

Executive Message from Lori Wanamaker: Share Your Experience

From: Executive Update PSA:EX <ExecutiveUpdate@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: May 17, 2021 12:02:46 PM PDT
Attachments: image005.png, image001.png

LORI WANAMAKER

Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and
Head of the BC Public Service



Executive Message from Lori Wanamaker: Share Your Experience

Good morning,

Among its many impacts, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced a major shift in how we all work over the last year. I continue to be impressed by the resilience and adaptability that the public service has shown in continuing to do our important work throughout this time. As I have previously noted, there are a lot of lessons to be learned from this experience. With that in mind, the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Public Service Renewal is actively examining how and where members of the BC Public Service work. This includes considering our approach to remote or flexible work arrangements.

Many of you have, of course, continued to work in your regular workplaces throughout the pandemic, adapting to ensure the safety of you, your coworkers and the clients you may serve. Whether at your regular designated work location or remote, each one of you has likely identified a range of benefits and challenges related to how we have been working over the past year. While our current model has allowed us to continue to serve B.C., we realize that, for most of us, continuing as we have been is not sustainable on a permanent basis. In fact, in research we've done in recent months, the majority of those working from home have indicated their preference is to not continue working remotely on a full-time basis. As such, we will be working over the next several months to update our corporate approach to work arrangements.

Our updated approach to how and where we work will be driven by three primary factors:

1. Ensuring effective and, where possible, enhanced delivery of service to people in British Columbia.
2. Delivering on our accountability and priorities as an employer.
3. Providing a positive employee experience for the BC Public Service.

To help inform our decision, your input is requested. For the next two weeks, the online ThoughtExchange platform will be open for you to share your perspectives on how we work. Keeping in mind the factors listed above, I'm asking you to share your ideas and experiences on the following:

1. Regardless of whether your workplace has changed, what new challenges have you experienced in performing your duties and/or delivering services over the course of the pandemic?
 - [Respond to question 1](#)
2. Regardless of whether your workplace has changed, tell us about any new ways of working that you feel have been beneficial and that we should continue post-pandemic?
 - [Respond to question 2](#)
3. What new practices did you, your team and your supervisor put in place to keep in touch and keep informed of where people were working and/or what they were working on during the course of the pandemic?
 - [Respond to question 3](#)
4. As we move forward, what tools and work arrangements do you see as essential for you to do your best work and for government to provide the best possible service to people in British Columbia?
 - [Respond to question 4](#)

You can participate by clicking the link for each question. The ThoughtExchange closes on May 28. We'll follow up to share a summary of the results and provide more information on our next steps.

Your feedback is a valuable input into the development of a refreshed approach to flexible work. Thank you for continuing to be flexible, resilient and patient as we navigate the pandemic together. And most importantly, thank you for sharing your thoughts so we can continue charting the future of the BC Public Service.

Sincerely,
Lori Wanamaker
Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and Head of the BC Public Service



Where ideas work

Please note: replies to this email will go to Employee News, and will be forwarded to the relevant executive members as appropriate.

Executive Message from Lori Wanamaker: Nature of Work Engagement

From: Executive Update PSA:EX <ExecutiveUpdate@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: June 24, 2021 10:00:14 AM PDT
Attachments: image004.png, image001.png

LORI WANAMAKER

Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and
Head of the BC Public Service



Nature of Work Engagement

Good morning.

We are now officially into summer, bringing with it a growing sense of optimism that we are progressing out of the pandemic. In May, I invited you to participate in an online opportunity to contribute your perspectives and experience with working from home during the unique circumstance of the last 16 months. Today I can share with you some of the high-level results of the input you shared.

First, my thanks to all of you who participated. More than 9,500 of you took the time to answer at least one of the four questions on the ThoughtExchange platform, sharing 39,233 comments. You also took the time to provide nearly 450,000 ratings of those comments to indicate those with which you most and least agreed. You can read a summary of the most prominent themes that emerged in a [report](#) posted to the @Work site today. A few of you also asked to see the data from a survey conducted by the BC Public Service Agency earlier this year, and this is available in a [separate report](#) on @Work. This survey found that while most of those working from home would like to continue doing so, for a majority the preference was to do so on a part-time rather than full-time basis.

In both these reports, those of you who participated sent a clear message that you wish to continue some level of flexible working arrangement on a permanent basis. This isn't a surprise and is consistent with data from many other surveys of employee preference across the private and public sectors. I can assure you that this message has been heard, and I appreciate all the input we have received. I am also conscious of the fact that while continued flexible work is clearly a widely held preference it is also not universal. For many of you, working from home has never been an option given the nature of the work you do. And in the ThoughtExchange comments we also heard from those of you would prefer a full-time return to your regular workplace. We are taking all these perspectives into account as we finalize decisions on our approach to flexible work post-pandemic.

As I have also noted previously, employee preference is not and cannot be the sole determining factor in our longer-term approach. Within your feedback, many of you rightly acknowledged the importance of service delivery to British Columbians. Our obligations to the public must always remain our primary focus. And the BC Public Service has accountabilities as an employer that it must also meet. How we addressed these during a prolonged health emergency is not necessarily sustainable on a permanent basis, and both these factors are essential considerations in addition to the preferences of BC Public Service employees.

