Telework Town Hall Meeting – Government Telework Professionals Convene and Collaborate

Some 200 qualified government and industry leaders gathered on June 15th in Washington, D.C. for the first Telework Exchange Town Hall Meeting. Attendees were eager to learn more about government telework programs, available technologies, governing regulations, and best practices from a range of agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and private sector partners. The Town Hall Meeting agenda addressed an array of hot topics for telework managers and teleworkers, from Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning to working implementations and enabling technology. The Town Hall Meeting also hosted the 2006 Tele-Visio Awards, with recognition of five leading government telework programs (for more details, see page three).

DOD Perspectives on Expanding Telework
The Town Hall Meeting featured two viewpoints on telework from Department of Defense organizations: Mark Fuhring, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, United States Army Communications Electronics Lifecycle Management Command located at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey; and Jack Penkoske, Director of Manpower, Personnel, and Security at the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), based in Arlington, Virginia. Each spoke about the role telework is expected to play during their organizational transitions called for by the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission Report (www.brac.gov).

Both Fuhring and Penkoske discussed how telework can and will be an effective tool to help ensure mission continuity during BRAC transitions, scheduled for completion in 2010. Penkoske’s organization is relocating its headquarters to Fort Meade, Maryland, yet 75 percent of current DISA headquarters’ employees live in Northern Virginia. He reported DISA has a major initiative underway to educate the workforce on telework options.

Agencies Have “Some” of the Necessary Infrastructure for Widespread Telework But They Lack Clear Strategies for Implementation
A study by the General Services Administration (GSA) shows that, while it will require planning and resources, providing a widespread telework infrastructure across the Federal government is worth the investment. To quote the study, “the potential benefits are far-reaching and cost beneficial.”

Theresa Noll, Senior Telework Program Analyst, Office of Governmentwide Policy, GSA, presented the Telework Technology Cost Study at the recent Telework Exchange Town Hall Meeting held in Washington, D.C. on June 15. Explaining one of the study’s business cases, Noll said, “Implementing a basic telework-at-home solution for 50,000 employees at an agency with 100,000 staff at a three-year cost of $16 million can yield more than...”

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Telework is rapidly emerging as a new strategy in Federal plans to prepare for everything from terrorist attacks to deadly viruses. As a result, many agencies are updating their existing telework policies and programs. Telework not only provides managers with a tool to improve worker productivity and workplace flexibility, it also is a means for agencies to ensure the continuity of essential government operations in times of emergency.

Best Workplaces for Commuters® (BWC) is a voluntary partnership program between the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) that recognizes these agencies and other employers for providing outstanding commuter benefits to their employees.

Nearly 75 Federal agency worksites and 65 state and local worksites already participate and have received the BWC designation. In addition to gaining national recognition, these agencies are offered networking opportunities and technical assistance on a range of commuter issues, including telework.

To participate and achieve the BWC designation, public agencies and other employers first must meet a National Standard of Excellence. To participate and achieve the BWC designation, public agencies and other employers first must meet a National Standard of Excellence that recognizes these agencies and other employers for providing outstanding commuter benefits to their employees.

In addition to a primary benefit, BWC employers also offer three or more “supporting” benefits. Some of these supporting options include onsite amenities, flexible schedules, as well as information on carpools and vanpools. Telework and other alternative workplace arrangements also qualify as supporting benefits when offered to a limited number of employees as an option, yet the six percent reduction in employee commute trips cannot be achieved.

The majority of Federal agencies that participate as BWCs include telework as one of their supporting benefits, as do about half of participating state and local agencies. For these agencies, telework is used for a number of reasons, all of which align with the goals of BWC.

“At the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), we’ve developed a range of workplace options that over time has really made a difference in our organization,” said Marge Adams, a USDA Work/Life Manager based in Washington, D.C. “Every year we see an increase in the number of employees who telework, use transit, or drive in together as part of a vanpool.”

Improved workplace productivity, healthy community relations, and strong employee recruitment and retention rates are among the key benefits Adams has observed.

She emphasizes the need to highlight these benefits when working with USDA managers to adopt innovative employee commute options, including teleworking.

1. Telework arrangements that reduce commute trips by at least six percent at a specified worksite, or
2. A transit or vanpool subsidy worth at least $30/month, or
3. A parking cash-out option worth at least $30/month

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Brooke Brewer, Director, Office of Work/Life and Benefits Programs with the U.S. Department of Labor agrees. The Department of Labor is in the process of increasing awareness of telework policies and programs. Like USDA, the Labor Department qualifies as a BWC given its strong transit program and because it offers a telework option.

