



Office of Inspector General

REVIEW OF THE FEDERAL LABOR RELATIONS
AUTHORITY'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
REMOTE WORK PILOT PROGRAM

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**Report No. MAR-24-03
March 2024**

Federal Labor Relations Authority
1400 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20424

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Acronyms

COVID-19	Novel Coronavirus
FLRA	Federal Labor Relations Authority
HRD	Human Resources Division
OFPP	Office of Federal Procurement Policy
OIG	Office of Inspector General
SF-50	Standard Form 50, Notification of Personnel Action

Review of FLRA's Implementation of the Remote Work Pilot Program

Report No. MAR-24-03

March 26, 2024

Susan Tsui Grundmann, Chairman

The Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) performed a management advisory review on FLRA's launch of the Remote Work Pilot Program. Our work was limited to reviewing, as of March 15, 2024, the status of FLRA's implementation of their Remote Work Pilot Program.

Results in Brief

We determined a total of 28 FLRA employees have chosen to participate in the Remote Work Pilot Program. We confirmed that all 28 individuals have a Remote Work Agreement that has been approved. Furthermore, we verified that all 28 employees are receiving the correct locality pay according to their actual work location. Lastly, we determined that none of the remote work employees have been disqualified from the Remote Work Pilot Program due to any disciplinary actions.

Background

On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak. FLRA, as well as most Federal agencies, immediately implemented a maximum telework policy which essentially permitted 100 percent telework for all FLRA employees. Employees only came to the office on a limited or as-needed basis. During this time of the national health emergency and 100 percent telework, FLRA management entertained and adopted a policy to allow FLRA employees to work remotely. The policy essentially allows employees to telework 100 percent of the time when the emergency was declared over. FLRA issued the Remote Work Pilot Program Memorandum of Understanding on April 4, 2022. The memorandum is FLRA's official policy governing the Remote Work Pilot Program. The terms of the program were agreed upon by the Executive Director of FLRA and two union representatives. It was put into place with an anticipated start date when the national emergency was declared over.

On April 10, 2023, President Biden declared the COVID-19 national emergency to be over. At that time FLRA immediately implemented the Remote Work Pilot Program.

Results in Detail

We determined that FLRA currently has 28 employees enrolled in the Remote Work Pilot Program. A request was made to FLRA's Human Resources Division (HRD) for the Remote Work Agreements of all 28 employees. Additionally, we asked for the most recent Standard Form 50's (SF-50) to verify if the employees were receiving the correct locality pay for their designated remote work location as stated in their Remote Work Agreement. HRD promptly provided us with necessary documentation. Upon review, it was confirmed that each of the 28 employees participating in the Remote Work Pilot Program had a properly executed Remote Work Agreement. These agreements specified the address of the remote work location and indicated whether it was situated outside the commuting area of their assigned office. No discrepancies were found.

Upon reviewing the SF-50s provided by HRD, we identified the official locality pay area for payroll use. Our review concluded that the locality pay assigned to each employee participating in the Remote Work Pilot Program was accurate. Those employees who indicated that they were situated outside the local commuting area of their designated office were indeed receiving the appropriate locality for their specified work location. There were no exceptions found during our review. The HRD Director stated HRD does quarterly reviews of remote employees to ensure the locality pay is current.

According to FLRA's policy on remote work, no FLRA employee can participate in the Remote Work Pilot Program if they have been disciplined for being absent without permission for more than five days in a calendar year or have been disciplined for "viewing, downloading, or exchanging pornography on a Federal Government computer or while performing official Federal Government duties." In order to assess compliance with this policy, we made a request for a comprehensive record of disciplinary actions taken against remote employees based on the aforementioned criteria. However, the HRD responded that there were no disciplinary actions to report. Consequently, we did not come across any exceptions during our review.

Conclusion

We determined that FLRA has ensured all employees have an approved Remote Work Agreement and has specified their designated work location. We have concluded that all employees engaged in remote work are receiving the accurate locality and pay and no employee has been subjected to any disqualifying disciplinary actions.

Recommendation

None.

Appendix 1: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of this review were to assess whether: 1) FLRA employees participating in the Remote Work Pilot Program had an approved Remote Work Agreement; 2) FLRA remote employees were receiving the correct locality pay; and, 3) FLRA remote work employees were subject to any disqualifying disciplinary actions. Our focus was solely on these three critical elements in the program's initiation, and we deliberately excluded any objectives related to the efficiency or effectiveness of the Remote Work Pilot Program, as it is premature to evaluate such aspects. Our fieldwork took place from February 6, 2024, to March 15, 2024, and we gathered information through FLRA's offices in Washington, DC.

We engaged in conversations with the HRD Director and obtained all the necessary documentation as requested from the HRD Director. We examined the FLRA policy pertaining to the Remote Work Pilot Program, as well as carefully reviewed all agreements and additional documents provided by HRD.

The information requested was thoroughly examined, along with management feedback, in order to analyze and draw conclusions. Our conclusions were based on this evaluation. We recorded all review processes and prepared a report for FLRA management to review. A preliminary version of the report was shared with management for their input.

The scope of our review did not include the efficiency or effectiveness of the Remote Work Pilot Program. As it is currently in the pilot phase, the duration is not long enough to assess its effectiveness. FLRA should establish criteria to evaluate the program at the conclusion of the two-year pilot in order to determine its efficiency and effectiveness.

Appendix 2: Report Distribution

Federal Labor Relations Authority

The Honorable, Colleen Duffy Kiko, Member
Michael Jeffries, Executive Director
Joseph Panteloglous, Director, Human Resources Division

Contacting the Office of Inspector General

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