



# Draft Flexible Work Practices Policy

**Version: 3.0**

**Date: <insert effective date>**

**Review date: <insert review date>**



## 1. Policy statement

The Audit Office is committed to supporting flexible work arrangements that prioritise employee wellbeing, support our purpose, vision and values, are consistent with NSW Government policy and compliant with employment law.

Our standard way of working entails regular attendance by employees at either head office, an auditee location or a related worksite.

We also recognise that providing employees with opportunities to work remotely can promote agile workforce management, enable successful and engaging careers and help employees balance their work and personal priorities.

This policy, and its supporting documents, provide guidance to employees and their people managers on flexible work arrangements.

## 2. Policy scope

This policy applies to all employees and contractors directly employed by the Audit Office of New South Wales, except when otherwise stated. It includes full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary employees and contractors.

Contractors wishing to work flexibly under an approved Individual Flexibility Agreement must seek agreement from the Audit Office and then their recruitment agency.

Flex leave will continue as a useful way to adjust hours of work between busy and quieter periods, but is not covered by this policy. Flex leave is a condition of employment for non-executive employees who are covered by the Crown Employees (Audit Office) Award.

## 3. Definitions

- **Executive contract** refers to the employment contract of a person employed by the Audit Office as an executive officer under section 33F of the *Government Sector Audit Act (1983)*.
- **Award** refers to the Crown Employees (Audit Office) Award as amended or replaced from time to time.
- **Head office** – refers to level 19, Darling Park Tower 2, 201 Sussex Street, Sydney NSW 2000.
- **Auditee location** – any of our auditee’s primary work locations.
- **Related worksite** – includes locations that are related to an employee’s work, for example a training venue. This does not include remote working locations, such as an employee’s place of residence.
- **Regular attendance** – means an employee working a minimum of 50% of their contracted hours per week at head office, an auditee location or a related worksite (if applicable). Should an employee need to balance this attendance over a fortnight (with more hours worked in one week than the second) then a minimum of one day per week attendance will apply.
- **Work/working remotely** – refers to working in any location in Australia other than head office, an auditee location or related worksite, such as an employee’s place of residence.

## 4. Policy content

The Audit Office offers a range of options for when, where and how work can be undertaken. Our standard way of working entails employees working a minimum of 50% of their contracted hours per week at head office, an auditee location or a related worksite.

All employees can access flexible working practices in line with this policy, as long as they can effectively complete the requirements of their role. However, not all types of flexibility will be available for every role.

We recognise that some employees may require additional flexibility, all employees are able to request additional flexibility via an Individual Flexibility Agreement (section 4.2).

## 4.1 Flexible working requirements

The following flexible working requirements apply to all staff when accessing flexible work practices.

