



# *Alternative Work Plan* **GUIDELINES**

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MOORHEAD



# Alternative Work Plan Guide

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## Introduction

Many reasons exist to offer alternative work plans at MSUM. Here are some possible benefits of alternative work plans:

- Improved morale and reduced stress by giving staff more options to balance work and family needs
- Increased customer service by expanding department hours
- Retention of valued staff
- Increased staff productivity
- Better planning for staff absences
- More time for personal growth, development, and volunteer opportunities
- Decreased traffic and parking congestion, energy consumption, and air pollution??

This document contains suggestions for those interested in exploring the opportunity of alternative work plans. The suggestions offered are not the only ones possible. We encourage you and your supervisor to contact the Human Resources Office with other options you would like to explore.

While it is apparent that the benefits of alternative work plans can extend to the individual staff member, the department, and the community, it is important to keep in mind that alternative work arrangements serve vital business interests as well. To be sure that the use of alternative work plans serves organizational as well as individual interests, we have developed some principles for you to use in planning and implementing these options.

### **Principle #1– Link alternative work plans to MSUM’s mission and strategic priorities.**

The business needs of both the department and of MSUM are the first consideration in any alternative work plan. At the same time, MSUM recognizes staff health and welfare are critical in the ability to achieve our mission. A major contributor to staff wellness is maintaining balance between work and personal/family responsibilities. Departments may identify positions suitable for alternative work plans and implement alternative work schedules in such a fashion that the work of the office is enhanced. Actions taken to implement any alternative work plans must be balanced with everyone’s ability to perform assigned job responsibilities.

### **Principle #2 - Support supervisors and staff by providing information and guidance to increase the participation in alternative work plans.**

Supervisors working together with staff can explore options that meet staff, department, and university needs. Open communication between supervisors and staff will increase the program’s success. Supervisors need to carefully consider the requests of staff before making decisions about alternative work plans.

### **Principle #3 – Ensure consistent approach in the use of alternative work plans.**

All staff, depending on the work requirements of the position, are given fair and reasonable consideration in the establishment of alternative work plans. While consistency in approach for consideration is important, it is recognized that not all departments are equipped to manage an alternative work plan. The options provided can be used to motivate and increase productivity.

## **Principle #4 – Evaluate program effectiveness periodically.**

Supervisors and Human Resources may use a variety of tools, including surveys, focus groups, customer service standards and organizational performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the opportunity.

## **Alternative Work Plan Considerations**

One of the many advantages of working at MSUM is the quality of work environment. While numerous factors contribute to a positive working environment, a major benefit is having flexibility in work schedules that allows staff to balance their work and family life. There are, however, parameters on what the University can offer staff because of the regulations found in federal and state laws, collective bargaining agreements, as well as University policy. The most prominent regulations that require additional consideration in managing alternative work plans are found within the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

### **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)**

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) categorizes staff in one of two groups, either “Exempt” or “Non-exempt”.

Exempt employees are those managerial or professional employees that are “exempt” from the overtime compensation provisions of the FLSA. They are expected to complete their work assignments whether 40 hours or more are required to finish the work.

Non-exempt employees are subject to the mandatory overtime provisions of the FLSA. Non-exempt employees are typically paid an hourly wage. Hourly wage employees are paid for all time worked. It is also noted that non-exempt employees must receive overtime pay for all hours worked in excess of their regular work week [as defined by the appropriate collective bargaining agreement]. The workweek is defined as 12:00 am Wednesday through Tuesday at 11:59 pm.

### **MSUM Policies/Procedures**

The “traditional work schedule” is defined as Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm including one half hour for an unpaid lunch break. In addition, one 15-minute rest period for each four-hour work period can be provided.

The need for non-traditional work schedules in many of the University’s seven-day per week operations (such as Heating Plant, Public Safety, Admissions, and summer programs) is recognized.

In considering alternative work plans, it is important for supervisors to maintain the efficiency and continuity of operations. Given this responsibility, it is recognized that not all departments may be able to grant alternative work plans to any or all staff.

## Types of Alternative Work Plans

The options described below for alternative work plans are dependent on the operational needs of the department and the University and subject to collective bargaining agreement stipulations.

### Staggered Scheduling

Staggered scheduling is creating fixed, staggered daily attendance schedules for employees within a department. For example:

- Three different 8-hour schedules such as: 7:30 – 4:00; 8:30 – 5:00; and 9:00 – 5:30  
OR
- 7:00 – 3:30; 7:45 – 4:15; and 8:00 – 4:30

### Flexible Work Hours

This option offers flexibility in arrival, departure and/or lunch times, typically with designated core times during the day in which all staff are present. Flexible Work Hours do not alter the total number of hours worked in a week. This type of scheduling can support meeting both customer needs and other departmental needs. For example:

- 7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Monday-Friday (with a half-hour lunch)
- 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Monday-Friday (with an hour lunch)

### Flexible Lunch Periods

Flexible lunch periods would create flexibility for the employee to either shorten or lengthen a lunch break with corresponding adjustments to the start and/or the end of the normal workday. To comply with FLSA requirements, the lunch break must be a minimum of thirty minutes.

