BRITISH COLUMBIA
BC Public Service | Where ideas work

Guidelines and Considerations for Expanding Flexible Work in the BC Public Service

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Contents

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

This resource provided by the BC Public Service Agency (PSA) provides guidance and considerations for ministries in the evolution of flexible work arrangements. This resource is intended to assist ministries with planning and implementing greater flexibility while also adhering to the criteria and requirements for flexible work that apply to all BC Public Service (BCPS) employees. Recognizing each ministry, program area, and employee group has unique and important characteristics to consider, there is no definitive template or prescribed approach, but rather guidance for consideration.

Background and Context

The BC Public Service consists of dedicated professionals committed to delivering exceptional service to the public. We put the public interest first in everything we do, and we recognize that being a competitive employer able to attract the skill and talent we need is essential to meeting that commitment.

Offering flexible work arrangements makes the BCPS a more competitive employer and supports the corporate goal of being a trusted, talented, and modern workforce that provides quality service to the people of B.C.

> **Trusted:** Allowing employees a choice of flexible work options demonstrates our trust in our employees as valued professionals who can be relied upon to do their jobs effectively and successfully in a variety of work environments.

> **Talented:** Offering flexibility in where and how people work will improve recruitment and retention of skilled and diverse talent from across all demographics and all regions of the province. It also supports improved employee engagement, which we know directly correlates to improved service to the public.

> **Modern:** Flexible work arrangements reduce barriers to employment, increase participation, and make it easier for diverse groups to build long-term careers in which to learn, lead, and grow. This approach can directly support increased inclusion in the BC Public Service.

Our support for flexible work dates back more than a decade, with the launch of the _Workpoint_ strategy that set out the benefits and essential elements of an approach to remote and flexible working. The model put in place at the time was updated in the

summer of 2021 applying lessons learned during the widespread adoption of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic and the longer-term impact of that experience for most employers.

Research and global trends show hybrid work is here to stay. Data from research across Canada and within the BCPS shows a general preference for remote work, with most employees preferring some level of part-time remote arrangement. Our own experience in the BCPS also shows employees are capable of successfully performing their jobs and meeting the needs of British Columbians in a hybrid model. Like all employers, our opportunity now is to ensure we can continue to expand our sustainable adoption of this new way of working through a thoughtful and intentional approach.

Realizing the full potential of flexible work will take time and requires some profound shifts in our organizational culture. It is a significant change that will inevitably require us to experiment with new approaches to how we work together, to adopt new tools, and to adapt and learn as we go.

As an employer, we will continue to assess the need for adjustments to existing policies and processes to support success in a hybrid environment. But the foundation is in place in the elements that already shape how we approach our work, from the Standards of Conduct and the Oath we all swear to our shared values of service, teamwork, curiosity, courage, passion, accountability and integrity.

The BCPS has been recognized as one of Canada's Top Employers for more than a decade, reflecting our commitment to adapt and evolve how we work and support employees in effectively delivering service to the public. Maximizing the potential of a hybrid work model is one more way we can establish B.C. and its public service as a leader in Canada.

While we work to maximize the potential of flexible work, we also recognize there are many BCPS employees who may not wish to work remotely or who are unable to do so given the nature of their work. It's important that adopting flexible work in a team takes the considerations of these employees into account to ensure there are no unintended negative impacts on their work, engagement and job satisfaction.

THE BC PUBLIC SERVICE FRAMEWORK FOR FLEXIBLE WORK

The BCPS framework for flexible work applies to the location of work, including working from home. Information on options related to potential flexibility in scheduling and hours of work is available on the MyHR website.

Desired Outcomes

A More Competitive Employer
- Higher employee engagement and job satisfaction, which leads to better service to the public
- Contributing to wider recruitment options and across different regions in B.C., which in turn can help foster a more diverse workforce, reflective of the province we serve
- Improving work/life balance and overall employee well-being
- Better addressing the needs of employees with visible and invisible disabilities, accommodation needs and different personality types

A More Effective and Efficient Public Service
- Enabling operational efficiencies, collaboration and productivity to ensure we uphold our obligations to government and the public
- Optimizing use of space and digital work tools
- Reducing government's carbon footprint to do our part in addressing climate action
- Enabling employees to effectively respond to events that impact the functioning of the workforce/workplace (e.g., pandemics, extreme weather events, natural disasters)

As we work to expand adoption of flexible work, we will ensure that we are:

