

# Flexible Work Checklist

2024

## Purpose of this checklist

This checklist, for Human Resource teams, executive leaders and people managers highlights influential actions to support and maintain quality flexible work.<sup>1</sup>

Enabling employees to take up effective flexible working arrangements supports workplace gender equality because it promotes women's workforce participation and shared caring responsibilities. Flexible work also makes good business sense, as it can improve productivity and positively impact employee engagement, wellbeing and job satisfaction.

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## Key

<b>Mandatory actions</b>	Employers' legal obligations relating to flexible work.
<b>Influential actions</b>	Evidence-based actions and strategies that enable and support quality flexible work that could have a significant impact on your organisation and employees.
<b>Supplementary actions</b>	Supplementary evidence-based actions and strategies that enable and support quality flexible work that may add additional benefit in your organisations.

This checklist also includes examples of **innovative practice** some employers are trying and having success with to enable effective flexible work.

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<sup>1</sup> Quality flexible work means that employees have secure roles where they are supported to work flexibly and have autonomy over their hours/patterns/locations, as well as opportunities for development.

# Summary of influential actions to support flexible work

The following are the most influential actions and strategies likely to have a significant impact on your organisation and employees:

## Access to flexible work

- All employees, regardless of gender, age, caring responsibilities, tenure, seniority or job.
- Informal flexible work arrangements are offered to employees, in addition to formal arrangements that are specified in a policy.
- Employers maximise employee access to hybrid and remote work across as many jobs as possible.
- Flexible work options are offered explicitly and by default in job advertisements.
- Job and work redesign is used to adapt jobs to be done flexibly.

## Enabling flexible work

- Collaboration tools and technology, resources and equipment are provided to employees to help them work flexibly.
- Performance expectations and metrics are adjusted to account for flexible work (for example, KPIs for part-time work are proportional to KPIs for full-time work) and employees are assessed on outcomes rather than workplace attendance.
- Employees who work flexibly are treated equitably in terms of access to valued work, development opportunities and career progression.

## Leadership and management roles

- Leaders establish and endorse the business case for flexibility.
- Leaders of all genders and levels (but particularly executive leaders and men) champion and normalise flexible work,

such as through role-modelling flexible working, encouraging others to work flexibly and celebrating it publicly.

- Managers understand the awards, agreements, contractual obligations or policies that apply to their team and the process for agreeing and approving these, including that before rejecting a request, they consider the consequences and try to reach an agreement or find an alternative.
- Managers ensure that their team is aware of the flexible work options available and involve their team in the design of flexible work arrangements that suit employee, team and business needs.
- Managers promote practices inclusive of those working flexibly, such as inclusive meeting practices, training, communication and resolution of scheduling conflicts.

## Employee and team responsibilities

- Teams collaborate on their flexible work practices to meet both individual needs, team needs and organisational requirements.

## Monitoring and evaluation of flexible work

- The take up of flexible work, and the impact on different genders, is measured and evaluated—and metrics on the use and/or impact of flexible work are reported to executive leaders and governing bodies.
- There are organisational targets around flexible work, such as to increase overall engagement in flexible work and increase men's engagement in flexible work.
- Employees are surveyed on whether they have sufficient flexibility and feel supported to access it, as well as about their perception of potential negative career consequences of working flexibly.

# Comprehensive actions to support flexible work

## Policy and strategy

For information on what to include in your flexible work policy or strategy, see the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's [Flexible work: policy and strategy guidance](#).

## Access to flexible work

<b>Mandatory actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Legal obligations around <b>entitlements to request flexible work</b> are met.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Legal obligations around <b>responding to a request</b> for flexible work are met.</li></ul>
<b>Influential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>All employees</b>, regardless of gender, age, caring responsibilities, tenure, seniority or job.<sup>2</sup></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Informal flexible work arrangements are offered to employees, in addition to formal arrangements that are specified in a policy.<sup>3</sup></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Employers maximise employee access to hybrid and remote work across as many jobs as possible.<sup>4</sup></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Flexible work options are offered explicitly<sup>5</sup> and by default in job advertisements.<sup>6</sup></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Job and work redesign</b> is used to adapt jobs to be done flexibly.</li></ul>

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<sup>2</sup> Suggested options include flexible hours (start and finish times), reduced hours or part-time work, job-sharing arrangements, compressed work weeks, purchased leave, time-in-lieu and remote working.

