



# Developing a workplace flexibility policy



"In order to get a productive society where people can manage their lives and their families, you need to have flexible ways of working. We encourage both men and women to utilise the flexible working options available."

**KATE MCKENZIE**  
CHAMPION AND CEO, CHORUS



"We are embracing the opportunities that technology brings to provide better services for clients and meet their changing needs. Technology also allows our people to work more efficiently and flexibly which is important for productivity and engagement."

**LLOYD KAVANAGH**  
CHAMPION AND CHAIR,  
MINTERELLISONRUDDWATTS

## What is a workplace flexibility policy?

A workplace flexibility policy formally sets out the flexibility **guidelines, principles and procedures** established by your organisation's strategy. It takes into account what kinds of flexibility your organisation supports and keeps decision making around flexible working consistent across the business.

## Why develop a policy for your organisation?

A workplace flexibility policy helps your organisation clearly communicate its intentions around flexibility and helps you to meet your legal obligations as an employer.

It formalises your organisation's intentions around flexibility which in turn helps to guide decision-making for employees and managers alike.

**Why flexibility?**

**Workplace flexibility is an essential enabler for managing the pace of change in today's world of work.**

It allows you, as an employer, to attract and retain top talent (your people), achieve increased productivity (your business), and foster an agile response to changing market needs (your customers and environment).

It's a diverse and in-depth strategy that goes beyond the traditional thinking of 'part-time work for new parents' to an integrated mindset and way of work accessible to all.

# How to develop a policy and procedures

Your flexibility policy should be descended from your flexibility strategy.

During the development of this, your organisation's strategic approach to flexibility will have been tested and evaluated against the day-to-day realities of the organisation.

## Your policy should include:



A statement that outlines the motivations behind your organisation's vision for flexibility and its importance to the overall business strategy.

Here are two examples to get you started:

- a. At [Organisation] we are committed to developing better business leaders within a diverse, agile and adaptive workforce. We aim to provide an environment of wellbeing that supports all our people in achieving their professional and personal goals and we respect the many different demands on all of us from within and outside of [Organisation]. Our approach to flexible working goes beyond legislative requirements to embrace a wide variety of individual circumstances and business needs. We believe that this approach equally benefits our people and the business through attraction and retention of great talent, individual and team effectiveness, productivity, morale and engagement.
- b. Workplace diversity and inclusiveness is about valuing individual differences and embracing and leveraging these in the workplace. Diversity in this context covers gender, age, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation and religious belief. Intrinsic to attracting and engaging a diverse workforce is our approach to flexible and inclusive work practices. [Organisation] aims to provide a working environment that supports the fact that many of our employees have caring duties in addition to their work responsibilities and therefore have a need to effectively balance their work and personal lives. Aside from caring duties, we further recognise that there may be other reasons why our employees value and require flexible work arrangements, and therefore our approach is to go beyond the provisions of the Employment Relations Act (2000) and extend the option of flexible work arrangements to all eligible employees who may or may not have caring responsibilities. There are no set rules about the types of flexible working arrangements. People leaders should be open to employees' suggestions and proactive about making these arrangements work if possible.



A definition of the purpose of the policy, the types of flexible working available at your organisation, and how they apply.



Guidelines and procedures for **establishing** flexible working arrangements

### Things to consider:

- ✓ Create an application form or checklist to ensure that you have all the relevant information to base a decision on and to keep it consistent.
- ✓ Keep the policy and application form somewhere central so everyone has access, possibly your intranet.
- ✓ What level of sign-off do you require for a flexible work arrangement? Just the applicant's immediate boss or does a divisional manager need to approve it?
- ✓ Is this different for informal and formal flexible working?
- ✓ Your HR team will need to action any changes to an employee's role, work hours, employment status, leave entitlements or benefits if applicable from agreeing a flexible working arrangement.



Guidelines and procedures for **managing** flexible working arrangements

### Things to consider:

- ✓ See '[Leading in a flexible workplace](#)' fact sheet
- ✓ Have a trial period to ensure that the flexible work arrangement is working for everyone.
- ✓ Establish regular reviews, whether every 3, 6 or 12 months
- ✓ Treat each request individually



#### Reasons why a request may be denied

» There are occasions where a request might not fit with the business requirements and the legislation covers the following recognised business grounds:

- inability to reorganise work among existing staff
- inability to recruit additional staff
- detrimental impact on quality
- detrimental impact on performance

- insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work
- planned structural changes
- burden of additional costs
- detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand.

