

Flexible **Work**

Staff Guide



Achieving work-life balance



The Department of Education & Training is increasingly aware of the importance of creating an environment that supports a diverse, flexible and adaptive workforce. The use of flexible work options is seen as one means of creating such an environment.

To assist individual staff members, principals and other work unit managers assess and implement appropriate flexible work options, the Department of Education & Training has published the following documents:

- *Flexible Work Guidelines*, which contains practical information and advice with case study examples
- *Flexible Work Managers' Guide*, which provides principals and other work unit managers with a strategic framework for planning and implementing flexible work options
- *Flexible Work Staff Guide*, a personal guide for individual staff members.
- *Telecommuting Agreement & Guidelines*, which will assist managers/principals and employees when developing a telecommuting arrangement.

Purpose of the Staff Kit

This kit contains four worksheets for your personal and private use which are designed to assist you to:

- better analyse your own situation and assist you to understand the workplace needs
- test whether/what work arrangement changes will assist you better balance work, life and family needs
- use a decision-making process consistent with that used by your principal/manager
- develop a formal proposal for flexible working arrangements as a way of making sure you have considered relevant work and personal issues.

Contents of the staff kit

The kit contains:

- 1 Work, life, family balance self-assessment
- 2 Assessing flexible work options
- 3 Decision-making format
- 4 Flexible working arrangements proposal

1 Work, life, family balance self-assessment

If contemplating changes at work to better balance work, life and family, it is important to carefully examine the full range of issues. At the outset it is useful to remember:

- that flexible working arrangements relate to balancing the needs of the school/work unit, as well as the needs of individuals
 - that school/work unit needs vary as does the capacity to accommodate individual needs
 - that different schools/work units may have limits to their ability to offer flexible arrangements
 - how flexible working arrangements might assist the achievement of school/work unit goals
 - that individual flexibility cannot compromise school/work unit capability and flexibility
 - what managers or principals need to consider when making decisions in relation to flexible working arrangements
- what factors are influencing you to consider ways of better balancing work, life and family needs
 - what action you can take to improve that balance
 - that changes to work schedules may not be the best action, or certainly the only action you can take to better balance work, life and family
 - that that you have a responsibility to present a well-thought out case for flexibility which the manager or principal must consider in light of a range of factors
 - flexible working arrangements must be regularly reviewed and fine tuned to continue to be successful for both the individual and the school/work unit.



2 Assessing flexible work options

Information is included about four major flexible options. Other options are outlined in the *Flexible Work Handbook*.

Job share

Job-sharing involves the voluntary sharing of the duties and responsibilities of one position between a number of employees, e.g. two people working part time.

Advantages

The possible advantages are:

- multiple skills and experience for the one salary
- diverse perspectives on one job
- mutual support
- mutual review and development
- increased motivation
- access to cover for absence.
- Increase staff morale and reduce absenteeism

Disadvantages

The possible disadvantages are:

- increased management and coordination load
- difficult to design job share to match skills and accommodate individual differences
- communication may be difficult
- ensuring career development
- breakdown of the job share partnership.



Contents of proposal

Your proposal should include:

- benefits to the school/work unit
- work and time schedules
- respective roles and responsibilities
- cross coverage (hand over) in general and between job share partners
- communication plan
- plan of action should one of the job share partners decide to discontinue the partnership
- process for review.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST

There should be no doubt about these issues:

- ✓ hours of work
- ✓ who affected
- ✓ communication plan
- ✓ cross coverage
- ✓ remuneration
- ✓ respective roles and responsibilities
- ✓ procedure for covering absences
- ✓ discontinuing partnership
- ✓ dates and criteria for review.

Part time

Part-time employees work less than seventy-six hours per fortnight on average and have continuity of employment and generally accrue cumulative benefits, such as annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave and long service leave on a pro-rata basis.

