

# Travel Choices Flexible Working Toolkit

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# Sydney is expected to grow by an extra 1 million people in the next 10 years.

As Sydney continues to change and develop, it's a great time to consider flexible working to make your commute more efficient and comfortable. Travelling to work outside the peak contributes to this. Working from home cuts out the commute altogether.

Transport for NSW's Travel Choices program is here to support flexible working for individuals, businesses and organisations to help you make the best use of time in busy workplaces and busy lives.

We understand that business's needs and cultures vary so flexible working will look different in each business and for every individual.

As there is no 'one size fits all' model there are a variety of ideas and solutions here that will help you find ways to make the most of flexible working.

Transport for NSW is putting its flexible working into action by providing options for staff and creating a culture where flexible working is the norm. Use the Travel Choices Flexible Working Toolkit to see how you too can make flexible working work for you.

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## What is flexible working?

Flexible working includes any work arrangement that alters the traditional Monday to Friday 9 to 5 on either a temporary or permanent basis.

Some examples include:



### Hours

- Different start and/finish times
- Time off in lieu



### Days

- Compressed work weeks (longer days, less of them.)
- Part-time work
- Job sharing



### Location

- Working from home for all or some of the day
- Telecommuting/Video conferencing
- Working from clients' offices, from co-working spaces or other locations closer to home

# Benefits

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## Why flexible working should matter to you

Research has consistently shown that individuals, teams, businesses and organisations all benefit when flexible working arrangements are made available to employees.

### Employer benefits:

- Work can be scheduled when there are more customers and across longer portions of the day to extend customer service, because staff can travel to and from work outside the peak
- Increased staff retention and attracting the best new talent
- Support for creating an anti-discriminatory workplace
- Increased productivity by ensuring staff make the best use of their working day
- Fewer staff demands for parking on site or subsidies.

### Employee benefits:

- A better work-life balance that suits your circumstances, by reducing or re-timing your travel outside the peak
- Start late and/or leave early to allow time for sports and leisure activities or to make more time for a relaxed school run with the kids
- Support for every stage of your working life, like when you need to care for older parents
- Ability to schedule quiet times to write/read documents without being disturbed
- Retiming commutes to avoid peak make for a more comfortable journey
- Reducing travel and parking costs.

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# For employers - starting out

## What you need to know

### Considering requests for flexible working

- As a manager, it is up to you to accept or reject a request for a flexible working arrangement. Your decision should be based on factors related to the impact on the workplace, the operational requirements and staff well-being.
- The impact on the role and rest of the team, capabilities of the individual, the business's policies, key challenges and issues should also be taken into consideration when considering a flexible working arrangement request.

### Managing flexible work arrangements

- Lead by example and adopt flexible working practices yourself, where possible, to demonstrate you are supportive of flexible working arrangements.
- Use this as an opportunity to demonstrate how your team should be communicating and proactively planning around various schedules.
- Implement the delivery of frequent progress reports; these are a good way to keep abreast of the results your team is achieving to report up.
- Once a flexible work arrangement has started, it is important to monitor and review it on an ongoing basis. Formal reviews are recommended every 6-12 months to address any issues that arise and ensure the success of the arrangements.

 [See the full checklist for considering a flexible working request for more information.](#)

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### Flexible start and finish times case study

Consider adjusting the settings on Outlook so that staff book meetings outside of the standard 9-5, for example highlight the 10am-3pm portion of the day, then clients and visitors don't have to travel in the peak either.

[Click here to find out more](#)



# For employers -

## Checklist for assessing a flexible working arrangement request

### Considerations for the business

- ☐ Does your business have a flexible working policy and does the request adhere to it?
- ☐ If not, can a less formal arrangement be accommodated?
- ☐ Are there additional costs associated with the request?
- ☐ Are there tangible benefits for both the employee role and the business?
- ☐ Will the needs of customers and the service quality be maintained or enhanced?
- ☐ Are there any IT issues to address i.e. access any necessary programs/hardware?

### Considerations for the team

- ☐ Will there be an impact on the rest of the team?
- ☐ Will the objectives of the role continue to be achieved?
- ☐ Has any potential impact on the team been properly addressed?
- ☐ Are there any days or times where physical presence in the office is required?

