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Policy Implementation Guideline: Telecommuting

ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

The following are eligibility considerations that need to be taken into account prior to the implementation of telecommuting.

The objective of this guideline is to assist the organisation with identifying the candidate most suitable for telecommuting based on their job functions and individual characteristics as listed below:

Key Area	Description
Job function	Job functions with one or more of the following criteria can be considered for a telecommuting arrangement: 1. Not dependent on fixed facilities, hardware, machinery or specific technology servers that can only be accessed on-site 2. Minimal to no handling of confidential client and business information 3. Require little face-to-face interaction and communication with co-workers and clients 4. Require travel or field work 5. Tasks can be evaluated quantitatively or qualitatively even if performed remotely
Employee	Candidates with the following characteristics can be considered for telecommuting arrangement: 1. Passed the probationary period as specified in the employment agreement 2. Good past performance appraisals demonstrating the ability to meet job expectations 3. Able to work independently without constant supervision from his/her supervisor 4. Strong self-discipline and good time management skills 5. Effective in conveying information both verbally and in written form 6. Well-equipped home office/ location that is safe and has minimal distraction 7. Able to work with little need for social interaction with on-site colleagues

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POLICIES AND EXPECTATION GUIDELINES

I. Telecommuting Policies

The table below outlines policies that the organisation needs to consider when implementing telecommuting. The policies can be amended according to organisation needs.

Policy	Description

General	• Existing organisation policies and guidelines must still be obliged by telecommuters
	• Telecommuting arrangements can be suspended or terminated if:
	  o it does not comply with business needs
	  o it affects the employee's work performance

Definition	• Work from home or anywhere other than the office enabled by information and communications technology
Application and approval	• Employees can apply for the arrangement using the **Telecommuting Work Arrangement Proposal Form** (refer to Appendix 1) • The process for approval of the telecommuting application is outlined in the **Telecommuting Work Arrangement Application and Approval Process** (refer to Appendix 2) • All proposal forms will be processed and stored away for future review as and when there is a need to amend or terminate the telecommuting arrangement (refer to Appendix 3 for **Telecommuting Work Arrangement Proposal Storage System**)
Work hours arrangement	• Clear work hours' arrangement policies need to be established to facilitate effective collaboration between telecommuters, non-telecommuters and supervisors. Organisations can introduce: 1. A formal method of logging hours (e.g. Clockwise software, Excel timesheet, etc.), subjected to the approval of employee's immediate supervisor 2. A policy requirement where the telecommuters need to be in the office at least twice or thrice a week depending on business needs
Compensation and benefits	• Telecommuters' salary, compensation and benefits do not differ from standard full-time workers • Employers are not allowed to discriminate against telecommuters by means of disallowing increment, benefits, bonuses and other forms of professional partiality
Performance management	• Employers should set clear KPIs and objectives for telecommuters measured by output instead of physical presence in office • Employers are not allowed to discriminate against telecommuters by means of disallowing career advancement, bonuses, and other forms of professional partiality
Technological infrastructure support	• Telecommuters should be provided remote access technology such as virtual private network (VPN), broadband public

	Internet access service, or a private IP environment for cases of handling sensitive data • Telecommuters should also be provided with telecommuting hardware such as laptop, headsets, encrypted data storage and other relevant equipment to facilitate effective telecommuting • Employees should complete the **Telecommuting Technology Checklist** (refer to Appendix 4) prior to commencing the work arrangement • The organisation is not liable for loss, damage of organisation-owned equipment due to employee negligence
Confidentiality	• Telecommuters are subjected to the organisation's confidentiality agreements and are expected to be vigilant when handling and relaying highly sensitive organisation data at remote location • Telecommuters are required to report to the organisation security center or hotline immediately in case of information security breach or loss of hardware
Safety	• The organisation is not liable for the safety of telecommuters when working in a remote location • Injuries incurred during work hours in a remote location other than the office is not claimable under the SOCSO employee injury insurance scheme

II. Telecommuting Expectations

The following are key expectations of supervisors and telecommuters in a telecommuting arrangement:

Category	Expectation
Supervisors	• Ensure employee compliance to telecommuting policies and arrangement • Allocate jobs evenly between telecommuters and non-telecommuters • Give prior notice to telecommuters regarding job allocations and required meetings and trainings outside of their telecommuting schedules • Periodically assess feasibility of telecommuting arrangement • Address challenges and issues highlighted by telecommuters • Practice non-discriminatory policy when it comes to performance assessment of telecommuters
Telecommuters	• Adhere to scheduled days of working on-site and remotely • Remain accessible by phone or organisation instant messaging system on telecommuting days • Remain flexible in adjusting telecommuting schedules if required • Remain accountable for delivering deliverables of quality • Choose a location that is feasible and conducive for telecommuting with minimal disruption • Attend to out-of-town/ travel-prone projects when need arises

COMMUNICATIONS AND REFERENCE MATERIALS

I. Communications

The following communications need to be delivered to the corresponding recipients at the established milestones throughout pilot implementation. The table below outlines the communication details:

Recipient	Milestone #1: one month before pilot project	Milestone #2: two weeks before pilot project	Milestone #3: one week before pilot project	Milestone #4: one day before pilot project
Telecommuter	• Telecommuting implementation objectives • Application and approval process	• Telecommuting policies • Telecommuting expectations	• Pilot project timeline • Date of pilot briefing	• Telecommuting pilot briefing materials
Non-telecommuter	• Telecommuting implementation objectives		• Pilot project start date	
Supervisor	• Telecommuting implementation objectives • Application and approval process	• Telecommuting policies • Telecommuting expectations	• Pilot project timeline	• Telecommuting pilot briefing materials

The design of each communication should be brief, easy to read, effectively summarising the necessary contents. Communications sent out after pilot initiation is outlined in **Pilot Checkpoint**.

II. Reference Materials

Reference materials required for provision of comprehensive information on telecommuting are outlined below, with all materials to be developed and owned by the HR department.

Reference Material	Objective	Target Audience

Telecommuting briefing	Provide telecommuters and supervisors with a comprehensive understanding on how the telecommuting arrangement will impact their daily roles:
	1. Telecommuting policies on:
	  o Compensation and benefits
	  o Performance management
	  o Work hours arrangement
	  o Technological infrastructure support
	  o Confidentiality
	  o Safety
	2. Expectations in a telecommuting arrangement
		Supervisor and telecommuters

Technology support guide	Provide telecommuters with clear avenues for help when facing technological challenges:	Telecommuters

	1. IT support contact details 2. FAQs on various technological challenge scenarios such as security breach, organisation data corruption, and internal server failure	

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The following is the pilot implementation approach which organisations can consider prior to the long-term implementation of telecommuting as an organisation policy.

Phase	PRE-PILOT		PILOT			POST-PILOT	
	Month 0		**Month 1**	**Month 2**	**Month 3**	**Month 4**	
	W1 · **W2**		**W1** · **W2** · **W3** · **W4**	**W1** · **W2** · **W3** · **W4**	**W1** · **W2** · **W3** · **W4**	**W1** · **W2**	
Key Activities	▪ Design pilot implementation approach and workplan ▪ Design pre and post-pilot surveys to gauge impact of telecommuting ▪ Design pilot checkpoint to periodically evaluate pilot		▪ Conduct pilot briefing to brief all parties impacted by the telecommuting arrangement ▪ Conduct pre-pilot survey to obtain a baseline measure of the impact of telecommuting ▪ Conduct regular checkpoints to evaluate progress of pilot, identify challenges and compile success factors	▪ Conduct regular checkpoints to evaluate progress of pilot, identify challenges and compile success factors	▪ Conduct regular checkpoints to evaluate progress of pilot, identify challenges and compile success factors ▪ Conduct post-pilot survey to gauge the impact of telecommuting	▪ Review and compare pilot outcome against initial goals and objectives ▪ Communicate success to employees to sustain momentum ▪ Develop mitigation plans to address challenges faced	
Responsible Parties	▪ HR/ FWA team		▪ HR/ FWA team ▪ Supervisors	▪ Supervisors	▪ Supervisors	▪ HR/ FWA team	
Deliverables	▪ Pilot approach ▪ Pilot workplan ▪ Pre and post-pilot surveys questions ▪ Pilot checkpoint		▪ Pilot briefing ▪ Pre-pilot surveys ▪ Pilot checkpoint reports	▪ Pilot checkpoint reports	▪ Pilot checkpoint reports ▪ Post-pilot surveys	▪ Pilot completion report ▪ Pilot success stories ▪ Mitigation plans	

PRE-PILOT SURVEY

The pre-pilot survey's objective is to obtain a baseline measure in gauging the impact of telecommuting on employees and employers in these key areas:
1. Cost savings
2. Productivity levels
3. Work flexibility
4. Employee performance
5. Employee engagement
6. Employee supervision

The pre-pilot survey should be conducted within the first 3 days of the pilot project.