Brewer believes that alternative workplace arrangements, including telework, are gaining tremendous momentum, and that in the future they will play a greater role in determining how the Federal workforce is managed.

“Right now telework is a critical flexibility (among Federal agencies) because it can help us strengthen and build effective Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Pandemic Flu plans,” said Brewer. “I suspect that our capabilities in this arena will be heavily tested over the next several months, and for many years to come.”

“As managers receive education and training, and the value of telework is demonstrated, it won’t be long before telework becomes more prevalent in the Federal workforce – and not just as a means to address security threats, but also because we will come to see that it provides us with a flexible, more productive workforce, cleaner air, and reduced congestion,” said Brewer.

For the EPA and DOT, this will mean the BWC program will have moved towards achieving its goals of providing employees with more flexible, productive, and satisfactory work arrangements.

For more information about the Best Workplaces for Commuters program, visit www.bwc.gov or contact Jeffra Rockwell at (734) 214-4401.
Money Does Grow on Telework Trees

On June 8, area commuters lined up to pick telework dollars at L’Enfant Plaza.

In an ongoing effort to educate the public about the savings and benefits of telework, Telework Exchange has rolled out a campaign called “Time is Money, and Money Doesn’t Grow on Trees.” The innovative campaign places “money trees” at busy intersections in Washington, D.C. and allows people to pick telework dollars from its branches and talk to a host of telework experts.

The first trees took root at the corner of 7th and D Streets, Southwest at crowded L’Enfant Plaza and just outside the Department of Housing and Urban Development headquarters. The second promotion, underwritten by TANDBERG, took place on August 16 at the corner of 13th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Throngs of people visited the trees to pick some valuable green from its branches and learn about how they could save money (for themselves and their agency) by teleworking just one or two days each week.

More money trees are in the works, and Telework Exchange is asking its members to visit the Web site (www.teleworkexchange.com) and vote for the next location. Stephen W.T. O’Keeffe, Executive Director of Telework Exchange, says “Consider gas price hikes, D.C.’s traffic gridlock, and concerns on global warming – telework is the answer. It’s time to put telework into drive.”

Tele-Vision Awards Recognize Outstanding Government Programs

The 2006 "Tele-Vision" Awards were presented at the June 15 Telework Exchange Town Hall Meeting. Five government organizations were selected by an independent panel of judges and recognized for excellence in telework program implementation. One winning telework program was selected for each of the categories noted below. For more information on these telework programs, and on the Tele-Vision Awards, see www.teleworkexchange.com.

Excellence in Telework Leadership

Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), Telecommuting Program

TIGTA’s telecommuting program, in place for more than five years, allows employees nationwide to work from alternate locations to conduct audits of Internal Revenue Service programs and systems and to investigate waste, fraud, and abuse. TIGTA is a recognized leader among Federal agencies and has incorporated telework as an integral part of its business continuity strategy. TIGTA has overcome program challenges with a comprehensive network of technical, human resources, and senior management support. Currently, 95 percent of TIGTA’s 840 employees are eligible to telework, and 740 participate in the program, with nearly half teleworking two or more days each week.

Innovative Application of Technology to Support Telework

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Telework Program

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Why Commute? be there now — with Video.

Visit us at www.tandberg.net to learn more about TANDBERG’s video conferencing solutions for Teleworking.
The FDIC’s voluntary telework program offers a suite of remote access services, including a Remote Client Network (RCN), a Virtual Private Network (VPN), and a dial-up service. Recently, the FDIC rolled out a token-based system that delivers all FDIC employees secure remote access from any computer with Internet access and a Web browser. The Web Enabled Remote Client Network (WebRCN) makes it possible for every eligible FDIC employee with access to a computer to participate in the Telework Program. In 2005, more than 2,300 FDIC employees participated in the program, working a combined total of more than 266,000 hours.

For issuing foreign organizations FAA certificates to work on U.S. aircraft and products, Telework is being used for inspectors working with operators nationwide. In October 2005, the organization built an interactive Web site based on the FAA Knowledge Services Network (KSN) to manage virtual office operation. This information-sharing Web site enhances employee and industry communications as well as tracks costs, approvals, inspector contacts, projects, and tasks.

