CREATING A FLEXIBLE SES WORKFORCE

Your practical guide to implementing flexible work practices for the Senior Executive Service in your organisation.

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FOREWORD

Attracting and retaining staff is critical to the continued success of the Western Australian public sector. The volatile nature of the global environment requires a stable, efficient and flexible public sector workforce to service the needs of the Western Australian community.

The public sector must also be mindful of its costs and, though remuneration is an important aspect in competing for labour, the sector’s general inability to negotiate on salaries means that other options must be explored.

Flexible work practices are an alternative means of attracting and retaining employees. There is an increasing demand from employees - particularly at the Senior Executive Service (SES) level - for greater choice regarding where, when and how work is undertaken.

As of December 2008, there were 21 Western Australian SES employees working part-time. Importantly 19% of the SES was aged 55 or older and eligible to retire within five years¹. This is a wealth of experience that the sector needs to retain and not lose unnecessarily. It is essential that the sector positions itself to retain those SES employees who wish to continue their public sector employment through access to flexible work practices. A failure to retain a competent public sector will adversely affect service delivery in the future.

I encourage you to strongly consider the content of this guide for the benefit of your agency and the sector.

M C WAUCHOPE
PUBLIC SECTOR COMMISSIONER
1. **THE BUSINESS IMPERATIVE FOR FLEXIBILITY FOR THE SES**

With a falling birth rate and an ageing population, the long term outlook for Western Australia is for labour and skills shortages. The *Retirement Intentions Survey 2006* conducted by the WA Department of the Premier and Cabinet found that 64% of respondents intend to retire from the WA public sector within the next ten years; 71% of these respondents have 15 years or more work experience in the sector. As these employees retire, it is anticipated that a large amount of knowledge and experience will be lost.

The ability to attract and retain high calibre leaders has become a critical area of focus for all organisations. This recognises the profound impact leadership has on an organisation’s success and the increase in demand for high quality executives in a tight labour market.

Research has shown that the main reason employees leave is not to attain a greater salary. Many workers strive for greater work/life balance and would like to have more control over how and when they work.

The public sector needs to investigate and implement strategies to attract and retain talented individuals. Flexible work practices are one way of doing this.

Flexible work practices have been shown to increase employee morale, satisfaction and commitment and when properly researched, implemented and embedded into the organisational culture present a win-win situation for both employees and the employer. A Victorian Survey found that flexible work practices were fundamental to the ongoing operations and sustainability of their organisations.

While it is recognised that any flexible work program needs to be a whole-of-agency initiative, meeting the needs of your SES workforce will help ensure your agency maintains the continuity and quality of leadership necessary to succeed.

*Research has shown that organisations need to be aware of the changing needs of their employees and provide flexible work practices in order to retain them.*
For example, many mature age employees (those over the age of 50) do not want to retire entirely, but do not want to continue to work at the same intensity. The *Retirement Intentions Survey 2006* found exactly that.

The survey also found that:

- Nearly one in five respondents intend to continue to work after they retire from the public sector
- Employees in management positions are more likely to plan to work elsewhere before retirement
- 50% of respondents intending to continue in paid employment elsewhere prior to retirement perceive difficulties in accessing flexible work arrangements in the public sector
- 85% of respondents who intend to continue to work after retirement from the WA public sector said they would be interested in contract or casual employment in the sector.

The promotion of flexible work practices present great opportunities to encourage employees within this subset to continue work in the public sector.

It is imperative to review current workplace flexibility in your agency to ensure you can keep your top talent for longer.

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**VITAL STATISTICS**

The *2007 Annual Benchmarking Survey* conducted by Managing Work / Life Balance International reported that best practice organisations achieved the following results from the introduction of flexible work options:

- **A positive impact on productivity** - 79% believe that their flexible work strategies have had a positive impact on productivity.
- **Improved attraction and retention** - 76% say they are able to attract and retain the best possible talent.
- **A reduction in turnover** - 54% indicated a reduction in staff turnover
- **Improved customer service** - 62% reported a positive impact on customer service levels
- **A reduction in absenteeism** - more than one third said their flexible work initiatives have contributed to a reduction in absenteeism.
SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

As leaders of your agency, you need to proactively introduce and support flexible work practices. It is the leaders’ role to drive the program to ensure success.

Actions to achieve success:

- identify and appoint a SES sponsor for a flexible work practices program
- drive the process at a strategic level
- ensure it is an ongoing agenda item at your weekly / monthly senior management meetings
- appoint a Workforce Planning Manager to manage and implement the program and ensure initiatives in this area are linked with the agency’s strategic business plan and workforce management strategy
- demonstrate commitment - be a role-model for the program within the SES team.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to provide Senior Executives and Human Resource Directors with the knowledge and tools to effectively develop and implement a flexible work practices program for the SES employees in their agency. It is a practical guide to ensure the flexible work practices program is successful and meets the needs of SES employees, agencies and the public sector as a whole.