TELECOMMUTING PRE-PILOT SURVEY
ORGANISATION X

Employee Copy

Thank you for participating in the telecommuting working arrangement pilot project for Organisation X. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey below.

1. On average, I spend RM_____ a week commuting to and from work (cost per week inclusive of petrol, toll charges, parking fees, public transportation fees, and other forms of travel spending).

2. On average, I spend a total of _____ hours a week commuting to and from work.

3. I believe telecommuting will help me to be **more productive** at my work.
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

4. I believe telecommuting will offer me the **flexibility** that I need to integrate work and life.
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

5. My supervisor and I are **aligned on the KPIs** I need to deliver on a telecommuting arrangement.
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

6. I believe telecommuting will increase my **engagement** levels at work.
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

Supervisor Copy

Thank you for participating in the telecommuting working arrangement pilot project for Organisation X. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey below.

1. I believe telecommuting will help my employees to be **more productive** at their work.
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

2. I believe telecommuting has the potential to benefit my employees, giving them the **flexibility** to integrate work and life.
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

3. I believe telecommuting will increase the **engagement** levels of my employees.
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

4. I believe supervising telecommuters will still be as **manageable** as supervising other employees.
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

PILOT CHECKPOINT

The pilot checkpoint is an avenue for the organisation to:
- Evaluate the progress of the pilot
- Identify and address any challenges faced by telecommuters and supervisors in the course of the pilot
- Compile success factors from telecommuters

The table below outlines the tentative checkpoint timeline and a list of suggested questions to be used at each checkpoint. The checkpoint can either be done through email or verbally.

The questions can be modified according to organisation needs.

Checkpoint Timeline	Suggested Questions
#1: first week of pilot	• What major challenges have you experienced which **affect your ability to telecommute**? (tick all that apply) ☐Network issues ☐Hardware Issues ☐Software Issues ☐Other:_____ ☐None • Have you experienced any major challenges **as a result of telecommuting**? • How have you or your supervisor addressed these challenges? • What **additional resources or infrastructure** do you require to help you telecommute efficiently?
#2: second week of pilot	• Have the resources provided to you been sufficient in addressing the challenges you faced in telecommuting? If no, state what additional resources you would require • Have you experienced any other challenges **affecting your ability to telecommute** since checkpoint #1? • Have you experienced any major challenges **as a result of telecommuting** since checkpoint #1? • How have you or your supervisor addressed these challenges?
#3: end of first month of pilot	• Have you experienced any other challenges **affecting your ability to telecommute** since checkpoint #2? • Have you experienced any major challenges **as a result of telecommuting** since checkpoint #2? • How have you or your supervisor addressed these challenges?
#4: end of second month of pilot	• Have you experienced any other challenges **affecting your ability to telecommute** since checkpoint #3? • Have you experienced any major challenges **as a result of telecommuting** since checkpoint #3? • How have you or your supervisor addressed these challenges? • Do you see an improvement in your work-life balance with telecommuting?

POST-PILOT SURVEY

The post-pilot survey objective is to gauge the impact of telecommuting on employees and employers in these key areas:
1. Cost savings
2. Productivity levels
3. Work flexibility
4. Employee engagement
5. Employee performance
6. Employee supervision
7. Organisation support

The post-pilot survey should be conducted within 3 days after the end of the pilot project.

TELECOMMUTING POST-PILOT SURVEY
ORGANISATION X

Employee Copy

Thank you for participating in the telecommuting working arrangement pilot project for Organisation X. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey below.

1. Telecommuting has helped **reduced costs** of traveling.
   ☐ Yes (If so, how much money) RM_____ per week
   ☐ No

2. Telecommuting has helped **reduced time** spent on traveling.
   ☐ Yes (If so, how much time) _____ (hour/ week)
   ☐ No

3. The **equipment** provided was sufficient for me to telecommute effectively.
   ☐ Strongly Disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree

   If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what **other equipment would you require** in order to improve the telecommuting experience.

   _____

   _____

4. Telecommuting has positively impacted my **productivity** at work.
   ☐ Strongly Disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree

If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways have telecommuting **negatively impacted your productivity** at work.

