

2022



Telework Annual Report

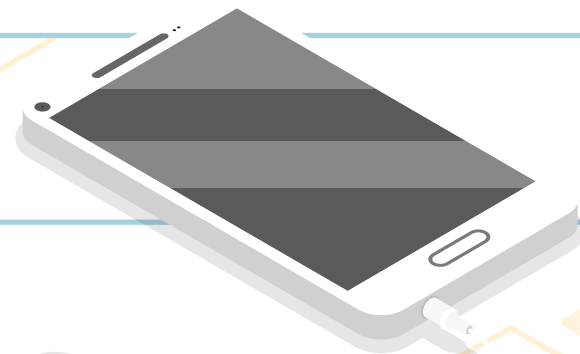


UNITED STATES
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE®

Table of Contents



INTRODUCTION	3
EXECUTIVE INTERVIEWS	4
KATHI VIDAL	4
ROB SORENSEN	5
STATISTICS	7
FY 2022 USPTO TELEWORK STATISTICS	7
REAL ESTATE IMPACT OF TELEWORK	7
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF TELEWORK	7
BUSINESS UNIT BY THE NUMBERS	7
TELEWORK GROWTH	8
USPTO FULL-TIME TELEWORKERS BY STATE	9
BUSINESS UNIT HIGHLIGHTS	10
NATIONWIDE WORKFORCE	22
REGIONAL OFFICES	22
TELEWORK ENHANCEMENT ACT PROGRAM	24
AGENCY OUTREACH AND SPEAKING EFFORTS	25
AGENCY ASSISTANCE	25
PRESENTATIONS/SPEAKING EFFORTS	25
LEADERSHIP FORUM EXTRA	25
FUTURE OF TELEWORK AT THE USPTO	26
ENTERPRISE TELEWORK INFORMATION SYSTEM (ETIS)	26
TELEWORK RESOURCES	26
EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT	26



Introduction



Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 marks the 25th anniversary of telework at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). From the start of the program in 1997, with 18 employees teleworking, to over 12,600 teleworking in FY 2022, the USPTO continues to be a leader of telework in the federal government. At the USPTO, telework is a business strategy that supports mission achievement and goal fulfillment. With telework employees in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, the agency has created a sustainable and best-in-class model for distributed work serving external stakeholders from across the United States.

The USPTO's Telework Program is guided by an agency-wide telework policy with consistent standards and procedures. Individual business units (BU) have their own telework programs designed to meet the operational needs of the BU while supporting the agency's mission and strategic goals.

FY 2022 was a year of transition and continued growth for telework at the USPTO. The previous two years presented unique challenges for both government agencies and private industry to overcome the impacts of the pandemic. The USPTO relied on its robust telework programs to seamlessly transition its workforce to almost entirely off-site. Leveraging over 25 years of telework experience and lessons from the period of maximum telework and using data to analyze the impact to organizational performance and organizational health, the agency updated all BU telework programs and the Telework Enhancement Act Program (TEAP) standard operating procedures. This enabled an expansion in the number of positions eligible to telework and increased the telework options available for each position. The updated telework programs were approved and in place in May 2022, when the USPTO fully reopened all locations to employees and resumed some in-person events and appointments for the public.

The expansion in telework provides additional cost savings by reducing the need for office space. It enhances our recruitment of critical talent by geographically expanding our candidate pool. It increases retention by providing opportunities for expanded work flexibility. Telework also enhances the resiliency of the agency during continuity events. Additionally, the USPTO's teleworkers have a dramatic impact on the environment in the

Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Telework reduces the number of cars on the road, thereby reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuel consumption, and energy usage. The decrease in air pollution also helps mitigate environmental and human health impacts.

At the end of FY 2022, over 96% of employees had an approved telework agreement, and 84% of the agency was enrolled in full-time telework. The increase of telework has naturally affected how much real estate the USPTO requires for in-person agency operations. Working with the General Services Administration (GSA), the agency will relinquish the Remsen and Randolph buildings on its headquarters campus in Alexandria, Virginia when the leases expire in August 2024. This reduction in office space is in addition to the release of the Randolph Square building in Arlington, Virginia.

To maintain its success, the USPTO strives to adopt sound workforce strategies where employees stay productive and connected, regardless of where they are located. The agency relies on training, information technology (IT), and engagement initiatives to support its program. Further, the USPTO depends on proven data to make the best decisions possible for its workforce and work environment. USPTO employee engagement and satisfaction scores are consistently above average, and employees identify telework as one of the factors they like most about working at the USPTO and one of the top reasons they stay. Expanded telework has also allowed the USPTO to expand the geographic diversity of its workforce. Going forward, the USPTO will focus on improving and updating its telework programs in ways that continue to drive improved outcomes for the agency and its workforce.



Executive Interviews



KATHI VIDAL

UNDER SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND DIRECTOR OF THE USPTO

Kathi Vidal provides leadership and oversight to one of the largest intellectual property (IP) offices in the world and serves as principal advisor to President Biden through U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo on domestic and international IP policy.

As the head of the USPTO, Director Vidal is working to expand American innovation and bring more ideas to impact, including serving as the Vice Chair of the Council for Inclusive Innovation (CI²), alongside Secretary Raimondo and CI² council members.

ON MAY 25, 2022, THE USPTO FULLY REOPENED ALL LOCATIONS TO EMPLOYEES AND RESUMED SOME IN-PERSON EVENTS AND APPOINTMENTS FOR THE PUBLIC. WHAT WERE SOME OF THE FACTORS IN THE SUCCESS OF THE REOPENING?

The successful reopening was an agency-wide effort, and our number one priority was the safety and wellbeing of our employees. Before the reopening, based on what we had learned about our ability to work effectively from home during the pandemic, we developed and implemented new telework guidelines that greatly expanded existing telework opportunities across all of our business units. This meant fewer employees returning to work on-site. We also took a number of steps to make our facilities safer, like installing hand sanitizer stations and hand wipes at every elevator lobby, equipping all building ventilation systems with MERV 13 filters, and providing administrative leave for employee vaccinations. Last but not least, we considered the mental health toll of the pandemic, frequently reminding our employees of confidential and free resources like the Office of the Ombudsman and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

YOU MENTIONED THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF UPDATED TELEWORK GUIDELINES. CAN YOU EXPAND ON WHAT THAT ENTAILED?

Telework at the USPTO is a data-driven business strategy that greatly enhances our ability to recruit and retain nationwide talent. It also provides our employees pragmatic work options while delivering significant real estate cost-savings, positive environmental impacts, and a better work-life balance for employees. Leveraging more than 25 years of telework experience and lessons learned from the shift to maximum telework during the COVID-19 pandemic, we reviewed every position for expanded telework eligibility. Collaborating with our three labor unions, we then updated business unit telework guidelines and the operating procedures for the Telework Enhancement Act Program (TEAP). The end result, as I mentioned before, was more people working at home and fewer on-site in our facilities. To support implementation of the new guidelines, we developed an agency wide telework IT solution that delivers simple and efficient telework application and approval processes and facilitates telework program management and data reporting.



WITH THE EXPANSION OF TELEWORK, HOW WILL THE USPTO ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTION?

With nearly 85% of our workforce now teleworking full-time, we recognize that employee engagement and connection requires renewed focus and resources across the agency. Our goal is to ensure that “remote employee” refers only to their location, not their work experience. Our New Employee Orientations, for example, provide helpful information on employee connection and engagement. Supervisors are provided a wide variety of resources and

training to successfully engage, lead, and develop employees within our hybrid work environment. In August, the USPTO's 2022 Leadership Forum, attended by agency managers and executives, included multiple presentations focused on enhancing culture and employee engagement, including "Connectable: How leaders can move hybrid teams from isolated to all in" and "Diversity and inclusion for distributed teams."

We also provide a robust suite of IT hardware and software to ensure our employees are able to remain seamlessly connected to each other, their managers, and their overall work environment, regardless of where they are physically located. This suite includes the single Universal Laptop for on- and off-campus use, Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection, the Cisco Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), Microsoft Teams, webcam, and Cisco WebEx. Additionally, we have developed web-based tools to support engagement and connection, including several employee social networking and connection sites.

We have held a number of small-group listening sessions and town hall meetings utilizing multiple channels for employee feedback. I recently launched the Director's Employee Feedback Portal, which allows employees to submit ideas and comments for review. Additionally, our 2022 People Survey, conducted across the agency to assist leadership in identifying areas to improve the employee experience, included multiple questions on engagement, well-being, connection, and the new hybrid work experience. These channels ensure our employees have multiple opportunities to be heard and influence change in their work experience.

WHAT DO YOU ENVISION GOING FORWARD IN REGARDS TO TELEWORK AT THE USPTO?

With nearly 85% of our employees teleworking full-time and more than 96% teleworking at least part of the time, telework will continue to be an integral part of our business strategy and culture at the USPTO. We will continue to focus on enhancing the employee experience and ensuring our telework programs are effective and aligned with agency strategic goals. Moving forward, our focus will be increasing teleworking effectiveness with the best tools, training, and processes that improve mission outcomes and maximize our ability to attract and retain the most talented and diverse workforce from across the country. Telework is one of many ways the USPTO brings innovation to impact, and I expect that will continue well into the future.

