

Future Flex Planning: Rethinking Where, When, and How We Work

A process outline for HL/HCL managers and their teams

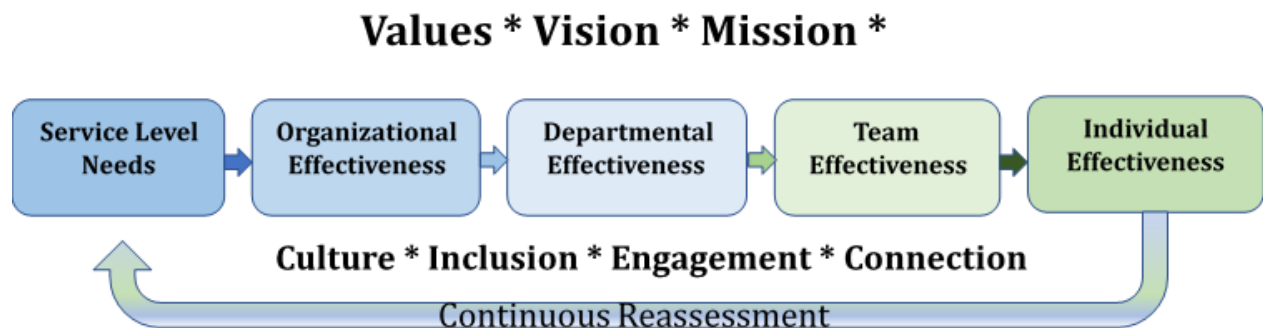
Our Vision for the HL/HCL Workplace of the Future

The Harvard Library is a welcoming, dynamic, inclusive, and high performing organization focused on outcomes. We creatively design our work and spaces to facilitate the success and engagement of library staff, students, faculty, and visitors. We support and strengthen organizational, team, and personal effectiveness through work and space designs that incorporate the best of on and off-site work, foster a strong sense of community, and ensure that all can be engaged, included, and connected.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to the period of experimentation that we are entering. Our principles for decision-making through this process include:

- **Organizational needs** must come first.
- The process for determining flexwork is **equitable**.
- Decisions are to be made **without bias or favoritism**.
- Flexwork design is **outcomes-focused** and **job appropriate**.
- Flexwork must have a **net-neutral** or **net-positive effect**.
- Flexwork must be **responsive** to the changing needs of the workplace and is not to be considered “permanent.”

Establishing our future workplace will be iterative; it will take some time to get this right!



Our future workplace models must consider service-level needs -- and organizational, department, team, and individual effectiveness-- while also answering the questions: *How do we modify our practices to support our goals of camaraderie, staying connected, and keeping*

everyone engaged long-term? How do we create and maintain a positive and inclusive work environment as we modify our patterns of being together regardless of location?

Imagining and establishing our future workplace will be both exciting and challenging, and the process will be iterative. This document has been created to help you think and work through this thought process.

Steps for considering your team's future work model

As you begin this work, keep in mind that we are trying to make the best use of work sites, no matter the location. For example, on-site work should focus on making the most of interactions, whether those interactions are with patrons, colleagues, or physical equipment and materials. In considering the future workplace, think about how, where, and when you and your teams will be able to do their best work.

Step 1: Service Level Needs: Determined at the level of: VP, VPDR, Department Heads and Directors

What are the service expectations for patrons? How will we achieve critical business needs and strategic priorities? This information should be regularly and clearly communicated by leadership to all employees across the department. This information is the most critical in the process of evaluating new models for doing our work.

Since service level expectations change, there is an expectation that work locations and hours may vary accordingly.

With current and future expected service level needs squarely in mind, proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Organizational Effectiveness

Every member of the HL and HCL community must understand and work in support of, and in alignment with, the organization's mission, vision and goals. Towards this end, all employees will be expected to participate in the broader Library community as follows:

Attend monthly Harvard Library All Staff (and, for HL/HCL managers, HL/HCL Managers meetings). These are expected to be virtual for the foreseeable future.

Plan to attend two to four on-site, community-wide events each year. These will be designed to strengthen community and facilitate development and knowledge in support of strategic priorities.

Read email regularly and respond in a timely fashion. Email continues to be a key means of communicating important organizational information.

Gain comfort with Zoom and other communications and planning tools that support engagement and inclusivity.

Be accessible! All employees with remote work schedules must have access to sufficient Wi-Fi to effectively support remote work tools.

Step 3: Departmental Effectiveness

VPDR members and Department Heads should work together to establish norms and expectations for communications and engagement that are consistent with overarching principles and align with organizational expectations but are particular to the group. The first step is deciding at what level in the department the norms and expectations should be developed. Once this is determined, some questions departments should work through include the following:

- What are the communications vehicles that your department will be using?
- What are the expectations for response times and responsiveness generally?
- What are the expectations for attendance and participation in department-wide meetings and events?
- Does it make sense to have “anchor days” when all are on-site to facilitate collaboration and build community?
- What norms will you establish to ensure the inclusion of all, whether on-site or remote?
- How will the effectiveness of new work models be evaluated, and at what intervals will they be revisited?

