

Alternative Work Arrangements Guide

Draft

The purpose of this guide is to serve as a resource for employees requesting alternative work arrangements and for supervisors evaluating those requests. Before using this guide, please review the Alternative Work Arrangements policy. The policy, which this guide supplements, provides fundamental information about eligibility for alternative work arrangements and the process for proposing and evaluating requests.

Not all positions lend themselves to alternative work arrangements. Decisions about whether to accept or approve a request for an alternative work arrangement rest solely within the management team of the library. Alternative work arrangements are expected to enhance employees' job performance and productivity, help employees balance work and personal commitments, and should be supported if departmental efficiency and service are not adversely affected, regular desk hours to meet departmental needs are not curtailed, and undue burdens are not placed on other employees or supervisors.

This guide outlines the types of arrangements available, and includes a description of circumstances in which they may be appropriate and feasible. Employees will find guidance in creating an alternative work arrangement request, and supervisors will likewise find counsel regarding the factors to consider when evaluating a request. This guide also describes the benefits of alternative work arrangements, which may help dispel some of the common misconceptions that have become barriers to their implementation. Finally, there is advice about how to communicate and implement decisions on requests.

Employees and supervisors should contact the Library Director at any time with questions about an alternative work arrangement request, its evaluation, or its implementation.

Types of Alternative Work Arrangements

Alternative work arrangements may take many forms, depending upon the aspects of their job performance employees want to enhance, or upon the particular work and personal commitments that employees are seeking to better balance.

Reasons that may drive a request: While every employee's situation is unique, there are some common themes which may give rise to a request for an alternative work arrangement. Some examples include transportation (bus schedules, ride-sharing arrangements, commuting time), family matters (delivering and collecting children from school or daycare, elder care considerations), health and wellness activities (utilization of fitness facilities or physical therapy programs), or other personal goals (volunteerism, or continuing training and education).

Employees may request alternative work arrangements for work-related reasons as well. For instance, if an employee's position involves responsibilities that require periods of uninterrupted concentration, such as writing, planning, data entry, or programming, the employee may perform better and more productively working at other times of the day or week, or at another location, such as at home. Space constraints may also lead employers to encourage alternative work arrangements for their employees.

Examples of alternative work arrangements:

- Compressed work schedule: Employees perform their work over the course of fewer days in a workweek. The most common example is working four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days on an ongoing basis or during certain times of the year, such as the summer months.
- Start and end times: A work schedule which meets the core needs of the office yet allows employees some flexibility. For example, an employee who normally works a 35 hour/week schedule (9:00 a.m. until noon, then 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.) might arrange for a ninety-minute meal break each day and then work until 5:30 p.m., in order to allow more time for exercise or classes. In the converse, the employee might also arrange to shorten the meal break to 30 minutes, allowing the employee to leave at 4:30 p.m. each day. In all cases, all hours worked must be reported.
- Reduced hours: A work schedule that is less than full-time. (Permission from the City of Lebanon per the personnel policy is also required for any change in time status.)
- Job-sharing: Two part-time employees share the responsibilities of one full-time job at prorated pay.
- Remote work: An arrangement in which employees work at home or at an

alternative worksite either during part of their work schedule or full-time. There are many different ways to set up a remote work arrangement; for example, an employee may work remotely most of the time and come to the office only for certain key meetings and events. Another example is a hybrid arrangement in which an employee works on certain days of the week in the office and works remotely on other days.

Benefits of Alternative Work Arrangements

Because of their many benefits, the Lebanon Libraries encourage and support the implementation of alternative work arrangements when they have a neutral or positive impact on the library's operations, budget, delivery of services, and distribution or flow of work. The benefits of these arrangements have been validated by global surveys and academic field research, and acknowledged by employees and supervisors when effective alternative work arrangements are already in place.

