**Facilitator’s Guide – Flexible working workplace sessions for managers and employees**

**NSW Public Service Commission**

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# Facilitator’s Guide: Flexible working workplace sessions for managers and employees

## Why we’ve provided this guide

This facilitator’s guide is to support you to offer flexible working awareness and engagement sessions for your agency’s employees and managers.

Your agency may need to run these sessions when it has revised its policy, if your employee survey data reveals there are employees or managers who would benefit from an increased awareness of flexibility and open mind towards its use, or if your agency is moving to a new activity-based workspace and the expectation is that more employees will work flexibly. These sessions provide an opportunity to clearly articulate organisational expectations about how it can work, and respective roles and goals.

Use the basic content here and augment it with your own agency’s policy settings for flexibility, any useful process information you think will be asked, and your agency’s vision for the future goals for flexible working in your agency, as articulated by your leadership team. See also the PSC’s [personas](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/leading-implementation-of-flexible-working/shifting-perspectives-on-flexible-working) and [misgivings](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/requesting-and-considering-flexible-work/typical-misgivings-about-flexible-working) for clues about the sorts of questions and perspectives you can reasonably expect to hear.

The guide also provides recommended reading to help you gain the background knowledge you’ll need to run the sessions, a checklist for planning and running them, content and additional resources.

## Learning objectives

* To uncover the current attitudes that employees and managers have about flexible working
* To explore the flexible working skills required and any development needed, to provide follow up support.
* To identify the changes in behaviours, habits and processes needed to better support flexible working, and how the changes can be adopted by individuals, teams and the agency.
* To discuss the agency’s flexible working policy, procedures and expectations.

## Learning outcomes

* Participants will better understand flexible working in the NSW government context: what it is, what it isn’t, how it helps.
* Participants will more clearly understand what needs to change and how to change the way our organisations, teams and individuals approach flexible working, and what their role is in supporting a state where flexible working is embedded.
* Participants will have an opportunity to discuss the local context: flexible working policy and IR framework.
* Participants will know where they can go for further support and resources after the session.

## Pre-reading for the facilitator

1. Your agency’s flexible working policy and procedures, and relevant industrial instruments (Flexible Working Agreement)
2. The PSC flexible working [conversation guides for managers and employees](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/requesting-and-considering-flexible-work)
3. The PSC [team-based design toolkit](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/design-flexible-work-with-your-team/design-flexible-work-with-your-team-toolkit) for trialling flexible working for an entire team
4. The flexible working [skill sets development guides for managers and employees](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/skillsets)
5. The [PSC guide to running accessible meetings and events](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/disability-employment/disability-resources)

## Pre-reading for participants

1. The flexible working [skill sets development guides for managers or employees](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/skillsets), depending on the individual’s role if you are splitting the sessions by these cohorts (recommended)
2. Your agency’s flexible working policy and procedures, and relevant industrial instruments (Flexible Working Agreement)

## Handouts for the sessions

1. Slide deck of the session with space for participants to write notes
2. ‘Rules of the Road’ handout
3. The PSC flexible working [conversation guides for managers and employees](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/requesting-and-considering-flexible-work)
4. The ‘tricky scenarios’ activity handout

# Planning ahead

## Administrative support

The sessions will need to be organised (advertised, registrations received, find and book a venue, etc.) and session materials prepared. You will need to know exactly who is attending ahead of time, to send out the pre-reading. It is suggested that the venue booking include 15 minutes’ set up and pack up time before and after the one hour session – so 90 minutes in total.

## Facilitation

It is recommended, although not essential, that two facilitators conduct each session. The session lends itself to a smaller sized group to allow for discussion – no more than 20 people. Because the session is interactive and is about a topic that can be associated with difficulties in the workplace such as not enough desk space, it is likely that participants may raise curly questions. The best way to keep to time in the session while at the same time not dismiss issues raised may be to post a ‘parking lot’ sheet on a wall in the workshop space so any issues that are better responded to after the session can be recorded, with a promise that there will be follow up. This would also be the way to handle any questions that you do not immediately have an answer for.

If you have a participant who is disrupting the session, you can respectfully call attention to the behaviour by asking the person to reserve their comments for after the session so that they can be properly addressed.

## Venue

You will need a room to hold up to 20 participants, with AV facilities and seating laid out in a way that enables discussion. Familiarise yourself with how to use the lighting, air-conditioning, projector/AV system, and where the toilets are, etc.

## Teaching aids

You will need a laptop to connect with the AV system to display the slide deck. You will also need large A1 size flip charts plus black markers for the skill sets exercise, plus all handouts.

Ahead of the session you should list as a two-column table the skill sets for managers or employees (depending on which session you are running) on the front page of the flip chart. When participants arrive, ask them to use a black marker to mark to identify their strengths (as a ‘tick’) and development areas (as a ‘cross’) when they arrive at the session. You’ll refer to this in a later activity.

## Publicity/invitations

Here is an example of text you could use through internal social media channels or calendar invite to encourage participation is below:

***Flexible Working sessions - register now!***

The new Flexible Working policy has been launched, but how can you make it work for you, your colleagues and the organisation?

