

**Helping your team design a new normal**

Build Back Better Workshop

**Toolkit**

**2020**

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# How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help you run a workshop with your team to experiment with enhanced flexibility as you gradually return to your workplaces. It includes supporting information: workshop outline, sample communications, samples of completed exercise and links to assist you. Use as much of the templates or as little as you think you might need - noting there is design logic behind it, so it is important to ensure you gather all of the information the activities would otherwise achieve, and follow the agenda (the PowerPoint could be helpful to structure the discussion, but is optional).

To assist you in using this toolkit and running a workshop, each section is colour coded.

**Templates - In workshop activities**

A blank copy of activities 1 -6 to use within the workshop.

**Sample communications**

A draft pre workshop email and a draft post workshop email.

*This is supporting information; you can use this version or choose to create your own.*

**Pre work reading, activity and agenda**

To be added to the pre workshop email.

**Getting started**

Step by step instructions on how to set up, prepare and run the workshop.

**Workshop outline**

Step by step detail on how to run the workshop – linking information to relevant PowerPoint slides and activities.

*This is supporting information; you can review and use this during the workshop.*

**How to use this toolkit**

Information on how to use the toolkit.

**Why run a new normal workshop**

Background information about the workshop and the benefits of this approach for you and your team.

**Samples of completed activities**

A copy of activities 1 – 6 completed with examples.

*This is supporting information. It can be used by managers to gain an understanding of the type of information to capture in the activities and to guide discussion in the workshop.*

**Links to supporting tools and resources**

Links to tools and resources developed by the PSC.

*This is supporting information. These may be useful to gain further understand of flexible working and assist in discussions with your team.*

# Why run a ‘new normal’ workshop?

* As we gradually return to our offices, firstly as a home/office hybrid and then perhaps into a new pattern, we have an opportunity to consider:
  + how we worked over this period
  + what we learned (about our work, our teams and ourselves)
  + what we might want to keep and what might need to change
* Since 2018, the NSW Public Service Commission has worked with flexibility subject matter experts Dr Graeme Russell and Claire Stewart to pilot ‘team-based flexibility trials’ across the NSW Government Sector. In every pilot run to date, business, team and individual outcomes have been maintained or improved, a cultural change to embed flexibility effected in as little as three months, and every team participating has made flexibility BAU.
* The data has been so strong, we have adapted this methodology to support the sector through a new challenge: returning to workplaces as COVID-19 restrictions ease, where many staff have used significantly more flexible working to juggle work and family/other commitments, yet deliver their work.
* In fact, we have learned so much about new ways of working over this time, yet progress may not be consistent, and differing expectations (and needs) could lead to valid misgivings about how the work will get done, or miscommunication and tension, particularly in a ‘hybrid’ model where people are equally at home or in the office, for example, and there needs to be crossover time planned. Additionally, while it has been an occasionally stressful or challenging time for many employees, there have also been some real breakthroughs in team cohesion from the ‘level playing field’ of all being online, and these are worth capturing.
* We have developed a workshop you can run with your team to guide this discussion. Whatever pace or pattern that your workforce returns to the workplace in, and in whatever the format, having this discussion is a great opportunity for teams to design their ‘new normal’.
* This toolkit is designed to help you as a manager run the workshop with your team. It will help you set up the workshop and provide you with the communications, activities and tools required to run the workshop.
* It will give you, as a manager, the opportunity to discuss with your team how they have been working over the period of COVID-19 restrictions and learn how they want to continue to work in the future to support the organisation and team.
* From your team’s perspective, it will build a shared sense of ownership, responsibility and accountability by co-designing your ‘new normal’, and the opportunity to re-think where, when, how and by whom the team’s outcomes are achieved.
* ***We suggest a survey is completed following the workshop to help you understand how everyone sees their flexibility now and a duplicate of that survey approximately 3 months later, so you can measure how you are going, and adjust if required. A copy of a robust, generic survey can be obtained from*** [***flexible.working@psc.nsw.gov.au***](mailto:flexible.working@psc.nsw.gov.au)

# Getting Started

**STEP 1 Have a conversation with your team**

* Let them know that you are going to schedule a workshop to design as a team a ‘new normal’.
* Explain why - as we gradually return to our offices/workplaces, firstly as a home/office hybrid and then perhaps into a new pattern, we have an opportunity to consider how we worked over this period, what we learned (about our work, our teams and ourselves), and then decide what we might want to keep and what might need to change.
* While it may seem like yet another meeting tell them about the benefits of running the workshop as a team, let them know it is an opportunity to come together and talk about how they work and how they would like to work. That they will be involved in designing how they want to work in the future, the ‘new normal’.

**STEP 2 Schedule the workshop**

* You could use your team meeting or run the workshop as part of a team-building exercise. This can be completed face to face or virtually.
* This workshop is best run over 2 hours to allow for facilitated discussions and completion of your implementation plan during the session. Invest the time upfront to get clarity and set expectations clearly, it will pay off.
* Ensure all members are available to attend the workshop.
* Use the draft communication in this toolkit to send your team an email about the workshop (page 10) with a copy of the pre reading (page 11 & 12), activity 1 (page 13) and agenda (page 14),

**STEP 3 Prepare for the workshop**

* Review the workshop outline and PowerPoint presentation to feel comfortable leading the discussion.
* Review the suggested workshop activities and example activities so you understand how your team will complete them, and what they inform.
* Contact the flexible working team at the Public Service Commission if you have any questions on how to run the workshop [flexible.working@psc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:flexible.working@psc.nsw.gov.au)

**STEP 4 Hold the workshop**

* Take this opportunity to hear from your team.
* Ask a member to scribe the outputs/information captured during the activities and appoint another as timekeeper.
* Allow time for the team to share their experiences.
* Complete the activities within the workshop (activities 1-6)
* Allow enough time to focus on and complete activity 5 – ‘rules of the road’ and activity 6 ‘implementation plan’.