ROBERT J. SORENSEN DIRECTOR OF THE TELEWORK PROGRAM OFFICE (TPO)

Rob Sorensen is responsible for developing and implementing the USPTO's comprehensive telework and remote programs for employees that support agency goals and objectives, improve employee retention, and enhance the agency's ability to recruit nationwide talent.

Prior to his arrival in May, he worked for the Department of the Navy as an executive on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations where he served as the Director of Manpower, Training, and Education Requirements. He also oversaw the initial development of the Navy's telework policy for military personnel. Sorensen is a retired naval aviator with over 20 years of active-duty service.



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE INSIGHTS YOU HAVE GAINED IN YOUR SHORT TIME AS DIRECTOR OF THE TELEWORK PROGRAM OFFICE?

The most notable factors I've observed over the past year is how thoroughly integrated telework is within the business processes across the organization, and how committed the organization is to ensuring USPTO's telework program is properly developed, resourced, and implemented. The USPTO has incorporated telework as a business strategy and human capital flexibility tool that helps support the agency's mission and achieve our goals. The USPTO has been a leader within the federal space in creating a nationwide workforce and in adopting and effectively implementing telework strategies. Telework significantly and positively impacts the USPTO by reducing the need for additional office space, enhancing recruitment and retention, and providing opportunities for expanded work flexibility.



WHAT LESSONS FROM YOUR TIME WORKING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY WILL HELP YOU IN YOUR ROLE AT THE USPTO?

The Navy and the USPTO face many of the same challenges, including effective network access and security, reducing costs, ensuring employees have the proper tools to remain effective and connected, and ensuring the organization can

recruit and retain talent. Additionally, both are working to structure telework as a business strategy that is aligned to mission success. As we updated the telework policy across the Navy, we recognized that telework is really about improving outcomes in our key mission goals, not simply teleworking more because we could do it. Expanding telework should really be done to improve those desired outcomes such as increasing productivity, improving employee satisfaction, lowering costs, and enhancing the agency's ability to function during weather events or other situations where working on-site is impacted.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS ARE THE TELEWORK PROGRAM OFFICE WORKING ON?

Prior to my arrival at the USPTO, the organization completed significant work to update the BU telework programs using what was learned during the maximum telework environment. With that work done, we are now focused on making improvements to those programs, including expanding options, pilot programs, and other initiatives that align to meeting business objectives. We are also developing metrics and goals beyond quantitative targets to support leadership decision-making and enable us to track and monitor trends and compare to forecasts. We continue to focus on improving customer service, collaboration with other industry and government agencies, and making improvements to our data collection and reporting processes. Finally, with the expansion of telework options and enrollment throughout the USPTO, we are working closely with leadership on real estate and space planning to ensure those initiatives can accurately plan for the future.

WHAT DO YOU ENVISION GOING FORWARD IN REGARDS TO TELEWORK AT THE USPTO?

As I mentioned earlier, the USPTO will continue to learn and implement improvements to our programs as we move forward. Additionally, one of our main efforts moving into the future will be a focus on workplace culture and employee connection. We want to create and maintain a culture that promotes the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA), and we want every employee to feel like they have a voice in the workplace. We understand the importance of employees having connections that go beyond work-related utility, and we will continue to explore ways to help strengthen connections across the workforce.

"When the announcement came out in May 2019 that telework options were expanding to include Hawaii, one thought came immediately to mind: *I am going home.*"

TIFFANY C.
Trademark Legal Policy Attorney



Statistics



FY 2022 (4TH QUARTER) TELEWORK STATISTICS

- Current number of teleworkers at the USPTO **12,636**
- Current number of eligible positions at the USPTO **13,085**
- Percent of positions at the USPTO that are eligible **99.85%**
- Percent of positions at the USPTO that are teleworking (agency-wide) **96.41%**
- Total number of patent teleworkers **9,830**
- Percent of eligible patent positions that are teleworking **96.07%**
- Total number of trademark teleworkers **1,067**
- Percent of eligible trademark positions that are teleworking **99.72%**
- Number of patent positions teleworking four or five days per week **8,941**
- Number of trademark positions teleworking four or five days per week **1,002**
- Number of TEAP participants **4,036**

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF TELEWORK*

10,973 TELEWORKERS WORKING FROM HOME FOUR OR FIVE DAYS PER WEEK:

- Avoid driving 91.22 million miles in a year
- Collectively save \$10.8 million in gas a year
- Collectively reduce emissions by 31,800 tons a year

1,545 TELEWORKERS WORKING FROM HOME ONE, TWO, OR THREE DAYS PER WEEK:

- Avoid driving 6.33 million miles in a year
- Collectively save \$749,100 in gas a year
- Collectively reduce emissions by 2,200 tons a year

* In the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area

REAL ESTATE IMPACT OF TELEWORK

- \$65.6 million real estate cost avoidance due to remote teleworkers

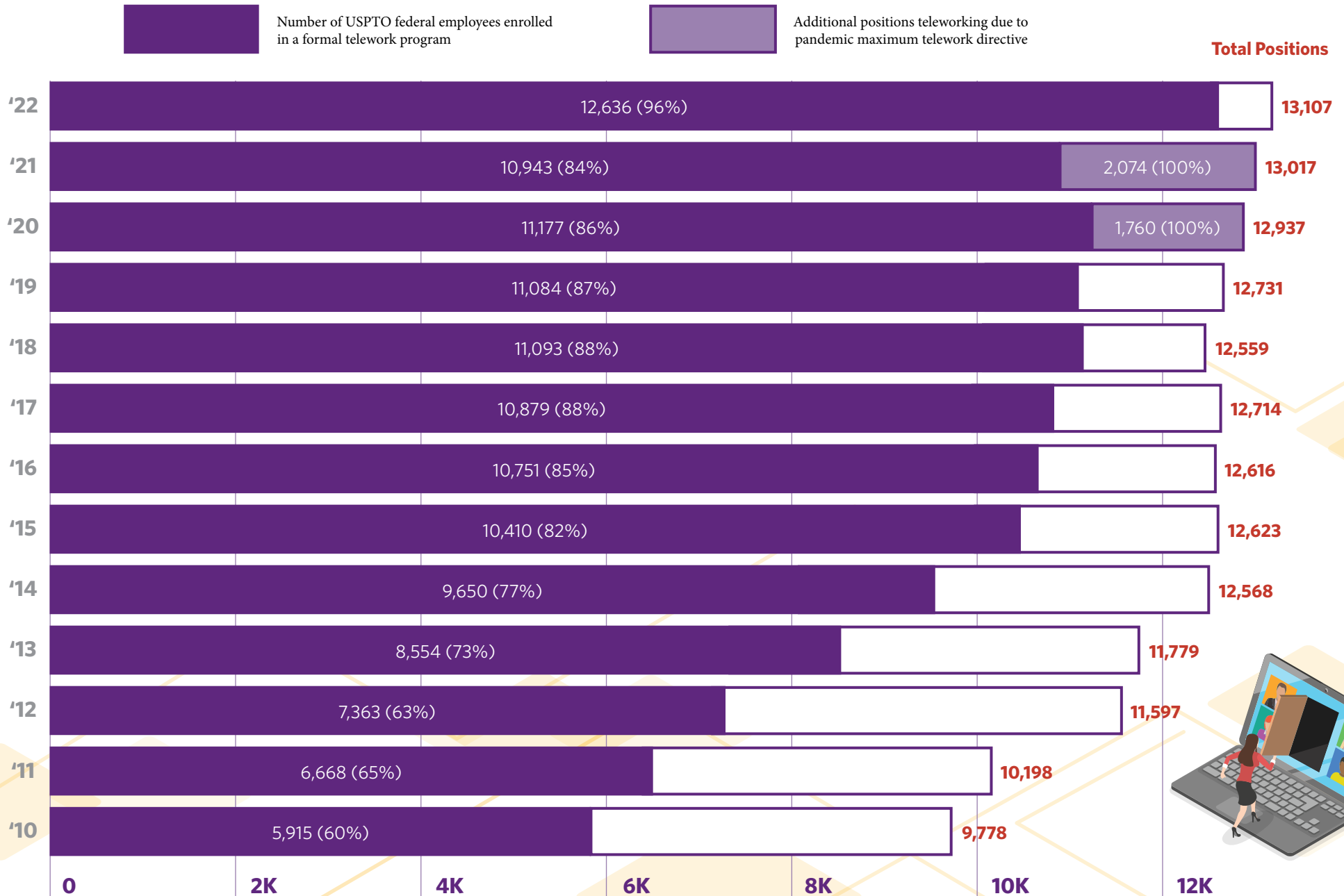
TELEWORK BY BUSINESS UNIT:		50-MILE	TEAP	HOTELING	ROUTINE	SITUATIONAL
BUSINESS UNIT**						
OCCO		14	10	2	3	6
OCFO		153	22	6	9	3
OCIO		444	43	17	71	10
OEEOD		0	0	0	18	2
OUS		0	1	0	6	31
OGC		29	0	7	86	7
OCAO		5	4	0	177	11
OPIA		0	0	0	106	8
Patents		5,349	3,499	93	884	5
PTAB		157	98	0	72	26
Trademarks		595	346	24	95	7
TTAB		42	13	0	18	2
TOTAL		6,788	4,036	149	1,545	118



