



SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT FOR TELEWORKERS

Q1: Can units use SI funds to purchase supplies and equipment for employees who are teleworking during the COVID-19 response?

A1: During the COVID-19 response, a unit may have employees teleworking who have never teleworked before, or who have teleworked infrequently. At the discretion of a supervisor/approving official, units may, *but are not required to*, purchase certain supplies and equipment that are required for the telework employee to do their job, subject to criteria, including the following:

- **A unit must have funds available to make such purchases and must ensure the cost is charged to an allowable fund source.** (Note: Generally, such costs are not considered allowable on federal grants and contracts. See Q2 for special considerations for Fund 803.)
- All purchases must comply with the Smithsonian's policies for [use of funds](#), [purchasing](#), [property management](#), and [information technology](#).
- All purchases for teleworkers remain the property of the Smithsonian, even if used primarily in a personal residence.
- Units should **not** purchase supplies or equipment that cannot be brought back and used at the employee's Smithsonian work site (except to the extent the supplies are used up during teleworking, such as paper, post-it notes, ink, etc.)
- Units may **not** purchase any items that are primarily for personal use or the comfort or convenience of the employee.
- Purchases of Sensitive and Capitalized property (e.g. laptops and any single item over \$5,000) must follow guidance in the following FAQs.

Employees who would like their unit to purchase supplies or equipment on their behalf, should contact their unit administrative officer(s) for further guidance.

Q2. Where can unit financial managers find more information about selecting an allowable fund source?

A2. For guidance on selecting a fund source, please refer to pages 2 – 6 of the [SD 323, Use of Funds Handbook](#). Questions about this guidance should be directed to Maggie Stone, stonem@si.edu or 202-633-5217.

Financial managers and Principal Investigators for government grants and contracts (Fund 803) may find this [FAQ resource from the Council on Government Relations](#) useful. Questions about allowable costs on government grants and contracts (Fund 803) should be directed to:

- Office of Sponsored Projects at OSPMail@si.edu (for all units except the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO))
- [Financial Management Department](#), SAO (for all SAO grants and contracts)

Q3: If an employee purchases IT equipment (e.g., desktop, laptop, phone, scanner, monitor, etc.) for use while teleworking during the COVID-19 response, can the employee be reimbursed if the equipment is turned over to SI later?

A3: No. All IT equipment must be purchased in accordance with SI policies and procedures. Employees must coordinate requests for such equipment through their supervisor/approving official and their unit's procurement official and Accountable Property Officer (APO). However, please note that there are [staff discounts available](#) for employees' personal use.

Q4. Can units purchase a laptop* for an employee to use while teleworking?

A4. Yes, as long as the laptop is purchased in accordance with the guidance in A1, established procurement and [property](#) policies, and [IT buying guides](#).

Note: All controlled [sensitive](#) or capitalized property, including laptops, is required to be tagged and entered into the SI Asset Management (AM) module in ERP. Units **must** coordinate with the unit procurement official and Accountable Property Officer (APO) when making a purchase of controlled sensitive or capitalized property. **Deliveries directly to an employee's home are not authorized for this classification of property. Units must coordinate with the employee's supervisor and the unit APO to transfer the property to the employee for use.** A list of all APOs can be found [here](#).

- **Capitalized property** is defined as property meeting the capitalization threshold (currently \$5,000.00 or greater) and whose acquisition costs are recorded in SI financial accounts and placed in the SI Asset Management (AM) module.
- **Controlled sensitive property** is defined as property considered highly vulnerable to pilferage, inappropriate use, and/or inappropriate disposal, and if lost or misused may present a serious liability to the Institution. Controlled Sensitive Property regardless of its acquisition costs must be tagged and tracked in the SI Asset Management (AM) module. Controlled sensitive property includes, but is not limited to, portable computers (laptops, tablets, e-readers, netbooks, and all equivalent devices).*

** In accordance with policy established by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), all laptops must have DDS, formerly known as Computrace, or another OCIO approved tracking system installed. Additionally, all applicable mobile computing devices accessed by the public must have DDS. Please see the [Inventory Management](#) page on Prism for more information on DDS including which laptop models will arrive with it factory installed. **Please contact the OCIO Help Desk at OCIOHelpDesk@si.edu or 202-633-4000 if you have questions about purchasing IT equipment.***

Q5. My unit placed an order for a laptop for an employee, however, we've been notified that the equipment is on backorder for several weeks. Are there any other options for getting a computer so that the employee can telework?

