



Telework!VA Case Study

Funded by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
Administered by RideFinders, a division of the GRTC Transit System
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Organization

United Methodist Family Services
Richmond Campus & Richmond Regional Center
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Testimonial

“The Telework!VA program has proven an integral component in our agency’s growth over the last three years. While the initial intent of the program, to reduce vehicles on the roadways, was important to us, we have certainly garnered other benefits. As we shifted to a management by results approach, we were able to more readily envision programs that would operate outside of our brick and mortar. As a result, the agency’s two newest programs are ones that indeed are housed outside of agency property. Without the consultation and financial incentives Telework!VA provided, we might very well have held back from undertaking these ventures.

And even more than the success of these specific programs, teleworking has freed us to embrace more flexible work schedules, make better use of our existing buildings, and to reduce costs of setting up new offices because we do not need as much physical space as we once did.

Telework!VA did a great job in providing not just the framework but significant funds to launch the project. And it was so easy to work with them, very little red tape, very big support.

It’s been a great boon to UMFS, and I would wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone interested in building a more efficient, flexible, and green business.”

Paul Kolhoff, Director of IT, UMFS

Business Benefits

1. Improved employee morale by reducing the stress of the commute while showing staff that UMFS is a cutting edge green workplace.
2. Encouraged UMFS to develop a teleworking mindset that then freed us to create entire programs in which all of the staff work outside of UMFS buildings.
3. In two cases allowed staff to continue to work who otherwise would have had to give up their positions. One of those staff was a regional director, whose departure would have been significantly disruptive to the agency.

Background

UMFS delivers a network of services from nine locations across Virginia to help serve more than 5,500 children and families in need annually. The organization has a total of 270 employees, including 100 at the Richmond Campus where the telework program was initially implemented. Approximately 150 employees are in positions that are suitable for teleworking. The remainder are required to be on-site to deliver client services.

UMFS submitted an application for the Telework!VA program in November 2007. At the time, none of the organization’s employees were teleworking on a regular basis. The organization sought to implement a telework program in order to:

- Foster a more flexible workforce.
- Improve retention and hiring.
- Make UMFS a more competitive employer.
- Reduce office space requirements.

Summary of Assistance Provided

UMFS was accepted into the Telework!VA program in March 2008 and the program was officially launched in May 2008 as part of Employee Recognition Day. Telework!VA provided technical assistance with reviewing UMFS' Telework Pilot Program Policy & Procedures, providing an orientation for employees, and conducting training for supervisors in April 2008 and May 2010.

UMFS also received \$33,589 in financial incentives. The funding was used to offset costs for laptops and printers at the employees' home sites (\$26,082) and an additional server at the office site to enhance remote access capabilities (\$7,507).

Telework Statistics

UMFS conducted the Telework!VA baseline survey in April 2008 and annual surveys in 2009 and 2010. 83 employees at the Richmond Campus completed the 2010 Telework!VA survey. The most recent survey results showed that:

- There were 28 teleworkers at the Richmond Campus.
- These employees worked at home an average of 1.2 days/week.
- The average one-way commute distance was 20 miles.
- These participants saved a total of 1,344 vehicle miles of travel per week, equaling a reduction of 64,512 commute miles annually (based on 48 work weeks in a year).

Obstacles or Challenges and How They Were Resolved

1. Initial buy-in from Executive Management.

Initial buy-in from Executive Management was accomplished through several presentations from Telework!VA's staff. They did an excellent job of supporting us throughout the process.

2. Convincing program directors that they could supervise remotely.

While most directors bought into teleworking, there were two who had to see it working at other offices before they embraced it. This was accomplished through administrative encouragement of the program and through staff requests for teleworking opportunities.

3. Making sure that necessary controls were in place to protect the agency and the network infrastructure.

We established procedures to ensure that they knew who was teleworking and how their home networks interfaced with the UMFS network.

Results

UMFS did not have any employees who were teleworking on a regular basis when they first joined the Telework!VA program in 2008. After conducting a successful pilot program at the Richmond Campus with approximately 30 employees, the program has since been instituted at six of the organization's sites. The number of participants has continued to grow and as of June 2011, UMFS reports that 75 employees telework on a regular basis, including four staff members who work completely from home to support a new client-services program started two years ago. This represents 28% of the organization's 270 employees.

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