

teleWORKS

**Empower your workforce with
flexible workplace options.**



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Produced by the **Rideshare, Etc.** program, supporting sustainable transportation alternatives in the Greater Madison area.



TELEWORKING THE NEW NORMAL

In 2020, COVID-19 caused many employers to implement emergency telework protocols, rapidly reshaping workplace operations and norms. The experience provided a valuable window into the benefits of telework nationwide, prompting greater demand for hybrid workplaces in the future.

This toolkit provides tips and considerations for employers and employees in Dane County interested in pursuing a flexible, long-term approach to telework. Insights include feedback from the Madison Region Remote Work Survey conducted in June 2020¹, as well as research from around the nation. We encourage you to use this toolkit to start or continue the conversation at your workplace.

When viewed in the context of sustainability and transportation, telework presents an opportunity to reduce driving in Dane County. As part of an employer's commute solutions program, it can join public transit, bicycling, carpooling, vanpooling, and walking as a way to encourage employees to drive less.

Telework is also a valuable recruitment and retention tool for employers, and a benefit for employees that increases flexibility, saves money and reduces stress.

Employers who use lessons learned today to thoughtfully plan for the next evolution of the workplace will be able to harness valuable benefits for their employees, businesses, and community.



79%

of Madison region
respondents want to work
from home at least one
day per week in the
future¹

¹ Greater Madison MPO, "Madison Region Remote Work Survey: COVID-19 Impact," June 2020 https://www.greatermadisonmpo.org/planning/otherplans.cfm#Remote_Survey

TELEWORK'S ECONOMIC IMPACT



Economic Benefits

Telework offers a number of economic benefits for both employers and employees.

Businesses that implement some type of flexible telework option can save on costs related to real estate, parking, absenteeism, maintenance, and other resources. Nearly six in ten employers nationally identify cost savings as a significant benefit to telecommuting.²

Telework can also help employers reduce turnover and training costs by improving employee happiness and wellbeing. Employees report higher engagement and lower stress when working from home, due in part to greater flexibility to manage personal and professional obligations.

37% of employees would change jobs in order to work remotely at least part time³

A January 2020 Gallup study found that employees across various industries who spend 60% to 80% of their time working remotely tend to have the highest rates of engagement.⁴

Employees also save time and money on the days they telework. Seventy percent of respondents to the 2020 Madison region survey said a top benefit had been saving money by not commuting. Another 69% said they will view an employer more favorably if given the option to work from home.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Recent polls show employees tend to be happier, more engaged, and less likely to switch jobs when they have flexible workplace options. Employees report a greater work/life balance, including less stress, time and cost associated with commuting.

OVERHEAD SAVINGS

Businesses can achieve significant savings on costs associated with real estate, building maintenance, office supplies and parking infrastructure.

COMMUTE COSTS

Cutting down on time spent commuting saves fuel and maintenance costs for employees who would typically drive alone.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Reduced traffic, less peak hour congestion and fewer drive-alone commutes can help reduce demand for costly projects such as roadway expansions and parking infrastructure.

² Global Workplace Analytics, <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/pros-cons>

³ Gallup, 2016: <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/206033/america-coming-workplace-home-alone.aspx>

⁴ Gallup, January 2020: <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/283985/working-remotely-effective-gallup-research-says-yes.aspx>

A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACE



Environmental Benefits

Telework can contribute to a cleaner, more sustainable future for our community.

As teleworking becomes more common, an important goal should be to reduce driving overall. Drive-alone vehicle commutes create greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that affect air quality and quality of life. Reducing commute trips can be a powerful way to reduce emissions, as they tend to be longer and occur during the morning and afternoon peaks.

Seventy-four percent of respondents to the 2020 Madison Region Remote Work Survey primarily drove alone to work prior to the pandemic, and 32% commuted over thirty minutes.⁵



28%

of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation⁶

With the majority of employees today expressing a preference for part-time telework, the impact of reducing drive-alone commutes by just a few days per week can be significant. A recent study of Seattle data found that if people stayed home just one or two days each week, the city could close in on a 5% decrease in its total vehicle miles traveled.⁷

⁵ Greater Madison MPO, June 2020.

⁶ U.S. EPA, 2018: <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

⁷ Government Technology article on StreetLight Data analysis, 2020: <https://www.govtech.com/analytics/Societal-Changes-Could-Decouple-Traffic-Economic-Prosperity.html>

LESS SINGLE-OCCUPANCY DRIVING

Approximately 71% of employees in Dane County and 61% in Madison drive alone to work. Talk with employees about how they can use telework to reduce their daily driving.

VEHICLE EMISSIONS

Fewer people driving alone can lead to better air and water quality, and public health benefits.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Less driving puts less stress on our roadways and parking infrastructure, lengthening their lifespan.

