



# Building leader support for flexible working

A toolkit for HR  
managers and  
change leads

## Use this toolkit to develop a plan for influencing your agency's leaders to commit to and support flexible working change.

These toolkits have been developed from content drawn from a series of workshops run for NSW government agencies in September 2019, as part of the NSW Public Service Commission's program of work to embed flexible working across the sector.

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# Building leader support for flexible working

## Why your agency may need this toolkit

The NSW government has committed to ensuring all government sector roles can be flexible on an 'if not, why not' basis in a way that maintains or improves service delivery for NSW. It's the responsibility of agency CEOs to meet this policy commitment, and the PSC has provided a strategic framework, [Make Flexibility Count](#), that articulates what 'if not, why not' looks like for an agency.

Understanding what this policy commitment looks like in each agency's unique operating context can be an early challenge, and articulating that at the leadership level, and building buy-in, is invariably the first step. To help, we've provided two toolkits. The first, this one, is for building the buy-in from your leadership group you will need, given their impact on the success and take up of flexible working. The second toolkit, *Agreeing your agency's flexible working vision and goals*, is to work with this group to articulate your agency's future goals or 'vision' for flexible working, and agree accountabilities and sponsorship. You will use the latter to communicate across your agency what flexible working could look like, and adapt any PSC tools, supports and guides in support of your stated goals. Use this toolkit to develop a plan for influencing your agency's leaders to commit to and support flexible working change. Leadership buy-in is the first step to successfully implementing flexible working so this is a great place to start if your leaders are not yet convinced of the benefits of flexible working or have not committed to a change plan to embed flexible working in your agency.

## What this toolkit contains

Both toolkits provide you with a way to influence senior leaders to commit to and support flexible working change in your agency, with examples provided for how you can engage leaders, and structure the conversation. This pack contains two resources to help: this guide, and a PowerPoint template for use in your leader workshop to guide discussion.

