

Architects Male
Champions of Change

All Roles Flex



1

Implementation Guideline

2019





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1

Intent

1.0

Background and Intent

Understanding an existing work culture open to flexibility and the collective decision to implement ‘All Roles Flex’

Background	Intent
<p>In September 2016, the Architects Male Champions of Change conducted a survey to understand the status on flexible working arrangements and the culture of always being available in the architecture industry.</p> <p>The survey identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That it was important for the industry to address flexible working arrangements transparently• Flexibility has different meaning for individuals• A large percentage (63%) felt that they had permission to work flexibly and their office had a supportive culture towards flexibility (70%)• Generally, however over 60% felt flexible working policies were not available to them or they weren't clearly articulated <p>Given that the results of the survey demonstrated an existing work culture open to flexibility, the Champions of Change agreed to implement ‘All Roles Flex’ in their individual practices by June 2017.</p>	<p>This ‘All Roles Flex’ Implementation Guideline aims to assists practices in the drafting and implementation of an ‘All Roles Flex’ Policy.</p> <p>The document identifies considerations, culture and processes that support achieving flexibility for all positions to suit a practices work culture and values.</p> <p>Its intent is to engender a spirit of flexibility, recognising that each individual Flexible Working Arrangement will be unique to reflect an individual’s personal needs.</p> <p>Practically, the guideline aims to establish a procedural and cultural framework for negotiations to take place that allow for an equitable, transparent approach to flexible working for all employees.</p>



Legislation

The Fair Work Act 2009 provides employees in the national workplace relations system with a legal right to request flexible working arrangements.

Employees who have worked with the same employer for at least 12 months can request flexible working arrangements if they:

- are the parent, or have responsibility for the care, of a child who is school aged or younger
- are a carer (under the Carer Recognition Act 2010)
- have a disability (and are qualified for a disability support pension under the Social Security Act 1991)
- are 55 or older
- are experiencing family or domestic violence, or
- provide care or support to a member of their household or immediate family who requires care and support because of family or domestic violence

■ All Roles Flex

‘All Roles Flex’ represents a position where the employee defines their *flexible working arrangements* that suits their needs and prepares a business case for the practice to consider implementing through negotiations with the employee. This is sometimes referred to as an individual flexibility agreement.

■ Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible working arrangements is defined as a variation to *contracted hours of work* and may include variety in:

Hours of work

(e.g. changes to start and finish times)

Patterns of work

(e.g. split shifts or job sharing)

Location of work

(e.g. working from home)

■ Contracted Hours Of Work

Hours of work agreed in an employee contract. Hours may be agreed on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis. Contracted hours of work may be *full-time* or *part-time*.

■ Full Time

In Australia, full-time contracted hours of work is on average, around 38 hours each week. The actual hours of work is agreed in a contract between the employer and the employee.

■ Part Time

Part-time contracted hours of work is less than full time hours of work. The actual hours of work is agreed in a contract between the employer and the employee.



Why practices should aim for a flexible workplace:

Attracts And Retains Staff

Offering a flexible work arrangement increases the ability to attract and retain talented employees.

- Increases access to skills and experience
- Offers opportunities to offset the cost of travel for those on who have a long commute
- Can extend the working life of your most experienced employees.

Motivates And Values Staff

A flexible working arrangement shows an individual that their employer values their work efforts, creating higher levels of motivation and work satisfaction.

Diversity

Flexible Working Arrangements invite people that would otherwise be excluded from the workplace setting, providing an opportunity for diverse solutions in practise.

Reduces Operational Costs

A flexible policy that allows staff to work remotely can result in a reduction in office space requirements with the setup of hotdesking and remote work environments. In addition:

- Increased staff retention will see recruitment and training costs decrease.
- Retaining staff with corporate knowledge will ensure teams operate efficiently with increased knowledge sharing opportunities

Reduces Leave

Staff that feel motivated and valued are less likely to take sick leave.

Increases Productivity

An organisation with a flexible working policy is likely to see increased productivity, as flexible workers tend to stay focused to get work completed to suit their work week.

