"Telework—Manage the Work, Not the Time"

NIH Telework Festival
Tuesday, November 22, 2011
Arrive—9:15 a.m., speak—9:35 a.m.
Kirschstein Auditorium, Natcher Bldg.

Greetings.
Thanks, Colleen. Good morning to all of you sitting here, and a special welcome to those of you joining us via videocast. I know some of you are at alternative workstations and many of you are actually teleworking from the comfort of your own homes. Let me acknowledge you first. Now, you can see me and hear me just as well from wherever you are, can't you? It's virtually no different than being here in the auditorium right? Well, except that you didn't have to worry about the weather outside, or about getting dressed up for work. You didn't have to give any thought to catching the carpool, consulting the train schedule or wondering whether there'd be parking when you got here. Yes, I can see you all out there at your kitchen tables, in your pajamas and slippers, nodding your heads and smiling happily.

Well, I can't actually see you, can I? That's the point, though. I don't have to see you to know you're there…any more than we all need to be on site to be working. We have to think of creative ways to manage our workload and let employees manage their time, don't we?

Acknowledgments.
Of course, that's what we want talk about—and learn more about—today. I want to thank the NIH Telework & Flexible Work Schedules Workgroup under the leadership of Chris Major, Dan Dupuis [due PWEE] and Julie Berko of OHR. They've had tremendous support from ORS and ORF in bringing telework to the forefront at NIH. Let me also thank all of the employees, supervisors, and managers who already are supporting telework and implementing it in their ICs. I want to recognize the leadership at HHS, as well, for their continued encouragement on telework.

I'm going to get right to the point, since I have a lot of information to deliver in a very short amount of time. The truth is, I could sum up most of the fervor and excitement for telework—at least at NIH—in one word: BRAC. You have only to venture outside NIH's gate on any given day to see the traffic and congestion that have already become a way of life around here. Anything we can do to make progress on our mission and also make the roads a little less crowded, I believe we should consider.

Think differently.
For the few minutes I have, I want you to look at telework from a different perspective. I want you to see the issue like the scientific community we are. Perhaps as managers, some of you have already done an exercise like this, using a business model. You call it implementing Best Practices, right? That's very close to what I'm suggesting here.

You don't have to be at NIH long to start using the scientific method for everything. We take a problem….Form an idea about the problem….Start collecting data. We weigh all of the evidence. Then we apply what we've learned to solving the problem. We find ways to translate our results into therapies, solutions, answers to the problem.

Now, of course that's overly simplified. Sometimes the steps don't go exactly in that neat order, and oftentimes things don't go just according to the plan. Most times these studies take many years before we get, for instance, a good candidate drug or intervention that we can share. But here's where we can speed up the pace of science a little today. A great deal of the data-collecting has already been done for us. In fact, the concept of telework dates back to 1973. NIH has been out in front of the issue for quite some time as well. So, we can draw on decades of information already gathered. This Telework Festival can provide a few shortcuts for us.

As I see it, we've got three aspects to consider here: Crowd Control, Greener Pastures and Workforce Well-Being. Let's look at all three, briefly.

First, we're all aware of the multi-faceted problem:

Crowd control.
Our Bethesda campus, our facilities in Rockville, the roads around them, the parking facilities to support them—all are crowded. BRAC brought more cars, more people, more congestion and more traffic. That's a fact. We knew it was going to happen. We planned for it. We've implemented several countermeasures to deal with it. But the fact remains, we see too many vehicles, too much pollution and too many traffic tie-ups for an area this size to accommodate.

Telework can help us with this problem.

The second thing we need to think about is related to health, and—frankly—putting some of our environmental health research into action:

Greener Pastures.
Put all of our congestion, traffic and parking issues aside for a moment and consider that telework can help NIH reduce its carbon footprint on the planet. We can make an impact on the environment. In fact, on HHS's list of *Top 10 Things We Can Do for a Sustainable Home and Workplace*, the number one item is "Increase the Use of Telework and Alternative Work Schedules."