A5. If your unit has been notified that the ordered equipment is on back order, and has an urgent need for a computer in the interim, please contact the [OCIO Help Desk](#). In your request, be sure to provide justification for the urgent business need for an interim teleworking solution. OCIO has a limited number of computers that they may be able to lend on an interim basis, while the supply lasts, to those who have an urgent business need.

Q6. If an employee does not have a home printer, can the unit purchase one for the employee?

A6. Yes, as long as it is purchased in accordance with the guidance in A1, established procurement and [property](#) policies, and [IT buying guides](#). **Note:** a printer is considered administratively controlled sensitive property. Although an SI asset tag is not required for administratively controlled sensitive property, and we do not record it into the SI Asset Management (AM) module, it is tracked by the unit's APO. **Purchase of administratively controlled sensitive property must be reported to your unit APO.** A list of all APOs can be found [here](#).

- Administratively Controlled Sensitive Property is property that poses potential risk to the Institution if lost, stolen, misused, or disposed of improperly. However, due to its limited portability, the likelihood of it containing sensitive information, and/or the likelihood of improper disposal, administratively controlled sensitive property is not tagged or tracked in the asset management module.

Administratively controlled sensitive property includes:

- Cameras and camcorders
- Projectors
- iPhone®, and similar cellular devices
- Desktop computers
- Copiers, printers, and scanners

Q7: At an employee’s work site, she has two monitors/a larger monitor and feels she could telework more efficiently if she had a second/larger monitor at home. Can SI funds be used to buy the employee a second/larger monitor to use at home while teleworking if she brings it back to the office later?

A7: If supervisor/approving official determines that a second monitor or other piece of equipment is required in order for the employee to do her job while teleworking, the purchase would be allowable as long as it is purchased in accordance with established procurement and IT policies, and the guidance in A1. However, the employee’s supervisor/approving official may also determine that the equipment is not required for the employee to do her job while teleworking, even if the equipment might make her work more efficient. **Please note** that supervisors may assign any work they determine is necessary as long as the supervisor knows the employee has the knowledge and skills to perform the assigned work. (See Q28 in the [April 1st Telework & Leave guidance](#).) During this extraordinary time, efforts should be made to be flexible and consider different ways to achieve the mission.

Before making a monitor purchase, please contact your unit’s IT support staff or the [OCIO Help Desk](#) to confirm that the monitor model will work with the intended computer and determine whether you need to purchase special cables.

Q8: An employee and his partner are both teleworking from home with their kids/pets. The extra background noise makes it difficult to focus on work. Can SI funds be used to purchase noise cancelling headphones for the employee as long as he brings them back to work?

A8: SI funds may **not** be used to purchase items for personal comfort or convenience. While certain items may make teleworking more pleasant, convenient, or productive, items that primarily address a personal need or circumstance are not allowable on SI funds. Supervisors should allow for maximum scheduling flexibility. Employees in this situation should speak with their supervisors on how to structure their day. Telework hours may be broken up throughout the day using flexibility in scheduled work hours. (See the [April 1st Telework & Leave guidance](#).) For information about providing accommodations for a disability, see Q10.

Q9: What procurement method should my unit use for basic office supplies (such as paper, post-its, printer ink, mailing labels, etc.) for use in teleworkers’ homes?

A9: Effective April 1, 2020, Smithsonian staff who are teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and in need of basic, consumable office supplies may work with their Unit Procurement Officers (UPO) or PCardholders to get necessary and allowable items delivered to their homes. (**See A1 for criteria for allowable items.**) OCon&PPM has worked with [StaplesAdvantage](#), an online ordering system for office supplies, to allow PCardholders to temporarily add employees’ residential addresses to unit accounts. (Answer continues below.)

Using [StaplesAdvantage](#) helps the Smithsonian Institution with strategic-sourcing efforts to save on costs, reduce the number of suppliers, and provides GSA-approved and negotiated rates on office supplies. Staples can deliver office products across the United States. If you need office supplies shipped to your home, please:

- a) Follow your unit purchase request procedures.

