

Flexible Work Arrangements Policy

About this document

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1. Background

1.1 Purpose

The Flexible Work Arrangements Policy sets out the Department's objectives, principles and definitions of flexible work. The purpose of this document is to provide managers and staff with clear and transparent policy statements that take into account the diversity of people, responsibilities and functions across the organisation.

1.2 Scope

This Policy applies to all permanent, fixed term and casual DOC employees.

1.3 Goals

Implementing this policy will ensure that flexible work becomes:

- Universal - flexible work (in some form) is available to everyone.
- Supported - by leaders, policy, systems and processes.
- Consistent and transparent - requiring conversations between managers and staff members.
- Accepted - flexible working is seen as legitimate and productive.
- Balanced - managers and staff each take responsibility for the success of flexible work.

1.4 Guiding Principles

The key principles that underpin the flexible work arrangements policy include:

- DOC is committed to becoming flexible by default by 2020, with the aim that all positions can be worked flexibly, unless there is a strong business reason why they can't be.
- DOC will consider all requests for flexible working in alignment with the intent of the policy and attempt to support employees' requests to work flexibly where possible.
- DOC is committed to being a high performing organisation and sees flexible working as central to this.
- Flexible work options enable DOC to attract and retain a more diverse workforce.
- DOC acknowledges that due to the wide range of roles and responsibilities within the organisation, not all forms of flexible work will be available to all roles.
- Flexible working arrangements are always initiated by the employee not the employer.

1.5 Mandate

The mandate for flexible working is established by the Public Sector 'Flexible by Default by 2020' initiative and supported by the provision for flexible working arrangements under the [Employment Relations Act 2000 \(Part 6AA\)](#).

1.6 Definitions

1.6.1 Different types of flexible work

Flexible work is when an individual chooses to alter the timing and/or location of their work in relation to:

- A change in hours of work.
- A change in days of work.
- A change in place of work.

At DOC, flexible work arrangements must be made in agreement with a manager and balance the organisational, team and personal needs to best suit all of those involved. Given the diverse range of roles, responsibilities and functions across DOC, not all forms of flexible working will be available to all roles.

1.6.2 Informal flexible work arrangements

Informal flexible work arrangements are changes to a work pattern or location which:

- Are irregular in nature and;
- Are for short periods of time (less than one month's duration) and;
- Do not require a change to the employee's terms and conditions of employment and;
- Require written approval from a manager.

1.6.3 Formal flexible work arrangements

Formal flexible work arrangements:

- Are regular in nature;
- Involve an ongoing change to the pattern of working;
- Require written approval from a manager; and
- Require a variation to the terms and conditions of employment and possible systems and payroll changes.

2. Policy Statements

DOC is committed to providing work arrangements and environments that support whanaungatanga and are responsive to employees' needs to balance their personal priorities with their professional commitments.

All employees can request flexible working arrangements on a formal or informal basis, for any purpose or reason. The manager's decision to approve or decline the request should be free of discrimination and should not be influenced by the purpose or reason for the request.

Flexible work requests can be made at any stage of the employee life cycle, including during recruitment, and there are no limits as to how many times a request can be made.

There are specific business reasons stated in the employment legislation as to why a flexible work request is not able to be accommodated. DOC is committed to reasonably considering and balancing the needs of individuals, teams, managers and the organisation.

DOC has the same duty of care for employees who work from home as in the workplace, as per the [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#). Employees have a responsibility to ensure their work environment at home poses no risk to their security or health, safety and wellbeing.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