_____

_____

_____

5. The **KPIs** set at the beginning of the telecommuting arrangement were realistic and achievable given my new working arrangement.
    ☐ Strongly Disagree
    ☐ Disagree
    ☐ Agree
    ☐ Strongly Agree

    If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways were the **KPIs unrealistic and unachievable**.

    _____

    _____

    _____

6. I believe the telecommuting arrangement has not adversely affected my **performance evaluation**.
    ☐ Strongly Disagree
    ☐ Disagree
    ☐ Agree
    ☐ Strongly Agree

    If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways do you think telecommuting has **adversely affected your performance evaluation**.

    _____

    _____

    _____

7. Telecommuting has positively impacted my working relationship with my **colleagues**.
    ☐ Strongly Disagree
    ☐ Disagree
    ☐ Agree
    ☐ Strongly Agree

    If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways have telecommuting **negatively impacted your working relationship with your colleagues**.

    _____

    _____

    _____

8. Telecommuting has offered me the **flexibility** I need to integrate work and life.
    ☐ Strongly disagree
    ☐ Disagree

☐Agree
☐Strongly agree

If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate how telecommuting was **unsuccessful in providing you with the flexibility to integrate work and life**.

_____

_____

_____

9. Telecommuting has increased my **engagement** levels at work.
   ☐Strongly disagree
   ☐Disagree
   ☐Agree
   ☐Strongly agree

If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways have telecommuting **negatively impacted your engagement levels at work**.

_____

_____

_____

10. My organisation management and supervisor were **strongly supportive** of the telecommuting arrangement, making effort to ensure that the arrangement works effectively.
    ☐ Strongly Disagree
    ☐ Disagree
    ☐ Agree
    ☐ Strongly Agree

If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what **additional management support would you require** in order for telecommuting to work effectively.

_____

_____

_____

11. I would **recommend** telecommuting to other employees.
    ☐ Strongly Disagree
    ☐ Disagree
    ☐ Agree
    ☐ Strongly Agree

12. Has telecommuting benefitted you in any other way?

13. What were the biggest challenges faced in telecommuting, if any?

14. Additional thoughts or comments:

Supervisor Copy

Thank you for participating in the telecommuting working arrangement pilot project for Organisation X. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey below.

1. Telecommuting has positively impacted my employees' **productivity** at work.
   ☐ Strongly Disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree

   If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways do you think telecommuting has **negatively impacted your employees' productivity at work**.

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. It was easy to keep track of my employees' performance against the **KPIs** set at the beginning of the telecommuting arrangement.
   ☐ Strongly Disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree

   If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways have telecommuting made it **difficult to keep track of your employees' performance**.

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. My task of **supervising** telecommuters was manageable.

☐ Strongly Disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree

If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways have telecommuting made your **task of supervising less manageable**.

_____

_____

_____

4. Telecommuting has benefitted my employees, giving them the **flexibility** to integrate work and life.
   ☐ Strongly Disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree

If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways do you think telecommuting has **unsuccessfully offered your employees with the flexibility to integrate work and life**.

_____

_____

_____

5. Telecommuting has increased my employees' **engagement** levels at work.
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" to the question above, please indicate in what ways do you think telecommuting has **negatively impacted your employees' engagement levels at work**.

_____

_____

_____

6. I would **recommend** telecommuting as an alternative working arrangement for eligible employees.
   ☐ Strongly Disagree
   ☐ Disagree
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree

7. Has telecommuting benefitted your team in any other way?

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8. What were the biggest challenges faced in the telecommuting arrangement, if any?

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9. Additional thoughts or comments:

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ISSUES AND MITIGATION ACTIONS

In implementing telecommuting, organisations should take into consideration the following list of issues that could potentially be a barrier to effective implementation.

