


<b>Approved by:</b> Juan Williams, Commissioner	<b>Policy Number:</b> 14-001 (Rev. 04/15/2024)
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<b>Application:</b> Executive Branch Agencies, Executive Branch Employees, Human Resource Officers	<b>Effective Date:</b> September 20, 2016
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## Alternative Workplace Solutions

The State of Tennessee recognizes that in an everchanging workplace environment, it is in the State’s best interest to use the tools at its disposal to meet recruitment and retention challenges in an evolving economy. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on how agencies may utilize the various options offered under the Alternative Workplace Solutions (AWS) framework. Contained within the policy are the various types of AWS arrangements, as well as the requirements for each arrangement.

AWS arrangements utilize mobile technologies, flexible work schedules, and multi-user duty stations to maximize efficiency of work processes while reducing costs associated with office space. This policy is designed to provide the structure needed for effective implementation while continuing effective operations. Agencies are responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions of this policy. It should be noted that not all employees will be eligible for participation in AWS and many employees will continue to report to their regularly assigned physical building during their regular work schedule. An employee’s agency has discretion to determine whether a position is AWS-eligible. This Policy addresses four (4) specific AWS arrangements; however, employees may have situations where AWS arrangements overlap:

1. Work from Home
2. Mobile Work
3. Free Address
4. Condensed Work Schedule

### Work from Home

This AWS arrangement provides employees the opportunity to work at a place other than his or her regularly assigned office location, such as the employee’s residence or an alternate location approved by the employee’s supervisor/manager.

An employee using this arrangement will work from his or her residence, or other approved alternate location based upon a mutually agreed upon schedule by the

supervisor and the employee. If a mutually agreed schedule cannot be reached, the supervisor will have the final decision. If a business need arises, an employee may be required to report to their regularly assigned office location, even if scheduled to work from his or her residence or other approved location. On the days the employee is not scheduled to work from home, the employee will report to his or her regularly assigned office location. For employees utilizing this arrangement, their residence (or other approved alternate location) will be their official designated reporting station for the days he or she works out of the office. The employee's official duty station will remain as designated by the agency, as employees may be required to report to this office location as requested by management for meetings, trainings, etc. Additional information about this arrangement can be found in [Appendix A](#).

### **Mobile Work**

This AWS arrangement provides flexibility of schedules for employees whose responsibilities require them to be away from the office for much or all of the regular workday due to community interaction or other job duty requirements. Mobile workers will not be assigned a permanent office but will instead utilize the Free Address option when reporting to the regularly assigned office location. The employee's official duty station will remain as designated by the agency. Additional information about this option can be found in [Appendix A](#).

### **Free Address**

This AWS arrangement may be suitable for an employee whose primary place to conduct State business is in a regularly assigned building, but who frequently collaborates with different groups and/or engages in a variety of different projects. This arrangement is also suitable for Mobile Work and Work from Home employees when they are physically present in the office. This option includes an arrangement whereby employees utilize unassigned, non-permanent duty stations on an as needed basis. Agencies may require employees to reserve the workspace in advance, or the workspaces may be used on a first-come, first-serve basis. Additional information about this arrangement can be found in [Appendix B](#).

### **Condensed Work Schedule**

This AWS arrangement will work alongside the requirements associated with other AWS arrangements. However, the goal is for agencies to utilize the condensed work schedule for both employees utilizing AWS and those who work in-office to the extent possible based on the nature of their agency, divisions, and employee job duties. Employees who take advantage of this AWS option will generally utilize the condensed, four-day workweek to meet their total scheduled hours. Additional information about this arrangement can be found in [Appendix A](#).

**Factors to consider when designating a position as suitable for an AWS arrangement**

Agencies shall consider AWS for all possible job classifications which would lead to efficiencies and effectiveness in daily operations. However, not all job classifications may be appropriate for AWS arrangements. Each participating agency shall identify job classifications eligible for AWS and should consider the following factors when determining which positions may be eligible for AWS arrangements:

1. Nature of the work performed by positions considered for AWS arrangements;
2. Efficiency of work processes;
3. Impact on ability to provide quality customer service;
4. Utilization of office space;
5. Utilization of technology and environmental impact;
6. Effectiveness of existing project teams;
7. Impact on agency travel expenses; and
8. Impact on employee quality of life.

When determining whether to implement AWS arrangements, agencies should ensure that the arrangement does not violate any state or federal laws not contemplated in this Policy.

**Eligibility of employees for an AWS arrangement**

All employees in positions designated by the agency as eligible shall be qualified to participate in AWS, and all eligible employees are authorized to participate to the fullest extent possible without diminished individual or organizational performance.

