

Responding to a request for flexible working arrangements template

You can use this template to either agree to or refuse an employee's request for flexible working arrangements.

The template has been colour coded to assist you to complete it accurately.

You need to replace the **red < >** writing with what applies to your business and situation.

Explanatory information is shown in *blue italics* to assist you and should be deleted once you have finished the letter.

Some of the sections are optional because they might not apply to your employee and can simply be deleted.

Steps to follow when responding to a request for flexible working arrangements

Step 1: Know the rules

While all employees can ask for flexibility at work, certain employees have a legal right under the *Fair Work Act 2009* to request flexible working arrangements.

As a manager, the 'right to request' means you have a legal obligation to:

- **seriously consider the request and the employee's circumstances**
- **respond in writing within 21 days**
- **only reject the request on reasonable business grounds and specify how these grounds apply to the request**
- **State in the response whether or not other changes in working arrangements can be accommodated, and if so, outline those changes.**

Awards contain additional rules about requests for flexible work arrangements.

For more information visit our [Online Learning Centre](#) for a free course on *Workplace flexibility* or go to www.fairwork.gov.au/flexibleworkingarrangements.

Step 2: Consider the request

Flexibility helps employees maintain a work/life balance and can improve business productivity and efficiency. However, not all forms of flexibility will suit all workplaces or all jobs.

When you receive a request for flexible working arrangements you should consider whether the proposed arrangement would affect things like duties, costs, productivity, workplace health and safety, other staff, suppliers or customers. When considering the request, don't assume that 'different' always means 'bad'. For example, the proposed arrangement may reduce your staff costs or have a positive impact on your service delivery.

If you are covered by an award, you must consider the employee's needs and the circumstances around the request, and the consequences for the employee if the change are not made.

It is best practice to approach a request thinking 'how can I make this work'. If the requested arrangement won't work for your business, consider alternative options.

Step 3: Talk to the employee

Before you respond in writing to a request for flexible working arrangements, employers covered by an award must discuss the request with their employee to try to reach an agreement about changes to the employee's working conditions, taking into consideration:

- the needs of the employee
- consequences for the employee if changes in working arrangements aren't made
- any reasonable business grounds for refusing the employee's request

As part of this conversation you should explore whether there are any alternative arrangements that may work better, or whether it is appropriate to trial the arrangement first.

If you need to say no to a request, be honest with the employee and help them to understand why you cannot accommodate it. If you need help preparing for this conversation, visit our [Online Learning Centre](#) for a free course on *Difficult conversations in the workplace*.

Step 4: Respond in writing

If you have received a request for flexible working arrangements you must respond in writing, saying whether the request is granted or refused. You can only refuse a request on reasonable business grounds. If you do refuse a request, your written response must include the reasons for the refusal. If you are covered by an award, and refuse a request you must also state whether or not there are any other changes in working arrangements that you can offer the employee to better accommodate their circumstances, and if so, outline such changes. This template will help you include the right details.

If the request is made under the Fair Work Act you need to respond in writing within 21 days of the request.

You should keep a copy of the letter for your records.

<Insert date>

<Insert employee's name>

<Insert employee's contact details>

Dear <Insert name of employee>

RE: Your request for flexible working arrangements

I refer to your letter dated <Insert date of request> where you requested the following flexible working arrangements:

<Insert changes requested, eg:

- changes to your start and finish times
- working from home 2 days per week>

<Insert the name of your company > values flexibility and is committed to finding practical solutions to help our employees maintain a work/life balance. We consider all requests on a case by case basis and look to balance our operational requirements with the needs of our employees, clients and team members. We have carefully considered your request.

Delete the following sections that don't apply.

Agree to Request

I am pleased to advise that we can accommodate the flexible working arrangement you've requested. Your new working arrangements will commence on <Insert date of commencement>.

This arrangement is agreed to on a trial basis. This means we will monitor and review this arrangement to ensure it continues to meet both your needs and the needs of the business. The first review will take place on <Insert date for review>, however it may be scheduled earlier if required.

Refuse request

As discussed on <Insert date>, we are unable to approve your request for the following operational reasons:

<Insert reasons why the requested arrangement cannot be accommodated. Include enough detail to show the refusal is reasonable>.

Refuse but offer different arrangement

As discussed on <Insert date>, we are unable to approve your request for the following operational reasons:

- <Insert reasons why the requested arrangement cannot be accommodated. Include enough detail to show the refusal is reasonable>.

However, the business can offer you the following alternative arrangement, which we believe may meet your needs:

- <Insert details of alternate proposed arrangement>.

If you agree to this alternative arrangement it will commence on <Insert date of commencement> on a trial basis. A review of the arrangement would take place on <Insert date for review> to ensure that it continues to meet both your needs and the needs of the business. This review may be scheduled earlier if required.

Refuse and offer no other arrangement

As discussed on <Insert date>, we are unable to approve your request for the following operational reasons:

- <Insert reasons why the requested arrangement cannot be accommodated. Include enough detail to show the refusal is reasonable>.

The business has considered the possibility of alternative flexible working arrangements other than those you requested, but is not able to offer any changes to your working arrangements at this time.

Please confirm in writing whether you wish to take up the alternative arrangement by <Insert date of reply>.

Please contact me on <Insert your telephone number> if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

<Insert your name>

<Insert your position>

The Fair Work Ombudsman is committed to providing you with advice that you can rely on.

The information contained in this template is general in nature. If you are unsure about how it applies to your situation you can call our Infoline on 13 13 94 or speak with a union, industry association or a workplace relations professional.