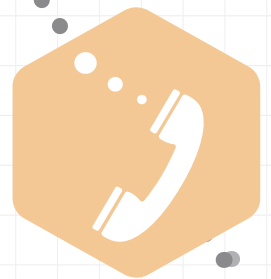




# FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE

## REFERENCE GUIDE



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# INTRODUCTION

Flexible work arrangements are on the rise in the U.S. Advancements in technology and improved communications have allowed employees to remain engaged and productive virtually without being physically present at work. Organizations of all types are moving forward with flexible work arrangements. At some workplaces, people now have several choices in how they structure each day of their work week.

This reference guide describes recent national and local trends in the workplace, types and potential benefits of flexible workplace arrangements, successful case study examples, and key components for starting a flexible workplace program at your organization.

## TRENDS

National and local trends indicate a desire for more flexibility in the workplace and show an increase in the number of people participating in such programs.

### National



Approximately 10,000 baby boomers are reaching retirement age every day.<sup>1</sup> The increase in the number of baby boomers retiring each day will result in an influx of new workers to fill vacancies.



Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce by 2025 and they want flexibility.<sup>2</sup>

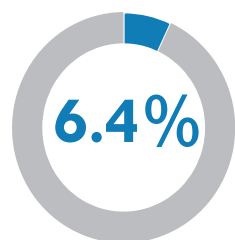


Census data indicates about 4.6% of all U.S. workers work from home.<sup>3</sup>



According to the “[2017 State of Telecommuting in the U.S. Employee Workforce](#)” report, in the last 10 years, telecommuting has grown 115%, surpassing the rate of people who take transit.<sup>4</sup>

### Local

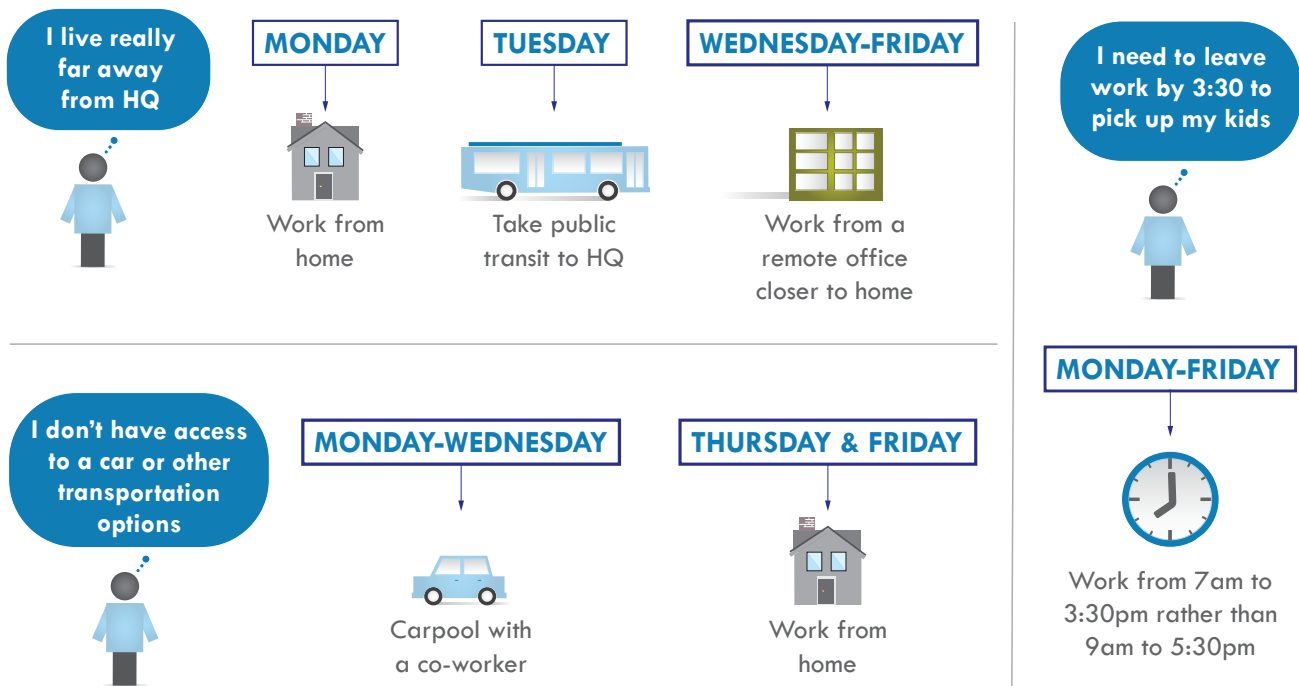


Nationally, Oregon has the third largest percentage of full-time employees that work from home.<sup>5</sup> Working from home in Oregon has been on the rise, increasing from 5.1% in 2005 to 6.4% in 2016.<sup>6</sup>



Several metropolitan areas in the state have more full-time employees working from home than the average, including Bend at 9.4%, Corvallis at 7.5%, and Portland at 7.5%.<sup>7</sup>

# TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE



There are several different types of flexible work arrangements employers can leverage allowing their employees to create a schedule that supports a variety of lifestyles. This may include flexibility in the location, schedule, or number of hours worked.

