

Remote Control:

Reviewing Ad-Hoc Pandemic Telework & Developing a
Telework Plan for the Town of Dover, New Jersey

Special thanks to...

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The Town of Dover



Remote Control Dover

Overview

- Dover Health Department essentially new in 2023
- 8 FTEs including grant-funded staff members
- ~~Vacancy for a public health nurse~~
Our new nurse started Tuesday!
- Currently rebuilding a solid foundation & restoring services
- Rapidly changing demographics
- Critical need for recruiting & retaining well-qualified staff



Mission

The Dover Health Department protects, improves, and promotes the physical, mental, and social health and well-being of all Dover residents.

Sarah A. S. Perramant
CPM Virtual Cohort March 2023



Problem Statement



Poor Planning

Government agencies launched telework in response to COVID-19 emergency without formal plans; employees sent home without necessary tools



Poor Results

Ad-hoc telework faced significant challenges & was deemed a failure



Potential Benefits?

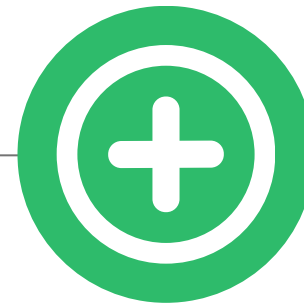
Interest in telework remains high among employees & job candidates; potential tool for recruitment, retention, space constraints, & emergency preparedness

Literature Review



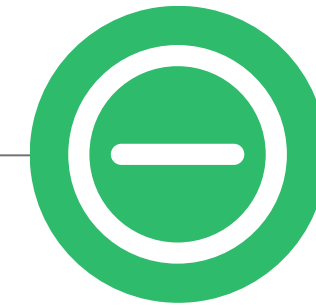
Defining Telework

“Telework is defined as any work conducted away from the primary workplace, part-time or full-time, which is facilitated or aided in some way by information and telecommunications technology,” (Overmyer, 2022, p.99).



Benefits

- Increased satisfaction
- Work-life balance
- Builds trust
- Cost savings
- Continuity of operations



Challenges

- One size doesn't fit all
- Isolation
- Reduced organic collaboration
- Lack of recognition/connection to management



Best Practices

- Clear policy/plan
- Performance management
- Technology
- Training & buy--in
- Trust
- Evaluate & adapt



Results



Survey

- 17/125 employees responded
- 71% teleworked during the pandemic... 82% reported it was a success
- 53% indicated they would look for telework in a future job opening
- 88% thought telework = improved work-life balance... rose to 100% among caregivers
- Not every role is a good fit

Interviews

- 5 Interviews total - several department heads were not with the Town during COVID
- Supervisors see potential & successes in other government agencies (Morris County & State)
- Concerns about how to supervise and manage remote workers
- Key takeaways: planning, strong policy, and the right technology

Pilot Project

- Developed pilot policy - approved by Town Administrator
- Extended pilot due to flooding/upcoming renovation
- Overall success
 - Work-life balance improved
 - Alleviated space constraints
 - Improved trust
 - Communication smooth
 - Not all employees took part
- Some small hiccups



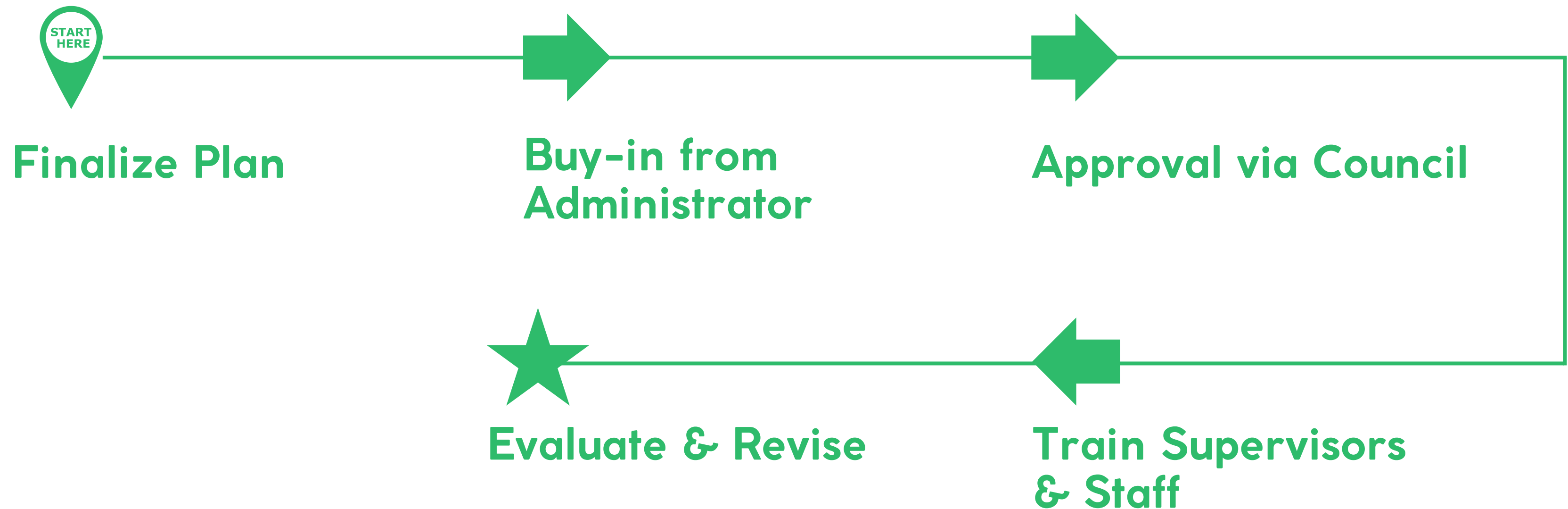
Results

““it seems like incorporating telework is the way of the future. If Civil Service and the State can make hybrid telework work, I don’t see why we can’t do it on the local level.”

“...[with the right technology] honestly, I think that everything could potentially be done via telework.”

“Telework is going to be a key in retaining qualified staff.”

Implementation Plan



Lessons Learned

Disconnected perspectives

There is a clear disconnect between leadership and employees/candidates. Hopefully the leadership will consider benefits re: employee engagement & satisfaction, shared cost-savings, and emergency preparedness.

Success is largely built on trust

The pilot project was an overall success. Even if we are unable to continue teleworking in the long term, the trusting relationships I established between my team members and myself as part of this capstone are a long term benefit.



Questions?

