



**STATE OF OKLAHOMA
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

"Working for Oklahoma"

OPM 08-16

DATE: June 23, 2008

TO: All Appointing Authorities

FROM: Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., IPMA-CP, Administrator and
Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration 

SUBJECT: **Flexible Work Options**

Recent dramatic increases in fuel prices and energy costs have aroused interest among both employers and employees in flexible work options that could help alleviate the impact of those higher costs. In the final days of the 2008 Legislative Session, the Oklahoma House of Representatives introduced House Concurrent Resolution 1097 aimed at encouraging state agencies to adopt a compressed four-day work week. Although this resolution was not passed, there remains a keen interest among state agencies and their employees regarding flexible work alternatives. The purpose of this memorandum is to advise agencies of the major options that are available and some of the factors they should consider in implementing them.

Flex-Time

This option involves a “. . . regular, eight-hour-day work schedule that permits the use of alternative starting and ending times within limits set by the appointing authority and that includes a common work period during which all employees are expected to be present [74 O.S. 840-2.26 (B)].” For example, an agency with normal work hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. could establish its core hours as 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and allow employees to vary their starting times from as early as 7:00 a.m. and their quitting times to as late as 6:00 p.m.

Flex-Time allows employees to schedule their working hours around their personal commitments and reduces their need to take annual leave. It may result in lower absenteeism, improved morale, and the possibility of having staff available during extended hours without the need for overtime. Challenges include the need to establish works schedules that insure adequate communication between employees and supervisors and adequate staffing during non-core hours. When denying participation to those employees whose schedules are not compatible with Flex-Time, managers should carefully explain the business reasons for the denial.

Alternative Work Schedules

Alternative work schedules can take the form of either a compressed four-day work week or a 5-4/9 work week.

Compressed four-day work week: Under this alternative, employees work a 40-hour work week in four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days. Similar to Flex-Time, the four-day work week may result in improved morale and lower absenteeism. It may enhance

recruitment among employees who otherwise might not be available for a traditional work schedule. It has the potential to result in significant cost reductions if the agency is able to close or substantially reduce its operations on the fifth workday. Finally, it is simple to administer, requiring no special modification of the administrative work week to preclude overtime liability. The agency must assure that employees on this schedule receive sufficient breaks to avoid fatigue from working longer hours. Also, care must be taken to schedule meetings at times that will allow those on compressed work weeks to attend. To preclude discontentment, employees should be reminded prior to participating in such schedules that fewer evening hours will be available to them on work days to spend on personal activities.

5-4/9 schedule: Under this alternative, during a two-week period, the employee works eight 9-hour days, one 8-hour day, and has one day off. Like the four-day work week, the 5-4/9 schedule may result in improved morale and lower absenteeism. Also, it allows agencies to staff extended hours without the use of overtime. Unlike the four-day work week, the 5-4/9 schedule does not allow the agency to completely discontinue operations on one work day; however, it may be a more practical option for those agencies that are unable to shorten their work weeks. The challenges are the same as the four-day work week and also include the need for diligence in assuring that there is adequate communication between supervisors and employees when schedules do not coincide. Also, use of the 5-4/9 schedule requires rearranging the administrative work week to insure that no more than 40 work hours are scheduled in any one week.

Telecommuting

This is an alternative work option in which an employee works from home for a portion or all of the work week. The employee performs his or her job electronically through phone, fax, pager and email. The advantages of telecommuting are similar to those of the alternative work schedules. Depending on the degree to which it is used, it can potentially provide even more cost savings to the employer and the employee than alternative work schedules. It also has the potential to attract and retain a wide range of workers that otherwise would not be available to the employing agency due to disabilities, geographical location, child care, or other circumstances. Because face-to-face contact with employees is minimal in this option, the agency will need to look for opportunities to provide that direct interaction. The agency will also have to assure that employees do not feel left out or overlooked for special assignments or promotions. Before entering into such arrangements, employees will need to clearly understand that they will be losing the social aspects of being in the office. Obviously, telecommuting is not appropriate for all jobs, particularly those where face-to-face contact with clients is required or where team effort and close coordination are required. Prior to initiating telecommuting, agencies must insure that employees have suitable electronic equipment (either their own personal equipment or those provided by the agency) and are provided remote access to agency network drives and email.

Agencies are encouraged to review these options and determine if one or more of them may be appropriate for some or all employees in their work environment. Clearly, not every agency will be able to implement all of them for all employees; and, due to mission requirements or workload considerations, some agencies may not be able to consider any of them.

If you have questions or concerns about the flexible work options that are available, or if you would like assistance in your implementation of one or more of those options, please feel free to contact the Office of Personnel Management Compensation Staff:

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