

2023



Telework Annual Report



UNITED STATES
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE®

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INTRODUCTION

Fiscal year (FY) 2023 marks the 26th anniversary of telework at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). From the start of the program in 1997, with 18 employees teleworking, to nearly 13,000 teleworking in FY 2023, the USPTO continues to be a leader of telework in the federal government. At the USPTO, telework is a business strategy that supports mission achievement and goal fulfillment. With telework employees in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, the agency has created a sustainable and best-in-class model for distributed work to serve external stakeholders from across the United States.

FY 2023 was a year of continued learning and refinement for telework at the USPTO. In the previous year, the agency updated all business unit (BU) telework programs based on lessons learned from the mandatory telework environment during the pandemic. The updated telework programs were approved and in place in May 2022, when the USPTO fully reopened all locations to employees and resumed some in-person events and appointments for the public. Throughout FY 2023, leadership across the agency continued to assess telework programs as well as many of the supporting enablers of telework. These efforts resulted in updates to the agency-wide telework policy and several BU telework programs, updates to telework training material, improvements to the Enterprise Telework Information System (ETIS), development of a new supply ordering site for employees enrolled in remote telework options, and updates to multiple telework-related processes.

Telework provides significant benefits for the USPTO and its employees. It provides the USPTO cost savings by reducing the need for office space and it enhances the USPTO's ability to recruit critical talent by geographically expanding the candidate pool. Telework also enhances the resiliency of the agency during continuity events, such as during the mandatory evacuation due to the pandemic. Telework increases employee retention by providing opportunities for expanded work flexibility and provides the opportunity to reduce employee commuting costs and time.

At the end of FY 2023, over 96% of employees had an approved telework agreement and 86% of the agency was enrolled in full time telework work. The increase of telework has naturally affected how much real estate the USPTO requires for in-person agency operations. Working with the General Services

Administration (GSA), the agency will relinquish the Remsen and Randolph buildings on its Alexandria, Virginia campus when their leases expire in August 2024. This reduction in office space is in addition to the release of the Randolph Square building in Arlington, Virginia.

To maintain its success, the USPTO strives to adopt sound workforce strategies where employees stay productive and connected, regardless of where they are located. The agency relies on a dedicated Telework Program Office and a network of BU telework coordinators to actively manage telework across the agency. It also relies on effective policies, training, information technology (IT), and engagement initiatives to support its hybrid workforce. Further, the USPTO depends on proven data to make the best decisions possible for its workforce and work environment. USPTO employee engagement and satisfaction scores are consistently above average, and employees identify telework as one of the factors they like most about working at the USPTO and one of the top reasons they stay. Expanded telework has also allowed the USPTO to expand the geographic diversity of its workforce. Going forward, the USPTO will maintain focus on improving and updating telework in ways that drive improved outcomes for the agency and its workforce.



EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN MAHONEY, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Mr. Mahoney leads the Office of Administrative Services (OAS) in the planning and administration of a variety of administrative support programs, including and not limited to asset management; conference, food, and concession services; emergency preparedness; energy management; lease administration; personnel and physical security; real estate, space, and personal property management, safety and health; and shuttle and transportation services.

Mr. Mahoney was appointed the Director of OAS in March of 2021. Prior to working at the USPTO, he served as the Director of Human Resource Management and Chief Human Capital Officer for the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Chief Human Capital Officer for the U.S. Small Business Administration, and as the Associate Director for the Human Capital Leadership and Merit System Accountability Division for the Office of Personnel Management.

Prior to Federal service, Mr. Mahoney spent 25 years in the private sector. Mr. Mahoney serves as President of the Board of Directors for Worldwide Assurance for Employees of Public Agencies, an organization that provides insurance to federal employees.

WHAT ROLE DOES OAS PLAY IN SUPPORTING TELEWORK AT THE USPTO?

The OAS and the Telework Program Office (TPO) coordinate regularly on a wide number of programs to ensure our employees' administrative needs are met regardless of where they are working. We work cooperatively on space management and real estate planning, the shipment of printer supplies to remote workers, management of IT assets, emergency preparedness and planning efforts to understanding our future workforce needs.

YOU MENTIONED REAL ESTATE AND SPACE MANAGEMENT PLANNING. HOW HAS TELEWORK IMPACTED THE USPTO'S OFFICE SPACE NEEDS AND WHAT ARE THE CURRENT PLANS FOR THAT AT THE USPTO?

The increase of telework has naturally affected how much real estate the USPTO requires for in-person agency operations. Working with the GSA, the agency will relinquish the Remsen and Randolph buildings and the Elizabeth/Carlyle Townhouses on its Alexandria, Virginia campus when the leases expire in August 2024. This reduction in office space will save the USPTO approximately \$50 million annually. The USPTO also released the Randolph Square building in Arlington, Virginia. We are currently in the process of reconfiguring spaces to meet the individual needs of business units and provide more hoteling spaces for teleworking employees to reserve when they are on site.

WITH THE EVOLUTION OF TELEWORK, HAS OAS MADE ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO SUPPORT THE LARGER NUMBER OF TELEWORKING EMPLOYEES?

We've expanded the number of hoteling offices available for remote employees to use while on campus and updated the capabilities of our web-based room reservation system. The traditional model for office space has been replaced by innovative approaches that prioritizes flexibility and efficiency. One such concept gaining more traction is the expansion of hoteling offices. By examining this evolving workplace trend, we understand how hoteling offices can help the USPTO optimize resource utilization. Hoteling offices provide a flexible and cost-effective solution that empowers employees with freedom, promoting collaboration, and maximizing space utilization.



With more employees working remotely, we've also made significant improvements to our printer supply ordering site by streamlining the user interface, integrating telework and IT asset data and enabling employees to receive order confirmation and tracking information for each order. The USPTO is implementing the GSA's USAccess system for Personal Identity Verification (PIV) cards. When the system is fully implemented, employees who work remotely outside the 50-mile radius from the Alexandria, VA campus will be able to go to a GSA site and get their PIV card and return to a GSA site for resolving issues if needed.

ANY ADDITIONAL ITEMS FOR THE FUTURE?

As our telework programs evolve, the OAS and the TPO will continue to coordinate and work with the BUs to ensure we are providing the best support and services on site and to our teleworking employees. The OAS is leading the USPTO's project to stand-up the Southeastern Regional Office in Atlanta, GA and the Northeast Community Outreach Office in Strafford County, NH.

