Employee-Initiated Requests for Change in Duty Station

Section 1 – Purpose

1. This article defines the process for an employee to initiate a voluntary request for a change in duty station (without a change in position) in the following situations:
2. The employee’s position is not eligible for a Remote Work Location Designation, but the employee would like to request a remote work arrangement. (Section 2)
3. The employee currently works at an approved remote work location and would like to move to a different remote duty station location (Section 3)
4. An employee is currently not working at an approved remote location but occupies a position that is eligible for a Remote Work Location Designation and would like to move to a remote duty station (Section 3).
5. An examiner would like to change regions and move to a different remote duty station location (Section 4).
6. The provisions (with the exception of Section 4) of this article apply to all employees, regardless of job title or duty station.
7. All requests to change the location of a duty station under this article will be processed centrally using a form or system developed by the Bureau.
8. Any change in duty station made under this article is subject to approval by the Bureau in accordance with the terms of this article.

Section 2 – Requesting a Remote Work Location Designation and Duty Station

1. Employees whose positions are not eligible for a remote work location designation pursuant to the Remote Telework and Hybrid Program article may request a remote designation in order to:
   1. Address a unique or personal circumstance that necessitates relocation of the employee on a temporary basis; or
   2. Retain the employee on a permanent basis.
2. The terms and provisions of the Remote Telework, and Hybrid Work Program Article apply to any remote work authorized under this section.
3. The official worksite/duty station for an employee who is approved for remote work is the approved location specified in the employee’s Remote Work Agreement; the employee will receive the locality pay that is associated with the location of their approved duty location.
4. An employee-initiated request to change duty station without a change in position is not an entitlement. Work Location Designations are subject to approval by management. The Bureau will not pay for any employee-initiated moves.
5. Temporary changes in duty station to address a unique or personal circumstance of an employee may be authorized for an initial period of up to one year and extended up to a maximum of two years, provided the current Bureau Telework Program (including Extended Situational Telework) does not adequately address the employee’s work location needs; the costs associated with having the employee change duty stations (travel, resources, etc.) are reasonable; and the employee meets the eligibility and suitability requirements outlined in Sections 5 C and D of the Remote Telework, and Hybrid Work Program Article.
6. Permanent changes in duty station to retain employees may be authorized if the request satisfies the conditions specified in item E above and management determines that the loss of the employee would have significant negative impact on the ability of the Bureau and/or work unit to achieve its goals; and the employee would likely choose voluntary separation if the relocation request is not approved. Factors that will be considered in deciding whether loss of the employee would have significant negative impact include, but are not limited to:
   1. Number of years working at the Bureau
   2. Specialized knowledge
   3. Institutional knowledge
   4. The employee has unique knowledge or skills not possessed by other Bureau employees
7. To request a change in duty station for a position that is not designated as remote eligible:
   * + 1. The employee initiates the process by submitting a request to their supervisor for a remote work location.
       2. The supervisor will review the request in accordance with the criteria as defined in this Section.
       3. If approved, the employee must execute a Remote Work Agreement with their first-level supervisor and maintains a record of the agreement. Management will process the personnel action within 30 days of executing the Remote Work Agreement unless a different timeframe is mutually agreed upon between the employee and their supervisor and the employee’s duty station will be changed to the approved location specified in the employee’s Remote Work Agreement. The employee will return to their previous duty station at the end of the approved duration of the Remote Work Agreement at the employee’s own expense.

Section 3 – Requesting approval of a remote duty location or a change to an approved remote duty location