Clarity on roles and expectations when negotiating flexible work arrangements is vital to the success of flexible workplace

Employer

For flexible working arrangements to thrive, each practice should aim for a policy framework that encourages:

- Effective, open and transparent communication
- Provide business resources that support working outside of the office
- A team support system to ensure flexible work practices do not impact project deliverables
- Clarity on time expectations for business and team structures
- A culture of trust, supportive of flexible working

Employee

Similarly, each individual employee should aim to:

- Carefully assess and analyse flexible working needs and communicate these clearly
- Identify possible obstacles to flexible arrangements and resource ways to overcome these
- Be prepared to offer flexibility in return to support others
- Be aware of the impact your flexibility has on the time management of others
- Be a positive example for flexible working to assist with cultural change



Communication

1

Effective communication between a practice and flexible employees is vital to the success of flexible working arrangements

Best Practice

- Employees prepare a business case to work flexibly communicating the benefits to both the employer and the employee
- Champion Practices formally recognise the benefits of flexibility for all and offer a broad range of flexible working opportunities to employees, both men and women
- Be clear about who is responsible for managing flexibility in the practice; provide resources to the role; and assess and measure outcomes from flexible working
- Keep communications open, full and frank. It's important all parties have realistic expectations

Consider

Employee and employer communication

- Be flexible about flexibility - this will allow the process to be reviewed, refined and adjusted
- Try not to allow previous experiences to influence future flexible working arrangements – recognise that an option that may not have worked for one employee may work for another
- Regularly review the effectiveness of the flexible working arrangements
- Agree on negotiation methods upfront to address and resolve any problems that may arise

Team communication

- Develop agreed protocols for internal team communication
- Ensure that there is enough interface time within teams for project collaboration
- Agree on availability, particularly during the hours when the employee is not working
- Establish a list of the kinds of situations and issues for which an employee will be available for contact
- Ensure regular contact so that staff remain engaged and do not feel isolated from the office

Project team communication

- Develop agreed protocols for client communication so that client needs are met and flexible working arrangements are respected
- Develop agreed protocols for consultant communication
- Consider group emails over individual emails to ensure information is transparent and addressed promptly

Advocate flexibility with clients and the community

- Advocate for flexible work practices

Resources

2

Advancements in technology has supported the shift towards flexible work patterns with employees able to work at an off-site location

Best Practice

- Articulate new technologies available to assist with working at an off-site location
- Agree on the approach to new technology as part of the flexible working agreement
- Clearly communicate if new technologies available differ between roles e.g. all employees may have remote access to the server; only senior staff may have access to a laptop etc

Consider

Funding

- Champion Practices to determine who pays for the equipment and telecommunication costs (phone, electricity, software).
- New technologies may change between agreements – if so, consider providing checks to the negotiation process so that technology available is distributed equitably
- Establish protocols for allowances for staff to claim as expenses
- Recognise that any increase to operational cost (IT, Payroll, HR) would be offset by other benefits that will impact the bottom line positively

Time frame

- Clarify whether access to new technologies is required for short or extended periods of time

Technology

- Be open to a variety of new technologies to ensure that flexible work arrangements can be flexible. E.g. remote access, skype, telephone conference, VPN, laptop, iPad etc
- Consider additional training to ensure employees are proficient in new technologies

Safety

- Review current Workplace safety procedures and adapt for an off site environment

Support

3

It is critical to provide the appropriate scaffolding to support teams working flexibly so they can meet the expectations of the traditional building process. This requires careful organisation of teams and clear communication of project roles.

Best Practice

- Opt for open communication within teams. E.g. all team members attend meetings, all team members are included on emails to the client etc
- Encourage a team culture of supporting each other so that any task can be addressed by any team member should flexible work patterns impact immediate project needs
- Regularly consult with team members who might be affected by flexible work patterns and seek their feedback on how it might work better. This provides an opportunity for team members to voice any concerns and to collaborate on solutions
- Focus on outcomes and achievements within an agreed time frame

Consider

Roles and Expectations

- Continuously articulate roles, expectations and deliverables. When teams are working in separate locations this communication is essential for deliverables to be met.
- Consider regular meetings to ensure team members are working towards the same outcome. This can be via new technologies or face-to-face.