**Flexibility in location** or teleworking can include working from home or working from an alternate location. This may require employees to have access to additional technology, such as a laptop or cell phone.

**Flexibility in schedule** can include flextime—employees work eight hours per day but can adjust their arrival and departures times from the traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.—or a compressed work week—employees work full time but in fewer than five days, such as four, 10 hour shifts.

**Flexibility in the number of hours** can be permanent or temporary. Employees may work less than the traditional 40 hours per week permanently if they fulfill a part-time position or if they share one full-time job with another employee. A temporary reduction in the number of hours may occur during a transitional period—employees work a reduced schedule after having a major life event but later return to full time work—or may be a seasonal re-occurrence—employees only work during part of the year.<sup>8</sup>

# WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS?

Flexible work arrangement can provide numerous benefits, such as:



## Increased productivity.

Studies have shown that employees who work from home are happier, healthier, and more productive. A 10-month study conducted by Stanford University showed that people who worked at home in one company of 16,000 employees contributed to a 13% increase in productivity. Employees worked more hours, took shorter breaks, and used less sick leave<sup>9</sup>. Statistics compiled by Global Workplace Analytics show that telecommuters at JD Edwards were 20 to 25% more productive than their colleagues at the office. At American Express employees who telecommute were 43% more productive than workers in the office.<sup>10</sup>



## Improved recruiting and retention.

Offering flexible workplace arrangements helps employers attract a wider range of employees with varying lifestyles. Statistics compiled by Global Workplace Analytics indicate 46% of companies that allow employees to work from home say it has improved employee retention and reduced attrition.<sup>11</sup>



## Reduced carbon footprint and congestion.

Communication technology removes the need for people to travel into the office every day. This helps reduce pollution and removes the need for people to travel on roadways. Research conducted by Flexjobs showed that Xerox, Dell, and Aetna flexible work arrangements translated into 95,294 metric tons less of greenhouse gas emissions, which is equivalent to removing 20,000 cars off the road.<sup>12</sup>



## Disaster preparedness.

In the event of extreme weather or a natural disaster, employees may not be able to get to work. Allowing people to work remotely helps ensure employees will stay safe and be productive in the event that they cannot travel to work. Flexible schedules can be useful for employees who may be able to adhere to their typical schedule but will arrive later and leave later. If there is an emergency at the office (e.g., earthquake, fire, etc.), having fewer people in the office to account for and evacuate can help employees at the office stay safe.<sup>13</sup>



## Improved health.

Health, happiness, satisfaction are lower for people who have longer commutes.<sup>14</sup> According to the Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College, flexible work options can reduce stress, improve work-life balance, and contribute to a better physical and mental well-being. A study involving more 19,000 employees at nine different companies showed that employees with flexible workplace arrangements had lower levels of stress and burnout than employees who did not have a flexible workplace arrangement.<sup>15</sup> Flexible work arrangements can also reduce the risk of spreading illnesses at the office. Employees are able to stay up-to-date with work but take the time to rest at home so they recover more quickly and get back to work feeling 100%.<sup>16</sup>



## Cost savings.

Flexible work arrangements make employees more productive, providing cost savings for their employers. They also help retain staff, which can eliminate the need for costs associated with advertising job openings, conducting interviews, and training new employees. Employers can also lower costs associated with office space. More employees working remotely can reduce the amount of office space needed and cut down on rent and mortgage expenses. Statistics provided by Global Workplace Analytics indicate that companies can save up an average of \$10,000 per year for each full-time employee that works from home.<sup>17</sup>

# KEY COMPONENTS

COMPONENT FOR SUCCESS	COMMON MISCONCEPTION	SOLUTION
<b>Clear Program Goals &amp; Policies</b>	Flexible work arrangements go against an organization’s mission of working together and getting things done.	Establish program goals rooted in the values of the organization to help shift workplace culture and help strengthen the case for a flexible workplace program.
<b>Program Champions</b>	Leadership doesn’t support flexible work arrangements.	Partnerships help ensure that everyone is on the same page. Work with departments and managers across the organization, such as HR, IT, among others to identify program champions and develop a program that is supported by all levels of the organization.
<b>Suitability</b>	If one or two employees have workplace flexibility, everyone will want it. The employees who are not allowed to have a flexible schedule will complain. <sup>18</sup>	Determine who is best suited for a flexible workplace arrangement. Establish clear policies about which positions/types of employees are eligible and any limitations on frequency (e.g., employees can work remotely up to two days per week).
<b>Accountability</b>	Managing employees with flexible work arrangements is more difficult. <sup>19</sup> Employees are not working if they are not in the office. <sup>20</sup>	People who have a flexible schedule are often more productive. Establish clear expectations and performance measures so managers can hold employees accountable.
<b>Training and Program Awareness</b>	People are not aware of what flexible work arrangements are available to them. Policies are implemented inconsistently across departments. <sup>21</sup>	Ongoing trainings and clear messaging can help ensure that everyone is on the same page. Employees are aware of the opportunity and managers are aware of the benefits and tools available to support the program. Hold workplace trainings to educate managers and employees about the policies and accountability measures for a successful program.
<b>Technology</b>	Communication—particularly in a time-sensitive situation—will suffer. Collaboration and teamwork will be limited. Providing equipment for employees will be too costly. <sup>22</sup>	Technology gives employees the ability to communicate quickly from almost anywhere. Standard tools, such as a laptop, are often all that is required. Leveraging the latest tools can help organizations maintain seamless collaboration and teamwork. Costs can actually be reduced from telework programs. Employees who work at home do not have to have a dedicated office space, therefore, employers could have a smaller office space, lower rent/mortgage, lower electricity bills, etc.
<b>Program Assessment</b>	Flexible work programs don’t have measurable, positive results.	Research suggests that flexible work options result in more productive and happy employees. Keep track of program participation and costs and communicate the results of the program to the organization. Is the program meeting the established goals? Are employees using the program? What adjustments could be made to improve the program?

