



## TRAINING & FLEX SUPPORT DURING THE PANDEMIC

The Alliance has always recommended having robust training, education, and support structures around flexible work in place in order to have a truly inclusive flex culture in your organization. However, our [2019 Law Firm Flexibility Benchmarking Study](#) found pre-pandemic flex support to be too weak – only 6.1% of respondents had a flex affinity group, and two-thirds did not offer flex education. We recommend that organizations invest more resources to ensure flex programs are properly utilized and valued. During the pandemic, our [Pulse Poll: COVID-19 & Reentry Study](#) found that significantly less than a majority planned/launched trainings focused on remote work best practices.

While training and flex support is always necessary to make flex successful for both workers and their managers, it's even more crucial during the pandemic as many employees are first time teleworkers, and many managers are leading remote teams for the first time too. Organizations must allocate resources to this area in order for their workforce to succeed in this new environment.

- 1. Launch Customized Trainings.** We strongly encourage organizations to launch customized remote work/flex training programs for all stakeholders that cover pandemic-specific issues. Employees would benefit from training around best practices when working remotely, and managers should participate in ways to effectively manage remote/hybrid teams. There are issues that need to be addressed in this environment, such as unconscious bias around caregivers, giving/soliciting feedback, raising visibility, and fostering team engagement. For a starting point to create these trainings, look at our [Business Continuity, Success \(and Sanity\) During COVID-19 Telecommuting](#) webinar recording.
- 2. Utilize Affinity Groups.** This is a trying time for many employees, and organizations should utilize affinity groups to help foster discussions and support. Many are leaning on their Women's Initiatives, Flex and Caregiver groups to host discussions, provide resources, and foster a sense of community. Caregiver groups can create a resource list of virtual tutors, and other available caregivers. They can also sponsor programs to help employees with caregiving responsibilities. Flex affinity groups can host a firm-wide discussion of flexible work best practices so all employees can benefit from their experiences.
- 3. Leverage Mentoring Programs.** Right now, organizations need to keep employees engaged, connected, and supported. Does your organization have existing mentoring or integration programs? Ask mentors to reach out to their mentees and check in. Provide mentors with suggestions for ways to connect (i.e. virtual coffees or virtual

happy hours), and host panel discussions showcasing ways mentor/mentees have remain connected.

4. **Solicit Feedback.** Solicit employee feedback to understand what's working and what needs to be fixed. Consider launching an employee survey, focus groups, or insight interviews to understand what support structures have been most useful and what additional resources are needed. Do a substantial portion of the workforce find any applications or technology particularly useful? Are there consistent gaps mentioned in terms of resources?
5. **Offer Technology Support & Training.** Pay particular attention to technology support that has been leveraged and why this technology in particular was useful. Technology is a crucial element to remote working/flex success. Remember that some employees are very tech savvy, while others are working remotely for the first time and may not be as familiar with several technological resources. It's important to spread knowledge on what technology is available, what resources have been particularly useful, and how to effectively use them. Consider hosting a training series focused on virtual applications, availability trackers, and virtual collaboration tools.

The Alliance is here to provide you with expert advice about necessary training, education and flex support during the pandemic and beyond. Members have access to several Alliance resources as part of their benefits: the [Resource Library](#), [Strategy Calls](#), [Policy Reviews](#), [Advisory Hours](#) and [Signature Seminars](#). To discuss specific training needs during COVID-19 and after, contact [Manar Morales](#).