<b>Alignment with the requirements of the branch, workgroup and stakeholders</b>	<p>Flexible working requires give and take, and should balance the needs of our people, workgroups, and stakeholders. Arrangements should consider the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>requirements of the employee's workgroup and align with their branch's guidelines and workgroup's commitments to flexible work practices. This ensures that leaders can clearly articulate, and employees can understand, when in-person collaboration or engagement is required</li> <li>workgroup context and how work will be fairly distributed and addressed to meet the needs of the workgroup</li> <li>schedules and nature of work, and that of the Audit Office's internal and external stakeholders, including auditees.</li> </ul>
<b>Ability to work safely</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate consideration must be given to ensure employees have a safe and effective working environment, no matter where they are working.</li> <li>The work health and safety responsibilities of the Audit Office and its employees are the same regardless of whether employees are working at head office, an auditee location, a related worksite or remotely.</li> <li>The need for a safe and ergonomic working environment to mitigate issues such as trip hazards, slippery floors, electrical safety, lighting and ventilation still apply.</li> <li>When working remotely, employees must ensure they have a suitable ergonomic set-up in line with our guidelines on <a href="#">how to set up your desk ergonomically</a></li> <li>All employees and contractors must complete an annual Working from Home Checklist which helps identify and manage potential work health and safety, and security risks. A new checklist must be completed within two months of moving to a new home environment.</li> <li>Occasionally, it may be necessary for the Audit Office to access to a home-based worksite to review safety arrangements or conduct incident investigations. Reasonable notice of this requirement will be provided, and employees must not unreasonably withhold consent if such a request is made.</li> </ul>
<b>Working without distractions</b>	<p>Employees must only work remotely when work can be completed without the distraction of caring for dependants, and remote working must not be used as a substitute for sick or carer's leave.</p>
<b>Prioritising outcomes</b>	<p>Outcomes should be prioritised when considering where or when the work is done, including considering whether a better outcome would be achieved with greater levels of collaboration.</p>
<b>Appropriate working hours</b>	<p>Employees can have flexible approaches to working hours, provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the hours they work are agreed with their people managers, to ensure regular and effective interaction with colleagues, auditees and other stakeholders</li> <li>most ordinary hours of work are undertaken during business hours (AEST 8am to 6pm)</li> <li>the arrangements do not hinder the effective and efficient completion of work</li> <li>a meal break of at least 30 minutes is taken in every five-hour period of continuous work</li> <li>the employee is not required to work specific hours to meet business needs.</li> </ul>

<b>Secure and stable internet</b>	If an employee requests and is approved to work on a weekend or a public holiday instead of in the usual work week, no additional compensation is payable. In these circumstances an employee would be compensated with time off during the week.
<b>Remaining connected</b>	When working remotely, it is the employee’s responsibility to ensure they have access to a secure and stable internet connection that can sufficiently support day-to-day business activities. Where remote internet connections cannot effectively support normal business activities, employees are expected to work at head office.  When working remotely, it is expected that your camera is turned on during meetings so that you can collaborate and build connections as effectively as if you were attending in person.  No matter the work location, all employees are required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be contactable by the Audit Office, their workgroup members, their auditees and other stakeholders during their standard working hours</li> <li>• notify their colleagues/ manager when they will be uncontactable for a period of time during their normal working hours, for example when taking a longer break than normal for an appointment</li> <li>• share their calendars with managers and colleagues, and keep diaries updated to reflect when they will be unavailable throughout the working day.</li> </ul>
<b>Working securely</b>	Employees must always: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protect sensitive information from unauthorised access, no matter where they are working. This includes physical sensitive information printed at home.</li> <li>• comply with the <a href="#">Information Security Policy</a>, irrespective of the location of their work. This includes locking your computer when away from your workspace.</li> </ul>
<b>Work location</b>	Employees who are required to attend face-to-face meetings or activities, workshops or training sessions are required to cover the costs of travelling to the office, auditee, other stakeholder or training sites (except for auditee visits covered by our <a href="#">Travel and Other Expenses Policy</a> ).
<b>Working overseas</b>	The Audit Office has a low-risk appetite towards Audit Office employees working outside of Australia. The <a href="#">Working Overseas Process</a> and supporting guide to working safely overseas provide further information.

Permanent and temporary employees on the Audit Office payroll (with a contract greater than six months) will be provided the following support to set up a safe and ergonomic remote working environment. These provisions will be reviewed as required:

- On commencement with the Audit Office, new employees will be provided a \$175 allowance to help set up their remote office.
- Effective 1 October each year, employees will be provided a \$350 allowance to help set up their remote office, paid via payroll in the relevant pay period.

## 4.2 Individual Flexibility Agreement

An Individual Flexibility Agreement (IFA) is a formal agreement made with an employee and is required when an:

- employee’s flexible working arrangement impacts their working roster, such as part-time, compressed working week/ fortnight (Award employees only), term working, job share or a career break
- employee does not regularly work from head office, an auditee location or a related worksite.

IFA’s should be intentional in balancing the needs of our people, our workgroups and our stakeholders. Arrangements must be in line with this policy, discussed and agreed between the



employee and their people manager, approved by their branch head, and considered in the context of each respective workgroup and the employee’s ability to continue to deliver business outcomes.

