



# City of Appleton Flexible Work Options

*Flexible work options for balancing all of life*



The City of Appleton recognizes that employees have many competing demands for their time and focus. We choose to be an employer who recognizes these demands and provides options to help employees integrate both their work and personal life. Studies have shown that providing flexible work options can result in benefits for both the City and the individual, including:

- Uninterrupted time for creative, repetitive, or highly detailed work.
- Reduced commuting time and use of office/parking space.
- Reduced stress.
- A correlation between work schedules and work styles.
- Expanded coverage for customer service.
- Increased productivity.



Flexible work options respond to significant changes at work and at home:

- Eighty-five percent (85%) of all workers have family care responsibilities.
- Our society is aging. Twenty-five percent (25%) of all workers have elder care responsibilities. Older workers are looking to step down from full-time opportunities while staying engaged.
- Work-life balance has moved to work-life integration where the lines between work and personal lives have blurred and multi-tasking is the norm.
- Technology has allowed the concept of the office to be more fluid than ever and work is no longer confined to the four walls of the office building.

**1 IN 4**

Employees says flexible schedule and options to telecommute motivate them to do their best work.

Flexible scheduling is a helpful way to prevent employee burnout by giving employees one of the things they value the most—choice. One in five employees cites work-life balance issues as a reason for considering a job change. One in four employees says flexible schedule and options to telecommute motivate them to do their best work, and nearly a third notes work-life balance as a leading contributor to loyalty to a company.



## FlexTime

Flexible start, stop and lunch/break times or modified schedule (e.g. 4 10-hour days)

## FlexPlace

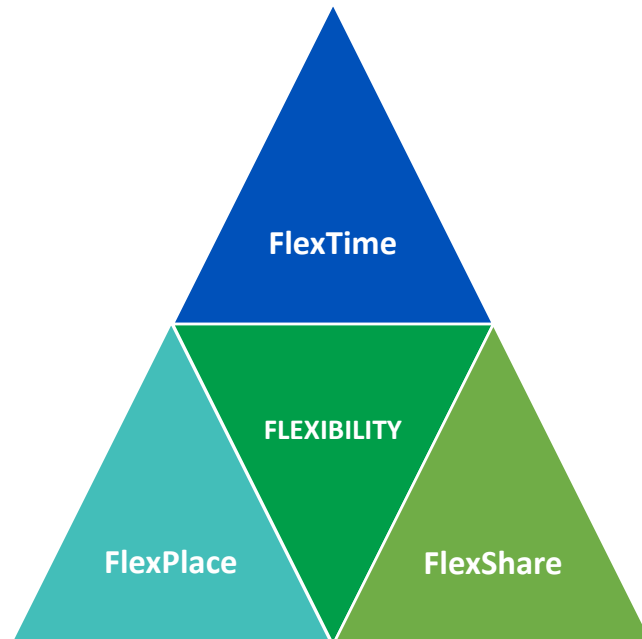
Working away from the office, typically at home.

## FlexShare

Less than full-time work or shared job assignment

Flexible work options provide alternative approaches to getting work done through non-traditional work hours, locations and/or job structure. They offer creative approaches for completing work while promoting balance between work and personal commitments. They are inclusive and provide support for a work-life balance for all employees, not just those who have family or care-taking responsibilities.

Flexible work options offered by the City include FlexTime, FlexPlace, and FlexShare.



# FlexTime

There are two variations of FlexTime: flexible schedule and modified schedule.

## Flexible Schedule

Flexible Schedule allows time flexibility to be built into the beginning, middle, or end of the day. These arrangements often include a designated time throughout the central portion of the day during which all staff are present, referred to as the 'core work hours'. Core hours ensure continued connection between staff members and offer opportunities for group meetings and communications.

Flex Schedule arrangements can include:

- Individualized start and end times that remain constant each work day.
- Individualized start and end times that vary daily; however, the same number of hours are worked every day.
- Individualized start and end times with varied daily hours but consistency in the total number of hours worked every week.
- Extended lunch times offset by additional hours at the beginning and end of the day or working through lunch to shorten a work day.
- Seasonal hours in which an individual starts and ends earlier in the day for the season.

Core hours are set by each department and all employees should be available during these hours when not on paid leave or family leave. If an employee will be absent during core hours and is not using paid leave, the employee should obtain prior approval from their supervisor before they are absent. (Example: if the core hours for the department are 9 a.m.- 3 p.m., and the employee wants to work from 10 a.m.-6 p.m., they should gain supervisor approval beforehand.)

When using flexible scheduling, the employee should talk with their supervisor to obtain approval for their flexible schedule arrangement. They should also mark their calendars to reflect their schedule and provide a number where they can be reached for urgent issues that may arise while they are out of the office.

