CONTEXT

The City of Barrie supports a flexible work culture and encourages alternative work arrangements, when feasible without compromising efficiency, effectiveness, operational requirements and effective service delivery to its citizens and business partners. Alternative work arrangements, including this Hybrid Work Program, are not a guarantee, entitlement, or a condition of employment. All hybrid work arrangements require the approval of an employee’s Department Head.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide clarity to all staff on what a hybrid work arrangement looks like at the City of Barrie as well as guidance on managing these arrangements, since they will be handled on an individual basis. This procedure describes the Hybrid Work Program, eligibility parameters, what is expected of employees while working remotely and how the City will support them. The roles and responsibilities related to consideration for a hybrid work arrangement and the criteria that will be used have been included in the procedure. This interim procedure has been created as part of a pilot Hybrid Work Program approved by the Executive Management Team (EMT).

The City of Barrie is committed to balancing the diverse needs of its employees to foster a culture of service excellence with a focus on citizen experience, operational performance, and staff engagement.

This procedure endeavors to improve employee engagement and operational performance through providing flexible work opportunities with the following objectives:

- Address the City’s Strategic Plan.
- Be a modern employer of choice. Increase the City’s ability to attract, retain, and engage high quality, high performing employees.
- Increase employee engagement.
- Address office space and operational needs and be fiscally responsible.
- Align with environmental and corporate social responsibility efforts, workplace sustainability, conservation and greenhouse gas reduction efforts and reduce traffic congestion on City roads.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

There are two main guiding principles for the City of Barrie’s Hybrid Work Program that demonstrate the City’s commitment to our key stakeholders – our employees and the citizens of Barrie:

**Principle #1:** Every City of Barrie employee must always ensure excellence in customer service and considerations for a hybrid work arrangement must not jeopardize our service levels or operational effectiveness.

**Principle #2:** Employees and management will work collaboratively to align on a hybrid work arrangement that enhances our employees’ engagement, satisfaction, and productivity.
DEFINITIONS

**Alternative work arrangement**: Any work arrangement that differs from the organization’s standard work schedule and/or location. When establishing flexible work arrangements, organizations seek to provide employees with a means to achieve a balance between professional and personal responsibilities in a manner that benefits both the employee and the employer. Some examples of alternative work arrangements include flexible working hours, compressed work week and hybrid working arrangements.

**Hybrid Work** - is an alternative work arrangement that, subject to mutual agreement with management, allows employees to carry out remote work on designated days while working at their normal work location on the other days.

**Remote Work** – as part of a hybrid work arrangement, remote work allows employees to carry out work duties from their homes, or other approved locations. Remote work utilizes telecommunications and/or computer technology for remote access to necessary network functions.

**Fit for Duty** – An employee is able to perform the duties of the job with efficiency, competence and in a safe manner, and in keeping with all applicable legislation, as compared to established or generally accepted performance standard.

PROCEDURE STRUCTURE

The document is divided into 5 main sections as follows:

- **Section A**: Program Eligibility
- **Section B**: Overview of the Hybrid Work Arrangement
- **Section C**: Overview of the Approval Process, Roles, Responsibilities & Criteria
- **Section D**: Employee Expectations
- **Section E**: The City of Barrie’s Commitment to Support Employees

The document will continue to be refined throughout the pilot, as needs evolve. As noted above, this document is intended to be an interim procedure and is subject to revisions based on work that is being conducted by the City’s Evolution of Work Committee.

**Section A: Program Eligibility**

The City may offer a hybrid work arrangement to employees who meet the eligibility requirements. The criteria used to evaluate each role include the nature of the work performed, the need for face-to-face contact with colleagues and/or the public, and any other requirements for a physical or on-site presence.

- a. Employees covered by a collective agreement are subject to the terms and conditions in their respective collective agreements.

- b. Employees in the Barrie Fire and Emergency Service Department are to follow applicable BFES procedure(s) regarding alternate work options and are not subject to this procedure.
For clarity, this Procedure is not intended to address circumstances where the City of Barrie has a duty to accommodate or make reasonable adjustments to working conditions due to religious, medical or other protected grounds or for temporary or emergency arrangements. This Procedure is also not intended to apply to requests for short term special arrangements (e.g. less than one month) that are approved by the immediate supervisor. Questions about the application of this Procedure should be directed to the applicable HR Business Partner.