An IFA can be short-term or long-term. Agreements may change due to a variety of reasons, such as business and operational needs, individual requirements and government directions. Ad hoc exceptions to the IFA Agreement should be discussed and agreed between the employee and their people manager in advance.

IFA’s are subject to an initial three-month review period, and annually reviewed thereafter.

Examples of where an employee may consider applying for an Individual Flexibility Agreement include:

- employees residing outside of Sydney
- employees with a health condition, disability, mobility issue or carers responsibilities where accessing remote working can support their productivity while helping to balance their personal commitments with work.

Circumstances where an IFA is required are outlined in the following table:

Type of agreement	Definition
<b>Increased access to working remotely</b>	Where work is not regularly conducted at head office, an auditee location or a related worksite.
<b>Part-time work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Award employees, part-time means working less than 35 hours per week (e.g. working three days/21 hours a week).</li> <li>• For Executive Contract employees, part-time means having a portfolio proportion of less than 100%. The employee is responsible for completing the proportion of their portfolio as discussed and agreed with their branch head.</li> </ul>
<b>Compressed working week or fortnight</b>	For Award employees, compressed working means working 35 hours in 4 days (average 8.75 hours per day) or 70 hours in 9 days (average 7.77 hours per day). Compressed working is not available for Executive Contract employees.
<b>Term working</b>	Working for a portion of the year and taking leave for the remainder (e.g. working March to November and taking leave from December to February. Employees who are term working may elect to receive a reduced fortnightly pay that is spread across the full year).
<b>Job share</b>	Responsibilities and pay for a role are shared between two or more employees.
<b>Career break</b>	Taking a period of leave without pay for up to 12 months.

\* Where is it not specified, types of Individual Flexibility Agreements are available to both Award and Executive Contract employees.

## Applying for an Individual Flexibility Agreement

Individual Flexibility Agreements will be considered upon receipt of an **Individual Flexibility Agreement Application**, which should be processed within four weeks of submission. Each application requires written endorsement from the relevant director and approval from the branch head, must consider business and operational requirements, and must include a proposed timeframe for the agreement. The employee’s roster will be updated in the payroll system where relevant.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

### 5.1 Auditor-General

The Auditor-General assumes ultimate ownership of this policy and either approves or delegates approval for any exceptional circumstances that fall outside the policy.

## 5.2 People managers are responsible for:

- supporting flexible work arrangements within their workgroup and branches in line with this policy
- working with individuals within their workgroup as required, to discuss and agree on flexible work arrangements to ensure their approach is successful
- setting expectations for their workgroup using the [Flexible Work Practices Toolkit](#)
- ensuring flexible work practices are intentionally designed to balance the needs of their people, workgroups, and stakeholders
- proactively addressing any non-compliance with this policy and proposing alternative arrangements where required
- providing employees with reasonable notice when requesting in-person attendance
- role modelling appropriate flexible work practices
- reviewing Individual Flexibility Agreement Applications (section 4.2) for feasibility, and making recommendations to the director for endorsement and the branch head for approval
- informing employees within four weeks of receiving a new Individual Flexibility Agreement Application whether the request has been approved or declined in writing. If approved, confirming the details of the agreement and if declined, providing a specific explanation
- reviewing the approved Individual Flexibility Agreements after the initial three-month period and then annually
- taking all reasonable steps to ensure that employees have a safe and effective working environment, no matter where they are working, this includes ensuring employees have suitable ergonomic setups and have completed an annual Working from Home Checklist
- encouraging employees to remain connected e.g. by ensuring their camera is turned on during meetings to collaborate and build connections as effectively as if they were attending in person
- consulting with the People & Culture team as required.

