Work-Life Balance: a resource for the State Services
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Work-Life Balance definition for the State Services

Work-life balance is about the interaction between paid work and other activities, including unpaid work in families and the community, leisure, and personal development.

Work-life balance is about creating a productive work culture where the potential for tensions between work and other parts of people’s lives is minimised. This means having appropriate employment provisions in place, and organisational systems and supportive management underpinning them.

Work-life balance for any one person is having the ‘right’ combination of participation in paid work (defined by hours and working conditions), and other aspects of their lives. This combination will not remain fixed, but may change over time.

Work-Life Balance principles for the State Services

Policy principles

Work-life balance should:

- benefit both the individual and the organisation
- be responsive to the needs of the organisation (nature of the business, operating hours etc) and demands of their service-users (citizens and/or government)
- be aligned with the vision and strategic direction of the organisation
- recognise that the needs of both the organisation and employees are not static, but change over time
- be broad, in order to cover a wide variety of situations (e.g. not just targeted at those with children) and employee needs
- be a joint responsibility between employees, their union and the organisation
- be available to all employees, or have it clearly stated where they are not (e.g. some jobs may not be able to be done part-time)
- be fair and equitable, recognising that different cultures, abilities/disabilities, religions, beliefs, whānau and family practices may mean different solutions for different people, and that “one size does not fit all”
- be affordable for the organisation and realistically budgeted
- value employees for their contribution to the organisation, regardless of their working pattern.

Implementation principles

Work-life balance programmes should:

- be flexible, so that work-life balance programmes can be changed to meet the needs of employees and the organisation as they change
- highlight the need for management, unions and employees to work in partnership to identify issues and discuss relevant and workable solutions
- be widely communicated, so that employees are aware of what is available
- be easily accessible, i.e. employees know what is available and feel they can use the provisions without being penalised
- be integrated with human resource and people management policies and practices
- be carefully planned and agreed and practical, so that they can work
- allow for tailoring to meet individual employee needs where possible
- include a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, to investigate if they are succeeding in their aims and are being applied consistently.
A well performing State Services can make a huge difference – to New Zealand's success as a country and to the people that make up our society. Government agencies need to be attractive to high achievers, who are motivated by making a positive difference in people’s lives. To achieve this, we aim to make the State Services an ‘employer of choice’.

The challenge, variety and influence of working in this sector are recognised as key sources of job satisfaction. They need to be supported by excellent workplace conditions that respond to the expectations of a changing workforce – and flexible work-life balance policies are high on the agenda.

The State Services cover a diversity of workplaces, roles and occupational environments. Work-life balance options have to be just as varied and imaginative, to benefit both employers and employees. This resource sets out practical steps to follow, and quotes real life examples of work-life balance strategies developed by individuals, groups, employers and the union. I hope it will serve to reduce barriers to a balanced lifestyle and contribute to our goal of making the State Services an employer of choice.

Mark Prebble
State Services Commissioner

The provision of quality public services requires quality jobs and quality management processes. Achieving work-life balance is an important element in this. In a fast moving world, work is a major part of our lives and in recent years unions globally have been thinking about how workers can achieve a better balance between paid employment and the rest of their lives.

In this country, the PSA has actively promoted work-life balance in public sector, health and local government workplaces. In November 2003, we organised a two-day Working the Future conference bringing together union members, public servants, Ministers, policy makers and various speakers to discuss what we want in our future working lives. Not surprisingly a balanced life emerged as a major theme. The publication of this resource is a significant step forward. It stresses the importance of strong workplace partnerships between employers and employees to develop practical and workable work-life balance policies. We were pleased to contribute to the development of this resource and we look forward to its being used widely across the public sector.

Richard Wagstaff
National Secretary
PSA Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi
Chapter 1

Introduction
Work is but one dimension of living and should not crowd out and distort family life, recreation and personal development... Work-life balance should seek to raise the profile of activities other than work and should contribute to the government goals of a growing economy and an innovative and inclusive society.

This resource informs government employees, employers and union representatives on the case for work-life balance and suggests ways to make it happen. It is prepared primarily for the use of government agencies, but may well have ideas and processes useful and applicable to the private sector. The guidelines are not a prescription, nor a set recipe. Organisations can ‘pick and mix’, according to their own requirements and circumstances.

Different parts of the resource may be of particular value to different readers. Some may want an overview of work-life balance principles and their potential benefits to an organisation. For others, such as HR professionals or line managers tasked with implementation, the detailed processes in Chapter Five are designed to give practical assistance. Being available electronically on www.ssc.govt.nz, this document has scope to evolve as work-life balance programmes are put in place, and so we welcome offers of new case studies or well-tested solutions.

The introductory chapter provides a definition of work-life balance for the State Services. It backgrounds the Government’s commitment to work-life balance for the New Zealand workforce, the leadership role of government agencies, the business case for work-life balance and its impact on productivity, and its connection to equal employment opportunities strategies.

Chapter Two provides a set of basic principles for the implementation of work-life balance policies, and points to a range of initiatives and solutions for individuals and organisations to consider.

Chapter Three describes ways for employers, employees and unions to work together in partnership to bring about positive results. The chapter identifies elements of a workplace culture that will support work-life balance and those that will inhibit it.

Chapter Four describes the work-life balance issues that impact on people in senior positions, based on interviews with Ministers, chief executives and senior managers.

Chapter Five offers practical guidelines for the development of work-life balance within government organisations.
Chapter Six brings work-life balance to life by discussing issues that arise in the workplace and in the lives of employees. It quotes brief case studies that illustrate approaches taken to address these issues.

An online Supplement to this resource (see www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance) provides further supporting and practical material of particular use for HR practitioners.

Background

In recent years, the question of the balance between people’s lives as paid workers and their lives as members of families and of communities has become a topic of discussion in New Zealand and internationally.¹ Demographic and sociological trends – more women in paid work, the changing roles of men and women, an ageing workforce, skill shortages, labour shortages, and the desire of younger generations not to be ‘married to the job’ – suggest that providing the conditions for work-life balance is increasingly important to employers in attracting and retaining talent for their workplaces.

In addition, productive economies depend on skilled, healthy and productive workplaces. The economic reasons for addressing work-life balance have been expressed by the Prime Minister:

"In New Zealand, the economic imperatives for work-life balance are growing. As our population ages, the challenge is to maximise the full potential of the workforce. The global pinch of skill shortages means that our workplaces need to be more innovative and more responsive to what matters to staff, if they are to recruit and retain them. In meeting our workforce needs, the first place to look is to our own people. We do have a lower rate of participation by women, for example, than do top performing Scandinavian economies. The nature and quality of our workplaces and working conditions do have a bearing on whether those who are presently under-represented will come forward to share their talents. It's clear to me that generating higher growth and productivity will also be linked to removing the barriers to participation in the paid workforce."

Government commitment

The Government has signalled that work-life balance is an increasingly important workplace issue for all of New Zealand society, as well as for the economy, and has stated that it has a leadership role in promoting policies that balance work and life.²

It established a Work-Life Balance Project in 2003, coordinated by the Department of Labour. Public consultations have revealed that work-life balance is a significant concern for many New Zealanders.³ The Associate Minister of Labour, Ruth Dyson, in her Foreword to the Project’s consultation report of July 2004, stated that:

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² CAB Minute (03)26/5A
The Government believes that it can play an important role in helping people to overcome the barriers that prevent them from achieving balanced lives. It can also play a leadership role in the way that it addresses the issue of work-life balance for the people it employs. However, achieving balanced lives for everyone will also require the contributions of the general public, as individuals, as members of families and whānau, as members of communities, hapū and īwi, or as employees or employers. The Government does not propose to take over roles that are most appropriately played by these people.  

**Public Service and wider State Services leadership**

This publication implements the Government’s aim of providing leadership in promoting work-life balance across government agencies. It supports the goal of making the State Services an employer of choice.

In 2002, the *Review of the Centre* led to work on the development of a Human Resources Framework for the Public Service. The major objectives of the Framework were to:

- enhance the performance of the Public Service as a whole and of Public Service departments
- promote a collaborative, joined-up Public Service that enhances integrated service delivery and reduces duplication and fragmentation
- enhance the ability to attract and retain diverse and capable talent.

The State Services Commission subsequently established a project team, drawn from departments and the Public Service Association (PSA), to examine work-life balance issues for the Public Service. This resource is the outcome of that team approach, and has involved extensive consultation with government organisations.

The completion of this resource coincides with the promulgation of new Goals for world class professional State Services. One of the key development goals is to ensure the New Zealand State Services are an employer of choice, attractive to high achievers with a commitment to service.

**Definition of work-life balance**

A work-life balance definition and associated principles have been developed to provide a common framework within which individual agencies can develop their own policies. They alert current and prospective public servants to the reasonable expectations they can have of their work environment.

Work-life balance is about helping staff to maintain healthy, rewarding lifestyles that will in turn lead to improvements in productivity and performance. Strategies to achieve balance will differ between organisations, partly depending on their function, the types of work roles they offer, and their workforce profile.

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4 Department of Labour, op. cit., p 2
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Work-life balance for any one person is having the ‘right’ combination of participation in paid work (defined by hours and working conditions), and other aspects of their lives. This combination will not remain fixed, but may change over time.

Implementing work-life balance effectively across an organisation is a strategic change management process, and involves culture change. However, the issue is congruent with many organisations’ stated values and provides a tangible outlet for modelling those values internally.

What provides a sense of balance varies from person to person. It is not a simple formula of time spent at work, compared with time spent on the rest of their lives. Hours worked is an important factor, but may not be the principal one. For some, it is an active choice to work longer hours at some phases of the year, or stages of their careers. The sense of having access to work-life balance is highly related to a sense of control, choice and being able to match work patterns to one’s own lifestyle and life stage. The meaning of work-life balance changes for people at different stages throughout life, often in response to milestones during the course of life.

Benefits for business

“Organisations that negotiate innovative work practices which also benefit staff are forward looking, competitive and profitable.”

The provision of quality public services requires quality jobs and quality management processes. Work-life balance programmes are an important element in achieving these.

“Over the last decade the evidence for the business benefits of work-life balance policies has been growing in volume and strength. The studies show strong links between work-life balance policies and reduced absenteeism, increased productivity and job satisfaction. Other benefits include improved recruitment and retention rates with associated cost savings, reduced sick leave usage, a reduction in worker stress and improvements in employee satisfaction and loyalty, greater flexibility for business operating hours, an improved corporate image.”

Entrants in the Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Trust’s annual Work & Life Awards cite “many business benefits arising from their work-life initiatives including

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5 Department of Labour, op. cit., p 13
6 Department of Labour Worklifebalance project Factsheet 2 Business
reduced turnover, sick leave and absenteeism, improved staff loyalty and productivity, improved recruitment and reduced workplace injuries”.

**Workforce gains from work-life balance policies**

“Economic growth in New Zealand is presently hindered by a critical shortage of skill and labour. New Zealand has a lower rate of female participation in the workforce compared with top performing Scandinavian countries such as Sweden. Removing the barriers to participation in the paid workforce is necessary for continued economic growth.

Improved access to the labour market for women, workers with disabilities, Māori, older workers, and people from a range of ethnic backgrounds is necessary for sustained economic growth. Work-life balance policies and arrangements are vital to attract these valuable workers back on the job and maximise the full potential of the workforce.”

The Auckland Regional Council, entrant in the 2004 EEO Trust’s Work & Life Awards states:

“Sick leave has declined as a result of work-life balance initiatives and turnover has decreased substantially.”

Stratex Networks (NZ) Ltd, joint winner of the EEO Trust’s Small to Medium Organisation Work & Life Award 2003 reported that:

“As a result of work-life initiatives:

- recruitment has improved with the time to fill a vacancy down from a high of 80 days to 40 days
- employee turnover has reduced from 19% in 2001 to 10.1% in 2003
- absenteeism levels are down by eight per cent, and
- sick days per employee per year are now 2.9 days.”

**Productivity gains from work-life balance policies**

“Implicit within each of the drivers (of workplace productivity) is the understanding that the way people are treated and managed is of fundamental importance to workplace productivity. People tend to be more motivated in the workplace if they feel appreciated and respected. Creating a positive work environment not only boosts morale but also productivity levels.”

Staff satisfaction and customer satisfaction are linked. Auckland City (joint winner of the Large Organisation category in the EEO Trust Work & Life Award 2003) stated: Its

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8 NZCTU It’s About Time! A Union Guide to Work-Life Balance, Wellington, NZCTU, November 2004
9 The Workplace Productivity Challenge – summary report of the workplace productivity working group Department of Labour 2004
(WLB) initiatives help attract a diverse workforce which reflects the diversity of its customers and enables the provision of excellent customer service.

Case study examples from the United Kingdom about problems that work-life balance has responded to include the following example:

"Unilever believes there are direct links between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and business results."  

A significant link was found between retention of staff and retention of customers in a study of 3005 customers of companies in service industries. Levels of customer dissatisfaction were closely linked to employee retention and staff turnover.

"Companies with highly committed employees had a 112% return to shareholders over three years, companies with low employee commitment returned 76% and average commitment returned 90%."

The cost of not addressing work-life balance

Organisations considering the cost implications of work-life balance should also consider the cost implications of not doing so.

The issue of ‘working to live or living to work’ was raised in the State Services Commission’s Career Progression and Development Survey, carried out in the New Zealand Public Service in 2000. The results pointed to a need to address work-life balance issues, with public servants expressing, in particular, concerns about excessive/heavy workloads. 75% said they worked more hours than they were employed/paid for.

The survey report pointed out risks to the health and wellbeing of individual public servants in this climate of long hours and heavy workloads, and consequent risks for capability. There are potential impacts on both recruitment and succession planning if the culture of government agencies is perceived to contain unacceptable conflicts with life outside the workplace.

International comparative data on work hours places New Zealand at the extreme end in terms of the proportions of the population who work excessive hours. Over 20% of New Zealand employees work 50 hours or more per week. This is a higher proportion than Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, and much higher than countries of northern and southern Europe. In countries such as the UK, the ‘long hours culture’ is being challenged both as a response to the European working hours directive, and also because of the social cost of long hours.

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10 www.employersforwork-lifebalancenet.org.uk/business/factsheet.htm
11 Study by Roper Starch Worldwide and Unifi Network 2000 cited by EEO Trust above
12 Survey by Watson Wyatt Worldwide WorkUSA 2000 cited by EEO Trust
14 In the Department of Labour public consultations on work-life balance, long working hours appeared to be the most significant issue in a large number of submissions. Organisational cultures that rewarded long hours were seen as an obstacle.
15 The CPDS survey (op. cit., p 75) revealed that a quarter of public servants (women and men equally) said they had not applied for a higher-level job because they were concerned they would not be able to balance their work and family responsibilities.
16 Callister, P 2004 reporting OECD data in The Future of Work within households: Understanding household level changes in the distribution of hours of paid work School of Government Victoria University Wellington www.dol.govt.nz
Over-work in our society is seen as a primary cause of growing ill health, both physical and mental. It is argued that men and women are having to work at a more intensive pace than in the recent past. Stress has become an increasingly intractable problem in the modern workplace as much for managers as for their office staff and shop floor workers.\textsuperscript{17}

If New Zealand is to compete in the global labour market, the attractiveness of New Zealand as a lifestyle destination needs to be supported by a work culture that enables a balanced life.

Lack of time and energy that is the consequence of a life out of balance has a direct effect on health and welfare. Physical activity rates have declined and sedentary lifestyles are having a big impact on the health and welfare of New Zealanders even though more than half would like to spend more time doing sport and active leisure.\textsuperscript{18}

It is not only trade unions that are increasingly concerned in arguing the case for a better work-life ‘balance’ as a means of combating the increase in pressures at work that are helping to destabilise what are already often fragile households and fragmented, shattered communities. The Confederation of British Industry acknowledges that ‘achieving an appropriate balance between work and other aspects of life has advantages for society as a whole’.\textsuperscript{19}

Pocock cited by Callister says powerful evidence exists in a growing body of research that long hours are bad for individuals, couple relationships, children and community fabric\textsuperscript{20} and, as the above evidence demonstrates, they are also bad for business.

Work-life balance and EEO

Work-life balance contributes to Equal Employment Opportunities by identifying and eliminating some barriers to participation in the workplace and creating new and improved opportunities for those who wish to participate.

Connections to Pay and Employment Equity

The Government also sees the connections between economic imperatives for work-life balance and increased participation in the paid workforce through its commitment to pay and employment equity.\textsuperscript{21} While the benefits will apply not only to women, they will promote gender equity, thus improving the quality of working life for women.\textsuperscript{22}

The Pay and Employment Equity report recommended:

\textsuperscript{17} The Future of Work-Life Balance Robert Taylor 2001 Economic and Social Research Council Seminar series
\textsuperscript{18} Worklifebalance Project Sheet 3 Communities and Recreation Dept of Labour
\textsuperscript{19} The Future of Work-Life Balance Robert Taylor Economic and Social Research Council Seminar Series
\textsuperscript{20} See The Work-Life Collision Barbara Pocock The Federation Press 2003
\textsuperscript{21} See, for instance, the speech by the Associate Minister of Labour, Hon Ruth Dyson, at the launch of the NZCTU guide It’s About Time, 3 November 2004.
\textsuperscript{22} NZCTU, op. cit., Preface
that the Work-Life Balance Project and the State Services Commission Human Resource Framework project on Work-Life Balance take into account, in relation to pay and employment equity, the issues of levels of pay, hours of work, leave entitlements, and workplace culture.”

This resource provides a variety of prompts to assist organisations to identify a range of work-life balance issues and solutions that can be tailored to fit their particular business goals and which also promote positive workplace cultures and productive contributions from all staff.

“We want New Zealand to be a great place to live and work. This means that people can effectively use their energy and skills to participate in paid work and all the other things that are important to them, society and the economy. It also means that employment relationships will be conducted in good faith, with employers, workers and their unions able to constructively discuss and address work-life balance concerns.”

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Chapter 2

Work-Life Balance Principles
Work-Life Balance Principles

The work-life balance principles that follow have been developed to reflect the needs of government agencies and their employees. Having an agreed set of principles serves to:

- establish a common framework within which individual agencies can develop their own work-life balance policies
- alert current and prospective employees to the reasonable expectations they can have of their workplace environment.

The principles have been structured around policy and implementation issues.

**Policy principles**

Work-life balance should:

- **benefit both the individual and the organisation**
  This acknowledges the intersection between work and life, and the requirement for the needs of both parties to be considered. There must be a ‘value proposition’ for the employer as well as a benefit for the employee

- **be responsive to the needs of the organisation (nature of the business, operating hours, etc) and the demands of their service-users**
  This acknowledges the need to factor in the purpose and demand of the business (the way it operates, hours of operation and client needs), when considering work-life balance initiatives

- **be aligned with the vision and strategic direction of the organisation**
  As with all other human resource-related issues, work-life balance needs to be ‘in synch’ with the strategic direction of the agency

- **recognise that the needs of both the organisation and employees are not static, but change over time**
  The needs of staff and the organisation should be reviewed regularly to reflect changes in staff circumstances, including age and lifestyle, and organisational circumstances, such as restructuring. Such recognition will ensure that work-life balance initiatives continue to be relevant and add value to both parties

- **be broad, in order to cover a wide variety of situations and employee needs**
  Work-life balance affects all members of society, not just those in traditional family
units, and initiatives should be accessible to reflect a broader range of family and ‘age and stage’ circumstances

- **be a joint responsibility between employees, their union and the organisation**
  This acknowledges the importance of a partnership approach, where the union/s and employer, management and staff, can work together to achieve change and share in the benefits of work-life balance. Staff are responsible for advising managers of changes to their life circumstances that may impact on work, and both are responsible for developing solutions

- **be available to all employees, or have it clearly stated where they are not (e.g. some jobs may not be able to be done part-time)**
  There will be some environments where there will be limitations on the type of work-life initiatives available. These circumstances need to be clearly identified, but should not limit the potential for implementation in other parts of an organisation and for other creative solutions to be found

- **be fair and equitable, recognising that different cultures, abilities/disabilities, religions, beliefs, whānau and family practices may mean different solutions for different people, and that ‘one size does not fit all’**
  Organisations should consider a variety of work-life initiatives to reflect the unique backgrounds and aspirations of staff from different cultures. This emphasises the need to involve representatives of all staff groups who will be affected

- **be affordable for the organisation and realistically budgeted**
  Initiatives need to be examined to ensure that the aims and objectives are feasible for the organisation and staff, and are within the budget parameters of the organisation

- **value employees for their contribution to the organisation, regardless of their working pattern**
  This signals the organisation’s understanding that employees have personal as well as working lives and that the two intersect. Having flexible options available that both acknowledge and accommodate different/changing needs, while at the same time meeting organisational requirements, will encourage greater employee contribution and productivity, and overall commitment to the organisation.