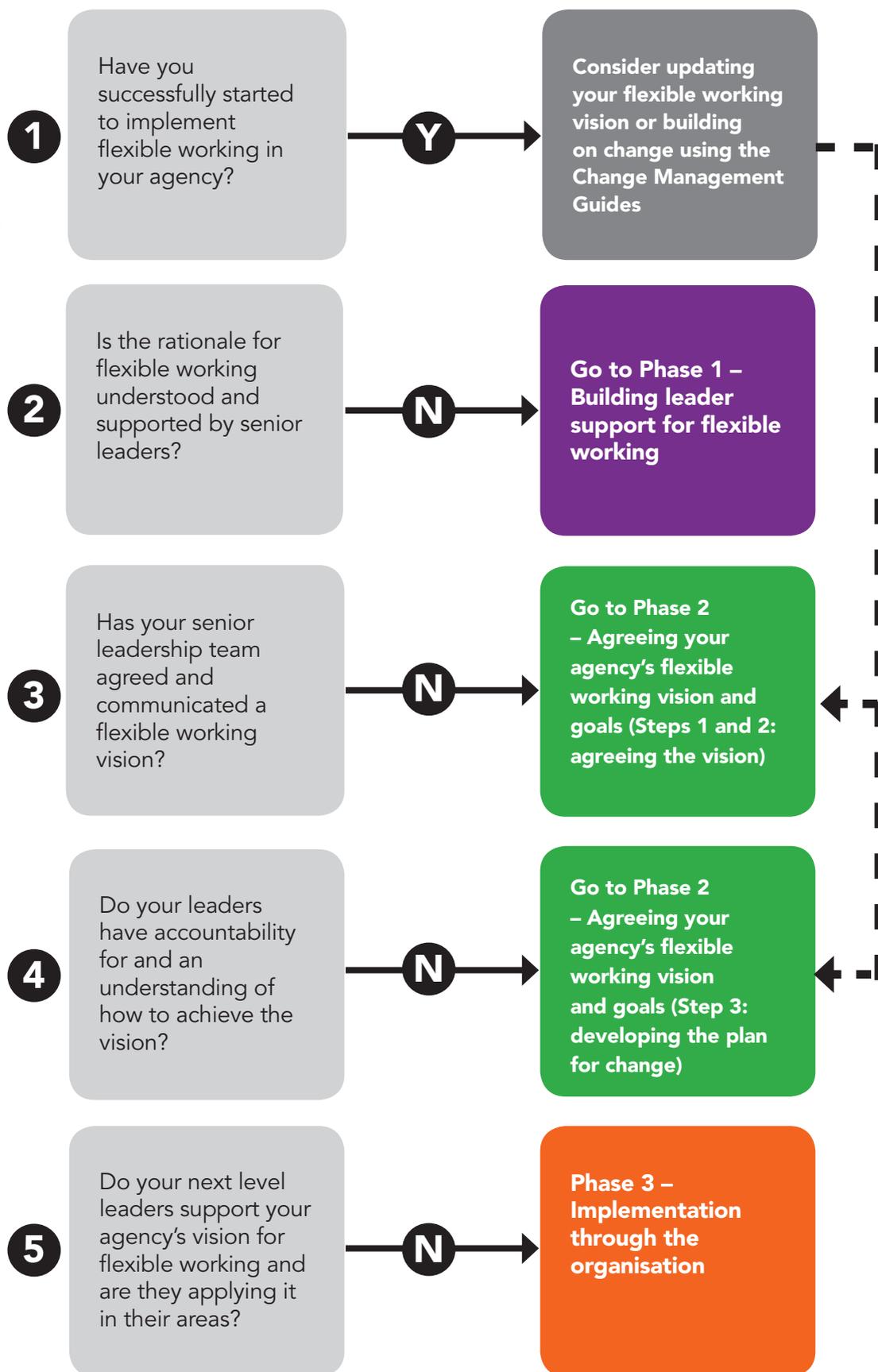
### THIS TOOLKIT



Phase	STEP 1 - Building leader support for flex work	STEP 2 - Agreeing your agency's flexible working vision and goals	STEP 3 - Implementation through the organisation
Overview	Co-develop an effective case for change with leaders which establishes a clear rationale for flexible working in their agency, including how it will support existing business objectives and address agency challenges.	Reach agreement on how the agency will support flexible working, including the desired future FIT maturity of the agency and how the agency will get there (through strategies outlined in the flexible working change guides).	Once there is senior leader buy-in and agreed priorities for flexible working, engage different manager groups to communicate and help them apply flexible working within their teams.  (this content not covered: see <a href="#">Make Flexibility Happen</a> )
Audience	Executive and senior leaders responsible for determining strategic direction.	Executive and senior leaders responsible for determining strategic direction.	Middle management leaders responsible for delivering on strategic direction.

# Influencing leaders decision tree

This decision tree will help you identify where to prioritise your efforts in influencing leaders to support the implementation of flexible working, and which step of the toolkit to dive into first.



# What is a case for change?

A case for change sets out a clear rationale for leadership action. It does this by linking your agency's business objectives with a given government priority area - an important tool for driving support and buy-in.

For flexible working, you will start building the case for change by clarifying the business challenges that your agency is currently facing, articulating why change is necessary, identifying what change is viable, and how you will know what is feasible.

Use the template below to guide your planning as you prepare to meet with your leaders and build your agency's vision for flexible working.

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## **Clearly articulate the *drivers* for change**

Is there a recognised problem or objective that the case for change will seek to address?

Does the case demonstrate why action needs to happen now?

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## ***Desirability* of change is shown through benefits**

Are the benefits clearly articulated, with a sound logic linking activity to outcome?

Does the case strongly align with sector or organisational strategic priorities?

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## ***Viability* of the change is backed up by evidence**

Have other jurisdictions done this change before and achieved benefits?

Do others who aren't responsible for developing the case (e.g. academics, other organisations) support the case?

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## **There is confidence that the change is *feasible***

Does the change show that the right capabilities are available or can be readily developed to embed and sustain the change?

Do stakeholders involved support the change?

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# Step 1: What to do before you meet with your leaders

Work with your agency leaders to co-develop a case for change that establishes a clear rationale for flexible working in your agency, including how it will support existing business objectives and address agency challenges.

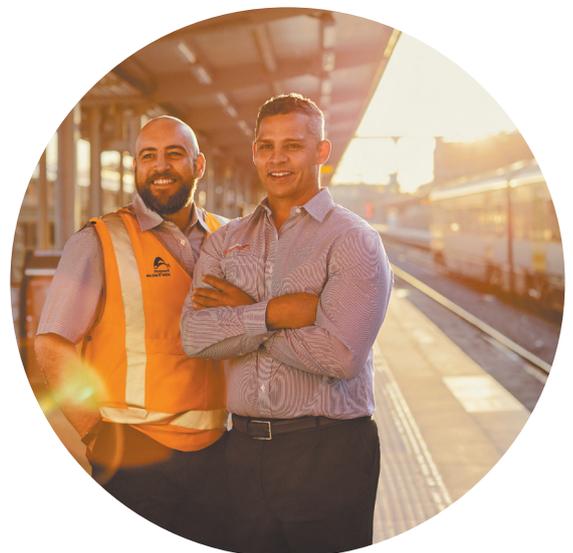
While there are three key steps, it would be worth noting it's okay to go back and forth. Sometimes you may need to revisit and consolidate previous discussions in order to move forward.