While not widely adopted, the BC Public Service has had policies and processes in place since 2010 to support flexible working through telework agreements where operationally possible. So the question is not whether or not we will support flexible work. We have for a decade and will continue to do so. The question is the extent to which we can sustain a broader level of adoption and how we do that in ways that ensure we meet our obligations to the public and as an employer. Final decisions on that are still to be determined by the Deputy Ministers' Council, and you can expect further updates from me as we finalize our approach in the next few weeks.

In the meantime, as the province approaches the anticipated transition to Step 3 of its restart plan a week from now, I will remind you that our approach through the summer will remain the same. Our workplaces remain safe, and we will update safety measures as needed in the transition to Step 3. Those of you working from home now may continue to do so. But if you wish to voluntarily return to your regular workplace over the summer, you are supported and encouraged to do that as well.

Thank you again to all those who took the time to help inform our deliberations on our longer-term approach to flexible work. And thank you to every one of you for your continued professionalism and resilience in serving British Columbians.

Sincerely,

Lori Wanamaker

Deputy Minister to the Premier,

Cabinet Secretary and Head of the BC Public Service



Where ideas work

We acknowledge with respect that the BC Public Service operates throughout B.C. on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples. The BC Public Service is deeply committed to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in B.C.

Please note: replies to this email will go to Employee News, and will be forwarded to the relevant executive members as appropriate.

Executive Message from Lori Wanamaker: BC's Restart Step 3

From: Executive Update PSA:EX <ExecutiveUpdate@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: July 2, 2021 10:49:33 AM PDT
Attachments: image004.png, image005.png, image006.png

LORI WANAMAKER

Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and
Head of the BC Public Service



BC's Restart Step 3

Good morning,

Yesterday the province officially moved into Step 3 of [BC's Restart plan](#). Progression through BC's Restart plan is proof of the positive impact B.C.'s vaccination campaign and other safety measures have on our collective fight against COVID-19.

In [Step 3 of BC's Restart plan](#), restrictions in areas such as travel, personal gatherings and office capacity have eased. While BC Public Service workplaces are ready to adapt workplace safety measures to align with Step 3, including increased workplace capacity, we will continue to take a gradual and thoughtful approach in how we transition workplaces. This allows employees who have continued to work in regular workplaces and on the frontline throughout the pandemic time to adapt and evaluate service changes. Understandably, feelings of excitement and anxiety, or both, are natural.

The Public Service Agency is providing support to ministries to help ensure staff safety as workplaces move into Step 3. This includes working closely with WorkSafeBC to transition from Workplace COVID-19 Safety Plans to Communicable Disease Plans, focusing on preventative measures such as handwashing and personal hygiene practices, cleaning, staying home when sick and what to do if there is an increase in local COVID-19 transmission.

To answer questions about our transition to Step 3, the [COVID-19 Information for BC Public Service Employees](#) webpage is updated, including updates to the BC Public Service COVID-19 Response FAQ. This webpage is your up-to-date resource for information about COVID-19 workplace guidelines.

Separate to this transition to Step 3, [as mentioned in my email last week](#), your corporate executive team and I are finalizing the details for what our post-pandemic flexible work model will look like. Stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks. In the interim, our approach through the summer remains the same. Employees working from home may continue to do so and those wishing to return to workplaces are supported and encouraged to return.

Thank you for your continued flexibility as we shift through the stages of BC's Restart plan. I applaud everyone's collective efforts as we safely take another step toward putting this pandemic behind us.

Take care and stay safe in the heat.

Sincerely,
Lori Wanamaker
Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and Head of the BC Public Service



Where ideas work

Executive Message from Lori Wanamaker: Flexible Work in the BC Public Service

From: Executive Update PSA:EX <ExecutiveUpdate@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: July 20, 2021 10:12:55 AM PDT
Attachments: image004.png, image006.png

LORI WANAMAKER

Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and
Head of the BC Public Service



Flexible Work in the BC Public Service

Good morning,

Here we are already well into summer. Before I get to an update on flexible working, let me express my appreciation to all of you supporting the response to an already challenging wildfire season in B.C. My thoughts are with all those affected by the fires, particularly in the community of Lytton.

I know many of you have been patiently waiting for confirmation of our approach to flexible working, and today I am pleased to share that direction with you. As I noted in my June message on this topic, the BC Public Service has had policies and processes in place to support flexible working for over a decade. A review of that policy approach determined we do not need to make significant changes to allow for a broader adoption of flexible work. We supported flexible work arrangements before the COVID-19 pandemic, and our existing policy framework allows us to continue to do so where possible and appropriate.

What has changed, of course, is the greatly expanded scale of remote work adopted during the pandemic, and the experience we have gained in the positive and challenging aspects of working from home. In the unique context of this public health emergency and to be responsive to public health directions, we temporarily relaxed some of the requirements we would normally have in place for flexible work. We will now be reinstating these along with some new criteria in the best interests of both employees and the employer. As a result, those who wish to continue working from home will need to have an approved telework agreement in place by September 7, 2021 using the corporate template provided by the BC Public Service Agency. This aligns with the anticipated date for the transition to [Step 4 of the provincial Restart Plan](#), and it provides ample time for you to work through establishing or updating telework agreements with your supervisor.