- b) Contact your UPO or unit PCardholder and provide them with your residential shipping address, unit email address, and phone number where you may be reached while teleworking so you can be added to your unit's StaplesAdvantage account.
- c) Let your unit procurement staff know what office supplies you need. Allowable items are basic office supplies, such as paper, printer ink cartridges, writing and mailing supplies, that meet the criteria provided in A1. Note that at-home deliveries are capped at \$100 per order. Please only request items you need to do your work for a few weeks at a time.
- d) PCardholders will have your residential addresses added to their accounts by coordinating with Brian Ross, RossB@si.edu, OCon&PPM).

More information can be found by referencing the [StaplesAdvantage FAQs](#).

Q10: What should I know about requests for items to accommodate a disability?

A10: Procurement staff should refer the employee who is requesting the item(s) to Carol Gover in the Office of Equal Employment and Minority Affairs at goverc@si.edu or 202-633-6418. **Please note:** Carol cannot discuss accommodation requests with procurement staff, and procurement staff should not second-guess a supervisor's approval of items that may be considered accommodations. For questions about the Smithsonian's policy on accommodations for people with disabilities, please refer to [SD 214, Equal Employment Opportunity Program](#), and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Handbook](#), or contact the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority Affairs ([OEEMA](#)).

Q11: I have been using my personal phone and internet service to telework. Can I be reimbursed for these expenses? What about the electricity used while I'm teleworking?

A11: Consistent with the SI Telework Procedures Manual, SI is not reimbursing employees for personal phone and internet services, even if those services are used by employees to telework. SI is also not responsible for operating costs associated with using a residence or other alternate worksite for teleworking (e.g., home maintenance, insurance, or utilities).

Q12: Can I use Smithsonian funds to purchase cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, and facial tissues for use by employees who are teleworking from home?

A12: No. Smithsonian funds may **not** be used to purchase these items for use in employees' homes.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE

Q13. Can a unit use Smithsonian funds to purchase cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, and facial tissues for use by employees and [affiliated persons](#) in Smithsonian facilities?

A13. Smithsonian federal and discretionary trust funds may be used to purchase the following items for use by essential employees and affiliated persons performing mission critical tasks in Smithsonian facilities:

- cleaning supplies such as disinfecting wipes, hand and dish soap, and paper towels,
- alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 % alcohol, and
- facial tissues.

See Q15 for guidance on how to request such supplies. The Smithsonian Coordinating Officer for the Emergency Operations Group, convened per [Smithsonian Directive \(SD\) 109, Smithsonian Emergency Management Program](#), has determined that the items listed above are necessary to maintain the safety and healthiness of Smithsonian premises in response to legitimately anticipated dangers and exigencies of COVID-19.

Q14. Can a unit use Smithsonian funds to purchase masks or respirators for employees?

A14. Use of Smithsonian funds for **masks or respirators** is only authorized when a Smithsonian employee or affiliated person's job duties require their use as personal protective equipment (PPE) for occupational health

and safety purposes. SI funds may not be used to purchase face masks or respirators for anyone who has not been determined to require this type of PPE during regular performance of their duties. Masks should not be worn outside of performing identified tasks to preserve supply for when they are required. **See Q15 for guidance on how to request such supplies.**

Q15: How should a unit obtain PPE and cleaning supplies to support essential employees performing mission critical tasks in Smithsonian facilities?

A15: Requests for PPE and cleaning supplies to support essential employees performing mission critical tasks on site should be coordinated through the unit's designated Emergency Point of Contact (POC). The unit POC should batch the unit's requests and submit to the designated points of contact for the Logistics Group of the SI Emergency Operations Center (EOC) per the most current incident action plan (IAP). Requests will be evaluated by the Logistics Group on a case-by-case basis.

Q16. Can hand sanitizer, gloves, masks or other PPE or cleaning supplies purchased with Smithsonian funds be donated to the medical community or another group in need of these supplies?