This guide focuses on flexible work practices to meet the needs and expectations of three segments of the SES workforce:

- mature aged executive staff
- women in executive roles
- rural and remote executive staff.

Although this guide specifically targets SES level employees, it is important to remember that flexible work practices should be available to all employees, regardless of their situation.

VITAL STATISTICS - THE WA PUBLIC SECTOR

As at June 2008:

- Women comprise more than two thirds (68%) of total public sector employees, but represent less than one quarter (24%) of the SES workforce.
- The median age of an SES employee is 52 years (48 years for women and 53 years for men).
- 24% of public sector employees worked part-time while only 6% of SES employees worked part-time.
3. UNDERSTANDING FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES

Flexible work practices are non-traditional work arrangements that allow staff to balance their work and life commitments while meeting the employers’ work needs\textsuperscript{13}. They are a way to provide an attractive and persuasive employment proposition that goes beyond a salary figure when competing for talent and human resources.

Flexible work practices must work for both your agency and your SES employees.

Findings from \textit{The Australian Work and Life Index 2008}\textsuperscript{14} indicate that flexible work practices are no longer just to help people with family demands. Many workers also indicate the need for more flexible work practices to help them balance their work and non-work commitments, including study, sport, and other personal and career development activities.

\begin{center}
Changing how you work will only succeed if it presents a solution to a business challenge - whether it's about increasing productivity, saving on costs or employee retention\textsuperscript{15}.
\end{center}

4. BENEFITS OF FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES

Access to flexible work practices to better meet lifestyle choices and commitments of employees will ultimately help attract and retain them at all levels\textsuperscript{16}. Other benefits include:

- an increase in the potential and talent of your executives
- a positive employer brand
- increase in employee job satisfaction and higher staff morale
- improved ability to manage knowledge loss
- retain older experienced workers
- avoids unnecessary recruitment costs.

\begin{center}
\textbf{RESEARCH}
\end{center}

Research\textsuperscript{17} has found that over 75% of best practice organisations indicated that the two key contributors to their ability to attract and retain the best possible talent were:

- the availability of flexible work arrangements
- a workplace culture responsive to the needs of the business and its employees.

Moreover, 88% of these organisations indicated a belief that an organisation’s work objectives can be achieved in an environment where employees plan and manage their own schedules to fit with their life demands.
A 2008 study\textsuperscript{18} found that employees in managerial and professional occupations have a poor work/life balance compared with less skilled workers. Those working more hours than they would prefer have significantly poorer work/life balance than those with higher levels of flexibility and control over their work time. By providing flexible work practices employers will support and enable a better work/life balance for their employees, increase employee job satisfaction and ultimately retain staff for longer.

A 2008 report\textsuperscript{19} found:

- 83% of women and 73% of men consider an organisation that genuinely supports work/life balance to be extremely important when job seeking
- 12% of women and 11% of men said they left their previous job to achieve a greater work/life balance
- more than 50% of both men and women believed they did not have access to flexible work hours.

5. **TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES**

Flexible work practices available to agencies include:

- part-time work
- compressed working week
- telecommuting / working from home
- flexi-time
- career breaks / purchased leave
- paid parental leave
- study / sabbatical leave
- cultural / religious / important occasions / voluntary leave
- phased retirement
- job share
- fixed term contracts or supplementary duties.

Flexible work practices are not just about working part-time - they are about exploring different ways to work that are successful for your agency and your SES employees. The practices adopted should be those that will attract and retain talented SES individuals to ensure that the agency’s strategic outcomes are achieved.

**WORK CONTROL**

Research has shown that employees value control over how and when work is completed more than the length of time worked.\textsuperscript{20}
A UK study found that for many individuals working part-time was a compromise and not their ideal choice. A quarter of women (24%) working part-time would prefer to work full-time, but said there were no opportunities for full-time work with their employer. The inability to find full-time flexible work was a problem for 43% of both men and women working part-time. 35% of individuals not working could be encouraged back to the workforce if more flexible work options were available.

Further information on the options available are detailed in the Appendix.

6. GETTING STARTED

The success of a flexible work practices strategy will be determined by the strategic and practical support it is given by the agency and the uptake by employees. Responsibility to implement flexibility at the SES level in your agency should be assigned to your most senior HR practitioner. If there are large scale benefits for your agency, consider appointing a Workforce Planning Manager to implement and oversee the program. This will provide a foundation of support and ensure that the responsibility for the program is held at a senior level.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Meeting the needs of your SES workforce will help ensure your agency maintains the quality of leadership necessary to succeed. Employees are more likely to take up available flexible work policies if they feel they have support from their direct manager or if their manager models the use of flexible work practices. Also, when SES employees use flexible work practices, it demonstrates to other executives that flexible working practices and career progression / career maintenance are not mutually exclusive.