### Implementation principles

Work-life balance programmes should:

- **be flexible, so that the provisions can be altered to meet the changing needs of employees and the organisation**
  The needs of staff and the organisation should be regularly analysed to reflect changes in staff circumstances, such as age and life style, and organisational circumstances, such as restructuring. Such recognition will ensure that work-life balance initiatives remain relevant and add value to both parties
highlight the need for management, unions and employees to work in partnership to identify issues and discuss relevant and workable solutions

As work-life balance benefits employees and employers, and can result in changes to working patterns, it is important that all parties, including unions, participate actively in this process. To be effective, work-life programmes need to be developed through an inclusive process.

be widely communicated, so that employees are aware of what is available

The greater the range of options known to be available, the greater the benefits to staff and the organisation.

be easily accessible, i.e. employees know what is available and feel they can use the provisions without being penalised

Having the work-life initiatives posted in a form accessible to everybody will increase transparency and assist all parties in discussions about options and solutions that will best fit staff and organisations. The organisational culture should encourage and not penalise people who seek work-life balance solutions, while respecting those who work standard hours, or long hours by personal choice.

be integrated with human resource and people management policies and practice

Work-life balance contributes to the achievement of inclusive and responsive organisational cultures and provides access to equal employment opportunities within the working environment. It is therefore an important feature of human resource policies and practices. All personnel with people management responsibilities should be aware of work-life balance policies and guidelines. Other HR policies and practices should complement work-life balance and not work against it.

be carefully planned, agreed and practical, so that the programmes can work

Well-planned, agreed and practical work-life programmes will contribute positively to the overall wellbeing and security of employment for all staff. To achieve this, management buy-in should be obtained, and both staff and union/s involved.

allow for tailoring to meet individual employee needs where possible

The programme needs to be flexible, as the same size does not fit all. Tailoring to meet an individual need, where appropriate, will contribute to maximising staff participation.

include a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, to investigate if they are succeeding in their aims and are being applied consistently

The evaluation should be done in consultation with managers and staff, and should include a review of whether the organisation’s needs have evolved or the original value proposition is different.

Chapter Five offers practical steps for implementing these principles. It does not prescribe solutions, but encourages organisations to find those best suited to their circumstances. However, there are a number of well established strategies that might be considered. Section One of the online Supplement sets out some of these, under the following five broad categories:
flexible working arrangements (the organising of work hours)

leave (time out of the workplace)

child and elder care (assistance with family needs)

health and wellness initiatives (preventing and managing the stress from work and life)

work-life balance culture/environment (the organising of work and management style).

Case studies of successful initiatives by government agencies are supplied in Chapter Six.

For other case studies, go to:

Chapter 3

Working Together
A key idea embedded in the work-life balance policy principles set out in Chapter Two is that it is imperative for employers and employees, including the relevant union, to work together, if work-life balance is to become a reality for more than a handful of individuals.

This chapter:
■ provides some comments on working in partnership
■ identifies elements of a workplace culture that will support work-life balance and those that will inhibit it
■ outlines the roles and responsibilities of key parties.

**Working in partnership**

The objective of all parties working together is to facilitate the achievement of work-life balance for as many individuals as possible, whether their focus is on improving personal wellbeing or on participating more fully in family life, or in other unpaid work or community work. In every situation it is up to individuals to define the ‘right’ work-life balance for themselves. This makes a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach impossible, and underscores the need for all parties to work together to address different situations.

Working in partnership requires the active involvement and participation of all parties, with a commitment to a shared approach. In the area of work-life balance, an ability to work together effectively will be based on the creation of a positive, long-term relationship between unions, employers and employees that is concerned with both the future of the business and improving the working life of individuals.

The Partnership for Quality Agreement between the Government and the PSA has identified a set of principles around the concepts of *engagement* and *good faith* that are useful in considering how the parties involved can work together effectively in the area of work-life balance. *Engagement* relates to the collective participation of employees through their union in the management of their workplaces. *Good faith* is concerned with respect for each other’s roles and acceptance of responsibility for making the partnership work. The focus of the relationship is problem resolution and asking “How can we make this happen?” not “Why won’t this work?”
A genuine partnership\textsuperscript{25} will have:

- shared commitment to investment in quality jobs and improving the quality of public services
- common ownership of plans, issues and problems, and the generation of solutions
- recognition of the legitimate roles of the employer and the union
- recognition that each party has an interest in the other being well organised and effective
- openness on both sides
- trust that is built by identifying and solving problems jointly
- representation from all groups of staff
- healthy dialogue that sees the parties working together on problem resolution
- a commitment to improving the organisation of work at all levels in the organisation
- a commitment to action on possible solutions rather than shelving the issue until it is too late.

Example

**Work-life balance approach in DPMC**

The results of the Public Service Career Progression and Development Survey (2000) raised some questions around work-life balance within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC). Based on these findings, the senior management team agreed to look into work-life balance.

A number of sessions were held with the first, second and third tier managers on issues such as work-life balance, as part of the Senior Management Forum. Following this, a decision was made to ‘do some work’ on work-life balance.

A consultation process was initiated via email, resulting in limited response.

The senior management team agreed that a group should be established to explore work-life balance issues. Discussion was held with the union about the work and the process.

Interested people were invited to participate. The work-life balance group had one representative from each business unit. Each representative consulted with their own unit in whatever way suited that work area, e.g. by email, in staff meetings, groups or one-to-one to identify the types of work-life balance that existed and possible solutions.

Following this information-gathering phase, the group collated this information, prioritising common issues and identifying possible solutions.

The group reported to the senior management team with recommendations, e.g. the development of a work-life balance policy, increasing fitness reimbursement, flexibility guidelines, managers taking responsibility for work-life balance issues in their own units, continuation of the group, etc.

The union supports the approach taken to work-life balance.

The group continues to meet at least quarterly. It is working on work-life balance induction material for new staff, developing resources for the departmental intranet, and continuing to consult with staff on work-life balance issues.

\textsuperscript{25} Some of these principles are contained in the Trades Union Congress document Changing Times – a TUC Guide to Work-Life Balance, London, TUC, 2001, pp 4-5. See also the Partnership for Quality agreement.
Organisational culture

Work-life balance policies and practices within organisations are influenced and shaped by the wider environmental context. Work-life balance is part of an organisational culture, and is driven by key parties with individual roles and responsibilities. An individual’s work-life balance is influenced by the culture and by all the parties involved.

Organisational culture means ‘the way things are done around here’. It is made up of the assumptions, practices and beliefs that form the unquestioned, ‘normal’ way of working in an organisation – the reality, not necessarily what is stated and explicit. Organisational cultures can be powerful in either supporting or undermining initiatives such as work-life balance.

In this section, the culture and values needed to support work-life balance are discussed, as well as those that hinder or inhibit the achievement of balance. This information will:

- assist an organisation to understand its organisational culture and to assess the extent to which it can support work-life balance
- describe the type of environment needed to support the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in enabling work-life balance.

While it is not possible to create a new culture overnight, it is possible to propose new values and new ways of doing things that, over time, can set the stage for new behaviour. Culture is created by all the participants in it. Each person has a part to play in shaping and influencing the culture.

A number of the values that support work-life balance are included in the principles in Chapter Two.

A culture that values balance:

- is active, not passive, e.g. asking “How can we make this happen?” rather than saying “Let’s wait and see what others do”
- is innovative, e.g. people approach issues with an open mind as to what the solution may look like and are willing to try out new solutions
- is inclusive, e.g. work-life balance policies cover all staff, irrespective of whether or not they have childcare responsibilities
- is aware of, and seeks to prevent, potential discrimination in terms of loss of career advancement or income due to accessing work-life balance arrangements
- is flexible to meet the varying needs of different staff, e.g. policies are developed that enable customised solutions to be found for differing needs
- has a high level of trust among employees, employee representatives and managers, e.g. union and management work together on developing work-life balance strategy
- respects and values employees’ roles outside of the workplace, e.g. responsibilities in relation to elderly parents, community work, sports teams
- is reciprocal, in the sense that the organisation supports work-life balance by being flexible and responsive to staff needs, and staff support the organisation by being diligent and productive at work
- is realistic about what the organisation has the capacity to deliver and encourages managers to negotiate workloads and priorities and to manage expectations accordingly.
Aspects of workplace cultures that hinder or inhibit the achievement of balance include:

- **Attitudes of employees.** Employees need to maintain the trust of their employers by using flexible hours or special arrangements honestly, responsibly and fairly, in a spirit of respect for both their employers and their colleagues.

- **Attitudes of colleagues.** Colleagues’ personal beliefs, attitudes and behaviours toward people who utilise work-life balance initiatives can be a powerful inhibitor. For example: unwillingness to schedule meetings to meet the needs of part-time workers; a belief that people aren’t contributing fully if they leave before 5 pm; or a belief that others’ work-life balance solutions should come at their own personal expense.

- **Rigidity in management approaches.** Attempts to negotiate work-life balance can sometimes be inhibited by the rigidity of management, whether due to their lack of understanding of work-life balance, knowledge of organisational policies or lack of willingness. For example: not being open to exploring how things could be done differently; approaching issues with a negative attitude, e.g. “This won’t work because…”; “I work long hours, why shouldn’t you?”; applying ‘rules’ according to the letter rather than the spirit of work-life balance policies.

- **Internal practices.** In some cases there are rigid assumptions and requirements and/or lack of vision, choice and flexibility around the way work is done. One example is where the value of work is defined by the individual’s visibility to the manager, or by the length of working hours, as opposed to output, adding value or meeting objectives.

- **HR policies.** The extent to which flexibility is not built into HR policies can negatively influence the culture. Examples include where overnight travel payment for childcare is expressed as a special case that has to be applied for, rather than a legitimate expense; or the failure to consider and indicate in job descriptions whether a job could be filled on a part-time or job-share basis.

- **Personal barriers.** Sometimes inhibitors are self-imposed, based on the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of staff who might otherwise desire access to work-life balance policies and practices. Examples include feeling that they are not pulling their weight or that they are placing pressure on others by utilising work-life balance initiatives.

- **The special nature of the work** can make work-life balance difficult to achieve – e.g. field workers in the Department of Conservation working out in the bush for ten days at a time.

Ways of addressing such issues are discussed in Chapter Five.

**Roles and responsibilities of parties**

Work-life balance cannot be achieved in isolation, but is the joint responsibility of a number of parties, including the individual seeking work-life balance for her/himself.

Chapter Four of this publication expands on the roles of chief executives and senior managers, and Chapter Five describes the implementation phases that require input from all of the parties.

The following table is designed to give a ‘see at a glance’ summary of the key roles.

In addition, other people within an organisation will need to be engaged in some phases. For example, during the development of the organisation’s strategic approach to work-life balance, it may be important to engage staff involved with business planning and the identification of future capability needs. During the development of the work-life balance plan, it would be helpful to involve staff from the corporate planning and finance areas. Equally, during the development of the work-life balance communication strategy, it will be critical to involve internal communications/media staff.
Summary of roles and responsibilities of key parties in work-life balance

**Individual**

- Makes choices carefully about fit with organisation when applying for a job
- Identifies personal needs (‘must haves’ versus ‘like to haves’) and possible solutions (being realistic about what is possible)
- Takes responsibility for discussing needs and possible solutions with their manager (and union if appropriate)
- Takes responsibility for delivering their own workload as agreed with their manager
- Reviews and modifies arrangements as their personal circumstances change
- Is supportive of colleagues’ and manager’s work-life balance needs
- Participates in development of organisational work-life balance strategy

**Union**

- Promotes work-life balance to members and employers
- Articulates the collective interests of members in work-life balance issues
- Works in partnership with employer to develop a work-life balance strategy and to improve work-life balance in the organisation
- Leads members’ participation in developing work-life balance solutions
- When required, assists individuals to negotiate work-life balance solutions

**HR manager**

- Develops a work-life balance strategy that meets the needs of both the employees and the organisation
- Ensures work-life balance is embedded in all HR policies (including provision of induction and training)
- Supports individual managers to improve work-life balance in the organisation and find solutions to employees’ work-life balance needs
- Ensures training on work-life balance principles and practice is provided to managers
- Provides assurance to management that the work-life balance strategy is being appropriately implemented in the organisation

**Line manager**

- Explicitly communicates support for work-life balance initiatives
- Walks the talk/leads by example
- Implements organisational work-life balance strategy (including managing risk-averse work environments)
- Works with individual employees to manage work-life balance fairly and creatively and to find individual solutions (by challenging existing practices, identifying scope for flexibility, identifying opportunities as well as limitations)

continued over page
Senior manager

- Sets the environment that will make work-life balance work
- Walks the talk/leads by example, by modelling work-life balance in his/her personal life
- Sets work-life balance performance expectations for managers, so that they find solutions to employees’ work-life balance issues
- Leads the development of the work-life balance strategy
- Manages Ministerial expectations of staff and the organisation
- Ensures that the wider context makes work-life balance possible.
Chapter 4

Spotlighting the Leaders
Work-life balance is a leadership issue for chief executives and senior managers. And it is also a personal issue. This section explores both. It is based on interviews with Public Service chief executives and senior managers, and Government Ministers.

**Work-life balance as a personal issue**

*What gives a sense of balance?*

Work-life balance or the integration of work and life for many people in senior roles is not a simple formula of time spent at work compared with time spent with family, on exercise, relaxation or personal interests. Hours worked is one of the measures of work-life balance, but not the principal issue for most. Instead it is more about control, choice and being able to match work patterns to their own lifestyle and life stage.

Some are comfortable with long work days, so long as weekends are largely quarantined. For some of those with young children, it is important to be home regularly for the evening meal, and bath and bedtime rituals, even if it means doing a few hours’ work later in the evening. For others, sustained periods of intensive work are fine, so long as they are punctuated by significant breaks of real relaxation.

*What can make it difficult?*

Developing and maintaining a sense of balance is not always easy for people in senior roles. Besides the straight demands of the job, difficulties come from:

*Commitment and loyalty*

Commitment to the work of their agency and personal loyalty to their colleagues and their Minister can result in senior managers and chief executives knowingly emphasising work at the expense of their personal life.

*I feel torn by loyalty to my CE and the Minister.*

*Frustration, lack of progress or feeling that the work is not valued***

Many people commented that the satisfaction of work going well and the energy that comes from achievement can more than compensate for long hours. So, too, can knowing that the work is recognised and valued. This provides enthusiasm and energy that can spill over into other aspects of people’s lives, whether it is family or leisure activities.
Similarly, frustration from unnecessary difficulties, lack of progress or feeling that the work is invisible and unacknowledged, also has an impact outside of the workplace. This frustration can undermine a sense of work-life balance as much as, and sometimes more than, the hours worked.

The nature of the role
People identified that the nature of some roles increases the difficulty of maintaining a work-life balance.

Some roles are isolated, without immediate peers. The position of chief executive can be lonely. So, too, can being the only Māori in the senior management team with the implicit or explicit expectation to represent all things Māori. The opportunity to link into relevant networks, such as the Chief Executives Forums, is critical for people in these roles.

Roles that garner media attention can make it more difficult to maintain a work-life balance. Media interest often results in unpredictable and urgent demands. The article in the Saturday or Sunday paper cannot always be ignored until Monday morning.

Managers who have come from working in regions commented on the impact their move to Wellington had had on their work-life balance. The direct interface with Ministers intensified the work demands that come from the dual responsibility to the Minister and servicing the business.

Technology
Some aspects of technology have helped with work-life balance, but can also make it more difficult. People commented that cell phones, e-mail and pagers have led to an expectation of availability seven days a week. People gave examples of taking a day’s leave, but spending a significant proportion of the time on the phone dealing with work issues; of going on holiday, but giving a promise that they would check their e-mails or review that paper while they were away.

A few people commented that communication technology had opened them up to staff putting responsibility back on their manager, rather than sorting the issue out themselves.

“E-mail is a way of pressing a button and avoiding responsibility.”

Job design and resources
Difficulties accessing the necessary information, staff with insufficient skills or experience, poor communication channels or lack of resources to do the job not only impact on the work, but can also impact on the manager’s work-life balance.

Although children can create another set of demands, several of the people interviewed talked of children helping them to maintain a reasonable work-life balance.

“Kids mean that you switch work off. They keep you grounded in real life.”

Are the difficulties real or perceived? They can be used as an excuse or a cover for personal choices. Some commented that it had become ‘fashionable’ to work long hours. Some people take their identity and status from how hard they are seen as working.
Some use work as an excuse to avoid the rest of their lives. For others, it is their own expectations rather than anyone else’s that are creating the work demands. Most people interviewed, however, felt these difficulties are very real.

Acknowledging the difficulty of maintaining work-life balance is not always easy. At senior levels, particularly for chief executives, there is a strong expectation of highly developed self management skills. This expectation comes from Ministers, their peer group and themselves. Admitting to yourself or to others that you are finding it difficult to maintain a sense of balance can run the risk of being interpreted as a personal failure.

What personal strategies are people in senior roles using to develop and maintain work-life balance?

The following are some of the strategies that people interviewed for this project have used to develop and maintain a work-life balance. Selecting from this range is very individual and personal.

- Make careful choices about the job you take on. Choose work that you believe in and you enjoy.
- Be deliberate in your attitude to work, particularly about keeping a sense of humour and not taking it too seriously.
- Make time for exercise, whether it is walking to work, running at lunchtime or walking to and from appointments.
- Make time for other activities that relax and refresh. This means knowing what you enjoy doing and deliberately making time for it.
- Deliberately manage your diary. People particularly valued the blocks of time they had regularly marked out in their diary whether it was for exercise, meeting their partner or children for lunch, taking the children to school or quiet reflection. They stressed how much easier it was to start a new job that way, rather than trying to change to this pattern. They also acknowledged the value of a good PA in helping to protect those times.
- Schedule holidays and make sure you take them.
- Protect the boundaries between work and the rest of life. The boundaries may be time specific such as never working on Saturdays. They may be to do with place, such as not bringing work home, or only doing work at home in the study, so the door can be shut behind you when you leave it. Or they may be situation specific, such as the phone not getting answered during family meal times. People talked of the need to quarantine their personal time and environment.
- Develop transition patterns or rituals between work and home. These included preparing the ‘to-do’ list for the next day, organising the desk, walking home or going for a walk immediately on getting home, changing from work clothes or sitting down with a glass of wine.
- Make technology work for you. For some, this is having a computer at home that is networked to the office. For others it means using a pager rather than a mobile phone as a contact point.
- Monitor and respond to your own stress. Experience in senior roles can equip people to recognise their own stress levels, but it can also make them immune to early stress...
signals. People talked of the need to deliberately monitor their stress levels, and the value of enlisting close family or friends to help.

■ Structure the job appropriately. Ensure that there are a manageable number of people directly reporting to you. Negotiate reasonable deadlines. Be realistic and honest about what is and what is not possible.

“You have to know yourself and how to work it.”

Work-life balance as a leadership issue

Chief executives and senior managers have a critical leadership role in addressing work-life balance issues within their organisations. Although the role of chief executive is particularly important, given the span of influence, the responsibilities are similar for people in all senior management positions.

Role of chief executives and senior managers

There are two dimensions to leadership in this area:

1. The wider context in which organisational and individual work-life balance decisions are made
2. The culture, policies and organisational practices that directly impact on work-life balance.

The chief executives and senior managers interviewed for this project echoed what is increasingly coming through in wider research, that both dimensions are critical. The following examines the key responsibilities in each.

Ensuring the wider context makes work-life balance possible

■ Ensure the expectations and work load of the organisation are reasonable

Being realistic about what the organisation has the capacity to deliver on and negotiating workloads and priorities and managing expectations accordingly, was top of the list for most. When this does not happen, some senior managers commented that they could end up ‘abusing’ their staff.

“If people burn out, it is a management failure.”

Expectations of the Minister/s were seen as having a particularly important impact on the workload of the agency, both the expectations that are negotiated at the beginning of the planning year and the one-off requests that arise at different times.

Many of the chief executives and senior managers interviewed in this project commented that their Minister “just wants the job done” and is not particularly concerned with how that happens. Ministers interviewed, however, were clear that for them to be confident that the job would be done, they needed to know if the work request would create a risk of either this or other work not being completed satisfactorily, and this included the people carrying out the work.
Dialogue about realistic work expectations between chief executives and Ministers is critical. Yet some felt that chief executives “often lack the courage, or second guess the Minister’s response”.

