**General Information**

1. **What are Flexible Work Options (FWO)?**
   Flexible work options allow a supervisor to meet the needs of both the Michigan Tech Fund and the employee by adjusting the employee’s schedule. Options include flextime (set starting and ending times that differ from a normal schedule), compressed work week (full-time employee completes 40 hours of work in less than five days) and flexplace/telework (allows for a portion of the job to be performed off-site).

2. **What are the most common reasons for a flexible work arrangement?**
   A department may want to extend open hours to provide better customer service, allow employees to better handle personal responsibilities and schedules, reducing the number of days employees are in the office, matching employee work hours to peak customer volume, employee carpooling, and increased opportunities for cross-training.

3. **What’s the difference between a formal flexible work arrangement and a temporary one?**
   A formal arrangement is created after discussion between the supervisor and employee using the FWO process and using the approved forms. A trial period may take place that allows the employee and supervisor time to assess whether or not the arrangement is working. Individual supervisors may choose to have their own guidelines, but they must meet the minimums outlined in the policy.

   An informal arrangement occurs on an as-needed basis and is worked out between the supervisor and the employee. Those arrangements should be temporary.

4. **Who makes the decision about whether or not I can have a flexible work arrangement?**
   Your supervisor is responsible for making the decision. Supervisors are encouraged to be open to accommodating employee requests, but the decision to set and/or change schedules is made by the supervisor. Supervisors need to be consistent in the evaluation of flexible work requests. Questions can be directed to the WorkLife Connections office.

5. **Are hourly and exempt employees eligible for flexible work arrangements?**
   Both types of employees are eligible for flexible work arrangements. Supervisors need to keep the Fair Labor Standards Act in mind when considering or implementing flexible work arrangements for non-exempt (hourly) employees since they are eligible for overtime if they work more than 40 hours in a work week.

6. **What are some examples of Flextime?**
   - Start and quit times that remain constant each work day (7:30 am to 4:30 pm)
   - Start and quit times that vary daily, however, the same number of hours are worked every day (7:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and 9:00 am to 6:00 pm Tuesday and Thursday)
   - Start and quit times with varied daily but the total number of hours worked every week is consistent
   - Extended lunch times offset by additional hours at the beginning and end of the day 7:30 am to 5:00 pm with 1 ½ hours off for lunch daily
   - Mandatory core-time with individualized start and end times with varied daily hours but consistency in the total number of hours worked every week

7. **What are some examples of a compressed work week?**
   - Four 10-hour days per week*
   - Four 9-hour days and one 4-hour day per week

   *Keep in mind that it is mandatory for any non-exempt employee who works more than 6 hours per day to have a ½ hour unpaid lunch break. The length of the unpaid break would be added to the shift length.
8. How do holidays work on a compressed work week schedule?
   All full-time employees are eligible for 8 hours of holiday pay per holiday. If the holiday falls on the employee’s regularly scheduled work day, the employee would be credited for 8 hours of holiday pay for that day. Employees may use vacation or personal leave to maintain their hours of pay or they may opt to work additional work hours sometime during the week. Another option would be for the employee to work 8-hour days the week of a holiday.

9. How does sick leave work on a compressed work week schedule?
   Those working a compressed schedule must account for all hours they would have worked, so if you are working 10-hour days, you would have to take 10 hours of sick time.

10. Are all employees eligible for a flexible work arrangement?
    No. Some positions require employees to be in the office during regular business hours. Factors to be considered by the employee and supervisor include operational needs of the Tech Fund, customer service requirements, productivity required, work/life balance of the employee and employee productivity.

11. If we are already using flexible work options, do we need to formalize it using the policy and forms required?
    Yes. It will be helpful in tracking and monitoring use of flexible options.

12. Can an area of the Tech Fund have Flexible Work Options that are different from the policy?
    Yes, a supervisor may choose to develop his or her own standards by which decisions regarding flexible work arrangements are made. A supervisor may choose to have busy times during the year when all employees must return to the standard work hours/days. The WorkLife Connections office is available to assist a supervisor with creating specific flexible work standards.