LEGAL ASPECTS

Organisations must ensure that any new flexible work arrangement in a work/life balance policy is consistent with their obligations under industrial relations laws, the Public Service Award 1992, the Public Service General Agreement 2008 and any agency-specific agreement or contract of employment.

For example, a proposed flexible working arrangement must adhere to the ‘hours of work’ clause in the relevant award or agreement. If there is conflict between award or agreement requirements and the proposed arrangement, employers may need to formalise these negotiations via a certified agreement.

Issues such as supervision, insurance, workers compensation, security, taxation and superannuation implications should also be considered in any flexible work practice.
PART OF A BROADER PLAN

It may be useful to consider broader work/life balance initiatives to attract and retain employees (e.g. health and wellness initiatives, on-site child care facilities, community involvement etc).

For more information, contact the Labour Relations Division, Department of Commerce on 9222 7700 or visit www.worklife.wa.gov.au.

7. FIVE STEPS TO IMPLEMENT FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES

This is a step-by-step approach to implement a flexible work practices program for your SES workforce.

**STEP 1 - ANALYSE YOUR SES WORKFORCE**

This section will help you to identify the demographics of your current SES workforce, determine how these fit with the agency’s business plan, identify any gaps and assess how these may affect the agency in the future.

**STEP 2 - DEVELOP A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE**

This section will explain the importance of organisational culture when implementing any new program or initiative and how to develop a supportive culture for flexible work practices.

**STEP 3 - DEVELOP THE FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES PROGRAM**

This section highlights the research methods needed to analyse your workforce and determine the flexible work practices that will best suit the needs of your SES workforce.

**STEP 4 - IMPLEMENT THE FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES PROGRAM**

This section highlights factors to consider in implementing the program.

**STEP 5 - EVALUATE THE FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES PROGRAM**

This section will provide tips to ensure the program is monitored, measured and evaluated to ensure that it is right for the agency and the SES workforce.
STEP 1 - ANALYSE YOUR SES WORKFORCE

A competent, well-managed and motivated SES workforce is a key element in an agency’s ability to deliver services. The right employment proposition has the power to attract the right individuals with the right capabilities. Work/life balance leads to a motivated and fulfilled workforce which ensures SES employees can give their best in pursuit of agency goals while allowing them to achieve personal goals.

To implement flexible work practices effectively it is necessary to understand your current and future workforce profile.

QUICKFACTS - THE IMPORTANCE OF SES EMPLOYEES

- SES members possess a wealth of skills, experience and knowledge that are extremely valuable to organisations.
- The WA public sector has recognised an increasingly competitive market for leadership talent, both across the sector and from the external market.
- Within the WA public service there are also SES-related key performance criteria that will need to be considered when determining which skills and attributes are critical to the right workforce mix. This will include people who can shape and manage strategy, achieve results, build productive relationships, communicate effectively, and demonstrate personal integrity and self awareness.

KEY QUESTIONS AT THE ANALYSIS STAGE

Work through the questions below to determine your agency’s current situation and to identify and address any gaps in your current and future SES workforce which may impact on the agency’s ability to achieve its goals now and in the future.

WHAT IS YOUR AGENCY’S STRATEGIC PLAN?

- How do flexible work practices fit with the strategic plan?
- How can you balance the needs of your organisation with those of your SES employees to balance work and non-work commitments?

WHAT IS YOUR AGENCY’S SES WORKFORCE PROFILE?

- What are the demographics of your SES workforce (age, gender, length of service in the agency, length of service in the public sector, leave liability and current work arrangements)?
WHAT TYPE OF SES WORKFORCE PROFILE DOES YOUR AGENCY NEED?

- Are the business needs of the agency being met by your SES employees’ existing skill sets?
- Will offering flexible work practices be a key tool to attract the skill sets your agency is currently lacking at the SES level?

WHAT ARE THE KEY ROLES OR OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS IN YOUR SES WORKFORCE?

- Which are the key roles that make your agency ‘tick’?
- Are these roles at risk?
- Can flexible work practices be used to retain SES employees in key roles?
- Can flexible work practices be used to attract new SES employees to fill vacant positions?
- Are the current key roles relevant to the future needs of your agency?
- Will flexible work practices attract SES employees who meet the future needs of your agency?

WHERE ARE THE EXISTING GAPS?

- What kind of gaps exist in your current SES workforce? Are they Skill gaps? Demographic gaps?
- Are there employees or subsets of employees that could be more effectively utilised or provided with targeted flexible working practices?

WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES THAT EXIST IN THE CURRENT SES WORKFORCE?

- Are there groups / individuals across your SES workforce with different work needs?
- Is a ‘one size fits all’ flexible work practices program sufficient for your SES workforce, or is a customised approach required?