## 1 Develop a plan for influencing your leaders

Decide on the best way to engage your leaders on an agency vision for flexible working. If you are having trouble finding time in the executive calendar for a specific workshop, consider one-on-one conversations with leaders, presenting at a leadership forum, or other regular meeting.

Consider building a "change coalition" to influence senior leaders. Resistant senior leaders may be open to listening to and being influenced by certain people more than others. By building a coalition, it spreads the workload and can help you to positively influence the leadership team from multiple angles. Also, identify advocates and detractors amongst the leadership team. The advocates can be a consistent and strong peer voice for flexibility on the leadership team table. You may be able to convince detractors as you build the case for change, but it might mean scheduling more one on ones to talk through the evidence and so that their concerns can be thoroughly addressed.



# Step 1: What to do before you meet with your leaders

## 2 Understand your agency's priorities

Understand your agency's strategic and business priorities and how they might link to flexible working. For example, if your strategic priority is 'Diversity and Inclusion', then flexible working is an important workplace adjustment that enables women, people with disabilities, older workers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other groups to better participate in the workplace, and through mechanisms such as job share, encourage that participation at more senior levels. A business priority could be a future office move that will require a switch to activity-based working, which in turn requires managers and employees to build capability in working to outcomes, and support working from different locations, which typically follows on.

Here are examples of how flexible working has satisfied the strategic priorities of two different Victorian organisations:

Driver	Proposed Change	Desirability (how will your agency benefit?)	Viability (what is the best practice from other agencies?)	Feasibility (what capabilities do we have to deliver this?)
<b>Cost sustainability</b>	Improving female representation and retention with the organisation by introducing flexible working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced absenteeism</li> <li>• Increased productivity</li> <li>• Improved employee satisfaction and tenure</li> <li>• Decreased desk costs</li> </ul>	Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning implemented an "All Roles Flex" approach immediately, in terms of expectation of attitudes and adoption of flexible working.	<p>Each employee has their own portable laptop</p> <p>Meetings can be run using skype, including sharing screens and voice</p>
<b>Productivity improvements</b>	Reducing burn out and improving staff health and wellbeing by implementing rostering preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved employee experience and tenure</li> <li>• Improves performance of employees</li> <li>• Reduced absenteeism</li> </ul>	The Royal Women's Hospital adopted a goal of ensuring that all 24/7 rotating employees were able to receive at least 50% of their rostering preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology enables time preferences</li> <li>• Large number of staff available for shifts</li> </ul>

# Step 1: What to do before you meet with your leaders

## 3 Assess the current state of flexible working

You will need an understanding of how your agency currently practices flexible working and broader workforce challenges and identify issues that inhibit managers and employees working flexibly. This analysis will inform not just the case for change, but the initiatives you will drive once support is in place. Use this assessment will help you identify the areas of your agency that need to change, and the areas that need initial focus.

1. Data Assessment	2. Engage with stakeholders	3. Summarise findings
Use the PSC's Flexibility Implementation Tracker (FIT), obtain your agency's assessment results, and identify the current state of practices throughout the organisation. Also access your agency's trend People Matter employee scores for flexible working (use, satisfaction, and manager support).	Collaborate with employees and managers across the organisation to further validate the issues identified in the data and uncover any other issues that may not have been identified.	Analyse the data gathered to understand what the current state of flexible working adoption is like across the organisation and issues that should be addressed.

You could also consider using a [PSC pulse survey](#), which was provided to agencies as a source of interim data between People Matter employee surveys, or for those agencies who do not participate in People Matter. It is also a way that agencies can reassure employees they are tracking progress in this policy commitment.

You can also draw on other workforce data to gather supporting evidence; for example, demographic, recruitment, workforce planning, diversity representation or recruitment data/ interviews.

Each agency also has a PSC flexible working Dashboard to test if this data also holds for their own organisation, and explore more: contact [PSC\\_WorkforceDashboard@psc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:PSC_WorkforceDashboard@psc.nsw.gov.au) if you are unsure who in your agency holds the login.

# Step 1: What to do before you meet with your leaders

## ● Find examples of best practice in similar contexts

Researching the case studies of other organisational experiences helps to identify best practice and can form the basis of your own agency's strategy, complemented by the data you've already prepared.