OFFICE WASTE

Employers who implement telework policies can reduce office waste and energy use.

For Managers



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A WORKFORCE INCENTIVE

By eliminating commute time, minimizing workplace distractions and increasing flexibility, telework can help employees avoid stress and make better use of their day.

A June 2020 survey by PwC U.S. found that 28% of employees felt more productive despite the added stresses of the pandemic, and 44% of said employee productivity increased while working from home¹. In the Madison region, 74% of survey respondents reported feeling the same or greater satisfaction with their personal job performance, and 36% reported greater productivity.²



44%

of U.S. execs say employee productivity increased while working from home³

By giving employees more control over their day, telework can also increase morale and reduce unscheduled absences. Employers that offer telework report higher engagement and fewer sick days. Employees are also less likely to need time off for family and personal needs or inclement weather.

While the majority of employees who are able to would prefer to telework at least one day per week, the key for managers is to discuss team preferences and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

1 PwC U.S. Remote Work Survey, June 2020: <https://www.pwc.com/us/remotework>

2 Greater Madison MPO, June 2020

3 PwC, June 2020



Workplace Benefits

PRODUCTIVITY

Studies show that employees who spend 60-80% of their time teleworking are more productive and engaged.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Reducing the stress of daily commutes improves mental wellbeing for many employees. 45% of Madison region survey respondents reported less stress due to not commuting and 54% reported having more time to sleep.

TALENT RECRUITMENT

Telework can expand the talent pool beyond geographic boundaries and make it easier for parents, caregivers, and people with disabilities to access and retain jobs.

EMPLOYEE MORALE

Teleworking gives employees more flexibility and control over their work and life.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Numerous polls show employees tend to be happier when they have flexible telework options, leading to lower turnover costs. Employees report greater work/life balance when able to telework even part-time.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

While teleworking helps many employees balance professional productivity and quality personal time, challenges can include social isolation, impacts to workplace culture, and setting boundaries to avoid over-work.

The biggest concern about remote work reported by 58% of Madison area executives and managers surveyed, was company culture and morale declining.⁴ With more employees teleworking part-time, providing tools and opportunities that facilitate social engagement among and across teams regardless of their location is critical.

Virtual watercooler chats, online happy hours, monthly book clubs and virtual coffee breaks are just some of the ways that managers can strengthen company culture in a hybrid office/digital space. Tools like Slack provide valuable ways to connect employees across diverse locations through shared chat threads for both social and professional purposes.

Another critical role for managers is working with teams to set expectations and boundaries around work time and communications. Every workplace and team is different, but establishing a consistent approach with defined expectations—such as whether video is required for meetings; how and when teleworking employees should check in; core work hours; whether texting is okay; and what types of work should happen in the office—will reduce stress and build trust.



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Tools like Slack provide valuable ways to connect employees in diverse locations through chat threads.

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⁴ Greater Madison MPO, June 2020

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TELEWORK PROGRAM

1. **Establish a detailed telework policy.** This document should define the program purpose and eligibility, outline employer and employee responsibilities, and set clear expectations around topics such as core work hours, office equipment, communications, and meetings.
2. **Have the right technology in place.** This includes determining what and how office equipment will be provided, and identifying software to support file sharing, team collaboration, project management, and privacy and security.
3. **Communicate and evaluate.** Regularly communicate with employees to gather feedback and address areas for improvement. This is critical to foster trust and lay the foundation for long-term success.





TeleWORKS Checklist for MANAGERS

PREPARE FOR TELEWORK

IMPLEMENT A TELEWORK POLICY

- ☐ **Outline the type of telework arrangement** (e.g., how many days will the employee work remotely, which positions are eligible, what expenses are covered).
- ☐ **Establish clear expectations** for virtual availability including check-ins, core work hours, and leave scheduling.
- ☐ **Measure performance** and decide how it will be assessed, using tools such as Paymo or Time Doctor if necessary.

EQUIP PERSONNEL

- ☐ **Inventory necessary equipment for employees**, such as laptops, docking stations, monitors, phones, WiFi, and office supplies and be clear about what is covered by the employer.
- ☐ **Assess adequacy of IT support** to assist employees experiencing technical difficulties.

EVALUATE SECURITY NEEDS

Keeping company data confidential and protected may require additional preparation.

- ☐ **Set up a virtual private network (VPN)** with each employee.
- ☐ **Install cyber security software.**
- ☐ **Install cloud-based file storage** to access data remotely.

DETERMINE CHECK IN PRACTICES

Teleworking employees rely heavily on clear communication for success. There is a range of software available for communication, virtual meetings, and task management.

