



City of Arts & Innovation

Governmental Processes Committee

TO: GOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES COMMITTEE DATE: MAY 7, 2025
FROM: HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT WARDS: ALL
SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF THE CITY'S TELECOMMUTE PROGRAM

ISSUES:

Receive a comprehensive presentation on the City's Telecommute Program from the Human Resources Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Governmental Processes Committee:

1. Receive this update on the City's Telecommute Program to review key insights, challenges, and recommendations to enhance the program's effectiveness.

BACKGROUND:

In March 2020, the City Council adopted the Telecommuting Program Policy as a strategic initiative to enhance workforce flexibility, help employees achieve a healthy work-life balance and reduce greenhouse gas emissions contributing to a smaller overall carbon footprint. The program allows eligible employees to work remotely under clearly defined guidelines to ensure accountability and productivity while ensuring continuity of operations and delivery of services.

DISCUSSION:

Telecommuting has become an undeniable force shaping the modern workforce and the shifting landscape of work.

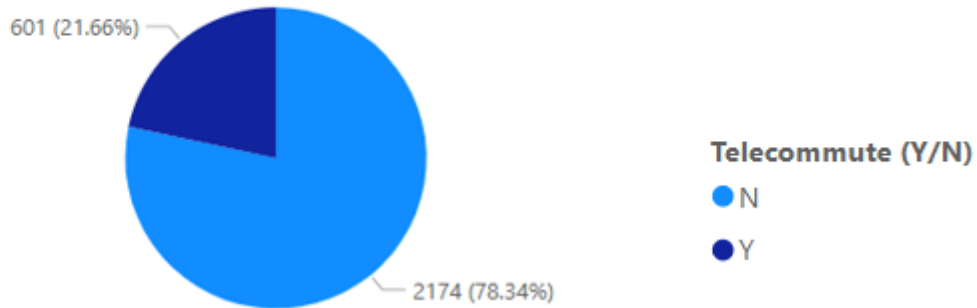
Its importance lies in its ability to provide significant benefits to both employees and organizations, fostering flexibility, productivity, and access to a wider talent pool. As technology continues to evolve and work preferences shift, telecommuting is likely to become an even more integral part of the future of work.

Approximately 21.38% (594 employees) of the city's workforce participates in the Telecommute Program. Since the implementation of the program, City management has been successful at

pivoting and managing hybrid workers, as well as continuing to provide services in a seamless manner.

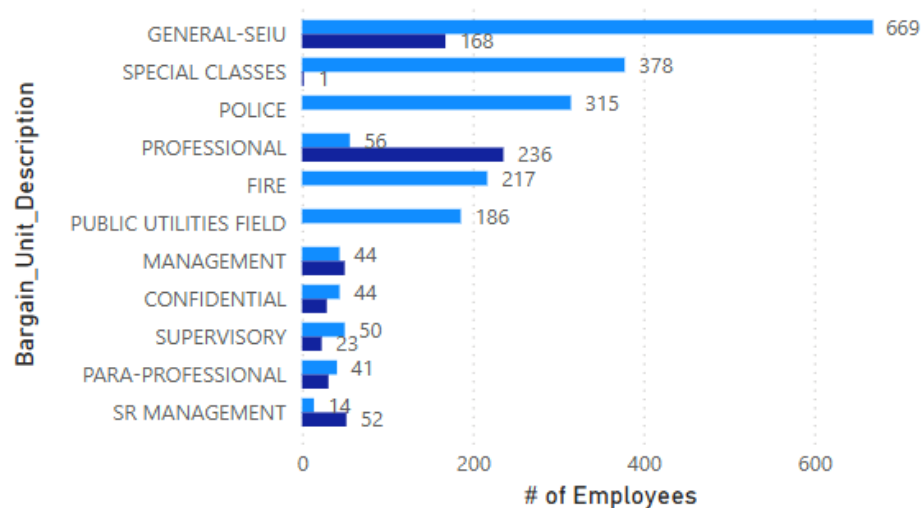
Adoption has varied across departments, with certain positions being more suitable for telecommuting than others.