**Please see pages 9-20 for more information

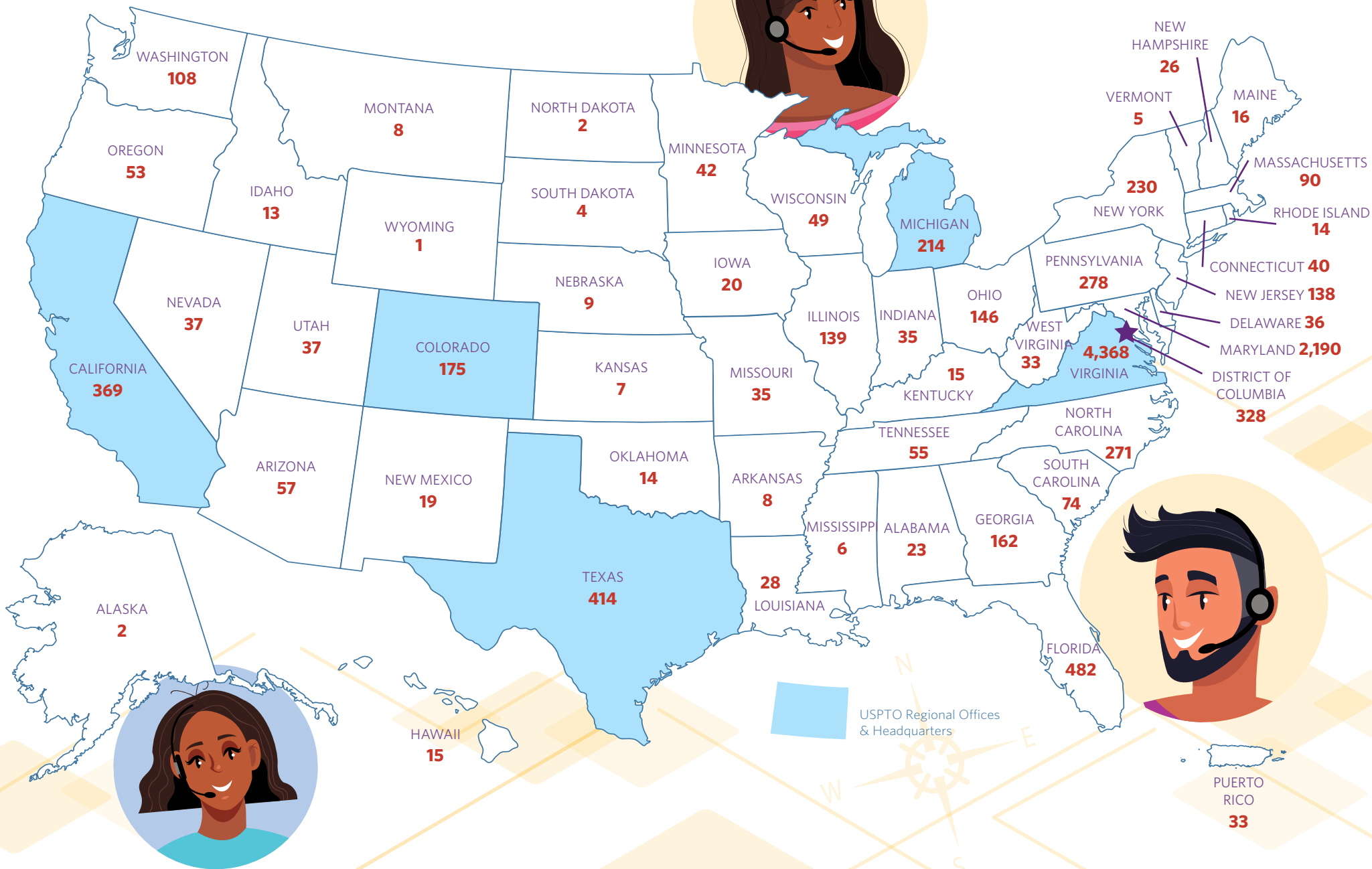
TELEWORK GROWTH

Since its start 26 years ago with 18 Trademark examining attorneys, telework has grown dramatically at the USPTO. The graph shows the growth of the total positions and eligible positions teleworking agency-wide.



USPTO FULL-TIME TELEWORKERS BY STATE

TOTAL: 10,973 TELEWORKERS



Business Unit Highlights



OFFICE OF CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (OCAO) OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

To successfully transition from the maximum telework environment, through the USPTO's phased reopening, and into a new hybrid work environment, the Office of Administrative Services (OAS) set clear communication for in-office tasks and remote tasks, ensured all eligible and interested employees were placed on telework agreements and explained telework guidelines and expectations. The OAS provided the required equipment to assist with the transition and also encouraged employees to stay social by starting weekly and monthly check-ins, kept up face-to-face communication with Microsoft Teams, offered online training to keep employees engaged and held virtual team building activities.

The OAS adapted to the hybrid work model by maintaining regular communication between management and employees through Microsoft Teams, email and phone.

●	TELEWORKERS IN OCAO:	
●	50-MILE	5
●	TEAP	4
●	HOTELING	0
●	ROUTINE	177
●	SITUATIONAL	11

The OAS used several methods to keep staff connected and engaged:

- All-hands meetings with agency updates
- Virtual happy hours where employees were able to connect
- Encouraged personal development
- Created psychological safety
- Encouraged teamwork and collaboration among all employees
- Recognized and rewarded OAS staff for their work on special projects related but not limited to COVID-19 efforts
- Provide employees with tools and resources for success
- Encouraged creativity
- Scheduled regular one-on-one meetings
- Scheduled group climate meetings

To ensure the OAS remains effective and aligned with established business unit goals and priorities, it will focus on the following areas:

- Offer flexible employee schedules and on-campus time when appropriate
- Communicate and set clear guidelines for staff

- Increase feedback from staff
- Streamline onboarding for new staff to acclimate the employee to the agency
- Set healthy boundaries
- Encourage self-care, build more wellness into team activities and share about family life or personal interests outside work

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

One of the main philosophies of the Office of Human Resources (OHR) that factored in the success in transitioning to a new hybrid work environment was to make people first. This meant making mental health a key to a successful work environment. The OHR reminded employees to take care of themselves and encouraged them to sign up for events that support well-being. This philosophy also informed a set of core values developed for the OHR: care, collaboration and expertise.

Another aspect was making adaptations to continue to deliver exceptional customer service. The OHR is a service organization and adjusted schedules to meet customers' needs. With that in mind, all teams have coverage until 5 p.m. every day. Coverage may be achieved with a mix of in-office presence and online presence.

"Telework has transformed the culture of the USPTO: it has contributed to increased productivity while reducing stress. It has expanded our understanding of work-life balance which allows us to be more engaged with our families and communities."

JAMES W.
Assistant Regional Director of
USPTO's Midwest Regional Office



The OHR also established a new Hybrid Workplace Committee representing all OHR divisions. The committee acted as the conduit between employees and the OHR management team. Employees shared concerns and questions directly with their division representatives, which were brought to committee meetings for discussion, and ultimately made recommendations to OHR leadership on return to the workplace.

The committee answered employee questions that came from a dedicated email box, the OHR employee survey, and frequently asked questions page. One example of an outcome from this process was the setting of OHR norms for operating hours, in-office presence, and no meeting Fridays. Each division designed their own team norms to manage workload and reduce fatigue to mitigate burnout.

The OHR stayed on top of the latest industry research, particularly in the areas of adapting to the hybrid work environment and employee well-being, offered by Gartner and Conference Board consultants. The OHR also leveraged related best practices and lessons learned from other business units and incorporated them. The OHR used the agency's Human Capital Council as a venue to share research, best practices, and lessons learned via subject matter expert presentations.