Let me share some data with you.

Annual estimates show that as of September 2011 data, more than 307,000 fewer trips are being made by employees to the NIH campus because of telework.

Of the 84 percent of NIH employees eligible to telework, 20 percent telework regularly 1-2 days a week and 20 percent telework less than once a month. Let's compare an *ad hoc* teleworker who works from home once every 2 months with an

employee who teleworks 1 to 2 days a week. According to the estimates, the weekly teleworker will save almost 430 dollars a year in gas and 51 hours in time spent on the road. That has direct reductions in greenhouse gases.

One study concluded that if 33 million Americans worked from home, Gulf oil imports could be reduced by 24 percent to 48 percent. We could decrease greenhouse gases by up to 67 million metric tons a year, and use as much as 7.5 trillion fewer gallons of gasoline each year. All that comes to a total of 110 million dollars in savings a day.

According to Telework Exchange, if all eligible federal employees teleworked 2 days per week, the federal workforce would collectively save 3.3 billion dollars and 2.7 million tons of pollutants annually.

The third and final point we should all consider may be the most vital:

Workforce Well-Being.
Telework—apparently even just the promise of it—makes employees happier. Almost any business model will tell you: a happier workforce is a healthier workforce and a more productive workforce. The positive effects on morale, and on NIH's ability to recruit and retain the best employees cannot be overstated.

A recent Telework Exchange study of federal managers reported that 66 percent of those who manage teleworkers say people who work from home are as productive as their in-office counterparts. In fact, at one of our fellow federal agencies—the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office—productivity reportedly increased by 10 percent with no change in quality of the work.

The truth of the matter is, employees who telework say they can get more work done with fewer interruptions. You know the kind of interruptions they're talking about, don't you? The so-called quick office pop-ins that turn into 15-minute chats? Or, how about the hallway hold-ups that turn a restroom break into an impromptu staff meeting? <smile> That time can really add up, over the course of a day or a week.

Teleworkers report less stress and fewer sick leave days too. We haven't even mentioned how telework can keep headcolds and other germs from spreading, or how inclement weather doesn't have to slow the work flow for teleworkers. We're coming up on that time of year too—snow, ice and flu season.

Fact is, nowadays, most potential employees are expecting some kind of telework choices and alternative work schedule options to be offered. We want to stay competitive as a top employer.

Evidence is clear.
So, in a nutshell, there it is, the strong case for telework. Those of you who have been hesitant to suggest this for your organization, or even for yourselves, can weigh the evidence.

Telework certainly benefits NIH. All of our commuters—from employees, patients and other campus visitors, to service people and those making deliveries—all of us experience reduced congestion and improved parking.

Budget-wise, NIH lowers the cost of its utilities, and reduces its parking and Trans-share expenses along with the funds we budget for physical workspace.

In addition, we improve our Continuity of Operations readiness. With telework, we help make local air quality better and we reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We also increase the assortment of work-life incentives we can offer potential employees when we recruit.

Telework helps us improve our workforce well-being. Our employees are happier, healthier. They spend less energy getting to work, and more on getting work done. Their wallets are healthier as well. Telework saves employees money, either on public transportation costs, or on fuel, and the general wear and tear of operating a vehicle to and from campus every day.

I really wish all of our science problems were as easy to address as this one. Telework helps us ease a little of the crowding. It gets us going greener, lessening our impact on the environment. And most importantly, telework significantly improves our workforce well-being.

We are determined to increase NIH participation in telework. Today's festival is a terrific way to start making that happen. I want to commend organizers again, for coordinating this. We do appreciate your efforts. Thank you.

Introduction of guest speaker.

Now before I take my seat, let me introduce our guest speaker, Howard Kelsey. He is the HHS Deputy Assistant Secretary for Facilities Management and Policy. His office provides direction in master planning, facility planning & design, construction budget oversight as well as leasing and maintenance. Mr. Kelsey is responsible for all matters and technical issues related to facilities for HHS. And, it's our pleasure to welcome him here today. Mr. Kelsey…