## 5.3 Employees are responsible for:

- working with their people manager, workgroup and stakeholders to ensure their flexible working arrangements are in line with this policy and are a success
- obtaining written approval for an Individual Flexibility Agreement where required
- completing an annual Working from Home Checklist to help identify and manage potential work health and safety, and security risks. A checklist also needs to be completed within two months of moving to a new home environment
- complying with Audit Office policies and procedures.

## 6. Legislative context

- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *NSW Carers Recognition Act 2010*
- *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014*

## 7. Contact point

If employees have questions about this policy, they should contact the Director, People & Culture. Any disagreements related to the policy can be escalated to the Deputy Auditor-General for decision.

## 8. Implementation procedures and related policies

- [C2024-03 NSW Government Sector workplace presence](#)

- [Flexible Work Practices Toolkit](#)
- [Flexible Work Practices Committee and Charter](#)

## 9. Review

It is intended that this policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if significant new information, legislative, government direction or organisational change warrants an update to the policy.

The Audit Office may adjust this policy at any point, with consultation. Any changes to the policy will be implemented with reasonable notice.

The requirements of this policy may be waived or altered by the Auditor-General in the event of a business disruption outside the control of the Audit Office.

### Document information

<b>Title:</b>	Flexible Work Practice Policy
<b>Owner:</b>	People and Culture Team
<b>Person responsible:</b>	Executive Director, Corporate, Experience and Strategy
<b>Approver:</b>	Office Executive
<b>Last updated:</b>	[DD/MM/YYYY]
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### Document history

Version	Date	Reason for Amendment
3.0	[DD/MM/YYYY]	We have taken the opportunity of the <a href="#">new government direction</a> to conduct a comprehensive review of our Flexible Work Practices Model and Policy

## Flexible Work Practices Policy – Frequently Asked Questions

### General policy questions

#### **Who does the Flexible Work Practices Policy apply to?**

This policy applies to all employees and contractors directly employed by the Audit Office of New South Wales, including full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary employees, and contractors.

#### **What is the purpose of the Flexible Work Practices Policy?**

The policy aims to support flexible work arrangements and prioritise employee wellbeing, support the organisation's purpose, vision, and values while ensuring we comply with both NSW Government policy and employment law.

#### **Why is the policy changing?**

Our approach to flexible working has served us well, and we have heard clearly that you and your workgroups enjoy the many benefits of our hybrid way of working.

Our flexible work practices model and policy have always maintained a commitment to remain consistent with NSW Government policy and compliance with employment law, and government policy has now changed.

We have taken the opportunity of the [new government direction](#) to conduct a comprehensive review of our model and policy. The proposed changes have been designed with the needs of our people, our organisation and our stakeholders in mind. They ensure flexibility remains available, which is central to our employee value proposition, and that we stay true to our commitment to align with government policy.

#### **Will there still be a Flexible Work Practices Model?**

As part of the policy review, we considered key parts of the Flexible Work Practices Model and have incorporated these into the updated policy where relevant. To simplify our approach, the updated policy will replace both the existing Flexible Work Practices Policy and Flexible Work Practices Model.

#### **Will there still be a Flexible Work Practices Toolkit?**

The policy will continue to be supported by our Flexible Work Practices Toolkit, which will be updated once the staff consultation period has finished, and the new policy finalised.

### Key changes

#### **What's changing?**

Two key changes are presented in our updated policy including the introduction of a:

1. standard work practice that entails staff work a minimum of 50% of their contracted hours either at head office, an auditee location, or a related worksite (such as a training venue). Should an employee need to balance this attendance over a fortnight (with more hours worked in one week than the other) then a minimum of one day per week attendance will apply
2. new process to formalise individual flexibility agreements between individuals and managers to support employees who need additional flexibility.

#### **What is a related worksite?**

This includes locations that are related to an employee's work, for example a training venue. This does not include remote working locations, such as an employee's place of residence.

#### **Do we still support flexible working arrangements?**

Absolutely. We have an emphasis on balancing work and personal priorities while ensuring employee safety and productivity. Flexibility is central to our employee value proposition, helping us to attract and retain talented employees.