An employee may not be eligible to participate in AWS (*pursuant to agency discretion*) if:

1. He/she is subject to official discipline for performance and/or conduct, including but not limited to suspension, demotion, or recommendation for termination;
2. He/she has documented violation(s) of the State's Code of Conduct;
3. He/she has demonstrated diminished individual or organizational performance;
4. He/she has violated the terms of the AWS agreement;
5. His/her position involves the direct handling of secure material (daily or on a frequent basis) which the agency determines is inappropriate for AWS. This may include materials for which the agency maintains a written policy restricting access or use of the material or for which appropriate mitigating IT security measures do not exist; or
6. His/her position requires daily, or on a defined consistent basis, onsite work activities that cannot be handled remotely or at an alternative worksite.

**Supervisor's responsibilities when utilizing an AWS arrangement**

Supervisors of employees utilizing AWS arrangements have certain responsibilities which include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Setting forth appropriate measures to protect confidential information;
2. Ensuring that customer service is not adversely affected by the AWS;
3. Undertaking the necessary risk assessments of the office design and working practices;

4. Clearly defining and setting forth the AWS employee's responsibilities;
5. Maintaining effective communication with AWS employees;
6. Informing employees of reservation system requirements for Free Address space (agency discretion);
7. Ensuring there is not a hardship or burden placed on other employees (additional work, etc.);
8. Maintaining responsibility and accountability for treating all AWS and non-AWS employees similarly in acts involving managerial discretion, including but not limited to: distribution of assignments among employees in the work unit, use of appropriate tracking and communication tools, performance management, both informal and formal feedback, performance coaching, learning and development, reassignment, promotions, retention, and discipline;
9. Providing advance notice, if practicable, to AWS employees regarding requests to report to the regularly assigned office location (notice is not required and does not absolve an employee's responsibility to be physically present upon request); and
10. Completing AWS training for supervisors and annually signing an employee's AWS Acknowledgement eForm or on a more frequent basis pursuant to business needs.

#### **Employee's responsibilities when utilizing an AWS arrangement**

Employees utilizing an AWS arrangement have certain responsibilities depending on which arrangement is utilized, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Maintaining established performance standards;
2. Ensuring that the alternative worksite is appropriate and provides the work environment, connectivity, technology, resource access, and security authority consistent with the work in which the employee is engaged;
3. Procuring and providing internet services appropriate to the work effort at their own expense;
4. Maintaining flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of the supervisor, work team, and agency (communication and collaboration);
5. Reporting to the regularly assigned office location, pursuant to agency needs, for all or part of the workday during which they would otherwise be engaged in an AWS arrangement;
6. Documenting AWS work time in accordance with established DOHR and agency time and attendance policies;
7. Complying with DOHR and agency rules and practices pertaining to requesting and obtaining approval for leave, overtime, or any change to the employee's work schedule;
8. Maintaining effective communication with supervisors and other employees with whom communication is essential for successfully implementing the arrangement;
9. Being considerate of employees sharing workspace, and maintaining a clean workspace at all times;
10. Properly maintaining and protecting confidential information, and following data security procedures at all times;
11. Using a shared workspace only so long as needed;
12. Maintaining a high level of customer service at all times; and
13. Completing AWS training for employees and annually signing an AWS Acknowledgement eForm.

### **Other Factors for Consideration**

Participation in an AWS arrangement of Work from Home is based on an employee's job responsibilities as determined by the agency. If an employee's productivity decreases or other performance/conduct issues arise, the supervisor should treat the AWS employee no differently than an employee working in the regularly assigned office location. This means that coaching and counseling should take place and, if necessary, the supervisor, in consultation with the agency's human resources officer(s), has the authority to issue disciplinary action appropriate to the infraction.

Employees who participate in an AWS arrangement are considered to be in an official duty status during the employee's designated work schedule, and must comply with applicable policies, rules, and laws while on duty in an AWS arrangement. Failure to adhere to applicable state and federal laws, as well as state and agency rules and policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Work from Home employees may have situations where caring for a dependent or adult is necessary for reasons including, but not limited to, a declared state of emergency,<sup>1</sup> illness, or an unavailability of care provider. In such instances, work from home employees are allowed to provide care for said individuals, however, employees must have supervisor approval and must ensure such care does not interfere in the completion of their duties in a professional and timely manner. For the aforementioned situations, employees are responsible for notifying their supervisor(s) of the situation for appropriate review and handling.

Employees are also expected to uphold the same levels of professionalism when communicating with external customers, coworkers and supervisors through the various mediums provided through an AWS arrangement. These virtual etiquette expectations include appropriate dress, connectivity responsibilities, and respectful participation. The Virtual Connection Guide is available for review in [Appendix C](#).

Commute time from home to work and from work to home are not considered work hours and are not compensable under [5 C.F.R. § 551.422](#) and [5 C.F.R. § 550.112\(j\)\(2\)](#). An employee may be compensated for commute time if he or she is officially directed to perform work while commuting. However, an employee cannot be compensated for travel to and from his/her official duty station as a normal incident of employment.