1. Assess your organisation's position	2. Internal Data and Results	3. Desktop Research	4. Engage like agencies and organisations
Assess and understand the size, physical locations, structure, typical roles and business priorities are of your organisation.	Consider what data you have available on the uptake and success of your agency's flexible working practices.	Research NSW government agencies and other organisations to understand their implementation strategies and best practices.	Contact similar agencies or other organisations to gather information about their flexible working status and strategies.



## Tools and materials

- Case studies of organisational best practice: for example, Qantas, BHP, Women's Hospital (Melbourne), Premier and Cabinet, Reserve Bank of Australia and Mirvac.
- The PSC has sector-wide analysis on its website that provides data on the links between flexible working and higher engagement, employee job satisfaction and willingness to go above and beyond. It also shows the correlation between increased flexible working use and satisfaction and rates of lower unplanned leave, a significant cost saving. It also shows data insights about gender differences between men and women and commuting times, at all grades/bands. This can provide insight into what type of flexible working could be attractive to a given cohort.
- University of Sydney Policy Lab: All Roles Flex Report
- UK Government Equalities Office also have a number of case studies and a survey of the data
- Make Flexibility Count: Strategic Framework for the NSW Government Sector
- Diversity Council Australia: Future Flex

## 5 Arrange workshop logistics and materials

Set up a workshop time, expectations, location and finalise supporting documents if required. This might also involve any pre-work or pre-reading you would like your leadership team to do, to make the most of the time you have with them in the workshop.

# Step 2: What to do when you meet with your leaders

When you have gathered all the evidence to support the development of your agency's case for change you are ready to meet with your leadership group and co-develop the case for change.

This step will link the business/strategic objectives of your agency with flexible working initiatives, use case studies of success from similar organisations to demonstrate that change for your agency is viable, examine the proven benefits of flexible working to encourage leaders to be motivated to support change, and analyse your agency's readiness for change to build confidence in a change program.

## 1. Capture / validate objectives

Business Objective 1

Business Objective 2

Business Objective 3

Business Objective 4

Business Objective 5

Business Objective 6

## 1 Prioritise business objectives

The business objectives of the agency are the organisation-wide and sector priorities. It is important to understand how flexible working may fit within these broader objectives of the agency.

Based on your research and understanding of your agency, you will have an initial view on the objectives of the agency and which of these can be achieved with the help of flexible working. Work with your leadership team and ask them to identify any additional challenges / priorities / objectives, prioritise by relevance to flexible working and the align them to realistic timeframes. You could use a flip chart to capture the discussion around priorities and timeframes.

## 2. Prioritise by relevance

Business Objective 2

Business Objective 1

Business Objective 4

## 3. Align with timeframes

6 - 12 months

1 - 2 Years

2 - 5 Years

Business Objective 2

Business Objective 1

Business Objective 4

# Step 2: What to do when you meet with your leaders

## 2 Case studies of success

Based on your research and analysis, share with your leadership team examples of where your own agency, other agencies and other organisations have made changes to support flexible working and the business benefits they achieved. Clearly demonstrate the value flexible working has brought and the organisation challenges addressed. Below is an example from three organisations; further examples can be found in the appendix. Choose ones relevant to your agency context and copy the details onto slide 5 of the workshop pack.

Organisation Context	Flexible Working Change	Benefit
Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning have 3,600 office-based, metropolitan and regional staff.	<b>Improve female representation with the organisation</b> – Went live with an “All Roles Flex” approach immediately, in terms of expectation of attitudes and adoption of flexible working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost savings of \$31 million annually, which is 2.25% of its output appropriation.</li> <li>• Improved employee work-life balance (93% in 2017 to 96% in 2018), increased productivity (53% in 2017 to 59% in 2018), higher engagement (43% in 2017 to 49% in 2018).</li> </ul>
Medibank has 4,155 office-based, home-based, contact centre, medical and sales staff.	<b>Attract and retain the best talent</b> – Upon moving from six offices to one location staff were given the opportunity to work in various locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees who work flexibly are significantly more engaged than those who do not (4% more engaged, 7% higher wellbeing scores, 2% more likely to work beyond what is required and 6% more energised to go the extra mile).</li> </ul>
The Royal Women’s Hospital has 430 corporate / support staff and 1900 clinical staff (rostered on a 24/7 basis).	<b>Reduce burn out and improve staff health and wellbeing</b> – Adopted a goal of ensuring that all 24/7 rotating employees were able to receive at least 50% of their rostering preferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost savings of approximately 7,000 hours of unplanned leave since 2017, equivalent to about \$420,000.</li> </ul>