**STEP 5 After the workshop**

* Have your team compile the outcomes from the activities.
* Use the draft communication in this toolkit to send your team a post workshop email (page 15) containing the compiled notes from the workshop for review and the link to a survey (if you are completing the survey).
* Ask each team member to review in detail activity 5 and activity 6 and add any additional information.
* Allow the team approx. one week for feedback/additional information.

**STEP 6 Next steps**

* Finalise the agreed ‘rules of the road’ and agreed ‘implementation plan’.  
  Talk about how you are working flexibly as a team at periodic team meetings (dial the frequency up and down depending how it’s going)
* Allow for reflection of the ‘rules of the road’ and ‘implementation plan’. If something is not working – update it/fix it.

# Workshop Outline

Outline to assist managers to facilitate their team workshop

Includes:

* No. - Agenda item number.
* Item – Agenda item information.
* Details – Further information about the agenda item and detail about what to discuss for each slide of the PowerPoint presentation.
* Format- how to present/facilitate the information. i.e. this part of the workshop is manager led, group discussion, facilitated exercise etc.
* Template - if there are accompanying activities/templates.
* Slides – the relevant slide number in the PowerPoint presentation.
* Time - approximate time to spend on each slide/activity.
* *Note – sections which require group activities are highlighted in orange.*

| **No.** | **Item** | **Details** | **Format** | **Template** | **Slides** | **Time** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **Introduction/scene setting**  Recap of flexibility available/likely in agency, articulate future goals/vision at qualitative level | * Welcome   + Acknowledgement of Country   + House keeping | Manager led | No | 1 & 2 | 2 min |
| * Why we’re here today –what will I get out of this session * Understanding and identification of your business, team and individual outcomes that need to be maintained or improved.   + Time to reflect on how you have worked as a team over the past few months. What worked, what didn’t work and why.   + Identifying the types of flexibility you and your team wants.   + A sustainable way of working to support you and your team.   + ***Invite discussion: what would they like from today?*** | Manager led - Facilitated discussion | No | 3 | 5 mins |
| * What we will cover today (Agenda) * Make sure the intent of the session is very clear, and what attendees will get out of it, including a pep talk about putting effort in to reach that goal. | Manager led | No | 4 | 1 min |
| **2.** | **Taking a team-based approach** | * Overview of flexible working: what and why? * Formal, informal, and ad hoc * Flexibility in (when, where, how, who) * What is a team-based approach to flexible working? Why does it work? | Manager led  *Slide 5, 6 & 7 provided as pre reading prior to session.* | No | 5 & 6 | 5 mins |
| * How do I work? – Activity 1 – explain the activity and then complete activity as a team. * What flexibility do you have now? * Formal, informal, and ad hoc * Flexibility in (when, where, how, who) * Has your approach to flexible work evolved? (how/why?) * Do you have a culture of flexible working? | *Activity provided prior to session as pre reading activity.*  Manager led - Prompting questions/facilitated discussion.  Team activity (break into small groups if needed/depending on size of team) | Activity 1 | 7 | 10 mins |
| * Do we have a culture of flexible working? * Housekeeping: IR/WHS/tech context (Award, reiterate commitment to good WHS in a BAU environment, cost neutrality of this approach). | Manager led  Facilitated discussion | No | 8 & 9 | 5 mins |
| **3** | **Identifying the outcomes** | * Identifying the outcomes – Activity 2 - explain the activity and then complete the activity as a team. * Identify and confirm business, team and individual outcomes to maintain or improve * Are these the same as 3-6 months ago? * If they’ve evolved, how, and what prompted that? * Has working flexibly impacted business, team and individual outcomes? * Assessment of the impact on business, team and individual outcomes. * Confirm the business, team and individual outcomes we’re now working towards. Have they changed at all? | Manager led - Prompting questions/facilitated discussion.  Team activity (break into small groups if needed/depending on size of team) | Activity 2 | 10 | 15 mins |
| **4** | **Ways of working**  Discuss experiences of how you worked over this period  What worked? What didn’t?  Are there opportunities for role or work re-design that need to be carried forward? | * How have you worked over the period of COVID-19 restrictions? – Activity 3 - explain the activity and then complete the activity as a team. This can be completed using the learning loop or table, depending how comfortable your team is with which format – both are provided. * Consider the flexibility possible in this context. * Reflect on how we’ve worked as a team over the past few months, and things to consolidate/resolve. * Use the COVID-19 Learning Loop as discussion piece/ to start and guide discussions. * When things worked well, why did they? * When things did not go so well, why was that? * What do you want to maintain? What gains to consolidate, what problems to solve/support? * Crafting a different approach to flexibility. * Wellbeing – prioritising mental and physical safety? * Change – leading through uncertainty, new practices emerging? * What were the challenges/barriers/dilemmas you faced? * What have been the advantages of the changes? * If you want to return to the office why? Is it because you feel like you have to vs makes you more effective? * What do you do in the office that is different? * What do we need to make us effective? * If working remotely, how do you make it ‘work’ when you have new team members? | Manager led - Prompting questions/facilitated discussion.  Team activity (break into small groups if needed/depending on size of team) | Activity 3 | 11, 12, 13 & 14 | 20 mins |
|  |  | * Are there opportunities for role or work re-design that should be carried forward? * In reflecting on how you have work and how you want to work in the future it is important to clarify the work implications of needing to adjust hours of participation both at a team and individual level. * Job redesign is an effort where job responsibilities and tasks are reviewed. * Challenge yourself and your team to identify different ways to plan and arrange the team’s work and question which work is a priority. | Manager led | No | 15 | 5 mins |
| **5** | **Future flex**  In that context, what kind of flexibility do you want to continue/start/modify/ change  Agree a future flex plan | * How do we want to work going forward, as a team? Activity 4- explain the activity and then complete the activity as a team. * What flexibility do we want as a team, and as individuals? * What new and old work practices will you keep doing, stop doing and what else is needed in the mix? Challenge assumptions about how work has been performed and will be performed as we transition back. * Who do you need in the conversation to make sure change is supported and can be sustained? * Decide which meetings need to be face to face (F2F) and which can be mostly online, to maintain inclusion. * Make sure they are consistent with the outcomes in (Agenda item 3, Activity 3 )? | Manager led - Prompting questions/facilitated discussion.  Team activity (break into small groups if needed/depending on size of team) | Activity 4 | 16, 17 & 18 | 15 mins |
| * As a team develop and agree on the rules of the road. Activity 5. Explain the activity and then complete the activity as a team * Discuss and agree on the flexible working you want to continue/commence. * How will we make this work? what are the rules of the road for this new way of working? * Work as a team and draft your rules of the road - ensure everyone has input | Manager led - Prompting questions/facilitated discussion.  Team activity (break into small groups if needed/depending on size of team) | Activity 5 | 19 & 20 | 15 mins |
| * As a team develop your implementation plan – Activity 6 – template provided below. * Ask each team member to share how they want to work. * Complete for each individual team member. | Manager led - Prompting questions/facilitated discussion.  Team activity (break into small groups if needed/depending on size of team) | Activity 6 | 21 | 15 mins |
| * Decide how you will check it is working i.e. standard item on agenda for team meetings, review roads of the road and adjust accordingly. * Identify any other tech/training or HR forms needed to implement * Socialise your plans with other teams/stakeholders * Implement your plan. * Advise of the agreed start date. * Get started | Manager led - Facilitated discussion | No | 22 | 2mins |
| **6** | **Wrap up** | * Survey – let the team know they will complete a pre and post survey (if you have chosen to complete the survey) * Questions? | Manager led - Facilitated discussion | No | 23 | 5 mins |

