

Toolkit
for
Flexible Work Arrangements
at
Michigan State University

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Flexible Work Arrangements Toolkit

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Introduction

Flexible work arrangements can be a useful method to maintain unit service while supporting employees' personal needs. Flexible work arrangements can be a win-win situation for both departments and employees. 74% of all businesses offer flexible work options and employees are increasingly recognizing flexible scheduling as an important factor in taking or staying with a position. ¹

Studies show that work schedule flexibility can yield many benefits including increased productivity, improved morale, decreased absenteeism and turnover, and improved quality of work. Flexible scheduling reduces stress and healthcare costs and creates an environment where employees are more satisfied with both their jobs and their lives.²

Flexible work schedules at MSU entail arrangements between supervisors and employees that allow employees to complete their employment duties while working non-traditional schedules.

Flexible Work Arrangements ARE:

- Flexible, they include variations in when, where, and/or how work is done.
- Focused on overall business goals, rather than case-by-case accommodations to individuals
- Planned and predictable
- Structured to emphasize the long-term rather than the short-term

Flexible Work Arrangements ARE NOT:

- An entitlement or reward
- A secret arrangement or special deal
- For every employee or every job

This guide is designed to provide tools for employees and employers considering flexible scheduling. This is a basic manual on the possibilities and common questions related to flexible scheduling. For further information and consultation please contact the MSU WorkLife Office.

¹Hewlett Associates Work/Life Survey, 2003-2004.

²Casey, J. and Chase, P. Boston College Center for Work & Family, *Creating a Culture of Flexibility*, 2003.

Why Flexibility?

Flexible scheduling can improve the employees' quality of life while enhancing business results. Economically, flexible scheduling makes sense for employers competing in a global economy to hire and retain knowledgeable employees. Flexibility is cost efficient, Deloitte and Touche LLP reported \$41.5 million in turnover-related savings in 2003.³ Recently the President of Families and Work Institute noted that 47% of businesses provide flexible scheduling as a recruitment and retention tool.⁴

A 2000 report by the Boston College Center for Work and Family reported:

- 87% of employees and 70% of managers report positive effects on productivity
- 87% of employees and 65% of managers report positive effects on quality of work
- 80% of employees and 76% of managers report positive impact on retention
- 75% of managers reported no change in their workload, while nearly all believe that work group productivity and job performance was the same or better.³

Expectations and Principles for Effective Flexible Scheduling

Employee and Supervisor Roles

Employees considering flexible work arrangements should:

- Think through which flexible schedule options will meet both your needs and the needs of your unit.
- Discuss your interest in a flexible work arrangement with your supervisor/manager.
- Ask for assistance or guidance from Human Resources and or the MSU WorkLife Office.
- Seek advice/suggestions from other individuals who are working a flexible schedule.
- Consider how the arrangement you are considering would impact your work and the work of your colleagues and include their feedback and needs in your considerations.
- Prepare a proposal and schedule time to discuss it with your supervisor.
- Discuss your proposal with your supervisor and work out a mutually agreeable arrangement.
- Make sure you and your supervisor have clarified all details or concerns and hold the same expectations.
- Try out the new schedule as a pilot arrangement. Monitor the success and challenges together, and evaluate the arrangement periodically with your supervisor.

³ Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, *Flex-Options: Why Flexible Workplace Policies are Good for Business*, 2006. ⁴Corporate Voices for Working Families, <http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org/>.

Supervisors considering flexible work arrangements should:

- Consider the potential improvement of business/department needs when assessing flexible schedule proposals from employees.
- Seek input from other employees since a flexible schedule for one employee can impact all team members.
- Consider each proposal on its own merits, while keeping the needs of the team in mind.
- Seek feedback from colleagues experienced with supporting flexible work options.
- Ask for assistance or guidance from the WorkLife Office or Human Resources.
- Clarify all expectations with the employee before implementing a flexible work schedule and discuss any questions or concerns. Consider adopting the new schedule as a pilot arrangement with a timeline.
- Communicate the new arrangement to other staff in the department and appropriate administrators.
- Monitor the successes and challenges.
- Evaluate the arrangement periodically, and have regular discussions with the employee.

Alternative work arrangements may require some adjustment in management style on the part of supervisors and may also require adjustments in communication to maintain accountability. The following steps can be helpful:

- Develop systems and structures that allow employees to respond to ever-changing work demands, such as having a back-up plan for coverage and communication when unexpected situations arise.
- Communicate explicitly and consistently about standards for accountability, quality and timeliness.
- Create a comfortable environment where employees can share concerns and creative ideas with you.
- Be open to experimenting.

