Guidelines for Alternative Work Arrangements

Job flexibility is important for many employees. Alternative work arrangements can have significant organizational and individual benefits that improve morale and allow employees to meet their personal needs while effectively contributing to the organization. Offering alternative work arrangements can also aid in employee recruitment and retention.

While alternative work arrangements are not an employee entitlement, the City supports the development of alternative work arrangements when a department head and/or supervisor determines that such an arrangement meets the needs of the unit and the employee.

Types of Alternative Work Arrangements

- **Compressed Work Week** – An employee increases the number of hours worked per day to permit fewer full work days per week.
- **Flexible Schedule** – An employee works an 8-hour day, but starts and ends work at times other than the standard operating schedule.
- **Flex Schedule** – An employee works a schedule where work week begins at 1:00 p.m. on Friday and ends at 12:59 p.m. the following Friday.
- **Job sharing** – Two employees voluntarily share the duties and responsibilities of one full-time position on an hourly, daily or weekly basis, with the salary and leave entitlements allocated on a prorated basis.
- **Teleworking** – An employee works from a home office or alternate location on a routine basis.

Application Procedure

An employee who wishes to apply for an alternative work arrangement should discuss the matter with his/her immediate supervisor and submit an Alternative Work Arrangement Request Form. The department head or his/her designee will evaluate the request and, if necessary, consult with other staff and/or Human Resources to determine whether a suitable arrangement can be established.

Preparing an Alternative Work Arrangement Request

An adequate request should include the following elements:

- The business rationale for the alternative work arrangement, i.e., what benefits it offers to the work team, office, or the City (e.g., greater efficiency, increased productivity, expanded hours of service);
- A description of how the employee will accomplish the major components of his/her job;
- A description of how the arrangement will impact customers (internal and external), co-workers, the supervisor, subordinates (if applicable), and the division/department (e.g., space, retention, morale);
• Anticipated challenges and proposed solutions to overcome them;
• An explanation of how customer needs will be handled (e.g., coverage by coworkers, handled remotely, etc.);
• A description of how the employee will ensure effective communication with customers, co-workers, subordinates (if applicable), and his/her supervisor without sacrificing quality or responsiveness, or unduly burdening co-workers;
• A description of how the employee’s work can be measured/reviewed and how performance will be assessed; and
• Any cost implications or cost savings that will result from implementation of the proposed arrangement.

Modifying Alternative Work Arrangements

Since an alternative work arrangement is a business decision, it can be modified or terminated as necessary. Terms and conditions of the arrangement should be clear up front. The following examples could result in a modification or termination of an alternative work arrangement:

• Business needs are no longer being met;
• Job requirements change;
• Performance rating falls below an acceptable level;
• Office coverage or staffing needs change;
• An unexpected staff shortage develops; and/or
• Valid negative client or co-worker feedback is received.

As circumstances, business needs, and job requirements evolve over time, adjustments and modifications may become necessary. As with any traditional work arrangement, alternative work arrangements should not be considered permanent. Both supervisors and employees must be responsive to change and should monitor the arrangement to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the department. In some situations, it may be necessary to discontinue the arrangement or seek an alternative.

Compressed Work Week

Compressed work weeks provide a way for full-time employees to balance personal obligations/desires with work demands. This can result in enhanced productivity, as well as reduced absenteeism. There are a number of ways to establish a compressed work week schedule. Some examples include:

• Four days per week working 10 hours per day
• Four days per week working 9.5 hours per day and one day per week working 2 hours
• Four days per week working 9 hours per day and one day per week working 4 hours

All compressed work week arrangements require the endorsement of the department head and the approval of the Director of Human Resources.
Flexible Schedule

Flexible scheduling allows full-time and part-time employees to balance personal obligations/desires with work demands. This can result in enhanced productivity, as well as reduced absenteeism and tardiness. Furthermore, it may allow for extended office hours, if desired.

Some examples of flexible schedules include:

- 7:30 AM – 4:30 PM with a 1 hour lunch break
- 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM with a 30 minute lunch break
- 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM with a 1 hour lunch break
- 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM with a 30 minute lunch break

All flexible schedule arrangements require the endorsement of the immediate supervisor and approval of the department or agency head.

Flex Schedule

Flex scheduling adjusts the typical work week starting and ending dates to allow for one day off every other week. The work week begins at 1:00 p.m. on either Friday or Monday (depending on schedule selected) and ends the following Friday or Monday respectively at 12:59 p.m.

All flex schedule arrangements require the endorsement of the department head and approval of the Director of Human Resources. Participants must sign a Flex Schedule Agreement.