COMMUNICATION

- ☐ **Use messaging tools** such as Slack, G-Suite, Yammer, or Microsoft Teams.
- ☐ **Set up video conferencing platforms** such as Zoom, Go-To Meeting, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet.
- ☐ **Establish communication expectations for check-ins**, team meetings and one-on-one sessions, and understand employees' evolving engagement needs.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- ☐ **Implement collaborative tools** such as Asana, Trello, and Confluence to determine how projects and tasks will be tracked.
- ☐ **Use cloud-based file sharing** to transfer and share documents, such as Dropbox, WeTransfer, and Box.
- ☐ **Make yourself available to employees** and set up "open door" times when your team can reach you, or share your calendar so employees know when you are available.

KEEP COMPANY CULTURE ALIVE

Workplace culture is an important component of every company. Create virtual social activities to grow and sustain workplace culture in a remote landscape.

SUPPORT EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

- ☐ **Host social events** such as virtual coffee breaks, happy hours, book clubs, and gaming sessions.
- ☐ **Encourage wellness and a healthy work-life balance** by setting an example of unplugging during "off hours" and participating in virtual social opportunities.
- ☐ **Solicit employee feedback** to modify protocols and identify evolving needs.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Setting employees up for success will ensure a smooth telework transition.

- ☐ **Set staff up for success** by providing virtual training on communication tools, remote meeting protocol, project management software, and virtual collaboration.
- ☐ **Make a plan for new employee onboarding**, including available resources, how they will be supported and integrated into the team, and the level of telework available to new staff.

For Employees



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THE MANY ADVANTAGES OF TELEWORK



Flexible Benefits

Employees today are seeking flexible workplace options and greater control over when, where, and how they work. Despite the many challenges of COVID-19, employees who teleworked overwhelmingly reported positive impacts including greater flexibility and less stress.

In Dane County, 79% of respondents to the Madison Region Remote Work Survey reported wanting to work from home at least one day per week after the pandemic, and 69% of executives and managers reported that part-time telework would increase.¹

These responses mirror nationwide trends showing that for most Americans who can do so, the benefits of teleworking outweigh the disadvantages.² Four in ten Americans working from home due to COVID said it had a positive impact on their personal development and nearly six in ten said it positively impacted the time spent with their family.³

When implemented as part of a hybrid model, telework allows employees to match the type of work they do to the location that works best. An office environment with collaborative spaces facilitates teamwork and social connection, while time at home supports “heads down” independent work. The option to telework gives employees more control and the flexibility to manage time more efficiently.

Teleworking also provides a valuable opportunity to contribute to sustainability by reducing or altogether avoiding vehicle use on telework days. More time spent teleworking one day can also free up more time to bike or ride the bus to work the next.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUTE

Employees can use telework to reduce their vehicle use throughout the week. This improves the environment while saving time and money.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Telework offers greater flexibility to manage time efficiently while balancing work and personal obligations.

COST SAVINGS

Money saved on commute costs and parking fees can be banked, or used for lunches and happy hours with co-workers on office days.

LOWER STRESS

Telework can help avoid lengthy, stressful commutes and free up more time in the day to exercise, pursue hobbies, and spend time with family and friends.

WELLNESS

Employees who have the option to telework are typically happier, more engaged, and less likely to experience burnout.

1 Greater Madison MPO, June 2020.

2 Governing, June 2020: <https://www.governing.com/work/The-Pandemic-Has-Permanently-Changed-the-Way-We-Work.html>

3 PGI, June 2020: PGI, June 2020: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/pgi-survey-confirms-work-from-home-could-be-the-next-normal-301083330.html>

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES



Creating the right workspace and defining boundaries will make a big difference in making telework work for you.

Among the top challenges reported by Dane County employees teleworking during the pandemic were lack of access to necessary equipment; lack of a quality workspace; struggling to unplug; and frequent distractions. While the pandemic magnified many of these issues (hello, kids at home!), they are important considerations anytime.

 **35%** of employees struggle to unplug from work when working at home⁴

Setting physical and mental boundaries helps ensure that you can “leave” the office at the end of the day. Designate a workspace that is free from distractions and dedicated to professional work. Talk with your manager about expectations for core work hours, off-hours communications, and ways to support work-life balance. If you do not have access to ergonomic furniture or other necessary equipment, ask your employer about their policy on home office expenses — even if you only telework part-time.

Finally, taking short breaks, building exercise into your day, and connecting socially with co-workers are all critical to supporting a healthy balance any time you work remotely.⁴

⁴ Greater Madison MPO, June 2020.