Flexibility Options

Compressed Work Week: A program designed to allow eligible full time staff members to work longer scheduled days of work with intent of working fewer than 10 work days in each pay period.

Examples:

- Employees establish a 40 hour work week by working four 10-hour days.
- A full time schedule is accomplished in two weeks by working 80 hours in nine days (eight 9-hour days and one 8-hour day)

Benefits	<p>Employees retain full pay and benefits</p> <p>May reduce commuting time and costs</p> <p>May reduce childcare and elder care costs</p> <p>Provides a low cost employee benefit</p>
Challenges	<p>Employee may not be as productive working a longer day</p> <p>Employee may not receive supervision at all hours</p> <p>May create challenges related to hours of child & elder care availability</p> <p>May cause understaffing at times</p>
Compressed work week proposals should address:	<p>How office coverage will be maintained</p> <p>Definition of tasks when supervisor is absent</p> <p>How to coordinate schedules and communication</p>

Center for Work, Family and Personal Life, 2004. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *A Guide to Job Flexibility at MIT*

Flex-time: A program designed to allow staff to work “core hours” with either early or late beginning/ending of the workday.

Examples:

- Employees establish a fixed schedule that differs from the norm, e.g. 7am-3pm daily.
- Core hours within a variable schedule; e.g. employee is present everyday from 10am-2pm but the other 4 hours vary per day.

Benefits	<p>Employee retains full pay and benefits</p> <p>Employee’s working and time off hours more closely meet their needs</p> <p>May facilitate recruiting and retention</p>
Challenges	<p>May not provide supervision at all hours</p> <p>May cause understaffing at times</p> <p>May create difficulty in keeping track of hours</p>
Flex-Time proposals should address:	<p>How office coverage will be maintained</p> <p>How work hours will be tracked</p> <p>Definition of tasks when supervisor is absent</p>

Center for Work, Family and Personal Life, 2004. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *A Guide to Job Flexibility at MIT*

Job-Sharing: A program in which two people share a position, each working part of the week.

Examples:

- Two employees work half of a regularly scheduled full-time job with no overlaps
- Two employees work 3 days per week, with one day overlapping when both employees work

Benefits	<p>Employees have the advantages of part time work in a position that requires full time work</p> <p>Both job-share partners receive health coverage (prorated at 50% of benefits)</p>
Challenges	<p>Finding a compatible partner</p> <p>Dividing the work equally to achieve balance</p>
Job share proposals should address:	<p>Implications for pay and benefits</p> <p>Division of responsibilities between partners</p> <p>Hours of work for each partner</p>

Part-Time Work: A work schedule that is less than full-time but is at least half of the regularly scheduled full time.

Examples:

- Three or four days a week, 8 hour days.
- Five days a week, 4 to 7 hour days.
- 90% time = 36 hours

Benefits	<p>Provides flexibility to alter schedule in response to home or work demands</p> <p>Can reduce absenteeism and tardiness</p>
Challenges	<p>Employee loses income and possible some benefits (must work 36 hrs to retain full benefits)</p> <p>Re-assigning the rest of the employee’s job duties</p>
Regular part-time work proposals should address:	<p>What work will be accomplished in the employees reduced hours</p> <p>How will the rest of the employee’s work be handled</p>

Center for Work, Family and Personal Life, 2004. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *A Guide to Job Flexibility at MIT*.

Telecommuting: A program designed to allow staff to work a portion of their normally scheduled work hours from a remote location.

Examples:

- Established agreement to work at home part of the week
- Established agreement to work part-time at another location
- Temporary agreement for personal need or specific project

Benefits	Employee saves commuting time and costs Enhanced productivity May assist employees with disabilities
Challenges	Fewer networking opportunities for employee Not all employees may work productively in this arrangement Possible equipment purchases Not all jobs are performed easily off-site
Telecommuting proposals should address:	How communication with coworkers and supervisor will continue How much time will be spent in office and when What equipment is needed and who will provide it

Also see the Telecommuting Guide:

[Telecommuting Guide](https://worklife.msu.edu/workplace-assistance/flexible-work/telecommuting) (https://worklife.msu.edu/workplace-assistance/flexible-work/telecommuting)

Things to Consider When Working Remotely:

1. What elements of the job can be preformed off-site? Which cannot?
2. Where will the work be conducted?
3. What tools, equipment and technology are needed for work to be completed?
4. Have arrangements been made for dependent care?
5. How will privacy requirements be met? How will computer software, hardware, databases and other technology be secured and protected from use by other individuals?
6. How do you intend to resolve any obstacles that arise as a result of your telecommuting flexible work schedule?
7. List all goals, work assignments, metrics and/or other issues that will require consideration or change if the Telecommuting Flexible Work request is approved.