Both Ministers and chief executives identified that this dialogue requires:

- both parties being clear about the expectations negotiated at the beginning of the year
- chief executives checking out the urgency of requests. One Minister commented that chief executives might not know what else is riding on a particular piece of work and can make wrong assumptions about its urgency. Alternatively, chief executives can at times assume that Ministers’ requests must be given priority, without both parties considering the impact on other work. Both parties need to have a shared understanding of what one Minister referred to as the ‘start here’ list
- engaging in discussion about expectations and workloads several times a year, not just at the beginning and end
- chief executives giving advance notice if work is slipping, why it is slipping and what steps are being taken to address it
- if there are difficulties, chief executives making the opportunity to talk to the Minister, in particular alerting them to the risk to key personnel.

Expectations of the agency do not just come from the Minister however. Chief executives and senior managers also need to be able to effectively manage the expectations of the wider sector they work in and the managers and staff within the organisation. They need to challenge managers and staff to ensure that people keep focused on the prime objectives and priorities and don’t overload themselves. It can be difficult to get people to let go of issues or projects they are passionate about, when they are not the current priority, particularly if it runs the risk of undermining their enthusiasm and morale.

Get the right staff and resources

One chief executive commented that one of the worst things he could do for people’s work-life balance was to put them in positions they could not handle. The difficulty might be their personal skills, or it could be the circumstances or structure of the job. The impact is often not just on the immediate person, but also on their manager who has to manage the situation. Getting appropriately skilled people into key positions, developing people to meet the demands of their work, and structuring the jobs and resources so they can succeed will help make work-life balance possible.

“If they can’t do something, it’s the department’s failure, not the individual’s failure. It’s our responsibility.”

Fostering a collegial management team

A strong link was drawn between the morale and collegiality of the management team and the work-life balance of the individual members of that team. A cohesive team encourages people to back their colleagues up in times of difficulty, to share work, information and resources to spread the load and to keep work in perspective. The importance of this was also emphasised not only by the team members, but also by those reporting to them.
Streamlining work and systems
Having a computer system that works well, getting rid of any unnecessary duplication in work, streamlining compliance requirements can all impact on work-life balance. In part it is about saving time, but it is also about minimising frustration.

Addressing work-life balance directly

Mandate the issue
Chief executives felt that one of their most important responsibilities in this area was to ensure that the organisation actively and seriously considered work-life balance. This needs to be more than just informal conversations. Analysis and a strategic response are required.

“It is my responsibility to ensure the organisation continues to examine the issues, and continues to address the issues.”

Some chief executives talked of the value of having people in their organisation who would bring these issues forward and would ensure that their personal thinking was challenged by different perspectives. They were aware of the danger of only considering these issues from their personal perspective and of anticipating the answers for others.

Communicate a commitment to the issue
Chief executives, in particular, acknowledged the importance of personally talking about the issue with staff. This was in direct communications on the issue, but also subtly interweaving it into other issues and casual conversations.

Role model
Both chief executives and senior managers were aware of the impact of their personal actions. Some were aware that, although they were actively trying to encourage work-life balance for their staff, it was a case of ‘do as I say, not as I do’.

Equipping managers to actively assist staff
The responsibility of chief executives and senior managers is to ensure this happens and to participate themselves. This may involve management forums to share best practice, strategise about difficulties and develop a shared understanding of practices such as time-in-lieu or it may be guidelines or training.

The performance management framework can provide the opportunity for identifying development needs and for acknowledging good performance in this area.

Protecting boundaries
Although boundaries between work and the rest of people’s lives are ultimately personal and individual, chief executives and senior managers can help people protect their boundaries by:

- reminding people to take leave that is owing
- encouraging people to take time with family after particularly busy periods
■ not contacting people about work issues out of work hours unless essential
■ ensuring appropriate arrangements are made to minimise the need to contact people when they are on leave
■ planning work flows so that people can plan and take leave
■ using strategies like informal Friday afternoon debriefs of the ‘week that was’, to encourage people to leave work behind them when they leave for the weekend.

Acknowledging families
When people are putting much of their time and energy into their work, it impacts on their families. Acknowledging families through inviting them to some work social occasions or giving tokens of appreciation can make both the staff member and their families feel valued.

Monitor
As well as being proactive about work-life balance, chief executives and senior managers also need to watch and be ready to be reactive. Indicators such as long hours, leave not taken, drop in the quality of work, broken relationships and personal stress need to be responded to.

“People who get sick are often the people with the most leave owing.”

It helps to be aware of where work pressures occur. Several of the people interviewed for this project felt that the greatest work-life squeeze in their agency was for third tier managers. They often still have a technical role, as well as a team leader role. They may have less control and choice over what work is to be done and when it needs to be done by. Being more removed from Ministers, they may not get the chance to directly observe the nuances of the work requests and have to interpret and second-guess. They may not have the same ‘buzz’ of being in a position of influence.

Proactive monitoring will help identify issues at a stage where they are more likely to be resolved without lasting damage to the person, agency and the work.
Chapter 5

Making Work-Life Balance Happen
The focus of this chapter is the implementation of positive work-life balance practices within government organisations.

The guidance comprises:

- a strategic approach to work-life balance
- a self-assessment tool for determining an organisation’s current position in terms of work-life balance
- a five-stage model and associated steps
- the relevant roles and responsibilities for each work-life balance party.

This guidance is for organisations to use and adapt as necessary, to make work-life balance a living reality.

Where mention is made of unions working in partnership, this refers particularly to contributions expected from the PSA under the Partnership for Quality Agreement, or to similar collaborative approaches undertaken by other unions.

**A strategic approach to work-life balance**

Developing a work-life balance policy and practices is a strategic change process. There are five suggested stages of intervention:

1. Undertake work-life balance assessment and needs analysis. (“Where are we now?”)
2. Develop a strategic approach to work-life balance. (“Where do we want to be?”)
3. Plan and implement a work-life balance plan. (“How do we get there?”)
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives. (Review of “How we got there”)
5. Review work-life balance needs and a strategic approach. (Review of “Where are we now?” and “Where do we want to be?”)

The diagram on the next page depicts the strategic approach to work-life balance:
A self-assessment tool

All government agencies will have addressed work-life balance issues to some extent. In some organisations, this will be in considerable detail, with a work-life balance policy and a number of work-life balance initiatives in place. In other organisations, action taken may be quite minimal.

It is suggested that organisations assess their current position in relation to work-life balance according to the following categories:

- not current practice
- a beginning
- current ad hoc practices
- strategic practice
- strategic practice is evaluated.

Each of these categories is described in general terms in the left hand column of the table below.

Organisational self-assessment and a strategic approach to work-life balance

Organisations are encouraged to use this table to assess their state of progress on work-life balance policies and practice. Look under each heading in the left hand column and find the words that best describe the organisation’s current state of play. Once this is determined, the right-hand column will give ideas on how to progress work-life balance in the organisation.
## Chapter Five: Making Work-Life Balance Happen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the organisation’s current position with regard to work-life balance?</th>
<th>What should the organisation do to progress work-life balance?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Assessment level)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(Intervention level)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not current practice</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.1 Undertake work-life balance assessment and needs analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ No work-life balance policy or practice exists</td>
<td>5.1.1 Become familiar with work-life balance issues</td>
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<td>5.1.2 Understand drivers and motivating factors for exploring work-life balance in this organisation</td>
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<td>5.1.3 Conduct a needs analysis</td>
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<td>5.1.4 Develop a business case for work-life balance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A beginning</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.2 Develop a strategic approach to work-life balance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Some work-life balance policies exist or are being developed</td>
<td>5.2.1 Review business case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Some work-life balance practices are happening</td>
<td>5.2.2 Ensure senior management/union commitment to business case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Work-life balance policies are not necessarily linked</td>
<td>5.2.3 Develop a vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Lack of strategic overview</td>
<td>5.2.4 Identify key areas of focus for work-life balance in organisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5.2.5 Develop work-life balance policy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current ad hoc practices</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3 Plan and implement a work-life balance programme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Lack of strategic overview</td>
<td>5.3.1 Identify people to plan for work-life balance in organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ May be a number of work-life balance initiatives</td>
<td>5.3.2 Explore possible work-life balance initiatives that best suit work-life balance needs, and assess options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ There is organisational commitment to work-life balance</td>
<td>5.3.3 Draft a work-life balance work plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ May feel like we’re doing OK</td>
<td>5.3.4 Develop a communication strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.3.5 Implement work-life balance policy and plan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic practice</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.4 Evaluate the effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Strategic approach taken to work-life balance</td>
<td>5.4.1 Monitor the work-life balance plan/planned activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Overarching and linked policies in place which are well publicised and used</td>
<td>5.4.2 Evaluate the impact of work-life balance initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Limited monitoring of policies and practices in place</td>
<td>5.4.3 Plan ongoing monitoring and evaluation of work-life balance policies and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic practice is evaluated</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.5 Review needs and strategic approach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Strategic approach taken to work-life balance</td>
<td>5.5.1 Re-assess needs (to identify developing needs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Sound monitoring and evaluation occurs</td>
<td>5.5.2 Carry out ongoing review of strategic approach to work-life balance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1 Undertake work-life balance assessment and needs analysis

5.1.1 Become familiar with work-life balance issues

What is work-life balance? What are work-life balance issues? During this step, all parties are becoming familiar with the work-life balance landscape.

Three components should be in balance to achieve a healthy lifestyle: paid work, unpaid work, and personal time. In Chapter Six of this document, work-life balance issues have been grouped under those pertaining to the workplace and those relating to particular life circumstances. Categories within these two groupings are as follows:

- Work-life balance issues generated by aspects of the workplace:
  - nature of the work
  - types of workplaces
  - issues in the workplace.

- Work-life balance issues generated by different life needs:
  - need for time for families and community
  - need for personal time
  - needs as a member of a specific group.

5.1.2 Understand drivers and motivating factors for exploring work-life balance in this organisation

The focus in this step is on clearly identifying the impetus for addressing work-life balance issues in this organisation at this time.

Other places beyond this publication to explore what is covered by work-life balance are:

- [http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/what.html](http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/what.html)
Every organisation will have specific reasons why work-life balance is important for them now. These may include issues raised in employment agreement negotiations, union consultations, the ongoing loss of, or failure to attract, a particular group of employees (e.g. women or Māori), or the desire to be perceived as an employer of choice. The more explicit the motivation and drivers, the greater likelihood of success.

Resources to help identify why work-life balance is important for the organisation are:

- [http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/debate/latest_research.htm](http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/debate/latest_research.htm)

5.1.3 Conduct a needs analysis

The way the organisation provides work-life balance has to be driven by an understanding of the particular needs of the staff and the work of the business.

This step identifies a process for gathering a range of information that will assist the organisation to tailor future work-life balance strategies to the needs of staff and the organisation. It involves:

- reviewing what policies already exist, e.g. leave policy, flexible work, employment agreements. What is already in place? Is it working? Why? Why not?
- reviewing what is already known about staff needs. Look at relevant information that has already been collected, e.g. organisational surveys, HRIS information, EEO progress reports, exit interviews, partnership forums, statistics on sick leave/absenteeism, or issues identified by unions
- considering anecdotal information – what work-life balance issues do people/staff talk about?
- compiling a profile of staff:
  - who are the staff? Consider age profiles, gender mix, ethnicity, percentage of part time workers. For example, if the organisation has many women of childbearing age, this may indicate childcare issues; a high proportion of older staff may indicate elder care issues in regard to their parents
  - explore the extent of change over time – how static or mobile is your workforce? How flexible will your policies need to be?
- gathering information from staff about work-life balance:
  - canvas staff issues (e.g. shift work, travel to work, access to after-school care, Māori being expected to be experts in Māori culture/issues in the workplace)
  - gather ideas on possible solutions (e.g. access to flexible hours, work from home, breastfeeding areas, reduction of hours to prepare for retirement)
  - use union structures or staff groupings (such as Māori or Pacific networks) to identify priorities.
Resources to help conduct a needs analysis are:

- **Section Two** of the online Supplement,27 to help identify the best way for you to gather information from staff
- [http://www.workplace.gov.au/Workplace/WPDisplay/0,1280,a3%253D5190%2526a0%2526a1%2526a2%2526D517%2526253D530,00.html](http://www.workplace.gov.au/Workplace/WPDisplay/0,1280,a3%253D5190%2526a0%2526a1%2526a2%2526D517%2526253D530,00.html)

5.1.4 Develop a business case for work-life balance

The focus of this step is linking the original drivers or motivation for exploring work-life balance with the needs of staff in the organisation, and with any strategic issues that may have a bearing on a work-life balance programme.

This step may involve:

- exploring the external environment. Consider: government commitment to work-life balance, legislative commitments, e.g. Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act (1987), desire to be seen as an employer of choice, workforce changes, skill shortages
- exploring the internal environment. Consider: needs of staff, what sort of employer the organisation wants to be, what sort of business it is in, key strategies, issues that may impact on the composition of the organisation’s workforce in future
- identifying key business and organisational drivers, such as:
  - attracting or retaining staff
  - improving performance or productivity
  - increasing organisational flexibility in responding to customer need, e.g. greater flexibility of operating hours
  - gaining staff commitment and loyalty
  - the delivery of particular strategic goals requiring key skills that are only available in a flexible workplace
  - reduced employee stress
  - an enhanced public image.
- undertaking some form of high-level cost-benefit analysis (see **Section Three** of the online Supplement28 for further information), e.g. considering the costs and benefits of initiatives carried out in New Zealand or overseas that could be adapted for the agency, or exploring the current costs of not having a strategy29
- considering where work-life balance ‘fits’ in your organisation, e.g. within a business initiative such as quality of policy or service, or as an HR initiative, such as part of the HR strategy, EEO or diversity strategy, wellness or OSH policy

27 See [www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance)
28 See [www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance)
29 A cost-benefit analysis in relation to specific options is discussed further in section 4.3.2.
considering who has accountability, e.g. locating the programme in a senior management portfolio, or with the general manager in human resources

beginning the writing up of the business case.

The business case for work-life balance should include two main parts:

1. The purpose of having work-life balance policies and practices, i.e. why work-life balance is required in the organisation. This needs to be very specific to the business and staff in the organisation.

2. The costs and benefits envisaged, i.e. how work-life balance policies and practices will benefit staff and enhance the functioning of the organisation, and the risks and costs of not addressing work-life balance.

Resources to help build a business case are:

- [http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/business/making_a_case.htm](http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/business/making_a_case.htm)
- [http://www.workplace.gov.au/Workplace/WPDisplay/0,1280,a3%253D5191%2526a0%2526a1%2526a2%2526a3%2526a4%253D517%2526a5%253D530,00.html](http://www.workplace.gov.au/Workplace/WPDisplay/0,1280,a3%253D5191%2526a0%2526a1%2526a2%2526a3%2526a4%253D517%2526a5%253D530,00.html)

Example of a business case purpose statement, from the Department of Internal Affairs

Our purpose is to serve and connect citizens, communities and government to build a strong safe nation. To be real, we need to model the value we place on citizenship and community, which means modeling work-life balance within our own organisation. We believe that people who feel valued, and are able to balance work, family/whānau responsibilities and outside interests, are likely to be more productive workers and make better business decisions.

The benefits we envisage from work-life balance are:

- A happier and more productive workforce, because they are able to fulfill their work responsibilities and their responsibilities in their family and communities
- Higher standards of business excellence.

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30 Adapted from the DIA Work and Family/Whānau Guidelines, Message from the Chief Executive.
5.2 Develop a strategic approach to work-life balance

5.2.1 Review business case

If the organisation’s business case for work-life balance was not written recently, it may be useful to conduct a quality check. Check that the business case:

- still has meaning and is relevant (consider current business strategy, needs of staff, changing work-life balance environment – e.g. broader focus than family-friendly, legislative changes)
- had union involvement and support when it was drafted
- is easy to understand and that the language used fits the environment.

Where there are gaps or issues to be addressed in the business case, or there is need for updating or improving, refer to the process outlined in section 5.1.4.

5.2.2 Ensure senior management/union commitment to business case

The introduction of comprehensive work-life balance policies and practices may require something of a culture shift in some organisations. Leadership from senior management, and union/s where relevant, is critical to this process. This step provides a process to assist senior managers and the union/s to become clear about why work-life balance is important to the business and the value that it affords.

While this commitment may have already occurred during the development of the business case, there may not be buy-in from the whole senior management team and/or union/s for several reasons. For example, the business case may have been developed a long time ago, or there may have been changes in the management team.

To gain true buy-in and understanding of the business case for work-life balance, both senior management and the union/s need to engage consciously with the issue. This process may be driven by one of the senior management team or by the union/s, and may be facilitated and supported by the HR manager. The process could involve individual discussions or group workshops/discussions or a combination of these. During this process it is important to explore:

- the drivers and motivating factors for work-life balance, as described in the business case (consider which of the drivers have a particular resonance for the individuals, what the business drivers mean to them)
- the impact work-life balance issues have had on the business
- the individual manager’s experience with work-life balance issues personally and with their staff
the individual manager’s personal motivations for work-life balance.

It is important that there is genuine dialogue and sharing, and a willingness to discuss the issues. To be committed to the business case and be a champion of work-life balance, senior managers and the union/s need to see the business case as their own.

As a result of discussing and working through the business case, modifications may be identified, such as changes to the language used to make it more meaningful to people, or the addition of examples.

Upon completion of this process, senior managers and the union/s will be able to articulate persuasively to staff the reasons for achieving work-life balance, so they can explicitly support the work-life balance initiative and link it to the business.

5.2.3 Develop a vision

One of the major questions in the strategic change process described at the beginning of this chapter is “Where do we want to be?” The answer to this question is usually contained in a vision statement. This step describes what is being explored in a work-life balance vision and identifies the components of a vision statement.

A vision is a description of the future (e.g. for five, ten or fifteen years out) of what the organisation will look like when work-life balance has been achieved.

A good vision serves three purposes. It:

- clarifies general direction for change
- motivates people to take action in the right direction
- helps co-ordinate the actions of different people.

There are many different ways in which this vision for the future can be created, ranging from a workshop with a cross-section of staff, to the generation of ideas by a work-life balance committee, or the senior management team. The more people who are part of the process and understand the vision being discussed, the higher the degree of buy-in.

Formulating a vision statement at this stage helps to direct the change effort and creates a climate of expectation. A work-life balance vision statement will:

- link work-life balance with core business objectives
- express what will be done, rather than what will not
- be phrased inclusively
- state how work-life balance will benefit individuals and their changing needs at various life stages
- emphasise the provision of a supportive environment as well as the use of work-life balance policies
- recognise that all employees, not only managers, have responsibility for the policy.

Vision statements should be dynamic, clear and pithy. They should include:

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31 Adapted from Ross, Rachel and Schneider, Robin, From Equality to Diversity, UK, Pitman Publishing, 1992.
5.2.4 Identify key areas of focus for work-life balance in organisation

Once the organisation has a vision, managers, staff and the union/s where relevant, are ready to explore what the key areas of focus should be and to begin the development of the plan that will achieve the vision. This step describes how to identify which types of issues are the priorities for the organisation.

Before looking at what the key areas of focus are, review:

- the organisational needs identified in the needs analysis (see above, section 5.1.3)
- the purpose, the drivers and the benefits envisaged, as detailed in the business case (see section 5.1.4)
- where the organisation wants to be, as described in the vision statement (see section 5.2.3).

Based on this information, discuss the sort of workplace that seems important to the organisation, and the workplace issues that seem to be prevalent.

Consider which work-life balance issues seem to be most prevalent:

- Workplace issues – work-life balance issues generated by aspects of the workplace:
  - nature of the work (e.g. 24/7 environments)
  - types of workplaces (e.g. remote offices)
  - issues in the workplace (e.g. unrealistic workloads).
- Life issues – work-life balance issues generated by different life needs:
  - need for time for families and community (e.g. childcare)
  - need for personal time (e.g. leisure/recreation)
  - needs as a member of a specific group (e.g. older workers).

The priorities might be determined by:

- the number of staff affected
- organisational/business pressure, e.g. high turnover, high stress, areas where there is a risk of being in breach of legislation (see Section Four of the online Supplement33), lost opportunities
- cost-benefit analysis
- areas where you can gain ‘runs on the board’ (to help the marketing of work-life balance internally).

Once the priorities have been identified, it will be useful to describe fully the issue for each of the areas (what it is, the number of staff affected, the difficulties experienced by staff, and the impact on the business). This will assist in the development of solutions.

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33 See www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance
During the analysis of the priorities, consider the culture of the organisation. Are there aspects of the culture that hinder work-life balance and that need to be addressed? Consider:

- attitudes of colleagues
- rigidity in management approaches
- internal practices
- HR policies
- personal barriers.