WHAT DOES YOUR CURRENT SES TALENT POOL LOOK LIKE?

- What does your current internal SES talent pool look like?
- What will it take to retain it?
- What does the current external talent pool look like?
- What will it take to attract new leaders to your agency?
CONSIDERATIONS

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MATURE-AGED SES STAFF

The public sector in WA is an older workforce than the State's general working population, with 64% intending to retire by 2016. Access to quality part-time work at senior levels will attract and retain mature age employees for longer. It is important to balance the need of employees to transition gradually into retirement with the need of the agency to manage any knowledge or skill loss when the employees leave. Consider:

- contract / short term opportunities or employment after formal retirement
- facilitating a gradual reduction in hours, or in the level of executive responsibility
- allowing transitioning executives to work from home in the lead up to retirement.

CASE IN POINT - BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL

More than 17% of Brisbane's City Council workforce is aged over 55 years old. To prevent an exodus of skilled labour, the council introduced a number of alternative work options which led to a marked decrease in rates of mature-aged staff leaving the council.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR RURAL AND REMOTE SES STAFF

Regional employees comprise almost one quarter of employees in the WA public sector in 2008. Employees aged 40 years and older comprise more than 63% of WA public sector regional employees - this includes SES employees. Access to education and career progression is a key issue for this group. Consider:

- flexible work practices to allow SES employees to pursue career development and training opportunities
- flexible work practices - including part-time work - to allow SES employees to deal with unexpected or unpredictable work needs
- allowing SES employees to work from home or telecommute to reduce travel time.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR WOMEN IN SES ROLES

Women are significantly over represented in part-time employment and this needs to be considered when assessing workplace practices (in 2008, 44% of women worked part-time in the WA public sector compared with 15% of men). The representation of women in leadership in the WA public sector is disproportionate to the representation of women below Level 7. The table below shows that as the level of seniority increases, the fewer women are represented. This is in contrast to men, where a greater proportion are represented at higher levels of seniority.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 7 PSGA Equivalent</td>
<td>2738</td>
<td>3438</td>
<td>6176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 8 PSGA Equivalent</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>2157</td>
<td>3155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 9 PSGA Equivalent</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>1138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES employees</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>329</td>
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A number of factors may be present for the lack of women at senior levels, for example, women may be discouraged from pursuing senior management positions due to the long hours and lack of flexibility.

To increase the scope for women and men with caring responsibilities at a senior level consider offering:

- visible and quality part-time roles at the SES level
- flexible daily start and finish times
- a compressed working week
- opportunities to work from home
- flexible work hours commensurate with busy and quieter periods
- information and support for working parents and women returning to work, on how to balance work and family commitments.

In addition to flexible work practices, consider:

- redesigning or creating roles to balance the needs of the agency with the aspirations of the employee
- providing tailored leadership programs and work/life coaching.
STEP 2 - ANALYSE YOUR AGENCY’S CULTURE

The successful introduction and promotion of flexible work practices is heavily dependent on your agency’s culture. Workplace culture is “the shared beliefs, values and patterns of behaviour which lie behind what the organisation rewards, supports and expects”\textsuperscript{29}.

Workplace culture is expressed in the actions employees take, but is underpinned by their beliefs and values. All workplaces have cultures that define the value of work, for some the value is on working harder for longer, for others the emphasis is on output and meeting objectives.

For flexible work practices to be successful, the workplace culture must genuinely accept and support the arrangements\textsuperscript{30}.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE</th>
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<td>Research has shown that a workplace culture supportive of work/life balance requires attitude and behaviour changes at all levels of an organisation, as well as sufficient resources to support the initiatives and changes to organisational policy\textsuperscript{31}.</td>
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DOES YOUR AGENCY CULTURE NEED TO CHANGE?

Answer the questions below to determine if your agency culture is ready for flexible work practices.

1. Do you have, or have you trialled a flexible work practices program? If so, was it successful?
2. Do any of your employees currently use flexible work practices?
3. Do any of your agency’s senior managers use flexible work practices?
4. How are flexible work practices viewed in your agency?
5. How would you rate and describe the agency’s current understanding of flexible work practices?
6. Are there any procedures in place for flexible work practices, for example, employees who can provide advice on work scheduling?
7. Are there any attitudes / practices in your agency that would hinder a flexible work practices program?
8. Are there are employee groups that would benefit from flexible work practices?
9. What are the levels of absenteeism and turnover in your agency? Are there any patterns such as age / family commitments?
10. Is your agency supportive of employees who have interests / commitments outside of work?
DEVELOP A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE

There are four basic components to develop a supportive culture and secure change. These are illustrated in the diagram below:

- **Leadership**: Without the full support of the CEO, a change in workforce culture may not happen at all.
  - The CEO is the driving force of the agency - a high degree of ownership of the program is required.
  - A shared view of flexible work practices is needed amongst the senior managers - define the vision, values, aims and objectives of the program.
  - The senior management team need to define the desired outcomes of the program and how these should be measured.
  - Be a role-model.

