

Flexible Work Staff Kit

Achieving work–life balance

The Department of Education 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 has published the following documents:

- *Flexible Work Handbook*, which contains practical information and advice with case study example
- *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 Kit*, a personal guide for individual staff members.

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 the 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

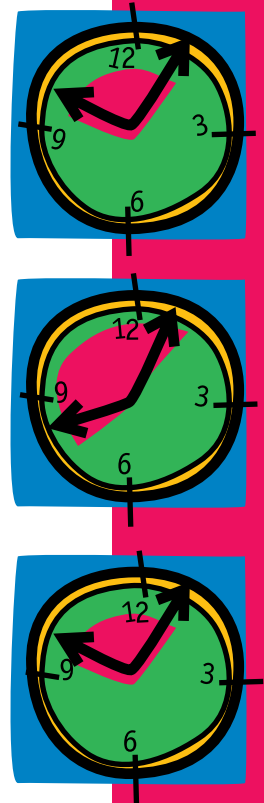
The kit contains:

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 and 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
- individual flexibility cannot compromise school/work unit capability and flexibility
- what managers 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
- 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
- you have a responsibility to present a well thought out case for flexibility which the manager must consider in light of a range of factors
- if approved, flexible working arrangements must be reviewed and fine tuned to continue to be successful for both the individual and the school/work unit.



2. Assessing flexible working 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, eg 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.

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
- career development
- dissolution.

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
- proposed dissolution plan
- review period.

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.

Part-time

Part-time work involves positions with a time fraction of at least 0.4 (for teachers and administrative staff) and 0.2 (school services officers).

ADVANTAGES

The possible advantages are:

- meet individual needs
- retaining and attracting staff
- provide flexibility to afford extra staff
- increases the range of skills
- provide for graduated change, eg reduced work load on return from maternity leave, prior to retirement
- means of meeting specific need.

DISADVANTAGES

The possible disadvantages are:

- increased management and coordination load
- team membership
- continuity and communication
- possible lack of choice regarding work load, eg class levels and subjects
- reduced timetable flexibility through reduced availability of certain staff
- career development
- financial disincentives, eg 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
- review period.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST

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

Telecommuting

Involves regular performance of work-related tasks in a home-based office 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.

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
- review period.

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.

Flexible hours (variation in working hours)

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

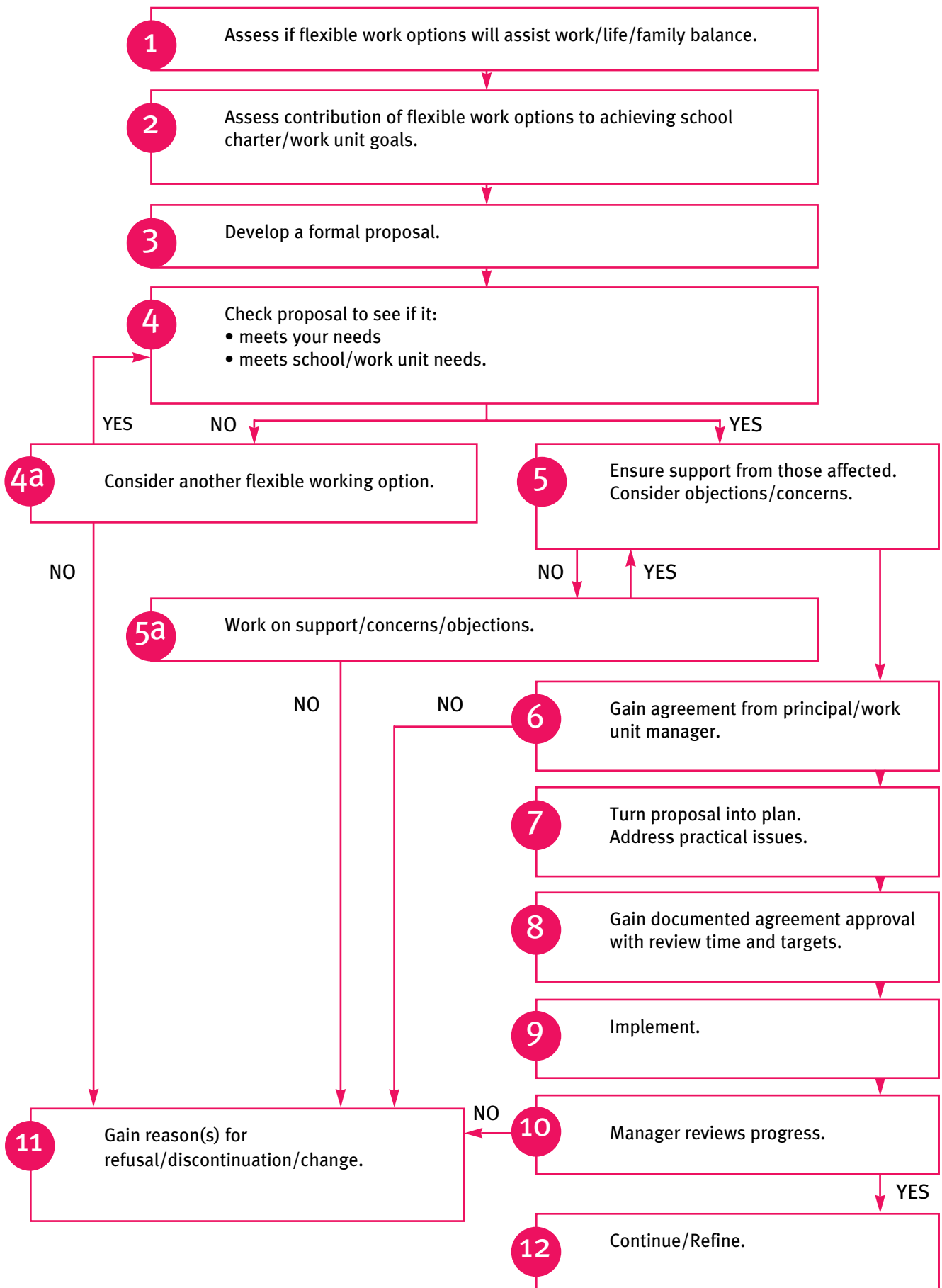
Your proposal should include:

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

SUMMARY CHECKLIST

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

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 change 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 this imbalance, stress, disharmony:

1	6
2	7
3	8
4	9
5	10

4. Now place these on the following grid:

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

5. What will your action proposed in question 2 achieve? Do you need to consider something else/something different?

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

7. Now what is your proposal?

Work

Life

Family

4. Flexible working arrangements proposal

Name

.....

Position

.....

FLEXIBLE WORK OPTION PROPOSED (may involve a combination)

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time | <input type="checkbox"/> Job-share | <input type="checkbox"/> Work from home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telecommuting | <input type="checkbox"/> Variable work hours | <input type="checkbox"/> 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?

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

Signature

.....

Date

.....