Finally, the OHR was cognizant of the change management aspects of moving from full-time telework to a hybrid model. The OHR did this by involving employees at all levels, fostering trust that created a feeling among employees of buying into the change to the hybrid work environment. In addition, the OHR was deliberate in rolling out changes, ensuring that employees had adequate time to prepare for what was to come. The OHR was successful in its adapting to the hybrid work model using a variety of different techniques. Some examples include:

- Adapting processes that were traditionally done in person to an all virtual experience (e.g., New Employee Orientation, Awards Ceremonies, Leadership Forum)
- Revising the OHR telework policy to account for adaptations to the hybrid workplace
- Being hybrid ready; all meeting invites must include an MS Teams link, so all team members can participate from home or office
- Planning when employees would report to the office to minimize disruption and ensure employee safety
- Creating information guides to help supervisors with mid-year conversations about returning to the office

- Signing Performance Appraisal Plans (PAPs) digitally
- Sourcing digital gift cards for awards
- Evolving competency to reflect what attributes (such as resilience, use of technology) have become more important with virtual work
- Creating an in-person meeting tracker to document the degree to which in-person meetings were occurring; the OHR used that information to optimize the hybrid experience and determine days needed in office to support customers

The OHR monitors data from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and the internal People Survey to determine where to focus efforts to ensure employee engagement and connectedness. Some of the innovative methods include:

- Communicating important information and updates from leadership (e.g., COVID-19 related guidance, specific responses to employee feedback) to employees
- Hosting a Wellness Fair, which included an EAP presentation on managing anxiety
- Scheduling Virtual Water Cooler Chats for each of the Elizabeth Townhouse "floors" so that employees can drop in and have non-work-related conversations
- Conducting brief check-ins with staff, primarily to stay informed about their state of wellbeing
- Fielding an anonymous survey so employees can submit questions for OHR senior leadership team to discuss and respond
- Maintaining a dedicated email inbox specifically for hybrid work-related questions and suggestions
- Hosting coffee talks with OHR senior leadership
- Requiring cameras during virtual meetings, especially with customers

On a broad scale, the OHR placed greater emphasis on the employee experience. Managing the employee experience means ensuring the interactions employees have across all touchpoints in their day-to-day work, and the contexts that influence those interactions, enable them to be effective and engaged. Teleworking is one of those contexts that needs to be managed. To that end, the OHR is in the process of standing up an agency-wide Employee Experience Committee; a major part of that committee is the Employee Experience Design Team, which will be represented by several OHR Divisions. The OHR will continue to keep abreast of the latest industry research on the hybrid

workplace, as well as learn from other organizations in how they navigate through and adapt to this change.

The OHR will explore the Employment Value Proposition (EVP) to understand what employees are seeking in employment. The EVP ensures that the OHR delivers what prospective hires desire in terms of flexibility and remote work and that USPTO continues to be an employer of choice. The OHR will continue monitoring the agency's exit survey to understand the extent to which any aspects of the hybrid work environment contribute to attrition. The OHR will also employ "stay interviews" that provide similar insight. Finally, the OHR will be reviewing telework eligibility by position to ensure its currency, as well as making any necessary adjustments to our telework policy.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

The Office of the Chief Communications Officer (OCCO) successfully transitioned from the maximum telework environment over the past two

●	TELEWORKERS IN OCCO:	
●	50-MILE	14
●	TEAP	10
●	HOTELING	2
●	ROUTINE	3
●	SITUATIONAL	6

years. OCCO leadership determined when OCCO staff needed to work on campus based on the type of work and OCCO mission needs. OCCO leadership worked with each employee to find out what was

important to them when transitioning from maximum telework, reopening, and working in the new hybrid work environment. They looked at other factors such as work-life balance, productivity, reduced absenteeism, and talent across the nation (specifically new hires). OCCO leadership continues to focus on ways to adopt a hybrid work model. They continue to come up with ideas to communicate with employees, so that they can always stay connected with remote and on-site employees.

OCCO staff adapted to the hybrid work model quite well. Most OCCO staff state that they have more flexibility to get work done, and they are more productive. They also enjoy their flexible work schedules and locations.

The OCCO uses several innovative methods to keep staff connected and engaged, such as encouraging the staff to take care of their health and wellness. They do this by encouraging them to take breaks often so they do not get burned out sitting at the computer all day. Also, they encourage staff to exercise and to create healthy habits when working at home. The OCCO also hosts frequent virtual meetings and causal hangouts (e.g., monthly

appreciation meetings where employees talk about something for which they are thankful). The OCCO often has other meetings to make sure employees feel heard and valued and to keep them excited about being a part of the OCCO team.

To ensure the OCCO telework program remains effective and in alignment with OCCO goals and priorities in a hybrid work environment, the OCCO will focus on fostering personal connections with each OCCO employee. Specifically, OCCO leadership understands that each employee has their own life outside of work and recognizes each employee strengths, weaknesses and interests to better connect with employees.

OCCO leadership are always working on implementing more effective leadership and employee engagement strategies. For example, the OCCO had an on-site team building training in December. The OCCO brought all employees together, had team building exercises and fun activities, encouraged staff to get to know each other. As a result, the staff got the opportunity to see one another, create camaraderie, and develop trust amongst each other. This event was a good way to keep the lines of communication open within the OCCO staff.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) is a hybrid first organization with a mindset that employees can work from any location and be productive. The OCFO implemented a new telework program that provides an option for five day per week telework to nearly 100% of employees. OCFO employees have reported high levels of satisfaction with the increased telework options and relinquished their USPTO physical office space without complaint throughout the transition to permanent home offices across 15 states.

In this new paradigm, OCFO leadership is committed to delivering the same work experience for every employee, regardless of where they work. The organization prioritized collaboration and open and active communication to transition smoothly into a permanent hybrid work environment. The OCFO leaned into technology, using tools like video, chat, and collaboration spaces with quick reference guides to acclimate employees to a permanent hybrid posture. Communication flowed through virtual all-hands meetings at all levels of the organization and through the electronic OCFO Weekly

●	TELEWORKERS IN OCFO:	
●	50-MILE	153
●	TEAP	22
●	HOTELING	6
●	ROUTINE	9
●	SITUATIONAL	3

Reports. Additionally, there is no distinction between organizational priorities, goals or performance expectations whether an employee teleworks or works in the office. In fact, the OCFO continues to establish annual priorities that cascade and communicate to those throughout the organization in the same way as in a less virtual working environment.

The OCFO understands that hybrid work requires a slightly different communication skillset than working in the office. The OCFO is deliberate about that new communication skillset every day, and strives to promote a shared sense of belonging and an effective hybrid work environment. This includes brainstorming improved and innovative ways to offer both in-person and virtual opportunities to connect, keeping the workforce engaged and promoting well-being and a positive workplace that aligns with goals and priorities.

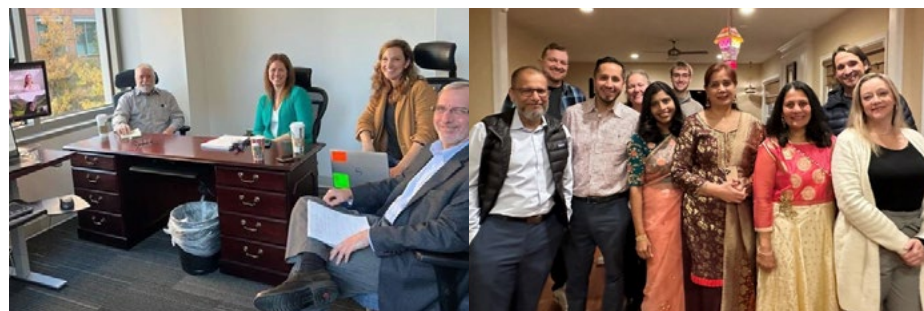
To that end, the OCFO established the Hybrid First Council (HFC) comprised of employees from across the OCFO at all levels of the organization. The HFC is designed to support a more virtual organization, advises on issues including retaining and developing culture, ensuring employees have the tools to do their work, establishing the norms and behaviors of successful hybrid work and ensuring that employees find time to have fun and connect as people. The HFC is a key element for creating and maintaining an OCFO culture, virtually.

cross-organization team projects, team building events and offering hybrid days, where some employees work together in a shared office space and others join remotely via video. The OCFO practices good hybrid etiquette as offices and teams do a great job of being highly inclusive in meetings by pulling together a broad representation of employees to discuss issues at all levels of the organization. The OCFO regularly recognizes and praises hard work through Microsoft Teams chats and channels and with more formal awards. After big deadlines, achievements are celebrated through hybrid events.



The Office of Finance, Financial Accounting Division celebrates the new fiscal year at a hybrid event.

The Office of Procurement celebrates Halloween virtually.



Activity Based Information (ABI) team in OCFO having a staff meeting with half the team online and onscreen, and the other half hoteling on campus.

The Office of Financial Management Systems, Fee Management Product Division celebrates Diwali at a team members home.