Culture

- Aim for diversity with flexible working arrangements for all projects e.g. large projects can be broken into smaller, achievable portions; small projects can be delivered flexibly
- Encourage a team culture where constructive criticism is welcomed to fine tune the impact of flexibility on the team
- Assess the effectiveness of flexible working on the team at regular intervals
- Share positive flexible work techniques across all teams in the practice
- Assess if additional training is required to equip project leaders with the skills required to manage flexible teams

Time

4

Transparency regarding expectations on time spent working is important for an equitable approach to flexibility

Best Practice

- Build in flexibility when providing any timebased requirements

Consider

Working hours

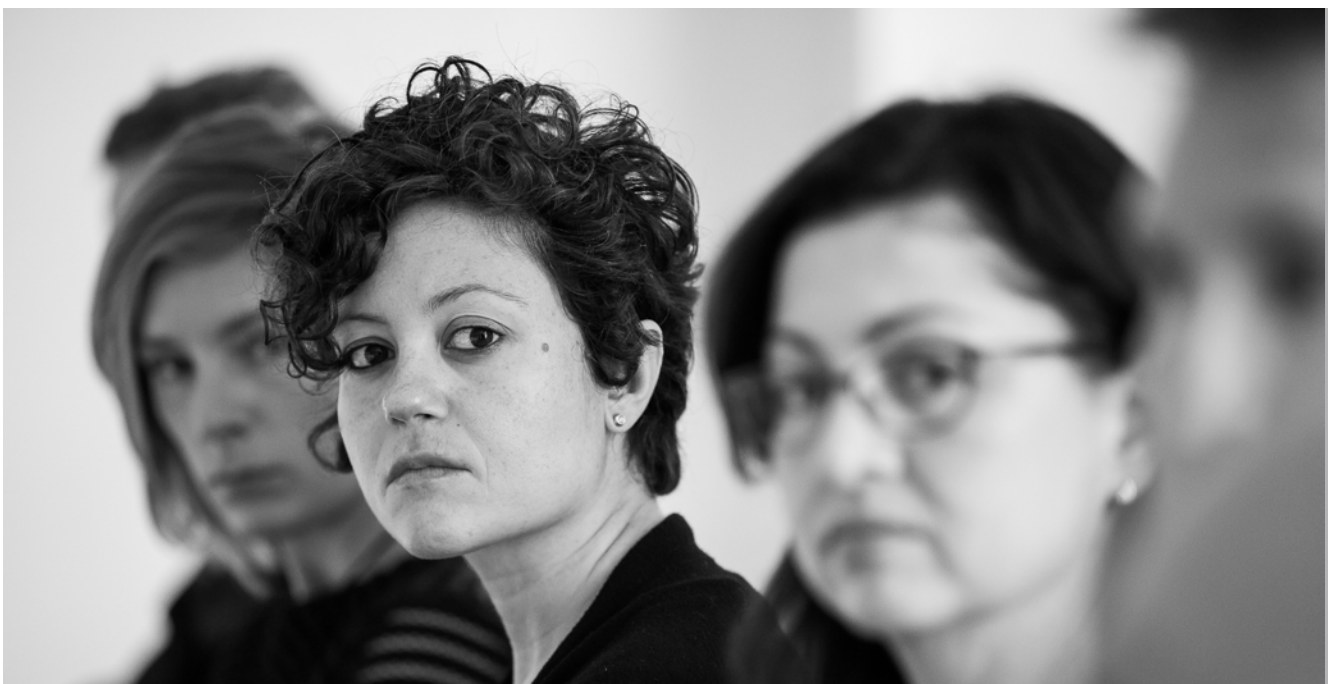
- Continuously articulate roles, expectations and deliverables. When teams are working in separate locations this communication is essential for deliverables to be met.
- Consider regular meetings to ensure team members are working towards the same outcome. This can be via new technologies or face-to-face.