Section B: Overview of the Hybrid Work Arrangement

The key elements of the pilot program are as follows:

1. Location: The specific location where an employee will be working remotely will need to be approved and must be in Ontario.

2. Duration: A hybrid work arrangement will be for a duration no greater than the end of 2022 with the potential for renewal upon mutual agreement should the Hybrid Work Program be approved after the pilot.

3. Terms & Conditions: The arrangement will be documented in a signed agreement that includes the following rights and responsibilities of each party:
   a. Subject to the availability of office workspace, an employee may terminate a hybrid work arrangement by providing the City with at least two (2) week’s written notice.
   b. The City reserves the right to return an employee on a hybrid work arrangement to their standard work location with a minimum of two (2) week’s notice at any time in the event that the City determines the arrangement has adversely affected the employee’s ability to perform normal job functions, or if organizational circumstances change such that a return to a standard work location is necessitated.
   c. Hybrid work arrangements will not be 100% remote. It is the general expectation that staff be required to be in the office on a regular basis.
   d. General guidance of staff attending a minimum of 3 days in the office with exceptions considered on business need.

In addition, the agreement document will detail the arrangement, including but not limited to, the number of days per week that the employee will work remotely. A hybrid work arrangement may be altered if the City determines it compromises service delivery or results in an additional cost to the City. A hybrid work arrangement will not be 100% remote (i.e., never required to be in the office) unless there is an exceptional situation and written approval has been received by the applicable EMT member. The terms of any alternate work arrangement agreement will not automatically apply to future incumbents. Similarly, the existence of an alternate work arrangement does not create a precedent applicable to the position itself (i.e. that the position will always be remote or subject to a hybrid work arrangement).

Section C: Overview of the Approval Process, Roles, Responsibilities and Criteria

Management staff will work collaboratively with their employees to openly review opportunities for hybrid work arrangements where operationally feasible. The key steps in the approval process and the roles and accountabilities for each step are outlined below:

1. An employee interested in a hybrid work arrangement should discuss such directly with their immediate non-union supervisor.

2. The supervisor and employee will discuss the number of days/schedule that the employee could work remotely, the start date of the arrangement and any other terms and conditions necessary to make the arrangement successful for both parties. If the direct supervisor and manager are supportive of the arrangement, the manager will forward the completed Hybrid Work Program Agreement request form along with a completed Remote Office Inspection Checklist to the Department Head for review and final approval.
3. The Department Head will review all requests and communicate the decision to the employee, manager/supervisor providing a rationale if the request is denied. The completed documents will also be sent to ASK.HR@barrie.ca to be placed in the employee file.

4. The Department Head may agree to the hybrid work request for a duration not to exceed the pilot program.

5. The denial of a hybrid work request, or the discontinuation of an existing arrangement, shall not be the subject of a grievance or complaint.

Management Considerations/Criteria for Approval:

Management staff will take the following into consideration when reviewing the employee’s request:

- Position eligibility, which considers job functions, responsibilities, special job requirements etc.
- Operational requirements and any operational limitations.
- The impact, if any, on service delivery to the citizens of Barrie and any stakeholders.
- The impact, if any, on the employee’s performance or on the team’s performance.
- Ability to perform work independently
- The ability to attract required employees, for ‘hard to fill’ roles.
- The employee’s current performance and attendance are satisfactory, and the employee displays work habits of a successful hybrid work arrangement. The work habits, skills and abilities of employees may impact the decision to approve or deny a hybrid work arrangement.
- Any additional costs that the proposed arrangement will have.
- Any requirements of applicable collective agreements, law or regulation e.g. health and safety hazards (Note: The Employment Standards Act, 2000, and Occupational Health and Safety Act will continue to apply to employees participating in work assignments at locations other than their standard work location).

Responsibilities:

Human Resources

- Provide advice and guidance to management staff and to employees interested in seeking, or already participating in, a hybrid work arrangement.
- Ensure agreements meet any legislative, policy or collective agreement requirements.
- Communicate and negotiate with the Union, where applicable.