- **Communication**: These components work together to send a uniform message, but order is important. For example, you need to clarify the vision and promote the message before you start an empowerment program.

- **Infrastructure**: Research has shown that one of the strongest predictors of poor work/life balance was an unsupportive organisational culture.

- **Leadership**: In implementing the “Putting People First” program at British Airways, the CEO Colin Marshall championed his vision of the new company by spending 18 months, twice a week, talking to staff to promote his vision. He then ensured the program provided realistic steps for employees to turn the vision into reality.

\[32\] \[33\] \[34\]
COMMUNICATION

Communication goes through many filters and can be interpreted differently so your message should be repeated constantly and through different mediums.

- There is never ‘too much’ communication
- Develop a communications program - use marketing principles to create the message, capture imaginations and use catchphrases
- Localise and personalise messages
- Communicate the advantages of flexible work practices
- Encourage two-way communication, listen openly and respond promptly
- Address negativity and issues with honestly and highlight positive and encouraging facts and anecdotes.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Communication was a key enabler to the development and implementation of flexible work practices at ANZ Bank. The company intranet was used to communicate with employees and to provide resources needed to effectively utilise flexible work practices. Posters were used to further promote flexible work practices and to highlight that it was now part of 'the way things are done' across the organisation. The ANZ also conducted events and seminars to help employees understand the benefits of flexible work practices.

INFRASTRUCTURE

These are the systems and structures which are used daily and include the ways in which employees are recruited, trained, promoted, rewarded.

- Have a written flexible work practices policy and ensure all employees are aware of it. Supplement this with checklists and ‘how to’ guides for managers and employees
- Issues such as equity, supervision, insurance, workers compensation, security, taxation and superannuation should be considered
- Promote flexible work practices in your recruitment program so new employees know what to expect
- Align the program with your agency’s strategic plan - link it to the agency’s success.
EMPOWERMENT

This process increases the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.

- Include your SES employees - ask them what they would like to do and how it could be done
- It is everybody’s responsibility.

ENABLERS TO CULTURE CHANGE

- Buy-in from senior executive management team
- Communication between employees and their managers
- A culture which supports the use of flexible work practices by all employees
- Leaders and managers who role model the use of flexible work practices
- Consistency in the application of flexible work policies
- Processes and structures which support flexible work policies
- Measurement and evaluation
- Open-mindedness, flexibility, and innovative thinking from both managers and employees
- Ability to change from management by time to management by outputs.
- Education and training for managers and SES employees on the implementation and benefits of flexible work practices.
- On-going support through advice and guidelines for managers whose employees work flexibly
- Setting realistic expectations for the program
- Giving feedback and celebrating ‘wins’
- Technology to assist those using flexible work practices
- Information to aid employees in their decision to work flexibly.

*People throughout all levels of the organisation need to be educated to understand that productivity no longer simply equals time in the office. Employees need to be given the flexibility to work in a way that best suits their needs and lifestyle and therefore allows them to reach their maximum productivity*.
STEP 3 - DEVELOP THE FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES PROGRAM

The likelihood of flexible work practices being actively taken up by your SES workforce is highly dependent on how well these options are matched to their individual goals and motivators. The WA public sector has flexible work practices and policies available; the key is to champion and promote the use of them.

The analysis of the specific drivers of your SES workforce will determine your approach to flexible work practices.

COMMONLY USED RESEARCH METHODS

The number of SES employees varies significantly between agencies; 70% of agencies employ five or fewer SES employees while 19% of agencies employ 10 or more SES employees - the SES workforce is far removed from a 'one size fits all' proposition.

The research method used must be appropriate to your agency. Surveys and focus groups generally work better and are more time efficient the greater the number of SES employees. Agencies with fewer than five may opt to conduct one-on-one informal or formal interviews.

ASK YOUR SES EMPLOYEES

TakeABreak.com.au uses regular group and individual discussions to identify ways that the business can better support its employees. Approximately twice a month they hold a ‘lunch and learn’ where issues such as flexible work hours, staff driven rostering system, ability to take personal leave for carers responsibilities and the need to find time for hobbies, sporting or social events are discussed over an informal lunch.

SURVEYS

• Provide quantitative information based on data provided by employees
• Data can be analysed statistically to give more validity to results
• Efficient means of gaining information from a large number of employees.

FOCUS GROUPS

• Used to gather qualitative information from employees, focus groups can be used to test ideas, identify preferences, gauge reactions and obtain perceptions
• Can be used to complement survey results
• Can be more time and labour intensive than surveys in the collection and collation of data.
FORMAL AND SEMI-FORMAL INTERVIEWS

- Hold one-on-one or in small groups
- More free-form than surveys or focus groups
- Can give a greater understanding on a particular issue
- Can be time and labour intensive.

