



Australian Government

# All Roles Flexible

Principles of flexible  
work in the APS





# Australian Public Service – All Roles Flexible

As leaders of the Australian Public Service (APS), **we are committed to creating flexible workplaces** that embrace diversity and meet the expectations of the Australian community and our workforce. The APS wants to attract skilled and engaged people and retain the talented people who are at the core of our Service's creativity, professionalism and success. The APS strives to be a model employer. By embedding flexibility, we have an opportunity to redefine the future of work in our Service.

As Secretaries, **we are committed to finding better ways of working** to improve experiences for all staff, while fulfilling our purpose to serve the Government and the Australian community. These principles complement protections provided in the Fair Work Act 2009 which must be complied with when an application for flexible work is made by an employee under National Employment Standards. Flexibility will help transform the APS to be the best it can be, operating in a way that is fit for the times.

**We encourage staff to be open-minded and purposeful in finding creative flexible working solutions that meet organisation and team needs.** Alongside flexible work, we also need to consider improving many other aspects of how we work, including recruiting from diverse national talent pools, mobility, learning and development, performance management, accommodation, technology and more. We support our people to be agile, innovative and to create solutions to overcome barriers.

**We support flexible work as a core part of the way we do business.** Flexibility strengthens our ability to deliver strong outcomes, improves our workforce's resilience and helps us be an employer of choice. Flexible work helps employees balance their work and personal priorities, and helps our Service:

- access expanded labour markets
- build more diverse and inclusive workplaces
- improve individual wellbeing
- attract and retain talent
- Improve resilience and ability to maintain business continuity.

## Secretaries Board

**28 March 2023 (endorsed)**



## We will be a public service where...

### 1

Flexibility applies to all roles, with different types of flexibility suitable for different roles

Flexibility applies to every role in the APS and all employees can request a flexible work arrangement (not just those designated groups identified in the Fair Work Act).

There are many different types of flexibility, including options to vary:

- **When** an employee works (e.g. which hours of the day or which days of the week, through flexible starting and finishing times, part-time hours, compressed work week arrangements, job sharing, purchased leave, leave without pay etc.).
- **Where** an employee works (e.g. work may be done in the office or from another location such as from home, a 'remote office', or a combination of these places (hybrid)).

While not all roles can be performed remotely, all roles can have some sort of flexibility. The nature of flexibility will depend on the role.

### 2

Flexibility needs to be mutually beneficial

To ensure flexibility works for everyone, arrangements must suit agencies and teams, as well as individuals.

This applies to all arrangements from when they are established. Arrangements should be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain mutually beneficial for all.



### 3

#### Organisational and team needs frame conversations about individual flexibility arrangements

It is important that agencies articulate their expectations about how flexibility can align with the organisation's needs. This may be through decisions about the types of flexibility suitable for different roles, including which roles can and cannot be done from home. Where roles are able to be performed from home, agencies may also provide benchmarks around the extent of face-to-face contact, such as the number of days to be spent in the office, or on handling requests to work from a different location. These benchmarks may be necessary to ensure consistency and equity across similar roles.

Flexibility should then be considered at a team level. It is at the team level where deliverables must be achieved, and it is important that team-level understanding of operational and individuals' needs are taken into account in decisions about flexible work. Team leaders may set further benchmarks, to accommodate flexibility across a team, such as use of agreed 'anchor days' where all team members attend the office in-person.

Individuals and their managers can then have open and honest conversations about individual flexible work proposals, aiming to find mutually beneficial solutions which work for the individual, the team and the organisation.

Managers and agencies should be transparent about flexible work decisions, and ensure the reasons are clearly communicated and understood.



## 4

### Flexible work arrangements value meaningful and regular face-to-face contact

Regular face-to-face (in-person) contact can improve employee well-being and build tangible team benefits, including for those roles which are able to be performed from home.

Face-to-face contact helps to maintain strong working relationships, fosters social connection and builds professional networks.

It also helps build positive workplace behaviours and a culture of integrity and respect, it increases innovation and enhances learning and knowledge sharing through collaboration and informal information flows.

Agencies are encouraged to attract talent nationally. Requests to work from a different location to a person's core team raise a number of additional considerations, including costs and practical issues to ensure meaningful connection with teams, which may be covered in agency policies.

## 5

### Flexibility is embedded, modelled and refined

Individuals, leaders and managers should promote a supportive culture through communications and role modelling.

Agencies should evaluate and monitor success of flexible work arrangements and consider what support can be provided, including supporting all staff to build capability to have open and honest conversations about working flexibly, managing performance and supporting career development. Agencies should also consider what workplace set-up (office configuration) and technologies may be appropriate to support flexible work.

Agencies should engage with their workers about how the suite of flexible work options are working, and if they could be enhanced.

As Secretaries, we will evaluate the effectiveness of the APS – wide approach, to ensure it is improving staff experiences in the workplace, while supporting the business needs of the Service.