Supervisors retain the authority to disapprove an employee's selection of a particular alternative worksite arrangement if, in the supervisor's opinion, the worksite is not business appropriate and/or fails to provide a working environment compliant with this Policy. This includes situations where an employee may be performing duties outside of the State of Tennessee. Information regarding performing duties outside of Tennessee can be found in [Appendix D](#).

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<sup>1</sup> See [DOHR Policy 12-039 – Employee Absences Due to Declared State of Emergency](#).

### **Training**

Employees who utilize an AWS arrangement shall complete AWS training (Edison online) for employees prior to the effective date of the AWS arrangement.

Supervisors who have at least one (1) employee utilizing an AWS arrangement shall attend or complete the following courses:

- 1) AWS training for supervisors (Edison online); and
- 2) Teaming and Engaging in the AWS Culture (face-to-face or virtual).

The Agency AWS Coordinator and/or Agency Learning and Development Coordinator is responsible for tracking the completion of these courses. Leadership and Learning Development facilitators are responsible for ensuring that the completion of these courses is entered into Edison ELM in a timely manner.

### **Edison AWS Acknowledgment eForm**

All employees, supervisors and AWS coordinators will utilize the Edison AWS Acknowledgment eForm process when beginning an AWS arrangement. Employees will initiate the AWS Acknowledgment eForm, supervisors will approve and those in the agency with the Agency HR Administrator role can issue the final approval these forms. Additionally, agency personnel designated as AWS Coordinators will have the ability to view these forms within their agency.

For any technical questions, please notify the Edison Help Desk at 1-866-376-0104 or 615-741-4357.

### **Agency Guidelines**

Each agency participating in AWS shall create guidelines for administration of the AWS program within the agency. The guidelines should be submitted to the Department of Human Resources for review and approval before being distributed to agency employees. The guidelines should include, but not be limited to, the following information:

1. Job classifications that are eligible for AWS arrangements, including criteria for identification;
2. Process of how employees will be notified of their eligibility to participate in AWS;
3. Reference to this Policy and appendices for clarification on definitions and other important information;
4. Guidance to supervisors/managers on advising employees that they will continue to be measured using the current performance management system;
5. Clear communication that employees who participate in an AWS arrangement will be eligible for the same opportunities as employees not utilizing an AWS arrangement, including: assignments, development opportunities, promotions, and awards/recognition);
6. Details regarding the administration of available AWS arrangements within their respective agency;

7. Details regarding protection of confidential information and data security procedures for those participating in AWS arrangement.
8. Instruction on how to complete AWS Acknowledgment e-Form in Edison;
9. Information on procedure for Free Address reservation system (if applicable);
10. AWS training requirements;
11. Name and contact information of AWS Agency Coordinator (mentioned below);
12. Information on procedure to request modification of AWS arrangement; and
13. Clear desk protocol.

### **AWS Agency Coordinator**

Appointing authorities shall designate an Agency AWS Coordinator who will be responsible for the following:

1. Maintaining and updating the Edison AWS Acknowledgment eForm, as directed;
2. Serving as primary point of contact for employees who have questions/concerns about AWS arrangements;
3. Developing or assisting with agency guideline development/implementation, as well as development of Edison AWS Acknowledgment e-Form;
4. Serving as an advisor for agency leadership regarding AWS;
5. Serving as a resource for supervisors with AWS issues or concerns; and
6. Assisting with compilation of metrics to ascertain effectiveness of AWS arrangements.

### **Acceptable Use Policy and Information Technology**

AWS employees utilizing State-owned hardware, software, internet, email, and other forms of State-owned communication media shall do so in a manner consistent with the [State's Acceptable Use Policy, Code of Conduct](#), and other state laws, rules, and policies.

Employees have a responsibility to safeguard government property and are responsible for the care, security, and effective utilization of such property, including computers, tablets, phones, and related equipment used to perform official duties. Employees may be financially responsible for the property if it is lost, stolen, damaged, or destroyed as a result of negligence, improper or willful actions.

AWS employees are required to use State issued equipment while working from home. The use of personal laptops is not permitted unless specifically approved by both DOHR and STS in certain, limited situations.

### **Clear-Desk Protocols/ Maintaining Sanitary Shared Workspace**

Agencies are encouraged to implement clear-desk protocols when employees have workspace-sharing arrangements. Such protocols typically require employees to clear the workspace of all work and personal items after use. Such practices help provide an accommodating workspace for all users and reduce the threat of confidentiality and data security breaches.

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Agencies should take measures to maintain a sanitary workspace, including providing anti-bacterial wipes and hand sanitizer to be used on shared telephones and other such equipment with multiple users. Disinfecting the area on a regular basis will reduce the spread of contagions and promote the overall health of the workforce.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Department of Human Resources' Office of the General Counsel or the Agency AWS Coordinator.