- **Increases job performance and productivity:** Employees have more awareness than anyone else about when, where, and how they work at their best. When employees have more control over their own work and maintain a healthy balance of work-related and personal commitments, they are more focused, creative, efficient, and productive. Studies have shown that alternative work arrangements substantially reduce the number of unplanned absences and increase job engagement. Alternative work arrangements may also enable employees to continue their education, which may help them develop and improve their job skills and competencies.
- **Builds and fosters a culture of trust and autonomy:** Supervisors who are receptive to requests for alternative work arrangements—even if ultimately they are not approved—signal to their employees that they have confidence in them and their judgment. Since the successful implementation of alternative work arrangements often requires open and honest communication among team members, a culture of trust develops and is reinforced within the team. Additionally, the autonomy given to the employee provides a key driver of job satisfaction.
- **Promotes diversity and inclusivity:** The availability of alternative work arrangements may remove barriers to job seekers and employees who may not otherwise apply for a library job or remain in a position. In particular, one such barrier for parents may be the cost of child care; for example, a parent who is able to compress his or her work schedule into four days per week instead of five may reduce child care costs by 20%. Likewise, alternative work arrangements may also remove barriers for job

seekers and employees who are caring for elder parents or disabled family members.

- Helps the environment and office space utilization: Some types of alternative work arrangements, such as compressed workweeks and remote work, reduce carbon emissions because employees are driving less. Adjustments to work start and end times may enable an employee to use public transportation or to participate in a ride-sharing arrangement, which also conserves energy. Job-sharing and remote work may also reduce a department's office footprint or open up office space for other uses.
- Enhances recruitment and retention: In an increasingly competitive market for talent, alternative work arrangements can further distinguish the Lebanon Libraries as a progressive employer. On an individual basis, the benefit of retaining an employee by utilizing an alternative work arrangement is obvious. What is less obvious, but just as significant, is that a work climate that is welcoming to these arrangements enhances morale for all employees. All of these benefits help contribute to a cycle of enhanced recruitment and retention.

In addition to the benefits of an alternative work arrangement, employees and supervisors who are making and reviewing requests must also carefully consider the arrangement's operational impact and its ability to support high performance by both the employee and the department.

Alternative Work Arrangement Requests and Evaluation

The Alternative Work Arrangements Policy provides that in most situations employees desiring such arrangements should prepare and submit a request to their immediate supervisor, taking into account the requested arrangement's potential impact on department operations and budget, the delivery of services, and the distribution and flow of work among department employees. There are, of course, a great many other factors to be considered by both the employee and the supervisor (and, in some instances, library leadership) in the submission, evaluation, and the decision to be made on any such request. The factors, concepts, and considerations set forth in this section should act as a guide for both employees thinking about requesting an alternative work arrangement, and for supervisors evaluating and deciding such requests. As noted throughout this guide, both employees and supervisors are invited and welcome to contact the Library Director for support in the process.

Factors to be addressed and considered in requesting and evaluating an alternative work arrangement request:

- *Has the supervisor been given enough time to review the request?* An employee should consider the requested start date and the work that needs to be done when submitting their request. Be sure the supervisor has adequate time to review before the desired start.
- *How will the expectations and objectives of the position be met under the requested alternative work arrangement?* Performance expectations, objectives, and standards should remain the same or be enhanced by an alternative work arrangement, especially as they relate to the interactions the employee may have with staff, patrons, and other constituents in the course of the work. Make a list of those expectations and objectives, including those that may not necessarily be spelled out in the position description. In the request, the work that may be accomplished *better* under the arrangement should be emphasized.
- *Will the arrangement result in any additional expenses to the department?* In most cases, an arrangement that results in additional cost to the department is not feasible, unless the additional expense can be offset in some way that can be quantified. For example, job-sharing arrangements may result in added cost if the two employees do not share the same workspace or computer. The request should address possible additional costs and include plans for offsetting those expenses.
- *Does the employee have a well-established and satisfactory record of accountability, reliability, and self-initiative in completing projects and tasks?* Since many alternative work arrangements involve a higher degree of autonomy, the employee's supervisor and colleagues must have confidence in the employee's ability to work well independently. If there is uncertainty about how others perceive the performance in these areas, candid feedback should be requested from others—not just the supervisor—in an appropriate manner. If there is room for the employee to improve, coaching on these aspects of the performance may be necessary, and the employee should make that improvement before requesting an alternative work arrangement. This is one factor that an employee may want to explore with help from the Library Director.
- *What are the department's expectations as they relate to employee visibility or accessibility?* Even if an employee can fulfill all the specific expectations and objectives of the job under an alternative work arrangement, consideration must be given to any burdens the requested arrangement places on others in the

department and any inadvertent barriers it creates to the employee's accessibility in meeting colleagues' and patrons' needs. Including specific steps to help alleviate or address those concerns will be an important factor in a successful arrangement.