<sup>3</sup> Formal arrangements are specified in a policy, formally agreed and documented. Informal arrangements involve negotiations between an employee and their direct manager and can allow the needs of individuals to be met, in the context of business demands.

<sup>4</sup> When all employees worked remotely during the pandemic, **57% of men and 43% of women said the workplace became more gender equitable**.

<sup>5</sup> Lack of clarity or visibility about flexibility in advertisements, **makes candidates less likely to consider the role**. **Explicit mentions** of the type of flexible work available is likely to be most effective in attracting candidates.

<sup>6</sup> This will help to increase the candidate pool, as employees **care about more than just salary**, and **other benefits and perks can affect whether a candidate shortlists/applies for a job**.

## Supplementary actions

- Employees can easily find and understand the flexible work policy, the process for getting flexible work approved and range of flexible work options available, and can **identify the flexible work options which work best for them**, in the context of their job.
- Recruitment policies and practices include measures to prevent a candidate's flexible work needs influencing the likelihood of their selection.
- There is a process for **reviewing declined flexible work requests** to identify patterns and identify whether some managers need support to reach agreements or alternatives.

## Innovative practice

- **Innovative forms of flexible work that match specific workplace context and needs:** For example, **Karitane** offers employees career break schemes, part year employment and variable year employment. **Oliver Wyman** offers a 'FlexOW' program, which includes options such as a 9-day fortnight and 10/11-month year (periodic and planned breaks of up to two months a year). They also offer 'Reintegr8 Days', which allow parents returning to work a work week of four days, while being paid for five days.
- **Work from anywhere:** For example, **Gitlab** has an all-remote workforce, with 1,500 team members located in more than 65 countries around the world, supported through their 'Remote Manifesto'. **KPMG** has a 'Work from Anywhere Policy' to allow employees to work overseas for up to six weeks at a time.<sup>7</sup>
- **4 day week:** For example, **Unilever** trialed a four day work week in New Zealand, where employees retained 100% of their salaries, while working 80% of the time, and committing to 100% delivery for the business.<sup>8</sup>
- **Make 'one simple thing' changes for flexibility:** For example, **Stockland** encourages employees to think about, discuss with their manager and put into practice the 'one simple thing' that will help them manage their work-life balance (such as leaving work early to attend a dance class or starting late to do the school drop off).

## Enabling quality flexible work

### Mandatory actions

- Health and safety requirements** are met and are suitable for all employees (including employees with disability).

### Influential actions

- Collaboration tools and technology**, resources and equipment are provided to employees to enable them to work flexibly.
- Performance expectations and metrics are adjusted to account for flexible work (for example, KPIs for part-time work are proportional to KPIs for full-time work) and employees are assessed on outcomes rather than workplace attendance.
- Employees who work flexibly are treated equitably in terms of access to valued work, development opportunities and career progression.

<sup>7</sup> Note that the practicality of this may vary due to tax restrictions limiting how long employees can work overseas and where.

<sup>8</sup> The New Zealand trial showed positive results against business targets, including revenue growth, most staff feeling engaged and a drop in absenteeism.

### Supplementary actions

- Managers have the knowledge and skills to conduct performance evaluations that are not influenced by the flexible work arrangements of their employees.
- Employees are trained to use communication and collaboration technologies that enable flexible work.
- Flexible working arrangements are discussed and agreed upon when working with external parties, such as that times and locations for meetings respect attendees' flexible work arrangements, and employees' flexible work arrangements are made with obligations to external parties in mind.

### Innovative practice

- **Supporting parents to be at work, on-site.** The [Hudson Institute](#) has onsite childcare and aims to hold events during school hours so that parents are supported to attend the office and work events.
- **Coordinated, intentional days for in-person work, where being together adds value and promotes collaboration and connection:** For example, [Logitech](#) implemented "gravity days" for in-person work, instead of mandating a return to office.
- **Workspaces and technology are optimised to support hybrid work:** For example, [Atlassian](#) created a "Connection Hub"—a multi-use, communal space designed to support hybrid work, and [Logitech](#) adapted their meeting rooms based on room use data from webcams.