### Compressed Work Week

This option creates fixed work schedules that allow an employee to work a 40-hour work week in less than the traditional 8-hour day, 5-day work week. It is noted this option is more complex to administer due to time tracking and leave/holiday hours management. It will be important to consult with Human Resources prior to creating this arrangement.

Examples of compressed work week:

- An employee works four 10-hour days
- An employee works four 9-hour days and a half day on Friday

If an employee's alternative schedule will change the number of hours per day they work, or the days each week that they work, a [temporary schedule change form](#) must be completed and signed. The Office of Human Resources will use this form to update the employee's schedule, which populates on their timesheet.

## Telework

This option creates flexibility in which an employee carries out all or some of the duties of the job at home or another alternate work location. While most positions at MSUM require staff to report to University locations, some employees can accomplish the duties of their jobs while working off-campus. If the location of work is outside the state of Minnesota it will be important to consult with Human Resources to determine if this arrangement can be established. It will also be important to work with the IT Department regarding equipment needs.

Examples of telework arrangements include:

- An employee works in the office Tuesday-Friday and teleworks from a home office on Monday.
- An employee works in the office 6:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and teleworks from a home office for two hours each afternoon.
- An employee works most hours from home [or other approved location] and is required to report to campus on occasion for meetings, events, etc.

If an employee wishes to request a recurring telework schedule, they will need to fill out a [Telework Schedule and Acknowledgement form](#). This document explains the University's expectations and policies for teleworking employees. The acknowledgement form will need to be signed by the employee's direct supervisor, the division administrator, and Human Resources. The employee and supervisor should also become familiar with [MMB's Telework policy](#).

Supervisors may approve situational telework for limited periods of time for extenuating circumstances [such as weather conditions, lack of transportation, children home from school, etc.]. In these cases, a telework acknowledgement form is not required.

When approving telework, the supervisor should review MSUM's [supervisor telework considerations](#). This document will help the supervisor to evaluate the employee's personal circumstances to ensure that the arrangement does not negatively impact the department's operations.

For a step by step guide regarding telework requests, please review the [Supervisor Telework Approval Process](#). Additional resources for teleworkers such as technology and ergonomic needs can be found on the [Human Resources webpage](#).

## Job Sharing/Reduced FTE

With this option it may be possible to readjust the work plans of two or more employees to become a job-sharing relationship, in which part-time employees share the duties and responsibilities of one FTE over an 8-hour day or a 40- hour week. Eligibility for benefits and leave may be affected. For reduced FTE options, please see applicable language in the various collective bargaining agreements.

Job Sharing example:

- Two employees with a 50% time appointment work Monday – Friday. One employee works 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and the second employee works 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## Responsibilities

Successful alternative work plans are dependent upon collaboration between staff, supervisors, directors, vice presidents and the Human Resources Office. The responsibilities of each are described below.

### Staff

- Help identify appropriate alternative work plans in cooperation with their supervisors
- Ensure that the mission of MSUM is still being met while using alternative work plans
- Contact Human Resources to obtain information regarding the opportunity
- Inform supervisors when a conflict occurs or may occur
- Provide feedback on ways to improve the opportunity

### Supervisors

- Ensure that the opportunity supports MSUM's mission, goals, and objectives
- Stay up to date on all plan types offered at MSUM
- Ensure both equity and consistency in the use of alternative work plans
- Obtain input from staff
- Ensure information is distributed to staff about alternative work plans
- Promote use of alternative work plans
- Forward suggestions and seek guidance from Human Resources
- Provide feedback on ways to improve the opportunity
- Review and approve [Telework Acknowledgement form](#) and [Temporary Schedule Change form](#) [if applicable]
- Evaluate alternative work plans at initial 90 days and annually thereafter

### Deans and Directors

- Ensure that the opportunity supports MSUM's mission, goals, and objectives
- Help identify appropriate work plans in cooperation with their staff
- Ensure both equity and consistency in the use of alternative work plans
- Allocate resources as needed, including cost of additional or specialized IT hardware or software
- Provide feedback on ways to improve the opportunity
- Approve, modify, or deny Alternative Work Plans
- Review and approve [Telework Acknowledgement form](#) and [Temporary Schedule Change form](#) [if applicable]
- Evaluate alternative work plans at initial 90 days and annually thereafter

### Vice Presidents and President

- Ensure that the opportunity supports MSUM's mission, goals, and objectives
- Ensure both equity and consistency in the use of alternative work plans
- Allocate resources as needed, including cost of additional or specialized IT hardware or software
- Identify and facilitate improvements for the institution
- Approve, modify, or deny Alternative Work Plans

## **Human Resources Office**

- Provide information for supervisors and staff
- Provide guidance to all departments on campus regarding alternative work plans
- Distribute general information regarding alternative work plans
- Offer feedback and suggestions
- Obtain input from staff
- Maintain complete alternative work plan forms
- Track alternative work plan review periods