Job Sharing

Job sharing is a great alternative when an employee desires part-time work, but the job function requires full-time staffing. The employee can achieve the level of work/life balance he/she desires, while the organization benefits from the skills and knowledge of two different individuals, as well as reduced benefit costs.

There are a variety of ways in which work time can be split for job sharers. Some examples include:

- Half or split days where one partner works in the mornings and the other the afternoons (The advantage is that sharers are in touch with the job each day.)
- Half or split week with each sharer working two and a half days (For example, one sharer works Monday through Wednesday morning while the other works Wednesday afternoon through Friday. The sharers could also alternate days.)
• Two days one week and three the next, with the sharers alternating to work the extra day (For example, Wednesday is worked by one sharer one week and the other the next.)
• Alternate weeks, i.e., partners each work one week on, one week off (This may be arranged on a traditional Monday-Friday basis or, e.g., Wednesday afternoon through Wednesday morning.)

Ideally, each job sharer should work exactly half time. Sometimes, however, it is convenient for sharers to split the hours on an unequal basis, e.g., one sharer always works two days and the other three.

Apart from allocation of hours, jobs can be divided in a variety of ways. It is possible to share a job according to a division of the tasks, projects, or other aspects of the job. Some jobs could be divided according to customers/departments/etc. It could also be decided that sharers do not divide the job based on specific responsibilities, but rather whoever is on duty handles whatever work needs to be done.

All job sharing arrangements require the endorsement of the immediate supervisor and approval of the department or agency head.

Telework

Teleworking can meet a variety of needs, as well as enhance employee satisfaction and productivity. Teleworking can reduce costs for both the employee (commuting expenses) and the City (utility expenses), in addition to alleviating space restrictions.

The feasibility of a telework arrangement should be determined by evaluating the work to be accomplished, the anticipated benefits to the department, the employee’s demonstrated skills, and the interactions required between the teleworker and other staff members or customers.

A formal Telework Agreement and Telework Assignment Form are required in order to document all pertinent terms of the telework arrangement. Employees and supervisors should work together to modify the agreement and assignment form as necessary to accommodate terms specific to the individual, the employing unit, and the work assignment. The Telework Assignment Form must be signed by the employee and the supervisor, and then attached to the Telework Agreement. The Telework Agreement must be signed by the employee and the department head or his/her designee before beginning a telework arrangement.

All telework arrangements require the endorsement of the immediate supervisor and approval of the department or agency head.

Expectations for Alternative Work Arrangements

In any alternative work arrangement, employees will be expected to meet the same performance standards previously established for his/her position.
Any alternative work arrangement should be achieved without curtailing normal service hours; incurring overtime costs; impairing the department’s effectiveness in carrying out its operations; placing undue burden on others in the department; or creating problems of safety, security, or supervision.

In certain circumstances, it may not be possible to proceed with an alternative work arrangement when an acceptable outcome does not prove feasible. The City, in accordance with managerial interests, reserves the right to deny or restrict alternative work arrangements in order to ensure that operational needs will not be adversely affected.

Guidance on alternative work arrangements can be sought from the Department of Human Resources.
ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISORS

Supervisors should give serious consideration to all requests for alternative work arrangements and respond to the employee’s request within 14 calendar days.

Supervisors will be expected to use the same performance measurement criteria that were in place prior to the establishment of the alternative work arrangement. Employees requesting alternative work arrangements shall have at least a “meets expectations” on their most recent performance evaluation.

New employees may be hired into an alternative work arrangement if the arrangement meets the business needs at the time of hire, with the understanding that such an arrangement may be changed if business needs dictate.

Evaluating Alternative Work Arrangement Proposals

In evaluating a proposed alternative work arrangement, supervisors should consider the following points to determine the feasibility of successful implementation of the request:

- The effect of the request on your department’s goals and commitments including costs, customer service, safety, and security;
- Whether the type of work performed by the employee is conducive to the arrangement requested;
- Whether the arrangement will create difficulty in scheduling meetings, coordinating projects, etc.;
- Whether the employee will be able to alter his/her schedule, as necessary, to attend meetings, training sessions, etc.;
- Whether there will be adequate coverage available during City operating hours for any responsibilities that require in-office staff;
- Whether the schedule will create a significant burden for other staff members;
- Whether significant cross-training will be required to ensure an adequate knowledge base at all times;
- Whether the employee’s productivity and overall work record demonstrate the ability to succeed in the proposed arrangement;
- Whether lack of supervision will, at times, be a concern;
- Whether equipment will need to be purchased, its cost, and availability;
- Whether the employee accepts responsibility for making the arrangement work;
- Whether the employee expresses willingness to consider other arrangements; and
- Whether the employee appears flexible and willing to make adjustments to ensure success.