It is recommended that employee's discuss with their managers and agree how they will use flexible work practices to conduct their work in line with the policy.

We will also continue to offer various flexible working options such as part-time, compressed working weeks (for Award staff), term working, job share or career breaks, which will require an Individual Flexibility Agreement (IFA). The policy also allows for IFAs where less than 50% of an employee's contracted hours of work are conducted at head office, an auditee location or a related worksite. Ongoing discussions with managers to discuss flexible working arrangements should be undertaken regularly.

### **Will I still be able to work from home?**

Yes, working from home is supported under the new policy as long as the minimum of 50% of contracted hours are met for regular attendance at head office, an auditee location or a related worksite. If additional flexibility is needed, staff can apply for an Individual Flexibility Agreement.

## **Consultation process**

### **What happens now?**

The draft Flexible Work Practices Policy will be open for consultation from Monday 11 November to 5.00 pm on Friday 22 November 2024. During this time feedback on the policy can be directed through to the People and Culture team via email [people.servicedesk@audit.nsw.gov.au](mailto:people.servicedesk@audit.nsw.gov.au).

### **Will the union be consulted on the draft policy?**

The union will be consulted on the policy in line with the two-week staff consultation period.

### **How will this impact me personally?**

#### **I already have an Individual Flexibility Agreement in place under the current policy. Will I need to renegotiate the terms of my IFA under this policy?**

An employee may have an IFA in place for many reasons. IFAs made under the current policy will carry over but should be reviewed every 12 months to ensure they are working optimally.

#### **I have a workplace adjustment due to disability and/or medical condition – do I need to renegotiate it now due to the circular?**

Specific adjustments that are in place for disability or those with a medical condition will continue as agreed unless there are any change in circumstances, or a review is required.

#### **What are some of the examples of circumstances where I might apply for an Individual Flexibility Agreement?**

Examples of where an employee may consider applying for an Individual Flexibility Agreement include employees:

- who have a flexible working arrangement that impacts their working roster, such as part-time, compressed working week/ fortnight (Award employees only), term working, job share or a career break
- residing outside of Sydney
- with a health condition, disability, mobility issue or carers responsibilities where accessing remote working can support their productivity while helping to balance their personal commitments with work.

All employees can request a flexible working arrangement, as long as it is in line with the policy, and it enables them to complete the requirements of their role. Not all types of flexibility will be available for every role.

### **I live interstate, how do I comply with the policy?**

Over the last few years, our office has had a policy to support people working across Australia, and staff working interstate can continue to do so as they currently are. They will now need to develop a

Individual Flexibility Agreement to support this to continue. As is already the case, there will be instances where people living interstate need to attend the office and the Individual Flexibility Agreement will incorporate this requirement.

Other existing arrangements are unchanged. For example, travel from a staff member's 'usual place of residence' to head office is considered private travel and staff must cover the travel cost. This includes any internal face-to-face meetings, workshops or training sessions. Refer to the Travel and Other Expenses Policy and Guidance document for more information.

### **I live regionally, how do I comply with the policy?**

As per the above if you live outside of the Sydney metropolitan area and plan to be in the office less than 50% of the week, you can apply for an Individual Flexibility Agreement. As with interstate travel, all travel from a staff member's 'usual place of residence' to head office is considered private travel and staff must cover the travel cost. This includes any internal face-to-face meetings, workshops or training sessions. Refer to the Travel and Other Expenses Policy and Guidance document for more information.

All employees can request a flexible working arrangement, as long as it enables them to complete the requirements of their role. Not all types of flexibility will be available for every role.

### **Will I continue to receive my working from home allowance?**

Permanent and temporary employees on the Audit Office payroll with a contract greater than six months are provided a \$175 allowance on commencement and a \$350 allowance annually to help set up their remote office. This allowance for 2024-25 was paid in October 2024.