Work breaks

- Clarify minimum required work breaks throughout the day – e.g. 30 – 60 minutes depending on length of work day

Core working periods

- Consider defining core working hours or core working days for the office. Obviously, this limits flexibility, but may be useful in the implementation stage



Culture

5

A positive culture towards flexibility is essential for it to succeed in architectural practice. Support for flexible working must be visible from the leadership team.

Best Practice

- Build a “can do” attitude creating a culture with a baseline of trust
- Understand that staff working flexibly still want to achieve professionally and can be relied on to deliver
- Reward outcomes and deliverables rather than time based-work, particularly excessive overtime
- Ensure that the policy is consistently applied across the organisation and does not appear to favour a certain employee profile
- Change the conversation on flexibility to be one of a positive impact on deliverables in lieu of a nuisance to the team and practice
- Measure the impacts of flexibility on staff morale and project performance with all employees

Consider

Lead by example

- Encourage senior staff to communicate their flexible work practices
- Ensure Practice Leaders understand and recognise that staff working flexibly still want to do achieve professionally and therefore can be relied on to “do the work”

Career progression

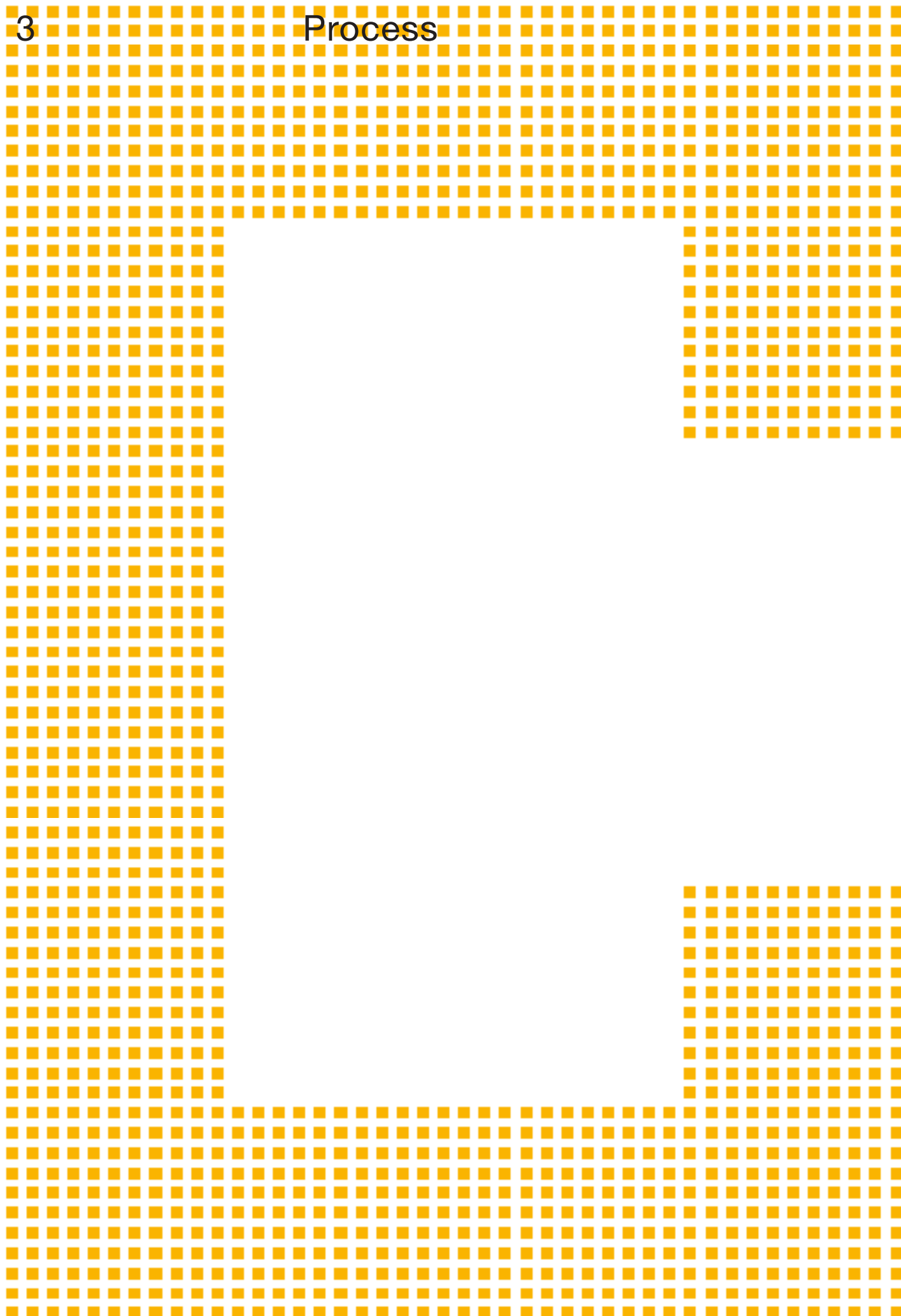
- Monitor that flexible working staff have the same opportunities for project work, recognition and promotion opportunities as traditional full time staff