TeleWORKS Checklist for EMPLOYEES

CREATE THE RIGHT WORKSPACE

FURNITURE

- ☐ **Set up a dedicated workspace** if possible to separate your work time from your leisure activities. Consider an area with a door to reduce noise, minimize distraction, and enable privacy.
- ☐ **A comfortable, ergonomic chair** that supports the back and neck is very important in preventing stiffness.
- ☐ **Proper work surface** that is the right height to keep monitor at eye level and prevent neck stiffness.
- ☐ **Good lighting** whether it is natural light or a desk lamp can help with eye strain.

TECHNOLOGY

- ☐ **Adequate Internet connection** that is clear and fast enough to handle your work and communication needs.
- ☐ **Laptop/computer** as well as a stand and any necessary peripherals such as monitor, mouse, keyboard, backup hard drives and necessary cables
- ☐ **Accessories** such as headphones, webcam, flash drives, etc.
- ☐ **Office supplies** that you usually need such as pen, paper, notebooks, sticky notes, etc.

ESTABLISH A NEW WORKFLOW

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Minimizing potential distractions is key to working productively.

- ☐ **Mute mobile phones,**
- ☐ **Turn off notifications** that aren't critical and work related on your laptop or desktop computer.
- ☐ **Avoid distractions** such as turning on the television.

ESTABLISH A ROUTINE

Keeping a happy work-life balance starts with a healthy routine.

- ☐ **Plan your day in advance.** Create a daily task list, check emails, and connect with your manager and teammates to determine what you need to accomplish.
- ☐ **Remember to take breaks.** Stand up at least every two hours and take a few steps to help blood flow. Planning your break times ahead of time will help set a healthy work routine.
- ☐ **Plan and prep meals** ahead of time to save stress and time during the workday.
- ☐ **Incorporate exercise into your day.** Movement helps boost energy in body and mind. Get up and move around, practice yoga, or go for walks to keep your brain sharp and your body happy.
- ☐ **Be sure to unplug.** Keep to a schedule and when the workday is over, mute notifications and disconnect. Inability to unplug leads to burnout and feelings of being overwhelmed.

PARTICIPATE IN COMPANY CULTURE

STAY CONNECTED

- ☐ **Connect with colleagues** **regularly** though communication tools such as Slack or Microsoft Teams.
- ☐ **Take advantage of collaboration tools** and peer-to-peer support opportunities.
- ☐ **Check in regularly** with managers.

BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS

- ☐ **Dress professionally.**
- ☐ **Encourage video** use, not just audio only.
- ☐ **Identify yourself** when speaking.
- ☐ **Reduce background noise** and speak clearly. Use headphones and headsets if necessary.
- ☐ **Take turns when facilitating.**
- ☐ **Mute your microphone** when not speaking.
- ☐ **Test screen sharing** ahead of time to work out any necessary kinks before presentations.
- ☐ **Have a backup plan** when the technology doesn't work.



Employer Spotlights



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Company Spotlight:

ZENDESK



Zendesk is a fast-growing customer service software company that prides itself on creating dynamic office spaces at the center of cultural hubs like downtown Madison. Among its many accolades, the company has won awards for Best Company for Work-Life Balance and Best CEOs for Diversity (2018), as well as Best Company Culture, Best CEO, Best Company Leadership, and Best Company Outlook (2017).

Prior to March 2020, Zendesk did not have a formal telework policy in place and only a fraction of employees worked from home a few days per week. During the pandemic, nearly 90% of Zendesk's 5,000 employees teleworked full-time, with only essential support staff visiting the office as needed.

Based on lessons learned during this time, Zendesk is now planning to accommodate a significant increase in remote work post-pandemic, including configuring its offices to support flexible workspaces and prioritize collaboration.

Despite numerous challenges, the experience of telework among employees and leadership at Zendesk has been a positive one, paving the way for a "new normal" in workplace design and culture. The company views embracing telework as an opportunity to increase diversity, provide employees with desired flexibility, and contribute to sustainability by reducing driving commute trips and office waste.

"During this time, I have most often heard people say that they are happy being remote for the pandemic," says Mandy Zakos, Workplace Experience Coordinator at Zendesk. "We love the office, but we have found that telework works and has a lot of benefits. The switch to remote has helped people with one-car households, helped people manage childcare in some cases, and helped people negotiate different demands and schedules between their job and their partner's."

Company Size:

Locally: 550

Globally: 4,306

Location:

**16 offices globally,
1 in downtown Madison**

Full time remote
pre-pandemic: **0%**

During pandemic: **90%**

Looking ahead:

**30% full-time remote
staff in the future,
with more part-time
flexibility for others.
Office design focused
on shared spaces
and collaboration.**



In many cases, teleworking has replaced a stressful, time-consuming commute and created more space in employees' days for other activities. It is also helping with the day-to-day affordability of reduced commute costs, and allowing some employees to consider moving to areas where they can afford to own a house. New opportunities for employee recruitment is another benefit. "Diversity, equity and inclusion is a priority of ours," says Zakos, "and remote work positions will allow us to access a bigger pool of diverse talent."