Once these questions have been answered, and any norms and expectations are developed and shared with all in the department, proceed to Step 4.

Step 4: Team Effectiveness

Team leaders will now engage their team in brainstorming methods for ensuring that 1) all of the above expectations have been communicated and 2) team norms are developed that are consistent with overarching principles and in alignment with departmental expectations but are particular to the team. Some questions teams should work through together include:

- What are the communications vehicles that your team will be using?

- What are the expectations for response times and responsiveness generally?
- What are the expectations for attendance and participation in team meetings and events?
- Does it make sense to have “anchor days” when all are on-site to facilitate collaboration and build community?
- What are the “core hours” when all on the team will be available to each other through the workday?
- What norms will you establish to ensure inclusion of all, whether on-site or off?
- How will the effectiveness of new work models be evaluated, and at what intervals will they be revisited?

Trust across the team is critical to a successful flexible work arrangement. Trust is gained through evidence of competence and reliability. Setting team expectations related to work product, timelines, and turnaround times will be essential and go a long way towards enhancing trust. **Establishing effective team and individual goals will be critical to this endeavor.**

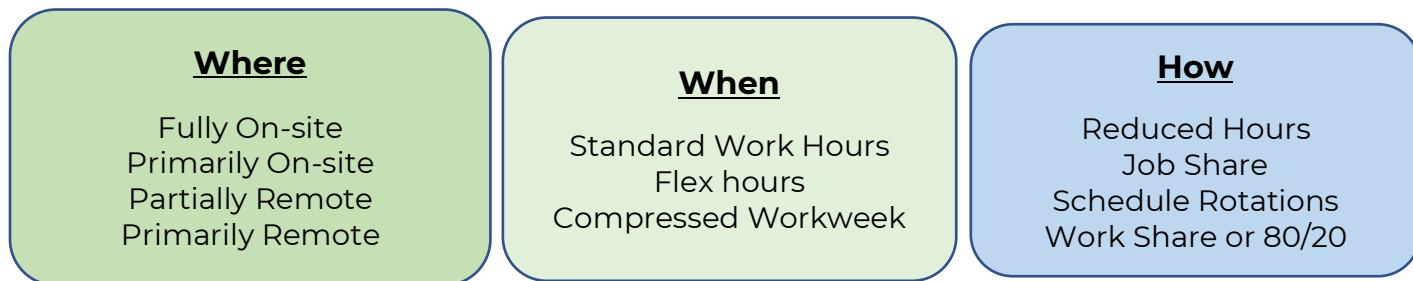
Be sure to engage your teams in these conversations and regularly revisit how things are going and what challenges are being encountered. Then, be prepared to make changes. There should be regular, ongoing conversations with team members in one-on-one and team meetings.

Step 5: Individual Effectiveness

The nature of the team’s work, and whether some or most of the work must be completed on-site, should now be established. Once the above expectations are set, it is time to consider individual flexibility to enhance personal effectiveness. For example, some employees may not be able to focus effectively while in the office and may schedule regular remote work to complete particular tasks that require concentration. Conversely, some may have home environments that are not conducive to focusing and will need to work in the office to do their best work. If done well, flexibility in where, when, and how work may be done can go a long way towards increasing employee motivation and effectiveness while enhancing morale.

Think creatively about how positions can be designed to enable each employee to work most effectively in consideration of their job responsibilities. There are many options for where, when, and how work can be done.

Following are some possibilities to consider:



Step 6: Documentation

To facilitate experimentation and continuous reassessment of work designs, individual flex forms are not required at this time. Individual flex requests may be necessary if individuals have requests for flexibility that fall outside of team flex plans. Please reach out to your [HR representative](#) with questions.

Team documentation:

Patron-facing services: Teams should develop a Team Roster / Schedule for On-site work to ensure adequate coverage and sufficient backup.

Team schedules and availability: Teams should develop and make available team schedules to ensure coverage and communicate accessibility for collaboration. It may be helpful to create a shared calendar with each team member's standard hours, location, and availability, ensuring adequate overlap for community building and collaboration.

Team leaders should develop a written plan for their team's flex work and submit it to their Department Head and VPDR member for approval *before* submitting the Team Future Flex Planning Form noted below.

Organizational documentation:

Before moving forward with implementing your team's plan, team leads or department heads must complete the Team Future Flex Planning Form (see resources section below for details). Facilities and IT will review submissions to ensure adequate site preparation. In addition, HR will review submissions from an equity lens.

Resources

[Future Flex Planning Presentation](#)

[Team Flex Planning Form Preview](#)

[Team Future Flex Planning Form](#) (Qualtrics, for final submissions by team leads only)

Harvard University Flex Resources: <https://hr.harvard.edu/flexwork>

[Harvard Library Human Resource Wiki](#)

[Harvard Library HR Flex Work Wiki](#) (more to come!)