Flexibility

- Communicate that flexible working is available for all employees of any gender – not just those with care responsibilities or special needs
- Foster a range of flexible work options across the practice to emphasise flexibility is flexible

Develop a culture that does not rely on presenteeism

- Maintain a vibrant culture of people when “everyone” is not in the office – this could be done through online forums, intranet, get-togethers etc.





Legislation

Under the The Fair Work Act 2009 (FW Act) requests for flexible working arrangements by eligible employees have to:

- be in writing
- explain what changes are being asked for
- explain the reasons for the request.

Employers who receive a request must give a written response within 21 working days saying whether the request is granted or refused. They can only refuse a request on reasonable business grounds. If a request is refused the written response must include the reasons for the refusal.

Employers don't have to choose between accepting or rejecting a request in full. Once a request has been made, employers and employees can discuss and negotiate to come to an arrangement that balances both of their needs.

Reasonable business grounds can include:

- the requested arrangements are too costly
- other employees' working arrangements can't be changed to accommodate the request
- it's impractical to change other employees' working arrangements or hire new employees to accommodate the request
- the request would result in a significant loss of productivity or have a significant negative impact on customer service.

Each Practice must decide what the parameters are for staff working flexibly

1

Outline what you can offer employees

Refer to Framework and Types of Flexible Working Arrangements sections in this document. Practices should be transparent in how they communicate these parameters to the studio:

Consider

- Publishing the types of Flexible Working Arrangements you can offer
- Publishing the criteria for accessing these arrangements
- Publishing the protocols that your practice will apply when accessing this flexibility in particular – Resources and Time

2

Outline how you access flexible working arrangements

Each practice must then set out the process that staff should follow to access flexible work options.

Consider

- Who the staff member should make their first approach to – e.g. Practice Management, HR Manager, Line Manager
- Explain how the business assesses the requests and criteria that needs to be met to access flexible work options
- Outline timeframes to consider and respond to request
- Outline process for reviewing impact on pay and benefits and how they are agreed
- Clearly document when the change in work pattern can take effect and the number of processes required to be complete prior to commencing – Manager Approval, new contracts, payroll, timesheets etc.
- Articulate if the access to flexible working includes a trial period or sunset clause
- Articulate an approach to work, health and safety when working off-site

3

Outline what you our expectations are of your flexible employees

Each practice is to outline what their expectations are.

