
Flexible work arrangements - a how to guide

Pay equity recommendation sheet four

Addressing pay equity within organisations focuses on identifying and removing barriers to workforce participation and career progression for female employees. This includes ensuring that all flexible work options, including part time work at senior levels, are available to all employees and that the organisation's culture actively supports the use of flexible working arrangements.

This pay equity 'recommendation sheet' assists organisations assessing and implementing a range of flexible work options that can support career progression and pay equity for women.

Is there a problem?

A pay equity audit may identify if there is a problem with flexible work arrangements within an organisation. If the audit shows that very few employees are using part time work, or other flexible arrangements, or that all part time employees are clustered in a specific section or type of job, this may indicate that they are barriers to employees accessing flexible work arrangements.

Actions and issues to address

Provide a range of flexible work options

Flexible work arrangements should focus on providing employees with more options for when and how they do their work. Organisations can provide a suite of flexible options to enable employees to choose the arrangements that best balance their work with family and lifestyle preferences.

Establish clear rules and policies

It is important to have clear policies and procedures relating to flexible work arrangements and it is best if these are documented and accessible by all staff. The criteria and the processes for requesting and approving flexible work arrangements need to be open and understood by all staff. Policies should provide employees with information about what arrangements are available, and provide managers with guidance on assessing requests from employees.

Communicate regularly



Government of Western Australia
Department of Commerce



Australian Government
**Equal Opportunity for
Women in the Workplace Agency**

Informing staff about flexible work options is very important and policies on flexible options procedures should be regularly promoted to all staff.

When organisations are recruiting new staff, the availability of flexible work can be used as a major attraction strategy for potential applicants. Flexible work options can provide an enhanced corporate image, make the organisation an employer of choice and improve the retention of skilled and valued staff.

Implement a flexible work arrangements culture

Organisational policies on flexible work cannot be fully effective without real support and commitment from management in implementing and applying these policies. Managers need to encourage and actively support the use of flexible arrangements, and organisations need to actively support managers in making flexible working arrangements part of the normal operating environment. Managers need to be provided with appropriate resources, training and time to appropriately assess all requests for changes in work arrangements. Some adjustments to work organisation may be necessary, such as scheduling meetings when all staff can attend.

Organisations also need to ensure that all employees who are using flexible work arrangements are accepted and respected as valued and committed employees. Such employees should be included in all training and professional development opportunities and given the opportunity for promotion on the same basis as all other employees.

A critical part of a flexible work culture is ensuring that employees understand and work within an environment of mutual trust and obligation. Employees must have a strong commitment to the success of any flexible work arrangement. Employees on flexible work arrangements must maintain work and performance standards and ongoing communication between employees and their supervisors is essential. Employee engagement in the success of flexible work arrangements will maximise benefits for both the organisation and the employee.

Provide flexible work arrangements at all levels

Flexible work arrangements should be available for all employees in the organisation, at all levels including management. Flexible work arrangements for senior positions are also important in retaining mature age employees in the workforce and reducing potential loss of organisational experience and skills, by providing alternatives to retirement.

Flexible work arrangements

Part time employment / Job sharing

Part time employees work reduced hours on a regular ongoing basis. Job sharing involves two or more part time employees sharing a full time job on a regular ongoing basis. Some of the most traditional full time jobs have been successfully converted into job sharing arrangements.

A formal part time / job sharing policy can be developed to ensure part timers can assist organisations implement and manage part time work.

Term time work

A term time work arrangement is ideal for employees with school age children. Leave without pay or purchased leave can be used to provide a working schedule in which employees work

only during school terms. Alternately, part time employees can be allowed to rearrange their hours during school holiday times, to better accommodate childcare arrangements.

Flexible hours

Employers may wish to set core work times to meet customer service requirements and allow employees to choose their starting and finishing times to suit family and lifestyle commitments. Other flexible arrangements used by organisations are providing for the accrual or banking of hours to be taken at a later time and annualising hours in which hours are arranged to meet fluctuating or seasonal workloads.

Home based work

Home based work (also known as teleworking or telecommuting) is an employment arrangement in which employees work from home on a full time, part time, temporary or permanent basis. Employees working at home usually rely on technology to enable them to perform their work, however this is not an essential element.

Flexible arrangements for taking leave

Flexibility in taking leave allows employees to take individual days, or even half days of annual leave, or allow leave to be taken at very short notice to accommodate family and lifestyle commitments.

Purchased leave / self-funded leave

In a purchased leave arrangement, employees work on their normal hours at reduced pay and take additional self-funded paid leave during the year. The income earned for the actual time worked including accrued paid annual leave is averaged and paid over the full year.

The most common arrangement is a “48 for 52” arrangement in which employees have a total of eight weeks leave per year. Some larger organisations offer a 4/5 years scheme, in which employees receive 80% of their normal income for four years of work, paid over a five year period in which the fifth year is taken as purchased paid leave at the reduced income level.

A simple arrangement for self funded leave is for employees to have leave without pay as single days or for a longer period to cover school holidays or other leave requirements.

Workplace family room

A family room in the workplace enables employees to continue to work as productively as possible while minding a child or another dependent family member when normal care arrangements breakdown.

Breastfeeding room

Some employers have provided a private room for women who wish to continue breastfeeding once they return to work. This can facilitate an earlier return to work.