

FLEXIBLE WORK STRATEGY TOOLKIT FOR UNITS AND SUPERVISORS

A People-Centric Approach to Creating Strategy and Managing a Team with various Flexible Work Arrangements



This guide will help OSU Units and Supervisors successfully and effectively create a Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) Strategy and Implementation Plan as well as support teams with varying FWA. Oregon State University (OSU) is committed to creating a people-centered work culture dedicated to advancing the vision and mission of the university. OSU considers fully remote, hybrid, and/or irregular work schedules viable FWA that may be appropriate for certain positions depending on the functions, responsibilities, and needs of the university. The use of flexible work arrangements advances OSU's work culture commitments and goals to recruit, develop, promote, and retain an excellent and diverse workforce.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Institutional Mission: Oregon State University is a diverse and welcoming land grant institution. As an institution committed to teaching, research, outreach, engagement, and collaboration, interactions between students, staff, and faculty are crucial to our work. FWA's must support this mission.

Quality of Student Services: FWAs will not interfere with the student-focused nature of our land grant university.

Quality of Research Environment: FWAs will not interfere with research activities that are physically based in laboratories and offices throughout the state.

Business Operations and Goals: FWAs will support business needs and operations in order to advance the success of each department in furthering the institution's mission and goals.

Equity: FWAs will be equitable.

Employee Recruitment and Retention: FWAs seek to support the recruitment, development and retention of diverse and talented faculty and staff while contributing to OSU's Culture of Belonging, Collaboration, and Innovation.



STRATEGY: BUILDING A FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENT STRATEGY

DISCUSS: Leadership determines where FWA decisions will reside; whether it be with the Unit Leader, Leadership Team, or Individual Supervisors.

DEVELOP: A matrix that identifies what positions will be suitable for FWA's based on objective criteria. Consider creating a unit workgroup for this task.

REVIEW: All position profiles and position descriptions within your unit. Using the matrix, determine their suitability for FWA.

SHARE: Findings with leadership and HRSP to evaluate equity in findings.

ASSESS: Create assessment plan and timeline for regular evaluation of FWA suitability.

CONSIDERATIONS

When building a FWA Strategy **SUITABILITY** for the various FWA should be a main consideration. A **SUCCESSFUL** FWA Strategy will include actively engaging team members.

SUITABILITY

Departments/Units/Managers should consider the following when determining suitability for FWAs:

- Nature of the work being completed.
- Can the work be accomplished independently and with limited direct supervision?
- Does the work require access to equipment, materials, or information that can be only accessed while on the University's campuses?
- Do job duties require extensive face-to-face contact with students, supervisors, staff, faculty, or the public on the University's campuses?
- Determine if employees in similar positions within the team are being designated in the same or different flexible work role arrangements and justification for their designation. (Supervisors can consult with HRSP's to ensure equity of treatment across similar positions within the unit).

SUCCESS

A successful FWA strategy will include evaluating challenges that may arise from different FWA being approved as well as proposing solutions to remove identified obstacles or challenges. Supervisors should consider the individual, team, department, and business needs in conjunction with the varying FWA's available. Actively engage team members to gain their perspectives as you develop your FWA strategy.

Criteria to consider:

- position duties
- events/meetings
- accessibility
- teamwork
- responsiveness
- customer/student needs

Not every position will be eligible for remote or hybrid work, but other FWA may be feasible. Seasonal FWA may also be considered.

TOOLS

[The Flexible Work Arrangement Implementation Checklist](#)

LinkedIn Learning Training: HR: [Providing Flexible Work Options](#), [Leaning on employees to develop your flexible work options](#)

STRATEGY: IMPLEMENTING A FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENT STRATEGY

- ANNOUNCE:** Share plan with team during a regular staff meeting.
- COMMUNICATE:** Discuss plan individually with team members during one-on-one meetings.
- IMPLEMENT:** Develop individualized FWA and have team member complete FWAA form ([link](#)).
- ASSESS:** Regularly review FWA with team members, at a minimum annually.

CONSIDERATIONS

When **COMMUNICATING** and **IMPLEMENTING** FWA for your department or Unit promote collaboration and creative solutions. Communicate clearly about department realities and workload expectations while also focusing on the long-term by valuing employee well-being and retention. Communications should consider the following:

COMMUNICATING

- Announce the FWA plan during an all-team meeting. Share criteria used and who was involved in determining the suitability of positions for FWAs. Share the assessment plan and acknowledge that position suitability for FWA will be regularly assessed.
- When communicating the FWA plan, a positive attitude and demonstrating a willingness to trust employees to work effectively is key to instilling trust in the FWA plan.
- Discuss with individual employees position suitability for FWA:
 - if FWA is applicable - collaboratively build the specifics of the FWA agreement.
 - if FWA is not applicable; discuss other opportunities for flexibility.