Refer to Chapter Three of this publication for examples of aspects of culture that hinder work-life balance, and the sorts of values that support it.

5.2.5 Develop work-life balance policy

Having an overarching work-life balance policy will help managers and staff to: understand the organisation’s approach to work-life balance; identify the organisational policies and practices that support work-life balance; and identify the principles the organisation would expect staff and managers to consider and apply in negotiating individual work-life balance arrangements. This step identifies what the policy may contain.

A work-life balance policy may describe:

- what work-life balance is and why it is important (this information may be found in the business case)
- the approach the organisation is taking to work-life balance (grounding the vision)
- the principles underpinning work-life balance in the organisation (refer to the generic work-life balance principles in Chapter Two of this document)
- what the organisation expects of both managers and staff in negotiating work-life balance arrangements
- particular work-life balance issues the organisation faces
- other policies that may be useful in achieving a work-life balance solution.

An organisation may already have policies on specific aspects of work-life balance (e.g. flexible work, working from home) located elsewhere, such as in employment agreements. However, it will be important to consolidate these in one general work-life balance policy, to include other initiatives to address gaps, and to have them linked by a vision and business case.

A resource to help develop a work-life balance policy is:

- Section Five of the online Supplement which contains organisational examples of work-life balance policies.
## 5.3 Plan and implement a work-life balance programme

- 5.3.1 Identify people to plan for work-life balance in the organisation
- 5.3.2 Explore possible work-life balance initiatives that best suit needs, and assess options
- 5.3.3 Draft a work-life balance work plan
- 5.3.4 Develop a communication strategy
- 5.3.5 Implement work-life balance policy and plan

Have you done a comprehensive needs analysis? If not, refer back to section 5.1 for this crucial step.

### 5.3.1 Identify people to plan for work-life balance in the organisation

It is important to have the ‘right’ mix of people involved in implementing work-life balance initiatives. This step discusses what needs to be considered in identifying the ‘right’ people to be involved.

The first step is to confirm or clarify where work-life balance fits in the management structure of the organisation in terms of who is accountable for work-life balance occurring in the organisation – e.g. the chief executive, the HR manager, another senior manager, or someone else.

Usually at this point the task of developing the plan will be delegated to someone else – often, but not always, an HR staff member. Involving the ‘right’ mix of people in developing work-life balance activities will mean considering representation of:

- a range of types of needs
- people from all levels in the organisation
- those with credibility and authority
- the union/s
- the different areas of the organisation.

In identifying the best way of involving people, so that they can contribute most effectively, consider availability, travel, work-life balance experience, and skill sets.

The next step is to identify how to gather these contributions. There will be different ways of involving people including:

- membership of a work-life balance committee
- contribution of ideas (refer to Section Two of the online Supplement for ways of gathering information from staff)
- development of material
- providing peer review of material developed
- as champions
- testing solutions.

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35 See [www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance)
5.3.2 Explore possible work-life balance initiatives that best suit needs, and assess options

For each of the work-life balance issues identified under the key areas of focus (see section 5.2.4), solutions need to be identified. This step looks at the process of exploring options.

For each problem in the areas of focus:

- describe the situation fully
- identify the issues for staff
- identify the issues for management.

The next step is to consider the wide range of possible solutions to address work-life balance issues. The different types of work-life balance initiatives fall into five categories:

- flexible working arrangements (the organising of work hours)
- leave (time out of the workplace)
- care of dependents (assistance with family needs)
- health and wellness initiatives (preventing and managing the stress from work and life)
- work-life balance culture/environment (the organising of work and management style).

For a range of options under these headings, refer to Section One of the online Supplement.36

For each problem in the areas of focus, brainstorm possible solutions:

- Consider what other like organisations are doing and what is working well for them. Remember, however, that the transferability of solutions will be influenced by the similarity or otherwise of organisational cultures and the extent to which the particular needs of your employees can be addressed.

- Look at information gathered from staff through the needs analysis phase. What solutions did staff identify?

- Run a consultation process with staff and managers canvassing for ideas on solutions and for testing solutions. Employees and first line managers will often have the most practical suggestions about how to organise work differently and will know what will work in the organisation’s environment. Remember that the quality of engagement with employees is as important as the solution. Ensure active involvement of a range of people and work in partnership to identify solutions. Section Two of the online Supplement37 has information on gathering information from staff.

- Obtain input from corporate planning and financial staff at this stage, on relevant aspects of cost/benefit analysis, risk management, strategic and business planning, monitoring, and progress reporting.

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36 See www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance
37 See www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance
Once possible solutions have been identified, the options need to be compared and evaluated. Some of the criteria you might use to evaluate options include:

- the extent to which it addresses the issue (i.e. the identified needs of managers and staff)
- the fit with overall work-life balance plan and policy
- predicting the likely result of action
- conducting a cost benefit analysis and compare with other solutions.

The steps in assessing costs and benefits are as follows: 38

- determine the likely scope of the work-life balance option you are considering
- identify the types of costs and benefits associated with this option
- measure or attribute financial values to the costs and benefits where possible. Where not possible, describe costs and benefits
- analyse the costs and benefits over the relevant timeframe.

As a final step in this process, undertake a quality check on solutions:

- check they are consistent with general work-life balance principles (refer to Chapter Two)
- make solutions permissive not prescriptive
- make sure they are not a new set of rigid rules.

Additional resources that help identify solutions and contain examples of solutions are:

- [http://www.workplace.gov.au/Workplace/WPDisplay/0,1280,a3%253D5223%2526a1%253D517%2526a2%253D530,00.html](http://www.workplace.gov.au/Workplace/WPDisplay/0,1280,a3%253D5223%2526a1%253D517%2526a2%253D530,00.html)

5.3.3 Draft a work-life balance work plan

The plan provides the framework and the steps to be taken to get to the desired goal. This step describes how to develop a work-life balance plan. (This does not assume that the work-life balance plan is a discrete document. It may equally be an integral part of wider organisational initiatives, e.g. strategic HR, wellness, or EEO.)

For each of the areas of focus and the solutions identified in the previous section, develop a work plan that includes:

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38 Top Drawer Consultants. Work and Family Balance: the Role of Employers. Further information in relation to cost-benefit analysis is available in Section Three of the online Supplement at [www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance)
the general goal for each area of focus

objectives and actions within the objectives (ensuring they are SMART\(^39\))

responsibilities (clearly identifying the people responsible for implementing work-life balance, such as the sponsor, project manager, and line managers with responsibility within their work areas)

timeframes (including milestones)

measures (identifying how achievement will be measured and the sort of information needed to track progress).

For example, if one of the areas of focus identified was care for children during school holidays, the goal may be something like “To support employees with childcare responsibilities over school holidays”. The range of possible objectives might cover implementing a school holiday programme in-house, providing information about a range of school holiday programmes near the workplace that could be accessed by staff, or providing some form of subsidy for such programmes.

In selecting your actions, think carefully about the first steps that could be taken. Choose ‘actionable first steps’ where:

- you will get an early win
- there are opinion leaders
- benefits are most likely
- the step is most obviously necessary/relevant
- there is supportive management.

For example, an actionable first step in relation to care for school holiday children might be to collate and communicate information to staff on existing school holiday programmes around the area.

The work-life balance plan would also usefully include:

- resources (including budget)
- risks and risk management
- information in relation to monitoring.

Thinking about future monitoring of work-life balance can easily be overlooked at the planning stage. When developing the work-life balance plan, the organisation should ask the following questions:

- Will all activities in the plan be monitored, or only some? What is the basis for this decision?
- Will the measures provide the necessary information to make a judgment at the point of monitoring?
- Is the information required for monitoring easily available or do processes need to be put in place now to ensure that it is available when required?

\(^{39}\) Objectives should be:

- **Specific** – Be precise about what you are going to achieve
- **Measurable** – Quantify your objectives
- **Achievable** – Are you attempting too much?
- **Realistic** – Do you have the resource to make the objective happen (money, machines, materials, minutes, people)?
- **Timely** – State when you will achieve the objective (within a month? By February 2010?)
The information in this section represents a generic approach to planning. Planning for work-life balance should suit and fit with each organisation’s planning processes and organisational style. Some of the style considerations are:

- high or low profile
- formal or informal
- centralised or decentralised
- rules, guidelines or frameworks for decision-making?

Resources to help draft a work-life balance plan are:

- Section Six of the online Supplement, which contains a generic guide to developing a work-life balance plan.
- [http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/business/plan.htm#doing](http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/business/plan.htm#doing)
- [http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/business/tips.htm](http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/business/tips.htm)

### 5.3.4 Develop a communication strategy

A communication strategy is an essential tool when undertaking any change management process. It is human nature to be resistant to change. Work-life balance is no different. There can be resistance based on people’s attitudes that work-life balance does not apply to them, or that some staff get to enjoy work-life balance at the expense of their colleagues. This step discusses what needs to be addressed in developing a communication strategy.

A communication strategy for work-life balance aims to demonstrate that all staff have work-life balance needs, and to identify the benefits of work-life balance for all staff.

It is important to approach communications in a planned way and fit the communications within the overall work-life balance plan.

A comprehensive communication strategy identifies:

- communication objectives
- the different audiences
- the different messages
- the different types of communication tools (it is important to use a range of media)
- timeframes
- ways of knowing that the messages are being heard and what people’s reactions are
- how the success of the communications strategy will be measured.

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41 See [www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/worklifebalance)
An organisation will pick up all or some of the above. The extent to which it will do this may depend on the current climate, the perceived need, the degree of change required, or other factors.

When developing communications, there is a need for real consultation to understand the audience and specific target groups. Issues to explore in order to understand the audience include:

- looking for commonalities and for key triggers for target groups
- understanding the differences in audiences, what their different information needs are and the best ways of communicating with them
- talking to the audience in a way they want to be talked to – using real words for real impact
- avoiding buy-out by being inclusive and by testing messages.

For example, there may be a need for different messages for staff and managers. Certainly it will be important that managers do not feel out of the loop, so it will be important to talk to managers early on and keep updating them. New staff, as well as existing staff, will need to receive work-life balance messages.

There are already many vehicles in any organisation for communicating the organisational approach and commitment to work-life balance. Review the following to ensure work-life balance is included:

- publications, including the Statement of Intent (SOI), strategic plan, operational plans
- website
- job advertisements and job descriptions
- selection processes
- employment agreement and the associated negotiating process
- induction
- internal communications
- manager behaviours and expectations
- performance specifications
- management training and refresher
t- HR policies.

Other handy hints for developing a communication strategy include:

- being careful not to place an over-emphasis on either people or business
- ensuring that the project is not regarded as ‘separate’ from business
- adopting a distinctive style and logo to bring it all together
- giving the issue personal relevance – make it meaningful and connect emotionally with the audience
- having ongoing planned communication and constant reminders of action – remember that changed behaviour is maintained by ‘pulsing messages’
- collecting stories and statistics to use
developing visible and vocal role models. Get as many advocates and role models as possible from all levels and areas. Use people with credibility that staff and managers respect.

There is a risk that the presence of a policy can create the illusion of attention to work-life balance. It is what is in ‘hearts and minds’ that is important. A good communication strategy can begin to address this with clear and meaningful messages.

“What is effective is presenting something that is emotionally compelling. People change their behaviour when they are motivated to do so, and that happens when you speak to their feelings. Nineteen logical reasons don’t necessarily do it.”

Resources to help develop a communication strategy are:

- Section Seven of the online Supplement43, which contains a communication strategy template and example.

5.3.5 Implement work-life balance policy and plan

Implementation of work-life balance occurs on two levels – in the implementation of individual work-life balance solutions and in the implementation of the work-life balance plan.

Negotiating and agreeing individual work-life balance provisions is generally the province of individual line managers, and requires the application of the organisation’s work-life balance policy and the application of work-life balance principles (see Chapter Two).

During the implementation phase of the work-life balance plan, each individual undertakes the tasks assigned in the plan, and the person with overall responsibility provides leadership, oversees the implementation process (including the communication strategy), and monitors progress.

Implementation of the work-life balance plan involves remembering to:

- involve staff in roll out – take people with you
- accept that new processes take time
- be flexible and adapt as necessary
- be aware that timeframes can slip out.

For some initiatives in the plan, it may be appropriate to start with a pilot or with test sites. Implementing solutions first in a single test site, or trialling one element of work-life balance across the organisation, allows the gathering of information to assess whether the planned initiative will achieve the goal and meet the needs of staff and managers. Piloting also allows learning to occur, so that the initiative can be adapted to ensure that when a solution is rolled out across an organisation any issues have been resolved. Reporting on the impact of a pilot initiative can also help secure buy-in from managers.

When looking at piloting a solution, some considerations are:

■ the project objectives
■ what the organisation wants from the pilot
■ communication – manage expectations by ensuring it addresses why the pilot is being done and when it will reach others
■ time for feedback
■ a process for intensively evaluating the pilot
■ preparedness to cancel, make dramatic changes, repilot, or tailor strategies for different parts of the organisation.

5.4 Evaluate the effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives

5.4.1 Monitor the work-life balance plan/planned activities

The key focus of this step is to assess the extent to which organisational work-life balance policies are being implemented, as well as activities outlined in the work-life balance plan. (As noted in 5.3.3, this plan may be a part of wider organisational initiatives, such as strategic HR, wellness, or EEO.)

Monitoring is principally used internally by an organisation to assess whether planned activities are occurring. It may also inform external reporting, such as to the State Services Commission on EEO progress, or be drawn on for external recognition, e.g. a proposal to the EEO Trust’s Work & Life Awards.

There are a number of timeframes in which monitoring occurs. Annual monitoring will normally occur at the end of the financial year, resulting in a report of progress made against planned objectives. For some parts of the work-life balance plan, there may be regular and/or more frequent reporting to senior management, e.g. on the variety and extent of use of flexible work options by staff. It is also possible that monitoring of specific aspects of the plan will occur at nominated other times.

Ideally, as part of the development of the work-life balance plan, the aspects of the policy and plan to be monitored have been identified, processes have been put in place to gather the necessary information on an ongoing basis, and the measures against which progress or achievement will be assessed will be spelled out. (For further information, refer to 5.3.3.)

Key questions include:

■ Is the plan being regularly monitored?
■ Is all the necessary information available?
■ Has all the necessary information been gathered?
What is being achieved in terms of the work-life balance plan?

What parts of the plan are not being achieved?

5.4.2 Evaluate the impact of work-life balance initiatives

The key focus of this step is to assess the impact or effectiveness of the organisation’s work-life balance policies and practices. Have they been successful in making a positive difference to staff and for the organisation?

The way in which success is defined will vary from organisation to organisation. In some places, staff may report they have more balance in their lives; in others, that they feel they have more control over how they use their time. The way in which the organisation measures success will be derived from its business case (see section 5.1.4), which outlines the purpose of its work-life balance plan and the benefits envisaged.

In planning any evaluation, it is useful to consider:

What questions does the organisation want answers to?

What information does the organisation need?

How will the organisation gather this information? Some will be available from monitoring the work-life balance plan; some may be available from other organisational sources, e.g. climate surveys, HRMIS systems. Other information may need to be gathered specifically for this purpose.

How is the organisation evaluating the information? What are the benchmarks? These may be internal or external:

- Internal benchmarks include previous work-life balance surveys of staff, the Career Progression and Development Surveys 2000 and 2005, or climate surveys.

- External benchmarks include national and international standards in work-life balance best practice, e.g. EEO Trust Work & Life Awards.

- What did the organisation set out to achieve in regards to work-life balance, as described in the business case?

The overarching questions that the organisation will want to address are:

What?”, “So what?”, and “Now what?”

What has been achieved? (Findings)

So what is the significance of this? What does it mean? How does it rank in terms of previous practice and against external measures? (Analysis)

Now what? What does this suggest for the future of work-life balance in this organisation? (Recommendations)

A resource to help in evaluating the impact of work-life balance initiatives is:

http://www.workplace.gov.au/Workplace/WPDisplay/0,1280,a3%253D5199%2526a0%2526a1%2526a2%253D530.00.html
5.4.3 Plan ongoing monitoring and evaluation of work-life balance policies, practices and benefits

This step is based on the recognition that effective plans and policies are characterised by ongoing monitoring and evaluation practices. The results of ongoing monitoring and evaluation are used to feed back into regular organisational review processes, thereby supporting the concept of continuous improvement.

There are two main drivers for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of work-life balance initiatives:

- quality assurance – where plans are being implemented and are effective
- risk management – where plans are not being implemented and/or are not effective.

Where plans are working well, regular monitoring and evaluation provides senior management with assurance that the work-life balance needs of staff are being met. Communicating this information to staff increases both senior management and staff commitment to work-life balance initiatives. Where regular monitoring and reporting identifies with problems or concerns with the work-life balance plan, this information can be used to inform necessary changes.

Monitoring the work-life balance plan:

- at the beginning of the plan period, identify the timeframe for monitoring (annually or other)
- identify those parts of the plan that need to be monitored regularly throughout the monitoring period, and those which can be monitored at the end
- ensure there are processes in place to collect the monitoring information, and they are easy to use.

Considering the ongoing evaluation of your work-life balance plan:

- plan in advance when, and how often, evaluation of work-life balance in the organisation will occur, e.g. annually, two-yearly, five yearly
- identify in advance the issues the organisation is interested in exploring over time.

Identify in advance the type of information that may be required and, if necessary, put in place processes to gather that information. For instance, if wanting to analyse the uptake of work-life balance by staff over time, it will be necessary to ensure that the HRIS can gather, easily analyse and report on this information at the end of the time period.
5.5 Review needs and strategic approach

5.5.1 Re-assess needs

The work-life balance landscape is in a constant state of change, as organisations and the needs of the individuals within them both change. This step signals a re-evaluation point, when the organisation reviews and re-evaluates the content of its work-life balance plan in accordance with current needs of staff, as well as any emerging needs.

If organisations are not already keeping abreast of current developments and trends in relation to work-life balance, they are encouraged at this time to undertake an external scan of emerging work-life balance issues. This will include changes in government policy in relation to work-life balance and expectations in response to this or new legislation, or emerging issues or new approaches or responses to better supporting staff to achieve work-life balance.

At this stage, it will also be important to re-assess the current and emerging work-life balance needs of staff. This should be done reasonably frequently (at least every two years). Work-life balance needs will change through turnover of staff and as staff move into different life stages. A re-assessment may also be triggered because of information found as part of internal monitoring or evaluation.

Details about assessing staff needs are included earlier in this chapter at section 5.1.3, but it is likely that a less comprehensive process for gathering this information may suffice the second time this is done (e.g. a follow-up survey rather than the need for focus groups, etc).

The sorts of questions being explored at this step are:

- Is the current work-life balance plan still relevant, i.e. does it still meet the needs of staff?
- What other emerging needs are there?
- What are some options for how these might be met?

Following this analysis, appropriate changes can be made to the work-life balance plan and communicated effectively to staff.

5.5.2 Ongoing review of strategic approach to work-life balance

This step signals a time for revisiting the way in which the organisation understands and approaches work-life balance, to take into account any change in external factors, e.g. new legislation, as well as internal factors such as restructuring, which may be demanding a rethink of how the organisation approaches work-life balance.

A review of the business case should be undertaken at the same time as staff needs are reviewed. The suggestions outlined in section 5.1.4 are also pertinent for this review of the business case.

The sorts of questions being explored at this step are:

- Is the current business case still relevant, i.e. does it fit with the organisation’s business strategy?
- Are external factors placing greater/lesser priority on work-life balance?
- Are internal factors influencing the organisation’s approach to work-life balance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Employee</th>
<th>Union</th>
<th>HR Manager</th>
<th>Line Manager</th>
<th>Senior Manager</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Become familiar with work-life balance issues</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Sec</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Understands drivers and motivating factors for exploring work-life balance in this organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Conduct a needs analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Develop a business case for work-life balance</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Prim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Review business case</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Prim</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 Ensure senior management/union commitment to business case</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Prim</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.3 Develop a vision</td>
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<td>Sec</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Some</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.4 Identify key areas of focus for work-life balance in organisation</td>
<td>Sec</td>
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<td>Prim</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5 Develop work-life balance policy</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Prim</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1 Identify people to plan for work-life balance in organisation</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>Prim</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Explore possible work-life balance initiatives that best suit work-life balance needs and assess options</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3 Draft a work-life balance work plan</td>
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<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Develop a communication strategy</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
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<td>Sec</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5 Implement work-life balance policy and plan</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>Prim</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Sec</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1 Monitor the work-life balance plan/planned activities</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Evaluate the impact of work-life balance initiatives (effectiveness)</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Prim</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 Plan ongoing monitoring and evaluation of work-life balance policies and practices</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Sec</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Re-assess needs (to identify developing needs)</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Sec</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.2 Carry out ongoing review on strategic approach to work-life balance.</td>
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<td>Prim</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Some</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Prim** Primary role – this role is responsible for the completion of the step.

