

Proximate Commuting



What is it?

"Proximate commuting" involves assigning employees of multi-worksite organizations to locations nearer to their residences. This strategic approach seeks to diminish commuting expenses and offers a range of advantages to both employees and employers, while also benefiting society and the environment.

How it works

Proximate commuting initiatives are born out of ProximateCommutesm, a consultancy enterprise and program established by Gene and Carolyn Mullins based in Seattle. ProximateCommutesm outlines three approaches for multi-worksite employers to facilitate shorter commutes for their staff:

- **New Hire Placement** – Assign newly hired employees to worksites located closer to their residences.
- **New Job Placement** – Consider proximity as a key factor when selecting candidates to fill job vacancies.
- **Job Swap** – Enable eligible employees to exchange worksites, provided that such swaps lead to reduced commute distances and/or times.

Advantages of Proximate Commuting



- Proximate commuting diminishes the length of commutes, thereby reducing both the time and costs associated with traveling to work.
- Alleviate external burdens like traffic congestion, the risk of accidents, and pollution emissions.
- The flexibility in worksite locations may even enable certain commuters to transition from driving to alternative transportation modes, such as walking, cycling, or public transit, should they select locations that are more accessible through these means.

Disadvantages of Proximate Commuting

- HR and union leaders might be concerned about potential resistance from employees who choose not to exchange their work locations.
- Employees may feel like they are working in a less desirable location if it is not the main office location.
- Similar to remote work, employees may not be working in-person with their colleagues and/or managers, which can affect productivity and employee morale.
- Unless the work site reflects the culture of the organization, new employees may not adapt to the organization's culture and norms, which may limit their successful integration into the organization.



Considerations of Proximate Commuting

-  Employers should ensure that the worksite is comparable to working at the main office location, with the same requisite level of security and protection if applicable.
-  If proximate commuting is combined with other working arrangements, such as remote work, employers should take into consideration the impacts of those working arrangements.
-  If employees and their managers work at different sites, oversight of employees may be similar to that of a remote work setup and therefore employers should provide the appropriate supports to both managers and employees to ensure maximum productivity and oversight.
-  Achieving goals and fulfilling duties hinges on effective results-driven management, necessitating the establishment of clear work objectives and guidelines.
-  Employers should allow employees to still access other work sites as needed, such as for in-person meetings and work with other colleagues or their managers.
-  Clear protocols should be established if an employee moves, how this information should be communicated, and whether the work site will change accordingly.
-  Employers can also offer proximate commuting in more flexible or ad hoc ways as an alternative to remote work, as long as protocols are established. For example, employees may be allowed to work in cafes, restaurants, libraries or other public spaces outside of their homes as long as they can maintain a safe and secure environment that is conducive to productive work.