Department Heads/Directors/Managers/Supervisors

- Discuss hybrid work possibilities with respective employees, consult with Human Resources (as required) and determine if the request is eligible for approval (based on the established criteria).
- Complete Hybrid Work Program Agreement request form as required. Ensure that the employee gets a copy of the agreement, and a copy is sent to ASK.HR@barrie.ca for employee file.
- Manage the hybrid work arrangement by supporting and monitoring the employee including:
  - Ensuring they have completed the Remote Office Inspection Checklist.
  - Ensuring that they continue to meet the criteria for participation.
  - Establishing clear, performance-related objectives.
  - Clarifying a work schedule with each employee.
INTERIM PILOT PROCEDURE

- Periodically evaluating ongoing performance.
- Monitoring employee adherence to the agreed variables in the work week schedule and taking corrective action as necessary.
- Resolving any related conflicts and engaging Human Resources staff for assistance when required.

Employees

- Know and comply with the Hybrid Work Program and related processes and procedures.
- Complete and sign the Hybrid Work Program Agreement with their Supervisor and notify their Supervisor in writing ahead of time regarding any change required in the arrangements that have been agreed upon.
- Complete the Remote Office Inspection Checklist and make every effort to ensure remote office space is ergonomically correct.
- Ensure applicable policies are followed and that defined job performance objectives and expectations are met.
- Comply with approved arrangements and conditions, including the requirements to maintain service and complete work on schedule.
- Understand work schedule provisions and terms and conditions of employment.
- Submit performance, time, activity, and attendance information, as required.

Section D: Employee Expectations

When working remotely, employees are expected to be compliant with the City’s existing policies, procedures and practices, unless another working arrangement has been established and agreed to in writing. Specifically, employees are expected to be aligned with the following requirements:

1. Availability Expectations:
   - Employees may be required to come into the office from time to time on remote workdays (e.g. to meet operational demands, attend required training, to participate in a mandatory event, etc.) with a minimum of 24 hours’ notice, other than in cases of emergencies (such as a weather event, facility emergency or media interview) where advanced notice is not possible. As such, employees should ensure that they have alternate care arrangements for dependents when this is required.
   - Employees are expected to be focused on delivery of City services during hours that an employee is paid by the Corporation. Any childcare/family care or other responsibility that is incidental and requires a physical presence shall not detract from an employee’s ability to deliver the services for which they were hired to perform.
   - Employees shall make themselves available by telephone, virtual platform or email during the scheduled hours of any hybrid work arrangement, except for their scheduled lunch period and/or breaks.
   - Employees are expected to keep their supervisor informed about their work location. Note, from a health and safety perspective, the City needs to know who is in the office in the event of an emergency e.g. fire.
   - Employees who are impacted by an unexpected technology failure that prevents the employee from working remotely on any given day will work with their immediate supervisor to determine an alternate plan. This could include making up the hours, using applicable time banks or taking the time as unpaid. In the event the connectivity issues continue, the hybrid work arrangement may be discontinued until the technology issues are resolved.
2. **Office Set-Up Expectations:**
For a hybrid work arrangement to be effective, employees are expected to set up and maintain remote office space that provides a suitable work environment. Specifically, the office must have the following:

- Reliable connectivity to internet and phone.
- A secure connection to the internet.
- The minimum technology requirements to perform their job functions.
- Access to a quiet, uninterrupted and professional setting.

3. **Expectations Related to City Property:**
- Company assets are required to stay in the Corporation of the City of Barrie office with the exception of laptops and cell phones. Exceptions can be made at the discretion of Management.
- Employees are responsible for home office set up costs, which include, but are not limited to, items such as internet connection, utilities, and office furniture. Any increases to the employee’s home utility costs as a result of the hybrid work arrangement are the responsibility of the employee.

4. **Health and Safety Expectations:**
- Employees must be ‘fit for duty’ during their scheduled work time.
- Employees who are approved for a hybrid work arrangement must complete a Remote Office Inspection Checklist.
- Employees will be expected to set up a remote workspace with furnishings that are ergonomically sound and appropriate to the nature of their work. Virtual assessments of the remote work area may be arranged, upon request, through the Workplace Health and Safety Team in Human Resources.
- Employees should review the Remote Work Ergonomic Guidelines to ensure specific strategies to prevent Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) are in place for a remote office.
- Employees will be expected to comply with normal reporting requirements for any work-related accidents or injuries. The employee may be covered by the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* for job-related injuries that occur in the course and scope of employment while working remotely.
- Employees must report injury and/or accidents to their immediate supervisor promptly.
- Employees are responsible to prove that any workplace incident was in the course of employment duties, in the event of an injury or accident in the employee’s remote workspace.

NOTE: Hybrid work arrangements may change, including suspension of the arrangement, if an employee requires a modified work program or the employee has a permanent restriction/limitation as a result of an accident/injury. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis through the Workplace Health and Safety Team in Human Resources.

5. **Other Expectations Related to Conduct:**

- Employees are responsible for taking the necessary precautions to secure and protect City property, documents and the confidentiality of information, and discussions, while working remotely (i.e. ensuring those living with or visiting the remote location do not have access to the information).
- Employees must adhere to the City’s Code of Conduct, Responsible Use of Technology policy, the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) and the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA). These procedures and pieces of legislation govern and protect the privacy of individuals, and confidential information held by the City.
INTERIM PILOT PROCEDURE

- Employees should avoid connecting to any public Wi-Fi networks using their personal or City-issued computing devices while working remotely.
- Employees should not conduct in-person business meetings of any type at their home, inclusive of meetings with other staff unless approved by the Department Head.

Section E: The City of Barrie’s Commitment to Support the Program

The City is committed to ensuring that employees have a safe and comfortable environment in which to work. To achieve this goal, the City is committed to providing the following support to its employees:

1. **Safe and Comfortable Environment**: Office workstation design and setup is an important consideration in the prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD). The City of Barrie has standards for ergonomics, which has a specific section on Office Workstations. The City encourages employees to ensure ergonomic compliance while working remotely.

2. **Hybrid Work Arrangement Education**: To help our employees and management staff to make a smooth transition to a new way of working, the City of Barrie will offer training and other resources.

3. **Allowance for Remote Office Equipment**: This is under review and will be finalized after the pilot.

The following will not be provided by the City as part of the pilot Hybrid Work Program:

1. The City’s insurance coverage does not cover equipment owned by the employee.
2. The City will not be liable for loss or damage of the City’s property where the employee has failed to take reasonable precautions to secure and protect same. The employee shall be responsible for the costs associated with loss or damage.
3. The City does not require any employee to work remotely and therefore we will not issue a T2200. For further information, please visit the Canada Revenue Agency website.

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

a. Alternate Work Arrangements Policy
b. **Hybrid Work Program Agreement**
c. CUPE Local 2380 Collective Agreement
d. Code of Conduct
e. All relevant policies, procedures and departmental Standard Operating Procedures that address employee conduct and expectations
f. Hybrid Work Pilot Program – Employee Guide
g. Hybrid Work Pilot Program – People Leader Guide
h. Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention (Ergonomics)
i. Remote Work Ergonomic Guidelines
j. Remote Office Inspection Checklist
OVERVIEW – Hybrid Work Program Procedure

Employee and Supervisor discuss possible Hybrid Work Arrangement

- Supervisor should discuss their assessment of the position and thoughts on possible hybrid work arrangement based on above Management Considerations/Criteria for Approval.
- Employee should be prepared to explain the hybrid work arrangement they desire and how it will work without negatively impacting operations or customer service. Explain how business requirements and performance expectations will continue to be met while on a proposed hybrid work arrangement.

Management considers operational needs and feasibility of Hybrid Work Arrangement

- Supervisors and Managers are responsible for assigning work and determining work schedules for Employees based on operational needs and resources.
- If a hybrid arrangement is possible, a Hybrid Work Agreement Form and Remote Office Inspection Form should be drafted and provided to the Department Head for review and final approval.
- Final decisions about Hybrid Work Arrangements are made by Department Heads and/or work with them to develop suitable arrangements whenever possible.

Management provides response to Employee’s request

- If approved, share with employee, and set appropriate working parameters.
- If request is not feasible, consider alternatives that can be proposed.
- If declined, provide a reason. Possible business reasons for declining a request may include, but are not limited to:
  - A detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand.
  - A detrimental impact on quality or performance.
  - An inability to reorganize work among existing staff.

If approved, send Agreement to HR and review periodically

- Send signed Hybrid Work Program Agreement Form and Remote Office Inspection Checklist to Human Resources - ASK.HR@barrie.ca to be placed in the employee file.
- Employee must comply with all responsibilities as listed in this procedure.
- Management to review agreement with employee periodically to ensure that it is working.
- Update and/or terminate agreement as needed.
- No agreement will exceed the period of the pilot program.