Decisions on flexible work need to balance individual employee preferences with the fundamental priority of service delivery to British Columbians and fulfilling our obligations as an employer. I believe that can be done effectively within the model we have in place. As we adjust to a more sustainable deployment of flexible work, in addition to each individual employee's performance and preference, we also need to consider the potential impact on organizational culture, team dynamics and other members of a team. Not all of us have been able to work from home or want to do so on a permanent basis. And so we need to consider how remote work will influence the employee experience for our colleagues as well as each of us as individuals. This will be part of the discussions you can expect to have in your ministries and teams.

More information on the [criteria for flexible work and our approach](#) is available on MyHR and I encourage you to review that information if you are interested in continuing with a flexible work arrangement. You can expect further communication from your ministry executive on how they plan to support sustained flexible working in your ministry's unique operating context. It will take some time for ministries to finalize their approach to applying this corporate direction, and so I encourage you to be patient as your executive and leadership teams work with you in the coming weeks.

My thanks for your patience as we have worked to finalize this approach and for the input so many of you have contributed along the way to help inform our decisions. We have learned a lot from this experience and the many successes you have achieved along the way, and we will continue to explore how we can draw on those lessons to improve how we work as a public service in the months ahead.

As always, thank you for your continued professionalism in serving the people of our province. It's been a challenging first half of the year in so many ways, and I know you have all worked very hard through everything we have faced. The outlook for the pandemic continues to improve, offering hope and optimism for

the second half of the year. I hope you all find the opportunity to get a break this summer to take care of yourselves and those most important to you.

Sincerely,
Lori Wanamaker
Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and Head of the BC Public Service



Where ideas work

We acknowledge with respect that the BC Public Service operates throughout B.C. on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples. The BC Public Service is deeply committed to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in B.C.
Please note: replies to this email will go to Employee News, and will be forwarded to the relevant executive members as appropriate.

Executive Message from Lori Wanamaker: COVID-19 Update

From: Executive Update PSA:EX <ExecutiveUpdate@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: August 24, 2021 2:05:10 PM PDT
Attachments: image004.png, image005.png, image004.png, image006.png, image003.png, image001.png

LORI WANAMAKER

Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and
Head of the BC Public Service



COVID-19 Update

Good afternoon,

In the last two days, government has provided updates for British Columbians on some important next steps in B.C.'s pandemic response. As always, we have assessed the impact these steps have on BC Public Service workplaces.

The requirement for proof of vaccination announced Monday will apply in certain social and recreational settings and events. It does not, however, apply in BC Public Service workplaces at this time. We have appropriate safety measures in place, including for workplaces in the Interior Health region where measures are aligned to the most recent public health orders. The Public Service Agency continues to work with ministries to ensure our workplaces remain safe, and we will continue to adapt our approach consistent with public health advice or where any unique risks may be identified.

Today, the Provincial Health Officer announced she is reinstating mandatory mask use in public indoor settings province-wide. In the Interior Health region, masks are mandatory in all workplaces consistent with recent health orders. Everywhere else in the province, masks are now required in areas of office buildings where services to the public are provided and remain recommended in other workplaces.

Considering the recent increase in COVID-19 cases and the potential delay in the transition to Step 4 of B.C.'s Restart Plan, we have decided to postpone the implementation of our flexible work approach at this time. If you wish to continue working remotely longer-term, you are still required to have an approved telework agreement in place by September 7. However, we will not expect the schedules set out in those telework agreements to apply until October 12, after the Thanksgiving long weekend.

The [Flexible Work FAQ](#) has been updated on MyHR to reflect these changes. The Public Service Agency will update the COVID-19 FAQ with information to reflect these changes shortly. We will continue to assess our plans in the context of the pandemic over the weeks ahead and communicate any further changes as needed. But for now, this means if you are currently working remotely you can continue to do so until at least October 12. However, as has been the case throughout the summer, if you wish to return to your regular workplace in the interim you are encouraged and supported to do so. Those who need to or choose to be in our workplaces can rest assured they remain safe.

We have a very high vaccination rate across B.C. that continues to improve each day, with approximately three-quarters of eligible British Columbians now having received their second dose. Vaccines remain our best defense against COVID-19. If you are among those who have not yet been vaccinated, I strongly encourage you to do so if you are able. It is easy, it is safe and it is one important step we can take that will literally save lives in our communities.

I know the pandemic continues to be a concern for all of us, personally and professionally. My thanks to all of you for your continued professionalism in the face of this ongoing challenge – and thanks also to those of you who are protecting yourselves and your communities by getting vaccinated. We will get through this by continuing to work together, and by being kind, being calm and being safe.

Sincerely,

Lori Wanamaker

Deputy Minister to the Premier,

Cabinet Secretary and Head of the BC Public Service



Where ideas work

We acknowledge with respect that the BC Public Service operates throughout B.C. on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples. The BC Public Service is deeply committed to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in B.C.

Please note: replies to this email will go to Employee News, and will be forwarded to the relevant executive members as appropriate.