| Role | Description of responsibility |
|-------------------------|---|
| Director-General | <p>Actively role model and champion flexible working at DOC.</p> <p>Endorse this policy.</p> <p>Ensure that DOC meets its obligations under the legislation and this policy.</p> |
| Deputy Director-General | <p>Actively role model and champion flexible working at DOC.</p> <p>Initiate leader-led conversations with Directors, Managers and whole teams to set clear expectations and share key messages about flexible working.</p> <p>Support Directors and Managers to implement and embed flexible working practices by providing the necessary systems, processes and equipment.</p> <p>Embed this policy within their Business Group.</p> <p>Ensure their Business Group complies with the standard operating procedures (SOP) relevant to this policy.</p> |
| Directors | <p>Actively role model and champion flexible working at DOC.</p> <p>Initiate leader-led conversations with managers and whole teams to set clear expectations and share key messages about flexible working.</p> <p>Support managers to implement and embed flexible working practices by providing the necessary systems, processes and equipment.</p> <p>Consider how flexible work arrangements can be implemented in their Business Unit in a transparent and consistent way.</p> <p>Assess, approve or decline flexible work arrangement requests in accordance with this policy.</p> <p>Embed this policy within their Business Unit.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>Ensure their Business Unit complies with the standard operating procedures relevant to this policy.</p> |
| Managers | <p>Actively role model and champion flexible working at DOC.</p> <p>Initiate leader-led conversations with teams and individuals to understand employee and business needs in relation to flexible working.</p> <p>Support staff to work flexibly by providing the necessary systems, processes and equipment.</p> <p>Consider how flexible work arrangements can be implemented in their team in a transparent and consistent way.</p> <p>Assess, approve or decline flexible work arrangement requests in accordance with this policy.</p> <p>Negotiate alternative options with staff regarding flexible work arrangements where necessary.</p> <p>Adhere to the SOP to implement flexible work arrangements, including health and safety requirements if working from home.</p> <p>Where possible resolve any disputes regarding declined requests or issues arising from approved requests.</p> <p>Report any non-compliance with this policy to their Director.</p> |
| Human Resources (HR)/ Organisational Development (OD) Teams | <p>Provide guidance regarding this policy to Deputy Directors'- General, Directors and Managers.</p> <p>Advise on flexible work arrangement documentation.</p> <p>HR - advise on employment obligations and legal requirements.</p> <p>OD - evaluate, review and improve this policy and ensure its relevance.</p> |
| All Staff | <p>Consider and factor in the impact of their flexible working arrangement on business outcomes, key stakeholders, the wider team and Manager.</p> <p>Adhere to the policy and SOP.</p> <p>Actively monitor and review how the flexible arrangement is working and initiate conversations with the manager to discuss any impacts on them, their team or ability to achieve performance outcomes.</p> <p>If working from home – ensure there is a work area that provides a safe, productive and secure work environment.</p> |

4. Related Documents

- [Flexible Work Arrangements Standard Operating Procedure](#) (DOC-6000632)

5. Document History

| Date | Details | Document ID and version | Amended by |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 01/09/2019 | First version of document published | doc-5962157 | |

6. Documents Replaced

- [Working from Home Policy](#) (olddm-811324)

Manager guide to flexible work

1. What is flexible work?

Flexible work is when you choose to change the hours or days of work, or the place you work from. During the nationwide COVID response we all experienced working from home – which is one option of flexible work. Staff may have also asked to alter the days or hours they work – which is another type of flexible work.

Following our COVID experience, we all have a great opportunity test out new ways of working that support our wellbeing. Your staff may be interested in continuing or trialling a new flexible work arrangement and you will need to consider how to balance their needs with those of the team, your stakeholders and service delivery. Consider solutions that could work well for everyone involved and be prepared to review and refine as you go.

2. Flexible work options

Here are some of the common flexible work arrangements, but there are lots of different options that someone could try. Explore which options could work best for them, the team and DOC:

- Altered start / finish times
- Altered days
- Compressed hours fortnight
- Increasing / decreasing hours
- Phased gradual reduction in hours
- Leave without pay (e.g. for school holidays)
- Working from home some days / all the time
- Working from another DOC office

3. Useful considerations

When considering a staff member's request to trial a new flexible work arrangement, it's useful to work through these points:

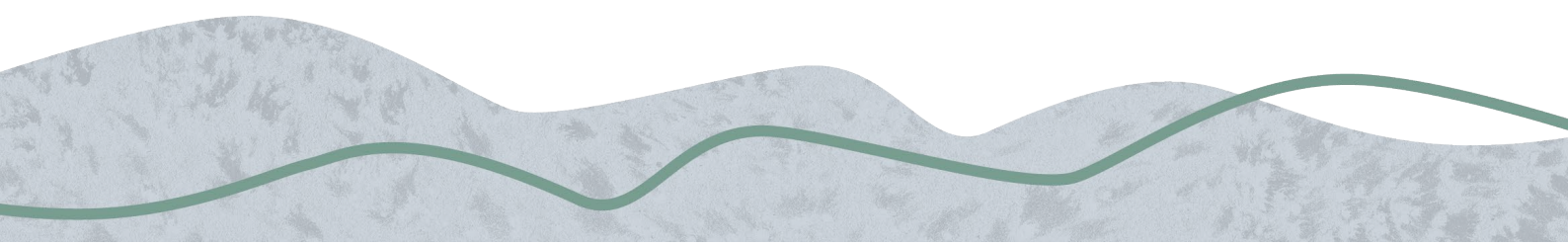
Individual needs and goals

- What are their goals for working flexibly? Which flexible work arrangements may help them achieve this? There may be more than one option.
- What wellbeing needs do they have, and how can we accommodate them? E.g. Work / life balance, family / whānau commitments, personal commitments and hobbies.
- Are they well set up to work safely and effectively from home, if working from home interests them?
- How to create an arrangement that helps them work at their best. E.g. are they an early riser?
- Are there any health, safety or wellbeing concerns we need to address?

My team, manager and stakeholders' needs

- When do colleagues, Treaty Partners and stakeholders need to be in contact?
- How will they stay visible and responsive for work?
- How will we organise, track and deliver work?
- How will the team maintain social connections, collaborate and communicate?

DOC's needs

- What aspects of their role need to be completed in the office, or in the field? And when?
 - What aspects of their role are public facing, and how will they accommodate the public's needs?
 - What aspects of their role involves working with Treaty Partners or stakeholders and how will they accommodate their needs?
 - What impact is there on budget and team resourcing
- 

4. How to trial a flexible work arrangement

Have a conversation with your staff member to discuss their ideal work pattern and location and the possible impact on the team, stakeholders and service delivery. If the request is occasional or on an ad-hoc basis, approval via email is enough.

If your staff member is looking for a regular pattern of flexible work, ask them to complete a formal [Flexible Work Request Form](#). You will then have one month to action the request.

A trial period is the best way to start, though you can also approve or decline. Decide on the arrangement, length of trial and approve in writing using the [Trial letter template](#). Talk to HR about any system/payroll changes.

If a staff member's work pattern is changing significantly (e.g. reducing total hours, or altering days worked) you may need to vary the terms and conditions of their employment in writing, which may also need systems / payroll changes. Discuss with your Senior Advisor HR the process to follow.

If at the end of the trial period your team member would like to make their arrangement permanent, the process to follow and criteria for making decisions can be found in the [Flexible Work SOP](#). You will need to consider:

- The needs of the individual, team and DOC can be properly balanced.
- Sufficient budget and resources exist to support the arrangement on an ongoing basis.
- Workloads can be fairly distributed across the team.
- Operational requirements can be met and outcomes delivered on time and to a sufficient standard.
- Health, safety and wellbeing needs can all be properly managed for everyone impacted.
- The individual has a sensible plan for how they will stay connected, productive and responsive.

5. Working from home



It is important for staff to have a home office that is safe, well set up ergonomically and as comfortable as possible to maximise the benefits of working from home. It is also anticipated that they will be doing low risk office work during paid work hours at home.

To work from home, staff have a responsibility to provide a workspace where they can work safely and effectively and fast, reliable internet services. The [Working from home intranet page](#) has great workspace setup tips.

Health and safety

The potential hazards of a working from home environment must be assessed and preventative measures taken to ensure your staff member is working from home safely. This includes:

- Completing a health and safety checklist for home offices [Doc-5965239](#).
- Completing a virtual home office workspace assessment [Doc-5731951](#).
- Reviewing these regularly and filing on their personal file.

Equipment for home office



The home office virtual workspace assessment will recommend an ergonomic design and any additional equipment required to establish a safe and effective home workspace. Staff will purchase the equipment in agreement with you, as recommended by the independent assessment. They will be reimbursed for the reasonable cost of this equipment from within team budgets.