The OCFO is happy to report that it is already off to a good start as offices continue to be productive, effective, efficient and socially connected despite hybrid work. Microsoft Teams and video calls enable employees to engage in a very similar way to an in-office model (employees see each other on video, have recurring touchpoints, share calendars, have group chats and more). The OCFO also strives to keep engagement high by having

The OCFO offices have designed a range of activities, like virtual games and fun virtual Halloween photos. The OCFO has also prioritized wellness and shares reminders and tips on maintaining wellness, both collectively and individually. Promoting a healthy work-life balance in this hybrid environment has empowered employees to know everyone is a leader, which has successfully changed the culture of the organization to a hybrid first work model.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

During maximum telework, the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) reviewed all positions for telework eligibility. The OCIO implemented a new telework program that provides an option for five day per week telework to 90% of employees. Prior to the phased reopening, OCIO employees received training on the new telework program. Quick reference guides and other materials were also provided via an updated

TELEWORKERS IN OCIO:	
● 50-MILE	444
● TEAP	43
● HOTELING	17
● ROUTINE	71
● SITUATIONAL	10

OCIO Telework Program SharePoint site. Employees were provided an opportunity to request additional equipment in accordance with their selected telework option. Over the summer, 423 OCIO employees relinquished their USPTO physical office space as they transitioned to permanent home offices. The OCIO repurposed spaces previously used for on-site training, contractor space and the service desk to now support hybrid priorities of collaborative services, client-software services and cyber security.

OCIO employees have reported high levels of satisfaction with the increased telework options. The OCIO achieved an Employee Engagement Index of 85 in the 2022 FEVS – five points higher than OCIO’s previous highest score in 2020.

The hybrid work model also has allowed the OCIO to recruit employees from outside of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area who do not wish to relocate, increasing and diversifying candidate pools. The OCIO sees telework as an option to promote a people-first culture, and wants employees to feel prepared to handle any scenario that may arise, whether they stay online, go back into the office or a combination of both. To that end, the Collaboration in a Virtual & Hybrid Environment site identifies various hybrid scenarios and how each could be handled. The site provides tips on how to be a good participant in, or host of, virtual meetings. The site also has a wiki for online collaboration and discussion about telework and hybrid work challenges, ideas and discoveries employees want to share with their OCIO peers. Recognizing that a major aspect of engagement is making sure staff has access to (and can find) the information, people and tools they need, the OCIO has created the New Ways of Working (NWOW) knowledge portal as an online single access point.

The OCIO has established the virtual NWOW dojo, a virtual space to drive employee engagement, facilitate rapid learning, and immediate implementation of skills. Dojo allows USPTO teams to bring a challenge, as well as bringing staff with the needed expertise to provide hands-on support and coaching in an engaging, focused, rapid and ongoing delivery environment. The OCIO will continue to leverage the virtual dojo and expand its application and availability beyond product teams.

Additionally, OCIO leadership will continue to emphasize the balance of flexibility and accountability. The OCIO is also committed to identifying and

leveraging appropriate technology as an enabler that will improve collaboration for all stakeholders including teleworking staff.

OFFICE OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND DIVERSITY

The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity (OEEOD) underwent an evolutionary process as the office operations transitioned from a maximum telework footing to a hybrid environment. Initially, staff was required to attend weekly in-person staff meetings. After several months, a committee of OEEOD employees was tasked to conduct a review of the telework policy and to recommend changes if appropriate. The committee met with additional OEEOD employees who suggested that the requirement to meet in person for an hour each week was outweighed by the stress and expense they incurred getting to those meetings. Shortly thereafter, the committee recommended and the office leadership agreed to conduct the weekly staff meetings virtually and to begin scheduling in-person training/engagement meetings one day each quarter.

TELEWORKERS IN OEEOD:		
●	50-MILE	0
●	TEAP	0
●	HOTELING	0
●	ROUTINE	18
●	SITUATIONAL	2

Despite being conducted virtually, staff meetings have remained effective for conveying information and planning office initiatives, as well as offering employees the opportunity to socialize and share personal news with their peers. The quarterly meetings are expected to be more focused and more engaging because, unlike the weekly meetings, they are being carefully planned to include training and team building opportunities. The first quarterly meeting will take place in February 2023.

In addition, since March 2020, the USPTO Diversity Program, administered by the OEEOD, has taken an outsized role in the agency’s efforts to keep the workforce engaged after the mandatory work from home order was issued. Where the majority of the program’s work used to take place in person on the headquarters campus, the Diversity Program has since leveraged the agency’s telework capabilities using MS Teams and Webex conferencing software to host a variety of events and activities that were formerly conducted in-person. Community Day 2022 was held in a hybrid environment with the bulk of employees (4,000) participating online with nearly 200 participating in person. Moreover, in fiscal year (FY) 2022, the Diversity Program continued



sponsoring, co-sponsoring and facilitating virtual heritage month events and activities commemorating: Black History Month; Women's History Month; Asian American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Month; Jewish American Heritage Month; Caribbean American Heritage Month; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI+) Pride Month; Juneteenth; Hispanic Heritage Month; Disability Employment Awareness Month and Native American Heritage Month. All planning, coordination and execution of those events, to include networking gatherings, welcome wagon socials and flagship events with keynote speakers were conducted remotely.

In FY 2022, the USPTO Diversity Program leveraged the agency's telework capabilities to continue implementation and management of activities under the "Engagement in the Time of Telework Initiative." In collaboration with the leaders of the USPTO's 30 officially recognized employee groups and additional volunteers, more than a half dozen regularly scheduled virtual events and activities were sustained, including book club meetings, coffee chats, photography contests, film discussions and more.

Additional major events included:

- Noche de Ciencia/Night of Science
- Veterans Day Celebration
- Lunar New Year Celebration
- Martisor Celebration
- Diwali Virtual Celebration

The Diversity Program produces an annual wall calendar to teach and promote diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. The 2022 calendar, "12 Ways to Become a More Inclusive Leader in 2022" was mailed to all employees and provided a variety of ways for individuals to practice DEIA in their daily lives, develop their inclusive leadership skills and become better allies to communities and groups different from their own. A 508-compliant version was also made available online. The USPTO's Voluntary Employee Organizations (VEOs) also enhanced virtual engagement and workplace inclusion by contributing to the following activities during FY 2022:

- Bring your own mug coffee breaks
- Monthly and/or end-of-quarter socials
- Virtual field trips
- Health and wellness and finance seminars
- Welcome wagons
- Scholarships

"When I moved to Denver, I was able to do work that I love in a place that I love. The flexibility the USPTO provides allows me to do a job I enjoy without sacrificing in other areas of my life."

ALLISON B.
Supervisory Patent Examiner



- Food and clothing collection/donations
- Community service activities
- Tutoring (local students)
- Mentoring and shadowing programs
- Networking events
- Career and leadership development courses
- Recruitment and outreach to Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs)

Lastly, the USPTO Diversity Program was able to continue its diversity outreach and recruitment activities seamlessly, despite working remotely, by conducting workshops for and exhibiting and recruiting virtually from the University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez (UPRM) School of Engineering Biannual Career Fairs; the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) National Convention; Federal Training Institute and Expo; the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Virtual Career Fair; STEM National Conference and Expo; and the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) National Leadership Training Program and Career Fair. They also conducted Find and Apply employment webinars and leadership/professional development workshops for students and professionals from the UPRM School of Engineering, FAPAC, LULAC, Huston-Tillotson University, and Arkansas State University, in addition to various federal agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of State, Federal Aviation Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Agriculture, Department of the Army, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Department of Education, General Services

Administration, Office of Personnel Management, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Department of Justice and Drug Enforcement Administration. The Diversity Program partnered with the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers chapter at the agency (SHPE-USPTO) and the Office of Education and Outreach to put on the annual, and first virtual, Noche de Ciencia (Night of Science) event for K-12 students, their parents and educators, geared toward promoting STEM education and careers.

OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

The Office of General Counsel (OGC) continues to have a seamless telework program with the majority of employees teleworking four to five days per week. Prior to the USPTO's phased reopening, the OGC's telework coordinators provided training guidelines and worked with senior leadership to ensure all employees were provided with the necessary equipment. This pre-planning allowed OGC employees to have a smooth transition with no delay of day-to-day operational support.

The new hybrid work model afforded greater flexibility, enabling the OGC to hire employees from outside of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. This model has also empowered employees to work on-site and off-site with the opportunity to move between locations to address caregiving or other responsibilities. The hybrid work model also has promoted inclusion, engagement, and well-being for all employees.

The OGC used several methods to keep staff connected and engaged. Each office within the OGC organized monthly staff meetings, mandatory in-person quarterly all-hands meetings and training sessions, as well as smaller weekly informal meetings such as virtual water cooler breaks. These meetings kept employees connected, engaged, and aware of agency updates and developments.

To ensure the OGC telework program remains effective and in alignment with established goals and priorities, OGC contacted its external customers (courts, opposing counsel, etc.) to discuss the transition from in-person appearances to a virtual platform and the process for document filings. So far, the transition has been very successful, although on-campus support has been required for document processing and trial preparation.

TELEWORKERS IN OGC:		
●	50-MILE	29
●	TEAP	0
●	HOTELING	7
●	ROUTINE	86
●	SITUATIONAL	7

Based on the experience the OGC has conducting virtual trials, hearings and depositions, it has learned some parties lack technical knowledge and access to information technology equipment and programs. The OGC has had some difficulty with the ability to utilize the same virtual platforms as external customers but was able to continue with the proceedings.

