Suggestions/Guidance for Working From Home Productivity

As many of your teammates may be working from home extensively for the first time, we wanted to provide some guidance and suggestions to you as a leader in an effort to help navigate this situation.

For some teammates, they will be able to work from home with minimal disruption. For others, however, there may be aspects of their job that they simply cannot do from home. As leaders we want to be creative during this time to provide practical and productive guidance to our teammates so they can continue to contribute and serve our citizens. Below are a few work suggestions/ideas for your teammates. This is not, by any means, an exhaustive list, but it is intended to help give you some ideas on creative ways to keep your teammates productive outside the workplace.

Work Tasks:

On-line training
- This could be a great opportunity to either get caught up on outstanding online training, or to learn and sharpen new skills. The State of Nebraska offers the best in class to teammates when it comes to on-line learning classes. Linkedin Learning classes are available in the Employee Development Center which can be accessed from link.nebraska.gov. Agencies who have purchased bundles for their teammates can access any of the Linkedin Learning classes at no additional cost. For those Agencies who have not purchased bundles, Linkedin Learning is still available to their teammates for individual purchase. They can simply request the course(s) they would like to watch in the EDC. Once management has approved the cost, they will have access to the class(es). For assistance with accessing Linkedin Learning or the EDC please email as.linkhelp@nebraska.gov.

Cleaning out outlook folders and archive based on agency's records retention schedule
- Another suggested task for teammates would be to go through their email and clean out their email folders or archive them in accordance with the agency's records retention schedule. The email inbox can quickly become unruly, so this could be a great time to sift through old emails and organize.

Review and update rules/regulations and policy documents
- Are your agency's rules/regulations and policy documents up to date, and are your teammates familiar with them? You can use this time to direct your teammates to become familiar with your internal rules/regulations and policies, and to have the documents updated if necessary.

Review and update content on web-sites
- Similarly to the rules/regulations and policy documents, is your current agency or division/department website up to date? You could have your teammates review the site looking for inaccurate or out of date information. Are there any broken links? Does the look and feel of the site need to be updated to current branding standards? Teammates could then work with whomever updates your website to get the corrections made.

Review agency forms and materials, update branding

- What forms and materials does your agency use? Do they have the current branding? Are the forms or materials incorrect or have out of date information? Teammates can use the time working from home to review your agency's materials and update them as necessary.

Developing Standard Operating Procedures and working manuals

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are a vital part of any business continuity plan. If your teammates do not have SOPs or working manuals for their daily duties/procedures/processes, this would be a great time to have them work on them and put them together. If your teammates do have SOPs, you could have them review them to ensure they are current and up to date.

Review processes and procedures

- The current situation has forced all of us to think outside the box, and in some cases get creative. As your teammates review or create their SOPs, have them look for efficiencies. Are there better ways to do things? What better time to look at things outside the box than when we are working from outside the box?

Back Burner Ideas/Projects

- Are there any projects which have been on the back burner for some time due to other demands? This may be a good time to dust off those ideas and projects.

Productivity Resources:

On the Covid-19 Personnel Resources page there are additional tools/resources to help you as a leader to ensure productivity during this time:

Process Identification Guide

- This tool can be used to identify critical processes, what tools/supplies needed to complete those process, and to help create action plans to get the work done and ensure accountability.

Work Plan

- The purpose of the Work plan template can be used for projects / work assignments to make them more organized and efficient. They should display all the activities and tasks which are involved in a project / work assignments, who is assigned to each activity and task and when the tasks are supposed to be completed. The intent is for you to be able to assign work assignments/tasks and then have the ability to set clear and expectations and accountability.

Team Accountability Session

- A best practice for teams to operate effectively under limited direct supervision is to be upfront with accountability and expectations. Setting up regular touch points helps facilitate communication flow and expectation management. Having a worksheet to guide the conversation helps ensure teammates are on the same page and working to accomplish connected goals.

Remote Huddle Board
- The purpose of the Remote Huddle Board is to provide teams the Visual Management tool with daily Metrics/Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which are quantitative measures that show how effective a team is at achieving a business objective or priority.

Additional Tips/Suggestions for You and Your Team:

Do an Inventory of your workspace and make a check-list *
- You are used to your office so be sure to take note of what you will need at home. Make a list of what you would like to take with you. Especially those items which make your day easier and more productive.

Set communication norms *
- Identify channels your team will use for formal and informal collaboration and expectations for communication.

Establish check-ins with your teammates
- The contact will help keep them in the loop and connected. Use technology (Skype/Chat/etc) to maintain human contact.

Test your tech *
- Before your first virtual meeting, do a dry run with a colleague to test if your microphone and camera are working. It will also give you an opportunity to practice using functions like screen sharing.

Create regular work hours
- This is especially important for the non-exempt teammates, but all of us need to be aware of this. For some, working from home can make it easier to put in extra hours. We do not want teammates to burn out or put strain on their families.

Be patient *
- The transition to remote work may not be completely seamless and may have its challenges. Share strategies with teammates for staying on task and working successfully at home, and help others when experiencing platform issues or learning new tools.

Be understanding *
- Compassion for ourselves and others can help keep us connected and feel supported during uncertain times. If the virus continues to progress, feelings and fears will inevitably impact work. Practice self-care and check-in with your teammates to see how you can provide support and ease anxieties.

Note: The suggestions with an asterisk (*) are from an article by Devin Boyle on govloop.com for planning to shift to remote/telework. (https://www.govloop.com/community/blog/planning-for-a-shift-to-remote-work-tips-for-staying-productive-while-working-from-home/).

Linkedin Learning Resources

There are two Linkedin Learning courses in the Employee Development Center which may be additional helpful resources for the shift to telework. These two classes are being made available to all State teammates for free. To access these classes, sign into the EDC from link.nebraska.gov and search for the courses using the search feature, or click the title below (you will be prompted to sign in). If you need assistance, please reach out to the LINK Help Desk at as.linkhelp@nebraska.gov.

Working Remotely
- When you unlock the power of remote work, you can ditch your commute, work where you focus best, and spend more time doing things you love, all while advancing your career. Coach Mike Gutman from FlexJobs shows how to use today's cloud-based communication and collaboration tools to get work done from anywhere, while remaining connected to your organization. He reveals how you can create a productive work environment at home or around town by structuring your day correctly and avoiding distractions. He also explains how to build rapport with remote colleagues so you feel like you're part of the team and succeed in your remote career. Watch this course to learn how to work productively, when and where you want, and achieve the freedom and flexibility you need for a more balanced life.

Managing Virtual Teams
- Working remotely has been on the rise for many years now, with research showing that hiring managers expect nearly half of all their workers to be working remotely over the next decade. While many trends feed into this way of organizing work, managing the work effectively will be key to the success of organizations globally. In this course, instructor Phil Gold provides managers with a clear approach for getting the most out of their remote teams. He zeros in on the key factors that will ensure productivity, engagement, and growth, as well as a manager's role in building trust, removing roadblocks, nurturing connections with team members, and setting clear goals.