TIFFANY C.
Trademark Legal Policy Attorney

"When the announcement came out in May 2019 that telework options were expanding to include Hawaii, one thought came immediately to mind: *I am going home.*"

Robert Ross
Avatar
Weight: 74
Height: 179
Your gender: Male

STATISTICS

FY 2023 TELEWORK STATISTICS

• Current number of teleworkers at the USPTO	12,894
• Current number of eligible positions at the USPTO	13,386
• Percent of positions at the USPTO that are eligible	99.81%
• Percent of positions at the USPTO that are teleworking (agency-wide)	96.14%
• Total number of patent teleworkers	9,977
• Percent of eligible patent positions that are teleworking	95.58%
• Total number of trademark teleworkers	1,118
• Percent of eligible trademark positions that are teleworking	99.91%
• Number of patent positions teleworking five days per week	9,207
• Number of trademark positions teleworking five days per week	1,020
• Number of TEAP participants	4,507
• 50-mile radius participants	6,898

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF TELEWORK*

11,560 TELEWORKERS WORKING FROM HOME FIVE DAYS PER WEEK:

- Avoid driving 96.10 million miles in a year
- Collectively save \$14.8 million in gas a year
- Collectively reduce emissions by 33,347 tons a year

1,220 TELEWORKERS WORKING FROM HOME ONE, TWO, THREE, OR FOUR DAYS PER WEEK:

- Avoid driving 4.9 million miles in a year
- Collectively save \$762 thousand in gas a year
- Collectively reduce emissions by 1,715 tons a year

* In the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area

REAL ESTATE IMPACT OF TELEWORK

- \$68.5 million real estate cost avoidance due to remote teleworkers

TELEWORK BY BUSINESS UNIT:

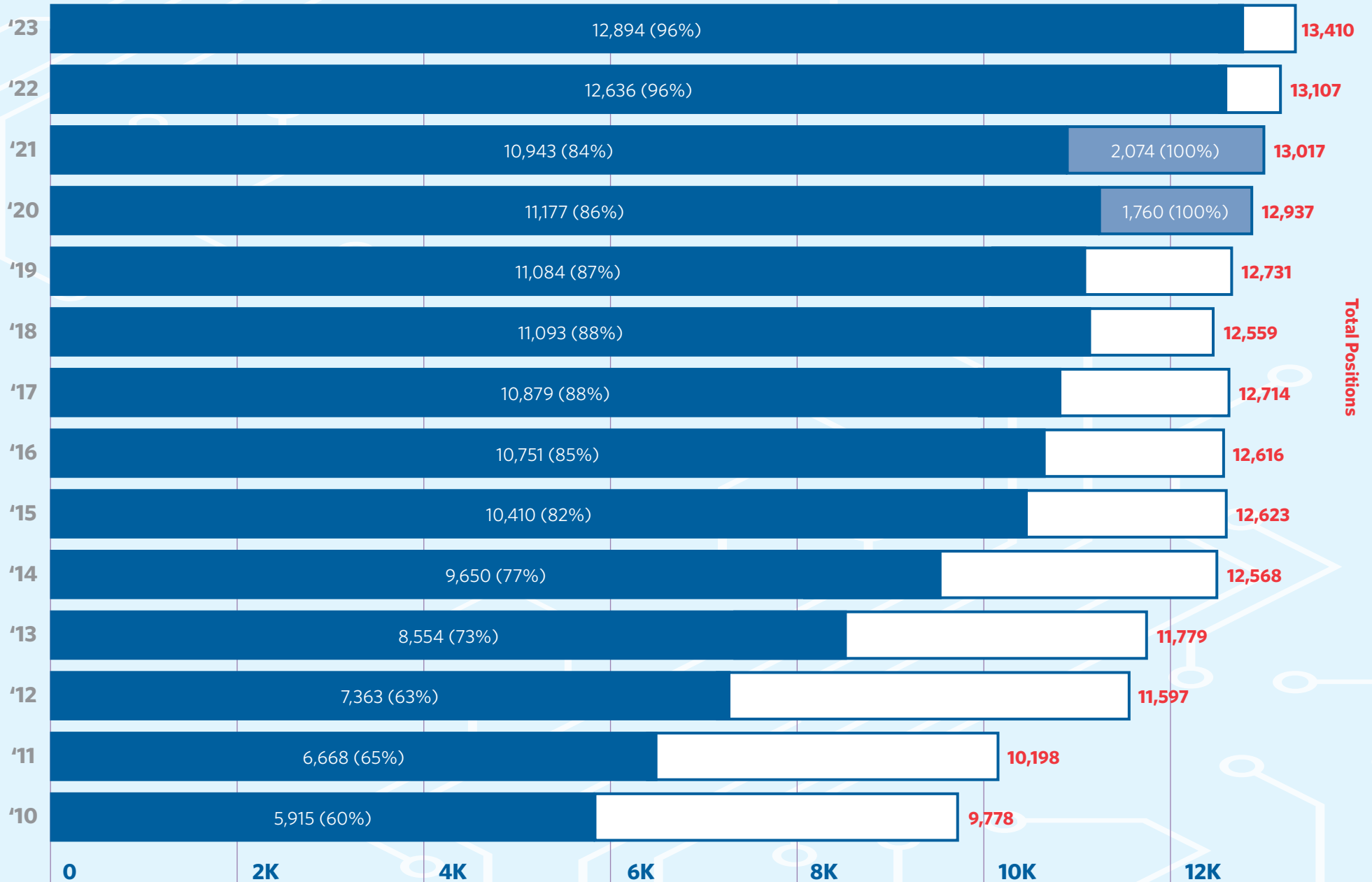
BUSINESS UNIT**	50-MILE	TEAP	HOTELING	ROUTINE	SITUATIONAL
OCCO	22	14	2	4	5
OCFO	153	37	4	10	3
OCIO	442	64	20	69	9
OOEOD	13	0	1	7	2
OUS	2	1	0	8	31
OGC	72	4	10	33	8
OCAO	119	17	8	62	11
OPIA	13	0	1	93	7
Patents	5,320	3,817	70	763	7
PTAB	152	95	9	57	25
Trademarks	547	443	30	94	4
TTAB	43	15	0	20	1
TOTAL	6,898	4,507	155	1,220	114

**Please see pages 9-20 for more information

TELEWORK GROWTH

Since its start 27 years ago with 18 Trademark examining attorneys, telework has grown dramatically at the USPTO. The graph shows the growth of the total positions and eligible positions teleworking agency-wide.

■ Number of USPTO federal employees enrolled in a formal telework program
■ Additional positions teleworking due to pandemic maximum telework directive



USPTO FULL-TIME TELEWORKERS BY STATE



**TOTAL:
11,560**

ALABAMA
38

ALASKA
3

ARIZONA
71

ARKANSAS
11

CALIFORNIA
397

COLORADO
205

CONNECTICUT
47

DELAWARE
37

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
323

FLORIDA
535

GEORGIA
176

HAWAII
19

IDAHO
15

ILLINOIS
157

INDIANA
46

IOWA
24

KANSAS
12

KENTUCKY
20

LOUISIANA
29

MAINE
17

MARYLAND
2,287

MASSACHUSETTS
103

MICHIGAN
220

MINNESOTA
50

MISSISSIPPI
8

MISSOURI
40

MONTANA
10

NEBRASKA
10

NEVADA
49

NEW HAMPSHIRE
28

NEW JERSEY
150

NEW MEXICO
20

NEW YORK
252

NORTH CAROLINA
284

NORTH DAKOTA
4

OHIO
152

OKLAHOMA
14

OREGON
53

PENNSYLVANIA
296

PUERTO RICO
39

RHODE ISLAND
13

SOUTH CAROLINA
86

SOUTH DAKOTA
6

TENNESSEE
63

TEXAS
438

UTAH
41

VERMONT
5

VIRGINIA
4,444

WASHINGTON
124

WEST VIRGINIA
36

WISCONSIN
52

WYOMING
1

TELEWORK PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

The USPTO's telework program is guided by an agency-wide telework policy that establishes clear standards and procedures for development and implementation of BU telework programs and integrates guidance and standards from complementary agency policies related to telework such as employee time and attendance responsibilities, virtual private network (VPN) connection requirements, and employee responsibilities related to human resources. Rather than taking a "one-size-fits-all" approach, the USPTO has more than two dozen the BU telework programs to address the specific business objectives and unique workforce for each BU. This approach allows BUs to design telework strategies that are based on the BU's work requirements and support their operational needs. Each BU also conducts annual position telework eligibility reviews to ensure their programs are updated and aligned to current work requirements.