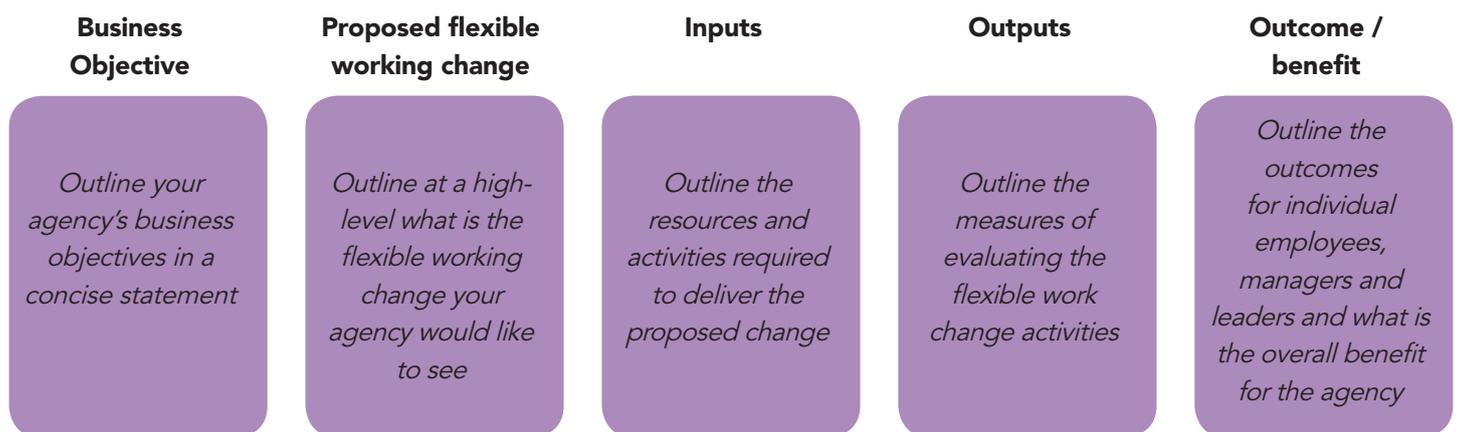
# Step 2: What to do when you meet with your leaders

## 3 Build the case for change

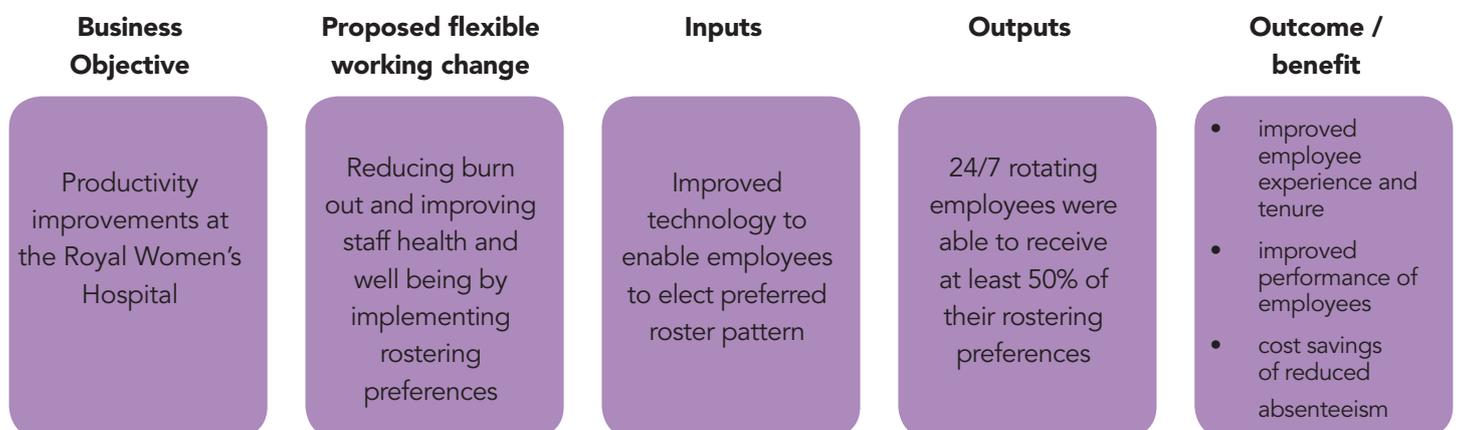
Building the case is about identifying how flexible working changes can help deliver on the agency's objectives or address its challenges that were agreed as a group. Identify and quantify the benefits (if possible) to highlight the desirability of the change.

