



COVID-19 Related Workspace Improvements Return to Workplace Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the eligible time period for expenditures for the Return to Workplace (RTWP) initiative?

The associated costs incurred for RTWP improvements should be within the time period beginning April 1, 2021 and ending August 31, 2021.

2. If agencies have employees returning to work before July 1, 2021, can agencies begin to make these expenditures before July 1, 2021?

Costs associated with the safe return of employees to the office incurred on or after April 1, 2021, should be included in an agency's Budget Narrative Request. Eligible costs that are part of an agency's approved Budget Narrative Request will be reimbursed as per the process outlined in the RTWP timeline.

3. If agencies purchase something ahead of submitting a plan, but it is included in the plan, will the agency be able to include the cost for reimbursement?

The goal of the RTWP initiative is to reimburse agencies for all allowable and approved expenditures. The keys for reimbursement of the expenditure(s) incurred between April 1, 2021 and August 31, 2021 are to:

- a) include the anticipated expenditure in the Budget Narrative Request;
- b) receive an approval of the Budget Narrative Request; and
- c) ensure the actual expenditure(s) meet the allowability of the program requirements and align to what was included in the Budget Narrative Request in the agency's Reimbursement Request.

Therefore, purchases can be made in advance of an approved request but with the understanding that, if they are not approved within the request or do not meet the program requirements, the expenditures may be the responsibility of the agency.

4. Are technology system upgrades for conference rooms to assist with telework/teleconferences eligible?

Yes. Conference room and common room technology and improvements are allowable expenditures. Examples include the purchase and installation of software and equipment to improve safe meetings while allowing for collaboration.

5. Who should sign the Budget Narrative Request?

Approval and signature of the agency's Budget Narrative Request should be from the agency head or designee. The Department requests a delegation of authority accompany the signed Budget Narrative when the designee is a person other than a Deputy or Assistant Deputy Secretary or equivalent in an agency, authority, office, board, commission.

6. As an agency, how should I establish a chart of account structure for the RTWP initiative?

Agencies should consider establishing fiscal structures to utilize a PR appropriation to allow for encumbrances of funds and transfer of expenditures, and for a single interunit bill for all allowable and appropriate expenditures by September 30, 2021.

7. For the costs that agencies pay for between April 1-June 30, will agencies be able to do a FY2021 interunit bill by the FY2021 closing deadline of July 9 so that refunds of expenses occur in the same fiscal year? Then, do a FY2022 interunit bill by September 30, 2021, for costs paid July 1-August 31?

This approach would be acceptable to request reimbursement of allowable expenditures as approved from the agency's Budget Narrative Request. However, this can also be accomplished through the receipt of revenue for a direct federal award, collected in the same appropriation as the expense is incurred.

Therefore, the preferred approach would be to utilize a PR appropriation to allow for encumbrances of funds and transfer of expenditures, and to reflect appropriate accounting for a single interunit bill for all allowable and appropriate expenditures.

8. If agency employees spend time installing items for or on this initiative, will their salary and fringe be allowable expenditures?

Direct internal service charges incurred from state personnel performing installation efforts at DOA-owned buildings will be considered as allowable expenditures, assuming they were estimated and included in the agency's approved Budget Narrative Request. The direct internal service charges should be billed via the normal General Service Billing (GSB) processes for agencies to record the expenditures within their General Ledgers.

Direct services performed from state personnel performing installation efforts at agency-owned buildings or facilities will also be considered as allowable expenditures, assuming they were estimated and included in the agency's approved Budget Narrative Request.

9. Additionally, in regard to labor costs, would internal staff time and fringe costs be considered an eligible cost for reimbursement under this initiative? Coding can be established to track this if it would be allowable and reimbursable.

The labor costs of internal staff (non-DOA, non-contracted) associated to implementation of physical improvements and cubicle configurations, or for conference room and common room technology upgrades would be considered as allowable.

Administrative efforts, such as financial planning or oversight, would be considered as unallowable.

10. Expecting most of the personnel costs to be related to information technology and facilities staff, bureaus within our agency have their own cost pools and billable rates that are charged for work performed for a division, as described in our federally-approved Cost Allocation Plan. When completing the template with our estimate, we would like to use the billable rate that would be charged for tasks associated with this initiative, defined as Line 4 costs rather than as Line 1, 2 or 3, which is how we have reported similar costs in the existing pandemic trackers. Would this be an acceptable approach?

