

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 expires on December 8, 2017.

The TEAPP program significantly expanded the USPTO's teleworking workforce and allowed the agency to hire and retain the highly skilled workforce it has today. Currently, the USPTO has 6,100 full-time teleworking employees located in nearly every state in the country, representing nearly half of the USPTO workforce. Of these, approximately 2,500 are TEAPP participants (see Figure 1).

A 3-year extension of TEAPP would allow the USPTO to continue to improve the

program while providing the agency with sufficient time to develop a budget proposal that could absorb the associated travel costs of TEAPP employees. During those additional three years, the agency estimates those costs to be approximately \$3.5 million based on planned employee trainings for FY 2018-20.

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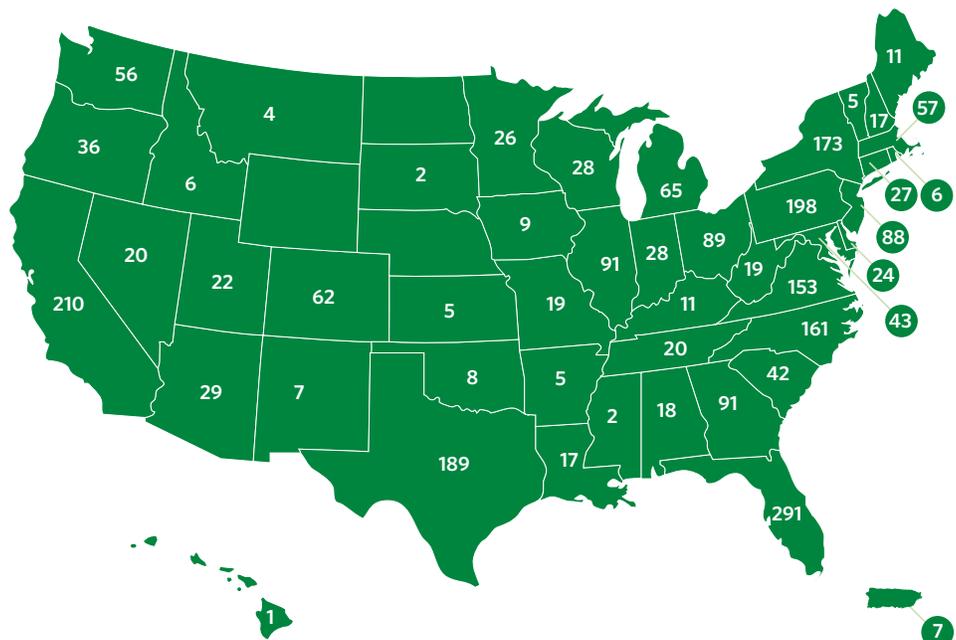


Figure 1: TEAPP Participant Locations as of Q2 2017. Collectively, 2,493 TEAPP employees represent 40% of all full time agency teleworkers.

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 USPTO business model to recruit and retain the best and brightest talent while reducing operating costs and more efficiently using user fees. 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 TEAPP program are:

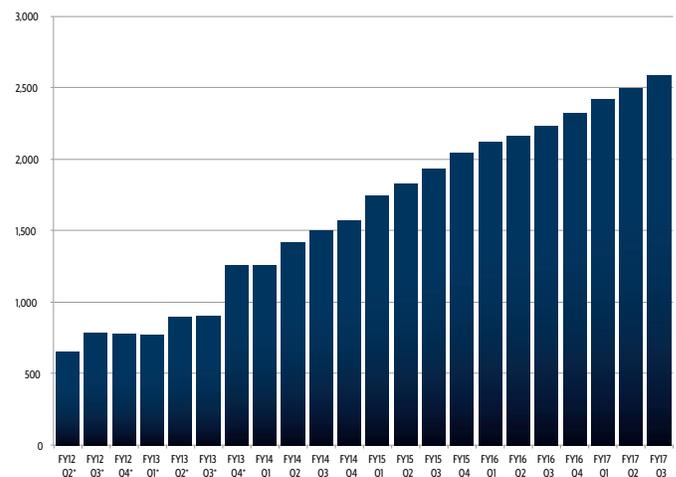
- Savings of approximately \$3.5M over three years of agency travel costs for TEAPP employees;
- Savings of \$77.4M in FY2016, the bulk of which comes from avoided real estate costs (\$17.1M) and increased retention (\$31.5M);
- The ability to recruit top notch scientists, engineers, and lawyers across the country (see Figure 2);
- Proven increases in productivity and work hours compared to non-hoteling program participants³; and
- Increases in employee morale and decreases in the environmental footprint of commuting.

Program Oversight

Today at the USPTO, supervisors receive extensive training and have a variety of tools in place to help monitor employees' attendance and work levels, regardless of where the employees are working. Some of our management tools include:

- A supervisory IT dashboard tool which shows employee-specific data on examiner production and timeliness performance;
- Focused training for all supervisors and employees on USPTO time and attendance policies;
- Well-developed time and attendance policy, updated in April 2017, with agency-wide refresher trainings on time and attendance obligations and a policy on expanded use of networking and collaboration tools; and
- Annual recertification of agreements with all of our teleworking employees.

Figure 2: TEAPP Participants



3. 2016 USPTO Telework Annual Report; Also, National Academy of Public Administration's report "The United States Patent and Trademark Office: A Telework Internal Control and Program Review" (Washington, D.C.: July 2015).