500K+

**fewer miles
commuted in 2020**

As a sustainability minded company that prioritizes renewable energy and offsets its carbon emissions, the large-scale shift to telework has also allowed Zendesk to envision the magnitude of benefits possible if more staff teleworked more frequently. With nearly all employees in the Madison office working remotely during the bulk of 2020, Zakos' team estimated a reduction of over 500,000 vehicle miles due to employee commuting in the Madison region alone.

The temporary halt on business travel and its associated emissions led to additional savings, and Zendesk anticipates continuing to de-emphasize business travel post-pandemic due to the effectiveness of virtual communication tools.

To help alleviate the physical and mental challenges of this time— including setting up home offices, sharing workspaces with partners and kids, and dealing with feelings of anxiety and disconnection— Zendesk began to reimburse the cost of home office items such as headsets, monitors, desks and ergonomic equipment, and instituted new policies for parental and mental health leave.

The company also established an internal learning lab with a plethora of resources including employee telework trainings, mental health support, and online community interactive spaces. Newsletters helped distribute information, and software such as Slack and Zoom became critical to streamlining team communications and facilitating social interaction.

*In many cases,
teleworking has
replaced a stressful,
time-consuming
commute and created
more space in the day
for other activities.*



These adaptations to the pandemic occurred at a time of intense growth for Zendesk, when the company was already struggling to sustain the scale of office buildouts needed to accommodate large influxes of new staff with personal desks. “In the past few years we were constantly scrambling to have enough desks. We knew we needed to find a new model because we could not sustain all of the buildouts,” says Zakos.



75%

of Americans want to work remotely at least one day per week post-pandemic¹

Based on lessons learned during the pandemic, Zendesk is now comfortable planning for 30% of employees to work remotely full-time, with more part-time telework flexibility for others. Offices will be organized into “neighborhoods” for different departments, with shared desks to accommodate employees spending some days working at home and some at the office. “The new focus is on the office becoming a more flexible, collaborative space. This will save a lot of resources, while still allowing employees to come hang out and enjoy the space.”

Creating unique reasons for employees to enjoy the office continues to be a top priority for Zendesk, particularly as the company focuses more on the office as a place to interact and connect. “We pride ourselves on the look and feel of our spaces,” says Zakos. In Madison, this means soft seating, social areas, snacks, drinks, and floor-to-ceiling views of the State Capitol. “Zendesk likes to have offices in places where we can walk out the door, support local businesses, and be in the hub of culture and activity—that will not change.”

¹ Morning Consult, “The Future of Work: How the Pandemic Has Altered Expectations of Remote Work,” June 2020: https://go.morningconsult.com/2020_Q3_2319_WFH-Report-Download.html



“The new focus is on the office becoming a more flexible, collaborative space. This will save a lot of resources, while still allowing employees to come hang out and enjoy the space.”

Company Spotlight:

FILAMENT GAMES



Filament Games is an industry-leading educational game developer with fifty-two employees and one office headquartered in downtown Madison. The company has won numerous awards including two Serious Play Conference Gold Awards (2020), a Wisconsin Innovation Award (2019), and a Webby People's Voice Award (2019).

Filament was more prepared than most to transition to a digital workspace, but its experience during the pandemic further evolved the company's workplace culture, revealed new business and talent recruitment opportunities, and led to plans for a more hybrid work environment and re-envisioned office space.

Prior to March 2020, Filament offered a flexible remote work option that allowed employees to telework part-time. The company had no formal policy in place and did not allow full-time telework except in rare instances. Most employees spent 30–50% of their time working remotely, while some chose to work in the office every day. When the pandemic hit, this balance shifted to approximately 95% of employees working remotely full-time.

According to CEO Dan White, one of the biggest benefits to staff has been the flexibility. "For some people it's just more time efficient," he says. "They don't have to commute, they don't have to put on work pants, they can just get up and start working immediately if they want to. They have much more control over their schedule."

ADDITIONAL SUSTAINABLE COMMUTE BENEFITS:

- Connected urban location
- Pre-tax transit subsidy (Metro Transit Commute Card)
- Bicycle parking
- Educational opportunities

During the initial transition, Filament invested in webcams and laptops to make home offices more effective. It also revised its policies around meetings and videoconferencing to loosen requirements, and invested in food deliveries, entertainment gift certificates, and counseling subsidies to support

Company Size: **52**

Location:
Madison, Wisconsin

Full time remote
pre-pandemic: **5%**

During pandemic: **95%**

Looking ahead:
Filament will restructure employee benefits and reconfigure its office space to support a hybrid environment with more employees working from home more frequently.



employees' mental health and wellbeing. The company is now using lessons learned to develop a hybrid plan for the future that balances providing support for employees' home workspaces with creating shared arrangements in the office to reduce redundancies.