## CASE STUDIES

### Large Company: Clif Bar

Employees at Clif Bar's company headquarters in Emeryville, California, can choose a flexible work schedule and compressed work weeks, working 80 hours in nine days and taking every other Friday off. They also have the option to work from home one day per week.

A survey of employees found that:

- 61% use a flexible schedule
- 49% work compressed work weeks
- 12% work from home
- 84% say Clif Bar is a great place to work<sup>23</sup>

### Small Company: XPLANE

XPLANE is a design consultant in Portland, Oregon, that helps clients with organizational strategy, activation, and performance. They offer their 30+ employees telecommuting, flextime, compressed work weeks, and unlimited paid time off. All employees are eligible.

A survey of employees found that:

- 90% telecommute
- 100% use flextime
- 5% choose a compressed work week
- 96% say XPLANE is a great place to work<sup>24</sup>

### Campus: The University of Oregon

The University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon, has offered employees the option to work from home since 1999. Employees must have approval from their supervisor and eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis. Employees who have scheduled telecommute hours a significant portion of the time on an ongoing basis are required to sign a telecommuting agreement. They must establish consistent schedules and provide their own telephone and computer.<sup>25</sup>

### Public Agency: Washington State Department of Transportation

Washington Governor Jay Inslee's Executive Order 16-07 "Building a Modern Work Environment" directs agencies to identify, experiment with, and adopt innovative ways to provide greater workplace flexibility and enable a more mobile workforce. The order sets a goal for state agencies to increase telework from 8.8% in 2015 to 9% in 2017 and increase flexible work schedules from 21.2% in 2014 to 40% in 2017. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) exceeded the telework goal, with 11% of eligible employees teleworking in 2018.

WSDOT offers the following options:

- **Telework** allows eligible employees to work remotely during their approved schedule. Certain job classifications are generally eligible for telework. Employees apply to their managers for approval, and must not have any formal corrective or disciplinary actions of file for the current or preceding period.
- **Alternative work schedules** include compressed work weeks (such as four 10-hour days), alternate days off, and start and stop times outside of the normal 8 to 5 schedule
- The **Infant at Work Program** supports parents and legal guardians bringing infants aged 6 weeks to 6 months to work, or working from home. To bring an infant to work, employees must identify a minimum of two co-workers who are not under their supervision to serve as alternate care providers. Participation is typically limited to employees who work in an office setting due to safety concerns.<sup>26</sup>

# GETTING STARTED

If you are interested in developing a flexible work program at your organization, consider these steps to get started.



## 1. Build the Business Case

Consider what benefits flexible work arrangements could provide your organization to make a case to management about why this should be implemented. Building the business case will require a program champion to spearhead the initiative.



## 2. Develop a Policy

Identify program goals and draft a policy to address eligibility (e.g. suitable positions and characteristics), any limitations on frequency, alternative location requirements, and equipment requirements and responsibilities. Collaborate with departments across the organization in these conversations (e.g., HR, IT, Communications, etc.).



## 3. Draft an Agreement

Managers should work with their employees to draft a flexible work arrangement agreement that details:

- Preferred schedule and alternate work locations
- Check-in schedule
- Performance metrics that will be tracked during remote work
- Equipment needs and responsibilities of each party



## 4. Conduct Trainings

Managers and employees should attend program trainings prior to participating in the program. Requiring all staff to attend program trainings can ensure that everyone is on the same page.



## 5. Assess and Maintain the Program

Keep track of program performance (e.g., progress toward meeting goals, recorded benefits, participation, costs etc.) to help determine if adjustments to the program are needed. Publishing the results helps communicate the program benefits. Conduct ongoing trainings and promotions to help maintain consistency across departments and encourage employees to participate in the program.



## 6. Communicate Successes

Collaborate with your communications team to highlight success stories of people working a flexible schedule. Gather and publish testimonials from managers and staff to build awareness of the program and foster support and participation.

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