A16. In general, Smithsonian is unable to make these donations at this time. Our current supplies are dedicated to protect our colleagues, including our occupational health nurses and healthcare providers and those who are caring for our living collections. The Institution will continue to evaluate our operational needs and supplies, and will determine if we have PPE or other items available to donate. Special requests to donate SI property from Unit Directors and Smithsonian leadership should be directed to si-coronavirusinfo@si.edu for evaluation on a case-by-case basis.

Q17. Can a unit use Smithsonian funds to purchase bottled water for employees?

A17. Bottled water may only be purchased for employees using Smithsonian funds when emergency conditions have caused tap water to be unavailable or declared unfit to drink by OSHM. At this time, the guidance regarding bottled water during standard operations is still in effect. COVID-19 has not affected the potability of tap water. SI funds may not be used to purchase bottled water for employees and affiliated persons.

MANAGING CONTRACT PERFORMANCE

Q18. Should Contractors be allowed to telework where possible?

A18. Units are strongly encouraged to work with their contractors to evaluate and maximize telework for their contractor employees, wherever possible, as a way to enable continued contract performance consistent with the health and safety of their contractor and staff. This includes modifying contracts that do not currently allow for telework. If a contract does not lend itself to telework, for example, because it must be performed on location the COTR should consider being flexible on delivery schedule and contract completion dates.

Q19. If contractor personnel must be quarantined due to exposure to the virus, whether or not related to performance of the contract, and this action results in a slip in the contract schedule, may contracts be extended or otherwise altered?

A19. Yes. SI contracts provide for excusable delays, which may extend to quarantine restrictions due to exposure to COVID-19. In determining the best course of action, the COTR should discuss the situation with the contractor to determine if other options are available (e.g., ability of employee to telework or to find a substitute employee). If other options with the existing contractor aren't feasible, it may be appropriate to re-procure elsewhere if possible.

Q20. If an SI building, such as a museum, is closed to the general public in order to further the practice of social distancing, should repair work to the building be halted until the building is reopened?

A20. Work is not necessarily required to stop. Whether work is continued or stopped should be addressed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the health and safety of government and contractor employees. These discussions should include SI-COVID-19 Response Public Health recommendations and current local or State Public Health orders.

Q21. In light of the pandemic, will any relief be offered regarding re-registration in the System for Award Management?

A21. Yes. Current registrants in SAM with active registrations expiring before May 17, 2020 will be afforded a one-time extension of 60 days.

POINTS OF CONTACT

Q22: Who do I contact if I have questions about the Smithsonian's Use of Funds policy?

A22: Questions on the use of Smithsonian funds should be directed to Maggie Stone, stonem@si.edu.

Q23: Who do I contact if I have questions about managing government grants and contracts (Fund 803)?

A23: Questions about government grants and contracts (Fund 803) should be directed to:

- Office of Sponsored Projects at OSPMail@si.edu (for all units except the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO))
- [Sponsored Programs and Procurement Department](#) of SAO (for all SAO grants and contracts)

Q24: Who do I contact if I have questions about the [IT buying guide](#)?

A24: Questions about the IT buying guide should be directed to the OCIO Help Desk at OCIOHelpDesk@si.edu or 202-633-4000.

Q25: Who do I contact if I have questions about using a purchase card (PCard)?

A25: Questions on the use of purchase cards (PCards) should be directed to the Charge Card Program Help Desk at CCPHelp@si.edu.

Q26: Who do I contact if I have questions about Smithsonian property?

A26: You should contact your unit Accountable Property Officer (APO). A list of all APOs can be found [here](#). Unit APOs may direct queries to OCon&PPM if they have further questions about Smithsonian property by contacting the Personal Property Help Desk at OConPPMPPOBProperty@si.edu.

Q27. Who do I contact if I have questions about managing contractor performance?

A27. Please contact OCon&PPM via the online Help Center at: <https://si-jira.si.edu/servicedesk/customer/portal/1>.

Q28: Who do I contact if I have questions about requests for items to accommodate a disability?

A28: For questions on the Smithsonian's policy on accommodations for people with disabilities, please refer to [SD 214, Equal Employment Opportunity Program](#), and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Handbook](#), or contact to Carol Gover, goverc@si.edu or 202-633-6418, in the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority Affairs ([OEEMA](#)).