Consider

- Access to emails and responding to emails outside of contracted hours
- Access to electronic diaries for managers and project teams
- Open communication
- Expectations in respect to being contactable outside of contracted hours

Include a Working Off-Site Checklist

- Each practice to list items to be addressed to assist employees when preparing a request for flexible work at an off-site location e.g. work from home

Examples of Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible working arrangements take many forms, and may include one or a variety of the options listed below:

■ Staggered Hours

Employees have different start, finish and break times

■ Compressed Working Hours

Employees can cover their contracted hours of work in fewer working days

■ Flexible Hours

Employees have the freedom to work outside set core office hours determined by the employer e.g. 7:00am to 7:00pm

■ Working From Home

Employees spend all or part of their week working away from the employer's premises.

■ Job Sharing

One full-time job split between employees who agree the hours and responsibilities between them.

■ School Holiday Flexibility

Additional leave during the school holidays.

■ Annual Hours Of Work

Contracted hours of work are calculated annually allowing for flexibility over the year

■ Rostered Days Off

Extending hours of work on a typical day to accumulate time for a day off in any given period

■ Reduced Hours Of Work

Reduced hours of work. This may be for a fixed period or on a permanent basis.

■ Time In Lieu

Replacing work in addition to contracted hours with time off work at a later date

■ Transition Hours

Reduced hours of work during a transitional period e.g. returning from a career break or major operation

■ Part Year Work

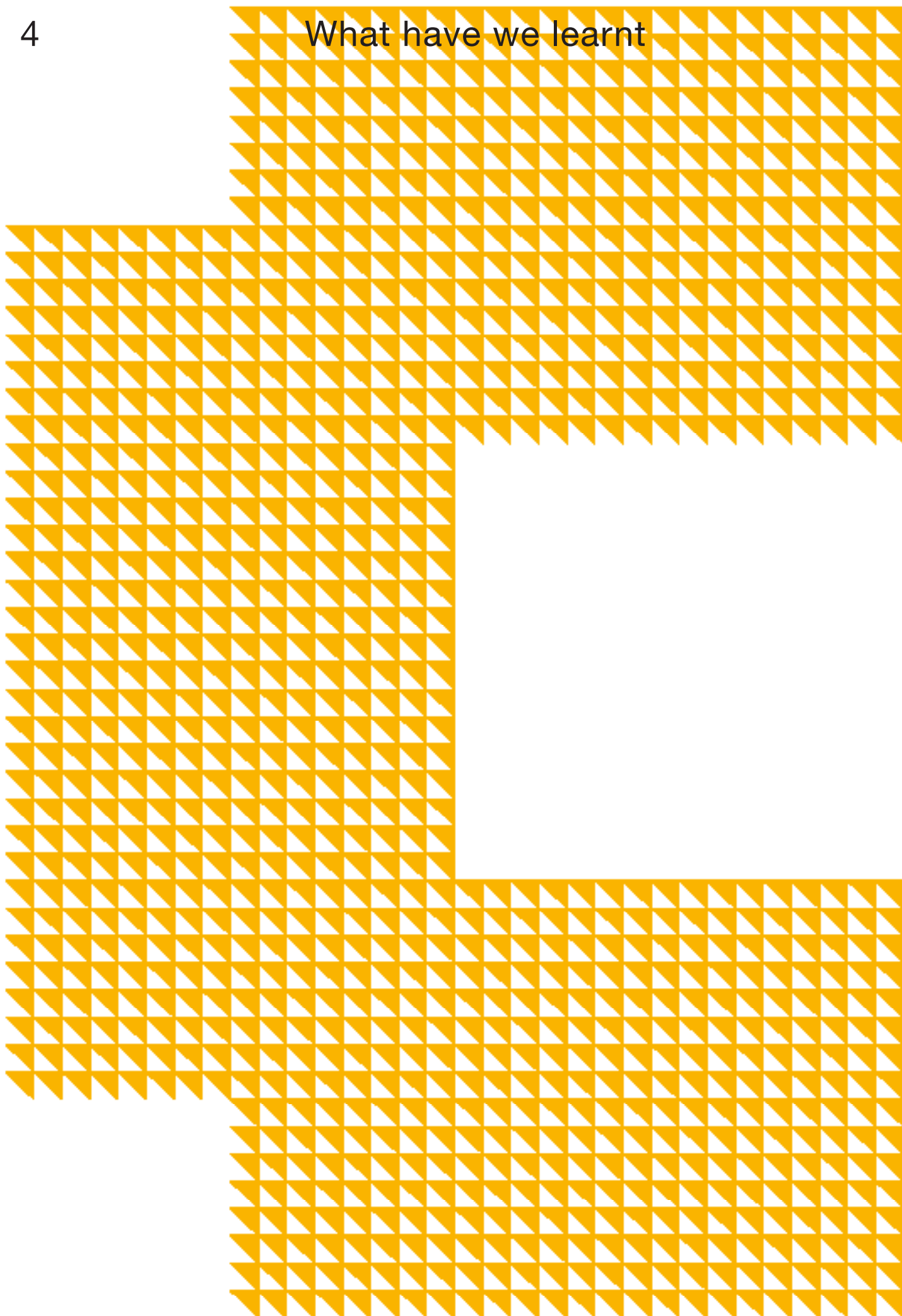
Reduced hours of work allowing for extended leave for certain months of the year