From a business perspective, Filament now feels comfortable offering full-time remote work as a post-pandemic option to new hires, which has expanded and diversified its talent pool. The company also expects long-term norms around business travel to change, leading to financial savings and broader market opportunities, as well as reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite its many benefits, the concentrated shift to telework raised concerns about company culture and social engagement over time. "There has been a lot of interest in what kinds of social structures we can put in place in the absence of things that would happen organically at the office," says Dan White. Zoom, Google and Slack were critical tools already in place that helped Filament navigate these issues in the all-remote environment, but feedback from employee surveys indicates that most will prefer to return to a schedule of 30–50% of time in-office to collaborate and socialize.

Filament values sustainability and employee well-being, and a flexible telework policy will be just one way it continues to advance these priorities. The company currently participates in the Metro Transit Commute Card program, giving employees access to a discounted rate for bus rides using pre-tax dollars. It also ensures that bicycle parking is available and surveys employees annually about ways the company can make non-driving commutes even easier. As Filament grows, it will continue to prioritize office locations that are highly accessible by bus, bike and walking.

Looking ahead, White is excited about the possibilities of the cultural shift around remote work, including greater flexibility, new office design opportunities, expanded markets, and a stronger, more diverse workforce. "I anticipate that more employees will take advantage of the remote work benefit, and I'm excited about the prospect of re-formatting our HQ to use space more efficiently in recognition of that fact."



Filament's experience has led to plans for a hybrid work environment and re-envisioned office space. As the company grows, it will continue to prioritize office locations that are highly accessible by bus, bike and walking.



Company Spotlight:

AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE



American Family Insurance is leading with communication and intention as it leverages lessons learned from remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. With 13,500 employees across 79 offices nationwide, the Madison-headquartered company is the nation's 13th largest property/casualty insurance group, ranking #254 on the Fortune 500 list.

As a forward-thinking employer that supported telework prior to COVID-19, American Family was prepared in many ways for the massive shift caused by the pandemic. Despite the relative seamlessness of its transition, however, the company gained new insights that are now informing the evolution of its business and workforce development strategies.

Prior to March 2020, American Family embraced remote work and provided a large amount of discretion to managers in determining work from home expectations with their teams. Approximately 25% of all employees worked remotely full-time, with others doing so occasionally as needed due to weather or personal schedules. The company provided an

office equipment stipend for those who primarily worked from home, in addition to necessary computer equipment and software.

When the pandemic hit, American Family quickly shifted to about 98% of staff working from home full-time. Aiding this was the fact that most employees had laptops, and the company had previously invested in

ADDITIONAL SUSTAINABLE COMMUTE BENEFITS:

- Pre-tax Commuter Benefits account that allows employees to set aside up to \$270/mo for transit and vanpooling expenses
- Bicycle parking
- Flex scheduling

Company Size: **13,500**

Location: **Headquartered in Madison, WI; 79 offices nationwide**

Full time remote pre-pandemic: **25%**

During pandemic: **98%**

Looking ahead: **reconfigured office spaces for collaboration and teamwork; greater flexibility in scheduling; more full-time remote staff; evolving approach to employee on-boarding and relationship building**



software licenses, bandwidth upgrades, and other important technical resources after its brief closure during the polar vortex in 2018.

Among the numerous benefits that American Family leaders and employees experienced during this time, flexibility was key. “Teleworking has been very well received,” says Kari Grasee, VP of Business and Workplace Services. “Flexibility for employees has been a big benefit. Those with long commutes are able to avoid that time and stress. People have more options at home, and most employees say they have been able to maintain their same level of productivity, which is great.”

The company is deeply committed to learning from employees and conducted multiple surveys during this time to understand their experiences, needs and desires. One takeaway is that about 90% of employees will prefer to continue working from home in some capacity in the future. As the company works to leverage this feedback into new policies and plans, Matt Becker with the Enterprise Employee Experience team notes, “We have always prided ourselves on flexible options and will continue to be a leader in this space.”



Energy use at AmFam is down **15%**

The full-scale shift to teleworking also revealed new opportunities for sustainability and talent recruitment. American Family hired more staff with the expectation that they could continue to be full-time remote in the future, and now sees remote work as an important way to access top, diverse talent regardless of location.

From a sustainability standpoint, Grasee notes that company energy use is down by about 15%. Additionally, fewer people driving for their commute has implications for reducing both GHG emissions and future parking needs.



“Flexibility for employees has been a big benefit. Those with long commutes are able to avoid that time and stress.”

