1. Assessing a Flexible Working Proposal for Suitability

1. Introduction

Things are going well. You've had a great idea, your team are on-board and excited about making a change. So what happens now? This paper outlines the second step in transforming your idea into a reality – assessing your proposal and seeing if it's really suitable. The outcome of this stage will be a business case for consideration by your Head of Service, which evidences why your team should change to a new way of working.

You've got to produce a convincing business case for your Head of Service to approve your proposal. Depending on the scale of your proposal, there could be quite a bit of preparatory work to undertake – so best to enlist some helpers to share the workload!

2. How do I create a winning business case?

It's not just about having a good idea and some money to make a change happen. Aligning your team proposal within Group and corporate objectives is a key requirement for any successful business case, and follows the 'golden thread' principle – ensuring that WCC is investing in the right projects.

So why create a business case? A business case is required for two main reasons. Firstly to ensure that there is sufficient justification for the decision to move forward with your new way of working proposal. Secondly, to ensure that all reasonable options for developing or delivering the change have been identified and examined, and the most beneficial option has been selected. The business case should contain enough evidence and reasoning to persuade the reader (in this case your Head of Service) of the justification on the basis of what they have read.

The good news is that a corporate standard Business Case template has been created to provide a framework for managers to use, and to promote consistency.
You will be able to use a lot of material from your initial team workshop to populate the business case template – an outline of which is shown overleaf.

The indicator (W) highlights areas where your workshop material could be used.

Figure 1: Components of a WCC business case

Background	Provide a summary which sets the scene for the reader. (W)
Business need	Outline the drivers for change. (W)
Outcome capability	Describes the deliverables from the proposal, and explains how these fit into corporate objectives and directorate/divisional plans. (W)
Stakeholders	Describes who they are and the impact of the proposal on them. (W)
Assumptions	Outline any assumptions made in writing the proposal.
Scope	Identifies what's in and out of scope. (W)
Constraints	Identifies things the proposal relies on to work. E.g. financial support, adaption to change.
Dependencies	Outlines any internal and external dependencies.
Options to consider	Focuses on realistic and achievable options that could be considered. (W)
Cost & funding	Outlines the one off costs, the on-going costs, sources of funding and break-even timescales.
Benefits	Shows potential benefits and how these can be measured. This is where base lining material can be really effective. (W)
Critical success factors	Outlines how the proposal would be evaluated, and the factors which would indicate success.
Risks	Outlines the significant risks to the project. You can use your PEST and SWOT analysis here. Think about Political, Internal, External, Financial, Technological risks. (W)
Key milestones	Provides a high level plan showing the key milestones to implement the proposal.

Top Tip!

Read successful business cases and adopt their style. Talk to the authors and get their advice on creating a winning business case.

3.   Gathering evidence and measuring benefits

New ways of working proposals are about change and will normally be closely linked with business processes. Thinking about your business processes at this early stage is crucial. If you understand your current processes and can see where you want to be, then planning for change will be clearer.

Measuring your current way of working (base lining) and your new way of working is absolutely essential to demonstrate how effective your change has been. If investment of any sort is required, then having hard facts available to support your case will certainly grab attention. It's important to have sufficient time to measure existing processes – to provide a firm basis from which to measure your new change. Start measuring your current way of working whilst you are creating your business case.

Depending on the reason for change, teams will have different benefits they wish to measure. These should have been discussed in your team workshop – so the notes you created then will now come in very handy! For example, if your team are relocating as part of an office move, monitoring travel miles, Appendix E costs, and unproductive time spent travelling may be particularly relevant. If your team are implementing new processes, then undertaking timings of existing processes will be required to compare against the new process.

We've listed some of the more popular measurements below. You might wish to use some of these, and add team specific ones.

Top Tip!
Gather your base lining material now! This keeps the team focused on producing the existing evidence, and doesn't interfere with later implementation processes.