- **Service-focused** – prioritizing better outcomes for the public
- **Performance-focused** – achieving our operational and policy objectives
- **Accountable** – meeting our public service obligations and upholding public trust
- **Flexible** – adapting to ministry/organization operational needs
- **Empowering** – supporting employees to do their best work regardless of location in B.C. and ensuring we remain a competitive employer
- **Inclusive** – bridging geographical, organizational, or cultural gaps

Criteria

The BC Public Service supports flexible work options up to and including full-time remote work. Our corporate approach to flexible work balances:

1. Our shared obligation to prioritize effective service to the public
2. The responsibilities of the BC Public Service as an employer
3. Individual employee preferences

Service to the public remains the primary focus and employees engaged in flexible work must meet or exceed service delivery standards. With that overarching priority, the following principles define our corporate approach to flexible work options:

- Flexible work is not an entitlement nor a term of employment
- The suitability of flexible work options will vary according to specific operational requirements or employee circumstances
- Flexible work options must enhance and not detract service to the public, including availability and accessibility of services
- Participating in a flexible work arrangement is voluntary and requires the mutual agreement of the employee and supervisor
- Employees must meet or exceed their productivity and performance expectations to be approved for or continue a flexible work arrangement
- Open, ongoing communication about performance, team goals, workplace environment, scheduling changes, training and technology is key
- Flexible work options support the health and safety of employees
- Flexible work options safeguard the safety and confidentiality of information

Ministry leaders and supervisors have the latitude to define the extent of flexible work they adopt within the unique context of their respective ministry operational needs and desired culture. However, all flexible work arrangements must align with the BC Public Service corporate guidelines and the criteria set out by the BC Public Service Agency as included in the mandatory Telework Agreement that must be completed for all flexible work arrangements. Telework agreements should be reviewed annually, and can be terminated by the employee or their supervisor provided written notice is given within 30 days.

While all flexible work arrangements must follow the corporate guidelines, ministries may set specific additional criteria or operating practices to reflect their unique operational context or ensure consistency in how they adopt flexible work.

Roles and Responsibilities in Adopting Flexible Work

Deputy Ministers' Council

- Ensure the direction of the BC Public Service will enable government to meet its mandate and commitments in a flexible work environment
- Support consistent implementation and communication of the corporate flexible work model as an essential component of the BC Public Service's ability to recruit and retain top talent across B.C.
- Proactively raise and address issues and concerns related to flexible work and collaboratively seek effective solutions

Deputy Ministers' Committee on Public Service Renewal

- Set the overall cultural direction for the BC Public Service that aligns with and leverages a flexible work environment

Ministry Executive

- Approve the overall flexible work approach for their ministry, in alignment with corporate guidelines and principles, and in consideration of the specific operational requirements of their ministry including the potential impact on internal and external partners and clients
- Be accountable for the inclusion of flexible work strategies, actions, and measures in their ministry's annual workforce plan
- Maintain relationships and foster connection by modelling and ensuring consistent communication with teams and colleagues
- Proactively address or propose solutions to any challenges that may arise as a result of flexible work
- Be accountable for overall employee engagement and the consideration of flexible work impacts
- Ensure an equitable approach is taken in their ministry to flexible work, looking across similar roles in their ministry as well as down through individual reporting structures
- Work with the Ministry of Citizens' Services to address any necessary changes to workspaces.

Senior Leaders/Branch Heads

- Assess team readiness for flexible work, in consultation with teams, against the assessment guidelines

- Work with their teams to collaboratively create team-based approaches to flexible work
- Ensure principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility are considered and applied in the team approach to development and implementation of flexible work arrangements
- Consider internal team dynamics and internal/external partners or clients in decision making
- Lead clear team communications, support and model team engagement and processes, and address any team conflict in a timely manner
- Proactively address or propose solutions to any challenges that may arise as a result of flexible work

Supervisors

- Work with their leadership and teams to collaboratively create team-based flexible work arrangements
- Ensure an up-to-date telework agreement is in place with each team member, including all provisions included in the agreement about safety and security
- Ensure satisfactory performance of employees and completion of mandatory training
- Ensure satisfactory performance of their team and local service requirements are met through effective scheduling as required
- Leverage and model the use of tools and technology available to enhance team communication and engagement
- Maintain regular contact with employees regardless of location
- Ensure regular performance and development conversations are maintained
- Ensure a daily safe check in/check out procedure is followed
- Proactively address or propose solutions to any challenges that may arise because of flexible work
- Maintain relationships and foster connection by modelling and ensuring consistent communication with team and colleagues
- Ensure principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility are considered and applied in the team's approach to development and implementation of flexible work arrangements

Employees

- Assess personal readiness for flexible work
- Participate in co-creation of team agreements for team-based approach to flexible

work

- Adhere to the telework agreement, including all provisions included in the agreement about safety and security
- Ensure responsiveness to supervisor and colleagues, and adherence to service delivery standards for clients
- Recognize that flexible work is a benefit, and not a term of employment, and that flexibility on the employee's part may be required at times to support operational requirements and team needs
- Proactively address or propose solutions to any challenges that may arise as a result of flexible work
- Maintain relationships, foster connection, and ensure consistent communication with supervisor and colleagues.

