



CREATING A FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE

What is workplace flexibility? —

Workplace flexibility enables employees to balance work and family/personal needs and improve their effectiveness and productivity at work. Your business will benefit from balancing this flexibility for employees with the needs of your business. It provides a win-win situation.

To make your workplace more flexible you can offer various options to your workforce. These could include:

- flexible working hours including part time options;
- modified work roles and/or responsibilities including job sharing;
- flexible leave arrangements such as phased retirement; or
- working from home.

Remember to check out your rights and obligations as an employer when considering flexible arrangements. These differ at the State and Commonwealth level. You will need to ensure that any arrangement complies with the relevant awards and legislation that apply to your employees.

Benefits of workplace flexibility —

An important question to ask yourself is what your business can gain from having flexible arrangements in place. To ensure success, you will need the right flexibilities in the right jobs so your business can gain from both a happier workforce and a better bottom line. Flexible work options may not suit all jobs or every individual in your business.

Implementing flexible work arrangements can benefit businesses through:

- a more committed and productive workforce;
- an attractive recruitment tool to prospective employees;
- retaining staff with knowledge and key skills in your business; and
- reduced stress levels and sick days for employees.

There may be some costs associated with putting flexible work arrangements in place. However, these costs should be considered together with the benefits your business receives in improved productivity and longer term cost savings.

If you are covered by the State system you can seek information on your obligations from Wageline on **1300 655 266** or visit commerce.wa.gov.au/labour-relations/contact-wageline



If you are covered by the National system you can seek information from the Fair Work Ombudsman on **13 13 94** or visit fairwork.gov.au





Steps to introducing flexible work practices

1 Find out what flexibility employees need and look at the options.

- Communicate with your employees and find out how they are currently managing their work/life balance. Ask your employees what sort of flexibility they are looking for and why.
- Look at the flexibility options available and consider the following questions:
 - What options would suit your business goals?
 - What would the impact be on employees?
 - Would there be any impact on the products and services you provide and on your customers?
 - Can your business afford these flexible work options?
 - Would these arrangements meet your obligations under workplace laws?

The answers to these questions will help you make the right decisions regarding any requests from employees for more flexibility.

2 Consider requests for flexible work arrangements and create acceptable options.

- Let your employees know that you are happy to consider requests for flexibility and be open minded when considering requests.
- Consider the consequence for the employee and your business if you can't provide the arrangement requested and consider alternatives if necessary.
- Explain the reasons for your decisions.
- Remember that employees returning from parental leave may have a legal entitlement to request a variation in working hours.

3 Put flexible work arrangements in place.

- Reach agreement with your employees regarding the flexibility arrangement and communicate the performance standards expected.
- You can choose to trial the arrangement first if you are not sure how it will work.
- Whatever the agreed arrangement is make sure it is in writing so everyone is clear about how it will work. Ensure that an agreed review process and timeframe is documented, together with a system to keep track of hours worked.
- Make sure everyone in your workplace is informed about the flexible work arrangements.

4 Assess the impact and review.

- To assess the impact of the flexible arrangement you may want to consider whether your:
 - business is achieving its goals and your customers' needs are being met;
 - employees are able to get their tasks done to the standard that you expect;
 - other staff are coping with the impact of the arrangement; and
 - business is benefitting from decreased absenteeism and/or staff turnover.
- Review the arrangement regularly to ensure it is meeting both your employees' and business needs.

For further information and advice on creating a flexible workplace please visit commerce.wa.gov.au and jobaccess.gov.au



For more information, resources and practical tools to help you plan, attract, recruit, manage and retain a skilled workforce visit jobsandskills.wa.gov.au/resources-employers