To ensure telework continues to meet the needs of the agency and its workforce, USPTO leadership maintains an active role in the development and implementation of telework strategies. The USPTO's Telework Executive Steering Committee, composed of leadership from each BU, oversees the development of solutions to ensure telework continues to adapt to changing agency needs. The committee ensures telework solutions are integrated with other agency policies and initiatives, and collaborates on telework best practices and lessons learned.

The Telework Enhancement Act Program (TEAP), made permanent on January 1, 2021, via the Telework for U.S. Innovation Act, allows eligible employees to permanently change their duty station to a location of their choice in the United States beyond 50 miles from the USPTO headquarters located in Alexandria, VA. The TEAP is administered by the USPTO's TEAP Oversight Committee, which includes equal representation from USPTO management and each of the USPTO's three bargaining units (the National Treasury Employees Union, Chapter 243; the National Treasury Employees Union, Chapter 245; and the Patent Office Professional Association). The committee meets at least semi-annually to discuss administrative needs, oversight matters, and any proposed changes to the program.

The TPO, which is a part of the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (OCAO), manages the day-to-day operations of the USPTO's agency-wide telework program. The TPO is responsible for:

- Establishing and monitoring telework program goals and metrics
- Developing and maintaining oversight of telework policy
- Collecting and reporting telework data
- Developing telework training and recertification materials
- Administering telework IT application system and database
- Assisting the BUs with telework program updates and position eligibility reviews
- Managing the telework supply ordering site
- Communicating telework policy updates and telework training events to leadership and employees
- Leading or assisting with telework studies, pilot programs, surveys, and other initiatives
- Coordinating and integrating telework within other policy initiatives such as real estate planning, IT asset management and deployment, human resources, travel and continuity of operations
- Providing daily telework related customer service and support
- Supporting USPTO leadership on telework related engagements
- Providing telework assistance and support to other federal agencies



The TPO is supported by a network of BU telework coordinators from across the agency. BU telework coordinators are responsible for oversight of their BU telework programs, supporting telework related studies and initiatives, data collection and reporting, conducting training and customer service, and supporting BU position telework eligibility reviews.

TELEWORK KEY ENABLERS

ENTERPRISE TELEWORK INFORMATION SYSTEM

A foundational component of the USPTO's telework program expansion and continued success is the development and implementation of the Enterprise Telework Information System (ETIS). Implemented agency wide in 2022, the ETIS enables the agency to effectively operate its telework program and leverage telework data to inform the agency's mission objectives. The ETIS is a dynamic, integrated, and secure IT application and database with automated workflow for all telework agreement transactions. It facilitates effective telework program oversight and management, and consistently delivers reliable telework data for agency decision-making and reporting.

Through a web-based user interface, the ETIS provides employees and managers with automated processing for all telework-related transactions. Employee data from Human Resources IT systems is integrated in the ETIS, and employees can enter telework application data including program option, number of days, alternate worksite location(s), and internet service provider. This enables the following automated transactions, accompanied by targeted email notifications:

- Employee applications for a telework agreement
- Employee requests to change an approved telework agreement
- Employee requests to withdraw from an approved telework agreement
- Employee telework agreement recertification
- Management approvals and rejections of telework applications, change requests and telework recertification
- Management withdrawals of an employee from a telework agreement
- Management assignment of eligible delegate approvers

The TPO and the BU telework coordinators rely on the ETIS to oversee and manage the agency-wide program. The TPO and the BU telework coordinators access real-time data via in-application reports, telework histories of individual employees; they also perform system administrator functions such as role management to control access to telework data. In addition, each supervisor can access telework agreements of their direct reports to support employee management.



With nearly 13,000 employees teleworking, the ETIS enables the USPTO to integrate reliable telework data within its business processes. The system's electronic telework agreement records eliminate the need to track and store individual paper or electronic telework agreement files and enable the agency to securely maintain and access accurate historical telework data. The ETIS incorporates a direct feed to and from its Enterprise Data Warehouse, enabling the integration of telework data and reporting through Business Intelligence and other reporting tools. This allows the agency to effectively meet all telework data reporting requirements, analyze historical trends in telework participation, and integrate telework data within other agency operations and planning efforts. The USPTO utilizes telework data to support initiatives such as office space management and real estate planning, IT hardware and asset management, Human Resources processes, and regional employee engagement events.

Telework at the USPTO is dynamic, and the ETIS is designed to incorporate updates and improvements to meet the changing requirements of the agency. The USPTO has a dedicated in-house development team to maintain and improve the ETIS using Agile Methodologies (Agile). The development team delivers enhancements iteratively through frequent deployments to the production environment. They can quickly modify the ETIS to incorporate policy changes, new and updated telework programs, changing reporting requirements, agency organizational structure modifications, and agency-wide telework events, such as biennial recertification. With Agile, the team can continuously deliver updates to improve the user experience, achieve operational efficiencies, and adhere to cybersecurity requirements.

TELEWORK TRAINING AND RECERTIFICATION FOR EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS

Maintaining strong performance in a telework environment requires USPTO employees and their supervisors to be well trained not only on telework policy, roles and responsibilities and expectations for maintaining high performance, but also on the support that is available to help them develop new ways to collaborate and communicate, such as working on or managing teams.

The USPTO provides employees a wide range of telework training and information resources focused on how to effectively work in a hybrid environment. New employees are required to complete an interactive telework training module prior to entering a written telework agreement. The module includes information on telework fundamentals, USPTO policies, telework resources

and best practices for working in a hybrid environment. New employees are also provided a telework quick reference guide which contains links to important resources and policies, as well as a step-by-step guide to completing all required actions before commencing telework. Additionally, all USPTO managers are required to complete a telework training module focused on the specific responsibilities related to managing in a hybrid environment. The USPTO also conducts a biennial telework recertification. During this event, all employees complete a training module focused on telework policy and employee responsibilities, and teleworkers are required to ensure their telework agreement is up-to-date and recertify their telework agreement.

The TPO has developed an internal telework resource center providing various training resources, best practices and tools to support telework-eligible employees, existing teleworkers, and managers. Several BUs have dedicated telework resource pages providing information on resources, training, and best practices while working in a hybrid environment. The TPO also provides individual training sessions for telework coordinators, managers and employees to ensure they have tools and information required to effectively manage and perform in a hybrid environment.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information Technology (IT) systems are a critical component of the USPTO's business operations and telework program. The USPTO's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) strives to create architectures that are open to options that can help the agency work more efficiently and more economically in the future.