Our working from home allowance is reviewed as part of the budget process each financial year. Any future changes to the allowance will be communicated to staff.

### **How will I be supported through the change?**

#### **When will the changes to the policy take effect?**

The updated policy will be in place from 31 March 2025. This will help ensure employees have adequate time to prepare for the change. Once the consultation period has finished and the new policy is finalised, we will enter a transition period where employees can work with their managers to agree on their individual flexible working arrangements.

#### **I have a question about my individual circumstances that hasn't been answered here, where can I get help?**

We will host drop-in sessions during the consultation period where employees and leaders can ask questions or provide feedback. Additionally, you can submit questions to the people and culture team via email [people.servicedesk@audit.nsw.gov.au](mailto:people.servicedesk@audit.nsw.gov.au).

#### **I am worried about the impact of these changes on my mental health/family situation. Who can I speak to?**

You can:

- talk to your manager about your individual circumstances and plan how the new policy can be applied to support your individual circumstances
- contact the People and Culture team via email [people.servicedesk@audit.nsw.gov.au](mailto:people.servicedesk@audit.nsw.gov.au)
- contact our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) on the toll-free number 1300 360 364 or you can also start a conversation with a clinician by sending a text message to 0480 032 310. For more information on our EAP please visit [Alfie](#)
- contact one of our trained Mental Health First Aiders to confidentially discuss any issues and concerns that be impacting your mental wellbeing. Details can be found on [Alfie](#).

### **Implementation considerations**

**I need to apply for an IFA as I live interstate, when should I do that?**

IFAs should be in place prior to the new policy coming into effect on 31 March 2025.

**How will you ensure consistency in the IFA process?**

People and culture will work with branch heads to ensure consistency in the application of the IFA process.

**How will this policy be 'monitored'?**

As with all of our policies, there is an expectation that employees comply with the policy and that managers proactively address instances of non-compliance. Compliance with this policy won't be actively monitored, but there is an expectation that employees and people managers will regularly discuss employee's flexible work arrangements and ensure they are aligned with this policy and balance the needs of our people, our workgroups and our stakeholders.

**My child needs to stay home from day care or school because they are sick. Can I work from home and care for them at the same time?**

The Flexible Work Practices Policy states that 'working remotely is only practical when the work can be completed without the distraction of caring for dependents and when it is not used as a substitute for sick or carers leave.' Situations will vary depending on family circumstances and the age of the child. We provide carers leave entitlements for staff to use when they need to spend time during the workday caring for children.

**Are workgroups expected to have a conversation on what the expected way of working will be for each audit?**

Yes, at the start of the audit, discussing the best way of working to prioritise outcomes as well as where and when to meet with auditees during the audit is a priority. Spreading attendance across auditees is also a priority to ensure we have positive stakeholder engagement with our auditees.

**I was on leave last week do I need to complete the 50% of contracted hours in one week?**

No, there is no expectation that you will make up face to face attendance after a period of leave.

**I've noticed there are no audit rooms available for auditors at auditee sites.**

We've heard from auditees that they value face to face contact with their audit teams to build rapport, strengthen connections and enable corridor conversations that just don't happen over Teams.

While finding space may be challenging at some auditee sites, individuals should work with their managers to agree on an appropriate approach for each audit.

**What if there are not enough desks at head office?**

We encourage employees to plan ahead and book a desk in advance when planning to attend head office. Where possible, we also encourage employees to spread their attendance across various days in the week to:

- promote interactions with a wider group of employees
- reduce overcrowding on peak days
- ensure effective utilisation of our accommodation.

Employees must book a workstation in Robin before they attend the office. This can be done via our desk booking system, Robin. On busy days, we open up 'pit stops' in Robin to provide additional informal workspaces. Occasionally, we may also access overflow workspaces and meeting rooms in the GPT Space&Co flexible workspace in Darling Park Tower 1.

You can read more about pit stops and other [Protocols for how we work](#) on Our Workplace Pocket Guide on Alfie.