

Telework Enhancement Act Pilot Program (TEAPP)

Background

In February 2012, the USPTO launched the Telework Enhancement Act Pilot Program (TEAPP) as authorized by Public Law 111-292¹. This Act allowed USPTO employees to work throughout the country and waive government-paid costs for required travel back to headquarters. It expired on December 8, 2017. The program was extended by Congress in 2018 and will expire on December 31, 2020 without further action.

The TEAPP program significantly expanded the USPTO's teleworking work-force and allowed the agency to hire and retain the highly skilled workforce it has today. Currently, the USPTO has 7,148 full-time teleworking employees located in nearly every state in the country, representing more than half of the USPTO workforce. Of these, approximately 2,971 are TEAPP participants (see Figure 1).

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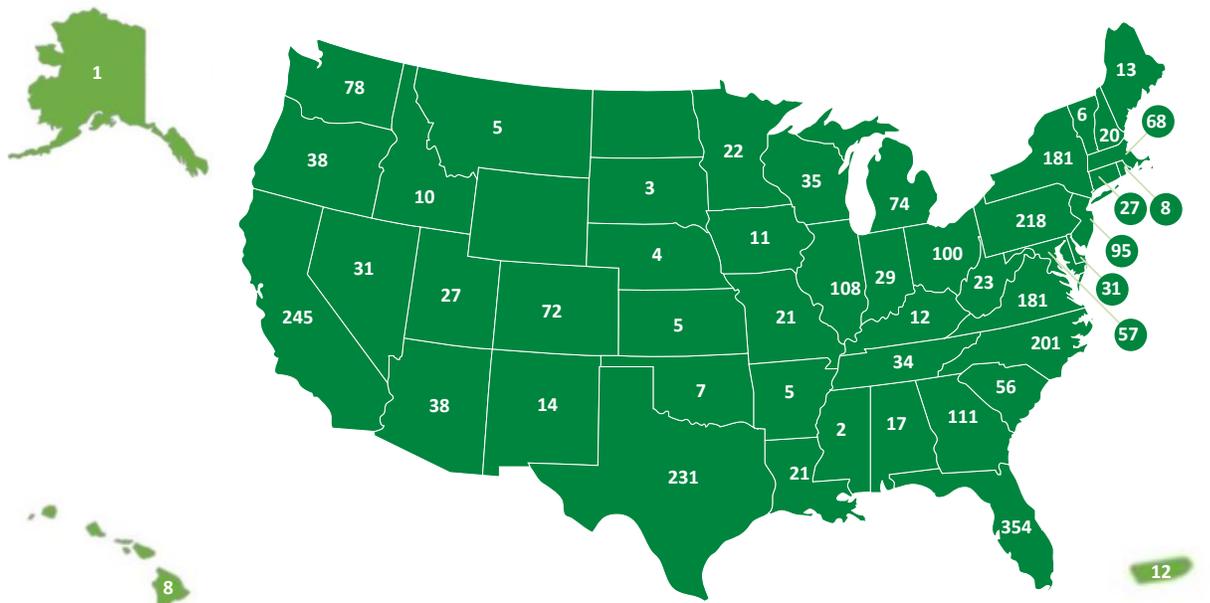


Figure 1: TEAPP Participant Locations as of Q2 2020. Collectively, 2,971 TEAPP employees represent 42% of all full-time agency teleworkers.

1. As defined in Section 6501 of the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010, the term “telework” or “teleworking” refers to a work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of such employee’s position, and other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work.

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Benefits of TEAPP

The USPTO's telework programs are part of the agency's business model to recruit and retain the best and brightest talent while reducing operating costs and more efficiently use its user fees. Over its history, TEAPP has demonstrated that enabling employees to work throughout the United States leads to higher employee retention rates and increased productivity. Specific benefits that can be attributed to the USPTO's telework programs are:

- Savings of \$123M in FY2019, the bulk of which comes from avoided real estate costs (\$52.1M), increased productivity (\$49M), and increased retention (\$23M)
- The ability to recruit and retain top notch scientists, engineers, and lawyers across the country
- Proven increases in productivity and employee morale
- Decreases in the environmental footprint of commuting

Program Oversight

The USPTO has a variety of established tools to help monitor employee attendance and productivity and foster collaboration, regardless of where our employees are working. Some of these tools include:

- A supervisory IT dashboard tool which shows employee-specific data on examiner production and timeliness performance
- The required use of secure ID cards during work hours, with sophisticated IT tools that track employee login/logout events as well as when the computer goes inactive
- Collaboration tools that streamline communication and indicate employee availability in real time
- A well-developed time and attendance policy, with required trainings on obligations and procedures
- Biennial recertification of telework agreements with all of our teleworking employees
- Multiple, well-established procedures to randomly audit employee work quality

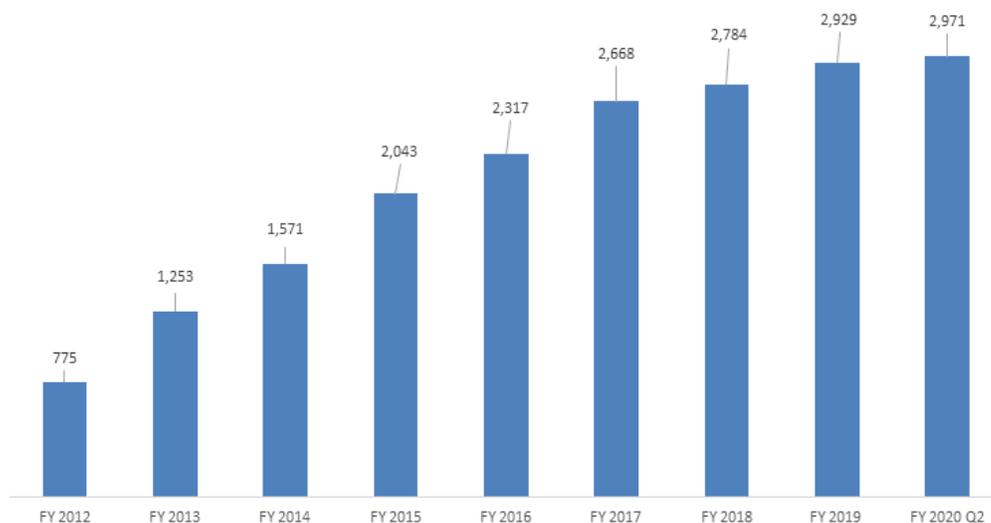


Figure 2: TEAPP Employee Participation Since Inception