NETWORK:

Over the past several years, the USPTO has upgraded network bandwidth and improved network security measures to enhance our remote workforce's ability to work seamlessly. The USPTO's network has been thoughtfully designed and engineered with resiliency in mind by being able to instantaneously recover if an issue occurs or if an interface experiences difficulty. In FY 2021, USPTO's Production Internet Circuit Bandwidth increased from 10 gigabits per second (Gbps) to 40 Gbps resulting in improved network availability, redundancy and resiliency.

Teleworkers access the agency network through a VPN, which encrypts data during its transit across the network from the server to the user's



JAMES W.

Assistant Regional Director of USPTO's Midwest RO

"Telework has transformed the culture of the USPTO: it has contributed to increased productivity while reducing stress. It has expanded our understanding of *work-life balance* which allows us to be more engaged with our families and communities."

local machine, using dual authentication (RSA SecureID token and strong encryption password). Employees are not allowed to load additional software on government equipment or download software from the internet. Teleworkers, while working at home, are required to maintain confidentiality of agency work products in accordance with the requirements of the employee's business unit.

Since the period of mandatory telework due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the USPTO approving wireless connectivity use was a pivotal step towards enhancing the landscape of employee telework experience. As remote work has become a cornerstone, facilitating robust wireless connections offers a flexible work environment and empowers the workforce with the tools needed for seamless collaboration and productivity. This strategic move not only fosters a sense of trust and support among employees but also underscores a commitment to adaptability and innovation. As the USPTO navigates the digital age, the approval of enhanced wireless connectivity represents an investment in the well-being and flexible telework experience of the workforce, reflecting an understanding of the dynamic nature of modern work practices. In doing so, the USPTO not only stays at the forefront of technological advancements but also contributes to the creation of a work culture that thrives in the era of telework. Currently from the 13,000+ workforce, the USPTO has a daily average of 20% of teleworking employees utilizing wireless connectivity.

HARDWARE:

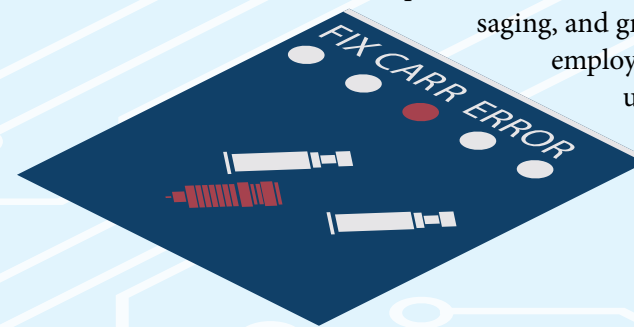
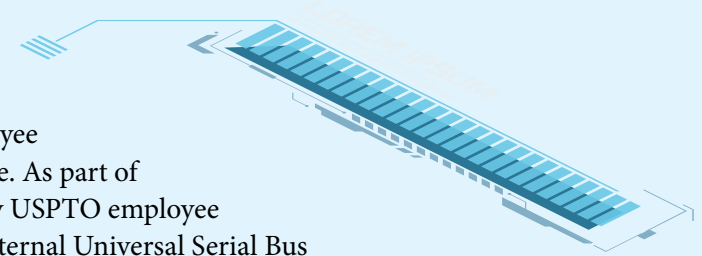
The OCIO has created a standard telework equipment solution to meet the needs of the USPTO's full-time and part-time telework programs. The universal laptop (UL) is deployed to all USPTO employees, providing a cost-effective means of supporting teleworkers and non-teleworkers alike. The UL standard enables the agency to support its extensive telework program without duplicating equipment or software. Accompanying the UL, teleworkers are provided with a monitor(s), a docking station, keyboard, mouse, webcam, and other equipment to effectively replicate the setup of an employee working in a USPTO office.

As part of the USPTO's Enterprise Collaboration platform journey, it has implemented and utilizes a single platform that enables employees to connect, communicate, collaborate and call using a single interface, streamlining and enabling a more seamless user experience. The USPTO transitioned from desk-based telephone handsets to computer-based softphones marking a

significant leap forward in enhancing the landscape of employee telework experience. As part of the transition every USPTO employee was provided an external Universal Serial Bus (USB) computer speakerphone and headset with microphone for plug and play to complement the computer-based softphone. These devices serve as alternate option to conduct handsfree calls, to ensure employees can hear clearly and better collaborate using the current workstation. In addition, these devices provide a clear audio with noise cancelation that filters out all background noise with a much smaller footprint than a desk phone. This shift not only reflects the ongoing digital transformation but also directly contributes to the adaptability and efficiency of remote work setups. By embracing softphones, employees gain the flexibility to manage calls directly from their computers, eradicating the constraints associated with traditional handsets tied to physical desks. This transition offers a liberating experience, enabling professionals to seamlessly integrate communication into their virtual workspace, fostering improved collaboration and connectivity.

SOFTWARE:

The USPTO also provides each employee a complete suite of software, including high quality collaboration tools, to ensure all employees remain connected to each other, their managers, and their customers, regardless of where they are physically located. The USPTO transitioned to the Microsoft Teams platform for virtual meetings, instant messaging, and group chats. This allowed employees to combine what used to take several different tools to accomplish into one, thus increasing the ease and efficiency of communication for our employees.



ROOMREZ - HOTELING OFFICE RESERVATION SYSTEM

RoomRez is a web-based hoteling reservation system customized for USPTO employee use. It is one of the key components for effective use of space at the USPTO. With the majority of teleworkers at the USPTO having given up their permanently assigned office, the RoomRez system provides an efficient and easy to use system for employees to reserve hoteling office space at one of the USPTO locations when needed. There are hoteling spaces designated for specific BUs, as well as USPTO-wide rooms available for use by any employee regardless of BU. There are different types of hoteling spaces available for reservation depending on need, such as regular hoteling spaces for normal office work, examiner interview rooms, public interview rooms, and lactation rooms.

The RoomRez system allows employees to check room availability, reserve office space, cancel an existing reservation, and view their reservations. All reservation times are listed in the local time of the selected location. Each workspace includes a docking station, keyboard, mouse, printer, monitors, webcam, office supplies, and storage. With the use of RoomRez the USPTO can ensure all employees will be able to have a space on campus when needed.

TELEWORK SUPPLY ORDERING

The USPTO employs a web-based application system for eligible full time teleworking employees to request shipments of paper and toner for use at their alternate worksite. The system enables employees to electronically submit requests and receive automated order confirmations, shipment notifications, and tracking information for each order placed. The TPO with the support of the OAS manages the day-to-day operations tracking orders and providing customer service to employees. Additionally, access to the site is controlled through the automated integration of telework application data from the ETIS and each employee's assigned IT asset information from the OAS Asset Management Division.



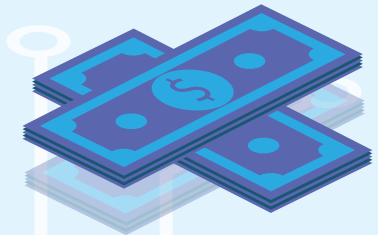
ALLISON B.

