

Information Technology Management Used For Remote Work

Background

Remote work is a way of organizing work that has progressed over the last decades. Technology has made it possible for employees to do some of their regular work from home while still being connected to the office. This is often referred to as “telework” or “remote work.”

On March 13, 2020, government guidelines to control the risk of contamination imposed remote work as the employment configuration that replaced all other forms.

Although this practice already exists within the City of Montréal (the City), a shift to remote work on a larger scale was necessary. Up to 4,500 employees work from home in remote work mode simultaneously, accessing the City’s network remotely.

Purpose of the Audit

To determine whether the control mechanisms, put in place for managing the information technology (IT) used for remote work within the City, allow to provide the necessary equipment and secure remote access to the City’s information technology assets to ensure that employees can continue to perform their work.

Results

We conclude that the City has put in place the control mechanisms to ensure the sound management of the information technology used for remote work.

Indeed, despite the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 crisis, the City’s Service des technologies de l’information (STI) quickly deployed all the necessary efforts in an exceptional context to put in place the technological environment as well as the security mechanisms required to allow all of its employees working remotely to continue their professional activities from home without any interruption of service.

These mechanisms include the STI’s guidance on IT used for remote work, the remote work awareness and training strategy, the protection mechanisms surrounding City data access and the operations management surrounding remote workers’ corporate equipment.

Main Findings

Remote Work Framework

- Several guidelines on good practices to be adopted by employees working remotely were developed within the organization. They were approved and distributed to all employees through the City's intranet.
- These guidelines provide the information required for employees to safely use IT to work remotely.

Remote Work Training

- Appropriate awareness and training on remote work and its components have been in place since March 2020.

Data Access Protection

- Appropriate authentication mechanisms are used by employees to access data located in the City's network in accordance with sound security practices. The screen lock on City laptops is automatically activated after a centrally defined period of inactivity.
- Appropriate software is installed and updated on all City devices remotely connected to the City's network to protect them from malicious attacks.

Operations Management

- In order to allow employees to work remotely, the STI put in place secure mechanisms to enable employees who do not have a City computer to use their personal computer. Since the beginning of 2021, nearly 2,200 laptops have been distributed to employees allowing them to work remotely. The STI has provided adequate computer support for remote workers.

The infrastructure in place allows for appropriate redundancy of key components and includes a secure environment for remote work.