13. Can the WorkLife Connections office override a supervisor’s decisions to deny a flexible work arrangement?
    No. The WorkLife Connections office acts as a consultant in the process.

Employee Information

14. I am interested in having a flexible work arrangement. What do I need to do?
    Review the Flexible Work Options Guidelines/Policy and the Employee Tool Kit (all guidelines, worksheets, and forms are available from the Tech Fund’s HR Coordinator). The employee is responsible for initiating the process and meeting with his or her supervisor to start the conversation. You should come to the meeting with the completed Employee Checklist. Keep your area in mind – colleagues, work flow, and the nature of the service provided – when considering asking for a flexible work arrangement. The meeting between the supervisor and employee should be to determine whether such an arrangement is workable and how it can be implemented with a neutral or positive impact on the work of the Tech Fund.

15. How do I know if a flexible work schedule is right for me?
    Your first consideration needs to be your work setting and staffing needs. If your job duties can only be performed in your area during regular business hours, then a compressed work week or flexplace/telework arrangement may not work. You should talk with your supervisor to see if a flextime schedule might be arranged.

16. Can my flexible work arrangement be changed? Who can make a change?
    With reasonable notice, either the supervisor or employee can change or terminate a flexible work arrangement. The first priority for a supervisor is to have an appropriately staffed operation, so if something changes within that operation, a flexible work arrangement may need to be altered. If there is an emergency, a supervisor has the option to change an employee’s schedule. Whenever possible, an employee should be given as much notice when a change is necessary.

17. How long is my flexible work arrangement in place?
    Every flexible work arrangement should be reviewed annually and a form filed with the HR Coordinator, indicating renewal.
18. My friend who works in a different department was able to get a flexible work arrangement, but my supervisor said “no.” Why are things handled differently for different employees?
Not every position is eligible for a flexible work arrangement. Supervisors are encouraged to find ways to make flexible work arrangements work for their employees whenever possible. Since your supervisor is responsible for the department’s operation, they have the authority to approve or deny a flexible work arrangement. Since every position and situation is different, you can’t assume that the same decision will be made for similar positions.

19. I am currently working in a position with a flexible work arrangement, but I am considering applying for a different position in Tech Fund or a department at the University where they can’t offer the same kind of arrangement. Can I insist that they keep my current schedule?
No, employees don’t have any rights regarding a flexible work arrangement if they decide to work in a different area. Michigan Tech Fund arrangements do not carry over to University departments. Employees considering opportunities in other areas should make sure they include questions about work arrangements during the interview process.

20. What happens if a meeting, training session or important event is scheduled when I am supposed to be off?
It is important to remember that the work of the university and the department must not suffer as a result of employees using flexible work options. There will be events or meetings that cannot be scheduled around your flexible schedule. This needs to be discussed between the employee and supervisor to determine how it will be handled. In some cases, the employee may have to come in. The schedule for non-exempt employees would have to be adjusted so that overtime would be avoided.

21. If I don’t take my breaks or lunch period, can I leave early?
Breaks may not be accumulated by the employee nor used to leave work early or come in late. You can work with your supervisor to see if your lunch schedule can be adjusted.

22. What if my schedule needs to be adjusted for a short period of time for a special event or specific project? Do I need to fill out the form?
No. If a schedule is being adjusted for a short time, it isn’t necessary to use the process.

23. I want to take a class, but don’t want to have to take vacation. Can this policy be used to accommodate that request?
You can develop a flexible schedule, in conjunction with your supervisor, on a semester-by-semester basis to meet this need. This type of arrangement would require filling out the flexible work options form because it is not a temporary situation.

24. What do I do if my flexible work arrangement isn’t working out?
Your first step is to talk with your supervisor. It is up to the two of you to work out the details. If there are issues, you may contact the WorkLife Connections office.

25. How long will it take my proposal to be approved?
There is no specific timeline in place.

26. As a supervisor, how do I deal with the possibility that everyone is going to want to have Friday or Monday off?
Other places where flexible work options have been offered to employees have indicated that this rarely comes up. Decisions for approving or denying flexible work arrangements should be based on organizational needs, as well as the needs of the employee. Objective criteria, such as seniority, special skills, or office needs, should be considered. You may need to get all of the requestors together to figure out how to handle it.