Supervisory Patent Examiner

"When I moved to Denver, I was able to do work that I love in a place that I love. The flexibility the USPTO provides allows me to do a job I enjoy without sacrificing in other areas of my life."

INTERNET SERVICE REIMBURSEMENT

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) manages the Internet Service Reimbursement (ISR) program. The ISR program allows eligible full time teleworking employees to request reimbursement for their internet service expenses used for official USPTO business purposes at the employee's approved alternate worksite. Employees utilize a web-based application system to submit requests for review, processing and payment.



PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The USPTO's telework program is a key corporate business strategy that directly supports achievement of the agency's strategic goals. The American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 incorporated performance-based attributes into the USPTO's operations. The USPTO has a clear mission statement, measurable services, a performance measurement system that provides the agency's fee-paying customers the performance expectations. To support this paradigm, the USPTO has a comprehensive organizational performance monitoring framework in place. USPTO leadership reviews these indicators on regular basis and utilizes this framework to implement new indicators or adjust work environment policies and practices which would positively impact performance.

Most USPTO employees work under production-based performance management systems to meet demand and achieve organizational performance goals. The agency ensures the same measurable performance standards are used to evaluate both teleworkers and non-teleworkers, and monitors production and performance levels to identify any potential impacts of telework on meeting the agency's strategic goals and performance expectations.

In addition to the robust organizational performance and individual production monitoring systems, the USPTO also understands that effective oversight of a remote workforce is central to maintaining high levels of productivity and stakeholder confidence. The USPTO has a variety of tools to enable productivity and foster collaboration, regardless of an employee's work location. Some of these tools include:



- Well-established and enforced USPTO-wide time and attendance communication, and collaboration policies, including requirements for employees to post their anticipated work schedules, use agency provided collaboration tools, and remain logged in to the USPTO network while teleworking
- Employee training to enhance employees' understanding of their time and attendance obligations and any required procedures for complying with their obligations to remain available to customers and colleagues during working hours
- Supervisory guidance and training on monitoring indicators of potential time and attendance issues, such as responsiveness to supervisory communications, inconsistent workload activity, and customer complaints
- Supervisory guidance and training on communication, establishing and monitoring performance goals, and focusing on results
- A streamlined time and attendance "quick check" process for any supervisor who sees indicators of potential time and attendance abuse
- Supervisory dashboard tools in Patents and Trademarks that display real-time data on daily work production and timeliness of completing work for patent examiners and trademark examining attorneys

Additionally, the USPTO's telework program has also allowed employees to continue to work during weather-related government shutdowns. The National Academy of Public Administration found that the USPTO's telework programs saved the agency an average of \$7 million per year based on work conducted during closures.

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

In addition to performance objectives, the USPTO's telework program also plays a key role in supporting the agency's organizational health. The USPTO's telework program is aligned with agency strategic goals and is focused on enhancing employee experience. The USPTO strives to be an employer of choice, and the agency ranks among [Top 50 Inspiring Workplaces in North America](#) and [Global Top 100 Inspiring Workplaces](#).

Telework provides USPTO employees increased flexibility to help maintain work/life balance, and reduce commuting time and costs. It also provides flexibilities that are critical not only for many employees with disabilities, but also for spouses and caregivers of military members. Telework enables the agency to expand traditional hiring methods and seek out talented workers in all areas of the country, which is essential to recruiting employees with the expertise required for the USPTO to fulfill its mission. The USPTO promotes its telework program when advertising careers across all communication platforms and at recruitment outreach events. The agency continues to monitor webpage analytics, social media metrics and qualitative data gathered at in-person hiring events to measure the effectiveness of telework messaging. Through the expansion of remote options and updates to BU telework programs, the USPTO has increased the available telework options to a larger portion of its workforce and expanded the geographic diversity of new hires.

The USPTO engages employees through a variety of methods to measure telework's impact on organizational health. The 2022 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) demonstrated strong support for the USPTO's telework and remote work programs. In addition, the agency's exit survey data indicates positive attitudes toward the telework and remote options. The vast majority of employees are satisfied with their current telework or remote options and leave the agency for reasons other than telework. According to recent exit survey data, 71% of participants indicated that telework availability was what they enjoyed most about working for the agency. Employee feedback is also supported through numerous small-group listening sessions and town hall events with agency leadership. These methods ensure employees at the USPTO have the opportunity to be heard and influence change in their work experience.

In FY 2023, the USPTO established an agency-wide Employee Experience Committee to focus on employee experience design and delivery. This initiative helps the USPTO deliver an employee experience strategy that balances productivity, wellness, and inclusion, and drives a culture that engages and retains employees, maximizing organizational outcomes.



BUSINESS UNIT INPUTS

OFFICE OF CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (OCAO)

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

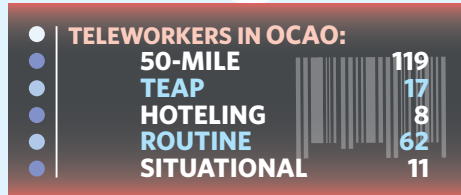
The Office of Administrative Services (OAS) continues to operate a seamless telework program offering employees situational and routine telework options, providing employees work flexibilities and allowing the OAS to attract and retain top talent. To ensure program effectiveness and alignment with strategic goals, OAS leadership continuously monitors performance and gathers employee feedback for improvement.

The OAS sets clear expectations for in-office tasks versus remote tasks, ensured all employees were on approved telework agreements, and provided the required technology and equipment to assist staff with the hybrid transition. The OAS also encouraged employees to stay social and connected through use of weekly and monthly check-ins, continued face-to-face communication using Microsoft Teams, participated in online training to stay engaged and hold virtual team-building activities.

The OAS adapted to the hybrid work model by maintaining regular communication between management and employees through Microsoft Teams, email, and phone. Our employees routinely and quickly get the assistance and resources they need to optimize performance while teleworking.

The OAS used several methods to keep staff connected and engaged:

- Conducted all-hands meetings with agency updates
- Planned virtual get-togethers where employees were able to connect socially
- Encouraged personal development and training
- Encouraged teamwork and collaboration among all employees and teams
- Recognized and rewarded staff for their work on projects related to, but not limited to, pandemic response efforts
- Provided employees with tools and resources for success
- Encouraged creativity
- Scheduled regular one-on-one meetings between managers and employees



To ensure the OAS remains effective and aligned with established business unit goals and priorities, the OAS will continue to focus on the following areas:

- Providing flexibility with employee schedules and on-campus time, when appropriate
- Setting expectations for clear communication and guidance
- Expanding methods for employees to provide feedback
- Streamlining the onboard experience for new staff, ensuring new employees are acclimated properly
- Setting healthy boundaries for work-life balance
- Encouraging self-care and building wellness into team gatherings and activities

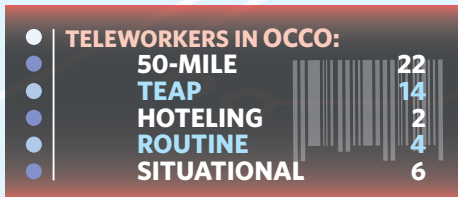
OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The Office of Human Resources (OHR) continues to operate an effective telework program offering employees situational, routine, and remote telework options. The program was expanded this year to include the option for employees to participate in the 50-mile radius and TEAP programs. This expansion of telework options provides greater work flexibilities for employees and increases and diversifies OHR candidate pools for recruiting nationwide talent without sacrificing outstanding customer service. The OHR studied the interactions with customers outside of our business unit and determined remote options were practical as customers were not seeking in-person OHR assistance and frequently the interactions via available electronic methods better met the customer's needs.