The biggest challenge for employees beyond the unique personal and mental demands of the pandemic has been finding ways to collaborate and innovate. Co-workers miss casual social interactions, and the company has had to explore new ways of onboarding employees and forging co-worker connections in an all-digital environment. Cloud-based tools including Zoom and Microsoft Teams are now critical, and teams began scheduling virtual happy hours, team lunches and other social events to stay connected.

To support employees mentally and emotionally, company leaders stressed the importance of boundaries and self-care. “We recognize the reality of “zoom fatigue,”” says Grasee, “and strongly encourage employees to set workday time boundaries, take vacation time, and not feel the need to respond immediately to texts and emails.” This has been an important conversation with managers, stressing the need to communicate with teams about setting expectations and boundaries.

Moving forward, American Family will ensure these lessons learned are not lost. “We are embracing remote work as a key part of our workforce strategy,” says Grasee. “We’ve seen firsthand the benefits that remote work brings for employees in terms of flexibility, and we see that there are business benefits as well. We want to take advantage of that.”

This includes focusing on the real reasons that people want and need to be in the office. Company leaders are talking with employees and business partners to understand what is important to them. “Right now, our office is very cubicle-oriented,” says Grasee. “This ratio will likely shift to spaces that are more conducive to ideation, collaboration, teamwork. We know we will work differently in the future and that our physical spaces will need to change to reflect that.”



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Company Spotlight:

BOARDMAN
CLARK

BoardmanClark

Boardman Clark, one of Madison's oldest and most esteemed law firms, credits relationship building and company culture as foundational elements of its success. Headquartered on the Capitol Square, the Firm has five additional offices throughout Wisconsin and employs ninety-seven full-time attorneys and staff. The firm is recognized for its work in sustainability, its pro bono services, and diversity/equity and inclusion initiatives, including support of the State Bar Diversity program. Its attorneys and staff have won numerous awards.

Because it was deemed an essential service and rooted in the traditional "office culture" of a law firm, Boardman Clark had a unique set of demands, decisions, and challenges to navigate during the pandemic. Thanks to work begun in early February 2020 to assess resource needs and gaps, the Firm was able to shift 80% of its employees to full-time remote work in a matter of days. Ultimately, the experience has transformed the way the Firm does business, enabling it to learn how to do things more efficiently.

As with many other employers nationwide, the silver lining of the pandemic was that it forced long-term positive changes that Firm leaders admit were unlikely to have occurred otherwise—or if so, at a much slower rate. At Boardman Clark, this included

new digital processes to deal with mail, filing, and communications that led to major reductions in paper and energy waste. Office administrators note that the Firm had tended to overuse resources in the office and that the pandemic has accelerated the Firm's ability to deploy technology to enhance efficiency.

Partner and Chair of the Executive Committee Richard Heinemann recognizes key long-term opportunities for

ADDITIONAL SUSTAINABLE
COMMUTE BENEFITS:

- Office location accessible by walking, biking and transit
- Pre-tax Commuter Benefits program for employees to pay transit and vanpool expenses
- Indoor bike parking and showers

Company Size: **97**Location: **6 offices**
across WisconsinFull time remote
pre-pandemic: **0%**During pandemic: **80%**

Looking ahead: **More support for part-time telework and flexible schedules; new digital processes to reduce resource use; greater mix of virtual and in-person communications with clients and community members.**



communications and sustainability: “We’ve gotten good at virtual meetings, which can actually enhance your ability to connect with people. You cannot completely replace in-person interaction, but we have learned that we can be incredibly efficient and reach more people by doing things virtually. It also saves money, time, and the need for people to drive to get to a meeting or event. Striking that balance between in person connection and the efficiency and flexibility of remote working will be important for us in the future.”

From a recruiting standpoint, the increased flexibility of telework is allowing Boardman Clark to expand its horizon and access new talent opportunities. “We view this as an enhancement,” says office manager Lisa Statz. “Many of our employees, including people with young families or aging relatives, are enjoying the flexibility. It enhances the attractiveness of our firm when hiring.”

The greatest challenges of this time and questions for the future revolve around culture and connection. Heinemann notes, “Everyone is more comfortable using Teams and Zoom now, but how do we continue to work collaboratively as an organization? How do we keep people informed and connections alive? How do we retain the office culture that we’ve worked so hard to build?”

In considering the benefits of personal interaction for relationship building—both for internal office culture and mentoring, and external business development—Boardman Clark concludes that a part-time approach to telework will likely strike the best balance in the future. The Firm also views returning employees and attorneys to the office as an important way to support local businesses and help with economic recovery in the communities it serves.

Boardman Clark envisions a hybrid environment that balances time for in-person collaboration and connection with more flexibility for employees to determine when and why they come in to the office. As this “new normal” takes shape nationally, with more employers embracing a part-time approach to telework, the Firm will set an example for managing this balance within the demanding field of law.