Ministry Human Resources Leaders

- Provide advice and recommendations on the overall flexible work approach for their ministry, in alignment with corporate guidelines and principles, and in consideration of the specific operational requirements of their ministry including the potential impact on internal and external partners and clients
- Provide support and issues resolution to executive, leaders and supervisors in both the ministry and team application of flexible work arrangements
- Act as liaison point between the ministry and the Public Service Agency with respect to flexible work, supporting communications, required training, issues resolution and reporting expectations
- Develop the ministry's annual workforce plan, ensuring flexible work strategies are reflected
- Provide reporting and status updates as requested to the Public Service Agency
- As required, escalate any issues resulting from flexible work arrangements to executive or the Public Service Agency.

BC Public Service Agency

- The head of the Public Service Agency establishes and maintains effective human resource management policy
- Provide corporate and organizational-level policy and development supports and for assessment, measurement, and reporting on corporate impact of flexible work arrangements
- Respond to questions and issues that cannot be managed at the supervisor or ministry level

- Provide clear corporate guidelines, criteria and communications around flexible work, including liaison with Corporate Executive and Ministry Human Resource leads.

Ministry of Citizens' Services
- Responsible for policy decisions related to workspace optimization and digital work tools.
- Manage all major corporate procurements related to physical workstation assets and related software and programs required to effectively support a hybrid- flexible work culture.
- Coordinate with the PSA to ensure all members of the BCPS are aware of tools and changes to workspace, and that they feel supported in their use and are aware of associated resources.
- Maintain informational webpages related to digital work tools and workspace.
- Office of the Chief Information Officer: Provide IM/IT strategy, policy, infrastructure, and standards required to support hybrid-flexible work
- Corporate Information and Records Management Office: Provide records management and information security policy, standards and training that effectively support a hybrid work environment
- Real Property Division (RPD):
  - Manage government real estate and leases and the execution of government's future of work hybrid workplace strategy.
  - Provide direction and support collaboration and problem solving with Ministry Facility Management Units on changes to workspace.
  - Ensure the project roadmap for implementing a future of work hybrid workplace strategy is approved by DMCPSR.

CHECKLIST OF CONSIDERATIONS FOR FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

The first priority in adopting flexible work must always be ensuring individuals and teams are able to meet or exceed their service obligations to the public and government. All flexible work arrangements must consider the broader context of each team's operational requirements and culture. Flexible work can and must support our commitment to employee engagement and inclusion. Ensuring alignment across each ministry and, where operationally feasible, across the BC Public Service is advised.

The following checklist is provided to help ministry executive, leaders and teams define an effective approach to flexible work within their work units. Executive and senior leaders are expected to lead with a consistent approach and are strongly encouraged to engage teams in dialogue to establish a shared understanding and support for a shared approach to flexible work. Ministries may define their own process for monitoring and reporting but will be expected to assess and prioritize ministry requirements, identify required corporate resource supports, and meet corporate reporting requirements.

The checklist of considerations to be addressed is divided into two categories:

1. **Leadership considerations:** What do leaders need to think about to ensure their teams are set up for successful and appropriate flexible work arrangements?

2. **Team considerations:** What do teams need to assess and address together to ensure the adoption of flexible work allows them to deliver on expectations and maintain a positive and engaging experience for everyone?

Many of the decisions regarding these considerations will be documented as part of each employee's telework agreement.

Leadership Considerations

Leaders play an essential role in assessing the readiness of their teams to successfully adopt and achieve the benefits of flexible work. Shifting to a hybrid environment may also require leaders to assess and adapt their own approach to supervision and aspects of how they support and empower employees to achieve their best work. The following checklist is a guide to some of the key considerations leaders should address in preparing their teams and themselves for success.