27. As a supervisor, how do I say yes to an employee and no to someone else?
Supervisors must make the decision based on operational needs of the area in conjunction with the employee’s needs. Rather than saying “no” to a specific type of request, consider whether a different type of flexible work arrangement might work.

28. As a supervisor, can I require someone else to change his or her schedule to accommodate others who want a flexible work schedule?
You can change work schedules and arrangements to accommodate the needs of your area, but move cautiously if it may appear that you are favoring certain employees.

29. Can flexible work arrangements be used to deal with busy times of the year when there is a need for our office to be open earlier or later?
Yes – it may be helpful for your area to be open earlier or later during the beginning of a semester or during the summer if you’re dealing with youth programs. If this is a short-term arrangement, then it is not necessary to fill out the FWO paperwork. Supervisors should be clear on their expectations of working varied hours during the year when employees are hired or as soon as it is evident that there will need to be a change in the future.

* Keep in mind that it is mandatory for any non-exempt employee who works more than 6 hours per day to have a ½ hour unpaid lunch break. The length of the unpaid break would be added to the shift length. If an hourly employee works more than 40 hours in a work week, they must be paid overtime.

30. I’m a supervisor. Can I participate in a flexible work schedule?
Yes, it may be possible for some supervisors to participate if it fits into the work flow of the Tech Fund.

31. Can employees work on a Saturday or Sunday as part of their flexible work schedule?
If the needs of the Tech Fund are being met with an employee working on a weekend, that’s fine. The supervisor needs to remember that additional resources (additional heating/cooling) should not be utilized for this purpose.

32. How do I interact with someone who is using a flexible work option if they are not in the office?
Interactions should be discussed and determined when the initial FWO is developed and periodic evaluation by both the employee and supervisor to see if things are happening as expected. If the person has a compressed work week, does the supervisor expect the employee to check his or her email on their day off?** Clarifying communication is just as important as clearly laying out work assignments and due dates.

** NOTE: If the employee is non-exempt (hourly), they must be compensated for time when work is done, even if it is not done in the office. Caution must be used to avoid overtime situations.

33. What are the factors that I should consider when evaluating a flexible work arrangements request?
Considerations should be given to the work that needs to be done, the needs of the Tech Fund, the supervisor and the employee. Additional factors you may consider are:
- What are the customer and Tech Fund needs?
- Is there a restriction on where the work can be done?
- What are the needs of the employee?
- Is the employee part of a team that works together most of the time and would require changing everyone’s schedule?
- Will the arrangement positively contribute to the productivity of the organization?
- Does the employee have a need to meet face-to-face with customers on a regular basis?

34. How can I manage/supervise someone that I rarely see?
It is imperative that on-going updates and evaluation of goals, assignments, and due dates takes place on a regular basis. It will be up to you and the employee to determine how and when this happens.

35. I’m not really sure that I am comfortable with my staff using flexible work options. What are the things I need to consider?
As a supervisor, you are the person to determine whether or not flexible work options are appropriate for your area and your staff. You need to carefully consider whether or not this will work, but remember that reasons for not approving requests must be applied consistently. The Manager Tool Kit can help you to
have a discussion with the employee who has requested an FWO. Things to consider include work flow in the office, employee performance, contribution to overall effectiveness of the area, assistance in work/life balance for the employee, and using flexible work as a way to retain a valued employee.

36. One of my employees wants to work from home but I need them in the office. How do I handle that situation?
   As the supervisor of an area, you do not need to approve every request. If there is a need for the employee to be in the office, then you can deny the request. You may want to consider whether or not the employee might be eligible for a different type of flexible work (flextime or compressed work week) that could help out with their work/life balance.

37. We have several employees with flexible work arrangements in my office but I am worried that coverage is going to be a problem during busy times of the year. Is there anything I can do?
   Many areas have times when everyone needs to be in the office during regular business hours. Supervisors can require that flexible work arrangements be suspended during these times.

