



INCORPORATING THE 4 Es AS PART OF THE FUTURE OF WORK

One long-lasting effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the future of work will be different. Organizations needed to adjust overnight and offer flexible work to *all* employees, and many saw employee productivity and satisfaction go up during this time. Organizational leaders are now thinking through how to continue offering flexible work post pandemic and create a successful flexible work environment. What additional skills, experiences, and resources do employees need? What types of flexible work should we consider?

Flexible work is clearly now a business need to retain and acquire top talent, as well as an important way to foster employee productivity and satisfaction. However, organizations need to be intentional in how they lay the groundwork for flexibility in order to reap the full benefits. We recommend your organization's pandemic task force use our **4Es Discussion Framework** to discuss building or revamping your flexible work initiatives post-pandemic.

1. **ENGAGE** – How will you engage with flexibility? Will you have a policy or just offer flexibility on a case-by-case basis? Will you offer flexibility to all employees or just certain professionals? Will you offer holistic flexibility (i.e. reduced hours/part-time, telecommuting, flexible start-end times, job sharing, compressed work weeks and sabbaticals) or just one type of flexible work option? Organizations should take these into consideration in order to determine how they will engage with flexible work. The Alliance strongly recommends that all organizations create a written flexible work policy after the pandemic in order to signal firm support, ensure that it's available for all employees (not just those who work for supportive managers), create a systematized process for approval, and specify expectations/parameters. The Alliance also recommends offering holistic flexibility as one size does not fit all, and all employees can utilize some form of flexibility regardless of their position or role. For example, a receptionist may not be able to telecommute but may be able to job share, switch to a compressed work week, or utilize other part-time options.
2. **EXPERIENCE** – How do your employees experience and talk about flexibility? Are employees across departments and functions able to utilize flexibility? Are any managers resistant to accepting flexible work? The Alliance strongly encourages organizations to survey employees during the pandemic to collect data (i.e. additional technology needed, ways managers maintained connections, virtual team events, etc.) to make immediate and long-term changes. Think about hosting focus groups, and check-in meetings to fully understand employee experiences with flexibility. Share success stories to promote flexible work and remedy any issues as they arise.
3. **ENVIRONMENT** - Do you have the right environment in place to support flexibility? Is your organizational culture conducive to training, mentoring, community support, and

workload allocation to ensure flexible workers can succeed? Are you offering resources such as technology stipends, office hoteling, affinity groups, or in-person/virtual team building events? Organizations need to think through necessary tools in order to provide the right support for employees working flexibly.

4. **EFFECTIVE** – How effective is your flexible work program? What were your desired outcomes (recruitment, retention, utilization satisfaction, engagement and/or productivity), and how are you measuring up? Organizations need to think about how they will track flexibility and should do so regularly to understand what's working and what's not – at least every quarter the first year and annually thereafter. If you're hoping flexibility will improve retention, then compare the percentage of unwanted attrition before and after you started your workplace flexibility program. Comprehensively review exit/stay interviews to understand why people chose to stay or leave.

The Alliance is here to provide you with expert advice on creating successful flexible work programs after the pandemic. Also take a look at our [Flex Success Framework](#) when creating/implementing your flexible work program, which provides a five step roadmap to make sure your program achieves your organization's objectives. Additionally, members have access to several Alliance resources as part of their benefits that will help them launch effective flexible work programs and necessary infrastructure: the [Resource Library](#), [Strategy Calls](#), [Policy Reviews](#), [Advisory Hours](#) and [Signature Seminars](#). To further discuss in more detail, contact [Manar Morales](#).