The People and Engagement team is providing hour-long sessions for employees and managers to explore how we can put the policy into practice. Everyone can ask about flexible working, so we encourage everyone to attend. We want to help you get the most out of working flexibly, so register now!

All sessions will be held in the [insert name] room, details below:

**Employee sessions - Making flexibility work for everyone**

Tues 24 Sept: 2pm – 3pm

Thurs 26 Sept: 11:30am – 12:30pm

**Manager sessions - Building a flexible working culture**

Wed 25 Sept: 12pm – 1pm

Tues 1 Oct: 2pm – 3pm

To access the policy and for more information on Flexible working, please visit the Flexible Working page on the intranet.

We look forward to seeing you at the sessions.

*People & Engagement*

# Once registrations have been received

## Confirmations

Email participants to confirm the registration has been received and attach the skill sets self-assessment, giving them instructions about completing it and an expectation they should bring their results along to the session and be prepared to contribute their results anonymously.

Organise name tags or tent cards if the participants are unlikely to know each other.

Print enough copies of the handouts for the sessions for each participant.

## On the day

Take a laptop with the slide deck loaded, the teaching aids, handouts, black markers, pens and name tags, plus the flip chart to the session.

## Workshop structure

1. Introduction and acknowledgment of country
2. Brief scene-setting
3. Stand up, sit down exercise
4. What needs to change to embed flexible working?
5. Discussion of agency flexible working policy and procedures
6. How do we change as individuals, teams and as an organisation to embed flexible working?
7. Support and resources, discussion of skill sets.
8. Discussion of team-based design for flexible working
9. Exercise: tricky scenarios
10. Finish

# Running the sessions

Time required: 1 hour to 90 minutes

## Instructions

Arrive 15 minutes ahead of the session to set up the AV system, with the slide deck displayed on the projector screen at Slide 1. Place the printed slide decks and conversation guide at each seat where the participants will sit, with a pen and black-coloured marker each.

## Pre-session activity

You have set the [skillsets](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/skillsets) as pre-reading/homework. As participants arrive, ask them to write three ticks and three crosses on the flip chart to list which flexible working skills are their three strongest skills (ticks) and three skills for development (crosses).

Timing is tight, so switch it up according to the skills base you’re working with or extend the session to 90 mins if you feel your agency needs a deeper discussion of policy and procedures.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Slide #** | **Content/discussion** | **Peripherals/activity** | **Timing** |
| 1 | * Introduce yourself and invite participants to share their names and where they work, if they don’t know each other.
* Outline the session, including the learning outcomes for participants, and make the acknowledgment of country.
* Discuss housekeeping such as where the toilets are located, if necessary.
 | DiscussionSupport: [Aboriginal cultural protocols](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/2834/Aboriginal-Cultural-Protocols-document.pdf.aspx) Learning outcomes list from page 3 of this guide | 3 mins |
| 2 | * Start by defining flexibility. If you have 90 minutes you could ask them first what flexible working means to them, before presenting the slide content. If the group is large you could use slido or minti to build on on-screen word cloud as they contribute their definitions. It will help you ‘take a temperature’ if you do not know the group.
* This slide is important because there are a number of assumptions about flexibility that you will use the activity next to address.
* It introduces the possibility of a broad definition, and the capacity to think about flexibility differently from how participants may have before – as a benefit not only to employees but also to organisations.
* It’s also useful to state why your agency is committed to flexibility, using the frame of the business problems it will help to address (demographics, office move, diversity targets, wellbeing strategy, etc).
 | Present | 2 mins |
| 3 | **Exercise: stand up/sit down*** This is a fun way to test the group’s perceptions/biases about flexible working and build the case for change.
* It’s particularly useful if there are pockets of your agency doing it well, but others need to improve, or if everyone has assumptions about how ‘well’ their agency does flex that need challenging.
* Ask everyone to stand up, and stay standing if they support the first choice in their agency, or sit for the second.
* When you have completed all 7 statements, ask all to be seated and summarise your observations about the group’s responses to the statements (unless modify approach to small size group). You will find some discussion points listed on the slide notes in response to each of the 7 statements.
 | Activity1. Larger groups: consider using Sli.do or similar (20 ppl or more)
2. Medium groups: as suggested
3. Smaller groups (5 ppl or less): consider running as a discussion instead, and participants contribute their observations at each question
 | 8 mins |
| 4 | * This slide unpacks the issues raised in the ‘Stand up, sit down’ exercise by outlining what embedding flexible work looks like organisationally.
* Pause at the point where the business imperative is raised and ask participants to identify what the specific business problems might be within your agency e.g. not enough desks for the workforce or an ageing workforce, which flexible working can help.
* Then wrap up the slide by briefly unpacking what needs to change to embed flexible working for each affected (individual, team and organisation). It is a good opportunity for people to think through not just process change (which is where most participants immediately go) but also behavioural changes or changes to way their agency operates. If you have a bit more time you could ask them what they think needs to change, before outlining the answers.
 | Introduce, then seek responses to questions posed.  | 8 mins |
| 5 | Explaining roles as manager/employee* Invite managers to discuss what they think their responsibilities are regarding flexibility; OR
* Similar discussion for employees