# Sample communications – pre workshop

Sample email for managers to send to their team pre workshop

* To be sent out approximately one week before the workshop date you have set.
* Pre workshop email will include:
  + pre-reading (background information)
    - ‘Flexible working can be’ (page 11)
    - ‘What is a team-based approach to flexible working’ and ‘the key elements of a team-based approach to flexible working are’ (page 12)
  + pre-work - Activity 1: What do I do now (page 13)
  + agenda (page 14)

**Email**

**Subject - Agreeing ways of working and flexibility as we return to our workplaces**

As we gradually return to our workplaces, firstly as a home/office hybrid and then perhaps into a new pattern, we have a fantastic opportunity to consider how we worked over this period, what we learned (about our work, our teams and ourselves), and then decide what we might want to keep and what might need to change.

I would like to work with the entire team to take a ‘team-based’ approach and see what flexibility we can use, ensuring its sustainable and flexible. This means we will all get together to talk about how we have worked over the last few months and agree how we will work flexibly as a team as we gradually return to the workplace post COVID-19 restrictions.

We know that creating a flexible work culture across <add agency/team> is important – flexible working, managed well, has been widely shown to improve team wellbeing, engagement and productivity.

**I will send you a calendar invitation soon for us to have a workshop where we agree the flexibility everyone can use, for any reason.**

This is a chance for us to get together to think through how we plan and arrange our work, build an understanding of our shared goals and responsibilities and from there, see how we can incorporate more flexibility into our day-to-day work. You know your work best, so let’s see what is possible.

To make the workshop as short as possible, I am going to set a small amount of homework, some short pre reading to get you thinking, and a template on how you work now. This will get you thinking about how you have been working over the last few months to support business/organisation, team and individual outcomes.

**Feedback or questions are welcome**

If you have any feedback or questions about flexible working, please let me know.

# Pre workshop reading, activity and agenda

Pre reading, activity 1 and agenda to be sent to team prior to the workshop in the pre workshop email.

## Flexible working can be:

**Formal:** This is where you have a formal agreement, approved both by your immediate manager and HR, that usually involves changes in your job contract and working conditions (e.g. part-time work or job share).

**Informal:** This is where you have an agreement with your immediate manager and/or your team that, when business and team needs are met, you engage in a particular type of flexible work (e.g. varying your start and finish times, working from home) on an irregular basis.

A key aspect of this arrangement is that you have control over when you engage in flexible working, as long as you follow agreed guidelines for:

* when you do this (e.g. taking account of work demands); and
* who and how you need to communicate your change in work to (e.g. notifying your team)

**Ad hoc:** You access flexible working (e.g. vary your start time) when something happens unexpectedly or your needs change on short notice (e.g. because of a personal need).