■ Alternating Location

For those practices with satellite offices, flexibility in the office location.

■ Sabbatical / Career Break

Employees are allowed to take an extended period of time off, either paid or unpaid



In the 2015-2017 Progress Report, the Architects Male Champions of Change announced the continual monitoring of gender metrics with staff on flexible working arrangements



In July 2018, the Architects Male Champions of Change conducted the same flexibility survey taken in 2016 to understand the impact of 'All Roles Flex' on flexible working arrangements and the culture of always being available in the architecture industry. 730 people completed the survey with an equal gender mix. The survey identified the following:

- 73% of respondents felt that they had permission to work flexibly, a 10% difference from 63% in 2016
- 80% of respondents agree there is a supportive culture for Flexible Working in their practice, an increase on 70% in 2016
- 79% of respondents agreed that technology is available to support flexible working arrangements, compared with 67% in 2016
- 59% of employees agreed part time and flexible working options were clear and transparent, a marked increase on 36% in 2016
- 60% of respondents feel comfortable to request part-time or flexible working compared with 42% in 2016
- 25% of respondents perceive that flexible work arrangements have affected their career progression
- 73% of participants worked additional hours above their contracted hours with 54% of these participants not recording additional hours on their timesheets
- There was a high neutral response regarding the impact of flexibility on team structure and workload

Cultural change is slow. The Champions recognise their future focus will be normalising flexibility, so that it moves away from being tolerated towards celebrated.

The introduction of All Roles Flex across Champion practices improved transparency of flexible working options through policy and guidelines.

Whilst the numbers are positive, cultural change is slow.

The survey invited participants to provide additional comments and these unveiled a culture not reflected in the numbers.

- The impact of flexible working on team dynamics is felt, particularly by full time employees.
- There was a clear correlation between the additional hours worked and hours worked outside the office by flexible employees, hinting at work often unnoticed or sustained over working by the flexible employee to meet work expectations.
- Many still observe flexible working as an impediment to career progression, with minimal opportunity for leadership roles for the flexible worker.
- There is an entrenched perception that those who don't have children are not eligible to work flexibly and therefore feel discriminated against. This needs to be addressed.
- Across the Champion practices, flexibility is clearly supported at an ownership level but less so by team leaders.
- Some felt that project resourcing limited access to flexible working, particularly on understaffed projects.

Communication, time management and project planning play a pivotal role in the success of flexible working. Opportunities to improve these include:

- Well managed project resourcing
- Clarity on deliverables
- Clarity on time frames recognising the benefit of setting weekly tasks
- Realistic time frames that prepare for and take into account flexibility
- Regular status review and project check-ins
- Allow for greater responsibility across team members
- Provide time and project management training
- Build in the importance of communication, time management and project planning with clients to manage realistic expectations
- Normalise flexibility with team leaders reflecting a positive attitude across practice; provide additional support where challenges arise





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