FW: Flexible Work in the BC Public Service

From: Marquis, Yvette PREM:EX <Yvette.Marquis@gov.bc.ca>
To: Marquis, Yvette PREM:EX <Yvette.Marquis@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: September 22, 2021 10:23:54 AM PDT
Attachments: Flexible Work FAQ - July 2021.pdf

From: Marquis, Yvette PREM:EX <Yvette.Marquis@gov.bc.ca> **On Behalf Of** Wanamaker, Lori PREM:EX

Sent: July 14, 2021 1:55 PM

To: BCPSA Agency Corporate Executive <BCPSAAgencyCorporateExecutive@Victoria1.gov.bc.ca>

Subject: Flexible Work in the BC Public Service

Good afternoon,

The Deputy Minister's Council met yesterday to finalize the direction on an updated flexible work model for the BC Public Service, and I'm able to share an overview of that direction with you today. We will discuss this direction further at our Corporate Executive meeting tomorrow and I ask that you not share this information at this time. The BC Public Service has had policies and processes in place to support flexible work for more than a decade. Some of the flexible work requirements were relaxed during the COVID-19 pandemic to allow for a quick transition of more employees working from home at the direction of the Public Health Officer. Now that we are moving beyond the public health emergency, the BC Public Service is re-instating its pre-pandemic approach to flexible work, including the mandatory completion of telework agreements for all flexible work arrangements.

As a result, employees who wish to continue working remotely may do so until the anticipated transition to step 4 of the restart plan on September 7. To continue working remotely beyond that date, employees must have an approved telework agreement in place using the template provided by the BC Public Service Agency (PSA).

Employees who do not have an approved agreement in place on September 7 will return to their regular workplace at that time. They may still establish a flexible work arrangement after that date but must return to their regular workplace until an approved agreement is in place.

In addition to the pre-existing criteria, the updated approach includes the following changes:

1. Current employees must complete all mandatory corporate training prescribed by the Public Service Agency before a telework agreement can be approved. This includes IM 117 and the Annual Review of the Standards of Conduct and Oath of Employment. New employees, especially those hired as teleworkers, must take the Oath and complete IM 117 as soon as possible after they're hired. The PSA may prescribe additional training in the future.
2. Requests for remote work three days or more a week require approval by the employee's Assistant Deputy Minister or Executive Lead. Ministries have discretion to delegate this approval decision as deemed appropriate to a senior excluded manager or another member of executive.
3. If the employee works remotely three or more days a week, they acknowledge their ministry will require them to forego a dedicated desk or workspace in their regular workplace, subject to the ministry's workspace planning requirements. Ministries may, at their discretion, extend this requirement to telework agreements that involve one or two days of remote work per week to address their workspace planning needs.

I recognize each ministry has unique needs and requirements shaped by its mandate, priorities and operations. Ministries will therefore make their own decisions about the extent to which they enable flexible work options while ensuring organizational effectiveness. But where flexible work is supported, it must be implemented following this corporate approach and using the corporate telework template and criteria. This model is structured to provide ministries discretion to apply the framework in their work environment and unique service delivery context. Ministries are accountable for tracking, reporting and storing telework agreement data and the PSA will work with your strategic human resources leads to enable corporate reporting on adoption of flexible work in the weeks ahead. Moving forward this information will be used for workforce planning and analysis.

A FAQ document with more details is attached to provide further information on this approach and at tomorrow's meeting we will provide more detail on the planned communication of this direction to the public service. We will be sharing material with your ministry SHR leads following tomorrow's meeting, so please do not share this information at this time.

This direction on flexible work addresses the initial priority under the Nature of Work initiative overseen by the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Public Service Renewal. But it is only one component of the Nature of Work discussion, which aims to more broadly set a vision for how we enhance the way the public service works longer-term. You can expect opportunities to engage in that broader conversation in the months ahead.

I look forward to our meeting tomorrow.

Sincerely,
Lori Wanamaker
Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and Head of the BC Public Service

Flexible Work in the BC Public Service FAQ

EMBARGOED: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Part One: Flexible Work Approach3

1. What is the BC Public Service’s updated approach to flexible work? 3
2. What do you mean by “flexible” work? 3
3. What factors were considered when developing our refreshed flexible working model? 4
4. Will the approach to flexible work be applied the same in all ministries? 4
5. Are supervisors or ministries required to support flexible working? 4
6. Who may participate in telework arrangements? 4
7. What is meant by “operationally feasible” in the context of approving telework agreements? 4

Part Two: Telework Agreements6

8. Why do I need to use the corporate telework agreement template? 6
9. If I already have an approved telework agreement that pre-dates this updated approach do I need to get my supervisor to approve a new agreement? 6
10. I am taking part in Leading Workplace Strategies (LWS). Do I need a telework agreement? 6
11. What is the general process for requesting a telework arrangement? 6
12. Why do I have to have a telework agreement completed by September 7? 7
13. If I don’t have a telework agreement approved by September 7, does that mean I won’t be able to work from home? 7
14. Why do I have to complete a telework agreement now when I didn’t have to during the pandemic? 7
15. Why do I need my supervisor’s approval? 7
16. What are the criteria supervisors use in considering whether to approve a request for flexible work? 7
17. I have been working remotely full-time during the pandemic. Will this still be an option after September 7? 8
18. I used to work in the office, but I have found it is much easier given my individual circumstances to work from home. How do I get a telework agreement so I can continue working from home? 8
19. If I change jobs does my telework agreement still apply? 9
20. Do any of my terms and conditions of employment change? 9
21. I only telework from home on a very occasional basis and not according to a strict schedule (e.g., working from home one morning due to a home emergency, working from home one afternoon to focus on a specific work project, etc.) Do I still need to have a formal telework agreement signed by myself and my supervisor/manager? 9