**Flexibility in:**

* + **When** you work: e.g., varying start and finish times, compressed work weeks, split shifts, part-time, job share, term-time work, part-year work
  + **Where** you work: telecommuting, working from home, work hubs, different offices
  + **How** you work: e.g., agile work, activity-based work, collaboration, job and work redesign
  + **Who** does what: e.g., work sharing, flexibility in tasks within a team (less rigid and fixed)

## What is a team based approach to flexible working?

1. A common approach to flexible work
   * It is individually based
   * Conversations begin with an *individual’s* request, and a business case
   * We then look for ways to accommodate the request while ensuring that the flexibility will not have a negative impact on business outcomes
2. A different approach
   * It is *team-based and* ***co-operative*** *in nature*
   * We begin by identifying the outcomes that need to be maintained or improved – regardless of flexibility
   * We then challenge our assumptions about jobs, work and what is the best way to achieve our outcomes and consider the possibility that jobs and work could be designed differently
   * We identify flexibility options for team members that will either maintain or improve outcomes for the organisation, customers, team and individuals.
   * Finally, we establish flexible working principles and a culture of flexibility

## The key elements of a team-based approach to flexible working are:

* **Positive approach to flexible work:** There is a positive culture that supports the priority given to flexible working. This means:
  + Teams look for ways to **increase flexibility** that will both maintain and enhance performance and well-being for individuals, teams, customers and the organisation.
  + Different options are considered for **where, when** and **how** work is done and **who** does the work.
  + Possibilities are considered for job and work redesign to enable increased flexibility.
* **Shared responsibility:** All team members share the responsibility for making flexibility work.
* **Respect:** There is respect for each person’s flexibility arrangement, and we understand what flexibility means to each team member.

* **Trust and openness**: The approach is based on trust, and on the assumption that all staff are motivated and committed to delivering business outcomes
  + - **Flexibility is for all team members** (irrespective of personal characteristics or circumstances), while acknowledging options for flexible work will vary according to job, team and business requirements.
* **Two-way street**: The team is flexible to meet the reasonable diversity of staff needs and staff are flexible to meet reasonable team needs.
* **Communication and collaboration:** We communicate and collaborate about the use of flexibility, work demands and team capacity.

*After reviewing the pre-reading please complete activity 1. This activity will be used in the workshop as part of facilitated discussion exercises.*

Pre workshop Activity – Activity 1: what do I do now?

## **Activity 1: What do I do now?**

1. **How do I work*?***

*Think about …when, where, how, who and is it formal, informal or ad hoc? (column 1 and 2)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pre COVID-19 restrictions** | **During COVID-19 restrictions** | **After – the ‘new norm’** |
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1. **Has your approach to flexibility evolved? (how/why?)**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. **Does your team have a culture of flexible working?**

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| --- |
|  |

## Workshop Agenda

Send this to your team as an attachment in the pre workshop email

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date:** | |  | |
| **Location:** | |  | |
| **Attendees:** | |  | |
| **Duration:** | | 90 mins – 120 mins hours (suggest allowing 2 hrs for greater facilitated discussion and development of rules of the road and implementation plans during this workshop) | |
| **No** | **Item** | | **Format** |
| **1.** | **Introduction/scene setting**   * Why we’re here today? * Invite discussion: what would they like from today? * What we will cover today. | | Manger led – some discussion  8 mins |
| **2.** | **Taking a team-based approach**   * What is this approach and why does it work/help? * Do we have a culture of flexibility? * Housekeeping: IR/WHS/tech context | | Manager led/facilitated discussion - 10 mins  Activity 1 – team - 10 mins |
| **3.** | **Start by identifying outcomes**   * How to identify and confirm business, team and individual outcomes to maintain or improve | | Manager led/facilitated discussion,  Activity 2 -team - 15 mins |
| **4.** | **Ways of working**   * Discuss experiences you have had working as a team over this period * Embedding flexibility at <agency> – business strategy, not an accommodation. * Opportunities for role or work re-design that should be carried forward. | | Manager led/facilitated discussion,  Activity 3 -team - 20 mins  Manager led |
| **5.** | **Future flex**   * What kind of flexibility do you want to continue/start/modify/change, as a team? * Identify/agree as a team the rules of the road to put into place. * As a team develop your implementation plan. * Identify anything else needed (training, available tech, HR advice, socialising it with other teams/stakeholders) | | Manager led/facilitated discussion,  Activity 4 – team 20 - mins  Activity 5 - Rules of the road -team - 15 mins  Activity 6 – implementation plan – team - 15 mins  Manager led – 2 mins |
| **6.** | **Wrap up** | | Manager led - 5 mins |

Helping your team design a new normal – Build Back Better

# Sample communicatons -post workshop

Post workshop: Email from Manager to Team

* To be sent out after the workshop.
* Attach to the email the compiled notes from the workshop for review (activities 1-6) and the link to the survey (if you are completing the survey).
* Ask each team member to review in detail activity 5 and activity 6 and add any additional information.
* Allow the team approx.one week for feedback/additional information.

**Email**

**Subject: Thank you for the our ‘new normal’ workshop– and what to do next**

Thank you so much for coming to the ‘Helping your team design a new normal: Build back better’ workshop <last week/earlier this week>, it was great to work together to plan how we can make this work as a team.

**We’ll use data to inform our decisions – here’s a short survey**

Before we commence, please complete a short anonymous survey <insert hyperlink to evaluation survey here>, which will help us to understand how everyone sees their flexibility now.  There will be a similar survey in approximately 3 months’ time, so we can measure how were going, and adjust if required.

Attached are the outputs of our workshop (activities 1-6):

* Please review each of the outputs from the workshop and provide me with any feedback.
* Please review in detail ‘rules of the road’ (activity 5) we agreed. Please add to this information anything that is missing. I’ll share this with my fellow managers to ensure we have consistency and equity.
* Please review in detail our implementation plan (activity 6): what flexibility we agreed we’d try out, and how we’ll do it. Please add to this anything that has been missed.

Please provide me with any additional information by <insert date/timeframe>.

We’ll discuss in our team meeting how we’re getting started (e.g. as a standard monthly agenda item for team meetings, review roads of the road and adjust accordingly).

I would like everyone to get started and implement their plan by <insert date>.

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, please talk to me.

# Templates – In workshop activities

Activities 1 – 6 will be discussed during the workshop and are part of the PowerPoint presentation. You can print or email these as handouts.