PATENTS

The USPTO remained one of the federal government's trailblazers in the area of telework success. Patents continued to offer its employees the best in a post-pandemic, hybrid working environment while simultaneously promoting the flexibility of its various telework programs. To date, more than 9,800 Patents employees are participating in some type of telework program across the U.S., including Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico.

Virtual hiring of new employees continued throughout the year. The array of collaboration tools available to Patents hiring managers allowed them to select qualified candidates, conduct interviews and meet their new hires through video engagement. With an intentional effort to be on camera, newly-hired employees had the opportunity to feel more included and connected by seeing and communicating with their supervisors and colleagues during meetings, trainings and other BU activities.

Patents strived to place a strong emphasis on work-life balance, stressing to its employees that while focus on work is important, it was equally important to maintain a good quality of life. This concept continued in Patents as it operated in a primarily virtual and remote setting. Patents leaders also improved the agency's social network footprint and worked to engage employees in locations where they connect with nearby colleagues with like-minded interests.

Two new enterprise platforms were also launched during FY 2022. The Enterprise Telework Information System allowed Patent employees to join with all the agency's federal employees to sign-up for a telework program in one central location. Additionally, all employees now can submit requests for internet reimbursement for USPTO's work-at-home use in one new system – the Internet Service Reimbursement Program. Patents participants had

TELEWORKERS IN Patents:		
●	50-MILE	5,349
●	TEAP	3,499
●	HOTELING	93
●	ROUTINE	884
●	SITUATIONAL	5

previously been reimbursed via the Patent Internet Service Program legacy system. Both new systems provide Patents employees a one-stop-shop for either signing up for a telework option or requesting internet reimbursement.

More new and exciting changes are expected for Patents employees with continued emphasis on improvements in work processes, customer experience and employee engagement both in-person and virtually.

PATENT TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD HEARINGS

The Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB) successfully transitioned from the maximum telework environment implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic to the USPTO’s phased reopening into a new hybrid work environment. During this time, the PTAB conducted 473 ex parte appeal hearings and 555 America Invents Act (AIA) trial hearings remotely, either by telephone or video, a practice continued since the pandemic started. The PTAB granted public access to 265 proceedings by telephone or video, which was a service that the PTAB did not offer to the public before the pandemic. The PTAB has continued to offer public access in response to stakeholder feedback.

On July 11, 2022, the PTAB successfully resumed in-person hearings and has conducted 28 ex parte appeal hearings and 54 AIA trial hearings at the USPTO headquarters in Alexandria, VA and in each USPTO regional office, while also continuing to offer remote hearing options for both ex parte appeal and AIA trial hearings. The PTAB continues to improve the user experience and welcomes suggestions for improvement from all stakeholders.

October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022	
HEARINGS TYPE	NUMBER OF HEARINGS
Appeal (including reexaminations)	501
AIA Trials	609

During the time the PTAB transitioned to all virtual hearings, the PTAB launched the Legal Experience and Advancement Program (LEAP). LEAP encourages the professional development of patent attorneys and agents through oral advocacy opportunities, helping them gain experience in proceedings before the PTAB. The program authorizes up to 15 minutes of

additional argument time, depending on the proceeding length and the PTAB schedule, to allow junior practitioners from every demographic to gain court access and experience. Over the past year, the PTAB conducted 107 ex parte appeal or AIA trial arguments involving practitioners participating in LEAP.

PTAB ENGAGEMENT

The Engagement Committee is dedicated to providing resources and opportunities to engage the entire PTAB staff. The committee believes that an engaged employee cares about their work and about the performance of the organization, and that their efforts can make a positive difference. This committee strives to provide relevant material and to facilitate activities to help employees stay engaged in their respective jobs. Some of the PTAB’s events include “The Great Debates,” a number of game shows, wellness presentations, virtual connection happy hours, and “Take Our Kids to Work Day.”

TELEWORKERS IN PTAB:	
50-MILE TEAP	157
HOTELING ROUTINE	98
SITUATIONAL	0
	72
	26

Additionally, the PTAB continued the activities of the PTAB Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEI Committee). The PTAB DEI Committee was established to ensure active and continuous support of the USPTO’s diversity and inclusion initiatives. The committee also endeavors to ensure activities conducted at the PTAB leverage the diverse perspectives of PTAB members to enhance communication with colleagues and stakeholders, both external and internal to the USPTO, at all levels. For example, the PTAB DEI Committee and its activities were unveiled to the public in a boardside chat. The PTAB DEI Committee also partnered with the USPTO Diversity Program in hosting several events open to all USPTO employees, as well as facilitating moderated discussion on DEI topics between fellow PTAB employees.

Finally, the PTAB’s top priority is to maintain the health and safety of employees, contractors and the American public, while continuing to provide valuable services, programs, and resources at the highest level.

OFFICE OF POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Office of Policy and International Affairs (OPIA) staff returned to campus gradually, following the phased reopening in May 2022. Following much discussion with staff and supervisors, the decision was made to increase the

maximum number of days that employees could telework and to add one more day than had been available prior to the pandemic. This made it possible for staff to continue working from home at a greater frequency than before, but also accommodated various on-campus activities and processes. Over the following six months, the OPIA was able to observe and receive feedback on how employees' work habits had adapted to a heavily remote environment, and discovered that in most cases, it was not necessary for employees to be on campus more than one day per week to successfully complete tasks and accomplish goals. In December 2022, OPIA management again increased the maximum telework options to match the needs of the agency while

● TELEWORKERS IN OPIA:		
●	50-MILE	0
●	TEAP	0
●	HOTELING	0
●	ROUTINE	106
●	SITUATIONAL	8

accommodating the flexibility afforded with expanded telework program.

The OPIA has flourished in the hybrid model, which has been particularly well suited to attorneys

and the Global Intellectual Property Academy (GIPA), who frequently work with colleagues and counterparts across other federal and international IP agencies across the globe. Prior to 2020, they frequently had to accommodate time zone changes when scheduling calls or virtual meetings. The expansion of available hybrid virtual communication tools added to their effectiveness and ability to present a higher quality hosting environment.

Staff are encouraged to expand use of virtual tools for meetings big and small, ensuring that all meetings observe a virtual first approach so that staff working remotely can fully participate via video conference. OPIA staff members have had great success employing the screen-sharing options in MS Teams to offer step-by-step guidance to colleagues in troubleshooting various technology and process issues, as well as offering live demonstrations of new programs, reports, and software features.

The OPIA is fortunate to have an abundance of employees who are dedicated to the success of the agency's mission to foster innovation and protect intellectual property. OPIA strives to support them and their continued success by ensuring that expanded telework schedules, tools and equipment options help them perform effectively while teleworking. While still focusing on individual effectiveness, the OPIA wants to increase opportunities for engagement both within the OPIA and among colleagues in other business units to increase opportunities for collaboration and education.

TRADEMARKS

In 2022, Trademarks took several steps to successfully make the transition from maximum telework to a hybrid work environment. Trademarks worked collaboratively with the unions to create telework agreements that changed eligibility requirements to expand the number of employees able to telework, permitted virtual onboarding, and incorporated the ability to work at secondary alternate worksites. Trademarks then created a hybrid workplace model that offered employees flexibility and equitable access to opportunities. Trademarks also communicated these changes to employees by having lunch and learns and updated telework training materials.

As a result of its successful communication and training efforts, employees were able to make a seamless transition to the hybrid work model. Since adopting the new model, Trademarks has successfully

● TELEWORKERS IN Trademarks:		
●	50-MILE	595
●	TEAP	346
●	HOTELING	24
●	ROUTINE	95
●	SITUATIONAL	7

virtually onboarded employees, including two classes of examining attorneys.

Trademarks recognizes the importance of engagement in a hybrid work environment and has adopted many innovative methods to ensure employees feel a sense of connection to the agency and their peers. Trademarks used its quarterly publication, TMpeople, to highlight information about employees, including new hires, promotions and features columns written by employees. TMpeople did a cover story on returning to campus that featured photos of several engagement activities that took place after the hybrid work environment was implemented.

Trademarks has maintained the virtual events that were used during the pandemic to engage employees and added other events, including virtual Trademark employee recognition ceremonies, employee-led yoga stretch sessions, town hall meetings, and a Trademarks' Best Friend event that was a virtual gathering for pet lovers. Trademarks also continued to highlight the artwork of employees via a virtual art gallery.

In addition to virtual events, Trademarks has also created opportunities for employees to engage in person. Examples of these events include Coffee and Convo, and Munch and Mingle, both of which are opportunities for employees and their managers to meet and chat.

Managers continued to find creative ways to sustain connections with employees they supervise. Managers had case chats, happy hours, and game

nights for employees. Also, managers often had joint events to maintain a sense of camaraderie across business areas. Trademark leadership supported managers by providing industry information about engagement best practices and highlighting those managers who had successful engagement events.

In the future, Trademarks will focus on two areas to make sure that their telework program remains effective and aligned with goals and priorities, namely telework resources and engagement. Trademarks will continue to update the telework resources provided to employees. Employees will be provided with useful information via the Trademarks Telework Resources page and will be periodically sent reminders and tips about their telework rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, training materials will be updated to make them more accessible to employees. Finally, Trademarks will focus on employee engagement by having several opportunities for employees to meet and connect.

