


27 January 2023

Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 29 November 2022 in which you asked:

1. *What is Department of Conservation's current working from home policy?*
2. *How many staff currently work from home at least some of the time? What percentage is this of total workforce?*
3. *How much has the Department of Conservation spent on equipment / resources for staff to be able to work from home in 2022?*
4. *What does Department on Conservation pay per annum for any office space used by the department?*

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *What is Department of Conservation's current working from home policy?*

Our Senior Leadership Team is committed to enabling flexible work across our organisation where reasonable to do so. We consider such action to be reasonable and in alignment with the Government's 'flexible by default' 2020 [goal](#). Under our Flexible Work Arrangements Policy (Policy), we have committed to enabling our staff to work flexibly where possible. This action aligns with our goal to create flexible work arrangements that properly balance the needs of individuals and teams in a manner which does not compromise the operational requirements of our organisation. Our definition of flexible work, under our Policy, includes an employee requesting to change their place of work (e.g., asking to work from home) and / or their work pattern.

Our Policy allows employees to formally request to work from home part time or full time, on a regular basis. Approval requests are informed by our Flexible Work Standard Operating Procedure (FWSOP) which requires employees and managers to conduct a health and safety review. This ensures that their working from home space is suitably set up to prevent injury or wellbeing issues. Both managers and employees are able to access guidance and resources on how to set up efficient and effective flexible work

arrangements on our intranet pages. In addition to the above health and safety considerations, our FWSOP requires managers to consider a variety of factors before approval is provided. Common factors considered include:

- whether the staff member can continue to conduct their role effectively in a flexi-work environment,
- whether the staff member can continue to connect and collaborate with others sufficiently, and
- whether the staff member's well-being is likely to improve or be compromised in any way from a flexi-work agreement.

Managers are encouraged to explore options to reach a mutually beneficial arrangement that works for both the employee and DOC.

In November 2022, we informed our staff that employees in office-based roles are required to work from our business offices at least 3 days per week (unless a well-considered flexible work arrangement already exists). This approach is driven by a desire to ensure that we utilise our office spaces appropriately and foster in-person collaboration. We are currently preparing additional hybrid working guidance for our employees and leaders to ensure that any hybrid or working from home arrangements work well operationally and help us foster our desired collaborative culture.

2. *How many staff currently work from home at least some of the time? What percentage is this of total workforce?*

Our systems show that there are 183 staff (approximately 6.7% of our workforce) that are either on a flexi work trial period or authorised to partially work from home on an ongoing basis. It should be noted that our systems do not track the total number of employees operating under informal flexible work arrangements. Incidentally, the percentage of staff with informal flexi-work arrangements is likely to be much higher.

As previously highlighted, such work arrangements (including working from home) are primarily tracked internally between staff and supervisors to enable flexibility in approach as operational and individual needs change.

3. *How much has the Department of Conservation spent on equipment / resources for staff to be able to work from home in 2022?*

Our systems are not set up in a manner which tracks the purchase of equipment or resources for staff to be able to work from home. Subsequently, we are unable to extract data required to provide an accurate and informed response. This aspect of your request is declined under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as the information requested does not exist.

For your interest the Department supplies staff with laptop computers that can be used both inside and outside the office environment while working.



4. What does Department on Conservation pay per annum for any office space used by the department?


We can confirm that for the 2021 – 2022 financial year the Department spent \$9.96m on office space. For more information on floor space leased and total annual cost please refer to the Departments Annual Review which can be accessed at: [Department of Conservation \(Responses to written questions 1 to 246\) - New Zealand Parliament \(www.parliament.nz\)](http://www.parliament.nz)

At the time of writing this response the current count of Department leased offices is 64.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā


Ginny Baddeley
Chief People Officer
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai