



Core Principles

Policy

See [Policy 6.6.13 Flexibility in the Workplace](#) for further detail and guidance on flexible arrangements, including remote work.

COVID-19

The university supports the exploration of continued flexible work options, including remote work, in situations when such working arrangements fully advance the educational, research and outreach missions of the university, or when such arrangements help advance the health and safety of our campus community.

Core Principles

Flexible work at Cornell is guided by a core set of principles, which are further explained below.

- The flexible work arrangement is appropriate for the position. This includes the work itself, the people served by the work, and department, unit, and university missions.
- The flexible work arrangement will have either a beneficial or net-neutral impact.
- Flexible work decisions are at the discretion of a college/unit's leadership and are not grievable.
- The process for evaluating flexible work requests is equitable.
- Flexible work decisions are made without bias or favoritism.
- A flexible work arrangement will not cause an ongoing net hardship or a lesser experience for colleagues, students, etc.
- Flexible work arrangements should be documented and reviewed at least annually.
- A flexible work arrangement can be altered or discontinued at any time with a suggested notice period of no less than thirty (30) days.

The flexible work arrangement is appropriate for the position.

Not all types of flexible work will be suitable for every position. Some positions require an on-campus presence to serve students or other clients and customers, require the ability to work with others on campus at specific times and shifts, and/or involve tools, equipment or other apparatus that need to remain on campus.

The flexible work arrangement will have either a beneficial or net-neutral impact.

For flexible work arrangements to be approved, they should either enhance or maintain the individual's impact on the educational, research and outreach missions of the university and the priorities and goals of their respective college/unit. Arrangements should not result in additional ongoing expenses for a college or unit.

Flexible work decisions are at the discretion of a college/unit's leadership and are not grievable.

Although Cornell has many positions which are similar in their basic responsibilities, there can be great variance in priorities, services, customers, and environments across the institution. Given this reality, those best to make the determination about what level of flexibility a position can support are those directly responsible for the day-to-day management of the position.

The process for evaluating flexible work requests is equitable.

The **process** for making decisions regarding when, where, and how work gets done should always be equitable. This does not mean the resulting decisions will be equal, as there are many variables which can differ from situation to situation. Relevant evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, the requirements of the position, the priorities of the unit, the individual's ability to successfully perform the work in general and likelihood of success in the requested flexible work arrangement, and the potential impacts of the flexible work arrangement on co-workers, customers, and the overall department. The key to equity is a fair assessment process which is consistent and transparent and as such, colleges and units are encouraged to follow a consistent evaluation process.

Flexible work decisions are made without bias or favoritism.

All flexible work decisions should be evaluated based on business merit and free from any personal biases or preferences. One of the best strategies to avoid bias is to include more than one person, such as both the manager and HR Rep, in evaluating all requests. It is also helpful to regularly review decisions across a work unit to ensure consistency in the criteria used, the decision-making process and resulting outcomes.

A flexible work arrangement will not cause an ongoing net hardship or a lesser experience for colleagues, students, etc.

A flexible work arrangement should not have an ongoing negative downstream impact on another person or area. This includes situations such as when a remote arrangement creates an ongoing increase in workload for others located onsite or when a customer would realize greater benefit from an in-person rather than virtual interaction. As always, departments can rearrange work responsibilities, either temporarily or on an ongoing basis, to accommodate flexible work arrangements, where it makes sense.

Approved flexible work arrangements should be documented.

Cornell previously required all flexible work arrangements to have a documented agreement on file. Beginning in September 2021, the Workday Human Resources system will be able to track all forms of flexible work arrangements. At that time, all approved arrangements should be entered into Workday, which will serve as the formal documentation of agreements moving forward. Those working from non-commutable distances to campus should still have a written agreement in place, in addition to the Workday documentation. As with all their employees, managers should provide clear performance and communication expectations as well as regular performance feedback for employees on flexible work arrangements. Flexible work arrangements should be reviewed regularly (recommended at least annually) and updated as needed to continue meeting both the business and individual needs.

A flexible work arrangement can be changed or discontinued at any time.

Flexible work arrangements are entered into because they meet both the individual and organizational needs at the time

they are proposed. Sometimes these needs will no longer be aligned and thus the arrangement will no longer be viable. It is best practice that at least one month's notice is provided if a department/unit decides to discontinue a flexible work arrangement to provide an employee with ample time to make any personal arrangements needed to adjust to the change.
