

WCB Alberta – Flex Work Arrangements FAQ's

1. Commonly Asked Questions from Employees

How do I know whether flex work is for me?

Although you may assume that at least one of the flex options will help you balance your work and personal commitments, it soon becomes obvious that there is more to a successful flex arrangement than wishful thinking. You need to honestly evaluate the type of job you do, the type of person you are and the lifestyle you wish to lead.

After careful consideration, you may conclude that a flex option is not appropriate for you at this time - your need may not be sufficiently strong, reduced hours may not be economically feasible, and so on.

There are no rules about what will and won't work. You and your supervisor are in the best position to figure out what arrangement would be appropriate. In addition, the HR Consultant in your area is available for consultation.

Will a flex work arrangement hurt my chances for promotions or other job changes?

The WCB is committed to ensuring that employees who choose flex options are not penalized in terms of opportunities for promotion, job changes or career development. Career planning and management continue as usual, and the focus remains on the quality of the work you do, not when or how you do it. Performance, skills and aspirations remain the basis for promotion or job change.

However, it is possible that a career advancing job opportunity may arise that is not compatible with your flex arrangement. In such cases, you need to decide whether to explore a different flex option or take on the hours and work location appropriate to the new job.

What if one of my co-workers requests the same or a similar arrangement?

There are no defined limits on the number of flex arrangements that can exist in any unit at any one time. However, no flex arrangement can be approved in isolation or without regard for business and customer needs. It's up to your supervisor to assess your unit's capacity. If she or he determines that the unit can't handle your particular flex proposal, be sure to discuss other possibilities. Together, you may very well come up with an innovative solution that enables everyone to benefit to the greatest extent possible.

Will my vacation be affected?

For all full-time options, your actual vacation entitlement is not affected (i.e. the vacation hours accrued per month is the same, regardless of your work schedule). Part-time workers are paid a percentage of pay with each month-end cheque in lieu of banking vacation hours.

Are there some types of jobs or work environments that lend themselves more readily to flex arrangements?

There are some cases where certain types of flex arrangements may not be appropriate. Flexible work arrangements are evaluated based upon the Principles of Flexible Work.

What if my proposal is turned down? Can I appeal?

A flex proposal is a joint employee/supervisor venture. If handled properly, a proposal should produce a mutually understood outcome. It helps to take the following three steps:

1. Begin the process by having a preliminary discussion with your supervisor.
2. Continue to have discussions with your supervisor as you write the proposal, taking into account the supervisor's comments and concerns.
3. Once you have submitted your proposal, discuss it fully together.

The idea is to share as much information as possible before your supervisor arrives at a decision.

If you follow these three steps and your supervisor still turns down your proposal, you will probably already understand the business reasons for doing so. Your HR Consultant may be able to provide fresh ideas and perspectives.

The department head is responsible for the final decision.

2. Commonly Asked Questions from Supervisors

Are all jobs suitable for a flexible work arrangement?

No. Participating in a flexible work arrangement is dependent on many factors - the degree of customer contact, your supervisory style, the degree of knowledge of the employee, the willing support of coworkers etc. Don't be afraid to adjust schedules, and change the agreements as you gain experience and expertise in the arrangement. Nothing is cast in stone.

What do I do if everyone wants a flex option and I simply can't accommodate all the requests?

Make a strong effort to accommodate as many proposals as you can. If you have a number of flex proposals to assess, you might find it helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- What is workable for the unit as a whole?
- Would it help to rotate the opportunity for flexible work to accommodate all requests?
- What is the nature

Could I involve employees in identifying arrangements that work for the whole unit?

Yes, you'll need to practice a non-traditional approach to supervising, especially if there is a lot of interest in flex arrangements in your unit, but that is just the kind of management the WCB wants to see.

Are the personal reasons behind the proposal important?

An employee's personal reasons for requesting a flex arrangement should not be a factor in assessing the feasibility of the arrangement. Supervisors should focus instead on whether the proposal makes good business sense.

How do I assign priority to requests?

It's important to understand that you should avoid assigning priority. It is not appropriate for supervisors or employees to be placed in the position of passing judgment on whose personal needs are greater.

Employees should not feel pitted against one another nor feel the need to create "sadder tale" scenarios or divulge confidential personal information. They shouldn't have to justify a proposal on anything other than business grounds.

When more than one employee wants a flex arrangement, and you can't accommodate everyone, focus on trying to find a compromise or some other creative solution.

Can I ever say no?

Yes. As a supervisor, you are responsible for the effectiveness of your unit. But if you do decline a proposal, be prepared to explain your reasons in detail. Otherwise, the employee may assume your decision is arbitrary, and this could affect employee morale.

Should I be concerned about setting a precedent?

No. Assess each proposal on its own merits and in light of your unit's requirements. Does the proposal satisfy the needs of the customer, the employee and the WCB? That is the basis on which you accept or decline each proposal. It is not appropriate to decline a proposal simply because you may not be able to offer the same arrangement to everyone.

How will I handle requests for time off for medical, dental and other appointments?

The same way you do now. Absences of less than 3.5 hours may be considered as time off with pay. Absences of 3.5 or more hours will be considered sick leave.

How do I manage paid holidays?

If a paid holiday falls on the employee's normally scheduled day off, they will be given another day off in lieu, on a mutually agreed upon date. Lieu days should be taken as close as possible to the paid holiday (i.e. within the same month).