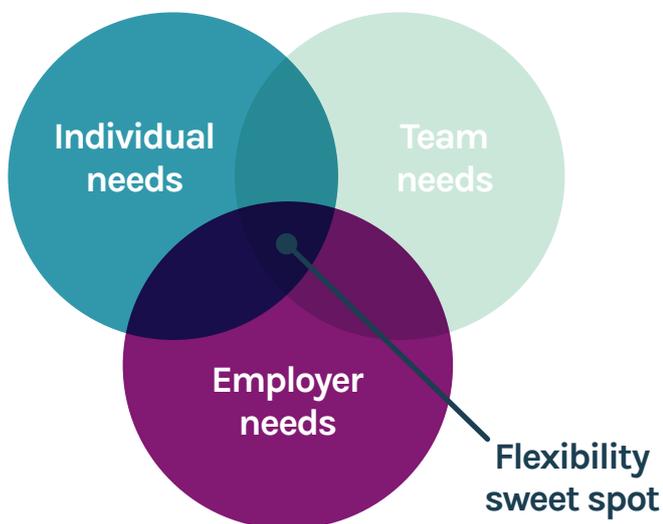
» It is important to keep track of the reason that a request has been declined so that you can review any challenges to flexible working

## Flexible working is flexible

Creating a flexible workplace involves a culture of trust and respect for others. There is always an element of 'give and take' when it comes to informal flexibility.

Large, international sporting events are an example of when you might want to consider giving your employees more access to informal flexibility. Recognising the passion Kiwis have for sport and for proudly supporting their country, as well as acknowledging how many other nationalities make up our working population, allowing people to flex their hours so they can watch games or events played at anti-social hours without having to take leave is an opportunity for increasing employee engagement and loyalty.

A number of organisations have relaxed their corporate dress code to support the feeling of flexibility that their employees have. Employees are encouraged to look ahead in their diaries and dress appropriately for the day they have. If they are not seeing clients or having external meetings then it might be appropriate for employees to wear smart casual rather than business formal attire. Employees are able to make the decisions that suit them best once your organisation has clearly defined expectations of what is required.



"A firm that encourages and supports flexible working is really important to me as a manager and an employee. As a manager, I want to support my team in many ways, be it inside and outside of work. As sponsors of the World Masters Games 2017, it was essential that we gave our people the ability to compete and volunteer during the games. Also important is allowing them to work from home; for quiet focused time or to fit family responsibilities into their busy days. This is all key to any organisation empowering its people to build loyalty, trust and a positive legacy."

**PAUL COTTINGHAM**  
HEAD OF MARKETS, KPMG

# Putting flexibility into practice

## » Plan ahead

- Look for opportunities in the team, especially when you have a vacant role
- Take the time to read your flexibility policy and request your team does the same
- Talk to people proactively about whether flexibility could improve their productivity and engagement and support their lifestyle

## » Making a request

- Be open to possibilities
- Treat every request as individual – even if flexibility hasn't worked in your team before
  - Schedule a dedicated time to talk to your staff member and remind them to come prepared with what they are looking for and how flexibility can help

## » Finding a solution

- Where possible, involve the team in how flexibility would work for the group (except where privacy may be an issue)
- Agree on the specific details on the arrangement (i.e. hours of work, physical location, communication processes, delegating responsibilities)
- Consider if additional technology is required
- Establish a trial period after which the arrangement will be reviewed

## » Manage expectations and outcomes

- Ensure you continue with 1:1s and team meetings – check in with each other regularly
- Look for ways to communicate and connect as group
- Speak up if something is not working: consider how to tweak the arrangement to better suit rather than dropping it completely
- Be a champion with other leaders: share experiences and gains with your peers

## » Review and improve

- » Review outcomes on a regular basis especially at the beginning of any arrangement
- » If there are performance issues, assess all possible factors (engagement, understanding etc)
- » Be aware of changing needs over time and respond to it
- » Ensure the whole team is aware of the benefits and acknowledges the challenges

### FURTHER RESOURCES:

More details including an example application form can be found [here](#).



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AUGUST 2017