<u>22. Can I telework from another province?</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>24. What is the process for terminating a telework arrangement?</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>25. My work unit has been restructured and my manager now wishes to terminate the telework arrangement to meet operational requirements. Is that permissible? What if I don't agree?</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>26. Other members of my team have been granted telework agreements. My supervisor refuses to grant me one. What should I do?</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>27. Why do I have to check in with my supervisor when I work remotely?</u>	<u>10</u>
Part Three: Flexible Work Tools and Expenses	11
<u>28. Who is responsible for the costs of equipping a home-based work location?</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>29. Can I use my personal computer or other tools if I'm working from home?</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>31. If I am called into the office on a scheduled telework day, may I claim reimbursement for travel costs between my home and the office?</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>32. What if my child or other dependent is sick on a day I'm scheduled to telework?</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>33. What if I require home renovations to establish a home office? Will the employer pay for that?</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>34. Are expenses related to my home office eligible for income tax deductions?</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>35. I was allowed to take some equipment home during the pandemic. Do I have to return that equipment if I am going to continue to work outside of the office?</u>	<u>12</u>
Part Four: BC Public Service Office Space	13
<u>36. If I work outside of the office, does that mean I won't have a dedicated desk when I work in the office?</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>37. Will more ShareSpace locations be established throughout the province?</u>	<u>13</u>
Part Five: Support and Resources	14
<u>38. What resources or training are there to support employees and supervisors with flexible work arrangements?</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>39. Are there resources/tools that I and my supervisor/manager can access to assist with considering whether to initiate and implement a telework arrangement?</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>40. Who should I contact if I have questions?</u>	<u>14</u>

Part One: Flexible Work Approach

1. What is the BC Public Service's updated approach to flexible work?

The BC Public Service has had policies and processes in place to support flexible work for more than a decade. Some of the flexible work requirements were relaxed during the COVID-19 pandemic to allow for a quick transition of more employees working from home at the direction of the Public Health Officer.

Now that the public health emergency is no longer in place, the BC Public Service is reinstating its pre-pandemic approach to flexible work, including the mandatory completion of telework agreements for all flexible work arrangements.

Employees who wish to continue working remotely may do so until September 7. To continue working remotely beyond that date, you must have an approved telework agreement in place using the telework agreement template. You must also meet the criteria outlined on MyHR. If you do not have an approved agreement in place on September 7, you are required to return to your regular workplace on a regular schedule.

In addition to the pre-existing criteria, the updated approach includes the following changes:

- Current employees must complete all mandatory corporate training prescribed by the Public Service Agency before a telework agreement can be approved. This includes IM 117 and the Annual Review of the Standards of Conduct and Oath of Employment. New employees, especially those hired as teleworkers, must take the Oath and complete IM 117 as soon as possible after they're hired. The PSA may prescribe additional training in the future.
- Requests for remote work three days or more a week require approval by your Assistant Deputy Minister or Executive Lead. Ministries have discretion to delegate this approval decision as deemed appropriate to a senior excluded manager or another member of executive.
- If you wish to work remotely three or more days a week, your ministry will require you to forego a dedicated desk or workspace in your regular workplace, subject to the ministry's workspace planning requirements. At their discretion, ministries may extend this requirement to telework agreements involving one or more days of remote work a week to address their workspace planning needs.

2. What do you mean by "flexible" work?

Flexible work for the BC Public Service is defined as alternate work arrangements, which includes mobile work within a BC Public Service office, working from home or working from another location outside the office.

Depending on the operational needs of the ministry, such as employee and ministry requirements for providing excellent service to our citizens, employees should discuss with their supervisor to determine if a flexible work arrangement is suitable for their role.

This does not include flexibility in schedules beyond what is supported through existing collective agreement provisions, or the terms and conditions of employment for excluded employees.

3. What factors were considered when developing our refreshed flexible working model?

The new flexible working model is shaped by three primary factors:

- Ensuring effective and, where possible, enhanced delivery of service to people in British Columbia.
- Delivering on our accountability and priorities as an employer.
- Providing a positive employee experience for the BC Public Service.

4. Will the approach to flexible work be applied the same in all ministries?

Each ministry has unique needs and requirements shaped by its mandate, priorities and operations. Ministries use their discretion to apply the flexible work framework in their work environment to support their employees, ensure operational effectiveness and provide service to citizens. There is no one-size-fits all approach to flexible work.

The BC Public Service remains flexible to the unique needs of each ministry, our employees and our citizens as we create and implement the model. However, where ministries do support flexible work options, they must do so using the mandatory telework agreement template and follow applicable BC Public Service policies and criteria.

5. Are supervisors or ministries required to support flexible working?

While the BC Public Service supports flexible working in principle, ministries and supervisors determine their level of support for flexible work in the context of their unique operational needs. Where flexible work is supported, it must be implemented following the corporately defined policies and criteria set out by the PSA. This includes using the approved telework agreement template.

6. Who may participate in telework arrangements?

Regular full-time or part-time employees are eligible for telework. Supervisors should contact MyHR for guidance in cases where other employee or appointees wish to pursue telework agreements.

Teleworking is not an employee entitlement or right. The BC Public Service has the discretion to determine if a proposed telework agreement should be approved.