TRADEMARK TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

To achieve a successful transition from maximum telework, through the phased reopening and into a new hybrid work environment, the Trademark

●	TELEWORKERS IN TTAB:	
●	50-MILE	42
●	TEAP	13
●	HOTELING	0
●	ROUTINE	18
●	SITUATIONAL	2

Trial and Appeal Board (TTAB)

prioritized frequent communication with employees on evolving USPTO policies. Specifically, the TTAB began holding quarterly all-hands meetings and sharing information

related to campus reopening, health policies, and updated telework guidelines to reflect the hybrid work environment. The TTAB worked diligently to draft and eventually finalize three new telework programs, two in collaboration with unions (National Treasury Employee Union (NTEU) 243 and 245) and one for non-bargaining employees, while also meeting business unit needs.

To manage the transition, the TTAB created a learning environment by holding information sessions for employees to hear about the new telework program options and ask specific questions to support employees with their decision-making. Additionally, the TTAB partnered with Trademarks to provide information sessions on the new Internet Service Reimbursement (ISR) program. Training was provided to ensure a smooth transition with two new systems: the ISR for reimbursement and the Enterprise Telework Information System (ETIS) for updating telework and alternate worksite information.

In FY 2022, the TTAB continued to adapt to the hybrid work model and its commitment to staying connected, collegially and professionally, and creating innovative methods to keep employees engaged.

To gain insight into more effective ways of working in a hybrid environment while facilitating full inclusion of all team members, the TTAB partnered with an organizational development specialist who tailored training to TTAB. The “Working Effectively in a Hybrid Workplace - Enhancing the Employee Experience” program focused on creating an optimal virtual presence. TTAB also held follow up focus sessions with employees providing a platform for employees to drill down and share best practices.

During the pandemic, the TTAB oral arguments remained on a virtual platform. In FY 2022, hearings resumed in person. Anticipating the change, the TTAB completed testing of the equipment in the TTAB’s hearing room before the resumption of in-person arguments, allowing for a smooth transition under the hybrid work environment. The TTAB successfully held three in-person hearings on the headquarters campus, and the TTAB participated in three hearings in remote locations as part of outreach efforts. In addition, the TTAB held 59 virtual hearings during the fiscal year.

The TTAB continued to develop training and onboarding activities for new employees and detailees. In FY 2022, the TTAB onboarded five new employees and five detailees to fill critical vacancies. The TTAB assigned informal mentors to aid in the transition into a 100% virtual environment. Internal cross training among the teams continued online. A summer law school extern trained and worked remotely using a secure USPTO virtual workspace with virtual universal laptop.

Staying connected is a priority shared by both the TTAB’s leadership and employees under the hybrid model. The TTAB’s leadership and employees have implemented multiple initiatives to stay connected and engaged with each other.

In FY 2022, the TTAB met its performance related goals across all branches. The TTAB continues to evaluate the number of telework days for all positions in the TTAB and work to balance the needs of the office and that of employees. The TTAB is proud to maintain 100% employee eligibility for telework and provide the opportunity for those employees seeking some in-office days to be comfortable while in the office.

To prepare for the future, the TTAB will continue to focus on communication and employee engagement through internal workgroups, training, team

"The agency's new telework and expanded *flexible schedule* programs have allowed me to adapt to my evolving needs to balance my personal and professional lives by affording me greater flexibility to work where and when I need."

PETER C.
Supervisory Patent Examiner



The OUS implemented new telework guidelines, and throughout the transition to full-time, hybrid and situational telework environments, executives and staff members remained fully engaged and responsive to their assignments and duties without delay or connectivity challenges. The OUS quickly and successfully adapted to the new telework environment by utilizing collaboration tools such as Webex, Microsoft Teams, Zoom and many other communication platforms.

The health and safety of all USPTO employees remains a top priority for the OUS. In an effort to provide safe working spaces for a hybrid workforce, the OUS established two hoteling offices, so employees can easily work with their on-campus peers when they are in the physical office. This also helped to promote the idea of a flexible work-life balance, which is critical in helping employees to perform the USPTO's core mission of protecting the intellectual property of stakeholders.

meetings, one-on-one check-ins and quarterly all-hands meetings. Also, the TTAB will continue to identify opportunities to engage in person, as well as virtually, keeping the experience inclusive, and engaging in any environment. In FY 2023, the TTAB leadership looks forward to implementing employee ideas through the work of the TTAB Community and Connection Workgroup. To aid in future efforts, a first quarter FY 2023 all-hands meeting will include learning best practices about employee connectedness and lessening worker loneliness from an expert and author in this field.

The TTAB continues to show resiliency and adaptability in meeting the challenges and opportunities of working in a hybrid work environment, thus reinforcing the motto, "We may have our trials, but our work is appealing."

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY AND DIRECTOR

The Office of the Under Secretary and Director (OUS) has successfully transitioned from an in-office working environment to a full-time, hybrid, and situational telework operation as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leadership, collaboration, and robust communication helped to provide seamless business method continuity of operations to ensure the health and safety of the employees, and provided uninterrupted service to intellectual property stakeholders throughout the world.

● TELEWORKERS IN OUS:		
●	50-MILE	0
●	TEAP	1
●	HOTELING	0
●	ROUTINE	6
●	SITUATIONAL	31



Nationwide Workforce



REGIONAL OFFICES

In 2022, each Regional Office supported the transition from a maximum telework environment through the USPTO's phased reopening into a new hybrid work environment. Regional Offices took a proactive approach in coordinating and resolving various operational and facility-related challenges with BU leadership to sustain a smooth transition post-pandemic. The safety of employees and visitors remains a priority. In accordance with headquarters guidance and adhering to the state and local COVID safety protocols, Regional Offices continue to monitor local conditions as determined by the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) COVID-19 community levels to update and implement the face covering requirements and follow other protocols.

Regional Offices are actively monitoring the pre and post-pandemic space utilization data to better plan for the future, and continue to work with the OAS to determine both short and long-term solutions for growing teleworkers outside the DC metro area. Specifically, employees joining the ranks of routine hotelers and remote workers in the geographical areas of the Regional Offices have significantly expanded or shifted over the last three years. Notably, the following table shows the growth of remote and hoteling employees in each region. As an interim step, a few of the Regional Offices increased the total of available hoteling spaces for patent examiners, administrative patent judges and managers to better accommodate the need via the RoomRez reservation platform. Also, continued support of region teleworkers in Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12), version 8, Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card-related services to renew or re-authenticate their PIV card has been facilitated by the Regional Offices.

The Regional Offices continue to enhance employee engagement through the work of the VEOs. These include the Rocky Mountain Region Work Life Organization, Rocky Mountain Region Outdoor Club, Silicon Valley Work Life Organization, Texas Regional Work Life Organization, along with locally assigned points of contacts from various affinity groups from Asian Pacific American Network, Bangladeshi-American Intellectual Property Organization, Patent and Trademark Office Society, the USPTO Military Association, American Muslim and Arabic Cultural Association, and others. Additionally,

the Regional Offices management and staff actively participate in planning, coordinating and execution of various events and activities.

REMOTE AND HOTELING TELEWORKERS PER REGIONAL OFFICE'S AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
Detroit	398	396	448	474	475	494	695
Dallas	270	282	320	359	381	399	567
Denver	116	128	140	152	162	170	256
San Jose	353	377	418	438	447	469	641

The Texas Regional Office worked in conjunction with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and OCCO to allow Dallas-Fort Worth-area employees to take part in volunteer opportunities to act as judges for a series of science fairs hosted through the NASA HUNCH program for various schools. Through this volunteer work, employees used their science and engineering background to give back to the local community while connecting with young minds. Also, USPTO Deputy Director Derrick Brent, Commissioner for Patents Vaishali Udupa, and Deputy Commissioner for Patents Robin Evans held multiple meet-and-greets with Houston and Austin-area employees



Jorge Valdes with students.



Texas Regional Office holiday party.

while attending various outreach-related events and conferences in the region. Additionally, the Texas Regional Office, in collaboration with local affinity groups, held their seventh annual holiday party at a local restaurant, inviting local employees and family to attend a lunch outing.



Silicon Valley Regional Office annual holiday potluck.

Director Vidal and Silicon Valley Regional Office employees at the Byer Center for Biodesign.

To help employees reconnect, the Silicon Valley Regional Office hosted an in-person summer picnic for many of the newly hired employees. This event provided the opportunity to connect with more experienced colleagues in-person for the first time. Similarly, the Silicon Valley Regional Office hosted its annual holiday potluck in December 2022. Notably, local Silicon Valley employees were invited to join Director Vidal at the Stanford Byer Center for Biodesign for a tour of the center and a discussion of the future innovation in health. Through this event, employees gained a greater appreciation for the role of intellectual property in the commercialization of innovative healthcare and personalized medicines, and walked away with a better appreciation of how their jobs impact innovation across the intellectual property ecosystem.