CASE IN POINT - UNDERSTAND EMPLOYEE NEEDS

The National Australia Bank surveyed staff in all parts of the organisation to determine what they needed in terms of flexible work practices. From this research the Bank implemented a number of initiatives to address employee needs. Business specific flexible working taskforces were created which work together to understand the issues and develop actions plans to improve the practice and take up of flexible work options. Policies were revised and introduced to enable flexibility with the following initiatives established:

- all positions advertised externally allow for flexible work arrangements
- a formal telecommuting policy
- measures on flexibility and balance are part of the company’s 360 degree management feedback tool which forms part of the company’s performance assessment
- Jobshare Forum to increase job share opportunities and provide information to those managing job share roles.
- diversity website designed to enable and encourage flexible work practices.
- regular promotion of flexible work arrangements via the National’s in-house publications, television station and other internal media
- the appointment of a “flexibility champion” to find innovative ways to structure roles to balance personal and business needs.

“These initiatives have resulted in a significant culture shift in the organisation to the point where work / life balance and flexibility are more greatly valued and increasingly modelled by many senior managers”. Executive General Manager, People & Culture, Peter McKinnon39.
Flexible work practices can benefit your agency as well as your SES employees. However, it is important to develop policies that balance the needs of your agency with the work/life balance needs of your SES employees who take up these options.

**BUSINESS NEEDS**

- Consider how the business needs of your agency can be met by SES employees who have taken up flexible work practices
- Are these needs likely to change in the future?
- Communicate business needs/concerns to SES employees
- Flexible work practices must be directly linked to agency goals and business achievements.

**NEEDS OF YOUR SES EMPLOYEES**

- What are the needs of your SES employees?
- Can key talent be retained by offering flexible work practices to meet personal needs?
- How might key talent be attracted with this sort of offer?

“We believe that our work/life policies also benefit TakeABreak - primarily by building high staff motivation and loyalty. We are often able to attract an extremely high calibre of experience than otherwise would have been the case, simply by providing flexible employment options”. Craig Davis, TakeABreak Joint chief Executive Officer (Operations)

**COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS**

A cost benefit analysis of proposed flexible work practices could be undertaken to ensure there are real advantages to the agency and to SES employees. For example, the costs of technology to facilitate flexible work practices such as laptops or personal digital assistants should be calculated over the life of the equipment and offset against the savings in retaining a talented, knowledgeable employee.

**TESTING**

- Use a trial period to implement flexible work practices that are new to your agency. A trial period provides the opportunity to test and adjust
- Run a pilot study. Test the new or different work practices on a small group of employees and evaluate the success before a full program roll-out
- Make sure all involved are aware of what to expect and when.
STEP 4 - IMPLEMENT THE FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES PROGRAM

To be successful, flexible work practices need to be embedded into the daily routines of your agency to ensure that these policies are used by your SES workforce.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

Your flexible work practices program should be easy to use and access, with cornerstones of simplicity, transparency, support and balance.

PRACTICALITY AND SIMPLICITY

Simple policies and procedures (within the bounds of organisational human resource processes and legislative requirements) will equate to increased access and take-up by your SES employees.

- Where will information about flexible work practices be stored?
- Who is the specific contact person to answer employees’ questions - at a job and performance-related level and procedural level?
- Flexible work practice guidelines should be developed.

TRANSPARENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The transparency and logic of decisions will affect the perceived value of the program.

- Who makes the decisions about which practices are taken up?
- What needs are considered?
- Give timescales for decisions
- Update employees at every stage of the process
- Be prepared to compromise.

FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES

"It's all about job design - once there is a click over to the idea - it becomes a process of setting targets and performance indicators - thinking outcomes rather than time watching."
SUPPORT MECHANISMS WITHIN THE AGENCY

SES employees are more likely to take up flexible work practices if they feel there is organisational support. This needs to occur at both a cultural and practical level.

- How will SES employees who take up flexible work practices be supported?
- What technology will be needed (e.g. remote access to networks and email)?
- What structures will be in place to develop and communicate schedules for SES employees who are job-sharing or working part-time?
- Agreements must be made as to whether SES employees want to be contacted outside their work times, or if a delegate is required.

PLAN WELL AND PROVIDE THE TOOLS

The University of Western Australia has realised that flexible work practices ensure employees remain motivated and happy and are positioned to contribute and succeed.

In implementing flexible work practices, the University developed schedules and timetables and innovatively used commonly available technologies to allow their employees a much more flexible workplace while maintaining the quality of work.

