



**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS
MAURITIUS**

09 May 2020

Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms
Circular Letter No. 32 of 2020
E/152/11/07

From : Secretary for Public Service
To : Supervising Officers in charge of Ministries/Departments

Work-from-Home scheme

The Pay Research Bureau has, at paragraph 18.5.38 in its 2016 Report, provided for homeworking for public officers and has recommended that Chief Executives of Ministries may, for assignments that are project-based with verifiable performance indicators and for which there can be no disagreement on what is needed for the target to be achieved, allow officers particularly at the level of professionals and above to work from home on certain assignments where demand exists and resources permit.

2. The benefits of the Work-from-Home Scheme are multi-fold:
 - Service delivery will be ensured
 - Lesser hours are spent in traffic jams and commuting costs are reduced
 - Work-life balance is improved
 - The spread of infectious diseases can be contained
 - There is saving on fixed office costs
 - Staff will be motivated to work in an innovative environment with less stress and more job satisfaction, improving their efficiency and effectiveness
 - There is more flexibility to organize tasks

3. In the Budget Speech 2018/2019, the Work-from-Home Scheme was announced as a measure to promote work from home to raise productivity beyond the traditional workspace. In this context, the necessary provisions were made under the Workers' Rights Act whereby there is a legal provision for regulating the "work from home" framework through the Workers' Rights (Atypical Work) Regulations 2019. The said provision covers presently only workers of the private sector.

4. In the wake of the threat of the COVID-19, it is an opportunity for Ministries and Departments to develop and implement the scheme for their staff on a pilot basis in the first instance. This Ministry has therefore worked out a temporary Work-from-Home Scheme which will not affect the existing terms and conditions of employment of public officers. The drafting of this scheme takes into consideration the initiatives taken by some public organizations on the matter.

5. The framework of the proposed scheme would be as follows-

(i) *Eligibility for Work-from-Home Scheme*

The scheme may cover technical/departmental grades as well as other categories of staff, depending on the nature and requirements of their jobs. Supervising Officers will decide whether an officer can work from home under the Work-from-Home Scheme depending on exigencies of the service, degree of interaction required with other parties, general nature and requirements of the officer's duties, ability to work autonomously and the need for physical presence in the office.

No officer shall be deemed to be a home-based worker in view of the above temporary arrangements as there will be no change to officers' responsibilities to work according to required policies and processes in their existing contract of employment. The official workplace will remain the section/unit where they are normally posted.

The Work-from-Home Scheme should not hamper the functions of Ministries/ Departments in their service delivery and as such, a core staff shall be present during office hours as ensured by the respective Supervising Officers.

(ii) *Application for Work-from-Home Scheme*

An Application Form (copy attached) has to be submitted by the applicant willing to work under the scheme. The Application Form has to be agreed with/ approved by the respective Supervising Officers.

(iii) *Hours of Work, Attendance and Availability for Work*

The contractual weekly hours of work of officers, i.e. 33¾ hours weekly would remain unchanged. Officers must be available and able to work on their contracted days whether they are in the office or working from home unless their absence has been duly authorized.

Officers shall be available within a core time of **8.45 hrs - 12.00hrs** in the morning and **12.30 hrs – 16.00 hrs** in the afternoon respectively to respond to any call or email.

Officers will be expected to be available to come to the office on any working day, should the need arise. This may include the situation when they are unable to connect to the IT systems or if they are asked to do so by their Heads of Departments/ Divisions/ Sections.

(iv) *Facilities for the operationalisation of the Scheme*

Officers working from home should make use of official IT equipment already provided to them or where such equipment has not been provided, their computers/laptops or smartphones, subject to the payment of a monthly Cell Phone and Internet Allowances as follows –

| | | |
|------------------------|---|--------|
| Cell Phones Allowances | - | Rs 300 |
| Internet Allowances | - | Rs 300 |

Each unit will have an IT sharing platform where all the relevant officers within the unit can share/edit documents or provide an update on the progress of works. Ministries/Departments will be requested to seek appropriate guidance on the use of appropriate technology platforms to support the adoption of the Work-from-Home Scheme and on reviewed work processes from the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication, and Innovation.

