



Ministry for
**Ethnic
Communities**
Te Tari Mātāwaka



Flexible Working Framework – May 2022



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

1. Flexible Working Framework overview

At the Ministry we want people to have a real choice about how they undertake their mahi in balance with their personal and family life. We want to ensure that in making things better for our ethnic communities in Aotearoa, we are also supporting the wellbeing and inclusion of the people leading that mahi.

The Ministry wants to be an employer who exemplars inclusion, attracting and retaining a talented diverse team and a robust flexible working framework is integral to achieving this.

Flexible working is a broad term which covers the ways, places, times and how much a person may work in delivering the agreed outcomes of their role within the Ministry. Developing a flexible working arrangement is not about making changes to your employment contract but more about considering the way you might best work in delivering your role while taking into account a number of work and personal factors.

Not everyone will have the same way of working depending on their role and own personal circumstances, and that's ok. So long as the guidelines and expectations are clear, including good transparent communication and a trusted relationship between individuals, their leader, team and wider Ministry, flexibility can work.

The following is a framework intended to guide the development of flexible working arrangements which support the individual, team and the outcome of the work. It is not exhaustive or prescriptive and is open to interpretation. Its important to note that this framework is a high trust model between employees and leaders.

2. Application

This framework is intended to guide all MEC employees (including fixed term). Options will be considered for contractors at the recruitment stage via agency's.

3. Flexible Working principles

At the Ministry, we have principles to guide any decision making associated with the development of a Flexible Working arrangement. These principles are;

Flexibility is the norm

We adopt proactive, thoughtful and sustainable practises around all forms of flexible working. Our default is to consider how not if we can enable flexibility.

Leadership by example

MEC Leaders should be a positive role model in managing and supporting flexible working arrangements for both their team members and themselves.

We are inclusive - not one size fits all

We recognise that we are all diverse individuals and flexible ways of working will look different for each MEC staff member because of this, our role and the type of work we do. Flexible working arrangements are agreed to on a case by case basis between the leader and the individual and do not need to necessarily replicate any other working arrangement.

Needs to work for everyone

We balance the needs of our staff as individuals with the Ministry's ability to deliver outcomes for the stakeholders and ethnic communities that we serve.

We work to ensure we are available for our leader, teams and stakeholders. This may take the form of a charter or agreement on ways of working together as a team or business unit, based on navigating multiple working arrangements across the Ministry.

Transparency and Trust

We are accountable for outcomes and once agreed, we trust that individuals will manage their flexible working arrangement within the guidelines. There is no judgement of differing working arrangements.

We communicate regularly to track progress and we freely share our availability or working arrangement with our team and where appropriate, stakeholders.

4. Flexible Working options

There are many different flexible working arrangements to consider across time, leave, place and role. The following is not an exhaustive list but more an example of working arrangements.

It is also possible that flexible working arrangements for an individual may be made up of more than one of these types. For example, you may work four days per week, two of those days in the office and two working at home.

Flexi-time		
Types	Description	Management considerations
Compressed time	Could be across a week e.g. 4-day week, or 9-day fortnight	Could also consider Flexi-leave options
Reduced hours	E.g. 5 hours per day	Consider the minimum number of hours required to fulfil the role.
Reduced days/part time	E.g. 3 days per week	Consider the minimum number of days required to fulfil the role.
Flexi-time	E.g. • Start early and finish early, • Start late and finish late, • Take an extended break in middle of day	Would need to be well communicated and contact expectations set with internal and external colleagues/communities/stakeholders

Flexi-leave

Types	Description	Management considerations
Leave without pay (LWOP)	Taking short or long-term leave without being paid	Please check Leave Policy for conditions that may impact leave without pay options.
Buying Annual Leave	Buy up to two weeks additional annual leave with a reduction in salary	Managed via DIA – payroll (an annual option)
Term – time working	Work during the school term and taking paid or unpaid leave during school holidays	Formal arrangement

Flexi-place

Types	Description	Management considerations
Working from home	Part of the week and in the office other days or full-time (all week, every week)	
Working outside the workplace region	Working from home in another region of New Zealand	On a case by case basis Consider period of absence from base.
Working from another MEC location	Such as a DIA office for a fixed period	On a case by case basis
Working from outside NZ and/or combined with extended leave	As a temporary or short-term arrangement for example while visiting family	(Still tbc – end May) Likely on a case by case basis for a max period (tbc) <i>Please note as there are some complexities to this option such as IT, security, time zones and we are working with DIA to ensure we could support this option.</i>

