

## **Ohio State University Extension Virtual Offices – Work Places**

The organization believes that the Extension professional is needed as close as possible to clientele and/or other team members, which requires flexibility in office location. The professional does need connection to a strong problem-solving team, clerical support, and housing for website management, computer technical support, etc., at the center. Effectiveness and efficiency will be lost without this connectivity to support rules.

We defined **virtual** as the ability to work from various environments and locations other than the assignment office. It does not imply a home office, although significant work may be done from a professional's home.

### **Criteria for Positions/People Suitable for Virtual Offices**

1. Many job roles can be conducted via electronic media and at multiple sites.
2. Professional is capable of working independently; self-starter; good time manager, trustworthy.
3. Professional understands uses and adapts new information technology.
4. Professional is a willing communicator and effective in multiple communication modes; responsive.
5. Professional embraces change.
6. Professional agrees upon arrangement that will enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the professional and program delivery.
7. Professional has statewide programming responsibility.

### **Process for application**

1. Professional and supervisor(s) must mutually agree, with an option for either to refuse.
2. Position will be identified and approved by a review of immediate supervisor(s), HR representative, and Department Chair.
3. **Virtual office plan** must be specifically developed, including a budget and evaluation plan for each professional with their supervisor(s).
4. The virtual office agreement can be terminated by the employer at any time, or through mutual agreement by supervisor(s) and professional.
5. The virtual office agreement should be reviewed annually. The form is located at: <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~admin/handbook/VirtualOfcCklt.pdf>.

### **Support for virtual office\***

1. Cell phones, with voice mail, published as employee's phone number.
2. Computer support will be provided through phone, help desk, or a specified work site.
3. Support staff, supplies, and equipment (computer, copying, scanner, etc.) needs will be negotiated. Support for phone/fax installation can be provided.
4. Mileage reimbursement will be established following University guidelines.
5. The person's supervisor must have a high level of trust for the employee; cannot be a micro-manager; is capable of communicating electronically.
6. Professional development opportunities must be provided to prepare/assist the virtual office worker.

### **Questions**

1. Can contracting be conducted with local Extension offices to provide clerical and equipment support?

*Probably not. The assigned office should be providing this support.*

2. Can a home office be utilized as a tax deduction?

*The individual would need to talk with their own tax consultant related to this situation.*

3. Could home office address be used for main address or the identified local office?

*No. The assigned office needs to be utilized as the mailing address and base of operations.*

**\*Clarification on 'support'**

1. An assigned office location will be identified. This will be the mailing address and phone will be forwarded if possible.
2. Cell phone with voice mail will be provided following current University guidelines.
3. Current computer or laptop would be provided. A laptop is optimum and would eventually replace a desk computer if this is all that is available at the start of the arrangement.
4. For estimating purposes, it is projected that a \$1,000 be budgeted per year to support the virtual office arrangement; this does include the phone-internet access. Reimbursement will follow current University guidelines. A maximum of \$50.00 per month will be budgeted to cover telephone bills, line charges for a second line, or internet connectivity. The individual will discuss with his/her immediate supervisor the most reasonable combination. The monthly costs will be reimbursable to the employee having paid the bills. It should be noted that this will be viewed as a taxable benefit.

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