Telework Program with Maximum Impact on Government
United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Trademark Work at Home Program
The Trademark Work at Home is a comprehensive program involving more than 220 employees (80 percent of eligible examining attorneys) who spend the majority of their workweek at home and share office space through a hoteling arrangement. Each employee is provided with the necessary equipment for secure remote access to the agency’s network, and automated systems enable users to perform all of their trademark examination duties electronically. By incorporating measurable performance goals in the evaluation of worker performance, the Trademark office has created a model of an extremely successful telecommuting program for government agencies.

Excellence in State Program Leadership
Arizona Department of Administration, State of Arizona Telework Program
An Arizona State Executive Order mandated telework, with the goal of having 20 percent of the 21,000 state employees in Maricopa County actively participate. Today, 3,700 employees, or more than 17 percent of the state workforce in Maricopa County, are teleworkers. Current estimates show that state teleworkers drive 4.5 million fewer miles annually, generate 75 fewer tons of air pollution, and endure 155,000 fewer hours of stressful driving time. With an employee replacement cost of $50 million per year, the telework program delivers significant potential savings to Arizona taxpayers, as a meaningful factor in the retention of qualified employees.
Partnerships, Teamwork, and Advocacy Are Key to Telework Center’s Success

Ask Joyce Twohig Larrick why her Federal Telework Center is so successful, and she answers with an emphatic, “Teamwork and community partnerships.” Larrick is Director of the Bowie State University Telecommuting Center, which currently is operating at 92 percent capacity.

For that “nearly full” status, she credits not just her staff, but also the teleworkers themselves. “They are our biggest advertisers,” she says. “They truly understand and appreciate the benefits of teleworking, and they are flexible, motivated, and productive.” It is not difficult to see why these teleworkers are appreciative. This particular Center comes with all the perks of a full university campus.

The MARC train runs right through the campus, making it easy for Baltimore residents to telework rather than commute to their Federal jobs in and around Washington, D.C. Teleworkers can get their exercise with a run on the University’s track or a swim in the pool. There are plenty of options for lunch at the cafeteria, and teleworkers can borrow a great book from the shelves – the Telework Center is located inside the campus library.

“There is no doubt that the collegial atmosphere is a selling point,” says Larrick. “You can network with your peers and eat lunch with co-workers, yet avoid all the normal office politics.”

Dr. Marion Harris, BSU’s Acting Vice President for Administration and Finance, said “The Center is an invaluable productivity resource to its users, and illustrates Bowie State University’s role as a leader in workplace innovation, and a community partner in addressing the professional needs of its community.”

A long-time resident of Bowie, Maryland, Larrick knows her way around the community and its various organizations. She is passionate about teleworking and is an active advocate in the Greater Bowie and Baltimore/Washington Chambers of Commerce, and she is a founding member of the Bowie Chamber’s

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The wide ranging benefits of telework with 20 teleworkers. He reiterated a roundtable discussion at the Center nearly 15 years, recently held a meeting at the Metropolitan Telework Center, and staying active in the International Telework Association and Council and the Washington Metropolitan Telework Centers. “I assume it is my role to be a proponent for all the General Services Administration (GSA) supported Telework Centers,” she says. It is not uncommon to see Larrick wearing a button that reads, “Ask me about GSA’s Telework Centers.”

The Bowie Center is an “office away from the office” for a variety of workers. Larrick estimates just over 60 percent of the Center’s teleworkers are Federal government employees, while the remaining 40 percent come from industry. Larrick works with managers to optimize their full use of the Center. For example, nine people from the same agency share one seat in the Center. Teleworkers are able to have flexible schedules and accomplish special projects.

Larrick also understands the important role that a Telework Center can play in Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently audited the Bowie Center for COOP services. The Center received strong marks and is now a COOP site for one Federal agency. Larrick noted that she is speaking with other Federal agencies as well.

The Center’s success has not gone unnoticed. Representative Steny Hoyer (D-MD) has used the Center to telework, as well as other Congressional members and a former administrator of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Hoyer, a proponent of telework for Federal agencies as well.

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People are surely paying attention, as the number of employees who telework has quadrupled in the last six months, and Penkoske considers telework to be a critical component in the agency’s strategy to retain and increase the current DISA talent pool.

“When we changed the telework policy recently, we explained that all positions are eligible for telework unless you come back and tell us why they are not by exception,” said Penkoske.

Mark Fuhring noted that, in the past, his department might have had only 25 to 30 teleworkers. The organization estimates expanding telework to 300-500 employees this year.