OHR leadership utilized the FEVS and the USPTO People Survey results to ensure the OHR telework program remains effective in maintaining strong organizational health. The OHR used several methods to keep staff connected and engaged. Each division within the OHR organized regular staff meetings and training sessions, as well as smaller weekly informal meetings such as virtual water cooler breaks. These meetings kept employees connected, engaged, and aware of agency updates and developments. Management and peers continually recognize the contributions of staff members who highlight the OHR core values of care, collaboration, and expertise.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

The Office of the Chief Communications Officer (OCCO) continues to operate its effective telework program offering employees situational, routine and remote telework options. The program provides work flexibilities for employees and allows the OCCO to recruit nationwide talent.

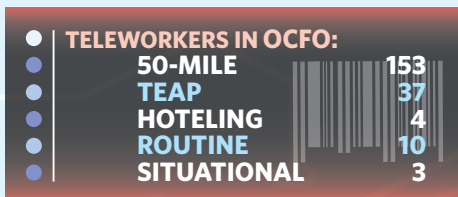


To ensure the OCCO telework program remains effective and in alignment with established goals and priorities, OCCO leadership consistently monitors the telework program and solicits feedback from employees so they can continue to develop a positive, healthy remote work culture. They also continue to ask employees to develop innovative ideas and complete telework self-assessments to improve the OCCO's telework program.

The OCCO used several innovative methods to keep employees connected and engaged. Each office within the OCCO encouraged employees to take care of their health and wellness. They encouraged employees to take frequent breaks to maintain focus and effectiveness. OCCO leadership also encouraged employees to exercise and to create healthy habits when working at home. Each office within the OCCO hosted virtual group and professional development meetings weekly, as well as other engagement events, to ensure employees feel heard and valued, and to keep them positive and excited about being a part of the OCCO team.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) developed its telework program with the theme “Hybrid first” as a top priority. During FY 2023, the OCFO focused on measuring the organizational effectiveness and results of its telework program using quantifiable metrics. OCFO employees are thriving in the hybrid environment and remain supported at all levels of leadership in achieving both their personal and professional goals.



During FY 2023, the OCFO achieved 73% of its organization-wide gain sharing goals, up from 61% prior to implementation of its existing full-time telework program. In the Gallup Q12 USPTO People Survey, the OCFO increased its Engagement Index Ratio (the percentage of engaged employees divided by the percentage of actively disengaged employees), from 2.3 in 2019 to 9.0 in FY 2023—indicative of a highly engaged team and a world-class level of engagement relative to other organizations surveyed by Gallup. The OCFO also recorded comparable increases across all topic areas in the 2023 FEVS, demonstrating the office's efforts in maximizing engagement and wellness in the hybrid workplace.

One of the OCFO's primary employee experience initiatives during FY 2023 was a series of one-on-one conversations between team members and supervisors on the topic of wellness. The entire OCFO workforce of 220-plus employees and leaders participated, and the Chief Financial Officer shared results at an all-hands meeting for feedback. Employees overwhelmingly reported that they appreciate their individual supervisor's support in balancing work and their personal lives, and that the OCFO's focus on hybrid first has strengthened the office's workplace culture and organizational health. The OCFO's telework program has also benefitted office leadership, with senior managers noting its significant positive impact on talent recruitment and retention not only in the National Capital Region, but across the United States. As one office director noted, “We have hired folks with great skills that we could not reach without the ability to offer the full-time telework option.”

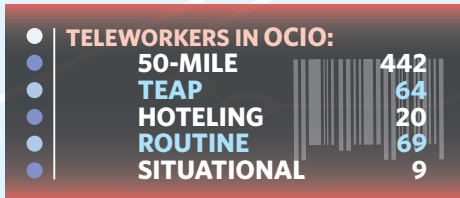
The OCFO's Hybrid First Council (HFC) continued to operate in FY 2023 as a board of employee volunteers dedicated to improving communication, connectedness, and engagement among the OCFO's workforce, currently dispersed across 19 states and Puerto Rico. In addition, the OCFO's individual offices—the Office of Planning and Budget, the Office of Finance, the Office of Financial Management Systems, and the Office of Procurement—have the freedom to pursue their own hybrid initiatives. All four offices combine in-person and virtual events for maximum participation, including holiday parties and an occasional “walk and talk” meeting. This flexibility allows each office to develop activities that suit their unique organizational culture, which then informs the overall OCFO telework program.

The OCFO has even more exciting plans for its FY 2024 telework program and looks forward to continued excellence in the hybrid environment.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

FY 2023 was the first full year of the new Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) Telework Program, following the campus reopening in May of 2022. Over the past year, the OCIO gained a great deal of experience and knowledge in supporting a hybrid workforce. Plans and estimates for the number of on-campus staff requiring support were tested, and the OCIO determined the need to implement slight adjustments in telework eligibility for staff providing end-user support. The OCIO telework program continues to receive high marks from employees.

The OCIO telework program includes the option for employees to participate in the TEAP, providing greater work flexibilities for employees and increasing and diversifying OCIO candidate pools for recruiting nationwide talent. OCIO management consistently monitors performance measures and solicits feedback from employees and external customers regarding process improvements. The OCIO also continues to monitor organizational health through surveys, engagement events, and feedback received from employees and managers.

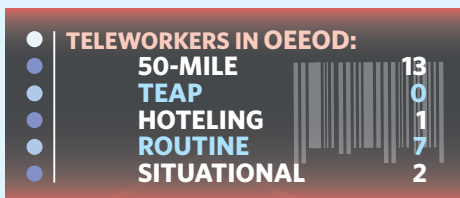


OFFICE OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND DIVERSITY

The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity (OEEOD) continues to operate its telework program offering employees situational, routine, and remote telework options. The program was

expanded in FY 2023 to include the option for employees to participate in the TEAP, providing greater work flexibilities for employees, and increasing and diversifying the OEEOD's candidate pools for recruiting nationwide talent.

To ensure the OEEOD telework program remains effective and in alignment with established goals and priorities, OEEOD leadership consistently monitors performance measures and solicits feedback from employees regarding performance and process improvements. Specifically, the OEEOD continues to require OEEOD-internal virtual weekly and twice-weekly meetings to



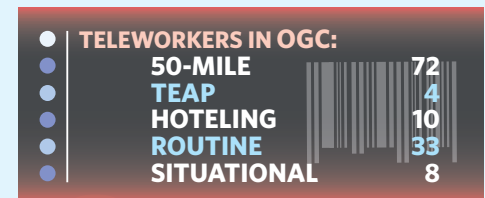
ensure that the OEEOD's mission is accomplished and that all deadlines are met. The OEEOD also has regularly scheduled virtual meetings with other business units on a weekly, biweekly, monthly, or quarterly basis.

