

**HEARING BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**



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Testimony of Pamela J. Gardiner, Acting Inspector General for Tax Administration Before
the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform

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Good morning Chairman Davis, ranking Member Waxman and distinguished Committee Members. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the challenges and successes the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, TIGTA, has experienced with Telework. Much of the work we do at TIGTA, audits and investigations of the IRS, lends itself to being done in a virtual environment. We believe Telework increases productivity, enhances employee satisfaction, and saves American taxpayers money.

As you may know, TIGTA has enjoyed tremendous success with Telework, and serves as an example of best Telework practices for the Federal community. TIGTA was even recognized for excellence in Telework by receiving the Commuter Connections Employer Recognition Award for Telework in 2003. Currently 854 or 97 percent of our total 884 employees are eligible to Telework. Of these 854 eligible employees, 92 percent choose to participate in the program.

TIGTA offers employees four levels of participation in our program. The participation level dictates the number of days a week the individual will telework and the associated costs TIGTA will pay. The four levels of participation are defined as:

Full - which allows an employee to Telework 4 to 5 days per week;

Expanded - which allows an employee to Telework 2 to 3 days per week;

Limited - which allows an employee to Telework 1 day per week; or

Episodic - which allows for situational or task-based Telework.

While Telework at TIGTA is very successful, we did experience challenges when first developing the program. In fiscal year 2000, TIGTA was one of the first Federal agencies to pilot and implement a Telework program. There was no model to follow so we developed our own. We experienced difficulty in finding resources available to answer questions, propose policy and identify appropriate training. Apart from the policy aspects, a significant technical challenge was in the area of broadband service. While availability has somewhat increased, it is still not available in all locations where TIGTA employees live. Additionally, at the time of implementation, broadband technology was new to TIGTA, and non-standardization of service posed added complexity. Finally, gaining management buy-in to the program was a significant hurdle.

In addressing these challenges, TIGTA used the information from our pilot program, private industry best practices, and conducted management training to address concerns. We developed a comprehensive network of technical and human resources support that shared organizational successes by communicating increases in productivity and work quality. There are several factors we have identified that we think other agencies may find helpful in developing their own programs.

We:

- timed our program rollout in conjunction with a technology upgrade to minimize expenses;

- provided all employees with laptops rather than desktop computers;
- installed a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to ensure top notch security;
- required the use of high-speed broadband technology for participants at the Full and Expanded participation levels to ensure productive data transmission;
- structured a flexible Telework policy to meet the needs of the work environment;
- provided training to all employees and managers before participation; and
- provided employees on full time Telework with printers, and other key tools.

Our Atlanta office demonstrated a high level of successful participation in Telework, which led us to the next phase of our program - hoteling. This concept entails significantly reducing overall office space and the number of individually assigned workstations. Individuals use software to reserve a workspace when they need to be in the office. We anticipate rent savings of \$100,000 in the first full year of operation.

TIGTA has incorporated Telework into our Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), and it is an integral part of our business resumption planning activities. By having the policies and provisions in place, should activation of the COOP become necessary, TIGTA will be able to maintain a steady workforce and quickly resume normal business operations overseeing the IRS and protecting tax administration.

In closing, Telework is good for TIGTA because we believe we can get the job done quicker and less costly. It's good for our employees because we believe they can focus on work and not their commute. And most importantly it's good for taxpayers because we believe Federal resources are at their optimal use.