

## **USDA BEST PRACTICES FOR UTILIZING TELEWORK FLEXIBILITY**

### **Retention of Employees**

**Agricultural Research Service (ARS)** – The spouse of an ARS Research Scientist located in the North Atlantic Area (Pennsylvania) accepted a new job 3 hours outside the local commuting area. The Research Scientist wanted to accompany her spouse; however, manuscripts needed to be written documenting scientific research that only she had worked on. The scientist moved with her spouse and ARS allowed a temporary telework arrangement for 6 weeks so that the manuscripts could be completed. The arrangement was in the best interest of both the employee and the Agency.

**Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)** – FAS launched a pilot in supporting a spouse (who is a USDA employee) to accompany her Foreign Service spouse on an overseas assignment in Canada and continue to work in her current position with FAS without a break in service. FAS negotiated work space, and support of equipment to perform her duties. She teleworks full time on a regular basis. Communication is done through telephone, video conferencing, and e-mail.

**Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)** – OCIO, Cyber Security (CS) and the National Finance Center (NFC) launched a collaborative effort in supporting the Departmental Telework Initiative in an effort to retain the security skills and knowledge of a highly skilled employee who is eligible to retire in the latter part of 2004. The employee had planned to relocate to the New Orleans area upon his impending retirement. CS approached NFC and formalized a telework arrangement to support both organizations while retaining him. He will continue to be on the staff of CS for the majority of his time while devoting a percentage of his time and skills to NFC projects. This initiative illustrates the creative use of telework as a positive tool in meeting organizations needs while retaining members of the workforce who would otherwise be leaving USDA. CS is delighted to have him continue as a part of the USDA workforce.

### **Temporary Medical Situations**

**Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO)** – OCIO has also used telework arrangements to accommodate employees with temporary medical conditions and disabilities. These arrangements were established to assist people after surgery and with ongoing medical conditions that would have made it impossible to commute to the office for a regular tour of duty. Offices were established in the employee's home in order to make it possible for them to continue to function in

their normal position successfully. These arrangements allowed OCIO to keep valuable assets in key positions and maintain productivity.

**Office of Communication (OC)** – OC has accommodated a highly skilled manager to telework permitting the individual an opportunity to resume work half time while recuperating from a nearly fatal car accident. It was impossible for the manager to travel to the official duty station or to resume part time work without this accommodation. This arrangement has allowed the employee to achieve a high level of motivation that is adding recovery while restoring his key contributions to the agency while recuperation continues. Teleconferences and computer connections permit significant contributions to the continuing workflow during the recuperative absence.

**Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM)** – OHCM has used telework arrangements to accommodate employees with temporary medical conditions and disabilities. These arrangements were established to assist people after surgery and with ongoing medical conditions that would have made it impossible to commute to the office for a regular tour of duty. Employees have worked from their homes in order to make it possible for them to continue to function in their normal position successfully. These arrangements have allowed OHCM to keep valuable assets in key position and maintain productivity.

## **Recruitment of Employees**

**Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)** - FSIS Human Resources Division recruited an employee for whom accessibility to Flexiplace/Telecommuting was a significant factor in the decision to work for the agency. The employee has important family responsibilities and the program was a major incentive for accepting the job offer with FSIS. The agency benefited by recruiting an experienced, competent employee and has been able to retain this individual partly based on workplace flexibilities offered by the Flexiplace/Telecommuting Program.

## **Accommodating Persons with Disabilities**

**Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)** - FSIS Policy Office used telework to accommodate a person with a medical disability by setting up a telecommuting arrangement. The employee has mobility difficulties and is permitted to work at home during periods of inclement weather. The employee will not be exposed to the hazards of snowy or icy conditions and will be productive by working at home. Both the employee and management continue to benefit from the arrangement, which has been in place for the past few years.