



<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Working from home – Implementing Government’s Expectations</b>		
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>2024 - 0315</b>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>10 October 2024</b>		
<b>To:</b>	<b>Hon Nicola Willis, Minister for the Public Service</b>		
<b>Action Sought:</b>	Indicate your preferred option for issuing the guidance and agree to the proposed approach for data collection	<b>Due Date</b>	17 October 2024
<b>Contact Person:</b>	<b>Paula Davis, Manager Workforce and Capability; Sarah Borrell, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Workforce</b>		
<b>Contact No:</b>	9(2)(a) privacy		
<b>Encl:</b>	No	<b>Priority:</b>	High
<b>Security Level:</b>	<b>IN CONFIDENCE</b>		

## Purpose of Report

1. Following your announcement on Monday 23 September of the Government’s expectations of working from home arrangements for public servants, we have begun implementing the key steps required to ensure agencies’ policies and processes, including data collection approaches, reflect the expectations.
2. This report provides you with advice on:
  - a. The outcome of our review on current guidance to ensure it reflects the Government’s expectations on working from home arrangements for public servants
  - b. Options for how the updated guidance can be issued, with a recommendation on a preferred option
  - c. Our proposed approach to data collection and reporting on the prevalence of agreements across the public service
  - d. Next steps for issuing the guidance and implementing the agency monitoring and reporting system.

## Guidance Review

3. We have completed our review of the Hybrid Working Guidance 2022 and Flexible-by-Default Guidance 2020. We consider that there is no longer a need for two sets of guidance, and we have begun consolidating them into one shorter and much clearer guiding document that reflects Government’s expectations. Initial feedback from agencies has been supportive of this direction, including having a single document.


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4. The new Guidance will adhere to the following principles:
  - a. Simplicity – the document is short, succinct and direct on what is expected and what agencies must weigh up when considering if a role is suitable for hybrid agreements.
  - b. Transparency – there is clarity on what and how agencies need to monitor, record and report on their agreements so there is consistency across agencies
  - c. Accountability – clearly stipulates that agreements and oversight are the responsibility of Managers
  - d. Flexibility – allows for future adjustments to be accommodated with minimum disruption for agencies policies and processes and confirms that current contractual agreements will continue uninterrupted.
5. The next step is to agree the best vehicle to issue new Guidance. This is discussed in the following section.

### **Options for Issuing the Guidance**

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9(2)(f)(iv) confidentiality of advice



### **Monitoring the prevalence of hybrid working**

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10. Supporting the implementation of the guidance, the Commission has been asked to capture information on working from home arrangements across the public service. Specifically, we will look to understand how many public servants have working from home agreements and what days of the week public servants are working from home. This information is to be publicly reported early in 2025.
11. The Commission has explored how to collect the information required with the minimum burden, to ensure that collecting this data does not take time away from the delivery of public services. The approach has been tested with agency Heads of Human Resources.
12. Departments and departmental agencies typically hold some information about occupancy of offices, but this does not capture work from home arrangements. The StatsNZ Business Operations Survey measured where employees were on a “typical day” and our planned approach uses a similar method which will allow for comparison with other sectors.
13. We are planning data collection and reporting that requires agencies to:
  - a. Collect team level metrics about work from home arrangements for a “typical week” from managers, including the number of staff who work from home each day of the week
  - b. Report to the Commission the summary of their agency data a minimum of twice yearly.
14. This data will allow analysis and reporting at the agency and system level:
  - a. The percentage of staff who work from home regularly
  - b. The percentage of staff who are working from home each day in a typical week
  - c. How many days of working from home are staff doing (e.g. less than one day a week through to fully remote).
15. We explored collecting additional information, such as occupation and regional breakdown. Collecting regional information would require substantially more work for agencies/managers and the Commission, as information would need to be provided at the individual public servant level, while also potentially triggering privacy considerations. This would change the collection from work from home arrangements to also capturing all physical work locations. To limit the burden from the new collection, we instead plan to use the next Public Service Census (March 2025) to collect occupational and regional working from home patterns because it will already capture demographic and job characteristics as well as use of work from home.

16. You have also requested we capture information on the *impact* of working from home. We intend to do this using the Public Service Census, including asking managers for their assessment of the impact of working from home on their team's productivity. All participants will be asked about their access to learning and development, clarity of team objectives, barriers to meeting objectives, and workload, as well as a range of other factors that support productivity. These will be reported at the agency and system level.
17. For both the new work from home collection and the Public Service Census, data will be collected and reported for departments and departmental agencies.

## Next Steps

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### Guidance

18. We will continue drafting the guidance and will provide you with a final draft by 23 October, along with the draft amendment to the Government Workforce Policy Statement if this option is selected. We will seek your agreement at this time to begin formal consultation with the relevant agencies and unions. We expect this process to take approximately 4 weeks (allowing time to run the consultation, analyse the feedback and to provide you with a subsequent update).
19. That suggests that the updated guidance will be available at the end of November.

### Monitoring and Reporting

20. Next steps on data and reporting are not contingent on decisions on the best vehicle for issuing Guidance.
21. We plan to get an immediate snapshot of the status within departments and departmental agencies on working from home arrangements. The timeline to get this would be:
  - a. **Late-October** – Commission provides agencies with template and advice on data collection
  - b. **End of November** – agencies submit their first data collection to the Commission
  - c. **Mid-December** - the Commission provides you with advice on baseline data
  - d. **Mid-February** – the Commission publishes agency and system level metrics on working from home along with the quarterly Workforce Data.
22. Once we have a baseline, we plan to gather work from home prevalence data every six months and incorporate it into the existing regular collection processes. This would mean collecting this data every year in March and September, with public reporting following.
23. The Public Service Census will run in March 2025, with results available in May. We have not decided when subsequent Census surveys will be run.

## Recommended Action

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We recommend that you:

- a. **Note** that we are drafting new Guidance that will replace the existing Hybrid Working Guidance 2022 and Flexible-by-Default Guidance 2020 and will provide you with a draft for your consideration

*Noted*

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- c **Agree** to the approach for data collection and reporting on the prevalence and impact of working from home arrangements for departments and departmental agencies  
*Agree/disagree*
- d **Agree** that Public Service Commission release this briefing once the updated guidance is published, with the legally privileged content in paragraph 8 being withheld  
*Agree/disagree*

Hon Nicola Willis  
**Minister for the Public Service**