## Leadership and management roles

### Influential actions


- Leaders establish and endorse the business case for flexibility.
- Leaders at all levels (and particularly executive leaders and men) champion and normalise flexible work, such as through [role-modelling](#) flexible working, actively encouraging others to work flexibly and [celebrating it publicly](#).<sup>9</sup>
- Managers understand the [awards, agreements, contractual obligations or policies](#) that apply to their team and the process for agreeing and approving these, including that before rejecting a request, they consider the consequences and try to [reach an agreement](#) or find an alternative.
- Managers ensure that their team is aware of the [flexible work options available](#) and [involve their team in the design of flexible work](#) arrangements that suit employee, team and business needs.<sup>10</sup>
- Managers promote practices inclusive of those working flexibly, such as inclusive [meeting practices, training, communication and resolution of scheduling conflicts](#).

### Supplementary actions

- Managers [review](#) flexible working arrangements regularly and adapt flexible work arrangements as employee needs change.

<sup>9</sup> A [study](#) within eight major organisations showed that employees mimicked their managers arrival and departure behaviour.

<sup>10</sup> [Managers are critical enablers of flexible work](#). They should [coordinate and support team members](#) to make the most of flexible working, while ensuring organisational needs are met.

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- Managers use team pulse checks and feedback loops to understand and improve their team's use of flexible work.
  - Managers complete training on how to lead flexible, remote and virtual teams.

## Employee and team responsibilities

<b>Mandatory actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When working flexibly, employees understand and follow the relevant legislation, such the <u><a href="#">Work, Health and Safety Act 2011</a></u>, the <u><a href="#">Fair Work Act 2009</a></u>, relevant awards or enterprise agreements and organisational policies.</li> </ul>
<b>Influential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teams collaborate on their flexible work practices to meet both individual needs, team needs and organisational requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>Supplementary actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employees <u><a href="#">support others</a></u> who work flexibly, including through communicating effectively with the use of collaboration software, organising online meetings, or providing written or audiovisual updates on tasks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employees <u><a href="#">discuss how to improve</a></u> the use of flexible work within their team and address any issues that may arise.</li> </ul>

### Innovative practice

- Employees manage their own schedules through [self-scheduling](#) and [shift-swapping](#) structures that avoid unnecessary manager intervention: For example, [Delta Airlines](#) allowed flight attendants to submit their schedule preferences in advance, in a process of “bidding”.

## Monitoring and evaluation of flexible work

<b>Influential actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The take up of flexible work, and the impact on different genders, is measured and evaluated—and metrics on the use and/or impact of flexible work are reported to executive leaders and governing bodies.<sup>11</sup></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are organisational targets around flexible work, such as to increase overall engagement in flexible work and increase men’s engagement in flexible work.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employees are surveyed on whether they have sufficient flexibility and feel supported to access it, as well as about their perception of potential negative career consequences of working flexibly.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Supplementary actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Periodically explore forms of flexibility offered to ensure they match employee and business needs and seize emerging opportunities.<sup>13</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> Use and impact of flexible work can be evaluated through levels of absenteeism, employee engagement, [recruitment, staff turnover, sickness absence data, health and safety metrics and KPIs \(e.g., revenue and deliverables\)](#).

<sup>12</sup> [Feedback can measure the effectiveness and engagement with flexible work](#) and allows employees to have input into shaping how they work.

<sup>13</sup> For example, [Google investigated](#) their employees’ appetite for time-based flexible working through surveys, interviews and focus groups. They discovered that a large proportion of their employees were interested in the option to work part-time if and when they needed to.

# Helpful resources

- [A Director's guide to accelerating Workplace Gender Equality](#) | Workplace Gender Equality Agency
- [Design your own flexible working trial toolkit](#) | NSW Government
- [Employer guidance on developing policies and strategies for the 6 Gender Equality Indicators](#) | Workplace Gender Equality Agency
- [Equitable Flexibility in Australia: Reshaping Our Workforce](#) | Bain & Company
- [Flex for Success: Five Practices That Build a Flexible Workforce](#) | Bain & Company
- [Flexible work](#) | Workplace Gender Equality Agency
- [Flexible Work \(More than one way to work\)](#) | New South Wales Health
- [Flexible Work Arrangements](#) | Women in Research
- [Flexible working arrangements best practice guide](#) | Fair Work Ombudsman
- [Good Work Design - Providing flexible work](#) | Comcare
- [New Data Proves Flexible Work Really Works: 7 Factors For Success](#) | Forbes
- [Normalising flexible working](#) | The Behavioural Insights Team

## Got feedback on this checklist?

Please email [wgea-education@wgea.gov.au](mailto:wgea-education@wgea.gov.au) to share your thoughts, referencing 'Flexible Work Checklist' in the subject.