**Sec** Secondary role – this role has a specific responsibility in relation to the completion of the step.

**Some** Some involvement – this role may provide input or a contribution for example provide comment as part of a consultation process.

**No role** No specific involvement.
Roles and responsibilities of the parties at each step

For a detailed description of the responsibilities of each party at each of the levels of intervention described in this chapter, see Section Eight of the online Supplement.44

The table above summarises the type of responsibility each party could have at each of the levels of intervention. This is indicative only. In the table, the assumption has been made that the HR person is the lead in the implementation of work-life balance. This could also be the chair of a WLB committee or a nominated line manager. Where senior managers have the primary role, this generally indicates that the activity requires strategy development or organisational leadership. Unions also tend to have a primary role in the strategy development phase. Line managers have a primary role when leadership in work-life balance is required specifically in their own work area.
Chapter 6

Bringing Work-Life Balance to Life
In this chapter, the focus is on a range of different work-life balance issues that arise in
the workplace and in the lives of employees, and on what might be done about them.
The issues will be familiar, and the ideas suggested for addressing them are practical. In
many instances, brief case study examples are provided to illustrate how a particular
government organisation or manager has addressed the issue. The names used in the case
studies are fictitious.

The issues are grouped by type:

- **Workplace issues** – work-life balance issues generated by aspects of the workplace
- **Life issues** – work-life balance issues generated by different life needs.

Each of the issues is considered under the following headings:

- Description of the issue
- Issues for staff
- Issues for management
- What the organisation can do
- Good practice examples, including:
  - Personal case studies
  - Organisational initiatives
  - Organisational policies.

**Workplace issues**

The work-life balance issues discussed in this section are as follows:

**Nature of the work**

- Call centres and 24/7 shift work environments
- Volatile work demands
- Travel/absence from home
- Work of high emotional intensity.

**Types of workplaces**

- Small offices
- Remote offices.
Issues in the workplace

- Ongoing stress – unrealistic expectations and workloads.

6.1 Nature of the work

6.1.1 Call centres and 24/7 shift work environments

Description of the issue
The common factor for staff in call centres and on shift work is that the nature of the work requires coverage and service to the public outside of ‘normal’ work hours and often around the clock. This is the case in a number of government organisations, for example:

- uniformed services, such as Police, Corrections, Customs, MAF border officials, Fisheries surveillance
- call centres, such as in the Ministry of Social Development and Inland Revenue
- on-call staff, such as in Child, Youth and Family.

Issues for staff
Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:

- being required to be on duty for fixed periods (compared with policy staff, where completion of the task or meeting the deadline, is paramount)
- being unable to take time out for personal reasons without significant prior arrangement and finding a substitute, or renegotiating shifts
- having sudden emergencies affecting their ability to meet personal commitments where others depend on them, such as collecting a child from day care or coaching a sports team.

Issues for management
Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:

- recognising that the regimented environment creates special demands on managers to be responsive to staff needs, e.g. rigorous forward- or contingency-planning.

What the organisation can do
To address these issues, organisations can:

- have a work-life balance policy in place, which covers flexibility options for a call centre or 24/7 environment
- work in partnership with an individual or team to come up with creative solutions
- ask staff to propose workplace or group solutions
- provide a budget for back-fill arrangements
- ensure National Office staff are aware of local situations and proposed solutions.
Good practice examples

**Police – flexible employment in 24/7 frontline response, operational environment**

After taking a period of parental leave, Sue, a sworn Police officer, made enquiries about returning to work on a flexible employment option.

Prior to taking the parental leave, Sue worked at an Auckland-based office. However, she approached management about working at a smaller station outside of Auckland, stating that she was “prepared to do anything” on flexible hours. An agreement was drawn up, with Sue initially working 16 hours a fortnight and later extending that to 20 hours a fortnight in the 24/7 frontline response operational Police environment.

**Sue’s Area Commander comments:**

“\nIt certainly makes sense to me that we utilise the training and skills Sue has acquired, and in her words she ‘loves it’. Recently Sue has praised the way her immediate supervisor worked with her to roster her working hours and the flexibility he displayed in programming her hours to fit around her husband’s roster, while meeting operational needs.

In my observation, that flexibility has been reciprocal, with Sue changing her hours or rostered days to meet an operational gap, sometimes at short notice. In my view, this is a success story in Police. We have retained a confident and competent staff member in an essential role, while not compromising her commitment to looking after her young child.”

**Otago District Health Board – resolving work-life balance in a 24/7 environment by changing rostered days on and off**

During bargaining, the difficulty of achieving work-life balance in the mental health units was raised as an issue. A working party that included PSA delegates was convened, and a problem solving approach was taken. The working party found that the best fit was to reinstate a 4 + 2 roster on a six-week cycle.

It was agreed that this roster would only be implemented if 75% of staff on a particular ward agreed. Where the roster has been re-instated, staff satisfaction indicators have been used to evaluate the impact. Staff have reported increased satisfaction in achieving work-life balance.

6.1.2 Volatile work demands

**Description of the issue**

‘Volatile’ work demands by definition mean that they are changeable, unplanned, and likely to erupt. They occur usually in response to a disaster or in managing a crisis.

Volatile work in government occurs most obviously in agencies responsible for people’s safety, national security and civil defence, in the form of an emergency response to a critical incident (whether real or as an exercise). Volatile work also occurs, however, in the policy advice environment, in the case of a high profile event or exceptional Ministerial demand.
**Issues for staff**

Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:
- the requirement to drop everything at short notice, including family responsibilities and other external commitments
- limited time to advise or get back-up
- personal emotional pressures, if loved ones are under threat or adversely affected
- the physical toll taken by long hours, lack of sleep, or an erratic food supply.

**Issues for management**

Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:
- the need to recognise external and physical demands on staff
- the need to train managers in responding to staff needs under emergency conditions, not focusing solely on the work context.

**What the organisation can do**

To address these issues, organisations can:
- ensure wellbeing during (food, rest areas, access to phones) and after the event (time off in lieu, counselling)
- provide cover for business as usual, to avoid a pile-up of work and resultant stress
- establish contingency plans, with roles to support affected staff
- supply food, hot drinks, etc for out-of-hours use
- maintain up-to-date contact lists and have a staff member responsible for following these up in emergencies
- set up strategies for emergency childcare, elder care, pet care, etc as needed.

**Good practice example**

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet – crisis situations**

From time to time, DPMC staff are involved in providing high-level advice or support for an unplanned event. Such events may involve staff working unusual hours in a crisis-type situation, where they must analyse incoming information and make key decisions in short timeframes, while working under intense pressure. In such instances, it is DPMC practice to assess resource needs and provide additional or back-up resources for staff early on in the event. Where possible, the department uses a shift system rather than asking staff to work for extended periods. Often the shifts will be agreed between those involved in the crisis.

DPMC managers also ensure that staff not only get an opportunity to take a break, but that they actually do rest and/or go home. It can be difficult to convince some people to go home when the heat is on! Arrangements are made to ensure that those staff working in a crisis situation can access food while working nights or weekends. In some instances, a room has been set up for people to rest.

Managers can offer time in lieu, if appropriate, and there is usually an opportunity to debrief after the event, to discuss how it was managed and how/whether to do things differently next time.
6.1.3 Travel /absence from home base

Description of the issue
Extensive travel and prolonged absences from home are part and parcel of roles in a number of government agencies, including:

■ overseas postings e.g. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Customs Service, New Zealand Defence Force

■ prolonged overseas travel, e.g. with Ministers, to multilateral conferences, etc

■ specific job types involving absence from home base – regional managers, trainers, auditors.

This lifestyle can be exciting and often suits individuals. However, after the initial excitement and glamour wears off, the impact of these demands on work-life balance can affect the retention of staff.

Issues for staff
Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:

■ effects on relationships with family and friends, and on spouses’ careers

■ personal health pressures, isolation, loneliness

■ distance from family in cases of emergency or bereavement.

Issues for management
Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:

■ special demands on managers to be responsive to staff needs

■ need to provide extra resourcing (money and backup)

■ need to be able to respond quickly and appropriately.

What the organisation can do
To address these issues, organisations can:

■ provide examples of leadership in these situations (both things that worked well and those that worked less well)

■ ensure that job descriptions are clear and clarify travel expectations

■ ensure that policies, induction and management training address these issues

■ try a variety of solutions and monitor the outcomes.
Good practice example

Education Review Office – Working away from home

As a consequence of issues raised in bargaining, a work-life balance forum (comprising senior management, HR and PSA) was created to identify and problem-solve work-life balance questions. Work-life balance issues had previously been raised in staff surveys, as well as by PSA delegates. In particular, working hours were raised as a problem.

An analysis of working time revealed that long hours correlated with the amount of travel undertaken by review officers. Initiatives developed to address this issue include:

- ERO working with clients (particularly in remote areas) to reduce evening meetings. Reports show that this is having a positive impact.
- Review officers being given special leave to compensate for nights away on review (one day after first fifteen nights, then one day per every ten nights). A cap has also been placed on the nights a reviewer should be away in a year. If this is exceeded, there is a penalty for the office in that extra special leave is given.
- Staff being involved in work scheduling, with a view to accommodating specific personal needs.

6.1.4 Work of high emotional intensity

Description of the issue

Some of the work undertaken by staff in government agencies can be emotionally demanding. This means that those workplaces have the inherent potential to be high-stress environments. See also Ongoing stress in the workplace (6.3.1). Agencies which, almost by definition, have high-stress environments, include:

- Those whose work has immediate impact on people’s lives (Child, Youth and Family, Corrections, Police).
- Those dealing with the public in intense or highly emotional situations (call centre or service centre staff in ACC, Courts, Inland Revenue or the Ministry of Social Development; Fisheries surveillance staff or DOC rangers involved in compliance work).
- Those working at the interface between cultures.

Inability to manage stress can result in impaired judgment and capability in the workplace, and can place serious strains and stresses on personal relationships and personal coping mechanisms.

Issues for staff

Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:

- Not being able to escape, or having limited control over, highly-charged work situations.
- Unrelenting pressure and no recovery period.
- Experiencing emotional and physical fallout they do not know how to handle.
finding that their coping mechanisms do not work any longer
lack of understanding about the emotional and psychological challenges of working with different cultures.

**Issues for management**

Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:
- the need to understand the nature of the environment and how it can impact on staff
- the need to plan to manage emotionally intense situations
- not recognising signs and signals when staff are burnt out or needing time out
- poor work organisation
- not having the necessary skills to perceive or deal with circumstances.

**What the organisation can do**

To address these issues, organisations can:
- establish good practice observation, and build in breaks and recovery time
- provide professional supervision
- provide training and assessment tools for staff and managers to help recognise stress states, physical and emotional unwellness
- make counselling available as necessary
- offer a buddy system to allow talking over of issues with peers where necessary
- provide appropriate workplace support and cultural awareness training for employees working in an intercultural environment
- provide extended sick leave provisions
- provide gym, fitness or wellness subsidies.

**Good practice example**

**Department of Corrections – Professional debriefing and clinical supervision**

The PSA Women (working) in Prisons National Committee approached the Public Prison Service (PPS), proposing that they work together to explore work-life balance issues in the workplace. One of the issues raised was the emotional intensity of the work and the need for support in dealing with it. The Committee recommended that professional debriefing should be private and ongoing, and that outside psychologists should be brought in for major incidents.
6.2 Types of workplaces

6.2.1 Small offices

Description of the issue
There are many instances within the State Services where there are offices with small numbers of staff. Small offices occur in both centrally-based agencies and in regional local offices around the country. See also Remote offices (6.2.2).

The limited numbers of staff can mean there is a lack of capacity to support people in balancing work with their personal responsibilities. It can also mean that options for work-life balance are restricted because of lack of back up or back-fill.

Issues for staff
Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:

■ staff feeling an obligation to be present at work, e.g. they go to work when sick, miss lunch breaks, neglect health checks
■ work flexibility and training times being difficult to arrange, due to the lack of cross coverage
■ staff accumulating annual leave and time off in lieu entitlements, as they find it difficult to get away.

Issues for management
Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:

■ an increase in staff stress and personal stress
■ options for solutions to work-life balance issues seeming limited.

What the organisation can do
To address these issues, organisations can:

■ manage workloads and leave or training absences actively, rather than reactively
■ provide options such as budget and resourcing for peak times or absences, rather than allowing problems to compound.

Good practice examples

Police – Highway Patrol flexible employment policy option

John, a police officer with children, works in the Highway Patrol Group in a rural town. He approached his superior officer with a proposal to work flexible hours under the Police Flexible Employment Options policy, so that he could balance his work and childcare responsibilities.

In this negotiated arrangement, John continues to work full-time hours, but mostly over the night shifts, with flexibility to cover the key risk areas over the weekends. He works from 6pm till 11pm on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and then works 10 (evening) hours on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
His senior officer was initially concerned about the impact of working continuous night shifts on John, so a trial period of three months was instigated. During this time, his senior officer kept in touch to ensure that this was working effectively for both John and the organisation. This particular example has been evaluated and has been working well for a year. John’s sergeant keeps in regular contact with him and there is flexibility in his rostered days on duty to allow him to swap the weekend work for Monday and Tuesday work, or to take annual leave on the weekend.

From the perspective of the senior officer on Highway Patrol, this work-life balance arrangement has been a win-win situation for everyone involved. John is enjoying the lifestyle of working nights and being able to care for his children while his wife works. For the Police, he is covering peak risk times in a geographically large and isolated region, which might have received limited coverage if normal rostering of staff had taken place.

6.2.2 Remote offices

**Description of the issue**

This situation arises where the office is located a significant distance away from other staff and/or government offices. Particular issues arise when these remote offices are located in small communities, especially if the nature of the work draws criticism or anger from local residents. In these instances, staff wellbeing and local recruitment and retention can be affected.

**Issues for staff**

Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:

- having their personal decisions, as well as those of their agency and the Government as a whole, highly visible to the community
- a lack of privacy, as a result of there often being no separation between life and work
- greater scope for threat from clients, as they are often aware of the individual’s private life, e.g. “I know where you live”
- potential conflicts of interest being highlighted, because everyone knows everyone.

**Issues for management**

Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:

- lack of support due to the remoteness from supervision, other managers and HR staff. This can mean managers find it harder to obtain advice, and it provides scope for risky practices and a ‘lone ranger’ culture to develop
- the potential for individual managers to develop poor HR practices in relation to staff work-life balance, without their head office being aware of this.

**What the organisation can do**

To address these issues, organisations can:

- provide special management training and support (e.g. coaching or mentoring) to reduce isolation and variable practices
Good practice examples

Department of Conservation – immediate family members as passengers in DOC vehicles

One of the issues for staff living in remote locations is that it can be hard for them and their family to get to the nearest town that has amenities like supermarkets.

To assist with this, employees may arrange for their family members to ride as passengers in a DOC vehicle during its use for work purposes. For example, an employee travelling from Fox Glacier to Hokitika for a meeting may arrange with the manager for her partner to accompany her as a passenger, provided this does not interfere with the official purposes of the journey and if the most direct route is taken.

Department of Conservation – work-life balance for employees on islands

The Department of Conservation (DOC) recognises that employees working on islands may face different challenges from their counterparts on the mainland in striving for work-life balance. With this in mind, DOC aims to work with employees to meet their diverse needs. For example, the Department tries to offer employment opportunities for spouses of employees working and living on islands. In one case, the wife of a Field Centre Supervisor has been given the opportunity to undertake administrative or fieldwork on the island. To avoid any conflict of interest, she does not report to her husband, but to another manager.

DOC has also worked with employees living and working on islands to plan ahead for emergency evacuation procedures should illness or injury arise. In one instance, DOC worked with an employee whose wife was pregnant, to develop an evacuation system to transport him and his wife to hospital for the birth, and also for coverage of his role when that happened.

6.3 Issues in the workplace

6.3.1 Ongoing stress – unrealistic expectations and workloads

Description of the issue

All staff can experience periods of pressure and intensity at different times in their working lives. Short-term stress can be stimulating. The situation described here is not about jobs with occasional high pressure points or brief periods of intensity. It refers to jobs where there is ongoing, constant exposure to stress. This is not only exhausting, but
can be devastating, resulting in impaired judgment and capability in the workplace, permanent physical and mental consequences, and serious strains and stresses in personal relationships and personal coping mechanisms.

As noted in section 6.1.4 of this chapter, a number of government agencies are involved in work of high emotional intensity, which has the potential to create high stress environments. High stress environments, however, can and do occur anywhere where pressure on staff is excessive and unrelenting. In 2000, public servants expressed concerns about excessive/heavy workloads, with 75% of staff working more hours than they were employed for\textsuperscript{45}. Over-commitments by managers about what the business unit or organisation can deliver, a failure to prioritise and manage workloads, and unrealistic expectations on staff, can result in a situation where managers feel they are ‘abusing’ their staff, and staff become burnt out. See Chapter Four for more on the roles and responsibilities of chief executives and senior managers.

Under the Heath and Safety in Employment Act 1992, employers are required to do what they reasonably can to reduce stressors and to help employees cope with stress in the workplace.

**Issues for staff**

Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:

- not being able to escape workload
- unrelenting pressure and no recovery period
- experiencing emotional and physical fallout they do not know how to handle
- finding that they are unable to use their usual coping mechanisms (e.g. getting to the gym regularly) and/or their coping mechanisms do not work any longer.

**Issues for management**

Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:

- a need to negotiate priorities, the urgency of requests and realistic workloads, with their Minister or manager
- poor job design and/or poor work organisation
- not recognising signs and signals when staff are burnt out or needing time out
- not having skills to deal with circumstances.

**What the organisation can do**

To address these issues, organisations can:

- negotiate priorities, timeframes and realistic workloads with the Minister, chief executive or manager
- institute reviews of job sizing and realistic workloads
- check out the urgency of work requests

- encourage staff to take regular breaks
- train and upskill managers in managing workload allocations, as well as in recognising the signs of stress and in providing support
- provide counselling or a buddy system as necessary
- provide extended sick leave and/or stress leave
- provide a gym or fitness subsidies.

Good practice examples

From a chief executive

A chief executive of a small government agency says she is aware of the potential impact of unrelenting, high workloads on staff wellbeing. After a particularly heavy work week for her (“I felt shattered”), she talked about how this felt for her in a meeting of all staff and stated explicitly that it was important that other staff members did not feel similarly because of work pressure. She made a decision to tai hoa on a couple of projects for a while, and encouraged staff to ask important questions in relation to new work, such as “Is this a priority?” and “Do we have to do this now?”

From a tier 2 senior manager

A tier 2 senior manager in a medium-sized government agency has recently joined the Public Service after a career in the private sector, where there were significant peer- and self-imposed demands to make business a success. He says that he learned the hard way (after a couple of episodes of physical burn-out in his career) that if you substitute quality of effort with quantity of effort, you will kill yourself. After the second period of burnout, he realised that this wasn’t a sensible way to live!

Over time, this manager has instituted three main types of change to manage the size and stress of senior management positions:
- introducing stronger disciplines around the amount of time spent on the job, and in separating work life from home life
- making better use of time he spends on the job
- making better use of staff.

Some of the specifics include:
- not taking work home with him (except on very, very rare occasions) so that he can give full attention to his home life
- limiting the number of hours he works a week so that “I’d consider I had failed if I worked [as much as] 50 hours in the week”
- having an in-built consciousness that he needs to get work done during working hours, so focuses on using the time well and going flat out at work
- recruiting people to whom significant work can be entrusted and who can be relied on to let the manager know when they need to be involved
- having a really good EA who ‘manages the gate’ and makes sure the time gets managed well
- walking to as many as possible of the frequent out-of-office meetings he attends
- having regular physical check-ups.
Education Review Office – monitoring of time usage

Working hours were raised as an issue in ERO through their work-life balance forum (a joint initiative between management and the PSA). One of the solutions that have been put in place is very careful monitoring of time usage. Regular surveys of hours worked are undertaken to review the time allocation of jobs to see if they have it right and if the workload is reasonable. Reviews of where the time is being spent and working hours are also undertaken, when a change in process is introduced, to look at the impact on workloads.

Ministry of Social Development – Manakau regional office wellness policy

The Manakau Regional Wellness Project Team (consisting of managers and case managers/brokers) is responsible for researching, planning and implementing health, fitness and wellness activities around the region.