## Modified Schedule

Modified Schedule typically compresses the traditional 40-hour work week into fewer than the traditional five, eight-hour work days per week. With a compressed work schedule, the focus is on outcomes and managing the appropriate workload in a condensed version of the work week.

Common examples of modified schedules for traditional 40-hour work weeks are:

- Four 10-hour work days each week.
- Four 9-hour days and one 4-hour days (e.g., Fridays) each week.
- 24-hour shifts (e.g., Fire Department).

**REMINDER:** When considering flexible options for non-exempt (hourly) staff, supervisors and employees should check with their HR Generalist regarding Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA) guidelines as well.

The Modified Schedule may be done on an ad hoc basis (e.g., temporary schedule for an employee) or on a routine basis.

Refer to the FlexTime Modified Schedule approval form (Appendix A) for more details.

## Availability

When telecommuting, staff are expected to be available by phone and e-mail during work hours and respond to messages on a timely basis. An employee's calendar should reflect the hours that they are working off-site and include a phone number where they can be reached when working remotely.

## Technology

When FlexPlace/telecommuting arrangements require use of technology from an off-site office, it will be necessary to arrange for support of the technology, as well as appropriate access to computer networks. In determining work schedules, consideration should also be given to availability of administrative systems and the technology support desk. Employees should also maintain complete confidentiality when working in a space that is off-site. This includes not using public or unsecured wireless connections unless accessing the City system using a VPN connection that is set-up by the City.

## Routine Basis

Employees who would like to telecommute on a routine basis should complete the approval form (Appendix B) and forward it to their supervisor.

FlexPlace (Telecommuting) arrangements are most appropriate for work that has clearly definite tasks, measurable work activity and does not require the individual's presence in the workplace. Many assignments are not suitable for a FlexPlace arrangement, either because of the type of work to be done, the need to be present in the office or the lack of necessary technology at home. FlexPlace does not refer to exempt staff working at home after hours to respond to customers' immediate demands (e.g., if a late-night storm comes in and an exempt employee responds to employee's or customer's requests for assistance). For more detailed information on telecommuting, see the City's Telecommuting Policy.

FlexPlace allows for a portion of the job to be performed off-site, usually at the worker's home, in one of two ways.

## Ad Hoc Basis

This is a situational arrangement that is approved on a case-by-case basis, where the hours worked were NOT part of a previously approved, ongoing and regular telecommuting schedule. Examples of ad hoc telework include working from home because of inclement weather or to meet a repairman to complete a repair at the employee's home, or a special work assignment which needs a great deal of focus and concentration. When using FlexPlace on an ad hoc basis, employees must receive pre-approval from their supervisor prior to telecommuting.

## Routine

This is a work arrangement that allows an employee to perform work, during any part of regular, paid hours, on a regular, scheduled basis, at an approved alternative worksite (e.g., home, telecommuting center). This arrangement will specify the number of hours to be worked at home and specific time in which this is to occur (e.g., every Monday, the first Friday of the month, etc.). The staff member may continue to work on-site for a portion of the work schedule and should be available for periodic meetings and interactions with his/her supervisor. The employee must be available during the core working hours set by his/her supervisor/department and must choose the hours that are most beneficial to the customer.

# FlexShare



FlexShare is a program that allows two staff members to share the responsibilities of one full-time position, typically with a prorated salary and vacation, PTO and holiday accruals. A FlexShare assignment is a full-time job split between two individuals, each with responsibility for the success of the total job. In a FlexShare arrangement, each staff member shares a specific proportion of the full-time position through part-time scheduling, often with overlapping time in the office. Schedules can be designed to meet the needs of the job sharers and the office. The schedules may also overlap as needed, or desired.



Example of a job share arrangement:

Employee 1: M, T, W = 20 hours

Employee 2: W, R, F = 20 hours

(Employees overlap some hours on Wednesday.)

Both FlexShare partners need to agree upfront that, if one of the job partners is not meeting the needs of the organization or decides to leave the job, the other will revert to a full-time schedule, permanently or until a replacement job partner is found within a reasonable time frame. If a new job partner cannot be found and the remaining job partner does not want a full-time job, he/she will agree to resign from the job to be replaced by a full-time worker.

## General Flexible Work Option Guidelines

- The arrangement must support the organization's goals, including fiscal responsibility and dedication to customer service.
- The supervisor and department director must approve the plan and be prepared to manage the work under the conditions of the arrangement.
- An employee's performance must be rated and continue to be at least "Consistent" to be eligible to request/utilize these flexible work options. The employee must continue timely completion of projects and productivity must be maintained.
- Arrangements for communication and accountability must be established between the employee and supervisor.
- Employees shall not use flexible time for purposes of working another job.
- A pilot time frame is recommended for trying out a flexible work arrangement before making a long-term commitment to it by either party (management or employee).
- Employees are responsible for working through problems and/or obstacles that may arise.
- Employees must be prepared to return to pre-flexibility arrangements.