The cost estimates associated to work efforts from state employees should be provided within the Personnel section of the Budget Narrative Request regardless of how an agency allocates those costs throughout its organizational structure. The hourly rates within the template are based on the Wisconsin Class/Range schedule but can be modified to reflect the billable rate(s) as needed.

However, if the cost estimates are for agency contracted staff working on behalf of the state (e.g. associated to an IT services contract), then the cost estimates should be provided within the Supplies/Services section of the Budget Narrative Request.

This approach may be different from what agencies have presented within the regular Cost Tracker though is the requested approach for the RTWP initiative.

11. What if agencies have claimed some of these types of expenditures on the "regular" COVID (Cost Tracker) expenditures report? Should agencies stop claiming there?

Costs associated with the safe return of employees to the office incurred on or after April 1, 2021, should be included in your agency's Budget Narrative Request and excluded from the Cost Tracker.

As explained in the May 6, 2021 FLC meeting, a determination has not been made that current Cost Tracker reported expenses will be approved for reimbursement. Conversely, eligible costs that are part of an agency's approved plan for the RTWP initiative, will be reimbursed as per the process.

12. What if some items have long delivery times like BSI Furniture or items in short supply due to demand?

Known or potential delays in supply chain as identified by agencies should be included within their Budget Narrative Request and should be proactively communicated to or discussed with DOA-BFM prior to submission of the request.

Known or potential delays in supply chain as identified by agencies after submission and approval of their Budget Narrative Request should be communicated to or discussed with DOA-BFM as soon as possible.

Considerations for adjusting the approved Budget Narrative Request and financial proposal may need to occur and can be discussed with individual agencies on an as-needed basis.

13. Can an agency be reimbursed for costs incurred after August 31, 2021?

Expenses incurred after August 31, 2021, may be considered eligible for reimbursement if the expenses meet the program definition(s) and the expenses were deferred due to delayed delivery of supplies or services from the supplier.

Considerations for adjusting the approved Budget Narrative Request and financial proposal may need to occur and can be discussed with individual agencies on an as-needed basis.

14. Would the cost of furniture for the conference rooms, including media tables, chairs or other items to better equip the rooms, be a reimbursable cost?

No. Any furniture purchases beyond what is needed for cubicle reconfiguration would be the responsibility of the agency and considered as unallowable.

15. Would the costs of air purifiers be considered as an allowable cost?

DOA-owned buildings and facilities are being evaluated for filter improvements in MERV (filtration) ratings and additional air exchanges as the building allows. Agencies should be aware that air purifiers would be considered as appliances and should refer to the DOA Facilities Tenant Manual regarding guidelines for bringing appliances to the workplace:

<https://doaintranet.wi.gov/Shared%20Documents/FacilitiesTenantManual.pdf#search=DOA%20tenant%20manual>

16. Would hand sanitizing stations for our employees and customer base be reimbursable?

No. The goal of the RTWP initiative is for agencies to identify projected costs of transforming existing workspace into safer work environments. Costs related to PPE or other sanitization efforts for COVID-19 should be included and submitted within the agency's monthly Cost Tracker.

17. For projects that have multiple components (hardware, software, furniture, installation), do you want those identified as "Other" for a single project or broken out by individual component and then somehow categorized in the description that the components work together (so should be approved as one or denied as one project).

Within the Budget Request Template, it is a best practice to make the most appropriate selection of the item from the Supplies and Services list. If that item is not available, then please select 'OTHER' to describe the item.

Additional detail, including what project the item is intended for, can be included in the 'Description' field. The 'Description' field can be expanded if necessary to ensure the proper level of detail is included.

18. Does an agency need a separate Budget Narrative Request (Section 2) for each project or can an agency summarize all of the projects into the one document?

Agencies should create and submit a single Budget Narrative Request which summarizes all intended projects. Section 2 within the Budget Narrative Request can be expanded to multiple pages if necessary to ensure the proper level of detail is included.

19. Can the agency claim administrative time to manage the CARES funding, reporting requirements, etc.?

No. Administrative efforts, such as financial planning or oversight, for the RTWP initiative will be considered as unallowable.

20. In many grants we charge an indirect rate; Can an indirect rate be billed for the RTWP initiative?

No. CRF does not allow for an indirect rate to be charged.

21. Where can I find additional information regarding the RTWP initiative?

A web page has been established for the publishing of RTWP initiative content and information in a centralized location and can be found:

<https://doa.wi.gov/Pages/RTWPInitiative.aspx>.

Additionally, Agency Financial Directors, Agency Budget Directors, and specified points of contact were provided a program overview, an initiative timeline, and budget request information as of May 11, 2021.