The team negotiated a fitness package for staff with an organisation that operates large well-equipped gyms all over South Auckland. A transferable group membership (i.e. a person can use any Leisure Services gym or amenity in South Auckland) was negotiated at a special rate and joining fees waived, conditional on 20 members joining (121 joined).

Inland Revenue Department – wellness group

IRD runs a “Wellness” group in one of its National Office buildings, with the purpose of co-ordinating wellness initiatives that staff suggest. Activities so far have included:

- free lunchtime seminars on a wide range of topics
- lunchtime walking and swimming groups
- relaxation and Tai Chi classes
- head and shoulder massages.

Planned initiatives include wellness checks (blood pressure, blood sugar levels, etc) and seminars on elder care, road safety and fire safety at home.

Life Issues

The work-life balance issues generated by different life needs are discussed in this section as follows:

Need for time for families and community (e.g. childcare)

- Managing ongoing family needs
- Contributing to community
- Emergency situations.

Need for personal time (e.g. leisure/recreation)

- Need for time to support self (recreation/leisure, sport, personal relationships)
- Needs as a member of a specific group
- Membership of a cultural or ethnic group
- Younger and older workers
- Issues for people with disabilities.
6.4 Need for time for families and community (e.g. childcare)

There are many different types of families. Families include those with or without children, one and two-parent families, blended or extended families, gay or lesbian couples, parents with children now living away from home, and group households. Families include those with elderly dependants or other dependants with a disability or long-term illness, those expecting or adopting children, or those with community responsibilities. What families ‘look like’ varies widely. What underpins them all is the same – emotional ties and a sense of responsibility for family members.

Many people have ongoing, regular family responsibilities and commitments. For others responsibilities may be occasional, such as caring for elderly parents periodically, caring for sick pets, or having children during the school holidays. For everyone, there is always the possibility of unexpected life events or emergency situations, such as the accident of a family member, which give rise to a fresh set of family responsibilities.

6.4.1 Managing ongoing family needs

Description of the issue

The majority of people have ongoing family demands that they need to manage while at work. These family demands can come in many different forms:

- elder care
- sickness of family member
- breastfeeding
- childcare (e.g. getting parental leave, returning to work from parental leave, ongoing childcare arrangements, school holidays).

Issues for staff

Some of the particular issues for staff include:

- ongoing care over time of family members, e.g. childcare, emerging elder care and wider whānau responsibilities
- obtaining long-term leave and returning to work after long-term leave, e.g. parental leave, leave to care for sick family member
- the ability to respond to family needs/obligations and to be there for celebrations and significant events
- rigidity in the workplace culture, which can contribute to having limited time for taking leave
- heavy workloads and long hours, which can leave little time for enjoyment with family
- resistance and/or a lack of recognition of the importance of relationships, if they do not

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fit the manager’s view or definition of ‘family members’, e.g. wider family/ whānau, lesbian or gay partners, pets.

**Issues for managers**

Some of the particular issues for managers include:

- the need to recognise that individual situations differ, requiring effort and attention on a case-by-case basis, as well as sensitivity and understanding in finding a solution
- the need to be flexible and creative to find a solution that fits the needs of the employee and the business
- personal concerns that employee will abuse alternative arrangements
- the attitudes of colleagues who view the work-life balance arrangements as “not fair”, “others are getting more than me”, or “that means that I now have to carry an additional workload”
- the need to give some control to the employee in terms of managing their work and time (which requires trust as the amount of the discretion the employee has increases).

**What the organisation can do**

To address these issues, organisations can:

- have specific policies in place to meet family demands, e.g. school holiday programmes, breastfeeding areas, inclusive and broad definition of ‘family member’ in sick leave provisions and flexible leave policies
- encourage managers to use work-life balance policies themselves
- encourage managers to be flexible and creative in implementing work-life balance policies
- manage the attitudes of colleagues who view work-life balance arrangements as unfair
- ensure work-life arrangements for some staff do not impose undue stress or extra workloads on others
- provide mechanisms for staff to raise concerns and offer tailored solutions
- ensure that work-life balance initiatives are the result of collective problem solving, as they will then be much more likely to achieve fair equitable and supported arrangements. Collectively-supported arrangements can be tailored to meet individual needs.
- communicate examples of how employees’ family needs have been met and how the solution has also been good for the organisation.
Good practice examples

Department of Conservation – job-share

In looking at retaining a Planning Supervisor returning from parental leave, the Department has found job-share to be a great solution.

The Department arranged for two employees to job-share. One of the Planning Supervisors returned from parental leave on a part-time basis, and a temporary planner (who also has childcare responsibilities) was employed on a part-time basis to cover the hours up to a full-time equivalent. This situation has worked well in the first year and the Department is currently confirming the arrangement for a further twelve months. The two people work well together and work similar hours. The advantage for the Department is the retention of an experienced planner and having another planner in the wings should the supervisor resign or have more children.

National Library – supporting employees with sick partner

The National Library recognises that it is important during times when employees are facing challenges in their personal lives to be empathetic and understanding, and to have the frameworks in place to let employees support their loved ones.

An example of this was when Judy’s woman partner was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo chemotherapy, which meant numerous hospital visits. Judy required flexibility in her working hours and understanding from her employer. She changed her hours to accommodate the hospital visits and negotiated her work situation to allow her to be in a position where she could have a week off if required to be at hospital with her partner.

This has worked well for both Judy and the National Library. As Judy comments:

“ My boss has always accommodated my needs. My other colleagues have always been very supportive too, which I’ve appreciated, because it’s not always convenient for other people. As long as I get my work done and give as much notice as I can, whatever time I need by way of leave to be at the hospital has been OK with them. People are very open in their attitudes so I’ve never felt I had to conceal parts of my life. This made it possible for me to integrate my personal life and my work.”

And, from the employer’s point of view:

“ The Library is very aware of the benefits of having a stable and knowledgeable workforce. It is important to provide policies and support frameworks so people can be there for their loved ones. Staff feel better about themselves and enjoy working in an environment where they are supported. This has a positive effect on staff productivity and on the way in which they contribute at work.”

From a chief executive

A chief executive of a small government agency has two children, one of whom has a disability. She has recently remarried, but as a single parent for much of her working life has always had to ensure work-life balance because “there was only me”. Part of any work package for her has always been taking time off in the school holidays, which she continues to do. She has explicitly negotiated sufficient leave into her current work contract to ensure this will continue.

She continues to give priority to her family, despite a large job, by careful planning, including:

- having breakfast with the children and taking them to school, and having coffee with her teenage daughter every Friday on the way to school
- limiting early evening networking to no more than twice a week and not working at home in the evening
planning weekends and family time into her life, e.g. simply not going to functions in the weekend if she can’t take her husband

planning leave so that there is a good break every four months.

In terms of work-life balance in her organisation, this chief executive is aware that work-life balance is an issue for all staff. For example, a large number of staff in the agency have school-age children and therefore have different demands on their time during the school holidays. Senior managers deliberately co-ordinate their leave around the school holidays and actively support their staff through a range of flexible work options.

From a chief executive

The chief executive of a medium-sized government agency has three young children and making time to spend with them is a priority. For him, time management is at the heart of it. “If you don’t control the diary and make time to do family things, they don’t happen”.

Part of controlling the diary means booking regular times when he is not in the office until 9 a.m. because he drops the children at school and kindergarten, and not scheduling meetings that run past 6 p.m., so that he can be home to see the children before they go to bed. Weekends are kept free to be at home with the family.

Travel for work impinges most on the family, so he makes it a priority to not be away overnight for national travel, and to keep the trip as short as possible for overseas travel.

“I have brought this philosophy with me through previous roles. There are lots of burnt-out public servants out there – people understand the need to be ‘selfish’.”

Ministry of Culture and Heritage

The Ministry of Culture and Heritage has two specific work-life issues policies. Some examples of the range of initiatives in practice are:

- A few positions have been established as four-day week positions, i.e. 32 hours. One for a Media Advisor, recently filled, attracted a large number of excellent applicants, despite there being a tight recruitment market. The Ministry believes that the main attraction was directly attributable to the role covering a four-day week.

- A male employee works 4 x 10 hour days, so that he can spend one day a week with his daughter.

- The chief executive makes a point of ‘walking the talk’, i.e. going home by 6 p.m. at night and picking the children up from school on some occasions. The CE also reminds other staff about the tendency to work long hours and encourages them to go home at more reasonable times.

- A PA who was on parental leave wanted to come back to work on a part-time basis. A job-share arrangement was organised to facilitate this, while at the same time opening up another opportunity for a part-time job.

- Flexible hours are available for staff in the event of pregnancy-related sickness.

- Staff with families have flexible time to pick up and drop off family members.

- The Ministry operates an Unlimited Sick Leave policy, including unlimited domestic leave provisions. This includes circumstances covering a broad definition of family. This policy is closely monitored and includes guidelines for staff use.

- The Ministry provides an opportunity for staff to ‘buy’ an extra week’s leave.
Inland Revenue Department – hours for working parents and guaranteed leave during school holidays

The IRD recruits working parents, with the daily hours for working parents generally falling between 9.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The recruitment and training processes were adapted to reflect the fact that many of the working parents were returning to the workforce after a break. Working parents also have the opportunity to have guaranteed leave during school holidays, either as annual leave or leave without pay.

The IRD National Office also runs a two-week school holiday programme in July for children of staff. Student nurses and teachers are hired to supervise and provide activities for children between seven and fourteen years of age. Typical activities include sports days, computer games and videos, and trips.

These initiatives have been successful for the IRD, as the recruitment of working parents has brought about a more stable workforce and added a different demographic group to the call centre. This adds to the dynamic of the work area and provides a different perspective.

Some specific policy provisions from government organisations

Ministry of Foreign Affairs – childcare costs

Foreign Affairs staff can be required to travel frequently and for prolonged periods. The Ministry therefore has special policies on childcare costs that are related to travel and that are ongoing. The respective policies state:

Wellington-based staff travelling on Ministry business, or attending a course outside business hours, may claim any additional actual and reasonable expenses incurred for childcare in their absence, where alternative arrangements cannot be made.

The Ministry will reimburse eligible staff for actual childcare costs as follows:

- For each child under five years of age (ending when the child turns five years of age), childcare costs to a maximum of up to $750.00 per quarter and up to $3,000 per year. The childcare reimbursement will be based on the number of hours the staff member works, and the number of hours the child is in childcare.

- For each child aged 5-13 years (ending when the child turns 14 years old), after school care costs, or holiday programme costs, to a maximum of up to $250.00 per quarter and up to $1,000 per year. The childcare reimbursement will be based on the number of hours the staff member works.

Ministry of Women’s Affairs – breastfeeding area

Following bargaining in June 2003, the PSA and the Ministry set up a working group to review the work-life balance provisions of the Ministry. One of the priority issues raised was support on return from parental leave. Staff and management used a problem-solving approach to determine how best to resolve this issue.

The solutions included:

- returning on a part-time basis, working up to full-time

- providing a private comfortable space for breast-feeding and/or expressing and paid breastfeeding/expressing breaks (there is a special code on the timesheet).

The provision states:

Breastfeeding/expressing provisions – The Ministry will make available, as required, a room for mothers, their baby and the baby’s carer for the purpose of breastfeeding and/or expressing.
Department of Internal Affairs – compressed working hours

Flexible working hours have been negotiated in the collective agreement between the Department and PSA. The Department’s policy in relation to compressed working hours states:

Compressed hours refers to an arrangement that staff may have to work longer hours on specified days during a week or fortnight in order to reduce the number of days worked or the number of hours on a particular day. This arrangement can apply to an individual, a team or a whole work group.

Tips and traps

- Compressed working hours can assist when someone is needing a regular time during the working week to attend to family needs, e.g. to do the rostered pick-up from school or elder care centre.
- If compressed hours can be arranged so that both staff and employer benefit, there can be huge payoffs in goodwill and reduced absenteeism.

6.4.2 Contributing to community

Description of the issue

For many people, contributing to the community in a voluntary capacity is important. People need time and energy to be able to engage in such activities outside of work, e.g. volunteering for the Samaritans or being part of a volunteer fire brigade. Work should not impact on their energy to contribute as a volunteer outside of work hours. In this case, volunteering is for personal satisfaction rather than for the benefit of the workplace (commercial benefit).

The Government’s Policy on Volunteering (2002) ([http://www.msd.govt.nz/work-areas/communities-hapu-iwi/volunteering/policy.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/work-areas/communities-hapu-iwi/volunteering/policy.html)) states that the Government expects all government agencies to have policies in place that support the private volunteering activities of staff, while ensuring that public servants continue to fulfil their professional obligations.

There are some situations where personal volunteering may be in conflict with the interests of the organisation. The Public Service Code of Conduct ([www.ssc.govt.nz/code-of-conduct](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/code-of-conduct)) contains information on conflicts of interest and how to manage them. This could include staff exercising judgment not to take on voluntary work that significantly impacts on their ability to do their paid work, because of tiredness or through being over-stretched by competing commitments.

Issues for staff

Some of the particular issues faced by staff are:

- the expectation in rural areas to help provide emergency support e.g. rural fire services
- managing their role as a State servant and their membership or contribution to other organisations as a volunteer
- having energy left to contribute in a different environment.
**Issues for managers**

Some of the particular issues faced by managers are:

- lack of awareness of staff’s involvement in other organisations, where there may be a conflict of interest
- having staff members volunteering where there is a conflict of interest.

**What the organisation can do**

To address these issues, organisations can:

- support staff, in principle, in their outside interests
- have a policy that discusses volunteering and conflicts of interest, and provides links to the Government statement on volunteering and the Code of Conduct, and communicate these policies
- talk with staff about potential conflicts of interest and how to manage them
- counsel staff who have conflicts of interest and do not recognise them.

**Good practice examples**

**Department of Internal Affairs – supporting employee to volunteer as ambulance officer**

The Department supported Mary, who was a volunteer ambulance officer working a shift every Sunday night. The manager and Mary came to a flexible arrangement where she came in later on a Monday morning. The Department also provided study leave for her to complete paramedic qualifications.

A positive spin off for the Department was that she held the position as Health and Safety representative for her office during this period.

6.4.3 Personal emergency situations

**Description of the issue**

Every person throughout their life will face emergencies or life crises, such as emergency operation, accidents, fire etc. These emergencies may be personal, or may relate to a person or pet close to the individual.

These events are unplanned and have an immediate impact. They throw the individual’s personal and working lives into chaos, and create the need to re-organise usual arrangements urgently. It can be a time of immense pressure and stress. When employees see their colleague being supported, it increases their confidence that the employer would support them in a time of crisis.

**Issues for staff**

Some of the particular issues faced by staff are:

- the need to provide unplanned, immediate care for family members
■ the need for time to deal with special circumstances at short notice
■ possibly a reluctance to ask for space and time to manage their crisis
■ uncertainty about what they have the right to and what they can expect
■ feeling torn by the demands of work, and the stress and needs of personal circumstances.

**Issues for managers**
Some of the particular issues faced by managers are:
■ the need to respond quickly and make snap judgments
■ the need to fill a staff gap at short notice
■ meeting the cost of paying for relievers to provide cover
■ dealing with the emotional response of staff to the situation.

**What the organisation can do**
To address these issues, organisations can:
■ ensure that enabling policies relating to leave and flexibility give ‘permission’ for responsiveness, and that managers understand their discretion within the policy
■ be sensitive and aware of what is happening in the lives of employees
■ be open about what employees can expect in times of personal emergencies
■ have back up resourcing in place so managers can tap into relievers at short notice. Examples of where organisations can find contingent workers are employees who are retired or who are in the process of retiring, employees on parental leave, consultants or short-term secondments.

**Good practice examples**

**Department of Internal Affairs – elder care and childcare responsibilities**
The PSA and the Department agreed to a two-year trial of flexible leave provisions, which included domestic leave. The trial started in 2002. Domestic leave includes sickness at home, significant cultural events, emergencies at home and arrangements for care of dependants. The trial is currently being evaluated.

DIA supports Brenda, who has an elderly mother and teenage children, by providing her with the capability to work from home when periods of crisis occur.

Periodically, a situation arises in terms of the care of her mother where Brenda needs to be at home. To support her to be able to care for her mother, the Department has set her up with a computer. The nature of Brenda’s work means that she does not have to be physically present in the office all the time, so she can work from home during those times when she needs to look after her mother. In this instance, the Department has recognised there is a need and, together with the employee, has planned and prepared to meet it. By providing this support and being flexible, the organisation has retained a highly skilled staff member.
6.5 Need for personal time

6.5.1 Need for time to support self (recreation/leisure, personal relationships)

Description of the issue

Often the aspect of life that gets the lowest priority is time for self. ‘Time for self’ encompasses the range of things that people do to feel nurtured, grounded and good about themselves. They are the things that help us as individuals to refuel. Sometimes this means exercise, sport, hobbies, holidays, or social time with partners, families and friends. Sometimes it means time alone for reflection, meditation or simply doing nothing. Access to discretionary time outside of paid work and unpaid responsibilities can be crucial to people feeling a sense of balance.

Employees who are fulfilled in their personal lives can generally manage their stress better in the workplace. Ensuring that staff have time to engage in activities that help them to ‘refuel’ will reap benefits for the organisation.

Issues for staff

Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:

■ finding it difficult to give themselves permission to take care of themselves
■ not finding/creating the time and space to engage in activities that they enjoy, and that support them and give them energy
■ excessive work demands precluding participation in leisure activities.

Issues for managers

Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:

■ balancing staff members’ personal needs with operational requirements
■ being flexible over staff use of time for health and fitness, e.g. building in time to go to the gym in off-peak hours, and balancing this with working earlier or later in the day
■ being unable to recognise signs and signals when staff are needing ‘time out’
■ handling and respecting different personalities, e.g. staff who do not want to take time in their personal lives, because work is their life
■ dealing with staff who may be hesitant to take time for themselves, because of the perceived impact on their career and/or what their colleagues might think
■ being aware that what works for one individual will not necessarily work for others.

What the organisation can do

To address these issues, organisations can:

■ have a wellness policy that places importance on employees finding time for personal lives
■ encourage managers to model personal self care
■ require managers to create an environment and process for negotiating work-life balance needs which respects different work-life balance choices
encourage and support staff to take care of their personal needs
be flexible about what the ‘solution’ may look like
train and upskill managers in recognising the signs of stress and in providing support
manage workloads.

Good practice examples

From a chief executive
For the chief executive of one medium-sized government agency, supporting self means keeping fit and looking after diet.

Committing time to self means booking times out in the diary well in advance, and having an EA who understands that these are virtually non-negotiable. For a year ahead, he has an hour blocked out in his diary every day for ‘lunch’, when he goes for a run or to the gym. He does actually get to exercise three to four times every week! “People in the organisation see me do it. I like to think that it encourages them too in terms of health and fitness. I think it also establishes some sort of boundary about this being ‘my time’ and others know not to infringe on it.”

This chief executive encourages his staff to participate in one of the range of sports teams supported by the organisation (including touch rugby, tennis, dragon-boating) by participating in some and sponsoring others.

Diet is also an important consideration. “Personally I am pretty conscious of what I eat, both in terms of quantity and the type of food, because of the sedentary nature of the role. When we provide food at work, I always ensure that there is a range of food, not just sausage rolls…”

Supporting self also means occasionally making time to spend with his wife during work hours. Every two to three weeks he sets time aside to have coffee with his wife in town.

From a chief executive
The head of a large government agency says he is adamant that his ability to be an effective chief executive is because he does not live for his work. For him, the top three things in his life are his family, his music and his career – in that order. This enables him to bring a perspective and balance to his work.

He is quite clear that his passion for music represents time for himself. More than that, “It is the way I explain the world to myself.” He relishes the ability to spend time doing something (in his case, composing) that does not permit any attention to the intellectual requirements of his day job. This enables him to maintain freshness and the sense of having given that part of his brain a rest, when he returns to being a chief executive. He finds his head clearer for decision-making and for dealing with any difficult situations.

He also places considerable store on keeping physically fit, with visits to the gym timetabled by his EA. This way, he maximises his capacity to do the top three things in his life. In addition, he consciously manages his time. He describes himself as being ruthless as he can with prioritisation and delegation. “I do work hard, and can work long hours, but when I don’t need to, I don’t. When the pressure is really on, I do it. When it comes off a bit, I take some time. At that time, it is important that I continue to prioritise and delegate…”

The chief executive operates from the principle of sustainability in his own career. He is very careful about what he goes to during the week, and if it will not advance what he wants to do in the job, he does not go. He uses all his leave. And he always gives the evening meal with his family high priority.
Inland Revenue Department – flexi-credits and working away from home

IRD and the PSA have negotiated flexi-credits in the ‘hours of work’ provision of the collective agreement. Staff are able to accumulate up to two days per month additional leave, which can then be used to fit non-work activities into their day or week. Anecdotal comments are that people do appreciate the ability to have flexi-time and that it helps them to balance their work and personal lives.