# Supervisor's Role

Supervisors are responsible for maximizing resources and utilizing staff talents. They are best positioned to understand the demands of the work and capacity of individual employees to succeed in a flexible work arrangement. As a result, supervisors will have the ultimate decision to approve a flexible work arrangement.

Supervisors will then need to manage the work under the conditions of the arrangement, including being responsible for:

- Ensuring resources are available for the tasks at hand, managing performance issues, and offering clear, concise communication of organizational goals and expectations.
- Providing regular feedback on performance.
- Ensuring that the flexibility arrangement is not used to circumvent appropriate use of paid time off.
- Assessing any overtime implications of flexible work options for non-exempt staff.
- Personally modeling balanced work practices.

Supervisors also have the discretion and ability to establish working hours for his/her workgroup (e.g., summer hours) as long as there is no adverse impact to the customer.

# Process

Flexible work options typically start in one of two ways:

1. The employee determines that he/she would like to have a flexible work arrangement and proposes this arrangement to his/her supervisor. This is the most common approach.
2. The supervisor suggests a flexible work arrangement for one, some or all workers to support efforts to balance work and personal commitments or to accommodate a business need such as extended coverage for customer service.

Employees submit a form when requesting a modification of work hours or to telecommute on a regular basis.



## Modified Schedule Guidelines

1. Modified scheduling will be offered to employees whose positions can accommodate such a schedule. Modified scheduling must have prior supervisory approval and must not disrupt the level of service or the smooth operation of the department. Modified scheduling can be discontinued at any time by the supervisor or department director.
2. Employees will be required to fill out the “Request for Modification of Work Hours” form each year (see next page).
3. Exempt employees working a modified schedule will be required to work whatever hours are necessary to accommodate the workload and the demands of the department.
4. Non-exempt employees who work a modified schedule must have no more than 40 paid hours in one week unless they have prior approval from their supervisor.
5. Vacation and sick leave will be charged based on normal work schedule per day (e.g., 9 hours or 10 hours).
6. Employees will be required to provide a calendar of their proposed flexible work schedule to their supervisor. A ½ hour lunch break must be included in the flexible schedule (e.g., 9-hour day would be 6:00 a.m.– 3:30 p.m.). Any deviations from the flex day schedule must be pre-approved by the supervisor.
7. Time for sick leave and doctor’s appointments of less than 2 hours can be made up within the same pay period (for exempt employees) or within the same week (for non-exempt employees) with prior approval from your supervisor.
8. On pay periods with two holidays, employees shall revert to typical 8-hour days.



# REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION OF WORK HOURS

Requested by (Employee Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In accordance with our Modified Schedule Guidelines, I hereby request a modification of my work hours:

1. Proposed duration of modified hours: from (date) \_\_\_\_\_ to (date) \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Proposed work hours: from (time) \_\_\_\_\_ to (time) \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Attach a calendar showing proposed schedule.
4. During my absence from normal office hours my essential duties will be covered as follows:

5. This modification will benefit the City in the following ways:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Increased hours of coverage for citizen contacts
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improved employee morale
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increased number of "quiet" hours
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improved communication and cross-training
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reduced employee turnover
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improved ability to attract new employees
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improved work-life balance for employees
- \_\_\_\_\_ Greater productivity for the organization

Supervisor Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Department Director Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Frequently Asked Questions

**What if everyone in our office wants to work a modified work schedule with Fridays off? No one would be there on Fridays and we need to staff the office every day of the work week. How does a supervisor decide who gets to choose which dates?**

One of the major prerequisites for offering flexible work options is that customer needs must come first, and customer service cannot be impacted negatively due to these options. Consequently, decisions for approving flexible work requests should not be based on personal needs but rather on organizational needs. If similar proposals are presented, objective criteria, such as employee tenure or specific office needs, may serve to resolve these conflicts. In some cases, where there are multiple people requesting flexible work options, the team must come to an agreement to accommodate these requests while adequately providing customer service coverage.

**Most of the staff in the office can benefit from flexible work options. However, our support staff are key to the work done by the rest of the staff. It doesn't seem fair to let everyone else benefit from these arrangements and not allow the support staff any options, but I don't know what else to do.**

There may be options that work to still provide support for staff while providing flexibility for support staff, even if not for large amounts of time. Often a half hour or hour adjustment in arrival, lunch or departure time can provide meaningful flexibility. Working at home once a month may allow for concentrated time on special projects. This way other staff can plan ahead while still allowing for flexible options for support staff. If there are multiple support staff, they could coordinate schedules to always provide for administrative support and customer service coverage.