Ask for a scribe for each activity, as it will be very useful to capture the outputs during each activity.

## **Activity 1: What do I do now?**

Also sent as pre-reading – each team member to complete before workshop – then for discussion in the workshop

1. **How do I work*?***

*Think about …when, where, how, who and is it formal, informal or ad hoc? (column 1 and 2)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pre COVID-19 restrictions** | **During COVID-19 restrictions** | **After – the ‘new norm’** |
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1. **Has your approach to flexibility evolved? (how/why?)**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. **Does your team have a culture of flexible working?**

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| --- |
|  |

## **Activity 2: Reviewing and confirming your outcomes**

Complete as a team in the workshop

**Identify your business/organisation, team and individual outcomes that need to be maintained or improved.** (Are these the same as they were 3-6 months ago?)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Maintain** | **Improve** |
| **Business/organisation** |  |  |
| **Team** |  |  |
| **Individual** |  |  |

**Has working flexibly impacted business/organisation, team, individual outcomes?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Negative** | **No Change** | **Positive** |
| **Business/organisation** |  |  |  |
| **Team** |  |  |  |
| **Individual** |  |  |  |

**Reflect on the statement below for discussion at the workshop**

What is your vision for how you want to work in the future as an agency?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

## **Activity 3: Reviewing how we work as a team over COVID-19 – Learning Loop**

Two options to complete: Option 1 – Learning loop or Option 2 Alternative approach. Use either depending on what you prefer. Complete as a team in the workshop

Start at change: Have you made changes to your role recently? Have you improved your process in any way as a result of Covid-19? Ask yourself what has really been different in the last two weeks — did a manager give you permission? If so, why? Did you make more decisions? Did you have less time to consult, engage, inform because delivery was the priority?

Then understand: why? What made that possible? If you (or anyone in your team think things are better or worse, now is the time to speak up.

3. Imagine:  In the past few weeks, if your organisation has responded well to the crisis, how has your work time been spent? Have you made more decisions, have you felt, despite the overlaying fear and panic, ever so slightly more engaged? Why do you think that might have been? If, like me, you enjoy challenge, change, pace and growth the last few weeks have been enjoyable despite the anxiety, but, not my day job. How can you translate what you’ve done recently into long lasting change? Can you imagine what change could be permanent?

4. Failure: What the public sector would traditionally define as failure has been rife in the last few weeks. Look at the number of public announcements and protocols that have been reversed or quietly dropped. But at the same time previously “risky” behaviour is being allowed. Suppliers are being paid daily, we’re buying equipment we thought we couldn’t afford, decisions have been made at pace and at the right level in the organisation, services are being redesigned in days and weeks, not months, and we’ve asked for understanding from the public, which they’ve given the uncertainty and complexity has been so apparent. Trust has increased and we need to keep it, so we don’t think of it as failure, just adaptation and prototyping. 

5. Sustain: what are we going to keep, and is your leadership on board as a group? How do we maintain the sense of trust everyone has experienced, and the autonomy that has made us effective? 

Source: apolitical.co (<https://apolitical.co/en/solution_article/covid-19-is-giving-bad-habits-and-old-ways-of-working-a-comeback>)

Activity 3 Option 1 Template: Reviewing how we work as a team over COVID-19

Complete as a team in the workshop

**COVID-19 Learning Loop**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Change** | **Understand** | **Imagine** | **Failure** | **Sustain** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Activity 3 Option 2 Template: Alternative approach. Reviewing how we work as a team over COVID-19

Complete as a team in the workshop

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| What worked well? | What didn’t work well? | What do you want to maintain? |
|  |  |  |
| Challenges and dilemmas experienced | What surprised you? | What did you learn from your experience? |
|  |  |  |

## **Activity 4: Our new flexibility plan**

Complete as a team in the workshop

**What flexibility do we want as a team?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**How do I want work***? (column 3) Use your information from column 1 and 2 (Activity 1).*

*What do I want to continue, start, modify, change, stop?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pre COVID-19 restrictions** | **During COVID-19 restrictions** | **After – the ‘new norm’** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**What new/old work practices will you keep/stop doing, what else is needed in the future?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Keep/continue** | **Modify** | **Stop** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

## **Activity 5: Rules of the road**

Complete as a team in workshop and send to each team member after for review

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Guiding principles (Availability/location etc…) | **Team suggestions** |
| How will we communicate (online platform, calendar, tools, work hours, sick, locations, WFH …etc.) |  |
| * + 1. With each other |  |
| * + 1. With stakeholders |  |
| * + 1. Notifying changes to flex work plans |  |
| * + 1. How will people find us if they need us? |  |
| Other guiding principles/parameters: |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

## **Activity 6: Implementation and monitoring plan**

Complete as a team in the workshop and send to each team member after for review

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Team Member** | **Flexibility option/s to be trialled** | **Implementation (steps I will take to do this)** |
| **Name** |  |  |
| **Name** |  |  |
| **Name** |  |  |
| **Name** |  |  |
| **Name** |  |  |
| **Name** |  |  |

**Implementation guide:**

**Attitude/approach:**

**Working from home:**

# Samples of completed activities (for manager to guide discussion in workshop)

## Activity 1: Completed examples

1. **Flexible working in ACME agency - How do I work*?***

*Think about …when, where, how, who and is it formal, informal or ad hoc?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Pre COVID-19 restrictions** | **During COVID-19 restrictions** |
| * *Flexible start and finish time (when- ad hoc)* * *WFH 1 day a week (where – formal)* * *Collaboration (how – informal)* * *Not everyone using flexible working, mainly just those with carer responsibilities or those with roles that required remote working* | * *Flexible start and finish times (when – informal)* * *WFH 5 days a week (where – formal)* * *Collaboration (how – formal)* * *Work sharing (who – formal)* |