### Workshop activity

The steps below describe how a proposed change achieves outcomes that will address an overarching problem or business objective. It demonstrates the desirability of change by linking activities and inputs, to outputs and to outcomes (and overall benefits). Use a model like the one below with your leaders to discuss and capture each component in order to build the case and demonstrate the desirability of change.



### Example



# Step 2: What to do when you meet with your leaders

## 4 Confidence in change

Work with your senior leaders to understand how feasible flexible working change is within your agency. Consider the practicalities of how to make change, including whether they have the right support from stakeholders, the required capability and an estimate based on examples from other organisations of the kind of investment and effort that may be required.

Consider using a stakeholder mapping tool to breakdown your workforce segments and external stakeholders. It may be useful to segment stakeholders into similar characteristics (based on life-stage, behaviour, role-type etc.). The PSC has developed a set of personas that summarise the typical concerns contributing to people's positive or negative reactions to flexible working, based on its research of the current state across the sector, and these may prove useful. You can form new personas based on your agency workforce profile or use the current ones as a starting point to map out and understand your target groups. This will inform the initiatives needed. Refine your scope of change if some elements look more challenging. Use a flipchart or other tool to record the responses to the questions in the table.



# Step 2: What to do when you meet with your leaders

## Workshop activity

Refine your scope of change if some elements look more challenging. Use a flipchart or other tool to record the responses to the questions in the table.

	Stakeholder support	Capabilities	Investment & effort
<b>Guiding questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who are the key stakeholder groups affected by the change? For example, staff, customers and industry groups.</li> <li>What is the size of each stakeholder group?</li> <li>What is each group's level of influence to making flexible work change happen?</li> <li>How much is each stakeholder group impacted by the outcomes of flexible work change?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the agency done something like this before?</li> <li>What are the capabilities required to make the change happen? For example, communications, technology, change management, flexible working leadership.</li> <li>Do the required capabilities currently exist?</li> <li>Or can the required capabilities be readily developed or recruited?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there an agreed vision among leaders of what flexible working means for our agency and where we would like to be in the future? If not, can leaders agree to creating the vision?</li> <li>Is there a credible blueprint or plan for making the change?</li> <li>What has been the effort required when others have delivered these changes?</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment</b>			

## Tools and materials

[Changing Skills and Experience Guide](#) (refer to capabilities in section 1.2). Use the identified flexible working capabilities across the roles to identify what capabilities currently exist in your agency, and what might need development.

# Step 3: What to do after you have met with your leaders

## ● Document the case for change

- Using the structure “Desirability, Viability and Feasibility” with your leadership group, you can simplify and identify the benefits, the best practice and the capabilities required to achieve your agency’s flexible working objectives.
- Document case for change output and distribute to leaders for validation. Additional one-on-one engagement may be required

Below is an example:

Driver	Proposed flexible working change	Desirability (how will your agency benefit?)	Viability (what are the best practice from other agencies?)	Feasibility (what capabilities do we have to deliver this?)
<b>Cost sustainability</b>	Improving female representation and retention with the organisation by introducing working from home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced absenteeism</li><li>• Increased productivity</li><li>• Improved employee satisfaction and tenure</li><li>• Decreased desk costs</li></ul>	Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning implemented an “All Roles Flex” approach immediately, in expectation of attitudes and adoption of flexible working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Each employee has their own portable laptop</li><li>• Meetings can be run using skype, including sharing screens and voice</li></ul>

## 2 Refine the plan

There may be other factors you need to consider at this point, such as any other agency priorities this can complement or conflict with, timing, and readiness for change that will need to be addressed before you can move on. A word of warning at this stage:

You will need clear endorsement from your entire leadership team, and an agreed vision for what it will look like in your agency. If you suspect that some members of the executive have reservations about flexible working, but have not communicated these during the workshop, you could meet individually with each executive involved to surface any concerns they may have, or gauge support and a willingness to sponsor and/or champion the work. Encourage them to openly discuss their misgivings about flexible working, explore any operational impacts and see what can be resolved (and most can be). When ready, you can refine the case for change and circulate it to your leadership team, then start work on the next stage: your leadership’s vision for change. If it takes more than one workshop to arrive at this point, it will be worth the effort.

For more information  
visit the [PSC website](#).



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**FLEXIBLE WORKING**