This slide is an opportunity to encourage participants that they already possess the skills needed to work flexibly – the only difference is that flexible working is an opportunity to more systematically and deliberately plan the way an individual or team functions. | Present/discuss | 5 mins |
| 6 | Switch facilitators to discuss policy* The new facilitator asks the group if they are familiar with the agency’s flexible working policy and if they have any questions.
* It is then an opportunity to re-emphasise some of the principles that underpin the policy, and any particular points that may directly address the local context, for example if any particular issues have been occurring in the agency with regard to flexible working. This ‘re-launch’ within an agency is a good opportunity to guide your people to move from an ad hoc approach towards flexible working to an embedded approach, which can more skilfully achieve benefits at a systems level of your organisation and make it more democratic for all.
 | Q&A re policy  | 5 mins |
| 7 | Switch back facilitators to continue discussion of changes required* When discussing the team-level, hand out a suggested ‘rules of the road’ document and explain that it’s a comprehensive list that can be discussed and adapted by team, although emphasise any that the organisation has mandated.

This slide deliberately discusses the practicalities of making it work, in order to build confidence, particularly amongst managers, to ‘give it a go’ and shift the workplace culture to be a shared team-based experience rather than focusing on the individual. At the same time, individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for self-managing and making changes to the way they work.  | Handout: rules of the road | 8 mins |
| 8 | **Skillsets/resources*** Turn your attention now to the flexible working skills list on the flip chart and in particular, where participants placed their ticks and crosses when they first entered the workshop room. Comment on the trends across the group and direct participants to the self-paced development guides.
* Mention one or two of the suggestions in the guide that directly address one of the development areas that looks like it is common to most of the group.
* If any of the skills, such as ‘Tech-savvy’ have an equal number of ticks and crosses, this is an opportunity for people to buddy up and learn from each other. If this is the case, invite people to collaborate and support each other, and nominate how they can do this.
* Also mention the conversation guide or any toolkit you have and let them know that both the manager and employee guides assist teams and individuals to talk through what’s involved in setting up flexible working arrangements, and what factors to consider in the process.
 | Skillsets sharing/discussion | 10 mins |
| 9 | This slide is an opportunity to briefly describe how flexible working can be set up amongst team members. You can refer to the PSC [team-based design toolkit](Go%20to%20toolkit%20for%20designing%20your%20own%20team%20trial%20of%20flexibility%20here%3A%20%3A%20https%3A/www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/design-your-own-flexible-working-trial) (having a copy of the toolkit handy helps) and talk through the summary on the slide notes. It might be helpful to ask if any particular teams want further information or are interested to give it a trial, so that you can provide follow up support. Don’t skip this slide, as it is the critical ‘what’s next/how to do this yourself’ piece that this workshop sets up to leave them with.  | Present | 5 mins |
| 10 | Slide 10 encourages participants to use the principles discussed throughout the session to form responses to a range of tricky scenarios about flexible working. Encourage participants to break into pairs and spend 5-10 minutes (depending on how long you have) discussing one/two scenarios. If you have time you can ask for volunteers to share their responses.A suggestion for making this an activity, if you have time, would be to have the scenarios around the room on individuals posters that participants can buddy up and pick one and write their response/ideas on. Then the group can discuss each and look at what other people have contributed in terms of comments. This could be a final whole-of-group debrief of the learning outcomes from the session.An “answer sheet” has been drafted for you but this is mainly an opportunity to hear how well the participants have understood the content of the session, not to necessarily get the ‘right’ answers. It’s more of a discussion. | Handout: scenarios | 5-10 mins |
| 11 | Wrap up the session and encourage everyone to advocate for flexible working in their teams and in interactions with stakeholders across the NSW government sector. If you are planning further promotional events or communications for flexible working, you can mention them to encourage participation, and to let teams know that support is available where any particular capabilities need further development (in relation to the flexible working skills exercise). | Present | 1 min |

# Post-session follow ups

The sessions may be just one activity in the context of a range of activities, communications or other initiatives that promote flexible working across your agency. You may also want to consider social media posts, printed materials such as posters or notices in staff areas, handing out collateral such as lanyards, an intranet space dedicated to flexible working or other activities.

*From an agency-wide implementation perspective*, the PSC [Flexible Working Change Playbook](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/leading-implementation-of-flexible-working) will assist you to develop an effective change strategy and identify any other initiatives needed.

*The team-based design toolkit* ([Design your own flexibility trial](https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/design-your-own-flexible-working-trial)) is the next logical step for employees and managers as a resource to address how they make it work at their team level. It goes into much more detail about roles and responsibilities, how to identify what flexibility might be possible in a specific team context and how to agree operational protocols and principles, success factors and check if its all working as intended.

From a skills uplift perspective, use the results of the skills discussion done in this initial workshop to identify any additional support or training that might be needed (and the accompanying development guide will provide resource ideas here). This can be dripfeed via your social media channels.

If there have been issues raised at the session that were posted on the ‘parking lot’, make sure you follow up by email to participants or directly with the individuals who raised the issues.