Equipment may include:

- A standard adjustable chair that meets office requirements.
- Other recommended supportive equipment which may include lap top risers, footrests, wrist rests, mice, keyboards, monitors, document holders etc.
- Desks will be assessed on a case by case basis
- DOC will NOT reimburse the cost of a computer or laptop – almost all DOC staff have been issued a Lenovo laptop to use when working from home and in the office. The [Technology – support for remote working](#) tile has more information.

Other expenses

If staff request to work from home as part of their flexible work arrangement, it is their responsibility to fund any utility costs, including internet costs, electricity, heating and insurance etc. A DOC phone can be used for communication and limited WIFI hot spotting for their home computer.

- Virtual meetings are being encouraged to reduce travel costs.
- Any additional travel costs associated with working from home will be at their expense

6. Working from another DOC office

Agreement needs to be made between you and the site manager of the alternative DOC office to ensure there is appropriate space and resources to support an additional staff person. Considerations may include desk space, IT Network, printing and office consumables, meeting room availability, vehicle availability, storage, on-site management and support, admin support, site induction etc.

- Virtual meetings are being encouraged to reduce travel costs.
- Any additional travel costs associated with working from another DOC office will be at their expense

7. Managing a flexible team

When staff work flexibly or remotely your team will need to be more deliberate about teamwork, including staying in touch with one another, and staying informed. It's useful to plan with your team how to you'll continue to include one another in your work, particularly if some team members are onsite while others work from home.

Meet as a team to plan how you'll work flexibly together. DOC's flexible work pilot teams told us that doing this was highly valuable and set them up for success. Seek your team's contributions on how to connect, communicate, make decisions and prioritise and allocate work. It's also important to explore what will help you all feel safe, supported and included. Doing this together early helps you work more flexibly and effectively together. The next few points summarise the key topics to discuss as a team.

Staying safe and well

Consider how the team will manage their health, safety and wellbeing whilst incorporating flexible or remote working. How will the team manage factors such as: working longer hours, working outside core hours, working from home, working in isolation, medical issues, personal security, information security, emergencies or natural disasters?

Make sure the team are clear about the process to follow in case of emergency or natural disasters. Discuss how you'll activate a phone tree if an emergency occurs and ask team members to update their locations and emergency contact details on About Me.

Support the team to maintain healthy breaks, bookend days so they have clear boundaries to their workday and encourage them to 'switch off' outside work hours, to support their wellbeing. Agree when team members are 'off limits' outside work time, and who will respond to urgent queries in their absence. If a role requires them to be available for urgent contact out of hours, then identify a way they can be contacted.

Setting the direction

Consider the best way to manage your team's deliverables, workplan, and timeframes virtually. Consider what you may need to do differently to ensure that the team can equally access work updates and contribute to decisions, no matter where they are located. If you have team members working from home, take time to set clear goals and deadlines with them and talk about how and when you'll discuss progress. Focus on the outcomes not the time spent.

Communication

When staff work flexibly or remotely it is harder for everyone to know where each other are and when they are available. Utilising their signature block to provide a clear and accessible reminder of their new flexible work arrangements e.g. Monday 8am – 4pm, Tuesday 3pm – 7pm and Friday 11am – 3pm is one option.

Another strategy is to customise online calendars to show working hours and location of work. Skype for Business also has an availability function, or you could use an MS Teams app to show everyone's schedule. External stakeholders and clients will need availability communicated on other channels accessible to them. Decisions to make include:

- What tech tools will we use, how and when.
- How and when to meet as a whole team.
- How to share visibility of where we are and when we are available?
- How to collaborate on projects.
- How to keep teammates updated on deliverables.
- What is our checking in process in an emergency?

Connecting the team

Create opportunities to connect. Flexible or remote teams need to work in a high trust environment, but they also need plenty of contact from their manager. Discuss with your team what support / input they need and schedule in regular time to do that. Consider when you need to see one another face to face and when virtual meetings work just as well. Create a plan to identify and respond to critical issues. Block time in your calendar to be available to staff to contact you and be clear that you welcome this. Identify how you will:

- Connect the team socially.
- Connect meaningfully and accommodate different communication styles.
- Use technology to connect.
- Connect people to make decisions.