### Capabilities of the individual

- ☐ Has the individual previously engaged in flexible working?
- ☐ Does the individual currently work well autonomously and manage their time effectively?
- ☐ Has the individual demonstrated a willingness to be flexible in their approach to work arrangements for the benefit of the business?

### Potential challenges and issues

- ☐ Does the request identify and address customer issues?
- ☐ Does the request identify all potential issues and challenges (including communication issues) that may arise with suggested solutions?
- ☐ Do you need a shared team calendar which shows each employee's availability and out-of-office days/times to help team members plan face-to-face meetings?

## Checklist for monitoring and adjusting flexible work arrangements

Upon completion of the trial period, managers should take the time to review the flexible working arrangement and discuss observations with the individual and team if appropriate.

Be sure to ask for feedback on successes and challenges and adjust where necessary. When reviewing an arrangement consider the following:

### Reviewing the arrangement (every 6-12 months)

- ☐ Has the employee complied with business's policy around flexible working?
- ☐ Has the employee met the expectations laid out in the original arrangement?
- ☐ Has the quality and quantity of work been maintained? Has it improved?
- ☐ What impact (negative/positive) has the arrangement had on the quality of service to the customer?
- ☐ Has the work arrangement impacted the employee's communications/relationships with team members?
- ☐ Has the organisation seen tangible benefits during the trial period?

### Adjusting for the Future

- ☐ Are any changes required for the flexible working arrangement?
- ☐ Can the flexible working arrangement be modified to better suit the individual, team or business?

# Communication is key

## Making Flexible Hours Work

Open, clear and concise communication is key to making a flexible working arrangement successful. All parties need to consider their options and have an open mind about what will work and what won't.

### Employer:

- Focus on results achieved rather than time spent in the office
- Encourage your team to communicate effectively on tasks to be completed using appropriate project management tools and proactively plan ahead around the various schedules within the team
- Speak to your staff about the benefits of the program and see what is going to work for them and the business.

### Employee:

- Be open about what you want to achieve
- Offer solutions about how you would like flexible working how you can make it work with your team
- Communicate regularly with your manager about how you are going, what issues are arising and how you can adapt to make it work.

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# For employees - starting out

## What you need to know

### Writing a request for a flexible working arrangement:

- Determine whether your employer has a flexible working policy and follow any existing procedures.
- Clearly outline your situation and your needs.
- Offer solutions to meet both the needs of the business and make it easy for your employer to see the benefits and approve your request.
- Be sure to address any impact your flexible work arrangement will have on your colleagues and the overall business, and create solutions to reduce the risk.
- Offer to meet face to face at a convenient time.

### Meeting to discuss your request:

- If you are not comfortable talking about these issues one-to-one, you might want to ask a colleague or HR representative to be at the meeting.
- Arrive prepared - write down the points you want to cover in the meeting as well as any agreement that is reached.
- Be clear and realistic about what it is you want your employer to agree to.
- Be prepared to negotiate.
- Remember that flexible working arrangements must be flexible for both parties.
- Remain professional throughout the discussion.

### Planning, implementing and reviewing the arrangement:

- Be responsive to any concerns your manager raises and develop solutions that benefit everyone.
- Time management and self-discipline are important skills for implementing an effective flexible work arrangement where it is up to an employee to ensure they deliver outcomes.
- Use planning tools to support your focus and work at home.

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# For employees - tips for reducing your travel/working from home

## Set working hours

Set out time during the day to undertake work and avoid using this time for personal tasks.

Communicate with your team and employer as to what times you will be available and ensure you are contactable; this is especially important for building trust with your manager when you are not physically in the office.

## Get organised

Organisation is key to staying focused and on track. Planning in advance around various flexible schedules requires the entire team to be organised.

Use schedules and to-do lists to stay on track. Structuring your day can help you to minimise distractions and maximise productivity.

## Communicate clearly and often with your colleagues

Make sure your phone is charged at all times.

Organise access to files and folders with your IT team.

If the majority of your communication is via email, clear written communication becomes very important so check your writing style and re-read drafts.



## Change it up

Sometimes you just need to get out of the house. Go out for a change of scenery if you're having trouble focusing; this can help you think more clearly. Relocating to a quiet café could help you re-engage for the remainder of the day.