1. **Has your approach to flexibility evolved? (how/why?)**

|  |
| --- |
| * *Not much change, except that the lack of travelling to work during Covid-19 gives me more flexible time to work with.* * *Previously working from office, with occasional WFH for appointments.* * *Lack of commute allowed more flexibility around start and end times but did risk bleeding boundaries between work and private time.* * *More collaborations.* * *Personal responsibility to deliver products* * *Greater knowledge of types of FW available.* * *Have formed a routine to support WFH* * *COVID-19 provided the opportunity to work from home.* * *Equipment – laptops (we were able to access the equipment required to allow us to work from home.* |

1. **Do you have a culture of flexible working?**

|  |
| --- |
| * *Yes. Our supervisor is supportive of flexible working, good communicator and leads a cohesive team.* * *Yes, for some teams in the organisation but no for others. Depends on your manager and if they are supportive or willing to try it.* * *Yes, quite flexible. COVID “forced the hand”* * *No, not within my team* |

## Activity 2: Completed examples

**Identify your business/organisation, team and individual outcomes that need to be maintained or improved. Some examples have been provided for you.**

(Are these the same as they were 3-6 months ago? – ongoing, new, new way of doing etc.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Maintain** | **Improve** |
| **Business/organisation** | *Customer service (ongoing)* | *Customer service (ongoing)* |
| **Team** | *Service delivery (ongoing)* | *Collaboration (new way of doing)* |
| **Individual** | *Support for flexible working for all* | *Work/life (new)* |

**How has working flexibly impacted business/organisation, team, individual outcomes**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Negative** | **No Change** | **Positive** |
| **Business/organisation** | * *No* | * *Business outcomes* | * *Customer service* |
| **Team** | * *Availability of team members when urgent info is needed* * *Ad hoc communications* | * *Delivering on outcomes* | * *Collaboration* * *Use of technology* |
| **Individual** | * *Being available 24/7* * *Social interactions* * *Corridor conversations* * *Time management* | * *Workload* * *Feeling connected to the team* | * *Wellbeing - Work/life balance* * *Time management* |

**Reflect on the below statement for discussion at the workshop**

What is your vision for how you want to work in the future as an agency?

|  |
| --- |
| * *Ability to remain responsive, adaptive, inclusive and build on collaboration (cross-team, cross-agency) – and retaining the productivity and engagement that enhanced flexibility has built on.* * *For an organisation that maximises the use of the technology connection to allow maximal flexibility for staff.* * *Managers to be supported to ensure ‘no one is left behind or lost’ and that outcomes remain the performance indicators.* * *Staff to be supported across a range of work mixes not just a simple formula of days in/out of the office.* |

## Activity 3: Completed examples

Reviewing how we work as a team over COVID-19

**COVID-19 Learning Loop**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Change** | **Understand** | **Imagine** | **Failure** | **Sustain** |
| * *Face to face delivery to virtual.* * *No commute/travel* * *Opportunity for innovation, ideas for change and adopting to different environment* | * *Working remotely and allow more collaboration.* * *How to connection with team* * *Technology* | * *Less travel - like working from home as travelling takes a lot of time.* * *To not go back to business as usual - as so much has changed and some is good, and some is bad.* | * *Change is forced* * *Recruitment - inability to fill unfilled position* | * *Collaboration and learning from the other teams* * *Like working from home as travelling takes a lot of time and excess time can be devoted to work–feeling safer in the work environment.* * *Sustain good well-being habit* * *Reflect on what worked and what didn’t* * *Collaboration* |

Activity 3 Option 2 Template: Alternative approach.

**Reviewing how we work as a team over COVID-19**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| What worked well? | What didn’t work well? | What do you want to maintain? |
| * *Team cohesion and communication.* * *Even in worst circumstances we continued to work productively.* * *Many tools for remote working already existed – capacity was the problem.* * *No lost time on commuting.* * *Weekly team meetings over Teams.* * *Finding time for regular exercise has been easier during the lockdown Collaborations / problem solving.* * *Video chat uptake* * *Time management* | * *Skype call quality poor for some, required new home data/speed arrangements.* * *Social interaction missing.* * *Network/data access struggled initially.* * *Volume of meetings.* * *Very work focused when work from home.* * *Facilities makes you get up and walk.* * *Commute involved some exercise as well.* | * *Flexibility in bandwidth.* * *Maintain close interactions across the team* * *WFH as a supported regular option, while maintaining connectivity with work team via online tools and forums.* * *Flexibility is the norm rather than requiring justification.* * *Potentially need more formality when new staff commence, to familiarise them with the role and the team, and establish manager-staff and staff-manager trust.* * *Using Teams and Zoom platforms for chat and meetings.* * *Video conferencing.* * *Broaden our definition of ‘remote’ to include other workplaces, not just home.* |
| Challenges and dilemmas experienced | What surprised you? | What did you learn from your experience? |
| * *Working days became longer and packed from start to finish – opportunity to have breaks more difficult.* * *Being in a Teams meeting was not recognised by Skype, so other people didn’t realise and tried to contact during meeting.* * *Missed informal interactions with team members (and non-team people in wider Dept)* * *Network Connectivity.* * *Balancing the day.* * *Technology issues.* * *Asking for help.* * *Balancing day with meetings.* | * *Loss of commute made big difference to daily experience – e.g. walks before/after work or during breaks.* * *How not having to commute to and from work gave so much more time during the day.* * *How relatively easy it was to work at home.* * *More control.* * *Keeping myself available.* * *Pressure to perform.* * *Everyone adapted and accepting with positivity.* * *How well staff in team adapted.* | * *Strike a balance between formality and trust – work being done is what’s important.* * *COVID circumstances have challenged expectations about offices and attendance and productivity – lowered importance of where you are working from.* * *Face to face meetings will become reserved from particular circumstances.* * *How to use Teams and Zoom platforms.* * *Size of meetings has effect on engagement. Smaller better* * *Technology keeps us all connected.* * *Reliance on technology.* |