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“Working at home has allowed us to increase certain efficiencies and reduce expenses without any significant decrease in productivity or client services.”

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Company Spotlight:

ILLUME
ADVISING

ILLUME

ILLUME Advising is a woman-owned research and strategy consultancy serving the clean energy sector in the U.S. and Canada. The firm employs thirty-four staff across six remote positions and three offices in Madison, Tucson, and Portland. Recent awards and recognitions include InBusiness Dane County Small Business Award 2020, and Ivy Exec #3 Women-Led business and #1 Boutique Consultancy.

At the start of the pandemic, ILLUME had a strong digital foundation and flexible workplace culture that eased the transition. Co-founders Sara Conzemius and Anne Dougherty launched ILLUME remotely in 2013, and established a hybrid workplace policy as the company grew that gave staff the option to telework twice a week. Noting the importance of face-to-face interaction, the company began holding internal team meetings on Zoom instead of conference call as early as 2015, and staff regularly used Slack and Teams to communicate.

“That put us in a really solid place in terms of understanding how to navigate collaboration and teamwork as part of telework when COVID hit,” said Conzemius.

**ADDITIONAL
SUSTAINABLE
COMMUTE BENEFITS:**

- Public transit reimbursement
- Offices accessible by transit, biking, and walking

ILLUME’s biggest challenge lay in navigating the transition with clients, most of whom came from office cultures with less technology in place to support remote interactions. The pandemic also disrupted much of the company’s field research, but new digital data collection tools such as video

Company Size: **34**

Location: **3 offices**
in **Madison, Tucson,**
and **Portland**

Full time remote
pre-pandemic: **18%**

During pandemic: **100%**

Looking ahead: **More staff teleworking more often; more digital engagement opportunities; less business travel; less demand for office space; continued focus on work-life balance.**



diaries and online focus groups ultimately proved less expensive for clients, easier to implement, and often more effective. ILLUME found they could engage more people digitally by making it easier to participate. As a result, says Conzemius, “I think we will see many of these tools persist. There is a recognition that we can often get the same quality of data digitally, and I think we will see a nice mix with in-person in the future.”

Among other benefits, the company anticipates saving as much as \$35,000 per year on rent in the future by rightsizing its office space needs. The decline in work travel has also been a significant improvement for employee wellbeing, sustainability, and company expenses. Now that clients see that virtual meetings can be as effective as in-person, ILLUME anticipates that work travel is unlikely to fully rebound—a huge benefit for working parents.

 **83%** reduction in travel costs from 2019

“I’m excited about a better way of working after COVID,” says Conzemius. “From a bottom line perspective, 2020 was a really good year for us and for our clients’ budgets. We found many new ways to deliver our work and travel costs were way down.”

While employees needed fewer sick days during the pandemic, Conzemius notes the flexible work environment can make it challenging for staff to take the time they need to recharge. Employees took well below their average amount of personal time in 2020, so encouraging vacation time is a continued priority for company leaders.

With many working parents on staff, another priority for ILLUME continues to be providing flexible options for people to accommodate their lives. The ability to telework

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“I’m excited about a better way of working after COVID.”
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supports this goal and allows ILLUME to access a larger and more diverse pool of talent when recruiting. Still, notes Conzemius, “The majority of our team looks forward to the time when we can be back in the office on some days to see each other.”

When onboarding new employees, ILLUME balances the benefits of telework with goals for mentorship, collaboration, and hands-on help for those who need it. The company sets up 20–30 minute virtual coffee chats for new staff with nearly everyone in the company over their first couple of months, and continues to explore new digital tools such as Mural to support team collaboration.

ILLUME also relies on Slack to facilitate casual socializing, with numerous non-work channels discussing recipes, music, ways to entertain kids, and more.

To accommodate its continued growth with a more hybrid approach, ILLUME is exploring new options like desk hoteling and co-working spaces. “COVID taught us that we can operate in a remote environment and that the cost for rent does not have a strong ROI,” says Conzemius. “Our team misses the in-person interaction, so I do not see us going fully remote, but how we think about the office and the value of that investment is changing.”



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“There are really interesting digital tools coming out for research and data collection. I’m excited to see how those will evolve, and how they will allow us to reach more people, especially those who often go unheard.”

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QUESTIONS?

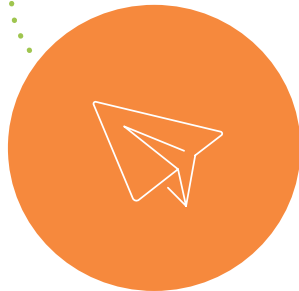
Zia Brucaya, AICP

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