- *Will others perceive the arrangement as fair?* The supervisor should consider whether approving the request will be perceived as fair, or if approval will open the door to the appearance of favoritism or discrimination. For instance, a supervisor may reasonably believe that the approval of the request is feasible only if the supervisor is able to also approve similar requests from everyone else. An existing culture of trust and support, coupled with open and transparent communications about the alternative work arrangement and the employee's willingness to periodically reevaluate the arrangement, may help address the supervisor's concerns about fairness and equity.

The above factors will likely apply to any requested alternative work arrangement. In addition, there are some unique factors to consider for each of the following specific types of arrangements:

- **Compressed work schedule:** The most common concern raised about compressed work schedules involves emergencies or unplanned coverage needs that may occur on an employee's "off" day. This should be addressed in an employee's request and in any approval. An employee may commit to being available by phone or email on off days to respond to emergencies, or they may need to be flexible and revert back to the normal five-day schedule when other colleagues are absent for vacation or other reasons. Please note: Under the City of Lebanon's Holiday Policy, hourly-paid employees receive holiday pay when a holiday falls on a day when an employee would have otherwise been scheduled to work. For example, if an employee has a compressed/alternative work schedule of Tuesday through Friday each week instead of Monday through Friday, the employee will not receive holiday pay or an additional day off with pay for any City of Lebanon holiday that falls on a Monday. (Because salaried employees are paid the same rate of pay each month, their pay is not affected whether or not they work on a holiday.)

- **Flexible start and end times:** Federal and state laws somewhat limit the degree of flexibility hourly-paid employees have to schedule their work, particularly across different work weeks. In accordance with these laws, eligibility for overtime pay is based upon all compensable time within the City of Lebanon's Sunday to Saturday workweek, including all hours worked and any benefit time taken (personal, vacation, etc.). For example, a weekly schedule that alternates between 48 hours

one week followed by 32 the next week (averaging 40 hours per week) may not be feasible for hourly-paid employees, since the law requires that the 8 hours worked over 40 in the first week must be paid as overtime. In all cases, all hours worked must be reported.

- **Reduced hours:** Reducing hours (“full-time equivalency” or “FTE”) may have implications for an employee’s benefits and paid time off accruals. Based upon the City of Lebanon’s current medical credit formula, reducing hours below 30 hours per week will result in a loss of medical coverage. Additionally, the amount of paid time off will be prorated based upon the reduced schedule. Another important factor to consider is that it may not be possible to return to full-time status in the future, as this would result in additional cost to the department at the time it occurs. If a reduction in hours is approved, the employee and supervisors should expect that a trial period may not be feasible, and this arrangement may well prove to be permanent, unless the department’s staffing needs change. A Payroll Authorization Form will be required for any reduction in time status/FTE.

- **Job-sharing:** If two employees sharing a job will have their own computers and workspaces, it may result in additional expenses incurred by the department. The job-sharing proposal should address these expenses with a plan to offset them, or include a rationale for how the benefits of the arrangement outweigh the added costs.

Since this arrangement involves two employees, the proposal should include contingency plans if certain issues arise in the partnership. For example, what will happen if one partner in the job-sharing arrangement leaves? How will time-off plans be coordinated? How will disagreements with the partner be handled?

Like a reduced-hours arrangement, a job-sharing arrangement can be difficult to change or reverse once it is in place, and a trial period is normally not an option. If hours/time status are reduced, a Payroll Authorization Form is required.