## Activity 4: Completed examples

**What flexibility do we want as a team?**

|  |
| --- |
| * *Staggered working hours.* * *Requirement for human interaction so working in the office and work from home to allow balance* * *Collaboration* * *Flexibility of start time and finish time* * *Increase knowledge in technology to support stakeholders whether working from office/home/remotely.* * *Outcomes focused* * *Reduced commute time.* * *Well-being and the need for cultural top up or inclusion and safety* |

**How do I want work***? (column 3) Use your information from column 1 and 2 (Activity 1).*

*What do I want to continue, start, modify, change, stop?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pre COVID-19 restrictions** | **During COVID-19 restrictions** | **After – the ‘new norm’** |
|  |  | * *The opportunity for job share or part time.* * *WFH 2 days and 3 days in office.* * *Working from home and office depending on work required – not a set number.* * *Working from office 1 day a week and from home, other location for the remainder of the week.* * *Flexible start and finish times.* * *Early start, long lunch break for exercise, later finish.* * *No set start and finish times each day – flexibility to change these to suit team and business outcomes.* * *Outcomes focused – not timesheet focused* |

**What new/old work practices will you keep/stop doing, what else is needed in the future?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Keep/continue** | **Modify** | **Stop** |
| * *WFH when possible to focus on tasks.* * *Flexible working options.* * *Trust/autonomy to structure workday/tasks/delivery.* * *WFH when possible to focus on tasks.* * *Flexible working options.* * *Trust/autonomy to structure.* | * *Decide which meetings need to be F2F and which can be mostly online, to maintain inclusion'.* | * *Back to back meetings.* * *Meeting for the sake of meeting – use other collaboration methods.* * *Less travel for meetings* |

## Activity 5: Completed examples

**Rules of the road (Day to day operating guidelines) sample**

#### Communicating with your team

* Wherever you are working, ensure your Skype for Business shows your working status and location, with notifications turned on.
* Ensure that your Outlook calendar is updated and available to team leader to view.
* For every meeting set up, include skype details.
* Ensure all team members feel as though they are part of the team, no matter what location they are working from. Use Skype, screen share, MS Teams, IM in Skype for general team conversation/bonding/collaboration.
* Agree on tools and communication protocols as a team.
* Ensure teams are up to date with your flexibility/ work pattern and location. Contingency plans are made for days not in the office and communicated to the rest of the team.
* Update team calendar/roster advising every one of your work status (i.e. working from home, working from office, sick, on leave, non-workday, change to work hours (i.e. working 12pm – 8pm) etc.)
* Advise how to respond to clients or colleagues on your behalf (should this be required).
* If there is a block of time you are unavailable, communicate this to your team.
* If you are absent, then details need to be maintained and communicated transparently.
* There is no expectation to be available out of hours (unless agreed by manager/or part of working requirements), on non-workdays or while on recreational leave. If you are working out of business hours, minimise impact on recipients by using an email signature tag line such as ‘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’. Alternatively use the ‘Delayed Delivery’ feature in Microsoft Office.
* Set principles and expectations around urgent vs non-urgent and turnaround timeframes.
* Agree on core hours and availability, a time when you know you can reach anyone in the team.

#### Working away from the office

* If you are working remotely, appropriate notice must be provided to your Manager and team.
* Respect confidential materials by not working on sensitive documents or having confidential conversations in public spaces i.e. cafes and public transport.
* Safety and wellbeing are important, ensure you are working safely when working remotely and in the office.

#### Setting up meetings

* Meetings and training, where possible, should be attended in person for connection purposes. When participating remotely, Skype for Business should be used.
* Each team should agree on a day/time when all members will be in the office/available for team meetings/training.
* Respect how others choose to work flexibly, no ‘just joking’ comments about people not working when they are working from home or another location.

#### Be flexible about flexibility

* Flexibility must be mutually beneficial, this means individual, team and business requirements must be satisfied.
* Keep an open mind and open discussions about flexible working.
* Increase awareness of flexible working and educate staff, utilising internal and PSC developed resources.
* Provide a consistent approach to flexible working. Flexibly should be discussed with the whole team and available to the whole team.
* Implement with equity in mind and ensure that everyone has a voice.
* Establish trust re personal flexibility and established parameters

#### Service delivery

* Business deliverables must be maintained to agreed objectives and standards.
* Performance will be assessed based on output (measure work outcomes). Flexible working will not adversely impact Internal and external service or personal performance.
* Acknowledge that business occurs outside of ‘business hours’

Guiding principles

1. This is based on trust and in focused on supporting wellbeing, engagement and connection.
2. Flexibility must be mutually beneficial.
   * This means individual, team and client requirements must be satisfied
   * We must be respectful and understanding of each other
   * Cost neutral
3. Permission to engage in informal flexible working does not have to be sought from your leader & reasons for engaging in flexible working don’t matter
   * As long as you follow the agreed parameters set in this document
4. We assess performance based on output not presenteeism

Parameters

1. If you are working remotely, appropriate notice must be provided to your leader and team. Notice should be given at least 24 hours in advance unless exceptional circumstances.
   * Wherever you are working, Skype for Business must be up to date with your status and location.
2. All meetings and training, where possible, should be attended in person for connection purposes. On rare occasions where you are participating remotely, Skype for Business or Zoom should be used.
3. Respect confidential materials by not working on them in public spaces i.e. cafes and public transport
4. Client service standards must be maintained to agreed performance standards.