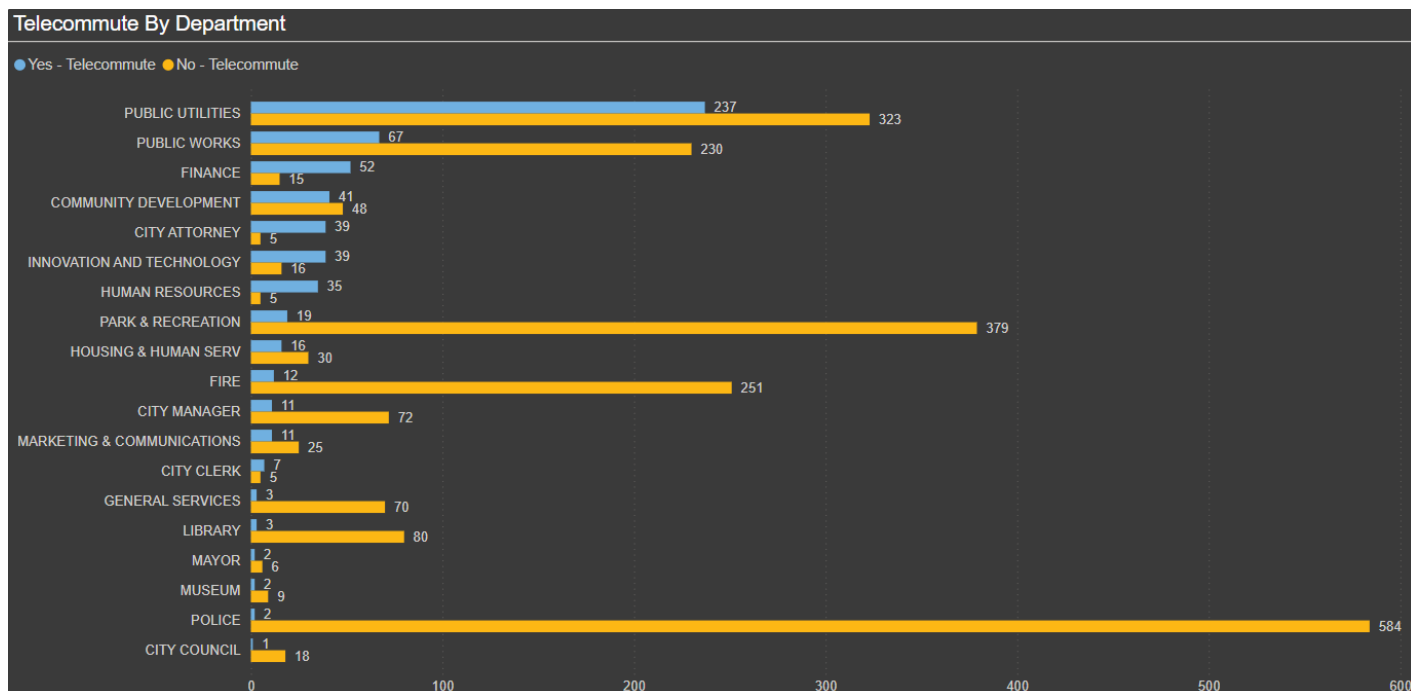
BREAKDOWN OF CITYWIDE EMPLOYEE TELECOMMUTE



EMPLOYEE TELECOMMUTE BY BARGAINING UNITS

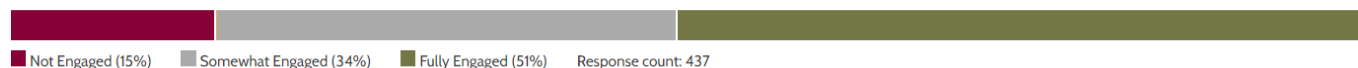
Telecommute (Y/N) ● N ● Y



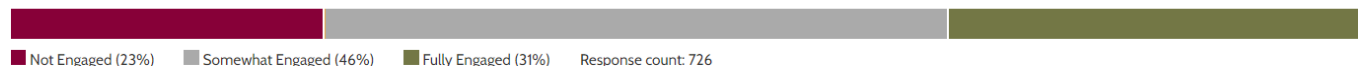


The city conducted an Employee Engagement Survey on March 20, 2022, which included seeking employee feedback on telecommuting. Employees who telecommute report being 51% fully engaged whereas; non-telecommuters indicated that they are 31% engaged. Telecommuters reported that they feel supported by their direct supervisor, connected to their team, and informed about organizational goals and priorities when working remotely. The goal of the adopted telecommute policies is to build on these strengths associated with telecommuting and to continue increasing employee engagement levels. The city will conduct another Employee Engagement Survey in the Spring of 2025, to track changes, trends and new developments.

1. Yes



2. No



Under the current Telecommuting Program for FLSA Non-Exempt Employees Policy (II-12), non-exempt employees may telecommute up to a maximum of four (4) days aggregate in a pay period. Similarly, under the Telecommuting Program for FLSA Exempt Employees Policy (II-11), exempt employees may telecommute up to a maximum of six (6) days aggregate in a pay period. However, management reserves the right to modify or suspend the number of telecommuting days allowed by policy based on the operational needs of the department.