7. What is meant by “operationally feasible” in the context of approving telework agreements?

The BC Public Service supports flexible work arrangements that are advantageous to both the employer and employees. When considering a telework agreement, supervisors should assess a range of factors to determine whether it's operationally feasible.

At a basic level, supervisors need to determine whether the employee can fulfil the responsibilities of their job and if it's operationally effective for the work to be done from the employee's work location. In

addition to assessing the impact on service delivery and productivity, consider the impact – positive or negative – on factors such as team dynamics and engagement, organizational culture and the ability of other members in the employee's work group to fulfil their duties. Supervisors should not assess each telework agreement request in isolation, but rather in the context of the overall organizational effectiveness of their business area.

Part Two: Telework Agreements

8. Why do I need to use the corporate telework agreement template?

The template addresses all the responsibilities of both the employee and the employer for the protection of both parties. It is also the only template endorsed by the BCGEU for use with BC Public Service employees and is consistent with the provisions of the collective agreement.

9. If I already have an approved telework agreement that pre-dates this updated approach do I need to get my supervisor to approve a new agreement?

Telework agreements should be reviewed annually. If your existing agreement is more than one year old, you should review it with your supervisor and confirm it can continue.

If your existing agreement was established in the last year, you should confirm with your supervisor they still support you continuing your current arrangement after September 7. If your agreement allows for working from home three or more days a week, your supervisor also needs to have the request approved by your Assistant Deputy Minister or Executive Lead. You will need to update your agreement or establish a new one to reflect any changes to your current arrangement.

All telework agreements must also use the corporate telework agreement template provided by the BC Public Service Agency. If your existing agreement does not use this template, you will need to complete a new agreement using the proper template and have it approved. All sections of the agreement must be completed.

10. I am taking part in Leading Workplace Strategies (LWS). Do I need a telework agreement?

Yes. This is a necessary document regardless of how frequently an employee is working remotely under LWS. The BC Public Service needs to ensure your location meets all the criteria for flexible work. Regardless of where you work, employees are required to follow Workplace Safety and Information Management policies.

11. What is the general process for requesting a telework arrangement?

Employees interested in teleworking should:

- Review the telework agreement and related resources on MyHR to ensure they understand the obligations and requirements of telework and maintaining a home office.
- Discuss the details of a possible arrangement with their supervisor/manager to ensure the arrangement is suitable to their job duties and is mutually beneficial to the employee and employer.
- Work with their supervisor/manager (or other decision authority) to complete and sign a telework agreement.

Once a telework agreement is completed and signed by the employee and their supervisor/manager, the employee may establish a home office, arrange for necessary equipment and network access, etc.

12. Why do I have to have a telework agreement completed by September 7?

This date coincides with the anticipated transition to Step 4 of [BC's Restart Plan](#), when we will see most workplaces resume more regular operations.

13. If I don't have a telework agreement approved by September 7, does that mean I won't be able to work from home?

You can still have a telework agreement approved at any time after September 7. But if you do not have one in place by that date, you will be expected to return to your regular workplace until a telework agreement is in place.

14. Why do I have to complete a telework agreement now when I didn't have to during the pandemic?

The telework agreement ensures you and your supervisor agree on your responsibilities and confirms the expectations for both parties. Telework agreements were mandatory for flexible work arrangements prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The requirement was not enforced early in the pandemic to allow for a rapid shift to working from home in alignment with the public health direction. The PSA continued to recommend telework agreements throughout the pandemic and, as the pandemic subsides, the BC Public Service is reinstating this as a mandatory requirement in the best interests of employees and the employer.

15. Why do I need my supervisor's approval?

Your supervisor needs to approve flexible work arrangements because they are best positioned to assess the operational impacts of your request.

16. What are the criteria supervisors use in considering whether to approve a request for flexible work?

When approving a request for flexible work, you and your supervisor must follow these guiding principles:

- Participating in a flexible work arrangement is voluntary and requires the mutual agreement of you and your supervisor. It is neither an entitlement nor a term of employment.
- Open, ongoing communication about performance, team goals, workplace environment, scheduling changes, training and technology is key.
- The suitability of flexible work options varies according to specific operational requirements or employee circumstances.
- Employees must be performing satisfactorily prior to being approved and must maintain their performance.
- Flexible work options support the health and safety of employees.
- Flexible work options must safeguard the security and confidentiality of government information.

Supervisors should also consider the potential impact of flexible work arrangements on other members of the team and other factors that influence organizational effectiveness such as workplace culture and team dynamics.

Criteria for working for telework includes:

- The arrangement must be operationally feasible and provide benefit to the employee and employer.
- Service standards are expected to be maintained or improved.
- The employee must attest their home office facilities are adequate and meet safety, security and confidentiality requirements.
- Remote work should not generate any additional net costs for the employer and upfront costs can be recouped over a reasonable period.
- Completion of a signed telework agreement is mandatory, and it must be reviewed annually.
- Telework results only in a change to the office location of an employee. Other aspects of the employment relationship – including employee benefits, entitlements, responsibilities, salary and the application of terms and conditions of employment, collective agreements and workplace policies – remain unchanged.
- The employee must have completed all mandatory training as prescribed by the BC Public Service Agency.
- If the employee wishes to work remotely three or more days a week, they must acknowledge their ministry will require them to forego a dedicated desk/workspace in their regular workplace, subject to the ministry's workspace planning requirements. Ministries may, at their discretion, extend this requirement to telework agreements that involve one or two days of remote work per week to address their workspace planning needs.
- Requests for remote work three days or more per week also require approval by the employee's Assistant Deputy Minister or Executive Lead. Ministries have discretion to delegate this approval decision as deemed appropriate to a senior excluded manager or another member of executive.