CONSIDERATION	ADDRESSED Y/N	NOTES
Can your team members complete all their job duties under their proposed flexible work schedule?		• An employee must be able to complete 100% of their job within their flexible work arrangement regardless of work location. • Job duties should not be changed to accommodate a desire for remote work. • Colleagues cannot be expected to take on additional duties to accommodate another employee's flexible work arrangement. • Supervisors should consider how they will continue to effectively assess performance in a hybrid environment.
Does your team understand the requirement to have an appropriately private, safe and secure workspace at their remote work location?		• All applicable policies regarding information management and the Standards of Conduct apply regardless of where an employee works. • Employees are required to work with their supervisor to ensure they have a safe work environment. • Because flexible work arrangements are voluntary, excluding basic employer

		provided equipment, employees are responsible for the cost of setting up, furnishing and maintaining a remote work location.

Does your team understand the [mandatory requirements](#) for all flexible work arrangements, including completion of mandatory training?		• Mandatory training for all telework agreements includes:
		    o IM117: Information Management
		    o Annual review of the Standards of Conduct and Oath of Employment
		    o Fraud Awareness and Prevention

Does your team understand the need for flexibility under the terms of a telework agreement?		• The telework agreement specifies "the employee will make necessary adjustments or changes to their telework schedule if required to attend the worksite based on operational requirements as determined by the supervisor." • Employees must be readily available to be contacted by colleagues and their supervisor during work hours. • Flexible work arrangements are not to be used to allow employees to do non-work-related tasks.
Does your team understand the impact of their flexible work arrangement within the broader context of the ministry/work unit dynamic?		• Leader should engage teams in discussion to further their understanding of the ministry direction and context. • Each member of the team should act intentionally to build connection and team culture, especially in hybrid and virtual contexts.

How does your team's flexible work arrangement impact when and where they work in the workplace?		• Under the BC Public Service criteria, any employee working 3 or more days per week from home may be required to forego a dedicated workspace at their assigned workplace location. Over time and as required, the public service will be extending this requirement to telework agreements involving one or more days of work to address workspace needs. • Consult with your ministry facilities management lead to ensure your team is aligned with any ministry or government-wide plans to optimize workspace use and design. • Ministries must work with the Ministry of Citizens' Services to address any required changes to the workplace.
What additional training might your team need to work more effectively in a hybrid environment?		• Managing and working in a remote team is different and requires a new approach to supervision, work assignment, supporting employees, and monitoring/following up. Consider if your team requires any additional training or resources to be successful in a flexible environment.
How will you ensure employee health and well-being in a virtual environment?		• In addition to the safety and ergonomic requirements in the telework agreement, it is important to be aware of employee mental health and the risk of issues such as bullying, which can be less visible in a virtual environment.

		• For assistance, consider the health, safety and sick leave resources available on MyHR.
How might hybrid and remote work options change your approach to hiring into your team?		• Adoption of more flexible work arrangements provides the opportunity to recruit new employees in a wider range of communities across B.C., opening the potential of a more diverse talent pool. • Consult your ministry HR team and the hiring manager resources on Careers and MyHR.
How might you adapt your leadership style to be successful in a hybrid environment?		• Building trust-based relationships and fostering ongoing conversations with team members can require a different approach in a virtual or hybrid work environment. It can be even more important that employees have a clear understanding of work expectations, roles and responsibilities, and a shared definition of success is essential. • The Learning Centre offers numerous courses and resources on coaching approaches for leaders and supervisors, tools for leading hybrid and virtual teams, facilitating results, and having difficult conversations when needed.
Are there any ministry criteria or corporate guidance for flexible work the team needs to adhere to?		• All flexible work arrangements must meet the corporate requirements and criteria prescribed by the BC Public Service Agency. • Ministries may determine additional requirements or

		criteria that reflect their unique operational context and organizational culture.
		• Ministries may also consider defining consistent levels of remote work for similar jobs across the organization.
		• Consult with your ministry HR lead for ministry-specific requirements and criteria

Team Considerations

Flexible work isn't just about what works for individuals. It needs to be considered as a team to ensure the benefits can be realized while also mitigating any potential negative impacts on team performance, engagement, and culture. The following checklist is a guide to some of the key considerations teams should discuss together in developing a team agreement for their approach to flexible work.

Team agreements should define what connection and responsiveness look like in a flexible work environment, and should include aspects such as communication, engagement, respectful behaviours, being fully present, acting inclusively, and being mindful of and honouring differences.

CONSIDERATION	ADDRESSED Y/N	NOTES
How often do we want and need to be in the workplace together, and how will we make the best use of that time?		• The extent to which face-to-face interaction impacts the team's work will influence whether and how often all members of the team need to be in the workplace at the same time. • Consider whether a regular schedule of consistent days in the workplace is best, or if the schedule can be flexible in response to operational and team needs. • Consider how you might adjust work to take advantage of in-person time together and save focused individual work for when you are remote.
How will we communicate effectively in a hybrid work environment?		• Teams should agree on which methods of communication they will use and what their shared practices are for virtual engagement (e.g.: when to have cameras on in Microsoft Teams meetings; setting virtual meetings as the default).