## Have deliverables

It is important to set outcomes for yourself to work towards and report on to demonstrate you are achieving results.

Don't be shy about sharing your successes with your manager; if you are achieving your deliverables, you will increase your manager's confidence in the flexible working arrangement.

## Have a dedicated workspace

Try and be consistent and work in the same location to undertake work related tasks. A separate office space can help minimise at-home distractions and ensure work doesn't impose on your free time.

If possible, have a separate work phone to use during your working hours so you avoid constantly checking your personal phone.

Keeping your workspace clean and free of clutter can help to improve your focus.

# For employees - tips for re-timing your journey to work

## Use trip planning apps

Trip planning apps can help you plan your re-timed commute. Popular public transport apps are the Opal Travel app, the CityMapper app and the TfNSW Trip Planner.

## Bike it to work

If you are not an experienced bike rider, the roads are less busy outside the peak and you may feel safer and more confident.

Plan your route before you leave on the Cycleway finder <http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/bicycles/cycleway-finder.html> or CityMapper

## Pack your bag

Make sure you take home any key documents you want to read or review the night before if you are planning to go in later the next day and prefer a hard copy. The same goes if you are leaving early to work from home in the afternoon.



## Devil in the detail on your Calendar

Make sure your colleagues and managers know when you will be in the office and what you are doing when you are not. This builds trust and confidence in the effectiveness of a flexible working arrangement. Plan meetings with colleagues or clients between 10am and 3pm too, so that you can all enjoy a comfortable commute.

## Use public transport and save money

Traveling outside the peak can save you money. A 30% discount when you travel outside the following peak periods:

- Sydney Trains and Station Link 7 - 9am and 4 - 6.30pm
- NSW TrainLink Intercity 6 - 8am and 4 - 6.30pm

# And finally...

## seven selling points for flexible working arrangements in business

### 1. Flexible work arrangements are inexpensive to implement

There are usually minimal costs for most flexible working arrangements. Any minor additional costs are offset by the reduced cost of employee turnover.

### 2. The productivity of a staff member that has a flexible working arrangement is higher than other staff

Studies have shown that flexible working actually enhances productivity. Flexible working arrangements offer a new way to achieve the same or enhanced outputs for the role.

Working at home, working when the office is quieter, or working from another remote location closer to home can help increase the quality and speed of work.

### 3. Flexible working arrangements require less direct supervision

Like all staff, employees utilising flexible working arrangements need a clearly defined role outlining their responsibilities.

Managers should focus on outcomes rather than time spent in the office. Successful flexible working arrangements require an open line of communication, trust and cooperation between an employee and manager.

### 4. Flexible working policies should apply to all staff for whom it is feasible

Flexible working arrangements are equally appropriate for all levels of staff. Stress can reduce organisational productivity. Staff at all levels of the business can be affected by stress inside or outside the workplace and a commute in peak hour can add to it.

### 5. Not everyone will want/be able to access flexible working arrangement

Flexible working does not suit every type of role or work environment and not everyone will want to request it, so the change to the work environment may not be as dramatic as you think.

### 6. Employees who have a flexible working arrangement are just as committed to the business

Accessing flexible working does not in any way have an impact on an employee's ambition, commitment or drive to succeed. These workers simply need a better approach to balancing work and home life. Flexible working helps to attract and retain a high calibre of staff.

### 7. Flexible work arrangements benefit everyone

Flexible working arrangements enhance productivity as well as promote a healthy work-life balance, so they benefit all staff.

Staff who care for family members or have study commitments particularly benefit from flexible working, but they also benefit staff concerned with maintaining a healthy work-life balance and overall well-being. The need is not gender or age related.

# Resources

For more information, click on the resources below:

[Fair Work Ombudsman – Flexible working best practice guides](#)

[Office of the Focal Point for Women in the United Nations – Myths and Facts about Flexible Working Arrangements \(FWAs\)](#)

[Public Service Commission \(NSW\) – Flexible Working](#)

[Public Sector Commission \(QLD\) – Flexible Working Myths](#)

[Workplace Gender Equality Agency – Flexible Working Toolkit](#)

[Harvard Business Review – Department Premier and Cabinet – Flexible Working Trial](#)

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