(v) ***Performance management***

Supervising Officers should agree in advance on tasks to be performed by members of their team together with delivery outcomes as agreed upon. Records should be kept of all tasks performed/hours put in by officers concerned and endorsed by the Head of Section.

The Head of Departments/ Divisions/ Sections will have to submit a report on the performance of each officer working under this scheme for Performance Management purposes.

(vi) ***Use of Government Property***

Officers should ensure that Government property under their responsibility is used appropriately and responsibly and that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent damage and theft. Any damage or theft of Government property must be reported to the Supervising Officers immediately.

(vii) ***Information Security***

Officers working from home must ensure that they adhere to the Official Secrets Act, Data Protection Act and Government Security guidelines in relation to Information Security and data protection.

(viii) ***Safety and Health***

Officers benefitting from the scheme and the Supervising Officer authorising his or her participation in the scheme shall comply with the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

(ix) ***Cost Implications***

The Government will not be liable for any additional household costs as home working arrangements is to be of mutual benefit. Whilst working from home, officers must take responsibility for their work during official office hours. The scheme is reliant upon there being trust between Heads of Departments/Divisions/Sections and officers concerned. This is so fundamental that any breach of trust will be treated very seriously with appropriate action, including putting an end to the agreement to work from home.

(x) ***Duration***

The Work-from-Home Scheme will be applicable on a pilot basis for **an initial period of three months** during which this Ministry will gather feedback to further enhance the scheme for its continued applicability in the Public Service.



S.Ragen

Secretary for Public Service

Copy to : Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service

WORK- FROM-HOME APPLICATION FORM

1.0 Part 1 to be completed by Applicant

This form should be completed by an officer who wishes to work under temporary Work-from-Home Scheme set up by the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms in the wake of the threat of Covid-19.

The Work-from-Home Scheme conditions should be read carefully before completing the form. In case of doubt regarding the implications of the policy guidelines, please discuss the matter with your Supervisor or the Officer-in-Charge of Human Resource section of your Ministry/Department.

Once it has been agreed that an officer will work from home for a period of time, the terms of the arrangement should be respected, as far as possible. However, officers will be expected to be available to come to the office on any working day, should the need arise. This may include the situation when they are unable to connect to the IT systems or if they are asked to do so by their Heads of Divisions/Sections.

1.1 Personal Details of Officer

Name of Officer

.....

Grade of Officer

.....

Department/Division/Section where posted:

.....

Current working days and Hours of work

.....

1.2 Details of working from home arrangements

Work to be performed (including nature of work, output)

.....

.....

.....

.....

Expected number of days to carry out the task

.....

Have you been provided with an official laptop? (Yes/No)

.....

Have you been provided with an official smart phone? (Yes/No)

.....

Do you need any specific working tools or equipment to be provided to your residence? (Yes/No) If yes, please give details

.....
.....

Address at which home working would take place

.....
.....

Mobile phone number.....

Email address.....

Period of application

Date from:

Date to:

I confirm that I have read and understood the terms of the Work-from-Home guidelines.

I understand that I will be required to provide evidence of the work which has been carried out at home.

Officer's Signature:

Date:

2.0 Part 2 to be completed by Head of Division/Section

Please complete either section (a) or section (b)

(a) I have considered the application form for home working from

.....

I **recommend** the request, subject to the following conditions

.....
.....
.....
.....

Period of Work from home arrangement

Date from:

Date to:

(b) I **do not recommend** the request for the following reason

.....
.....
.....

Head of Division/Section Signature:

.....

Date:

3.0 Part 3 to be completed by Supervising officers of Ministries/ Departments

Please tick as appropriate

Approved

Not Approved

Signature

Date