While the policy may allow for additional telecommute days this is merely a threshold. City management established that employees may work remotely a maximum of two days per week and must physically be in the office a minimum of three days each week. Exceptions apply only for approved vacation, sick leave, or attendance at off-site work-related event such as

conferences. This limitation includes the use of flex days. Remote work combined with a flex day in the same week is not permitted, as it would result in fewer than three in-office days. Flex work arrangements may be approved by a supervisor but cannot be scheduled in a way that reduces on-site presence to fewer than three days in each work week.

On February 10, 2025, the Human Resources Department conducted a telecommute survey targeting our Market Basket and reached out to twenty cities to determine what agencies offer telecommuting on a regular basis. Seventeen cities responded. Of those, ten indicated that telecommuting is offered on a regular basis, with the number of allowable days ranging from one to three days per week. Five cities responded and indicated that telecommuting is only offered on a temporary or emergency basis. The remaining two cities responded and indicated that they do not offer any form of telecommute.

City of Riverside Telecommute Survey Summary Februrary 10, 2025	
	2025
Surveyed Cities	20
Total Responses	17
Agencies that offer hybrid telecommuting on a regular basis :	10
Agencies that offer hybrid telecommuting on a temporary/emergency basis only:	5
Agencies that DO NOT offer any form of hybrid telecommuting:	2
Agencies that have a policy established:	9

The effectiveness of the telecommuting program has met its intended goals, including increased employee satisfaction, productivity, reduced turnover, aided with recruitment efforts for hard to fill positions and improved morale which allows the city to remain a competitive and valued employer of choice. Notably, the citywide turnover rate decreased from 12.34% in 2019, prior to the pandemic, to 9% in 2024, clearly indicating an improvement in employee retention since the implementation of the telecommuting program.

The City's mission takes precedence over remote work. Departments must maintain adequate in-person staffing to handle on-site responsibilities which ensures that a physical in person presence is maintained at all customer counters. The city has taken appropriate measures to address the challenges associated with remote work such as reduced face time with employees, employee engagement levels, and accountability. The city has implemented strategic measures by leveraging technology, enhancing communication and fostering collaboration, supervisors/managers have established clear remote work standards that promote transparency and trust. These efforts strengthen connections with staff, leadership, and our customers ensuring public services remain seamless and effective. Employees working from home are expected to remain fully responsive, including answering phone calls and replying to emails. Avaya office extensions are available for all employees working on and offsite to respond to residents' calls, 311, and other public-facing services focused on having seamless desk phone access while at the office or remotely with emphasis on response to residents' calls. Additionally, all employees are required to be physically in office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The program is expected to

continue to evolve to accommodate new workforce expectations and technological advancements.

All telecommuting arrangements are evaluated annually by management and Human Resources and as needed to ensure productivity and satisfactory service levels are maintained for internal and external customers. A telecommute form must be completed annually for staff working under a telecommute arrangement. The form requires the approval of the applicable supervisor/manager as well as the department head. All forms are required to be submitted to Human Resources and are retained in the personnel files. The Human Resources Department recommends on-going program assessment and refinement to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

While the telecommute policy is a benefit offered by the City and not a negotiated right it is a formal adopted policy. As such, any modification to City policies that impact bargaining unit membership requires the Meet and Confer process.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item supports Strategic Priority 5 – High Performing Government, and Goal 5.5, Foster a culture of safety, well-being, resilience, sustainability, diversity and inclusion across the City organization.

This item aligns with *EACH of the five Cross-Cutting Threads* in the Envision Riverside 2025, as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – The Telecommute Program promotes transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public service delivery. By integrating telecommuting into its workforce strategy, the city demonstrates adaptability, innovation, and a commitment to serving the community effectively.
2. **Equity** – The Telecommuting Program fosters inclusivity, accessibility, and work-life balance for a diverse workforce.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The Telecommuting Program is administered with no additional costs to the City as these policies leverage existing systems for the purpose of creating greater workplace flexibility.
4. **Innovation** – The City of Riverside is able to provide robust telecommuting optionality given its comprehensive access to numerous digital systems, technical support from the Innovation and Technology Department and a coordinated approval process facilitated by the Human Resources Department.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – The Telecommute Program promotes sustainable practices by reducing employee vehicular trips and thereby reducing vehicular emissions. The positive impacts associated with reduced vehicle trips include improved air quality and reducing the carbon footprint of employees by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this discussion to consider.

Prepared by:	Rene Goldman, Human Resources Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Kristie Thomas, Finance Director
Approved by:	Edward Enriquez, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer/ Treasurer
Approved as to form:	Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Telecommuting Program for FLSA Exempt Employees Policy (II-11)
2. Telecommuting Program for FLSA Non-Exempt Employees Policy (II-12)
3. Presentation