ILRI guidelines on working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic

March 2020

People and Organizational Development

ILRI guidelines on working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic

Author:	▪ *People and Organizational Development Directorate*	Board committee:	
		Approval date:	25 March 2020
Lead manager responsible for operational delivery:	▪ *People and Organizational Development Directorate* ▪ *Other key departments:*	**Version:**	1.0
		Effective date:	25 March 2020

Revision history

Version No.	Effective date	Approved by and date	Summary of changes	Next scheduled review
1.0	25 March 2020	Date:	NA	

Related documents

Global framework:	
Frameworks/other processes:	
Policies:	
Guidelines:	
Tools	

Contents

1. Introduction and objectives

As the world grapples with the evolving COVID-19, ILRI is taking measures to ensure the health and safety of its staff members, their dependents, contractors, suppliers and communities at large in the locations in which it operates alongside ensuring business continuity.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has led to a number of measures being implemented by ILRI and other CGIAR centres to protect staff and ensure business continuity. Among these is "work from home". Working from home refers to working arrangements whereby day to day tasks that are normally performed at ILRI office premises are performed at home.

These guidelines aim to ensure that staff are productive, connected and engaged with their work, despite being away from the office. The arrangements are temporary and should help to ensure that staff working from home will:

- continue to deliver on institutional deliverables throughout the period;
- are available for official meetings;
- are accessible, responsive and reliable throughout the period; and
- provide supervisors with regular updates to their work.

Separate arrangements have been put in place by all units for essential services staff who need to be in the office. These are covered under the business continuity plans.

2. Considerations for working from home

Staff working away from the office require four key elements to support a work from home environment:
- Guidance on ICT tools to enable working from home.
- Guidance to ensure staff remain productive and connected with their work colleagues while away from the office
- Guidance on protecting one's physical and mental health

3. Using ICT Tools to work from home

Supervisors should:
- Identify any essential staff that will be working from home that are under the HG14 that will need additional data packages and notify ICT.
- Review information that have been shared by ICT on connecting and using ICT tools to facilitate working from home below:

    o [For Kenya and global](#)

    o [For Ethiopia](#)

4. Ways of working from home

Supervisors should:
- Set clear expectations on work deliverables and agree on these with supervisees.
- Arrange virtual team meetings in addition to bilateral contact to help maintain team spirit and contact.

- Ensure that there is a common understanding on team communication and that all team members are able to access and use the appropriate channel(s) of team communication, for example by telephone, email, Skype, MS Teams.
- Be available to staff when required to provide guidance and support.
- Ensure continuous engagement and motivation of all staff during the period of working from home. Call or find other creative ways to check on teammates who, for one reason or another, are not able to work from home effectively due to the nature of their jobs.
Regular calls or other means of connection is advisable to foster a greater sense of connectedness during this period.

Staff are expected to:
- Deliver the expected outputs as agreed with the supervisor and inform the supervisor of any unexpected changes or challenges.
- Provide updated contact details to facilitate effective communication while working from home.
- Promptly notify their supervisors of any changes in their personal circumstances, e.g. illness that may hinder their delivery.
- Ensure regular and frequent engagement with their supervisor(s) and teammates and participate in team meetings and virtual institute Town Halls.

5. Making the most of the opportunity

Some staff may find they cannot undertake the full spectrum of their usual responsibilities while working from home for various reasons—maybe there is less (or no) meetings to support, travel to organize etc. Supervisors and staff are encouraged to identify online learning opportunities that support the Personal Development Plans (PDPs) of staff and set clear targets in relation to such development opportunities. In particular, staff are encouraged to use eCampus—ILRI's online learning platform (see Appendix 2).

6. Ensuring you stay productive and connected

6.1 Tips on working from home
- Plan your workday at home and set the work environment
- Set ground rules with family members and other people who may interrupt your work
- Identify a dedicated space for you to work
- Maintain your regular morning routine to mentally prepare yourself for the day's work
- Maintain your regular office hours with the required breaks
- Avoid distractions and pay attention during online meetings. Actively participate in discussions.
- Communicate with your supervisor and colleagues frequently about what you're working on and your progress
- Connect with colleagues, friends and other people you normally socialize with during your breaks via Zoom, WhatsApp or MS Teams.

6.2 Schedule a regular work plan
- Agree with your supervisor on a weekly time to submit and review your work plan. You can choose to use tools such as that provided in Appendix 1 or any other tools or software that you may find suitable for your needs.
- Set up virtual meetings to check in with your supervisor and teammates.

6.3 Collaborate with your team members to avoid feeling disconnected

It is important to cultivate a sense of connection to others during this period of social distancing. The risks of work from home include feelings of isolation which can have other repercussions. The importance of keeping a positive mind frame and connecting with teammates, family and friends cannot be overstated.

7. Staying healthy

Besides following the guidelines on maintaining social distance, maintaining good hygiene and staying in touch with others during the work from home period, it is also important to adopt or continue with other healthy habits to boost your immunity and positive frame of mind.

- Get at least 7–8 hours of sleep
- Eat a balanced diet
- Keep fit through exercise at home if possible
- Take daily walks if possible
- Avoid stress. You can find useful tips online on maintaining your mental wellbeing including these World Health Organization (WHO) and Centre for Disease Control (CDC) publications in the following links:
  - https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2 ; and this video from WHO Director https://youtu.be/s-z6KgwJP5c

  - https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html

Appendix 1: Template for planning, monitoring and delivery of outputs

Work plan and deliverables

Name:	
Reporting to:	
Date	

Daily/Weekly Planner

Task to complete	Action plan	Deliverable date
Day/Week 1		
Day /Week 2		
Day/ Week 3		

Past Week's Progress

Progress Update from the past week of _____ (It is not necessary to fill out this section on the first week)

Planned Objectives/Activities from Previous Week	Update on Progress Made for each objective/activity

Upcoming Week's Plan

Plan for the week of _____

Planned Objectives/Activities for the Week (Make your plans SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound)

Appendix 2: eCampus resources on teleworking/managing virtual teams

Log into eCampus for the following courses on teleworking/managing virtual teams:
- Cegos - Harnessing different perceptions of time to boost effectiveness
- Skillsoft - Effective Time Management -Time Management: Planning and Prioritizing Your Time
- Skillsoft - Facing Virtual Team Challenges
- Skillsoft - Leading Teams: Managing Virtual Teams
- Skillsoft - Contributing as a Virtual Team Member

To access ILRI's online learning platform, which has a wide spectrum of courses, login to eCampus: https://ecampus.ilri.org/

Login details:

Username: CGIAR email address
Password: lingos17 or your own password that you may have previously established

Follow the instructions to access online courses.

Patron: Professor Peter C Doherty AC, FAA, FRS

Animal scientist, Nobel Prize Laureate for Physiology or Medicine–1996

Box 30709, Nairobi 00100 Kenya
Phone +254 20 422 3000
Fax   +254 20 422 3001
Email ilri-kenya@cgiar.org

ilri.org
better lives through livestock

ILRI is a CGIAR research centre

Box 5689, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Phone +251 11 617 2000
Fax +251 11 667 6923
Email ilri-ethiopia@cgiar.org

ILRI has offices in East Africa • South Asia • Southeast and East Asia • Southern Africa • West Africa