If you determine that you cannot approve the employee's request, explain your decision based on your analysis of the proposal's impact on department operations and/or the employee’s work record in your department. Be supportive and, if practical, suggest alternatives. Encourage the employee to rework the proposal if possible.
Job Sharing Considerations

For a job share arrangement, supervisors should consider the following additional points and address any items which may be a concern:

- How difficult will it be to find a qualified job share partner based on the experience and education requirements for the job?
- If one part of the job share position should fall vacant, will the working hours left and related job content be attractive to new applicants?
- Can the workload reasonably be divided in an equitable way to achieve a balanced team?
- Does the employee clearly understand the implications of the arrangement (pay & benefits) and that there is no guarantee it can be reversed if the employee is not happy with the arrangement after implementation?

Telework Considerations

For a telework arrangement, supervisors should consider the following additional points and address any items which may be a concern:

- Can the employee’s performance and productivity be assessed effectively?
- Does the employee have the necessary information systems and technology (hardware, software, and connectivity), as well as security for those systems?

The following checklist should be completed before implementing a telework arrangement:

- **Establish Length of Commitment and Reversibility** - Establish dates on which the supervisor and the employee will review the effectiveness of the telework agreement and make adjustments as necessary. Either the employee or the employer may rescind the agreement, consistent with the specified notice requirements.
- **Define Accountability and Performance Measurements** - Define the tasks or scope of work to be completed via telework, the timeframes for completion, and how work will be reviewed, reported, evaluated, and measured.
- **Establish Communication Requirements and Availability** - Determine how communication between the teleworker and the work site will be handled. Consider whether to establish scheduled times when the teleworker will be available to colleagues and/or customers. The telework agreement may allow the supervisor to visit the worksite at mutually agreed upon times. The telework employee is expected to remain flexible in order to respond to business requirements, such as being available to work at the office on a normal telework day.
- **Establish Security and Confidentiality Requirements** - Assess the sensitivity of the information to which the teleworker must have access and determine what, if any, precautions are necessary. Ensure that the employee’s work computer used to telework is adequately secured and that it will not present an undue threat to the City’s information systems.
✔ **Identify Equipment, Equipment Insurance, and Office Supply Requirements** - Determine what equipment and supplies are needed at the alternate work site and who will provide them. Confirm that the employee must comply with licensing agreement terms for use of all software owned by the City. Maintain an inventory of equipment and supplies used at the teleworker's work site. City equipment and other resources located at the alternate work site are not typically insured. If departments do not insure the equipment that will support the telework arrangement, the telework agreement should specify whether the department or the employee bears the risk of loss.

**Managing Alternative Work Arrangements**

Consider the following points in developing a plan to effectively manage the work of individuals working an alternative work arrangement:

- Establish a plan that ensures clear communication and accountability;
- If the arrangement involves flexible hours or an alternative work location, specify the hours, days, and location of work, as well as the times when the employee will be on site for meetings and to communicate directly with other team members;
- Review implications of the arrangement with the employee emphasizing adequate record-keeping of hours worked and vacation/sick time;
- Before agreeing to long-term implementation, establish the arrangement on a trial basis with a designated review period;
- In a job sharing arrangement which results in a reduction in the employee’s scheduled work hours, make sure that the employee understands that you cannot guarantee a return to the previous schedule outside of the trial period, should the employee request it;
- Make sure the employee understands the terms of the arrangement, and that once the arrangement is implemented, its continuation depends on it working effectively for both the employee and the department;
- Document all pertinent details of the arrangement, including work hours and schedule, performance plan with measurable outcomes, and a review schedule. Provide the employee with a copy, and have him/her sign the documents to demonstrate acceptance and agreement with the terms.

**Questions & Answers**

**Q.** Should I limit the number of people in one work group who can have an alternative work arrangement so that I can be sure I can manage the work?

**A.** Determine the work configuration that will function best for your department/division. Some departments/divisions may find it workable to allow a great deal of flexibility. For others, only a limited number of positions lend themselves to alternative work arrangements. If you are not sure what will work for your department/division, limit flexibility initially with a commitment to review your practices as you and the workgroup gain experience. Consider a rotating schedule on a monthly or quarterly basis.
Q. How can I avoid having to change my own work schedule to effectively manage employees with alternative work arrangements?

A. You need to be confident that the work will get done whether you are present or not. Establishing an arrangement on a trial basis can allow you to determine whether the arrangement is likely to work on an on-going basis. You should also determine the results you need to achieve in order to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular arrangement.

Q. How can I ensure that employees do not assume that alternative work schedules are “permanent”?

A. Establish a clear, common understanding of the terms of an arrangement by putting them in writing. Share a copy with the employee and place a copy in the employee’s department file. Make sure that the written agreement states that the arrangement is subject to revision based on departmental work requirements.