Explore what helps team members feel included and listened to. The Flexible Work Team Conversation Guide can help you and your team talk through all these points together and plan how you'll work effectively together.

Review regularly

Use MORs to regularly review flexible work arrangements and talk through how things are working in practice for your staff member, the team and your stakeholders.

- Have any commitments or circumstances changed for your staff member?
- Are there any wellbeing issues to discuss? E.g. working longer hours, working outside core hours.
- Have the teams or stakeholders needs changed?
- Has there been any organisational changes to workload, projects or priorities?
- Contact your Senior Advisor HR if you need any advice and support.

Staff guide to flexible work

1. What is flexible work?

Flexible work is when you choose to change the hours or days you work, or the place you work from. During COVID-19 we've all experienced working from home – which is one option of flexible work. You may have also altered your work pattern to accommodate the needs of your household – which is another type of flexible work.

Following our COVID experience, now may be the time to consider how you would like to work flexibly moving forward. Talk to your manager about your ideal work situation and consider how to balance your needs with those of your team, stakeholders and service delivery. Consider solutions that could work well for everyone involved and be prepared to review and refine as you go.

2. Flexible work options

Here are some of the common flexible work arrangements, but there are lots of different options that you could try. Talk to your manager to explore which options could work best for you, the team and DOC:

- Altered start / finish times
- Altered days
- Compressed hours fortnight
- Increasing / decreasing hours
- Phased gradual reduction in hours
- Leave without pay (e.g. for school holidays)
- Working from home some days / all the time
- Working from another DOC office

3. Useful considerations

Before you speak with your manager about trialling a new flexible work arrangement, it's useful to work through these points:

My individual needs and goals

- What are my goals for working flexibly? Think about which flexible work arrangements help you achieve this. There may be more than one option.
- What outside work commitments do I need to accommodate? E.g. school runs, caring responsibilities, volunteer work, sports teams, hobbies.
- How do I work at my best? Do I need lots of social interaction? Do I need thinking time in the quiet? Do I think best early morning or later in the day?
- What wellbeing needs do I have, and how will I accommodate them? E.g. time for exercise or getting outdoors or seeing family / friends.

My team, manager and stakeholders' needs

- When do colleagues, my manager, Treaty Partners and stakeholders need to contact me?
- How can I stay visible and responsive for work?
- When is my role typically busiest? How will I accommodate that?
- How will I manage urgent requests when I'm offline?

DOC's needs

- What aspects of my role need to be completed in the office, or in the field? And when?
- What aspects of my role work with Treaty Partners, the public or stakeholders and how will I accommodate their needs?

4. How to trial a flexible work arrangement

Have a conversation with your Manager and let them know you are interested in trialling a flexible work arrangement. Discuss your ideal work pattern and location, the possible impact on the team, stakeholders and service delivery, and how long you would like to test the new arrangement for.

If you are looking for a regular and ongoing flexible work arrangement, complete a [Formal Flexible Work Arrangement Form](#). Your manager will have one month to action your request.

If your work pattern significantly changes (e.g. reducing your total hours, or altering days worked) you may need to temporarily vary the terms and conditions of your employment, which may also need systems / payroll changes. Your Manager will discuss this with you.

At the end of the trial review your arrangement with your Manager. If approved, you may need to vary the terms and conditions of your employment. The process your manager will follow can be found in the [Flexible Work Arrangements SOP](#).

5. Working from home



Your home set up should be safe, well set up ergonomically and as comfortable as possible to maximise the benefits of working from home. It is also anticipated that you will be doing low risk office work during paid work hours at home.

To work from home, you have a responsibility to provide a workspace where you can work safely and effectively and fast, reliable internet services.

Health and safety

The potential hazards of your working from home environment must be assessed and preventative measures taken to ensure you are working from home safely. This includes:

- Completing a health and safety checklist for home offices [Doc-5965239](#)
- Completing a virtual workspace assessment [Doc-5731951](#)
- Reviewing these regularly

Equipment for home office



The home office virtual workspace assessment will recommend an ergonomic design and any additional equipment required to establish a safe and effective home workspace. You will purchase the equipment in agreement with your Manager, as recommended by the independent assessment. You will be reimbursed for the reasonable cost of this equipment from within team budgets. Equipment may include:

- A standard adjustable chair that meets office requirements.
- Other recommended supportive equipment which may include; lap top risers, footrests, wrist rests, mice, keyboards, document holders etc.
- Desks will be assessed on a case by case basis
- DOC will NOT reimburse the cost of a computer or laptop – these have been ordered for staff to use when working from home. See the [Technology – support for remote working tile](#) for more information.