Laptops and access to the University’s broadband system is provided for each employee to ensure a smooth transition to flexible work practices. In job-sharing arrangements, the University provides email aliases to internal and external clients so that workflow is continuous and efficient.\(^{42}\)
STEP 5 - EVALUATE THE FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES PROGRAM

Evaluation is critical to success - it will:

- identify what is working and what can be done better
- provide evidence to gain greater support
- put a value on the outcomes of the program
- ensure the program evolves to meet the needs of your agency and your SES employees.

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

- Collect baseline information before the program is implemented as a basis for comparison
- Talk to the SES employees involved in the program to find out how it is working. Address any problems if and when they arise
- Talk to SES employees not using flexible work options to find out what they think. Compare the differences and address any issues
- Discuss the program with managers and HR professionals
- Consider using formal surveys, focus groups or interviews for feedback
- Review the test program at predetermined points
- Agree on how to determine success.

MEASURE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- Measure performance levels before and after implementation
- Review HR records - particularly leave information - to understand how flexible work practices are used
- Look at turnover and absenteeism to determine if the program has made a difference
- What measures are important to your agency?
- Measure uptake of the program - is it consistent across the SES workforce or limited to particular groups?

MAINTAIN SUPPORT

- Keep executive management informed of progress
- Communicate feedback upwards so any changes and improvements can be driven from the top-down
- Align your agency's business strategy with the program and show the benefits
- Ensure executive management support is maintained, communicate the benefits
- Ensure feedback is fed back into the program and communicate changes made and why.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>WHAT TO MEASURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff retention</td>
<td>• Staff turnover rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cost of replacing an employee including advertising, recruitment costs, job training and administration costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff attraction</td>
<td>• Number of applicants for each job vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-up rates of flexible work practices</td>
<td>• Number of employees working part-time, using flexible work hours, using parental leave etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>• Workload indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Productivity indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>• Amount of sick leave taken per employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with flexible work practices</td>
<td>• Monitor management and employee satisfaction through surveys or focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs of initiatives</td>
<td>• Cost of setting up home-based facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Costs of additional paid leave, if any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Additional administration costs, if any</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from
Government of Western Australia, Department of Consumer and Employment Protection
- The business imperative for work life balance
8. TIPS FOR CEOS

It is generally the responsibility of CEOs to fairly assess each application from your SES workforce for flexible work practices. The tips below may assist managers to obtain the information they need to ensure flexible work practices are beneficial for all.

1. PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION
   - Be aware of the employee’s needs and drivers
   - Be aware of the agency’s current and future needs and how these fit with flexible work practices
   - Ask for advice and support from your HR Director or other peers.

2. COMMUNICATE WITH THE EMPLOYEE
   - Review the employee’s application in the context of business needs and be sympathetic to the employee’s needs. Be prepared to compromise
   - Be up-front about any concerns you may have, and be prepared to offer or negotiate solutions
   - Be clear about the agency’s performance expectations - flexible work practices should enhance performance, not reduce it
   - Remember that you manage a diverse workforce - while family responsibilities are a common reason for an employee to apply for flexible work practices, other reasons may include travel, study, sport or other personal or professional interests (and should be treated equally).

3. ACCEPT OR DECLINE THE APPLICATION
   - If the application is accepted, agree to a trial period with the employee. Implement any necessary changes (including technological) that will support the employee’s flexible work arrangement. Communicate with other employees about the new arrangement, and address any queries they may have
   - If the application is declined, clearly articulate the reasons why and suggest actions the employee may take to support a revised or future application.

4. BE SUPPORTIVE OF FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES
   - Facilitate flexible work practices by scheduling meetings, training and social events at a time which suits all employees
   - Use flexible work practices yourself to demonstrate how they can be used successfully.
9. TIPS FOR SES EMPLOYEES

As an SES employee, you play a key role in the success of your agency’s goals. You need to ensure your own flexible work arrangements are beneficial for both you and your agency. When you access flexible work practices and succeed you send a powerful message.

1. SET THE DIRECTION

- Consider which flexible work practices offered align with your personal and professional goals
- Think about how your needs align with the agency’s strategic direction and your team’s goals
- Talk to people to learn about their experiences with flexible work practices - what worked for them and what didn’t?

2. CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

- Take the time to identify the benefits of various options and discuss your plans with your manager
- Develop your business case. Consider possibilities and solutions.

3. MAKE IT WORK

- Be flexible - the process of flexible work practices needs to balance both agency and personal goals
- Work cooperatively - support your colleagues’ needs and let them know how they can support you.