The OEEOD used several methods to keep staff connected and engaged. The OEEOD requires mandatory in-person quarterly all-hands meetings and training sessions, as well as smaller weekly informal meetings such as virtual water cooler breaks. The OEEOD also encourages in-person attendance at work-related trainings and conferences. These meetings, trainings, and conferences keep employees connected, engaged, and aware of agency updates and developments.

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

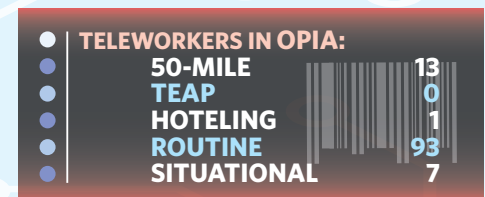
The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) continues to have a robust telework program with the majority of its employees teleworking four to five days per week. The program was expanded this year to include the option for employees in the Office of Enrollment and Discipline (OED) to participate in the TEAP, providing greater work flexibilities for employees, and increasing and diversifying the OED's candidate pools for recruiting nationwide talent.

The OGC used several methods to keep staff connected and engaged. Each office within the OGC organized monthly staff meetings, mandatory in-person quarterly all hands meetings and training sessions, as well as smaller weekly informal meetings. These meetings kept employees connected, engaged and aware of agency updates and developments. To ensure the OGC's telework program remains effective and in alignment with established goals and priorities, the OGC continued to conduct virtual trials, hearings and depositions.



OFFICE OF POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Office of Policy and International Affairs (OPIA) continues to thrive in the hybrid work environment. Our expanded telework program options enhance our office's ability to support



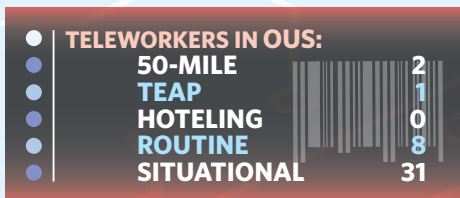
USPTO colleagues, leadership and partners throughout the global intellectual property community, as well as accommodate the unique schedule challenges that arise when collaborating across many different countries and time zones. OPIA employees participated in the design, planning, and delivery of 144 total domestic and international programs on best practices to protect and enforce intellectual property in FY 2023, making access to greater schedule flexibilities an asset to all. The option to adjust individual employee work schedules to meet personal needs and support the achievement of professional goals has positively impacted our ability to attract and retain staff at all stages of their career development.

To ensure the OPIA telework program remains effective and in alignment with established goals and priorities, OPIA leadership consistently monitors performance measures and solicits feedback from employees and external customers regarding performance and process improvements. Since the majority of our staff spend at least one day in-office at the USPTO's Alexandria campus, we are able to provide equipment and supply services on-site as well as participate in and enjoy the many exhibits and events that take place in the Madison building's atrium and the National Inventors Hall of Fame and Museum.

The OPIA utilizes several methods to keep staff connected and engaged. Each policy and administrative support team within the OPIA organized regular staff meetings, a monthly all-hands meeting to encourage connection and keep in touch on our offices' many projects and initiatives, as well as smaller informal social-style meetings amongst colleagues with common interests. These meetings kept employees connected, engaged, and aware of agency updates and developments.

OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY AND DIRECTOR

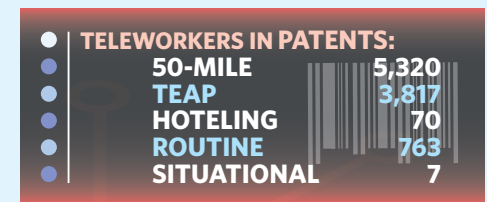
The Office of the Under Secretary and Director (OUS) continues to operate effectively with telework programs offering situational, routine, and remote telework options to employees. The OUS telework programs help to promote the idea of a flexible work-life balance, which is critical in helping employees to perform the USPTO's core mission of protecting the intellectual property of stakeholders.



Leadership, collaboration and robust communication helped executives and staff members remain fully engaged and responsive to their assignments and duties without delay or connectivity challenges. The OUS continues to utilize collaboration tools, such as Webex, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and other platforms to enhance workflow and communication among the staff and our stakeholders. Over the past year, the OUS has actively utilized those collaboration tools to offer engagement opportunities such as trivia games, costume contests and virtual recognition awards that catered to both our in-person and virtual employees. The OUS also commenced efforts to establish new telework programs for employees in the Office of Governmental Affairs (OGA) as part of the organizational alignment of the OGA to the OUS. These new programs will leverage the relevant aspects of the established OUS telework programs and be designed to incorporate the work requirements and mission needs of the OGA.

PATENTS

Patents employees continue to benefit from our telework programs that offer a range of options from situational and routine to remote telework. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Patents has experienced a significant increase in participation in telework which has resulted in cost-savings for both employees and the agency. Nearly 96% of eligible positions in Patents are enrolled in a telework program. Currently, almost 10,000 Patent employees are working from locations across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.



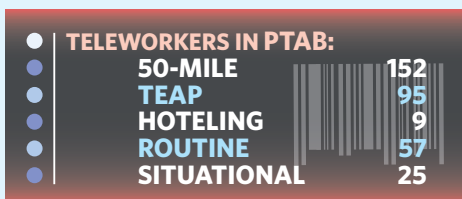
Patents offers a variety of programs and training centered around inclusion and engagement for management and their fellow employees, ensuring that teleworking employees remain actively engaged and connected regardless of their location. Various social networking and employee engagement programs are not only offered at the agency headquarters, but also at the USPTO Regional Offices.

In an ever-evolving telework environment, Patents leadership, in conjunction with the OCIO and other BUs, continues to seek innovative ways to improve employee experience with new telework equipment and other software and application upgrades. This includes new universal laptops, Microsoft Teams software for improved communications, and a satellite

internet service pilot to test the option to offer employees who live in remote locations a secure method to connect to the USPTO network. Patents looks forward to improving work processes, customer experience, and in-person and virtual employee engagement in FY 2024.

PATENT TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD HEARINGS

The Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB) successfully conducted virtual and in-person hearings in our new hybrid work environment. During this time, the PTAB conducted 367 *ex parte* appeal hearings and 506 America Invents Act (AIA) hearings. The PTAB granted public access to 210 proceedings by video, which was a service that the PTAB did not offer to the public before the pandemic but has continued in response to stakeholder feedback. The PTAB continues to improve the user experience and welcomes suggestions for improvement from all stakeholders.



HEARINGS TYPE	NUMBER OF HEARINGS OCT 1, 2022 TO SEPT 30, 2023
Appeal (including Reexaminations)	367
AIA Trials	506



PETER C.
Supervisory Patent Examiner

"The agency's new telework and expanded *flexible schedule programs* have allowed me to adapt to my evolving needs to balance my personal and professional lives by affording me greater flexibility to work where and when I need."