Flexi-role

Types	Description	Management considerations
Job sharing	Two people share the same job working part of the week each.	Formal arrangement
Reduced hours	Working less than full-time (40 hours per week) e.g. to study	Formal arrangement

Secondments	Taking on a different role (in MEC or PS agency) for development (short or long term).	Formal arrangement
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5. Making a Flexible Working request at MEC

Flexible working arrangements can be approached both in an informal or formal way. The difference is really about the impact the arrangement has on an individual's terms and conditions of employment. Both formal and informal arrangements require cooperation, communication and flexibility by all parties.

At MEC, we expect the most common form of flexible working arrangement will be informal and will not form part of your employment contract but will compliment it. However, the agreement will still need to be documented and signed by both parties and will form part of our Flexible Working reporting data.

Informal flexible working

Informal arrangements:

- Are for flexibility that doesn't involve changes to pay or employment agreements
- May be established at the request of an individual
- May involve ad hoc arrangements which are agreed between leaders and individuals on an as-needs basis, such as variable start and finish times and/or working remotely on some days
- May also involve regular arrangements such as specific start and finish times on particular days, or regular days an employee will work remotely
- Should involve give and take on the part of the employee, manager and team, to ensure team delivery is maintained.
- Leader and employee discuss the request and/or alternative options in the context of the role and the team's responsibilities and deliverables

Making a request

- Meet with your leader to discuss your request. Be clear about the type(s) of arrangement you would like considered, impacts, timeframes etc.
- Complete a [MEC Flexible Working Request](#)
- Allow the leader time to consider the request. Ideally, this should be no more than two working weeks.
- A further discussion arranged by the leader to respond to the request.
- An agreed and signed MEC Flexible Working Request form should be emailed to debra.davis@ethniccommunities.govt.nz for recording purposes.
- Where agreement has not been able to be reached, you can request a review of the decision by your DCE.

Formal flexible working

Formal flexible working arrangements are generally a longer-term or ongoing change of working arrangements which may change an employee's terms and conditions of employment. The agreement will need to be documented and signed by both parties and will form part of our Flexible Working reporting data.

Formal flexible arrangements may be:

- requested for a defined period e.g. someone wants to work shorter hours to enable them to complete a study programme then return to working full-time
- a progression of short-term arrangements e.g. when someone is returning from parental leave, they may choose to come back on shorter hours or work less days but eventually work up to full-time hours
- an ongoing arrangement e.g. regular part-time, job sharing.

Making a request

- Meet with your leader to discuss your request. Be clear about the type(s) of arrangement you would like considered, impacts, timeframes etc.
- Complete a [MEC Flexible Working Request](#)
- Allow the leader time to consider the request. Ideally, this should be no more than two working weeks.
- A further discussion arranged by the leader to respond to the request.
- Formal flexible arrangements require a formal letter confirming the arrangement and any changes to terms and conditions of employment. This should be done four weeks prior to the start of the arrangement (to allow time for changes to payroll and contracts). An agreed and signed MEC Flexible Working Request form should be emailed to debra.davis@ethniccommunities.govt.nz to generate the formal letter.
- A decline of a request must also be in writing and should state the clear rationale for the decision.
- Where agreement has not been able to be reached, you can request a review of the decision by your DCE.

Responding to any request

Consider;

- Alignment with principles
- Workflow and impact on role deliverable (including stakeholders)
- Impacts on team (direct and Ministry)
- Mutual expectations and norms of behaviour within the team

- What mitigations may need to be put in place to enable this arrangement to be successfully undertaken.
- Health and Safety
- Information security and privacy
- IT/Tools and support
- Any other support needed
- Communication of arrangement to MEC/Community (where appropriate)
- Timeframe for the arrangement

Monitoring and reviewing the arrangement

- Check in during regular one to ones with leader and individual.
- Escalate any concerns immediately
- Have a more formal review period every 6months and document the outcome in an email.

6. Related policies, procedures, standards, guidelines, legislation, and/or websites

The following documents are relevant to this framework:

- Flexible Working Request [MEC Flexible Working Request](#)
- Leave Policy [Leave Policy](#)
- PSC Guidance [Flexible-Work-by-Default Guidance and Resources | Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)
- The Employment Relations Act 2000 (ERA) [Legislation » Employment New Zealand](#)