4. EVALUATE AND REVIEW

- Communicate with your manager about what works and what could be improved and be prepared to tailor your plan
- Assess success - revisit your original goals and ensure the arrangement still meets your personal goals and those of the agency.
## 10. APPENDIX - TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES

A number of options are available to agencies in the areas of flexible scheduling, flexible leave, and job redesign.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART-TIME WORK</strong></td>
<td><strong>Considerations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Considerations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employers can arrange jobs according to peaks and troughs in the workload</td>
<td>• Managing part-time employees requires increased effort, particularly around scheduling and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increases the retention of experienced workers who prefer to work fewer hours</td>
<td>• There may be an increase in administration costs for the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides employees with the flexibility to meet both their work and non-work obligations</td>
<td>• This may not be the preferred option for employees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>COMPRESSED WORKING WEEK</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Considerations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allows employers to gain the same outputs and at the same time allows employees to free up their time during the working week for personal activities</td>
<td>• Employers and employees need to assess the practicalities of this option to ensure employees are available when required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TELECOMMUTING / WORKING FROM HOME</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Considerations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hours of work may be extended to suit the needs of the organisation</td>
<td>• Organisations may need to improve technology to allow employees to work effectively from home (e.g. access to intranet or network; broadband internet access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increases productivity as the time and stress of travel / commuting is eliminated</td>
<td>• Occupational Health and Safety requirements need to be met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduces the cost of travel for employees</td>
<td>• Ensure staff working at home can be part of meetings, training opportunities and social events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allows employees to be more productive by removing themselves from the interruptions of the workplace</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>FLEXITIME (FLEXIBLE HOURS)</strong></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Considerations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourages performance to be measured according to output rather than time spent in the office</td>
<td>• The onus is on employees to manage their own workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides employees with the freedom to manage their own workflow and balance it with non-work obligations and interests</td>
<td>• Employees must be able to work autonomously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Performance needs to be easily measurable in terms of output</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Flexible Leave

### Career Breaks / Purchased Leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Allows employers to retain experienced employees and reduce turnover</td>
<td>• The impact on work, team workload and client management need to be taken into consideration when negotiating career breaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improves employee commitment by recognition of their hard work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supports employee needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employees return refreshed from their break and are likely to be more productive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Paid Parental Leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Allows employers to retain employees who have family responsibilities</td>
<td>• Cost impact of policy changes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Study / Sabbatical Leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Employees gain knowledge and expertise which can be applied to the benefit of the organisation (and which they are more likely to share if they feel supported by the organisation)</td>
<td>• The impact on work, team workload and client management need to be taken into consideration when negotiating study leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased employee engagement due to support from the organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cultural / Religious / Important Occasion / Voluntary Leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Provides the flexibility to cater for diverse cultural, religious and lifestyle choices</td>
<td>• Employers need to carefully manage the balance between employee and business needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### JOB REDESIGN

#### PHASED RETIREMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Allows employers to retain mature-aged workers - employees can reduce their responsibilities and the organisation can retain the employee’s experience and expertise</td>
<td>• Employers need to carefully manage the balance between employee and business needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### JOB SHARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Brings a wider range of skills to one position</td>
<td>• Some jobs may not be easily shared between staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allows employees to choose working hours that suit them</td>
<td>• Careful management and coordination between job share employees is necessary to ensure client and business expectations are met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allows employers to extend hours of operation without incurring overtime costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunities for job sharers to support and learn from each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### FIXED TERM CONTRACTS OR SUPPLEMENTARY DUTIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Allows organisations to re-engage employees who have left the agency and benefit from their organisational experience, knowledge and expertise</td>
<td>• The organisation needs to ensure that expertise and qualifications are kept up to date over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides an additional ‘flexible’ workforce segment to the organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Australian Government, Australian Workplace website
Australian Jobs

Committee for Economic Development of Australia
Australia’s Ageing Population: Meeting the Challenge

Australian Government, The Treasury
Australia’s Demographic Challenges
- http://demographics.treasury.gov.au

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Fact Sheet: Mature Age Employment and Workplace Strategy

Government of Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development, Office of Women’s Policy
Paving the Way for Older Women in the Workforce 2025

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Working Families Program: Work and Family Balance in Regional Victoria

Government of Western Australia, Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Taking the Lead: Women in the Workforce

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Meeting the Challenge: Attracting and Keeping Public Sector Employees

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Memorandum No. 95-40 Flexible work practices

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Making Flexible Work a Success

CREATING A FLEXIBLE SES WORKFORCE
Grey Matters
Positive Ageing Workforce Education Project: Flexible work options

Mercer
Reflections on M&A: The Human Capital Dimension
  • http://www.mercer.com/referencecontent.htm?idContent=1270475

Australian Government, Jobwise website
How to implement flexible work practices

Mind Tools
Kotter’s 8-Step Change Model: Implementing change powerfully and successfully
  • http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_82.htm

Themanager.org
Dagmar Recklies: What Makes a Good Change Agent?
  • http://www.themanager.org/Strategy/change_agent.htm

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Better Work Life Balance Survey

ARTICLES ON THE CULTURAL IMPACTS OF FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES


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