Union and Overtime Considerations for Flexible Scheduling of Support Staff

Union/Association		Overtime Required by Fair Labor Standards Act	Considered Overtime by Union Contract
APSA – Administrative Professional Supervisors	Level 11 or below –	Maybe ¹	Yes – over 40 in a workweek
	Level 12 or above -	Maybe ¹	No
APA – Administrative Professionals	Level 11 or below –	Maybe ¹	Yes – over 40 in a workweek
	Level 12 or above -	Maybe ¹	No
Non-union	Level 11 or below –	Maybe ¹	Yes – per policy
	Level 12 or above -	Maybe ¹	No
CTUMSU – Clerical/Technical ²		Yes	Yes – over 40 in a workweek
1585 – Service Maintenance		Yes	Yes – over 8 in a day
999 – Skilled Trades		Yes	Yes – over 8 in a day
324 – Power Plant ³		Yes	Yes – over 8 in a day
Nurses	Level 73 or below	Maybe ¹	Yes – over 40 in a workweek
	Level 74 or above	Maybe ¹	No
FOP ⁴		Yes	Yes ⁴

¹ Not required to pay overtime under the FLSA if employee earns an annual salary greater than \$47,476 eff. 12/1/16.

² Health care delivery facilities have exceptions – refer to union contract

³ Maintenance Operations have 12 hour shifts – refer to union contract

⁴ FOP has 12 hour shift provisions – refer to union contract

Tools to Get Started

Employee's Worksheet for Proposing a Flexible Schedule

Step 1: My Job. List out your job responsibilities and other important features of your position.

	Staff/Faculty Perspective	Supervisor's Perspective
Responsibilities (Include time %s)		
Time Distribution		
Deadlines		
Key Interactions		
Key Meetings		

Step 2: Benefits and Challenges of Flexibility in my Unit. List the positives and negatives for you, your co-workers and your supervisor or department.

Benefits (+) or Challenges (-) to the Employee	Benefits (+) or Challenges (-) to the Co-workers	Benefits (+) or Challenges (-) to the Supervisor or Department

Step 3: Consider 3 Flexible Work Arrangement Options.

Schedule Choice/ My Needs		Scheduling Options	My Concerns	Department Barriers
	1			
	2			
	3			

Step 4: My Proposal

	Written Proposal
1. Provide a detailed description of the duties/tasks for the job	
2. List the hours/days for doing the work	
3. Specify your availability beyond the proposed schedule	
4. Recommend a specified trial period. Include how the work arrangement will be evaluated. Indicate how and when modifications will occur	
5. Recognize possible concerns and provide responses/ alternatives	
6. Request a meeting to discuss your proposal after your supervisor has read it	

Establishing a Flexible Work Arrangement

After a supervisor and an employee discuss a flexible work arrangement proposal and come to an agreement, the supervisor should summarize the discussion and the decision in a letter to the employee. The memorandum needs to include:

- A detailed description of the schedule the employee will follow
- A description of the work expectations
- A timeframe for the pilot test of the new arrangement
- An indication of when the arrangement will be reviewed and evaluated
- If there is a change of status, for example the employee is no longer working a full time or part time schedule, you need to complete a personnel action notice form.

Sample Language from Supervisor to Employee requesting early start and leave times:

Ellen, this memo is to confirm that your request for an alternative work schedule has been approved on a pilot basis.

Your new work schedule effective immediately will be Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with a half hour lunch period and two fifteen minute breaks.

(Unit name) is pleased to be able to offer you this flexible scheduling arrangement.

As we discussed, this alternative scheduling arrangement is dependent on the assumption that you will be able to maintain both the quality and quantity of work that you currently do during your regular work hours. We will meet again on (insert date) to review how this alternative work schedule met both your needs and the needs of the department.

Please feel free to communicate with me anytime between now and then if you find the new schedule is presenting any challenges that I could help you resolve.

