Work Planning Protocols

A guide for managers as they plan their team's future work model(s).

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What's Included in this Section?

1 **Policies and Guidelines Related to Flexible Work**
A collection of the Institute's policies and guidelines related to flexible work, including links to MIT websites that detail the processes in more detail and specific considerations for managers and employees to consider

2 **Recommended Work Planning Steps**
Steps and associated activities/templates for you to use when planning for the future work model. Read through the section for details and links to helpful activities and templates; the steps include the following:

- Prepare for team-wide and individual conversations (note: conversation guide and work planning exercise included)
- Conduct team-wide and individual conversations
- Complete team member (e.g., individual) work plans (note: template included)
- Submit team-wide work plan to manager and leader of DLC (note: template included)

3 **Frequently Asked Work Planning Questions**
A collection of common questions regarding the work planning process

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Policies and Guidelines Related to Flexible Work

Familiarize yourself with existing and current MIT policies and guidelines relevant to Work Succeeding.

Policies

- 3.1 Flexible Work Arrangements

- Employment Policy Manual (EPM) 3.1.1 Alternative Schedules

- Employment Policy Manual (EPM) 3.1.2 Off-Site Work

- 3.2 Performance Feedback, Performance Reviews, and Corrective Action

- 7.10 MIT Employees Working Outside Massachusetts (Domestic or International)

Guidelines

- Guidelines on Providing Equipment for Working Remotely

- Guidelines for Remote Work for Employees (e.g., data security and compliance, communication, and remote work equipment and technical assistance)

- Obtaining Disability Services

- Guidance on Purchasing and Tracking Items Shipped to Employee Homes for Remote Work

- Managing Teams in Remote or Hybrid Mode

MIT's Flexible Work Policy

MIT's flexible work policy ([EPM Sec. 3.1](#)) encourages DLCs to consider flexible work arrangements for non-academic employees, when such arrangements meet the DLC's operational needs and allow it to maintain its effectiveness in support of MIT's mission.

Important Policy Details

- Decision should be **equitable** and take into consideration **job requirements** and **operation needs** to meet the MIT mission
- A flexible work arrangement is not an **entitlement**
- Work flexibility may include **different schedules** (e.g., flex time, compressed workweek) and **off-site work**
- **Not all jobs lend themselves to off-site work**, and in some cases, some but not all members of a group may work off-site

- Off-site work arrangements may be hybrid or fully remote
- Off-site work must be sufficiently free from distractions, and may not be regularly performed while caring for a **child/dependent adult** or while undertaking other significant responsibilities
- Both the **department head and direct supervisor** must approve all flexible work arrangements

What to Keep in Mind

- Employees working in a flexible arrangement are expected to be at least as productive as if they were working on-site during normal working hours; you must oversee your employees' performance to ensure the quality and quantity are sufficient.

- Clear, consistent communication is essential for successful flexible work arrangements.

- Arrangements should be reviewed initially within 3-6 months and then at least annually.

Understand the Approval Process for Working Outside of Massachusetts

[Policies & Procedures Sec. 7.10](#) explains the approval process.

Important Policy Details

- Work in domestic out-of-state locations **must be approved in advance by you** (manager), in accordance with your DLC processes
- In addition to DLC approval, international work of longer than 30 consecutive days **must be approved in advance by the Provost or by the Executive Vice President and Treasurer,** or by their designees
- **Employment policies** apply regardless of whether the out-of-state work is required by MIT or whether it reflects the personal preference of the employee

- Administrative Officer or departmental HR representative must promptly notify Payroll (payroll@mit.edu) of an employee's new work address
- Employees must change their home address in Atlas; the DLC must check that this is done
- Employees working outside the New England area for **more than three consecutive months** must contact the Benefits Office if they participate in MIT's health care plans

What to Keep in Mind

- If out-of-state work comes up as a possibility as you have conversations with your team, contact your Human Resources Officer or DLC HR representative. Additional restrictions may apply to employees on visas or to sponsored work done outside the United States.

- The Administrative Officer or departmental human resources representative should inform their Human Resources Officer as soon as they know of any proposed international program or activity. [Please refer to this guidance on employees working abroad.](#)

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Follow the Recommended Work Planning Steps

If you have already conducted conversations prior to this toolkit release, we recommend conducting new conversations following this updated guidance

