

Public Service Commission

FAQs for team-based design – flex work trials



FAQs	
<p>Can I adjust core hours and bandwidth – as these don't seem to support flexible working? Can I work compressed hours?</p>	<p>Current industrial arrangements apply unchanged.</p> <p>In many agencies, there may be a supporting clause in the relevant local hours agreement that allows employees and managers to work with HR to alter bandwidth and core hours to allow employees to work flexibly in a way that maintains or improves productivity. The ability to work compressed hours will depend on the particular award and the HR processes of your agency.</p> <p>For agency specific questions regarding industrial arrangements in the first instance talk to your HR/IR area.</p> <p>IR specialists in agencies can seek guidance from advisors in Public Sector Industrial Relations on a case by case basis.</p>
<p>What about work, health and safety requirements during the pilot?</p>	<p>Work health and safety of all employees is paramount.</p> <p>HR teams are encouraged to check with their agency insurer regarding current WHS requirements, particularly for working from home inspection arrangements.</p> <p>Of course, agencies must make their own decisions in this process, based on their assessment of risk.</p> <p>Introducing work into your home environment also introduces mutual responsibility for your own work, health and safety for your physical environment.</p> <p>If costs are incurred when working from home, employees typically bear these costs and can seek independent tax advice where appropriate.</p>
<p>What about balancing working from home and carer obligations?</p>	<p>Working from home arrangements are not a substitute for dependent care.</p> <p>Employees are responsible for ensuring that appropriate care arrangements are in place whilst working from home and you should discuss these with your manager according to your circumstances.</p> <p>Carer leave may be requested to provide dependent care if required.</p>

<p>How can I record flexible working in my timesheet?</p>	<p>After formal manager approval has been sought as per agency process, your hours should be logged as usual in the timesheet – with any variations noted (where practicable) where the current timesheet structure proves unable to adapt to the hours worked.</p>
<p>How do I manage people when I can't see them?</p>	<p>It is vital that managers build trust amongst team members, be good communicators and able to listen, able to help their team connect and collaborate, and to help team members manage their time effectively – these skills are also important for flexible working.</p> <p>To begin a conversation about working flexibly, you can initiate a team discussion where everyone is encouraged to consider the business outcomes you wish to maintain or improve, and what the essential outputs will be, while also considering what kinds of flexible work options there are and how they may be incorporated into the team's working lives. Agree on quantifiable measures of performance, e.g., projects completed, client satisfaction, team engagement, support for team goals, and monitor these as you would as a manager.</p> <p>Together the team can plan for the changes and how to overcome any challenges. You may need to share your preferred overall approach, parameters and guidelines for flexible working with the team before engaging in more detailed one on one discussions. Have clear and agreed performance goals in place at the beginning: include both performing standard job-related tasks, as well as communication with other staff and participating in training and development activities.</p> <p>It is also important to agree on your communication protocols if someone is working away from the office and how they will let people know; i.e. home, hub, another government office: what is the process for team meetings? Can these be scheduled on a day that everyone is working from the same location, if you're office-based? How will the team use email, Skype, phone conferencing etc. How might the structure of meetings change to get the most out of the 'connected' time?</p>
<p>I have a team of 10. One team member has requested to work Mon-Thurs only. I'm worried that if I agree to this request others in the team will want the same arrangement.</p>	<p>Open and transparent processes are essential when dealing with multiple requests for flexible working arrangements. Consider each person's request and assess any flow-on affects (opportunities and challenges).</p> <p>Manage multiple arrangements with planning</p> <p>Managing different types of flexible working arrangements in your team may require some extra planning and team-based discussion to ensure adequate coverage across the working week. You can achieve this by using a work schedule and calendar (which will also help you plan for employee holidays and extended leave periods).</p>

	<p>Employee coverage</p> <p>Some ways to cover employees' work when they are not in the office include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddy systems – another employee could respond to urgent queries • Mutual flexibility – working arrangements need to meet business needs, e.g. employees agree to be flexible with their arrangements when emergencies and unforeseen deadlines occur
<p>Someone in my team has requested a flexible working arrangement but they have not stated why.</p> <p>Can I insist on knowing why the employee wants to work flexibly?</p>	<p>Employees are not obliged to provide a reason.</p> <p>However, knowing more about the employee's needs can be helpful if the plan they've proposed can't meet business/operational needs, and you need to work together to find another approach – it helps to know their needs.</p> <p>However, you cannot use the lack of a good reason as a ground for refusing the request or categorise one team member's request as 'more important' than another team member, except where the legislation gives them specific right to request. Requests can only be refused on operational grounds (i.e. by reference to their role description, key responsibilities and any performance criteria).</p>
<p>There's the possibility that allowing team members to work flexibly for a short period could affect the service we provide – how can we avoid this?</p>	<p>Most agencies will already have some flexible workplace initiatives in place. If this is the case, there should be some experience on how to make flexibility work. It is helpful when setting up the flexible arrangements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult with the employee(s) and team members to find the best way to make flexible arrangement work – consider the needs of the business and the customer/client • agree on the measure of success for employees working flexibly. Include their personal criteria, such as reduced travel time, or a less stressful working day. Consider the performance criteria of their job, such as 'timely response to customers' enquiries • plan for the unexpected – have a plan of action in place to cope with any crisis or 'difficult' situations that may occur • ensure the technology can accommodate flexible work arrangements • monitor performance to ensure issues can be addressed early <p>The policy commitment is for all roles to be flexible on an if not, why not basis – to maintain or improve service delivery for the people of NSW. Flexible arrangements that do not find an equilibrium between the needs of the individual, their team and their deliverables/customer will need to be re-considered and, ideally, an alternative found.</p>

<p>We already work long hours in our agency. Does this mean that we have to be 'on' 24/7?</p>	<p>There is no general expectation for people to be working out of normal hours, unless this is agreed to within the team. The best way to address this is to have an open discussion with your team about the work that needs to be done and your own expectations as a manager, with respect to best practice WHS principles.</p> <p>If you are working out of business hours, you can minimise impact on recipients by using an email signature tag line such as <i>'I am sending you this message now as I work flexibly and I do not expect you to read, respond or action it outside your regular hours.'</i> Otherwise – use the “Delayed Delivery” feature in Microsoft Outlook to delay sending emails until agreed office hours.</p>
<p>Where can I get advice on considering a flexible working request?</p>	<p>The PSC has developed conversation guides for managers and employees, as well as advice for developing and considering a flexible working arrangement:</p> <p>https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/requesting-and-considering-flexible-work</p>