Ministry of Social Development – Northland regional office workplace wellness policy

In the Northern regional office of MSD, a steering group (comprising PSA members, other staff representatives and regional management) was charged with developing a wellness policy, and ways of supporting staff wellness. Two practical initiatives that resulted were:

- a fruit bowl in the tearoom
- the Northland Staff Excellence Awards. These were established to encourage people to look after themselves. Contributions to the wellness of others or for self-care are rewarded. Each month every team nominates a member to receive a book of ‘vouchers’. The vouchers include:
  - sleep in (start work at 9.30 a.m.)
  - no appointments for one day
  - morning tea (manager buys you morning tea)
  - two-hour lunch break
  - an early day (3.30 p.m. finish).

The person receiving the award chooses when they will take the awards during the month. (It is possible to take all in one day!)

Some specific policies from government organisations

Ministry of Foreign Affairs – health and fitness subsidy

The Ministry provides a subsidy to Wellington-based staff for membership of health and fitness clubs in Wellington.

Treasury – fitness programme

As part of its work and life initiatives, the Treasury has a fitness programme. The policy states:

*The Treasury will reimburse the costs of gym or sports club membership up to $360 per annum, as long as the staff member pays the first $50.*

This is one of the Treasury’s most popular work-life initiatives as part of its overall HR strategy, reflecting the number of young people in their 20s and 30s working for the organisation. People can also use the subsidy for other forms of fitness such as yoga and swimming classes. The original policy has been in place since 1988 and has been revised over the years to meet the needs of staff.

State Services Commission – fitness centre

The Commission has a fitness centre in the basement of the office building, and pays 50% of membership fees for SSC employees.
6.6 Needs as a member of a specific group

People are diverse in terms of their race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability. This section specifically addresses issues related to ethnicity, age and disability.

- membership of a specific cultural or ethnic group
- younger and older staff
- people with disabilities.

6.6.1 Membership of a cultural or ethnic group

Description of the issue

Associated with membership of any cultural group is a range of rights, responsibilities and obligations. All staff members require the time and freedom to fulfil these cultural requirements. In particular in New Zealand, it is important that the cultural needs of Māori are taken into account.

Issues around cultural needs can occur when an individual’s culture, such as Māori, Pacific Island, or Asian, is not obviously reflected in organisational norms and when managers do not recognise that employees have different needs based on culture. This can occur in any agency, but is particularly an issue when the individual is isolated (the only one from their culture in the environment).

Work-life balance is a particular challenge for new migrants and refugees. Many leave behind valuable support structures (family, community) that help a person cope with volatile work demands, overwork and similar issues. It is important to recognise that different cultures may mean that different solutions to work-life balance are needed.

The following work-life balance principles developed with specific reference to Māori can be applied as guidelines for respectful treatment of all cultural groups:

- enable Māori or cultural or ethnic groups to define what is meaningful, in terms of work-life balance, in their own cultural context
- assure Māori or cultural or ethnic groups of the inclusion of their diverse realities in the principles of work-life balance within the organisation
- develop work-life balance policies and programmes that are appropriate to the needs of Māori or cultural or ethnic groups.

Issues for staff

Some of the particular issues faced by staff are:

- others making assumptions about values and life demands
- managers not understanding cultural demands and responsibilities
- cultural constraints on speaking out and asking for ‘special treatment’
- solutions offered for work-life balance not reflecting their reality
- being labelled and treated as if they have same issues as others of some other cultural group
colleagues’ judgments and perceptions influencing an individual’s willingness to ask for work-life balance options.

**Issues for managers**

Some of the particular issues faced by managers are:

- lack of awareness of different cultural demands and requirements on staff
- the need to be sensitive and open to cultural demands (can cause pain if insisting on asking why)
- the need for trust, respect and discretion – including by the manager’s manager.

**What the organisation can do**

To address these issues, organisations can:

- provide management training and support/buddying for new managers
- include flexibility for different cultures in HR policies and make it possible for line managers to use discretion – e.g. use of Christmas/organisational holidays as options to substitute for other religious holidays
- ensure flexible use of leave provisions.

**Good practice examples**

**State Services Commission – recognising cultural observances**

An SSC manager, who is Moslem, joined the Commission only a few weeks before she had planned to take part in the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. She was very pleased to find that the employer was flexible about this commitment and agreed to her anticipating annual leave. She was able to plan her work in such a way that key deliverables due for completion during the period were substantially progressed before she left. In order to do so, timelines for key departmental processes were brought forward. In addition, staff members were given opportunities to develop their skills by ‘acting up’ in areas of the Commission’s business in her absence, so that both staff and the manager concerned benefited from the solution.

Being a Moslem one of the key obligations she has to fulfil is to perform the five times daily prayers. She is pleased that the Commission has supported her to do this, in that she is able to take a short break for the mid and late afternoon prayers and pray in a quiet room.

**Department of Internal Affairs – whānau support in discussing work-life balance issue**

In the guiding principles of DIA’s Work & Family/Whānau Guidelines, there is a principle about whānau support. The principle states:

**Whānau support**

_People may feel more comfortable in discussing leave and other options with their manager or team leader in a culturally appropriate manner. They may wish to invite whānau support to participate in the conversation, to present particular views and to enable the issue to be discussed more fully._
6.6.2 Younger and older workers

Description of the issue

Work-life balance issues due to age can occur for a variety of reasons. Isolation from peers can be an issue for younger staff in the Public Service, depending on the age profile of the office. For older staff, making the transition to retirement is a particular issue.

For both younger and older groups of staff, getting work that is stimulating and challenging can be an issue. Younger staff may not be given the work because they are perceived as lacking credibility, to have a lack of judgment, and/or as not senior enough.

Older workers may not be given the work because they are seen as ‘past it’, or lacking technological skills.

Issues for staff

Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:

- isolation from peers
- the need for information and different approaches to assist with transition to retirement, e.g. part time hours
- work-life balance being defined narrowly, i.e. as applicable only to people with young children.

Issues for managers

Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:

- holding stereotyped views, on the basis of age, about what people can and cannot do
- having difficulty in relating to older or younger workers
- struggling with the complexities of managing a workplace that has a wide range of ages, especially in ensuring that the group works well together.

What the organisation can do

To address these issues, organisations can:

- provide support networks where staff are isolated due to age
- provide support for planning for retirement
- ensure that flexible working practices can be accessed by those planning for retirement
- ensure that work-life balance policies are not just about family-friendly arrangements.
Good practice examples

Department of Corrections – job-share for transition to retirement

The Department agreed to trial a job-share for two women in the Prison Service who would otherwise have had to leave because working full-time was difficult.

Mary was starting a transition to retirement and had responsibility for elderly parents, while Melissa was returning from parental leave. The employer was experiencing difficulty recruiting for the position, so trialing the job-share was a win–win situation for all parties. This is the first time a job share has been done in prisons. The Prison Service was able to retain the skills of valued staff and the two women were able to continue to work and to meet their other needs.

New Zealand Customs Service – phased retirement

Customs are in a unique position, in that they have a large number of long-serving employees. This means they have a great pool of knowledgeable staff, many of whom are technical specialists in complex areas. A strategy of phased retirement has been introduced to allow Customs to put in place a programme designed to ‘mine’ the intellectual capital of the senior technical specialists, before they retire.

The Service identified those specialists who were between 60 and 65 years of age and initiated discussions with each of them to establish what their retirement plans were. Arising from those discussions, a number of plans were developed that enable the staff involved to act as mentors and trainers of others, so that the knowledge they have can be transferred in a systematic way, while they also review the number of hours they work.

The initiative has helped Customs to manage the exiting of specialist staff and to capture the intellectual capital they have acquired with the Service. The scheme has also benefited employees. For example, reduced hours have been agreed for the health benefits of an employee.

Education Review Office – part-time hours as a transition to retirement

ERO have worked with a number of their older staff to achieve suitable part-time working arrangements as a transition to retirement. The issues they are facing are:

- matching the needs of the organisation and the individual
- scheduling the work
- fitting in the leave
- managing training within part-time hours
- managing retirement savings.
6.6.3 Issues for people with disabilities

Description of the issue

Employees of different abilities/disabilities can have different work-life balance needs and will require different solutions. The organisation’s work-life initiatives will need to reflect the unique needs of staff members with disabilities.

Issues for staff

Some of the particular issues faced by staff include:

- the amount of time required to get ready to go to work
- the need for extra leave for managing disability, e.g. specialist appointments
- colleagues who either are not supportive or do not know how to treat them.

Issues for managers

Some of the particular issues faced by managers include:

- lack of understanding about work-life balance needs of a staff member with a disability (and uncertainty about asking)
- managing colleagues’ expectations and attitudes.

What the organisation can do

To address these issues, organisations can:

- have policies in place in relation to people with disabilities, e.g. leave provisions
- train managers to be understanding, sensitive and receptive.

Good practice example

State Services Commission – supporting an employee with a disability

One of the managers at the Commission is blind. The Commission has recognised both her life and employment needs, and provides a supportive work environment. Some of the support has included:

- enabling another staff member to take her guide dog (and the guide dogs of two other State servants) for a walk at lunchtime
- throwing a retirement party for the guide dog which had been working with her for ten years
- enabling her to take domestic leave on the day after she had had to make the decision to put down her terminally ill guide dog
- enabling her to work from home when she had an operation to remove a cataract, by providing a docking station for her computer, etc. This meant that she could continue to work following the operation, without the problems associated with getting to and from work while still recovering
- providing her with a laptop to enable her to work while travelling to/from marketing trips. SSC ensured that the laptop was lightweight, so it was easier to carry, as she also has a back problem.
References

Australian Government website, *Work and Family*  
http://www.workplace.gov.au/Workplace/WPDisplay/0,1280,a0%253D0%2526a1%253D517%2526a2%253D530,00.html

Campbell, A. “Forget the old model, change is emotional”, in *New Zealand Herald*, February 5, 2003

Centre for Families, Work, and Wellbeing website (Canada)  
http://www.worklifecanada.ca/


Department of Trade and Industry website, *Work-Life Balance* (United Kingdom).  
http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance


Employers’ Organisation for Local Government website (United Kingdom) – flexible working case studies  
http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk/od/flexible/case.html

Families and Work Institute website (USA)  
http://www.familiesandwork.org/

Government of Canada website, *Work-life balance*  


Ministry of Women’s Affairs website, *Work and Family Balance, a policy perspective*  
http://www.mwa.govt.nz/cont_wk.html#workfamily


Work-life Research Centre (United Kingdom) [http://www.workliferesearch.org](http://www.workliferesearch.org)
Tools

Problem-solver

Basic benchmarking tool
http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/benchmark/benchmarking.htm
The Range of Work-Life Balance Options and Solutions

Every organisation and individual faces different work-life balance issues. Correspondingly there are work-life balance solutions that will suit different situations and address different needs. Organisations need to ‘pick and mix’ from the options to find the right combination to fit their environment and to have the most impact in addressing the work-life balance needs of their employees.

This section lists a range of work-life balance solutions under five broad categories:

- flexible working arrangements (the organising of work hours)
- leave (time out of the workplace)
- child and elder care (assistance with family needs)
- health and wellness initiatives (preventing and managing the stress from work and life)
- work-life balance culture/environment (the organising of work and management style).

Under each of these categories is a range of options.

Flexible working arrangements (the organising of work hours)

- flexible hours (change the start and end times of the work day)
- job share (share a full-time position with another employee)
- compressed work week (work full-time hours in fewer than five days)
- part-time (reduce the number of hours worked each day or week)
- time banking (work extra hours in advance and take equivalent time off at an agreed time)
- work reduced hours for a specified period of time (temporarily reduce to part-time hours)
- term-time work (divide full-time hours across school term weeks and take leave during school holidays)
- gradual retirement
- work away from the office (work from home or from a remote office)
collective options (require participation by all or most employed in a unit or work area)

self-roster (staff schedule their working day times)

annual hours scheme (distribute staff hours to meet changing levels of need across the year, e.g. winter may be busier than summer).

**Leave** (time out of the workplace)

- educational leave
- leave of absence, e.g. sabbatical
- parental leave (including allied organisational strategies aimed at ensuring staff on parental leave do return to the workplace – for instance, inviting them to work social functions, sending them a regular newsletter, keeping them up to date with significant changes)
- transition-to-retirement leave
- community leave (leave provided to undertake voluntary work)
- bereavement and tangihanga leave
- buyable leave, where an employee can buy additional leave through a proportional reduction in salary
- breaking leave entitlements into hourly blocks (e.g. to allow for time off during the day to attend school functions)
- employment breaks (short-term leave without pay)
- leave banking, where an employee takes a reduced salary for a defined period of time and ‘banks’ the reduced amount toward an extended period of leave for purposes such as further study or travel. This is a long-term approach – e.g. staff work for four years at 80% of salary and have the fifth year off on 80% of salary.


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**Child and elder care** (assistance with family needs)

**Assistance with care**

- on-site childcare
- emergency carer leave or back-up childcare
- childcare subsidy
- dependant leave (additional sick leave)
- childcare expenses in relation to work travel
- school holiday programme

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1 In addition to statutory minimum requirements (e.g. holiday leave, parental leave)
after-school care programme.

**Information services**
- resource material for new parents (e.g. information on pre-school options)
- advice seminars on elder care options (e.g. checklist for what to look at with retirement villages)
- information on local care providers.

**Sensitive practices**
- access to phone to make and receive calls from family members, or to make confidential calls, e.g. to doctor
- provision of car parks on an ‘as needed basis’ for days when people have dependant care responsibilities, such as going to a child’s school event, going with a parent to the doctor
- work-based support groups for staff with elder care responsibilities
- breastfeeding area (private area with appropriate facilities).

**Health and wellness initiatives (managing the stress from work and life)**
- good health and safety practices
- gym membership or subsidy
- smoking cessation initiatives
- employee assistance programme
- medical check-ups
- medical insurance
- flu shots
- eye tests
- showers and changing facilities
- bicycle parking
- study assistance
- budgeting advice
- time management and planning skills
- stress management training.

**Work-life balance culture/environment (the organising of work and management style)**

**Organising the work**
- meet in core hours (avoid scheduling meetings early or late, if possible)
■ avoid overnight meetings if possible
■ ensure fair and transparent workloads
■ offer different work arrangements under the same conditions (e.g. offer part-time work that is well paid and has access to training and career development)
■ ensure adequate staffing levels (to allow staff to take time off and not have to work extra hours).

Checking the management style
■ examine the messages that staff receive (what behaviours are being role modelled?)
■ look at what behaviours are rewarded (are people being rewarded for their visibility or for what they achieve?)
■ recognise the work-life balance needs of staff
■ reduce the amount of overtime worked
■ improve workload management
■ encourage the taking of annual leave
■ take an open-door approach to problems (within good guidelines, business/personal needs can be met).

The solutions that result from looking at the work environment are possibly the most influential in terms of the employee’s work-life balance. The fostering of an environment that is more ‘work-life balance friendly’ requires support. Ways of supporting this change are:
■ making improvements to the quality of the management training and support in the work-life balance area (for experienced managers, to give them a focus on new ways of looking at things; for new managers, to provide endorsement for those who may be nervous about exercising discretion)
■ ensuring leadership and role modelling from the leaders of the organisation
■ rewarding managers who encourage and achieve good work-life balance for their employees and who have a good work-life balance themselves.
Ways of Gathering Information from Staff

There are many different ways of canvassing staff for their thoughts and ideas on work-life balance. The method that is best for a particular situation will depend on a number of factors, such as the size of the organisation, the size of the sample (do you want to contact every person, or will a sample suffice?), the style of the organisation, the geographical spread of staff (are they all in one office or spread out across the country?), and cost and time considerations.

Some options for collecting information from staff about work-life balance include:

- conducting a work-life balance survey
- holding individual interviews
- running a consultation process
- establishing a formal work-life balance committee or forum
- running focus groups.

It may be that a combination of the different options is what is right for your organisation.

In this section, the different options are discussed. For each of the options there is a brief description, followed by a discussion of the issues. Information about running focus groups is developed in greater detail.

Conducting a work-life balance survey

Surveys are a comprehensive way of gathering information about the needs of your workforce. It is a particularly good method when there are large numbers, when everyone in the organisation is to be consulted, or when people are in different locations throughout the country. It allows for the widest involvement of all employees.

Potential drawbacks of surveys are that employees need to be motivated to respond, there is the possibility of low response rates, and responses and ideas can be limited to the questions asked.

While the information is easy to analyse if closed questions are used, responses may not be particularly valuable. Open-ended questions result in more detailed information, but can often be difficult and time-consuming to analyse.
For examples of work-life balance questionnaires, refer to either of the following publications:


These work-life balance survey examples can be adapted for use in your own organisation. However, it is a good idea to test the survey with a small number of people before you send it throughout the organisation. (Consider language, style, ease of instructions, examples/initiatives that may be specific to your organisation.)

**Holding individual interviews**

Conducting interviews can be a low-cost or a high-cost option, depending on the number of staff you interview and their geographical spread. Interviews can be a good strategy to employ in combination with another option, such as a survey, where interviews can allow you to explore interesting results from the survey in more detail. It can also be a way of testing solutions without raising staff expectations (as might be the case by the inclusion of possible solutions in a survey). People can provide more in-depth answers through interviews and more detail can be provided to the interviewee to clarify what is meant by a particular question.

**Running a consultation process**

Running a consultation process can be an effective method of obtaining feedback and ideas from a wide range of staff. This may be a useful way of gathering information from staff, once the organisation has identified the main work-life balance issues and has developed some ideas about solutions.

Running a consultation process could range from communicating with staff via a document (e.g. posted on the Intranet or sent out through the email network) and asking for submissions, through to running a series of briefings and inviting submissions, or running a series of focus groups with staff. More detail on running focus groups can be found later in this section.

**Establishing a formal work-life balance committee or forum**

A work-life balance committee could be an ongoing forum or a committee that is established for a particular purpose, e.g. to develop an organisation’s work-life balance plan. In forming a work-life balance committee, it is essential to clarify:

- the purpose of the committee
- the membership of the committee
- who the committee reports to
- the relationship of the committee to other key parties, e.g. the HR manager.
It is important to have a wide representation of the workforce on the committee, including both management and union representatives.

Examples of how organisations are using work-life balance committees are given in Chapter Six of *Work-Life Balance: a resource for the State Services*. Section 6.1.3 contains an example from the Education Review Office, where they established a work-life balance forum to identify and problem-solve work-life balance issues. Section 6.5.1 offers an example from the Northland regional office of the Ministry of Social Development, which has set up a steering group to develop a wellness policy and develop practical ways of supporting staff wellness.

“One of the most useful things we have done regarding work-life balance was to establish the work-life balance forum. It provides an avenue for staff to raise their concerns and air their views and a place where management and the union can discuss the issues and try to come up with a solution.” (HR Advisor from ERO).

For more information on developing a joint working group, including a sample terms of reference, refer to the NZCTU’s *It’s About Time! A Union Guide to Work-Life Balance*. This publication can be downloaded from: [http://www.nzctu.org.nz/policy/109996693920232.html](http://www.nzctu.org.nz/policy/109996693920232.html)

**Running focus groups**

A focus group involves bringing together a group of people to talk about issues that have relevance to a larger group of people. It is important the group is representative of the wider group and that the people within the group accurately represent the views of the employees they represent.

Focus groups are a good option when an organisation:

- **wants to explore lots of ideas and issues** and go deeper than is possible with a survey. As focus group questions are open-ended and interactive, many issues can be explored. Because of their open and exploratory nature, focus groups can also stimulate discussion about things that were not anticipated.

- **wants to develop a survey.** A focus group discussion can help define the most important issues, and because participants define those issues in their own words, the discussion can be a useful tool in developing a survey. A focus group can also help to reveal issues or potential solutions that should be probed further.

- **knows little about the important work-life balance issues** that are being faced by employees or are stuck for what ideas may work.

The group dynamic can result in better responses than discussing an issue with an individual, as people can build on each other’s comments. This can lead to the group developing creative solutions. Additionally, the group dynamics allow the observer to analyse the ‘unspoken’ language, and how other participants react to ideas through their responses, body language or lack of response.
The following are some guidelines for conducting focus groups.

At the beginning
Be very clear about:
- why the focus group is being undertaken
- what you want to achieve from it
- how you will use the information.