17. I have been working remotely full-time during the pandemic. Will this still be an option after September 7?

Full-time flexible work is an option where supported by supervisors. Any flexible work arrangements where you will be working three or more days from home also require approval by your Assistant Deputy Minister or Executive Lead.

18. I used to work in the office, but I have found it is much easier given my individual circumstances to work from home. How do I get a telework agreement so I can continue working from home?

You should approach your supervisor to discuss your situation. Prior to having this discussion, review the Readiness Reflection and Discussion Questions and other flexible work resources on MyHR.

19. If I change jobs does my telework agreement still apply?

Telework agreements are specific to an employee's position with their current work unit. If you take on a new position with another work unit, your current telework agreement will be terminated, and you will have to propose a new arrangement with your new supervisor/manager.

20. Do any of my terms and conditions of employment change?

No. Telework results only in a change to the work location of an employee. Other aspects of employment – including employee benefits, entitlements, responsibilities, salary and the application of terms and conditions of employment, collective agreements and workplace policies – remain unchanged. See the "Employee Status, Benefits and Hours of Work" section of the telework agreement for more information.

21. I only telework from home on a very occasional basis and not according to a strict schedule (e.g., working from home one morning due to a home emergency, working from home one afternoon to focus on a specific work project, etc.) Do I still need to have a formal telework agreement signed by myself and my supervisor/manager?

A telework agreement must be in place for all employees with regularly scheduled telework arrangements, whether they work from home part-time or full-time. This ensures proper approvals are obtained, costs and expenses are pre-authorized and both employee and employer have a clear understanding of all aspects of the telework arrangement.

A telework agreement should ideally also be in place for employees who work from a BC Public Service office full-time, but on rare occasions work from home.

22. Can I telework from another province?

Because employees who live or work in another province are normally subject to different tax rules and employment legislation, out-of-province working arrangements can create unanticipated obligations and liabilities for the employer. Such an arrangement is supported only in rare and exceptional circumstances, and any temporary out of province or out of country work arrangements must be reviewed by the Deputy Minister of the BC Public Service Agency.

23. Can I have a telework agreement with non-standard hours?

Telework agreements define where an employee works but are not designed to address changes to an employee's work schedule. Hours of work are determined in accordance with applicable collective agreements for included employees and the terms and conditions of employment for excluded employees.

24. What is the process for terminating a telework arrangement?

As noted in the telework agreement, an employee or their supervisor can terminate the agreement by providing 30 days written notice. In rare circumstances, such as a serious breach of the Standards of Conduct or other condition of employment, or a health and safety risk, a telework agreement may be terminated immediately.

25. My work unit has been restructured and my manager now wishes to terminate the telework arrangement to meet operational requirements. Is that permissible? What if I don't agree?

Telework is not an employee entitlement or right and the BC Public Service has the discretion to terminate an arrangement to meet operational or other business requirements. Regular communication about the arrangement should take place between you and your supervisor/manager to make sure both parties understand whether the arrangement remains operationally feasible or requires modification.

26. Other members of my team have been granted telework agreements. My supervisor refuses to grant me one. What should I do?

A telework agreement considers many factors, including the needs of the ministry and approval by the supervisor. Each request is reviewed on its own merits. A telework agreement is a voluntary privilege and not an entitlement. Prior to approaching their supervisor, employees are advised to review the Readiness Reflection and Discussion Questions and other flexible work resources on MyHR. These resources help employees when preparing their flexible work arrangement proposal.

27. Why do I have to check in with my supervisor when I work remotely?

Under WorkSafeBC's [Occupational Health and Safety Regulation](#) the BC Public Service must have a system in place to check on employee well-being when they are working alone or in isolation. Using family members for a check-in and out instead of your supervisor or having family members present so you are not working alone is not an acceptable method of ensuring worker safety. Work with your supervisor and health and safety committee to establish a check-in and out routine. While WorkSafeBC prefers a visual check, check-in and out can be done by email, phone or instant message

For more information see [Working alone risk assessment and check-in](#) or contact the Public Service Agency Workplace Health and Safety area through [Ask MyHR](#).

Part Three: Flexible Work Tools and Expenses

28. Who is responsible for the costs of equipping a home-based work location?

One of the criteria for supporting flexible work is that any arrangement should not generate additional net costs for the employer.

Flexible work arrangements are voluntary, and most expenses related to setting up and maintaining an employee's home office are the responsibility of the employee. For the majority of telework agreements office equipment and furniture are not paid for by the BC Public Service, except for basic employer-provided equipment and office supplies such as laptop, pens, paper, etc. The employer is also not responsible for associated utility costs such as the employee's home internet service.

The BC Public Service is responsible for providing appropriate tools and equipment for employees to use when they are in their regular workplace on a "one device per person" basis. The BC Public Service is not expected to provide a second set of comparable tools for the employee's mobile work location, such as a second computer, additional monitors, furniture etc.