For tips on setting up your workspace correctly, stretches, and links to interactive tutorials on managing physical discomfort and physical conditioning – see [Working from Home intranet page](#).

Other expenses

If you request to work from home as part of your flexible work arrangement, it is your responsibility to fund any utility costs, including phone / internet costs, electricity, heating and insurance etc.

- A DOC phone can be used for communication and limited WIFI hot spotting for your computer.
- Any additional travel costs associated with working from home will be at your expense
- Virtual meetings are being encouraged to reduce travel costs.

6. Working from another DOC office

Agreement needs to be made between your manager and site manager of the alternative DOC office to ensure there is appropriate space and resources to support an additional staff person. Considerations may include; desk space, IT Network, printing and office consumables, meeting room availability, vehicle availability, storage, on-site management and support, admin support, site induction etc.

- Virtual meetings are being encouraged to reduce travel costs.
- Any additional travel costs associated with working from another DOC office will be at your expense

7. Being part of a flexible team



When you work flexibly or remotely you need to be more deliberate about teamwork, maintaining a sense of belonging and staying up to date. Maintaining that sense of connection with people at work can be difficult if you aren't physically present at the same time as other team members.

Balancing your time out of and in the office, joining in social activities and staying up to date with developments across the organisation can all help to make flexible work successful.

Managing yourself

Flexible workers need to be good self-managers who can communicate clearly and plan work effectively. Group your work into related tasks and block out time for them, where possible.

Be clear about your deliverables

Clearly identify with your manager your deliverables, workplan and timeframes and how you'll demonstrate your progress on tasks. Be clear about how you'll communicate and keep your colleagues / stakeholders up to date with what you're working on.

Communicate your hours, location and availability

When you work flexibly or remotely it is harder for your team mates to know where you are and when you are available. Some people use their signature block to provide a clear and accessible reminder of their new flexible work arrangements eg. Monday 8am – 4pm, Tuesday 3pm – 7pm and Friday 11am – 3pm.

Another strategy is to customise your online calendar to show your working hours and location of work. External stakeholders and clients will need your availability communicated on other channels accessible to them. Decisions to make include:

- What tech tools will we use, how and when
- How to share visibility of where are and when you are available?
- How to collaborate on projects
- How and when to meet as a whole team
- What is the checking in process in an emergency?
- How to keep teammates updated on deliverables

Balance work and life

Agree with your manager when you'll be 'off limits' outside work time. If your role requires you to be available for urgent contact out of hours, then you'll need to provide a way that you can be contacted. Maintain healthy breaks, bookend your day so you have clear boundaries to your workday and 'switch off' outside work hours. Look after your wellbeing.

Working from home can seem ideal, but the reality can be challenging

Making sure that you can work without frequent personal interruptions is one challenge. Making sure that you aren't distracted by things that need doing at home is another. Planning, setting (and sticking to) boundaries with family and friends during your home-based work hours is a strategy that can help you increase the effectiveness of flexible work. Whether you're in the office or away from the office, it helps if you set clear boundaries and manage other people's expectations about your availability.

Find your work–life balance while working from home



Create a safe, quiet and comfortable workspace



Plan your day, including breaks and a finish time



Set boundaries with whānau and friends while working from home



Let your team know what hours you work



Use airplane mode to reduce phone and email distractions



Stop work when the working day is over



Talk to your manager if you're struggling with work–life balance

Review regularly

Use your MOR to review your flexible work arrangement and talk through how things are working in practice for you, your team, your manager and your stakeholders. Consider things such as:

- Have your commitments or circumstances changed?
- Are you seeing a change in your wellbeing from working longer hours or working outside core hours?
- Have your team or stakeholder needs changed?
- Has your workload or priorities or projects changed?