Category	Issue	Mitigation Action
Organisational	Management resistance	• Develop a business case analysis to justify value and return of telecommuting • Develop communication and reference materials to create awareness and educate stakeholders on telecommuting and its benefits • Pilot telecommuting arrangement with suitable job functions and top talents for a specific period of time to assess feasibility and demonstrate quick-wins to management
Technological	Data and network breach	• Create strong network security controls such as virtual private network (VPN), anti-virus, strong password • Provide encrypted hard drives and USB
	Technological disruptions	• Ensure telecommuters are adequately trained to use necessary technologies • Ensure availability of a comprehensive IT support for telecommuters • Provide back-up tools to prevent loss of data
Operational	Reduced productivity levels	• Effective delegation of tasks that are suitable for a telecommuting arrangement • Establish clear KPIs to ensure measurable performance outputs that can be achieved even when working off-site • Ensure supervisors are adequately trained to manage virtual teams effectively
	Non-compliance or abuse of telecommuting policies	• Communicate clearly and obtain consent on terms and agreements of telecommuting from telecommuters • Enforce disciplinary action if policies are breached
Social	Unconscious bias and perception of telecommuters as less committed to their work	• Conduct trainings for supervisors to create awareness of and address any unconscious bias against telecommuters • Communicate the implementation of telecommuting, its objectives, benefits, what it is and what it is not • Enforce anti-discriminatory policy to prevent discrimination of telecommuting in terms of compensation and performance management
	Isolation of telecommuter	• Ensure frequent communication and inclusion of telecommuters in the organisation's social events • Conduct department meetings and business discussions during established days where all employees are required to be in the office

	Non-telecommuter dissatisfaction	• Ensure clear employee value proposition is available for employees who are not eligible for telecommuting due to the nature of their jobs

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APPENDIX 1 – TELECOMMUTING WORK ARRANGEMENT PROPOSAL FORM

This form is used for the purposes of requesting, reviewing and modifying telecommuting work arrangement.

To be filled by the employee:

Employee Name   : _____

Job Title   : _____

Employee ID   : _____

Employee Email   : _____

Department   : _____

Supervisor's Name   : _____

Supervisor's Email : _____

Proposed Start Date : _____

Please fill out the following section with your proposed telecommuting schedule and location from which you will be working. Complete the "Office" column with an [X] for the days that you will be working from the home office.

Note that as per the telecommuting policy, it is compulsory for you to be working from the home office at least <insert duration> a week.

Day	Telecommuting Location	Office
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

Please answer the following questions succinctly:

What is/ are the reason(s) for you choosing the telecommuting work arrangement?

What is your preferred communication method to confer information between yourself, your co-workers and your supervisor? Please fill an [X] at preferred method, and fill the details:

[ ] Email   : _____

[ ] Mobile phone   : _____

[ ] Instant message : _[Provide official organisation username/ email for Lync or Skype network]_

[ ] Land-line   : _____

To be filled by the supervisor:

Telecommuting work arrangement for _____ is
[ ] Approved
[ ] Rejected

If approved, the employee will be able to start their telecommuting arrangement at the proposed date of _____.

If rejected, state the reasoning as to why the employee is not eligible for the telecommuting work arrangement:

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☐I understand that the approval of telecommuting working arrangement does not amend my employment contract.