Sample letter to an employee requesting 4-day 40 hour work week:

Ellen, this memo is to confirm that your request for an alternative work schedule has been approved on a pilot basis.

Your new work schedule effective immediately will be Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with an hour lunch period and two fifteen minute breaks throughout the day.

Though you will be working more than 8 hours per day on your scheduled work days, in accordance with your union contract this will not constitute overtime since your total hours worked per week will remain 40. As is our current practice, any overtime hours you work in addition to this new schedule will need to be approved in advance.

As we discussed, this alternative scheduling arrangement is dependent on the assumption that you will maintain an acceptable quality and quantity of work. We will meet again on (insert date) to review how this alternative work schedule met both your needs and the needs of the department.

Please feel free to communicate with me anytime between now and then if you find the new schedule is presenting any challenges that I could help you resolve. (Unit name) is pleased to be able to offer you this flexible scheduling arrangement. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sample letter to an employee requesting a time limited flexible schedule arrangement to meet a specific short term need:

Ellen, this memo is to confirm that your request for an alternative work schedule throughout the fall 2016 academic semester has been approved, subject to the agreement outlined below. It will be our understanding that:

- You will be away from the office for part of Monday and Wednesday afternoons this semester for the sole purpose of teaching a 4-credit class on campus for another department.
- During this period, you will adjust your daily departure and arrival times to ensure that you never work less than 40 hours for our department in any given week.
- As usual, any use of vacation time or personal leave hours to account for any of your working hours must be arranged with me in advance.
- You will keep track of your work hours and be able to document them upon request at any time.
- At the conclusion of the semester, we will review together how well this alternative schedule worked and discuss whether there is a desire and willingness to consider similar arrangements in the future.

Ellen, we are pleased to be able to allow you this flexible scheduling option.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the above description of this alternative work schedule arrangement.

Sample Flexible Work Arrangement Forms

Flexible Work Arrangement Agreement

Manager: _____

Employee: _____

Date: _____

This agreement is subject to the following conditions:

1. Evaluation every _____ month(s) or more often as necessary.
2. Employee maintains normal interactions with supervisor, coworkers and customers and is accessible to staff during traditional work hours.
3. Employee's work schedule does not adversely affect other employees and/or customer service.
4. Personal leave is handled in the same manner as prior to the Flexible Work Agreement.
5. Employee agrees to and follows the agreed upon work schedule.
6. Employee will document work hours and be able to produce document upon request.

Schedule

Select the type of Flexible Work Arrangement being agreed to:

- Flextime:** A program designed to allow staff to work "core hours" with either early or late beginning/ending of the workday.

- Job-Sharing:** A program in which two people share a position, each working part of the week.

- Compressed Work Week:** A program designed to allow eligible full time staff members to work longer scheduled days of work with the intent of working fewer than 10 work days in each pay period.

- Reduced Hours/Part-Time:** Employee may choose to work less than the standard 40 hours per week.

Telecommute: A program designed to allow staff to work a portion of their normally scheduled work hours from a remote location. (See Telecommute Guide.)

Other: _____

Specific Work Hours

Day	Hours	On-Site	Off-site
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Total Hours			

The evaluation of the Flexible Work Agreement will be based on the successful completion of the employee's job responsibilities.

The employee and the management at the workplace understand that effective communication is essential for the work arrangement to be successful.

The Flexible Work Agreement will be effective: _____

I have read and understand this agreement.

Employee

Date

Manager

Date

Flexible Work Arrangement Evaluation

Manager: _____

Employee: _____

Date: _____

Check the type of Flexible Work Arrangement being addressed:

- Flextime
- Job-Sharing
- Compressed Work Week
- Reduced Hours/Part-Time
- Telecommute
- Other: _____

Check the column that best reflects your opinion.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Communication with co-workers and supervisor has been effective.					
Customer service has been effective.					
Other employees have not been adversely affected.					
Work assignments have been completed successfully.					
Safety and security of employee and company equipment has been maintained.					
Any concerns and problems have been resolved in a timely manner.					
The arrangement has been beneficial for our workplace.					

Comments: _____

Would you recommend any changes take place with this flexible work arrangement?

Will this Flexible Work Arrangement continue?

- Yes
- No

If not, please explain the adjustments that will take place to the employee's schedule and the reasons for the change.

The next evaluation will occur on: _____

Employee

Date

Manager

Date