Area	Possible Measurements	Notes
Travel	Mileage claim form	Information about existing travel patterns. No additional work is required by the team to gather this information. May be too summarised? Does everyone provide consistent information?
Travel	Postcode analysis	For field workers who are visiting more than one location each day – provides an additional level of detail from the mileage form. It is an additional form to complete though.
Travel	Unnecessary journeys	Focuses on recording information about journeys which might not have occurred under the new way of working. Requires staff to really think about how the new way of working might change their travel patterns.
Desk utilisation	Office desk usage	Could be undertaken by a 'floor walker' or the team themselves. Need to pick a typical period of time to monitor. Avoid

		key holiday periods which could give misleading results.
Desk utilisation	Working from other venues	Each person completes one of these as a daily diary. Records working from other venues and flexibility.
Employee satisfaction	Staff survey	Internal staff survey could help identify key issues for staff.
Employee satisfaction	Team survey	Team survey before, during and after change to identify staff general happiness and work life balance.
Employee satisfaction	Turnover	The cost of recruiting and training new staff can be considerable. Look at reasons for turnover – would flexible working help to retain staff, or be more of an attraction for new staff?
Employee satisfaction	Time off and hours lost	Examine reasons for time off – could the introduction of flexibility increase available hours?
Employee satisfaction	Increased breadth of skills	Self-assessment, training evidence, appraisal outcome, promotions
Customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction survey	You may already have customer satisfaction results.
Customer satisfaction	Number of compliments / complaints	You may already have measures in place.
Customer satisfaction	Focus groups	Capture specific feedback.
Productivity	Amount of corrective work	Do you have measures to track amount of time spent on corrective work?
Productivity	Timing of existing processes	Linked with Business Process Improvement – can you create a flowchart showing existing process. Add timings. Then create and compare with new process. Simple timesheets can be used to show breakdown of work tasks.
Productivity	Existing KPIs	e.g. No of cases completed on time
Financial	Overtime costs	

4.   Change might cost!

The introduction of Modern and Flexible Working can be considered as a change initiative. It is recommended that you complete the **Flexible Working e-learning module on** WILMa, as it will explain what flexible working is, give a general overview, the practicalities, working with colleagues and finally a summary of the main points contained in the module.

It's probably a good idea to familiarise yourself with the 'Managers Guidance for Flexible Working' at this point.   There are lots of things to think about –

some of which may deserve a mention in your business case, especially if they require some sort of investment.   In particular think about your team and their suitability for a new way of working.   What assistance might they require to fully embrace the proposed change – might this incur additional costs?   You can utilise your Issue log to see the sorts of things your team may have already raised.

All costs and sources of funding need to be reflected in your business case.   There may be one-off investment costs, and recurring costs each year.   There may also be cost savings to consider – finding ways to turn benefits into ££:pp will be required.   The aim is to produce a cost benefit analysis which shows at what point the investment will breakeven.   You will need to demonstrate how the change will be funded.   Do you have a budget, are you seeking additional funds?

5.   Technology

Not all new ways of working projects require introduction of the latest technology.   Sometimes it's possible to make better use of your existing technology – at no cost at all.   For example, the use of Instant Messaging as an alternative communication tool.   We'd recommend involving ICT Services early in the development of your idea so that appropriate solutions to your business needs can be identified.   You can register a request for assistance via the ICT Service Desk.

ICT Services will be able to:

- ✓ Provide advice and guidance on how to get the best from your existing technology;
- ✓ Provide advice and guidance on other technology available which you may not be aware of;
- ✓ Provide advice and guidance on obtaining new equipment at best possible cost;
- ✓ Provide demonstrations of supported mobile technology at WCC;
- ✓ Lend mobile technology for a short evaluation in your team;
- ✓ Work with you if you have specialised requirements;
- ✓ Share learning from other projects;
- ✓ Create networking opportunities across the directorates so you can find teams who may have already done something similar.