**My co-worker and I work in the same department. She recently asked to work a modified work schedule and got approval. I brought up the same idea to my supervisor for me but was turned down. This doesn't seem fair.**

Flexible work options are not an across-the-board benefit for all employees. Managers know the operation of their work units best and are responsible for final decisions on how to get the work accomplished. Some jobs are more amenable to flexible options while others are not. Managers are asked to consider flexible work option requests but have the right to deny the request if it is not mutually beneficial for both the employee and the organization (e.g., if it would jeopardize the level of service we provide to our customers), or if the employee's performance or work habits are not consistent/need improvement.

**Can a supervisor mandate a flexible work arrangement? For example, if I like my 9 a.m.-5 p.m. schedule, can they require me to work a different schedule?**

Yes. One of our goals as an organization is to promote a work environment that helps provide work-life balance for employees. However, customer and organizational needs are always our number one priority. Supervisors should try to make the best effort to try to accommodate an individual employee's scheduling preferences; however, they also need to balance these requests with organizational needs (e.g., customer service coverage).

## **Could a supervisor implement flexible work options to be used for a limited time to meet fluctuating work demands, such as the need for expanded hour coverage at the beginning of a busy season, or to allow for more flexibility when work demand is less, such as during the summer?**

Yes. For example, it may be helpful for an office to have extended hours during a busy season to accommodate special demands. Some staff could have the opportunity to work an early schedule (e.g., 7 a.m.-3 p.m.) and others could work a late schedule (e.g., 11 a.m.-7 p.m.) to provide more customer service coverage. At the end of the busy time, traditional hours could be resumed. Likewise, some offices may choose to offer modified work schedules during the slower summer months to allow employees more flexibility. This arrangement may not accommodate customers as well in the fall, at which time the traditional work hours/arrangement would be resumed. The changes should also not impact our service to customers (customer needs need to come first). Non-exempt (hourly staff) should maintain the same number of hours worked weekly during the revised schedule as well. Overtime pay is required for full-time non-exempt staff who work more than forty hours/week.

## **I work a modified schedule, but the pay period includes two holidays. How does that impact my schedule?**

If there is more than one holiday in a pay period, you should revert to the normal eight-hour work day schedule. If there is only one holiday, you can follow the modified schedule, but you may need to supplement the holiday with additional paid time off benefits if you fall below your regular 80 hours worked during a pay period.

## **Even after I submitted a proposal and discussed it with my supervisor, he/she refuses to agree to implement a flexible work arrangement for me or my colleagues. What can we do?**

Flexible work arrangements must be agreed to by the supervisor. They are not an automatic arrangement. Sometimes they can't be accommodated based on the position (e.g., field crew where everyone needs to be present together to complete tasks). In addition, circumstances may change in a work unit causing a flexible work arrangement to change or be discontinued.

## **I want to telecommute. How do I get started?**

First, review the City's Telecommuting Policy (which can be found on the City's Intranet), then talk with your supervisor about the idea to see if it would be feasible based on the job you're in and your job duties (not all jobs are conducive to telecommuting). If he/she is open to the request, complete and submit the form (Appendix B).

## **If I want to telecommute on a regular basis, will the City provide me the equipment (e.g., computer, work station, etc.)?**

If you want to work from home on a regular basis, your department would need to purchase the equipment for you. Not all departments may be able to afford the equipment immediately and it may need to be budgeted for in the next budget year. You will be responsible for setting up an ergonomically smart workstation (see diagram in Telecommuting Policy) at your home. For assistance, the IT department and your HR Generalist can provide insights to make sure you have a safe space to work at home.

**What if I just want to work at home periodically (e.g., during a winter storm/if I have a big project I need to focus on)?**

You still must get pre-approval from your supervisor. In this case, if you don't already have a docking station/laptop, you'll also need to check one out from IT. Availability is limited and equipment may not always be available. Please give IT at least 24 hours advance notice when possible. Note: you'll want to plan ahead. IT will need to set up a Virtual Private Network (VPN) for you to access your City files online and provide a short training before you first telecommute.

**My co-worker and I talked about the option to share a position to provide better work-life balance for both of us. We worked out a tentative schedule and agree how it would work. What do we do next?**

The first step is bringing your proposed ideas to your supervisor to discuss options and how it may work. He / She will then talk with Human Resources about next steps. Your HR Generalist and supervisor should then sit down with both of you to talk about details (e.g., proration of benefits, schedules, etc.) to make sure everyone is on the same page and to establish a formal agreement.

**Where can I go to get more information about these flexible work options?**

You can talk with your direct supervisor or department director for more information.