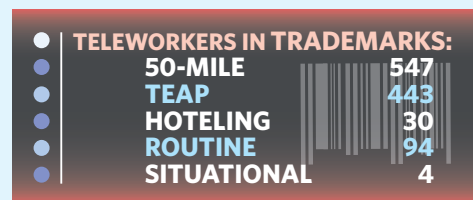
TRADEMARKS

Trademarks continues to provide an exemplary telework program to employees with a variety of telework options, including situational, routine and remote.

Due to the success of its previously piloted alternate worksite programs, Trademarks has included the ability to temporarily work from alternate worksites as part of its telework program offerings. The TEAP remains a popular telework program for employees who wish to work from locations outside of the greater Washington, DC area. This program has enabled Trademarks to recruit employees from a nationwide pool.

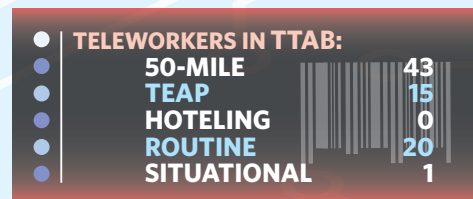
Trademark leadership ensured that its telework program remains effective by soliciting feedback from employees. Trademarks provided employees with frequent updates about telework requirements to ensure employees were aware of and remain compliant with the relevant processes and procedures associated with teleworking. In 2023, Trademarks introduced a telework newsletter that addressed frequently asked questions about telework and also provided helpful reminders about telework requirements.

Trademarks has adopted several practices to connect our employees to our culture and to enhance the employee experience. Offices are strongly encouraged to have monthly meetings and to conduct case law chats. Managers are invited to water cooler chats and hybrid quarterly meetings. Trademarks has also created special programs to engage with employees including an ice-cream social and a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) lunch time watch party event.



TRADEMARK TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

The Trademark Trial and Appeal Board (TTAB) continues to operate its telework programs offering employees situational, routine and remote telework options. The TTAB expanded telework participation for FY 2023, increasing participation in both the TEAP and the Remote 50-mile program. The TTAB's total hearings increased from 62 in FY 2022 to



81 in FY 2023, 59 of which were entirely virtual. Most in-person hearings also involved one or more judges or parties attending virtually.

The TTAB hired three judges, three interlocutory attorneys and two paralegals. The TTAB hosted three trademark attorneys and two interns as career development detailees. All on-boarded virtually to their positions. The telework flexibilities allowed us to hire talented employees, provide greater work flexibilities for employees and increase and diversify the TTAB's candidate pools for recruiting nationwide talent.

The TTAB has implemented many initiatives to ensure our telework program remains effective and aligned with USPTO goals and priorities. The TTAB began FY 2023 with an all-hands meeting that included a speaker who discussed employee connectedness and tools to lessen worker loneliness in the hybrid work environment. The TTAB continued measuring its program effectiveness and encouraged employee participation in USPTO surveys. The TTAB continued to maintain overall high scores for employee engagement. TTAB conducted a series of branch presentations with the goal of reminding employees of roles and responsibilities and how processes may have changed in the current hybrid teleworking environment. TTAB also focused on communication and employee engagement through its internal workgroups, team meetings and one-on-one check-ins.

The TTAB used several methods to engage staff in FY 2023, organizing and executing four quarterly all-hands meetings with topics that varied from staying connected and engaged to legal and general work-interest topics. In January 2023, the TTAB started a bi-monthly engagement activity called The TTABViews Series that garnered more than 70% employee attendance, and that afforded employees an opportunity to come together for information and social engagement. The TTAB continues to share information and encourage participation in the "Photo of the Week" on our SharePoint site, which features photos from USPTO outreach events, vacations, personal travel and special videos celebrating retirements and length of service awards. This year, the TTAB created a photo newsletter introducing our new hires, judges filling the acting deputy chief role and those on detail to the TTAB. The newsletters were a great opportunity to virtually get to know the team.



The TTAB continues to update, measure and enhance the employee experience for a robust telework program to support the USPTO goals and initiatives.

AGENCY OUTREACH AND PRESENTATIONS

The USPTO is often asked to present the agency telework strategy as well as provide support and guidance to outside organizations regarding telework efforts.

AGENCY ASSISTANCE

- National Telecommunications and Information Administration
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Commodity Futures Trading Commission
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Small Business Administration
- Securities and Exchange Commission

PRESENTATIONS

Presentation on Telework and Space Management — National Institute of Industrial Property of Brazil

LEADERSHIP FORUM EXTRA

In August, 2023, the USPTO held its annual Leadership Forum Extra event sponsored by the OCAO. This forum, for USPTO supervisors, managers and executives, had a specific focus on the theme of “Leading for Inclusion, Connectedness and Resilience.” The event featured two keynote addresses and a variety of breakout sessions. The Chief Administrative Officer, Fred Steckler and the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO, Kathi Vidal, opened the event with powerful remarks about ways to fully embrace the forum’s theme of “Leading for Inclusion, Connectedness and Resilience,” adding that these three leadership traits are so vital for us to embrace, ensuring our employees are treated fairly and respectfully, and that every employee is valued and belongs.

With 17 unique breakout session topics and panel discussions, including six external and 11 internal sessions, the 1,173 participants registered for a grand total of 8,273 hours of learning. The result of the Forum is a leadership population who left the event motivated and empowered with plenty of tools, strategies and creative ideas for how to best continue serving and engaging their teams regardless of their work location or their employees.



STACEY W.

Administrative Patent Judge

“Teleworking gives me the best of both worlds with the opportunity to work with my colleagues in Dallas while still having increased time at home. Plus, I have two boys so the flexibility allows me to keep up with their sports schedules!”

FUTURE OF TELEWORK AT THE USPTO

The USPTO will continue to refine and improve its telework program, guided by the agency's mission and strategic goals, and focused on initiatives that bring about positive changes to organizational health and performance. Looking ahead to FY 2024, the USPTO has some key telework initiatives planned to expand telework opportunities and provide updated training for employees.

DOMESTIC EMPLOYEE TELEWORKING OVERSEAS

Over the past year, the USPTO has been working to establish a Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas (DETO) policy that will provide eligible USPTO employees the opportunity to apply for Department of State approval to telework from an international location. The USPTO's policy will include DETO eligibility requirements and outline the process for submitting requests



for DETO agreements. The DETO policy will complement the USPTO's telework policy and provides the agency greater flexibility to retain a diverse and talented workforce.

TELEWORK RECERTIFICATION

In FY 2024, the USPTO will conduct telework recertification for all employees. The event will consist of training modules for both telework and non-telework employees containing information on the USPTO's telework policies, employee responsibilities related to human resources and timekeeping, IT security requirements, communication and collaboration, and telework requirements supporting the USPTO's continuity of operations policy. Additionally, each teleworking employee will be required to review their BU telework program, ensure the information in their telework agreement is up to date, and recertify their telework agreement. Each employee's recertified telework agreement will be approved by management, and the TPO and BU telework coordinators will track completion of the event. The FY 2024 telework recertification event will be the first utilizing the ETIS. Conducting recertification through the ETIS enables employees to recertify their agreements with the same user-interface and procedures used for telework applications and changes, and allows the USPTO to effectively track completion and maintain historical records of the recertification event for all employees.