		• Under workplace safety regulations, virtual workers are required to check in and check out with their supervisor at the start and end of their workday, and supervisors may wish to prescribe a consistent method for doing so.
How might we need to adjust how we manage administrative aspects of our work in a virtual environment?		• Consider if changes are required to information management and security when there are fewer or no people in an office location. • Teams should have a clear and consistent understanding of the implications of remote work on issues such as travel expenses.
How should or could the team change its business processes to maintain or enhance delivery?		• Consider if changes are necessary to how work is delivered, and if remote work enables any potential enhancements.
Will the adoption of remote work require any changes to the physical workspace to enable different ways of working when we are in-person?		• Consult with your ministry's facilities leads to assess whether any changes to the space used by the team are required or possible. • Ministries must work with the Ministry of Citizens' Services to address any required changes to the workplace.
Will we need any training on corporate technology tools to more effectively work in a hybrid environment?		• Consult with your ministry Information Management Branch, who can work with the Ministry of Citizens' Services to identify training options.
How will we onboard and orient new members into our team in a hybrid work environment?		• Consider documentation to be made available to new team members and how that will be

		- shared. - There may be value in agreeing to steps such as having the entire team attend the workplace together for additional days to help build relationships with new team members.
How will you monitor and review your flexible work approach to ensure it is working for everyone on your team?		- All individual telework agreements must be reviewed annually. - Teams should also define a timeline and process for reviewing their approach together and make adjustments when required to ensure individual and team performance, productivity and engagement.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

The following resources are available to support leaders and teams design and adopt flexible work arrangements that support their specific operational requirements:

- Getting Started with Flexible Work in the BC Public Service: an introduction to the BC Public Service framework for flexible work.
- Flexible Work in the BC Public Service FAQ: answers to the most common questions about flexible work arrangements.
- Flexible Work Readiness, Reflection and Discussion: guidance for employees and supervisors on how to address the requirements and considerations in establishing a telework agreement.
- Flexible Work Manager's Resources: guidance for supervisors in how to prepare and lead their teams and employees in a hybrid work environment.
- Guide to Submitting a BC Public Service Digital Telework Agreement: guidance on preparing, submitting, and managing the telework agreement required for any flexible work arrangement.
- Flexible Work Learning Resources: virtual courses and other resources to support working and leading in a hybrid environment.
- Safety Inspection for Working from Home: information on ensuring necessary workplace health and safety practices in a home-based workspace.
- Flexible Workspaces and Information Security: guidance for ensuring appropriate management of information in a remote-working environment.
- Telework at a ShareSpace Location: guidance on accessing BC Public Service ShareSpace co-working locations.
- Post-Implementation Discussion Questions for Flexible Work: suggested questions for employees, teams and supervisors to ask when assessing the impact of flexible work over time.
- Remote Work Toolkit: resources from the Learning Centre, CITZ, Microsoft and LinkedIn to help employees work from home more effectively, whether just getting going or working remotely for some time.
- Diversity and Inclusion Resource Centre: resources and information on the BC Public Service diversity strategy, training, governance and working collaboratively and respectfully with Indigenous peoples and communities.
- Ergonomic tips and guidelines: resources to assist with setting up a workstation to reduce the risk of injury.
- Creating a respectful workplace: information, tools, and services to help build and maintain respectful workplaces.

APPENDIX

Policies and Legislation

- Public Service Act
- OHS Regulation and Workers Compensation Act and OSH policy
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) and the FOIPPA Policy and Procedures Manual
- Accessible British Columbia Act
- Hiring and Deployment Policy
- Accountability Framework for HR Management
- Standards of Conduct and Oath of Employment
- Core Policy and Procedures
    - Travel Policy
- Privacy Management and Accountability Policy
- Managing Government Information Policy
- HR policy 11 – Discrimination, bullying and harassment in the workplace

Related Strategies and Frameworks

- Corporate Plan
- Corporate Values
- Workpoint: Rethinking How and Where We Work in the BC Public Service
- Where We All Belong (Corporate strategy on equity, diversity and inclusion)
- Ethics Management Framework
- Framework for Change
- Collective Agreements
- Terms and Conditions for Excluded Employees and Appointees
- Work Environment Survey
- Managers' Guide to Reasonable Accommodation