29. Can I use my personal computer or other tools if I'm working from home?

Employees should always default to using government-issued devices as they have the best IT resources and security for government information. However, you may use your personal device to access government portals such as [Summer/Webmail](#) or [Time/Pay Home](#). If you are going to use your personal device for government business, you should discuss this use with your supervisor and review the [Appropriate Use Policy 2.0 \(AUP\)](#) and the [Tip Guide: How to Protect Your Home Computer](#)).

Keep in mind:

- Employees must ensure the same protection of government information whether they are at home, in the office or at a coffee shop.
- Government information must be saved in an appropriate system (see the [Managing Government Information Policy](#)).

For more information on privacy or security, please contact the [Privacy Helpline](#) or [Information Security Helpline](#).

30. Can I use my government device for personal use?

Yes. Section 2.2 of the [Appropriate Use Policy 2.0](#) discusses reasonable personal use of government IT resources based on certain conditions.

31. If I am called into the office on a scheduled telework day, may I claim reimbursement for travel costs between my home and the office?

No. A teleworker's headquarters for the purpose of travel reimbursement claims remains the employer's workplace, not their home office. As such, employees may not claim travel expenses for travel to and from the office.

32. What if my child or other dependent is sick on a day I'm scheduled to telework?

Telework is not a substitute for dependent care arrangements (e.g., childcare, care for an elderly parent). Employees should have care arrangements in place, so their mobile work environment is free from distractions and they are able to respond to work demands as required by the employer. If the employee cannot make alternative arrangements for childcare, they should discuss with their supervisor whether suitable leave, such as family illness or annual vacation, as provided for in the collective agreement is reasonable in the circumstances.

33. What if I require home renovations to establish a home office? Will the employer pay for that?

No. Renovations required to create a home office, including installation of phone lines or other home modifications, are the responsibility of the employee.

34. Are expenses related to my home office eligible for income tax deductions?

Some home office expenses may be tax deductible if certain conditions established by the Canada Revenue Agency are met. All tax matters related to a home office are the responsibility of the employee.

35. I was allowed to take some equipment home during the pandemic. Do I have to return that equipment if I am going to continue to work outside of the office?

Each situation is assessed on the individual circumstance. However, during the pandemic, employees were allowed to take some equipment home, such as chairs and computer monitors, to allow the BC Public Service to follow the public health advice of maximizing remote working where possible. These items remain property of the BC Public Service and should be returned to your regular workplace by September 7.

Outside the unique context of the public health emergency employees are responsible for the costs of equipping their mobile work location. Except for employer-provided equipment and office supplies (e.g., laptop, pens, paper, etc.), the BC Public Service is not responsible for the cost of home office equipment or utilities such as internet service.

Part Four: BC Public Service Office Space

36. If I work outside of the office, does that mean I won't have a dedicated desk when I work in the office?

For flexible work arrangements where the employee works remotely three or more days a week, they are expected to forego a dedicated workspace in their regular office, subject to the ministry's workspace planning requirements. Ministries may decide to extend this requirement to flexible work arrangements involving one or two days of remote working as part of their overall workspace planning requirements.

You may not be required to forego a dedicated office or desk immediately. Your ministry will assess its workspace planning requirements over time and determine how best to configure and assign space to meet operational requirements. Your ministry will consider delivery of services and programs to the public and accountabilities as an employer, such as health and safety and commitments outlined in the BCGEU collective agreement.

Policy and guidance related to flexible work opportunities and associated workspace provisioning is a decision made by ministry Executive and the BC Public Service Agency.

Existing guidance indicates the suitability of flexible work options varies according to operational requirements or employee circumstances. Considerations related to the dedication of workspace at a government facility are outlined in the resource [Workpoint \(PDF, 3.4MB\)](#).

Various work scenarios are broadly described for different worker types, such as internally and externally mobile workers, occasional teleworkers and resident workers. Individual employee workspace requirements, whether at a government office or a remote location, are generally determined between the supervisor and employee when flexible work arrangements are formalized and in accordance with these existing guidelines.

37. Will more ShareSpace locations be established throughout the province?

[ShareSpace](#) is a workplace solution currently being piloted in the Victoria area as an on-demand alternative workplace model to support employees across the BC Public Service. While there are no specific plans to implement additional ShareSpace locations, the ShareSpace solution will be explored by the Real Property Division in consultation with ministry clients for sites that may benefit from this type of flexible co-working arrangement.

Part Five: Support and Resources

38. What resources or training are there to support employees and supervisors with flexible work arrangements?

The Learning Centre offers accessible resources and training to support employees and supervisors in flexible work arrangements. Additional training and resources are being explored and will be added as learning gaps are identified and new needs arise.

39. Are there resources/tools that I and my supervisor/manager can access to assist with considering whether to initiate and implement a telework arrangement?

Yes. Resources include:

- Guiding principles for mobile work options, including workstyle definitions
- Managing flexible work options
- Resources for remote work
- Telework Agreement, including information on occupational safety, emergency preparedness and information security requirements
- BCGEU Main Agreement
- WorkPoint Plan

Tools to support the remote work decision-making process:

- Mobile work – employee proposal
- Mobile work – readiness reflection and discussion
- Manager's flexible work options checklist
- Manager's mobile work checklist
- Mobile work – post-implementation discussion questions

40. Who should I contact if I have questions?

Employees or supervisors/managers with questions about telework arrangements can contact [Ask MyHR](#).