- **Remote Work:** Remote work allows for work to be performed off-site, usually at the employee’s home, on a regular basis. Remote work is most appropriate for work that does not require the employee’s presence in the workplace, has clearly defined tasks, measurable work activity, and can be performed alone. Supervisors should expect accessibility to be similar to in-office employees. In order to be a good candidate for remote work, an employee should be a strong performer who

does not require close supervision, and who is comfortable working in isolation from other employees. Remote work is not an alternative to child care or elder care, or other non-work responsibilities that may inhibit productivity and performance. All remote work requests must be reviewed by the Library Director before final approval. Before proposing or approving a remote work arrangement an employee and supervisor should consider:

1. How will the employee adapt to completing the work remotely?
2. How will the employee adjust to not being able to interact as easily with others?
3. How will the employee conduct work or participate in meetings and events that would customarily involve face-to-face contact?
4. Although the employee may be confident about their increased productivity working remotely, will the location away from the office affect the productivity of others who rely upon the employee?
5. What will the work schedule be? Does the work require the employee to be available at specific times for phone calls, or to respond to instant messages and emails?
6. What technology will be needed? What technology is the department expected to provide, and why? How fast, reliable and secure is the remote connectivity to the library?
7. How will confidential information be kept secure?
8. If there are work documents at the remote location, what will happen if those documents are urgently needed at the office?
9. How comfortable is the remote location as a workspace (furniture, temperature control, ventilation, ambient noise, distractions, ergonomics, etc.)?
10. Is there a need for additional homeowners or renters insurance coverage for a home office or for the technology that the employee owns? (Some basic insurance policies specifically exclude coverage of computers, smartphones, and tablets without a rider.)
11. If the employee is splitting time between working remotely and working in the office, can the office workspace be changed, moved, or repurposed

when not in use?

12. Tax implications related to the off-site work area are the responsibility of the employee, who is advised to consult a tax professional.

Remote work arrangements should be documented in writing and signed and dated by the employee and the supervisor. The final agreement should be as specific as possible and answer all of the questions outlined in the Alternative Work Arrangement Request Form.

Initiating a request and request format options:

Before developing a request, an employee may want to have a preliminary discussion with their supervisor. The purpose of this discussion is to introduce the idea and “test the waters,” that is, to receive an initial indication regarding the feasibility of such a request. This discussion may help determine what specific issues need to be addressed in the request and what format to choose:

- **Informal:** Some arrangements may be requested by simply discussing the proposed arrangement with the employee’s supervisor without a formal written request. If the employee and their supervisor agree on the request, the supervisor should confirm the details in writing (letter, memo, or email, for example) to document the arrangement and to help prevent future misunderstandings. An example of an arrangement that might be proposed and accepted in this manner is a request to change the work start and end times by one hour or less.
- **Written request:** A more substantial alternative work arrangement may warrant a formal written request that adequately addresses the considerations outlined above, as well as any considerations that are specific to the arrangement being requested. To facilitate the development of a thorough request, we suggest the employee use the Alternative Work Arrangement Request Form. Supervisors may confirm the details of the agreed arrangements as noted above, or, if the Request Form is used, the supervisor may sign the form.
- **Written request with a signed agreement:** In addition to the employee’s written request, more complex alternative working arrangements, such as remote work, will warrant a written agreement that is signed by the employee and the supervisor. The written agreement confirms the relevant details of the alternative working arrangement in clear terms. When creating a request, it is not necessary for the employee to provide a written agreement.

When an employee submits a request for an alternative work arrangement to their supervisor, it will be helpful for the supervisor to review the policy and to use this guide as an outline for the discussion. Supervisors should communicate openly with their employees and provide a timeline of their expected review.

The key principle to keep in mind when assessing the feasibility of any request is to evaluate it from all points of view: the employee's, the supervisor's, the other members of the team, and the individuals or groups served by the employee and the department. In addition to all of the factors to be addressed in the request, employees and supervisors should consider this question:

Will the services or support that the employee currently provides to others (colleagues, patrons, etc.) be provided similarly or better under the arrangement being proposed?

Documentation and Periodic Review

Upon approval of an alternative work arrangement, the supervisor and employee should keep a copy of the agreed-upon request for reference, whether it's a formal or informal request. Within that documentation, the employee and supervisor should create a timeline for periodic review of the arrangement, with mid-year and annual review periods as a starting point. After review, the arrangement may be subject to change based on the operational needs of the department, as determined by the supervisor. Be sure to document any changes in the arrangement to ensure consistency and understanding between the employee and their supervisor.