1. Employees who currently work at an approved remote location may request to change their official duty station to a different remote duty location on a permanent or temporary basis using a form or system developed by the Bureau.
2. Employees not currently working at an approved remote location, but in a position that is eligible for a Remote Work Location Designation, may request a change to a remote duty location on a permanent or temporary basis by using the form or system developed by the Bureau.
3. For positions with duties that do not require extensive travel, as identified in the employee’s position description and job announcement there will be no evaluation of the suitability of the proposed duty station outside of the terms and conditions of this article and Management will endeavor to process the personnel action within 30 days of receiving the request. Employees will not be permitted to work remotely outside of the contiguous United States without either a Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas Agreement (DETO) or an approved Situational or Extended Situational Telework Agreement.
4. For positions with duties requiring extensive travel, as identified in the employee’s position description and job announcement, additional evaluation of duty station location suitability may be required prior to approval. Requests for locations outside of the contiguous United States will not be considered.
5. No additional evaluation is required if:
   1. the proposed duty station is under 60 miles from the employee’s current duty station; and
   2. the employee can travel to a Large or Medium Hub (as classified by the Federal Aviation Administration) airport or any of the following small hub airports within 90 minutes commuting time: Oklahoma City, OK (OKC), Highland Springs, VA (RIC), Spokane, WA (GEG), Myrtle Beach, SC (MYR), Louisville, KY (SDF), Savannah, GA (SAV), Tucson, AZ (TUS), Pensacola, FL (PNS), Tulsa, OK (TUL), Birmingham, AL (BHM), Palm Springs, CA (PSP), Long Beach, CA (LGB), Grand Rapids, MI (GRR), Syracuse, NY (SYR), Buffalo, NY (BUF), Providence, RI (PVD), El Paso, TX (ELP), Des Moines, IA (DSM), Alcoa, TN (TYS), Little Rock, AR (LRT), Valparaiso, FL (VPS), Albany, NY (ALB), Fresno, CA (FAT)
6. Additional evaluation is required if the employee does not meet the requirements of D1, above. In such cases, the employee must meet the following additional evaluation requirements:
   1. The Proposed duty station must be within 90 minutes commuting time to a large or medium hub airport or any of the following small hub airports within 90 minutes commuting time: Oklahoma City, OK (OKC), Highland Springs, VA (RIC), Spokane, WA (GEG), Myrtle Beach, SC (MYR), Louisville, KY (SDF), Savannah, GA (SAV), Tucson, AZ (TUS), Pensacola, FL (PNS), Tulsa, OK (TUL), Birmingham, AL (BHM), Palm Springs, CA (PSP), Long Beach, CA (LGB), Grand Rapids, MI (GRR),Syracuse, NY (SYR), Buffalo, NY (BUF), Providence, RI (PVD), El Paso, TX (ELP), De Moines, IA (DSM), Alcoa, TN (TYS), Little Rock, AR (LRT), Valparaiso, FL (VPS), Albany, NY (ALB), Fresno, CA (FAT); and
   2. For examination staff, the airport must have flight options to three frequented destination airports within the employee’s assigned region, as of the time of the employee’s request. The flight options must:
      1. Not require employees to begin travel before 6:00 am or later than 10:00 am local time; and
      2. Allow the employee to travel from the proposed remote duty station to the destination airport within six hours.
7. Employees will be expected to submit documentation supporting the additional evaluation requirements.
8. Employees in an approved remote duty station location as of the effective date of this Article that do not meet the additional evaluation requirements under section 3D1 will be allowed to retain their current remote duty station location as long as they remain at their current location or within 30 miles of their current location.
9. Management will provide NTEU with a list of positions with extensive travel requirements within 5 business days of the effective date of this agreement, and thereafter whenever making changes to the list.

Section 4 – Requesting a change in region and remote duty location for examiners

1. Examiners may request a change in region and remote duty location
2. An examiner may request to change regions without changing their duty station location as long as their current duty station meets the additional evaluation requirements outlined under Section 3
3. Eligibility
   1. Must be an examiner
   2. Must not have been issued an At-Risk memo due to performance concerns within a year
   3. Must not have been on a Performance Improvement Plan within a year
   4. Must not be on a probationary period
   5. Must have been working in their current region for at least two years
   6. Must not have had any disciplinary action in the last two years
4. The receiving region must have an examiner vacancy available or not be exceeding their authorized headcount by more than five. If the receiving region does not have a vacancy but is less than five over the authorized headcount, a transfer of the headcount may be approved.
5. Supervision leadership will consider a request to waive eligibility requirements related to a probationary period or working in the region for two years in the event of specific hardship situations that include:
   1. A specific long-term medical situation of a family member where services or care are more accessible from a specific location
   2. Specific situations related to a family member status, such as a divorce (custody issues) or spousal placement (dual career)
6. Regional transfers may also be initiated and approved through the reasonable accommodations process when the employee has a medical situation or disability and requires access to care in a specific location.
7. The new remote duty station within the receiving region must meet the additional evaluation requirements listed in Section 3 of this article.

Section 5 – Denying an Employee Initiated Request for a Change in Duty Station

1. When denying a request for an employee-initiated change in duty station (both temporary or permanent), the supervisor must document the reason(s) for denial. A copy of the documentation will be retained by OHC.
2. OHC will maintain records, consistent with the applicable records schedule(s), of all denials of employee requests to change their duty station location under this Section, including: (1) a unique employee identifier; (2) the employee’s job title; (3) the employee’s division; (4) the employee’s office; (5) the employee’s region (if applicable); (6) the location (city and state) of the employee’s current duty station; (7) the location (city and state) of the proposed new duty station; (8) the name of the supervisor who denied the request; (9) the reason(s) given for the denial; and (10) the employee’s race, ethnicity (e.g. Hispanic or Not Hispanic), national origin, gender, whether the employee has a disclosed disability status (not the particular disability), and whether the employee is over or under 40 years old. Where necessary to protect an individual’s privacy rights or other legal rights, redaction or aggregation of data may be employed.
3. Once each quarter, OHC will compile a spreadsheet containing the information listed in Section 5B. of this Article and provide an electronic copy to both Bureau management and NTEU 335 leadership.