* Teams will provide coverage for customers (internal and external) between the hours of 9am – 5pm on business days.

1. Your safety and wellbeing are important, you must ensure you meet WHS requirements in any flexible work option

## Activity 6: Completed examples

Implementation and monitoring plan (sample)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Team Member** | **Flexibility Option** | **Implementation** |
| **A** | Work from home 1-2 half days per week. Mostly Wednesday and Friday but flexible when it comes to ensuring personal attendance at key meetings. | * *Note the half days in Outlook diary* * *Remind team* * *Use work laptop* * *Check in from home as needed.* * *Be in the office for team meetings* |
| **B** | Work from home one day a week. Possibly a regular day but could be flexible to ensure meetings are not impacted. | * *Note day in Outlook diary* * *Remind team* * *Avoid days where key meetings take place.* * *Use work laptop* * *Check in with Manager on day working from home as needed* |
| **C** | Work 5 days per fortnight from XYZ office. | * *Use of XYZ office arrangement* * *Note day in Outlook diary.* * *Remind team.* * *Avoid days where key meetings take place.* * *Use work laptop* |
| **D** | Work from home one day a week. Generally a set day but flexible to ensure meetings are not impacted. Option to make small ad hoc variations to core time without the need for a flex e.g. finish at 3.00 pm. | * *Note day in Outlook diary* * *Remind team.* * *Avoid days where key meetings take place* * *Use work laptop* * *Check in with Manager on day working from home as needed* |
| **E** | Work from home one day per fortnight. Same day. | * *Note in Outlook diary* * *Remind team* * *Avoid days where key meetings take place* * *Use work laptop* * *Check in with Manager on day working from home as needed* |
| **F** | Being able to make up hours within flexible bandwidth during the week. | * *Good communication with team and manager* * *Noting meeting times /mindful of meetings* |

#### Implementation guide:

* Maintain communication with manager/team as to when you will work away from office, and when you are online
* Avoid selecting days to work away from the office when key meetings take place
* Keep calendars up to date with pre-planned days out of office and leave including flex
* Sharing outlook diaries
* Ensuring when we are working from home or we’re going to be in later that this is in our diary and we’ve emailed or called or mentioned to the team/manager
* Meetings with external stakeholders – w here possible attend in person
* Presence of a senior adviser in the office each day for urgent requests /urgent meetings - good coordination and/or where no senior adviser can be, then a principal adviser in the office
* Flex rules and guidelines remain in place

#### Attitude/approach:

* When working from home, we’re online and we’re available
* When working from home we provide manager and colleagues with updates on our work
* When working from home we pick up the phone and check in as a way of ensuring good communication is maintained, regardless of flexibility arrangements. Likewise, manager and colleagues can connect by phone
* Ensure people are not ‘invisible’ when they work from home - inclusion, connection and communication effort

#### Working from home

* Please review the checklist
* Environment must be safe e.g. work at a desk with a suitable chair and good light
* Security – when working from home ensure good security practices e.g. put away work papers, laptop security etc. Just as you would at work.

# 

# Links to supporting tools and resources

The PSC has developed an extensive range of tools and resources to support managers and employees in flexible working. Some of the resources you might find useful are listed below.

What types of flexible working are there?

Definitions of the types of flexible working –when, where, how and who.

<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/working-flexibly--resources-for-employees/what-types-of-flexible-working-are-there>

Manager Conversation guides

If an employee wants to request an ongoing flexible arrangement, this checklist will help you to prepare your verbal and written response. We’ve also included a conversation guide for managers for having successful one on one conversations.

<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/flexible-teams--resources-for-managers/managers-conversation-guide>

Role adjustment

COVID-19 may mean some office-based employees need to temporarily scale back their roles. You or people in your team, for whatever reason, may not be able to work full-time during this period.

We have developed toolkits for employees and managers that provides a straightforward process for identifying the tasks and responsibilities that can be shifted, paused or re-allocated to effectively balance any increase in work and life responsibilities.

<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/flexible-teams--resources-for-managers/role-adjustment-for-managers>

How to make flexibility work as a team

This toolkit is designed to help you as a manager set up a step by step full flexible working trial (if your team has not used it extensively before) and check if it is working. It has been used successfully in both 24/7 frontline and office-based workplaces successfully. It will build your ability as a manager, although you will not have to become a flexibility subject matter expert to do it. From your team’s perspective, it will build a shared sense of ownership of the trial, and the opportunity to re-think where, when, how and by whom the team’s outcomes are achieved.

<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/flexible-teams--resources-for-managers/how-to-make-flexibility-work-as-a-team->

Typical misgiving s about flexible working

Employees and their managers sometimes express concerns about what flexible work is, how it works, who it is for, and what its benefits are. Some of these concerns reflect the minimal awareness-raising that their agencies have done to date about flexible working availability, and some are dilemmas to be worked through. Here are some commonly expressed concerns - we’ve matched each with information on how the concern can be addressed:

<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/flexible-teams--resources-for-managers/typical-misgivings-about-flexible-working>

Managing dispersed, flexible teams

This guide is for managers who find a scattered team has become the new normal, and need to adjust their managerial style and the team’s way of working together to adapt.

<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/flexible-teams--resources-for-managers/managing-dispersed-flexible-teams>

Skill set and development guide for managers

If you’re new to flexible working, or want to get better at managing flexible teams, we’ve created a tool that helps you understand what you need to know, say and do to work flexibly, with a development guide to help you improve any areas you want to build on.

<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/flexible-working/flexible-teams--resources-for-managers/skill-set-and-development-guide-for-managers->