Advantages

The possible advantages are:

- meets individual needs
- retaining and attracting staff
- provides flexibility to afford extra staff
- increases the range of skills
- provides for graduated change, e.g. reduced work load on return from maternity leave, prior to retirement
- means of meeting specific need.
- Increase staff morale and reduce absenteeism

Disadvantages

The possible disadvantages are:

- increased management and coordination load
- difficulty in being fully involved in all activities of the school/work unit
- continuity and communication
- possible lack of choice regarding work, e.g. class levels and subjects
- reduced timetable flexibility through reduced availability of certain staff
- ensuring career development
- financial disincentives, e.g. impact on superannuation, reduced salary.

Contents of proposal

Your proposal should include:

- benefits to the school/work unit
- work and time schedules
- clear description of roles and responsibilities
- communication plan
- continuity considerations—covering ‘the gap’ when you are not at work
- process for review.



SUMMARY CHECKLIST

- ✓ hours of work
- ✓ who affected
- ✓ communication plan
- ✓ continuity details
- ✓ remuneration
- ✓ roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ dates and criteria for review.

Telecommuting

Involves regular performance of work-related tasks away from the regular place of work using telecommunications technology to communicate with the school/work unit.

Advantages

Possible advantages are:

- productivity improvement
- improved morale and motivation
- reduced costs
- better use of time, eg reduced travel
- retention of valued staff
- decreased absenteeism
- accelerated use of technology in the school/work unit as a whole.

Disadvantages

Possible disadvantages are:

- home office costs
- occupational health and safety issues
- insurance and security issues
- inaccessibility
- personal and professional isolation.
- ensuring career development
- access to training



Contents of proposal

Your proposal should include:

- benefits to the school/work unit
- work and time schedules
- clear description of roles and responsibilities
- communication plan
- process for review.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST

- ✓ hours of work
- ✓ who affected
- ✓ communication plan
- ✓ coordination details
- ✓ required attendance in the workplace
- ✓ technology
- ✓ occupational health and safety check
- ✓ insurance of equipment
- ✓ roles and responsibilities
- ✓ notification of absences
- ✓ dates and criteria for review

Flexible attendance arrangements

Involves variation of standard hours

Advantages

The possible advantages are:

- means of better matching work flow and staffing
- means of covering peak work times
- means of tailoring hours to meet individual needs
- means of tailoring hours to meet changing or fluctuating needs
- way you might retain a full-time position while juggling multiple responsibilities.

Disadvantages

The possible disadvantage are:

- difficulty of coordination
- over taxing individuals—trying to do too much
- may mask the need for reorganising work schedules and altering work flow.

Contents of proposal

Your proposal should include:

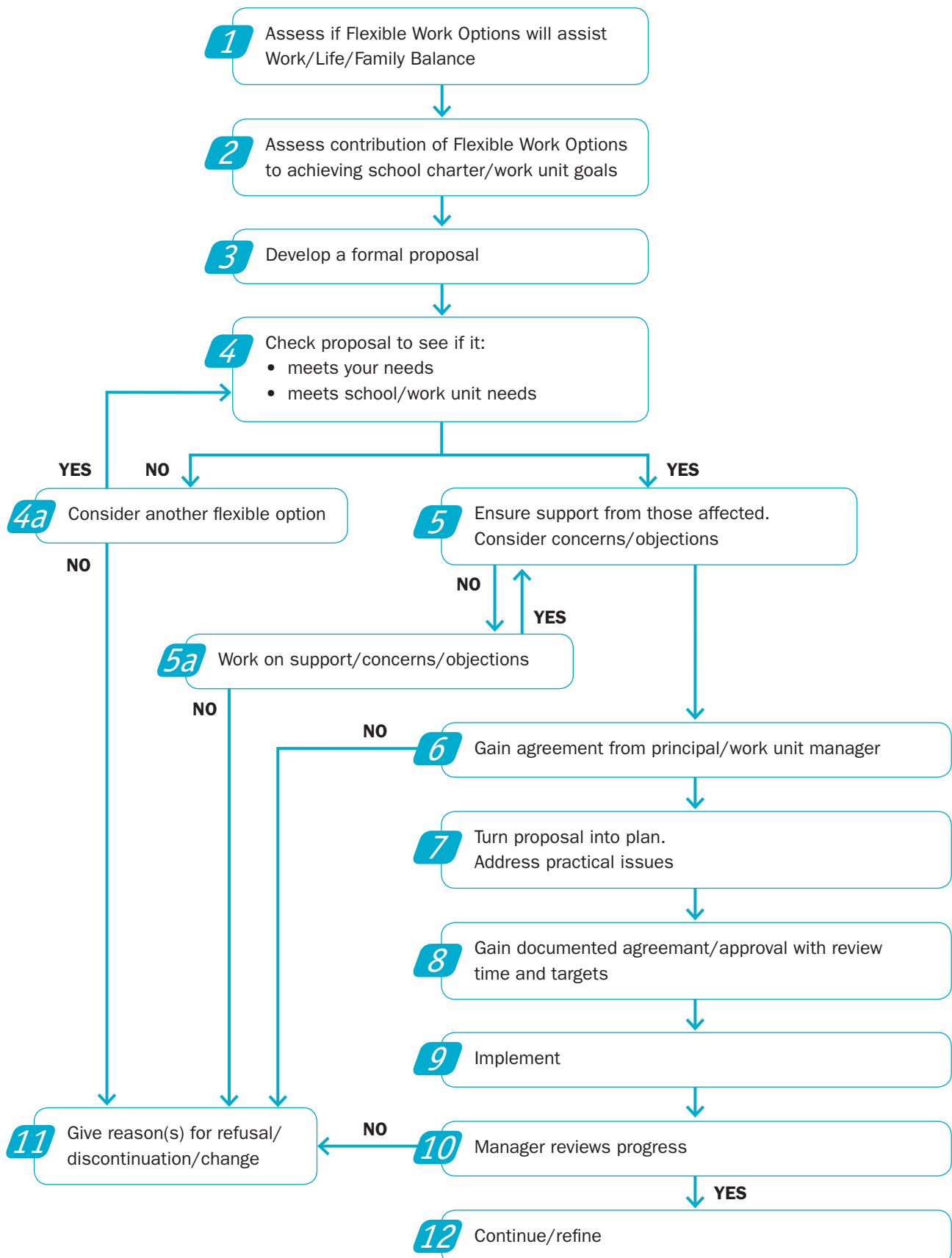
- benefits to the school/work unit
- work and time schedules
- communication plan
- coordination details
- process for review.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST

- ✓ hours and time of work
- ✓ who affected
- ✓ communication plan
- ✓ coordination details
- ✓ roles and responsibilities
- ✓ it is too demanding personally
- ✓ dates and criteria for review



3 Decision-making format



Work, life, family balance self-assessment exercise

Take some time to consider your needs. This is a private reflection—for your eyes only.

- 1** You are seeking to achieve better work, life, family balance. What changes at work are you considering?
- 2** What do you hope to achieve?
- 3** To get a broader picture, list ten things which currently contribute to work, life, family imbalance, stress, disharmony:

- 1** _____
- 2** _____
- 3** _____
- 4** _____
- 5** _____
- 6** _____
- 7** _____
- 8** _____
- 9** _____
- 10** _____

- 4** Now place these on the following grid:

	Work	Life	Family
In my control			
Not in my control			
Can take action			
Cannot take action			

5 What positive and negative impact will this have on the school/work unit?

6 How do you propose to address any possible negative impact?

7 Now what is your proposal?

Work

Life

Family

4 Flexible working arrangements proposal

Name

Position

Flexible work option proposed (*may involve a combination*)

- Part time
 Job share
 Telecommuting
 Flexible attendance arrangements
 Other

Schedule proposed (*provide details of the schedule proposed. This diary approach may help*)

	Hours/times	On-site	Home
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Total fortnight/weekly hours			

How will the proposal contribute to meeting school/work unit/team goals?

Who will be affected? How?

What are your suggestions regarding this?

What expenses might/will this incur?

What review criteria would you suggest for you and your principal/manager to assess how your performance is meeting expectations?

How frequently do you propose the arrangement be reviewed?

Detail the proposal on a separate sheet (*refer to the checklist in Options for flexible working arrangements and the Flexible Work Handbook*).

Signature _____ Date _____