The Rocky Mountain Regional Office hosted their annual holiday party in December 2022, which included food, games and other festivities.



Director Vidal, Cordelia Zecher and event organizers at the ARPA-E conference at the Gaylord Rockies.

Stakeholder roundtable in Utah with Director Vidal.

Experienced employees, recent hires and invited family members had ample opportunities to connect and engage. Many experienced why the Rocky Mountain Office employee “vibe” is easily characterized by knowledge, talent, empowerment, appreciation, fun and diversity. In early 2023, local employees teamed up with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), at the Colorado Technology Association’s annual She Tech conference, which celebrates and acknowledges women and girls in STEM and gives girls the opportunity to network directly with women who are leaders in the tech industry. Rocky Mountain Regional Office and NOAA shared an exhibit table; offered several hands-on interactive STEM activities; and spoke with hundreds of girls about science, engineering and why equal participation and leadership of women and girls in STEM disciplines is more important than ever to bolster technological growth and innovation. Most recently, Rocky Mountain employees hosted a STEM event at a local science and tech middle school, and taught students about the importance of intellectual property and how it impacts the lives of these future leaders.



Midwest Regional Office listening session with Director Kathi Vidal.

Girl Scout intellectual property badge event.

The Elijah J. McCoy Midwest Regional Office successfully transitioned to a maximum telework environment. The Midwest Regional Office expanded the number of telework offices from two to eight to accommodate examiners desiring to come into the office. There are groups of the VEOs, such as the Patent and Trademark Office Society, to support outreach activities in community spaces. In addition to regular meetings, the Midwest Office's monthly “Wednesday Check-In” allows patent examiners who are connected to the Midwest Regional Office to engage with one another. From listening sessions with Director Vidal to Girl Scout intellectual property badge events, the Midwest Regional Office continues to engage in outreach activities that support the goals and mission of the agency.

FY 2022 NUMBER OF TELEWORKERS IN EACH REGIONAL OFFICE'S AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

	TEAP	50-MILE	ROUTINE HOTELING	ROUTINE OR SITUATIONAL
Detroit	583	108	4	12
Dallas	455	106	6	20
Denver	157	96	3	19
San Jose	558	83	0	18
Total	1,753	393	13	69

The Regional Offices provide resources, services, and outreach efforts that augment the agency’s mission and goals through various methods. For example, the Regional Offices continued to provide unique detail assignments to teleworking employees that include opportunities to provide meaningful outreach programs and activities to stakeholders. These experiences expand the knowledge of detail participants, serve as opportunities that enhance career advancement opportunities, and support many of the Director’s initiatives including the Council for Inclusive Innovation, Women’s Entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, inclusive innovation, and others.



Booth at the Society of Women Engineers conference. USPTO Texas Regional Director Hope Shimabuku, Texas Regional Office Regional Assistant Director Jacob Choi with Assistant Outreach Coordinators (Detailees): Brittany Fisher, Christopher Harris, and Paola Agudelo at Digital 360.

As part of the transition from the maximum telework environment, all of the public-facing spaces were made available. The PTAB reestablished in-person hearings starting the summer of 2022. The public search room now has new workstations with a web-based patent search application that replaced internal legacy search tools. Public interview rooms have updated video conferencing equipment and the Outreach Room has several collaborative spaces for the IP community to collaborate. In addition, various public-facing services are available to regional educators, inventors, entrepreneurs, and the IP community to collaborate through on-site outreach programs, training, walk-in services and tours.

Overall, the Regional Offices remain adaptive to provide seamless support to employees throughout the nation and for their telework programs. The management and staff of the Regional Offices are dedicated to solving challenging problems and finding ways to make a positive impact through collaboration and communication.

TELEWORK ENHANCEMENT ACT PROGRAM

Looking to the future, changes to the Telework Enhancement Act Program (TEAP) operating procedures will expand TEAP eligibility within and across the BUs. After the permanent authorization of the TEAP, the TPO worked with all BUs to study the expansion of the TEAP. Some BUs historically have not had any positions eligible for the TEAP and ultimately may not have positions with work requirements or metrics that are conducive to full-time telework programs like the TEAP. Thus, individual BUs will continue to analyze and decide on additional eligibility requirements, policies, and oversight practices needed for the employees and BUs to meet their productivity and goal requirements in a post-pandemic work environment.

The resounding success of the USPTO’s telework programs has set the stage for future expansion of the TEAP in a post-pandemic world. Since the agency moved away from its maximum telework posture in May 2022 and the biweekly reporting requirements for non-TEAP telework programs were reinstated, more eligible employees applied for the TEAP. The USPTO will closely monitor the evolving demand for the program.

Agency Outreach and Speaking Efforts



The USPTO is often asked to present the agency telework strategy as well as provide support and guidance to outside organizations to support various telework efforts.

AGENCY ASSISTANCE

- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of the Navy
- National Telecommunications and Information Administration

PRESENTATIONS/SPEAKING EFFORTS

- Panelist—for Future of Work Summit—Hosted by Government Executive

LEADERSHIP FORUM EXTRA

From August 1-4, 2022, the USPTO held its annual Leadership Forum event sponsored by the OCAO working in collaboration with business unit executive planning committee members. This forum for managers and executives had a specific focus on the theme “Thriving through change and stronger together.” The event featured four keynote addresses and a variety of breakout sessions. The sessions focused on contemporary topics such as agile and inspirational leadership, diversity and inclusion for distributed teams, leading through uncertainty and exploring the softer side of exceptional leadership.

Chief Administrative Officer Fred Steckler, and Director Vidal opened the event with powerful remarks about ways to continue to support one another and grow as leaders each day in a hybrid environment. As with all leadership development activities at the agency, the Leadership Forum employed the 10 USPTO Ideal Leader Profile qualities as

its foundation, ensuring these were encompassed within the forum topics. Likewise, this flagship leadership learning event directly aligned with the three pillars of the USPTO People Plan: lead, engage, and enable.

With 12 internal speakers and panel discussions, 11 external speakers, 39 unique session topics plus four keynotes to choose from, the 1,128 participants registered for a grand total of 14,900 hours of training. Participants found the sessions on coaching, BrainShift (mindfulness), recognition and awards, and the keynote, “Diversity and Inclusion for Distributed Teams” to be of most value. The result of the forum is a leadership population who left the event motivated and empowered with plenty of tools, strategies and creative ideas for how to best continue serving and engaging their teams regardless of where they work.



“Teleworking gives me the best of both worlds with the opportunity to work with my colleagues in Dallas while still having increased time at home. Plus, I have two boys so the flexibility allows me to keep up with their sports schedules!”

STACEY W.
Administrative Patent Judge



Future of Telework at the USPTO



ENTERPRISE TELEWORK INFORMATION SYSTEM (ETIS)

One of the key drivers to the USPTO's telework expansion and continued success was the development and implementation of the ETIS. Updated in 2022 to support agency-wide telework programs, the ETIS is an integrated, secure, agency-wide IT system and database that provides telework application and approval processes, facilitates telework program management and provides accurate and timely telework data to reporting and data analysis tools. The user-friendly interface and automation provide efficient and effective application and approval processes for employees and management. The ETIS greatly enhances telework program management for BUs and the TPO. The ETIS also enables the agency to integrate telework data within other agency operations and planning efforts, such as office space management and real estate planning, IT hardware and asset management, human resources information and processes and regional employee engagement events.

TELEWORK RESOURCES

Teleworking employees are provided a suite of hardware and software to ensure they remain seamlessly connected to each other, their managers and their overall work environment, regardless of where they are physically located. The suite includes the Universal Laptop, Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection, the Cisco Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), Microsoft Teams, webcam, and Cisco Webex.

The agency also includes a variety of other resources to employees based on eligibility and selected telework options, including home internet service provider reimbursement for hoteling and remote teleworkers, shipment of paper and toner supplies, monitors, printers, and RoomRez web application to enable remote and hoteling

employees to reserve an office on campus or at one of the Regional Offices.

The Telework Program Office has developed an internal telework resource center, located on the USPTO intranet, to support telework-eligible employees, existing teleworkers and managers. Please visit the Telework Resource Room for various resources, best practices and tools. Several BUs have dedicated telework resource pages providing information on resources, training and best practices while working in a hybrid environment. Several BUs also have individual SharePoint sites that provide employees with additional resources and tools to support and improve work productivity and experience within the hybrid environment.

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

As noted within the BU updates, employee experience and engagement continue to be priorities at the USPTO. In addition to those BU highlighted efforts, the agency has developed a host of web-based tools to support engagement and connection, including several employee social networking and connection sites. These include Est. 1790, Patents Hub and Trademarks Community/Friends. The USPTO is also establishing an agency-wide Employee Experience Committee which will focus on employee experience design and delivery. This initiative will help the USPTO deliver an employee experience strategy that balances productivity, wellness, and inclusion, and drives a culture that engages and retains employees, maximizing organizational outcomes.