**Proven Government Telework Programs**

To provide Town Hall Meeting attendees with models of successful government telework programs, panelists discussed best practices and existing programs. One well-known example established over the last 10 years can be seen at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). Debbie Cohn, Deputy Commissioner for Trademark Operations, discussed the evolution of the program that is saving the agency more than $1 million annually in leasing costs. She highlighted key success factors, including establishing pilot programs, providing comprehensive training for teleworkers and managers, establishing measurable performance standards, and setting realistic expectations, as well as working closely with the employees’ union.

The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), part of the Department of the Treasury, has established a geographically-dispersed telework program that includes nearly 90 percent of the agency’s auditors and examiners. Ben Trapp, TIGTA’s Assistant Director for Information Technology, and a full-time teleworker, spoke about the program’s success and cost savings achieved to date. New employees initially work in a TIGTA office, then transition to a two-day-a-week telework plan, and eventually work full time from their home or alternate location. Trapp emphasized that executive management support was the single most important factor that has contributed to the initial success of the program.

Today, this nationwide implementation includes staff from more than 60 regional offices.

“Work is something you do, not a place you go,” said Ronald Simmons, Knowledge Management Officer and Technical Advisor at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). His presentation showcased the FAA’s Knowledge Services Network (KSN), an alternative virtual work space where FAA employees, business partners, and customers conduct daily business and manage programs of all sizes. The KSN has 22,000 users from 1,500 teams conducting the critical business of FAA – and a large portion are doing business from their homes or other locations.

**Integrating Telework into COOP – The Time is Now**

Business continuity is at the top of the critical list facing telework advocates today. Linda Koonts, Director of Information Management Issues at the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), reviewed the findings of a recent report entitled “Continuity of Operations: Selected Agencies Could Improve Planning for use of Alternate Facilities and Telework during Disruptions.” This report, issued in May 2006, discusses how, and to what degree, 23 Federal agencies are using telework programs as an integrated component of their continuity planning. (For more information on this report, see the June 2006 issue of The Teleworker or access the complete GAO report at www.gao.gov, report number GAO-06-713.)

The Department of Commerce’s Critical Infrastructure Protection Manager, Dave Jarrell, discussed programs underway across the large, diverse agency to integrate telework, COOP and other business continuity planning. The agency supports teleworkers, as well as a large mobile workforce, and these employees need the ability to work during all types of weather, and especially during an emergency.

As part of the Commerce Office of the CIO, Jarrell noted that an essential approach to ensuring business continuity is to involve the diverse stakeholders in the planning, governance, security, and testing of remote access systems. The Department regularly participates in exercises, internal and with other agencies, to ensure COOP programs are executable, and to address hiccups along the way.

**Leveraging Technology for Telework Results**

In a session dedicated to telework strategies and available tools, presenters told attendees how to turbo charge their telework programs. Speakers included Nigel Ballard of Intel Corporation, Ray Kent of Booz Allen Hamilton, Theresa Noll of the General Services Administration (GSA), and Tom Simmons of Citrix Systems. Ballard highlighted the future of wireless technology and talked about technologies available today, noting that most teleworkers will one day be able to work from any location. Simmons discussed the characteristics of the successful telework programs implemented throughout government, and touched on improvements in emerging technologies such as virtual meetings and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

Ray Kent and Theresa Noll shared the initial results of a recently-completed study conducted by Booz Allen Hamilton for GSA that analyzed the potential technology costs and benefits of broadening telework capabilities to support 25 to 50 percent of the Federal government workforce. Theresa Noll, a GSA Senior Telework Program Analyst, discussed the government’s study objectives and detailed the effectiveness and potential cost savings involved in implementing a more robust Federal telework infrastructure. For more information on this GSA study, see page one of this edition of The Teleworker.
The Office of the National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC), part of the Department of Homeland Security, hosted a special session at the Town Hall Meeting to discuss Federal telework best practices. The ONCRC is designing and implementing COOP programs for the National Capital Region. Through a series of outreach sessions, ONCRC is looking to involve experienced government and industry professionals in the planning process. As part of its mandate, ONCRC oversees and coordinates Federal programs, for and relationships with state, local, and regional authorities in the National Capital Region. Available proceedings from the June 15 Telework Exchange Town Hall Meeting can be found at www.teleworkexchange.com/townhallmeeting.

The study’s cost benefit analysis clearly shows that initial costs are well worth the investment – not just to those who are teleworking, but to the agency overall. The study also found that many agencies currently do not include telework in their comprehensive strategic IT planning and program development. GSA recommends that agencies consider telework technology as a component of their enterprise architectures and capital planning to expand program benefits and technology return on investment. To read the full study, visit www.teleworkexchange.com/gsa-telework-technology-cost-study.asp.