

## WDC Submission to Public Consultation on Guidance for Remote Working

The Western Development Commission (WDC) welcomes this opportunity to submit its views to the Public Consultation on Guidance for Remote Working. In this submission we highlight some of the insights gained on Remote Work from the various work programmes it is undertaking. These are outlined below, highlighting relevant feedback on some of the questions raised in the Consultation.

- Research & Policy Analysis (in addition to the Remote Work Taskforce with NUIG)
- Enterprise Hub Classification
- Common online booking system for hubs
- Interactive GIS map of hub locations <https://www.atlanticeconomiccorridor.ie/hubs-map/>
- Hub Outreach Programme
- Enterprise Hubs Strategy and Economic Impact Assessment
- The WDC was part of the successful GrowRemote REDF submission in 2019

In addition to the work undertaken with NUIG and the Remote Work Taskforce, the WDC has been working on **researching** remote work for many years. The WDC Policy Briefing (No. 7) *e-working in the Western Region*, see [here](#), examines the extent of e-work in 2017 as well as identifying issues and recommendations on how e-working can be further promoted, many of which are still relevant. The more recent WDC Insights blog posts from late 2019 see [here](#) and early 2020, [here](#), also offer insights especially in the context of Remote Work patterns in a post Covid environment.

In the context of developing further Government guidance to support Remote Work for employers and employees, the WDC would make the additional following observations.

- Remote work has been practiced widely in Ireland pre Covid, (see links above for data) and some industry sectors and occupations have been more predisposed to the practice than others. Organisation size and organisational culture can also influence the extent of the practice to date and the likelihood of continuing the practice. All of these differences indicate that the guidance required will vary by organisation type.
- The pattern of remote working post Covid will influence the extent and type of challenges employers and employees will face. It has been noted that the current practice of remote work (under Government direction) is not remote work in the conventional sense in that it has been on a full-time basis and combined with caring duties (with childcare facilities and schools closed). Over four fifths (83%) of respondents to the WDC/NUIG Survey indicated that they would like to work remotely after the crisis (see [here](#)). The preferred option cited by 42% is to work remotely several times a week. Current challenges are influenced by both

the rapid introduction of the practice – with minimal opportunity to prepare and the current pattern of working from home – daily (which is the preferred option of only 12% of respondents). It is likely that under a different pattern of remote work some of the challenges expressed may be less of a concern in a post Covid context.

- In consultations with companies on how they are managing remote working currently and examining their plans post Covid, the feedback has been that post Covid there will be a much greater degree of remote working than pre Covid. These companies requested additional clarity and guidance on the following;
  - Employer responsibility regarding Health and Safety.
  - Data and Security issues.
  - Taxation treatment of international employees.
  - Management training in effectively supporting productivity and performance for remote workers.

In addition, the WDC is engaged in a range of work programmes supporting the development of hubs and positioning them to support greater take-up of remote work across the country.

- Following regional and national engagement with over 200 public, private and community hub owners and users between 2019 and 2020 and subsequent feedback from other state agencies and relevant government departments, the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) **Enterprise Hub Classification** has been developed which categorises enterprise hubs into five categories based on the services they offer; Enterprise Hubs, Scaling hubs, R&D hubs, Co-working hubs and Community & Enterprise hubs.
- The process to procure a **common online booking system for hubs**, funded in conjunction with the Department of Rural and Community Development Dormant Accounts Fund, is underway and the system is planned to be in place along the AEC by year end, with national rollout to follow. Ahead of that rollout, **an interactive GIS map of hub locations** is in preparation <https://www.atlanticeconomiccorridor.ie/hubs-map/> as part of a broader marketing and communications campaign, with a national map to follow.
- A **€300k Hub Outreach Programme** is under way that will support over 70 hubs along the AEC, particularly aimed at hubs not eligible for existing or forthcoming support schemes.
- An AEC **Enterprise Hubs strategy** is nearing completion and the WDC will share these with stakeholders.

The WDC welcomes the work undertaken by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in supporting Remote Work and would be happy to engage further on various issues raised and the work being undertaken by the WDC.

Yours sincerely,



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