IMPLEMENTING

- Collaboratively work to develop the specifics of the FWA including start and end dates and complete the FWAA form. Timely submission of this form and an accurate work location are important for tax and benefit purposes.
- Ensure employees understand all relevant workplace expectations related to applicable FWA.
- Office Space Considerations ([LINK](#)): review approved FWA and develop an office space utilization plan.
- Review technology needs and resources. Identify technology tools employees use in their daily work and determine how the resources will be accessible when working remotely.



TOOLS

[Office Space Considerations](#)

LinkedIn Training: [HR: Providing Flexible Work Options - The challenges of implementing flexible work](#)

SUPPORTING A TEAM WITH VARYING FWA

<u>EXPECTATIONS:</u>	Set clear expectations and establish team norms.
<u>COMMUNICATION METHODS:</u>	Use a variety of communication methods and tools.
<u>TRUST:</u>	Build relationships, provide honest feedback, and communicate openly.
<u>RESOURCES:</u>	Identify resources available to best support employees.

In this section of the toolkit, we will identify ways supervisors can support teams in varying FWA through the key areas of **EXPECTATIONS**, **COMMUNICATION METHODS**, **TRUST**, and **RESOURCES**, as well as resources and tips to navigate this approach.

Support: Expectations

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS: Establishing clear expectations makes employees feel more confident in their work and role and can help reduce anxiety.

Set clear expectations for:

- work hours
- availability
- communication
- meetings
- projects
- deadlines
- responding to email



TEAM NORMS: Establishing team norms and agreements for individuals as well as the team or unit overall helps to ensure clarity.

Tips: Consider asking your team:

- What do you see as the benefits of having a hybrid or remote working arrangement?
- How do you like to communicate?
- How can we best keep one another updated on projects and key work?
- What additional information would help me understand and best support your hybrid or remote working arrangement?
- What expectations do you have of me as a manager?
- Do you have areas of interest you would like exploring you not have had a chance to in the past?

Support: Communication Methods

Communication with a remote or hybrid team can be more effective by using a variety of communication methods or channels.

Box and Microsoft Teams:

Helpful in collaborative environments and idea sharing, or to “pop in” for a quick question.

Email:

Often our default communication method; can be especially useful for progress updates, for updates that are not urgent, or to send out messages with general information for a team.

Phone calls:

Most useful when there is an urgent or sensitive issue you want to discuss or where you feel that tone will be important to the conversation.

Teams and Zoom Meetings:

Can help facilitate meetings and will be important tools when discussing difficult topics. As a manager or supervisor, checking in with employees and being able to see and hear one another can make you feel more connected.

Consider creating specific channels on Teams or Slack for employees to have more relaxed and informal conversations.

Tips:

- Ask each team member what communication tools and styles work best for them and try to use those methods when possible and available. Also set expectations about what communication methods need to be used and in what specific scenarios in order for the team to be most successful. Determine preferred communication methods and expected response times.
- Recognize employees on an ongoing basis
- Build connections between new employees and the team.
- Come up with or describe how the team will participate in activities that will help maintain a connection between team members.
- Establish and model "digital hygiene", try to shorten meetings so there is buffer time between, provide time for each team to block uninterrupted time and if possible do not send emails during non-work times.

Four Collaboration Modes in the Hybrid Environment
Collaboration Modes Charted by Location and Time-Spend



Source: Gartner (2021)
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Gartner

Support: Trust

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS: Positive work relationships show care for others and consider and value the interests of all team members. Making the extra effort to build human connections will go a long way toward building trust.

PROVIDE HONEST FEEDBACK: Inevitably, miscommunications will happen, assume good intent and allow both yourself and team members to have space to be authentic and honest while acknowledging the downsides and positives of the situation.

COMMUNICATION: Communicate consistently, transparently, and frequently, and encourage your team members to do the same. Open communication helps foster trust in a remote or hybrid work environment.