38. Many of my employees are asking to use a flextime or a compressed work week, but there are some staff who need to be in the office during regular business hours. It doesn’t seem fair to let everyone else benefit from these arrangements, but I don’t have a good reason to deny their requests. What should I do?
   It may be possible to offer employees small variations in their start or end times to be sure that the office is covered. In some cases, there may not be any options available. A simple objective explanation should be sufficient.

39. Can I use a flexible work arrangement to take care of a sick child?
   In some cases, a short-term arrangement may be made between an employee and his/her supervisor. The supervisor must grant approval for the arrangement.

Flexplace/Telework

40. In a flexplace arrangement, how can we be sure that our data security is maintained?
   Supervisors and employees should consult with their IT staff to be sure that required security measures are in place. There may be some costs involved. Arrangements should be made prior to the start of flexplace work for covering those costs.

41. If I work from home, can my boss come to my house?
   A supervisor may request to visit the employee during the employee’s regularly scheduled work hours. When approved in advance by the employee, the supervisor may visit to ensure that the home office setting meets appropriate work and safety requirements.

42. As a flexplace worker, I’m concerned about losing connections with my co-workers. Any suggestions?
   Touch base with your co-workers at least once a week. Be present at meetings whenever possible. Conference calls are ok, but physical presence is better. If you work from home several days a week, be prepared to change your days to be able to attend key meetings. Make sure that everyone knows how to get in touch with you if they have an urgent matter.

Managing Flexplace/Telework

43. What do I need to consider before approving a flexplace/telework arrangement?
   • Is there benefit to both the Tech Fund and the employee by approving the arrangement?
   • Where will the flexplace work site be located? Is the site safe, ergonomically acceptable, and secure?
   • What is the duration of the proposed agreement?
   • Is there a clear definition of the work schedule, work to be done, expected results, and frequency of employee evaluation?
   • What equipment will be provided by the employee? By the Tech Fund?
   • Does the employee understand responsibility for maintaining security of Tech Fund and University property, documents, and data located at the site and preventing unauthorized access to sensitive or confidential data?
• If applicable, what arrangements has the employee made for dependent care giving?
• If the employee is non-exempt, is he/she aware of the need for prior approval by the supervisor for overtime?

44. How will I know that employees working from home are productive? Can I require documentation to support an employee’s performance? How do I provide feedback to someone who is not in the office?
All employees will be expected to meet the same performance standards as otherwise required. Supervisors are expected to use the same performance review criteria that have been in place. The flexplace agreement should detail how the employee’s productivity and performance will be evaluated.

45. Can I require that someone with a flexplace arrangement be here for meetings or other events?
Yes, you can. That discussion should be part of the original agreement.

46. Is it possible to test a flexplace arrangement before final implementation?
It is recommended that a trial period take place before a flexplace arrangement is finalized.

47. Can someone with a flexplace arrangement also have flexible hours?
Yes, that can happen. The flexplace agreement should clearly define the hours the employee is expected to be available to others in the office and customers.

48. How can I manage my flexplace employees who are also part of a work team?
The flexplace agreement should detail expectations of the employee’s working with others in the office. If the work team has regular meetings onsite, the flexplace employee can be required to attend those meetings, either in person or via teleconference.

49. Some of my employees who do not have a flexplace arrangement seem to be jealous of those who do. Any suggestions?
All flexible work arrangements should provide a benefit to the office/Tech Fund. As a supervisor, you need to be able to share those benefits with the other employees. You must also be able to show how the work being done is integral to the operations of the Tech Fund. Flexplace work should not be seen as a way to get out of work responsibilities. The flexplace employee should be viewed as an important part of work group and should be part of regular meetings and gatherings.

50. How often should the flexplace agreement be reviewed? How long should I give the arrangement before I make any changes?
All flexplace arrangements are subject to ongoing review. Any changes should be based on business and operational considerations.

All Michigan Tech Fund flexible work options forms and guidelines have been adapted from the forms developed by Michigan Technological University, with thanks to Cleveland State University, George Washington University, Cornell University, Lehigh University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Kentucky, University of Arizona, and MIT whose WorkLife websites were especially helpful and are quoted in these forms and guidelines.