



**Small Firm Virtual Roundtable
Summary Notes
May 20, 2020**

Policy Development in Managing Remote Workers:

- Some firms updated IT policy to more explicitly state that while working from home information is still confidential and you can't use company equipment to do anything you wouldn't be doing in the office
- Most firms have employees using company IT equipment at home – monitors, laptops, etc.
- Some firms are increasing cyber security coverage
- When offices reopen, some firms will provide laptops for employees or two desktops – one for home and one for the office
- Issues around equipping staff when they split their time between the office and home
- One firm gave employees a no interest loan to purchase new PCs, monitors etc for home to be paid back whenever. This was acceptable since they can keep it and the firm doesn't end up with double the amount of hardware.
- Challenge of being 100% cloud-based when staff have poor internet connection at home
- Firms looking at ways to manage with less space or reimagined space.

Getting Back to Work:

- Issues around engaging staff when they split their time between the office and home
- Issues around employees being concerned about using public transportation to get to work
- Childcare becomes a challenge when offices reopen but schools remain closed
 - o Emergency paid FMLA leave is available for parents, and you can offer it on a part-time basis to help staff stretch out that leave
- Many firms thinking about temperature-taking devices as part of their return to the office plan
- Staff has expressed that they don't want to return to the office if they have to worry about one-way hallways, washing hands, wearing masks, and taking temperatures. They'd rather work from home.
- Many firms find that utilization and productivity has gone down while working from home
- Other firms have expressed that their project managers have been more available to their teams since they are working from home
- There are still concerns about quality and collaboration while working remote
- What does the future hold in terms of office footprint going forward. Does it make sense to reduce now while people are still working at home?

Business / Project Impacts & PPP Loan Forgiveness and Overhead Rates Discussion:

- Worries around states reducing fees, freezing wages, or ordering budget cuts

- If federal dollars are involved, there may be some protections from public agencies cutting your rates
- Loan Forgiveness Application released last week
- Still waiting on SBA Guidance – what are they looking for in terms of determining eligibility?
- Until the guidance is released, lenders will be hesitant to open loan forgiveness process
- Interest in tweaking the program: possibly extending the 8-week period to qualify
- Extending amount of time for firm's to pay back loan if they don't receive forgiveness
- 75/25 ratio of payroll to expenses
- Document FTEs; document from time deposit was made into firms' account
- Have until October to submit application
- EIDL Grant reduces amount of loan that can be forgiven
- Continue to rely on firm accountants for guidance
- Government contractors: if you have a loan that's forgiven, will your government clients insist on a credit to your overhead rate?
- Couple that with IRS guidance on deductibility of expenses, could you potentially be worse off for having taken the loan and having it forgiven?

ACEC Advocacy Staff Update:

- ACEC submitted a paper to DOD to push back on that guidance and ask for clarification and we've circulated a letter to other stakeholder industries which will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget and the FAR Council; Guidance from Department of Defense suggests that under the FAR you would need to provide a credit back for the loan forgiveness which would lower your overhead rate the following year
- ACEC is talking to OMB, AASHTO, and state DOTs to see if it's possible for firms to carry forward the previous year's overhead rate on contracts
- Tax Deductibility issue and making recommendations to FHWA/AASHTO: aberration and not typical of normal work flow
- Reauthorization could be a stop-gap measure but preference is for a long-term deal
- Next package forming that will include airports, water resources, transit, funds for state/local govts; House bill staking out what the caucus wants, elements in the initial pkg would be needed between now and Sept. 30th
- Gas tax reduction due to country shutdown
- Need for a long-term agenda for infrastructure
- Part of virtual fly-in currently going on are successful meetings with key lawmakers

Links shared in the chat as of 5/20/20

PPP Loan Forgiveness Letter <http://docs.acec.org/pub/62ee9ed5-0e76-fc23-5bca-db747404c53a>

R3 Advocacy Center <https://programs.acec.org/rescuerecoverrebuild/>

ACEC Webinars, Education Resources <https://programs.acec.org/r3educationseries/>

ACEC's Latest Research [https://www.acec.org/default/assets/File/ACEC%20COVID-19%20Business%20Impact%20Survey%20-%20Wave%206%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.acec.org/default/assets/File/ACEC%20COVID-19%20Business%20Impact%20Survey%20-%20Wave%206%20(1).pdf)

ACEC BIT Return to Work Guide

<https://files.engineers.org/file/ACEC-BIT-Employers-ReturnToWork-Guide.pdf>