Step One: Prepare for Conversations	Step Two: Conduct Conversations	Step Three: Complete Team Member Work Plans	Step Four: Submit Team Work Plan to DLCs Leadership
• **Use the Work Planning Conversation Guide (Exercise A)** (Word document, 3 pages, direct download) to prepare for and facilitate a team conversation and individual team member conversations about future work arrangements • **Complete the Work Planning Exercise (Exercise B)** (Word document, 2 pages, direct download) to help support your understanding of the various work models for your team	• Conduct a **team meeting** to understand the perspectives of your team members • Conduct **meetings with each team member** to discuss and align on future work arrangements	• After (or while) facilitating a conversation with each team member, work together to **complete the Team Member Work Plan Template (Form A)** (Word document, 2 pages, direct download) to document future work preferences	• After meeting with all team members, managers may **complete the Team Work Plan Template (Form B)** (Word document, 2 pages, direct download) to evaluate possible work arrangements for each employee and to update DLC leadership. • **The department head, as well as the direct supervisor, must approve all flexible work arrangements.** The department head may delegate this approval responsibility to an administrative officer, a human resources administrator, or other administrator in the department. In all cases, **someone in addition to the direct supervisor must approve the flexible work arrangement.** • Department heads will also report to their dean, vice president, or other member of Academic Council about the flexible work arrangements in their areas. • Using the Weekly Calendar in the Team Work Plan Template, populate the "Exercise: Template for Scheduling" in this section and share with your team

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Exercise: Template for Scheduling

Using the Weekly Calendar that you completed in the Team Work Plan Template as a reference, populate this blank template and share with your team[1,2].

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
On-Site Employees					
Remote Employees					
Total Count of On-Site Employees					
Total Count of Remote Employees					

1. *Depending on the team's working arrangements, time zone and employee working hours may be helpful to include as well*
2. *A set team schedule should NOT mean that there is no flexibility in adjustments for personal obligations, emergencies, or other reasons (e.g., a doctor appointment). Flexible and supportive work is also about shifting hours (alongside) location, as needed and when feasible*

Aligning Work Arrangement Decisions

The opportunity to openly discuss future work arrangements with your team is essential. If you experience difficulties or would simply like a secure outlet to talk, follow the steps below.

1 Speak with Your Team Members

We are all expected to have conversations about future work arrangements with our supervisors or managers. It is important for both parties to consider individual needs and preferences, the needs of the unit, and the needs of the full team in working toward MIT's mission. Each of us may request a conversation with our manager to communicate our needs and interests in how work arrangements are structured. The purpose of these conversations is to provide a constructive forum to discuss work arrangements, scheduling, safety and health, and other issues for the individuals and the team(s).

2 Discuss with Your DLC's HR Administrator or Leadership

Employees and managers may need additional support to align work arrangements. In such instances, the employee, either on their own or together with their manager, should set up a meeting with either their unit's human resources administrator or department leadership (e.g., administrative officer, department head, or assistant dean) for further discussion.
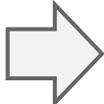
MIT HR and others will facilitate dialogue to find the best solutions.
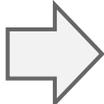
3 Additional Resources

The Institute is in the process of identifying facilitators to support flexible work arrangement alignment conversations. Employees, managers, or whole teams will be able to reach out to these facilitators for assistance as needed.

If you need additional guidance, MIT HR can facilitate conversations or recommend other Institute support options. For example, the MIT Ombuds Office is a confidential and independent resource for all members of the MIT community to constructively manage concerns and conflicts related to your experience at MIT.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Question	MIT Guidance
Does this toolkit apply to union employees?	No. If you are a union employee and have any questions regarding this, please reach out to your Human Resources Officer.
Is it mandatory to complete both the Team Member and Team Work Plans?	No, but it is recommended. Managers are encouraged to complete the Team Member Work Plan alongside each team member, document the work plan decision, and retain locally Additionally, each manager should complete the Team Work Plan or comparable documentation and share with their DLC leadership.
Is it mandatory that managers meet with their team before conducting individual conversations?	No, but it is strongly encouraged. It is recommended for managers to have a meeting with their team to gather perspectives on the team's future work arrangements. Research shows that employee input brings benefits to both the individual and organization. Managers should incorporate as much employee input as possible to provide the most effective, sustainable experience.
Is it necessary that managers meet with individual team members before completing the Team Member Work Plan?	Managers and team members are encouraged to align on and document a work plan together before the manager completes and submits the final work plan to their DLC's leadership.

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Reference the Work Planning FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions		MIT Guidance
If a team member and a manager cannot agree on a work plan, what are the next steps?	→	See "Aligning Work Arrangement Decisions" page in this toolkit for guidance.
Will each manager's Team Work Plan be made public and/or be shared once it is submitted to the manager and/or leader of DLC?	→	No, Team Work Plans will remain with each DLC's leadership. Each DLC's respective leadership will receive your Team Work Plan for awareness purposes and for future reference, if needed.
Will this process of making work decisions be iterative?	→	Yes, you and your team members should feel empowered to re-visit, discuss, and adjust work arrangements, as necessary. At a minimum, you should check in formally with your team members after six months to re-evaluate and address any issues within your team or issues working with other teams at MIT.
Does flexible work include the option to flex working hours as well?	→	Yes. Supervisors are generally responsible for establishing the working hours for the employees who report to them, consistent with the practices of their DLC. Reference MIT's Flexible Work Arrangements policy (EPM 3.1) for additional information.

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