Improved Outcomes in a High-Trust Environment



+39%
Engagement



+34%
Team Innovation



+24%
Performance

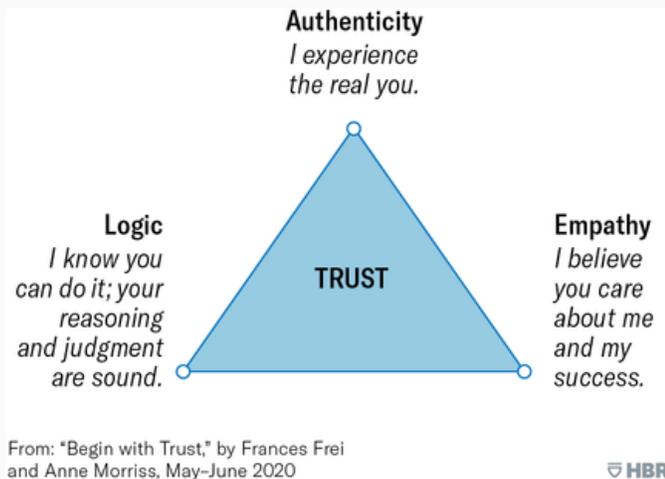


+11%
Intent to Stay

n = 4,264 employees

Source: 2021 Gartner Hybrid Work Employee Survey
Note: This data shows the outcomes for employees with high trust relative to those with low trust. Results are based on a regression analysis controlling for employee age, sex, level, education, industry, function and region.
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Gartner

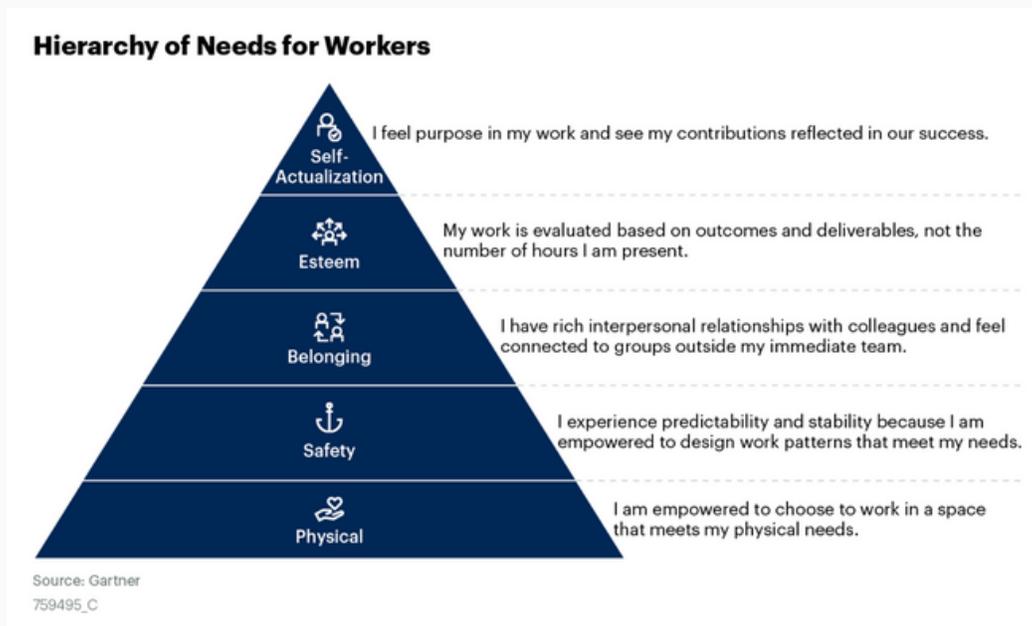


Team Behaviors that Build Trust:

- Keep Agreements
- Share Information
- Acknowledge Others
- Act Consistently
- Display Integrity
- Help Others
- Encourage People
- Cooperate
- Listen
- Act as an Equal
- Accentuate Positives

Support: Resources for Team Members

As a leader, it is important to ask your direct reports how you can best support them. Know your resources so you can best support your employees. Below are a handful of key resources provided by OSU for employees:



Gartner.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Documents

- [Flexible Work Arrangement Agreement](#)
- [Flexible Work Implementation Checklist](#)
- [Flexible Work Arrangement Guidance for Supervisors](#)
- [Office Space Considerations](#)

LinkedIn Trainings

How to sign up for a LinkedIn Learning Account

Strategy:

- [Leaning on employees to develop your flexible work options](#)
- [Providing Flexible Work Options, The challenges of implementing flexible work](#)

Support:

- [Communicating clear expectations](#)
- [Connecting and Collaborating in a Virtual or Hybrid Workplace](#)
- [Hybrid Team Building with a Purpose](#)
- [Building Trust, Why trust matters more than ever](#)
- [Supporting Your Mental Health While Working from Home](#)

Other Helpful Trainings:

- [Develop Essential Skills to Manage in a Hybrid Workplace](#)
- [Remote Work Foundations](#)
- [Hybrid Working Foundations](#)