☐I understand that the telecommuting working arrangement is subjected to the discretion of my supervisor and head of department and may be suspended and terminated depending on business needs.
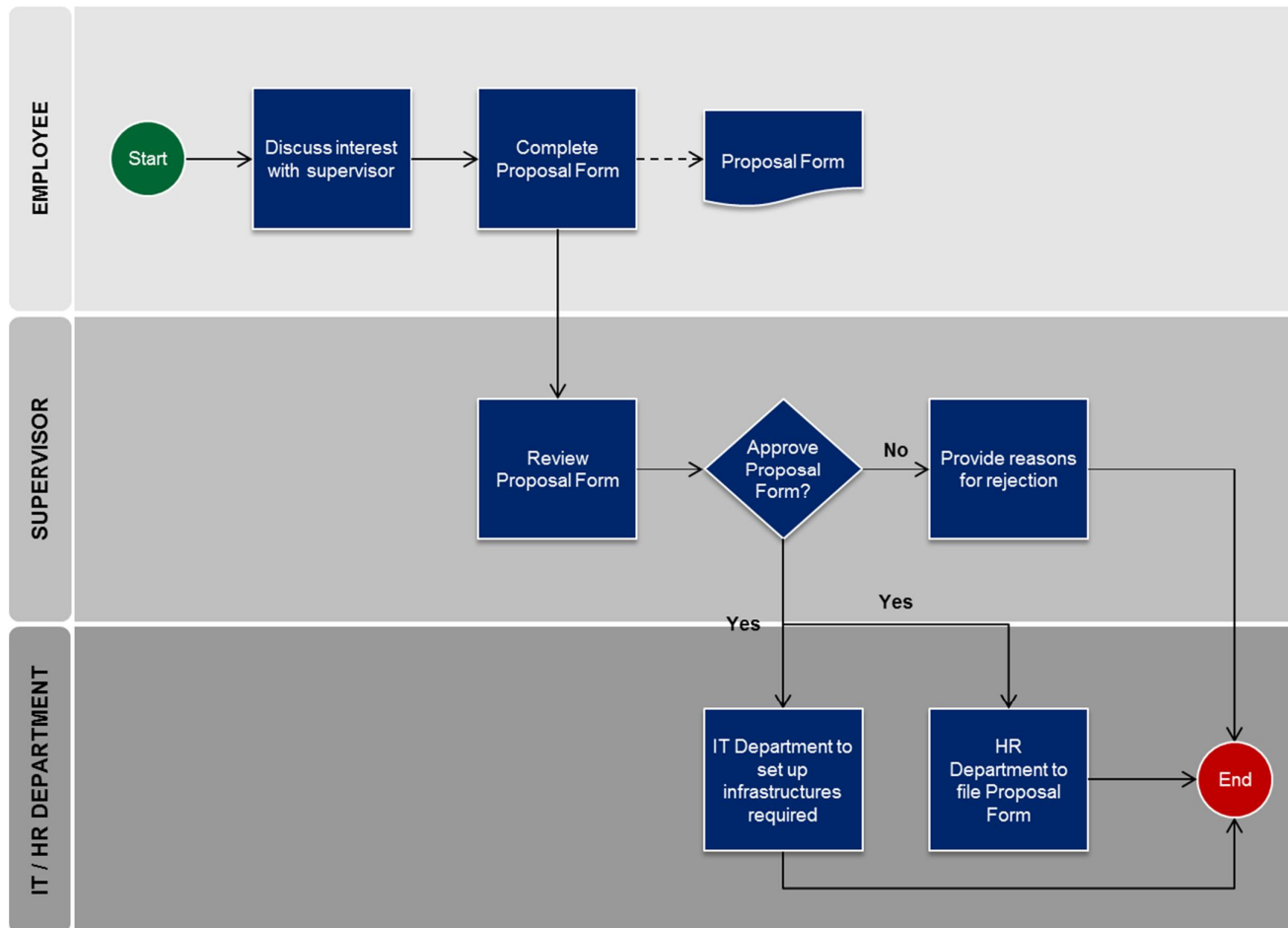
Employee Signature   : _____

Supervisor Signature : _____

Document Date   : _____

APPENDIX 2 – TELECOMMUTING WORK ARRANGEMENT APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

The following process is to be used in facilitating the application and approval process for a telecommuting work arrangement in the organisation.

APPENDIX 3 – TELECOMMUTING WORK ARRANGEMENT PROPOSAL STORAGE SYSTEM

The following outlines the different options to be used in the storing of the Telecommuting Work Arrangement Proposal Form, depending on the resources available in each organisation.

a) Storage of online forms in an online repository
1. Integrate HR webpage dedicated to the telecommuting working arrangement application procedures
2. Completion of Telecommuting Work Arrangement Proposal Form by employees online
3. Approval or rejection of Telecommuting Work Arrangement Proposal form by employers on line
4. Storage of processed Telecommuting Work Arrangement Proposal Forms in the back-end repository for future reviews

b) Storage of manual forms in a document filing system
1. Completion of Telecommuting Work Arrangement Proposal Form by employees in hardcopy
2. Approval or rejection of Telecommuting Work Arrangement Proposal form by employers in hardcopy
3. Storage of processed Telecommuting Work Arrangement Proposal Forms in document filing system

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APPENDIX 4 – TELECOMMUTING TECHNOLOGY CHECKLIST

Please confirm the following items are in place prior to commencing telecommuting.

- Getting Connected:
  - ☐ Stable internet service connectivity

- Hardware and Software
  - ☐ Laptop or computer
  - ☐ Headphones and microphones
  - ☐ Webcams (for video conferencing)
  - ☐ Pre-installed work-related software
  - ☐ VPN (if applicable)

- Security
  - ☐ Keep software up-to date to prevent hackers from exploiting security flaws (operating systems, web browsers, third-party plug-ins and other software)
  - ☐ Prevent identify theft by protecting account numbers, and other personal information
  - ☐ Turn on personal firewalls
  - ☐ Run antivirus software
  - ☐ Back up files to minimise risk of losing important files

- Home Office Equipment
  - ☐ Telephone or VoIP technology (internet-based phone service)
  - ☐ Surge protector
  - ☐ Printer or multipurpose machine
  - ☐ External hard disk