Size and membership of focus group
Focus groups work best when there are between 8-10 participants. Enough people need to be included to stimulate discussion and generate a variety of views. However, having too many people can mean the group is difficult to control or that some people may feel uncomfortable about contributing. Consider the mix of people, and particularly consider the desirability for all members to feel comfortable – if a person’s manager is present they may not feel as willing to contribute.

Timing and scheduling
Leave plenty of time for the focus group – allow at least 90 minutes. Before the focus group is scheduled to occur, brief participants on:
- when and where the discussion will be held and what time to allow for it
- the purpose of the focus group
- confidentiality – assure them that their comments will remain confidential to the group
- what the results will be used for
- contact details, in case they have any concerns following the meeting.

Preparation
In developing the questions, consider:
- the number of questions (don’t have too many – less is more)
- the order of the questions (e.g. from general to specific).

Where possible, use open questions rather than closed, as open questions make for better discussion. Use probes rather than prompts, e.g. “Could you give me an example of that?”; “What effect has that had on you?”.

Recording the focus group
There are two options for recording the discussion from the focus group:
- Write notes (It can be difficult to take both notes and facilitate. It is ideal to have two people, one to ask the questions and one to record.)
- Tape the discussion (People can be sensitive to this, so ensure that you ask permission in advance.)

Running the focus group

At the beginning of the focus group, it is important to introduce the facilitators and re-state the purpose of the focus group.

Ask participants to introduce themselves and establish or remind them of the rules of the group, e.g. respect, confidentiality, etc.

During the focus group, try to include everyone. Monitor the pattern of contributions and try to ensure everyone gets a chance to contribute. Having set clear ground rules, intervene if they are not being complied with.

When closing the focus group, signal your last question and ask for final comments. Thank the participants for their contribution and discuss what will happen with the notes from here.

Ensure that the notes are written up as soon as possible after the focus group has been completed, to ensure you capture the detail.

Further information on focus groups is contained in the NZCTU’s It’s About Time! A Union Guide to Work-Life Balance. The publication can be downloaded from: http://www.nzctu.org.nz/policy/109996693920232.html
Cost-Benefit Analysis

When considering which options to use in your work-life balance strategy, it is essential to assess the costs and benefits of each one. The assessment may be quantitative or qualitative, or a combination of both. The level of detail required will depend on:

- the nature of the option
- the information available
- the information required by your organisation’s decision makers.

In some cases, just identifying the types of costs and benefits will be enough. In others, being able to refer to costs and benefits of similar initiatives carried out in New Zealand and overseas is enough to convince senior managers. Few organisations do a full cost-benefit analysis of any of their human resource policies or programmes, relying instead on a realistic assessment of costs and benefits. If a full cost-benefit analysis is required, get help (if you need it) from qualified people inside your organisation or from a consultant.

Be realistic about what is necessary and what is possible. Keep it as simple as possible.

When to assess the costs and benefits

Assessing costs and benefits will be necessary when you need:

- to examine the current costs of not having a strategy. This can be used to motivate your organisation to implement a work-life strategy, e.g. cost of staff turnover due to family responsibilities
- to identify the costs and benefits of implementing a proposed option. This will help you decide if a specific option is worth implementing and to compare it with alternative options, e.g. the expected costs of introducing paid parental leave may include remuneration of staff on leave and costs associated with replacement staff, while the expected benefits may include reduced staff turnover and staff taking shorter periods of parental leave
- to identify the costs and benefits of an existing policy. This is necessary to evaluate the policy’s effectiveness, e.g. the costs of part-time work may include administration and accommodation, while the benefits may be greater flexibility and reduced absenteeism.
Steps in assessing costs and benefits

■ determine the likely scope of the work-life option you are considering
■ identify the types of costs and benefits associated with this option
■ measure or attribute financial values to the costs and benefits where possible. Where not, describe costs and benefits
■ analyse the costs and benefits over the relevant time frame.

The case study in Appendix B of the EEO Trust publication *Work and Family: Steps to Success* illustrates how this process could be used when a detailed cost-benefit analysis is needed.

The costs and benefits identified in the boxed checklist on the next page have been experienced by employers as they implemented different work and family strategies.

Where to get the information

Your level of analysis will depend on how much of the information you need is available. You may find some of the information you need from:

■ your organisation’s human resources records
■ your organisation’s financial records
■ surveys of your organisation
■ other employers
■ Statistics New Zealand
■ the Internet
■ specialist articles or books on work-life issues
■ EEO Trust data base
■ consultants.

It may be enough to use average or typical costs, rather than knowing the exact costs for your organisation. You may be able to get such average or typical costs from other employers, from general surveys of employment costs, or from other research.

Difficulties with assessing costs and benefits

Difficulties can arise in assessing costs and benefits when:

■ *the data is not available.* The systems for collecting the data may not be in place or are not sufficiently flexible to give you the information you need

■ *the data is too complex.* There may be too many other variables which also affect the benefit or cost you wish to assess

■ *the data is not quantifiable.* Benefits such as increased morale and loyalty are difficult to quantify

■ *the data takes too long to collect.* The costs of collecting the data must be kept in proportion with the costs of implementing the option

■ *the financial benefits may not be immediately obvious.* It is often far easier to count the costs than to attribute financial values to the benefits.
## Costs and Benefits: Checklist

**Do these benefits apply to your option?**
- lower staff turnover
- higher rate of return from parental leave
- increased productivity through reduced anxiety and distraction
- reduced absenteeism
- positive or improved public relations
- increased equal employment opportunities
- increased morale, commitment and motivation
- improved employment relations
- increased ability of staff to attend training courses
- increased ability of staff to work overtime
- increased ability of staff to be flexible to meet organisational requirements

**Do these costs apply to your option?**
- equipment
- replacement staff
- additional supervision
- procedural changes
- remuneration
- training
- administrative costs
- lost productivity
- construction or other establishment costs, e.g. child care centre
- staff time of those involved in investigating and implementing options
- consultancy costs
- time away from the organisation’s primary goals

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For further information, refer to:
Relevant Legislation, Government Policy and Current Government Initiatives

A number of New Zealand laws establish minimum terms and conditions of employment, while many government policies provide leadership and guidance to government organisations on being a good employer.

This section provides a list of the relevant legislation and policies as at March 2005, with a brief description of how they pertain to work-life balance. Readers should bear in mind that examples quoted throughout this publication reflect HR practice at the time of writing.

Useful website links are included below.

Legislation

■ Employment Relations Act (ERA) 2000
  This Act regulates most aspects of the employment relationship. It promotes collective bargaining. The ERA underpins the role of the union in the work-life balance area.

■ Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987
  This Act prescribes minimum entitlements with respect to parental leave for male and female employees, and protects the rights of employees during pregnancy, and during and following parental leave.

  *Section 71 of the Act entitles certain employees to paid parental leave. As from 1 December 2004, eligible workers will be entitled to 13 weeks of paid parental leave. This increases to 14 weeks from 1 December 2005.*

■ Human Rights Act 1993
  Section 21 of this Act describes the grounds on which it is illegal to discriminate. For some people, it is precisely their membership in these categories that may influence their desire and choices to improve their work-life balance. The prohibited grounds of discrimination are the following:

  ■ sex, which includes pregnancy and childbirth
  ■ marital status
- religious belief
- ethical belief
- colour
- race
- ethnic or national origins
- disability
- age
- political opinion
- employment status
- family status
- sexual orientation.

**Holidays Act 2003**
This Act sets out the minimum entitlements to:
- annual leave
- public holidays
- sick leave
- bereavement leave.

The Act provides a foundation of basic entitlements that are supportive of employees seeking to achieve work-life balance.

**Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992**
This Act is about making work activities safe and healthy for everyone connected with them. The Act highlights and makes explicit that it covers stress and fatigue as potential work hazards and sources of harm, and that certain behaviours may create a hazard in this arena. This has significant implications for the role of the employer in managing the stress and workloads of their employees.

**State Sector Act 1988**
This Act sets out to ensure that every employer in the State Services is a good employer; to promote equal employment opportunities in the State Services; and to provide for the negotiation of fair conditions of employment in the State Services.
Government policy

■ Partnership for Quality Agreement
The Partnership for Quality Agreement aims to develop an open, co-operative relationship between the PSA and departmental management, with the objective of contributing to the effectiveness of the New Zealand Public Service and enhancing the quality of employment in the sector. The Agreement informs and provides the context for the way work-life balance arrangements should be developed and implemented within a government organisation.

■ EEO Policy to 2010
The EEO Policy to 2010 identifies the three conditions that need to be present for diversity in the workplace to exist. One of these is an inclusive, respectful and responsive organisational culture. Implicit in this is the need for access to work-life balance provisions.

The EEO Policy to 2010 can be accessed at:
http://www.ssc.govt.nz/eeo-policy-to-2010

Current Government initiatives

Department of Labour Work-Life Balance Project
This project is about getting more people to think about work-life balance issues and helping more people to enjoy the benefits. The aim is to find out what is already being done in organisations, and to see what other practical solutions could work for employers and employees.

For more information on this project go to:

Pay and Employment Equity Unit
This unit has been established within the Department of Labour to oversee the implementation of the five-year plan of action that resulted from the Pay and Employment Equity Taskforce. It aims to reduce the gender pay gap across the Public Service, public health and public education sectors.

The Pay and Employment Equity Taskforce Report (1 March 2004) highlighted work-life balance as one of many issues relating to the gender pay gap. Work being undertaken by the Department of Labour is examining the impact of family responsibilities on the gender pay gap, in particular in relation to the participation of women in the workforce.

### Useful general websites

**http://www.legislation.govt.nz**

This website provides free public access to unofficial versions of New Zealand statutes (Public, Local, and Private Acts) and Statutory Regulations. You can search and browse this material free of charge. The legislation on this website is sourced from Brookers. This is a temporary website until the Public Access to Legislation Project is completed, at which time an official Parliamentary Counsel Office website will be established that will provide free public access to New Zealand legislation.

**http://www.workinfo.govt.nz**

This website provides information about recent changes in employment legislation including amendments to the Holidays Act, Paid Parental Leave Act, Employment Relations Act and Health and Safety in Employment Act.

**http://www.ers.dol.govt.nz**

This website provides information about employment relations, including employment conditions, rights and obligations.

**http://www.osh.govt.nz**

This website contains information on the Health and Safety in Employment legislation.
Examples of Policies and Procedures

Excerpts from departmental policy relating to work-life balance have been included throughout the Work-Life Balance resource. This section contains two full departmental examples of work-life balance policies as at March 2005 from the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and the Department of Conservation (DOC). Incorporated within the Department of Internal Affairs’ policy are vignettes illustrating aspects of the policy in practice.

Department of Internal Affairs – Work and Family/Whānau Guidelines

Message from the Chief Executive

Kia ora koutou

Getting a balance into our lives is crucial. We are setting high standards of business excellence, and need to ensure that this means working smarter, not necessarily longer. These guidelines have been developed because we recognise that while work is an important part of the lives of all people in DIA, we have other responsibilities as well. The guidelines are based on the belief that people who feel valued, and are able to balance work, family/whānau responsibilities and outside interests, are likely to be more productive workers and make better business decisions.

Several recent studies have reported the link between employee loyalty and family-friendly policies. One study, published in the June 1995 issue of Personnel Psychology, showed that when employees feel their employer cares about them, they are more willing to support change, stay late if needed, work an extra day, and be more flexible. They are also more loyal and more likely to stay with the organisation. Another study, conducted by the Families at Work Institute, shows that family-friendly policies and benefits gain employee commitment and loyalty better than any other programme. One US bank’s work and family programmes have provided the company with a competitive advantage in retaining skilled individuals and attracting new talent. “At NationsBank, we have a simple philosophy,” said the CEO. “If we take care of our associates, they will take care of our customers, and that, in turn, takes care of our stakeholders. It’s the way we do business.”

At DIA our purpose is to serve and connect citizens, communities and government to build a strong, safe nation. To be real we need to model the value we place on community. These work and family/whānau guidelines will help us to do that – by enabling DIA people to play a role in their families and communities as well as being highly productive paid workers.

I ask you all to bring these principles alive and make them work. We will all benefit.

Nāku noa, nā

Chris Blake, Chief Executive
**Introduction to Policy**

The term “family” means whānau, multi-generational families, same-sex families and close-knit small groups of people who come together and function as a family.

The DIA Work and Family/Whānau Policies are available in the HR Information Database and include Flexible working hours, Flexible working arrangements, and Leave.

DIA’s policies to assist people to balance their work and family responsibilities, affect employment conditions in three particular areas:

*Flexible working hours*
- start and finish times
- compressed working hours
- time-banking.

*Flexible working arrangements*
- part-time work (permanent or temporary)
- job share and job split
- part-year employment
- flexible working locations.

*Leave*
- parental leave
- dependant care leave
- bereavement/tangihanga leave
- special purpose leave
- cultural leave.

*Staff have family responsibilities if they:*
- are expecting or adopting children
- have children of all ages
- have elderly dependants
- have partners needing care
- have dependants with disabilities or long-term illnesses
- are experiencing crises or celebrations in their extended families and communities.

*Families are different in terms of:*
- *household arrangements* (e.g. those with or without children, one and two-parent families, blended or extended families, lesbian or gay couples, parents with children now living away from home and group households)
cultures, values, beliefs and actions (e.g. how they organise their childcare or eldercare arrangements) often linked to their ethnic backgrounds and the different ages and stages at which they choose to have children

economic and employment status

level of support from friends and relatives.

Note: The term ‘dependants’ is used through the guidelines. Dependents are people who rely on us for financial, emotional and/or practical support. Depending on the circumstances, dependants can be children, partners, parents, relatives, flatmates, friends, neighbours.

Family/whānau responsibilities come in all shapes and sizes

Some responsibilities will be unpredictable or arise only out of emergencies, such as travelling to a tāngi or taking a child with a broken arm for treatment.

Other responsibilities may be periodic or occasional, such as having the children for the school holidays, taking your turn to look after an elderly parent or supporting a partner undergoing cancer treatment.

Many people have regular and ongoing family commitments such as everyday care for children or elders or relatives with disabilities.

Supporting people to balance work and family/whānau responsibilities

Guiding principles for managers – walking the talk!

Get in first

It’s a good idea to periodically let your staff know that you realise they need to balance their work and home lives. Set the scene for the times when the two sets of demands conflict and they do need to discuss workable solutions with you and the team.

Flexibility is the key

Increasing the flexibility in working arrangements is the key to managing work and family. You need to know that as a manager you can be assured of a timely, quality, high impact out-turn. Even though people may have to balance their work and family commitments, you as their manager can still get the results you are looking for, provided you are visibly supportive of staff having flexible arrangements at times.

Go for Win/Win

Look to achieve win/win solutions when discussing work/family issues. There is much to be gained from coming to an arrangement that benefits the individual staff member, the team and the business. When someone needs to alter their working arrangements for a while for family reasons, get their colleagues involved in helping to work out the solution. That way everyone wins.
**Throw away the “If you give them an inch . . .” mentality**

Try not to be hampered by the “precedent” mentality – “If I let her do that, everyone else will want to do it too.” When looking for a solution to a work/family issue, it works well to treat each situation on an individual basis, and to communicate clearly with staff about why a different arrangement is happening for someone. Keep the secrecy to a minimum.

**Family/whānau-friendly through and through**

Don’t wait until a crisis situation arises to talk about flexibility in working arrangements. A culture of personal and team responsibility at work enables people to work out for themselves how they are going to deal with family/life demands and contribute fully to work. Flexible options can be offered in recruitment advertisements (you may attract a real winner that way!); or in team talks; or in the performance assessment.

**What about the men?**

Remind yourself and others that men, as well as women, need to balance their work and home lives. Work and Family Policies increase the opportunities for men (and women) to be more involved in caring for their families, without adverse reaction from managers and colleagues.

**Whānau support**

People may feel more comfortable in discussing leave and other options with their manager or team leader in a culturally appropriate manner. They may wish to invite whānau support to participate in the conversation, to present particular views and to enable the issue to be discussed more fully.

**Flexible working hours, arrangements and leave: practices and policies for balancing work and family/whānau**

**1 Flexible working hours**

Flexibility in the way in which hours are worked is the single most helpful factor that enables people to balance their work responsibilities and their family responsibilities. This came through strongly in the responses to the 1995 survey on work and family responsibilities.

**1.1 Flexible start and finish times**

Flexibility around start and finish times enables staff to vary the times that they begin or finish their working day, provided they work their contracted number of hours each week or fortnight. Managers and staff may find it useful to examine the options around flexible start and finish times, and choose those most suited to the people and the business.
Tips and traps

■ When people have the flexibility to vary their hours according to family demands, both the employer and the employee benefit. The employee can manage work and home more effectively, and the manager is not approached each time an adjustment needs to be made to the way hours are worked. Flexible start and finish times allow for children or elders to be dropped off or picked up from daycare at particular times.

■ Flexi-time works best when staff in the team are multi-skilled. If, for example, one of the counter staff is called away urgently to a family member in hospital, there are others who have the appropriate customer service skills to pick up the counter work.

■ It’s a good idea to talk with managers and colleagues about what arrangements work best and what changes you may need from time to time. That way it’s a no surprises approach when an emergency occurs.

Merrilyn’s partner, Ross, sometimes needs to travel on business. He usually picks up their two year old from day care each day. When he’s away, Merrilyn needs to do both the drop off and the pick up. For the few days Ross is away, Merrilyn has an arrangement that she will work 6 1/2 hours each day at the office, and either take evening work home or work longer hours when Ross returns.

1.2 Compressed working hours

Compressed hours refers to an arrangement that staff may have to work longer hours on specified days during a week or fortnight, in order to reduce the number of days worked or the number of hours on a particular day. This arrangement can apply to an individual, a team or a whole work group.

Tips and traps

■ Compressed working hours can assist when someone is needing a regular time during the working week to attend to family needs, e.g. to do the rostered pick-up from school or elder care centre.

■ If compressed hours can be arranged so that both staff and employer benefit, there can be huge payoffs in goodwill and reduced absenteeism, according to LWR Industries, Christchurch.

Six months ago the “production” team agreed to try a new system of hours. They work 8 1/2 hours Monday through Thursday, then have Friday afternoons off. This fits in well with their peak work flows and gives them an opportunity to have “extra” time to attend to “the rest of life” matters. The team loves it; their manager is happy; Sally and Bill, who both have school age kids, are home when they get home from school; and Tessa has a round of golf with a friend.

Tilly has been selected to represent her region in netball. During the winter months, she often has to travel with her team on a Friday afternoon. Tilly and her manager have agreed that Tilly will work longer hours on two other days of the week.

1.3 Time-banking

Time-banking is a more formalised time in lieu system. It works well in businesses that have peaks and troughs in their schedules through the year. When a period of long hours is being worked, there is an agreement that the overtime hours will be banked and taken as leave at a later time. Employees have the option of taking the accrued hours as a block during a slower period.
Tips and traps

- Managers and staff can talk about time banking and decide if it is suitable for the nature of the business.
- It may be a good idea to trial time-banking before a firm decision is made.
- Be clear about how much time people can accumulate, the timeframe in which that time must be used, and what factors will influence when they can use that time.
- The advantages of time-banking are that:
  - It is effective in motivating staff during a period of long hours being worked.
  - Staff can give back to their families the time taken away from them when they were working long hours.

Last year, Sam, who manages the community applications unit, agreed that people ‘bank’ their extra hours during peak periods. He has noticed that when people can look forward to time off later, staff (and their families) are happy to go the extra mile during the tough times. Sam’s giving ‘time banking’ the thumbs up!

For two weeks each summer, Mai works as a team leader at a Youth Camp run by her community. The DIA business she works for uses time-banking during peak periods, which are always during the winter months. Mai is able then to use her banked hours for when she goes on camp.

2 Flexible working arrangements

2.1 Part-time work

Part-time work is the term that applies to any arrangement in which the employee works fewer than full-time hours.

Tips and traps

- Talk together as a team about routinely advertising positions offering part-time employment as an option. You may attract capable people who are not available for full-time employment. The job may be one that can be done in fewer than full-time hours, or one that can be job-shared or job-split (refer 2.2 and 2.3).
- Managers may find that their concerns about increasing costs (administration, space, equipment, training), by employing part-time workers, is balanced by the benefits. It is well-documented that generally part-time workers are proportionally more productive than their full-time colleagues.
- Sometimes minimal job re-design can provide an opening for a talented part-time worker. For example, a shift in priorities within the business can lead to the re-shaping of a job as part-time. (A useful reference is The Design and Management of Part-time Work within the Public Service, available through HR.)

Billy has been working full-time for two years. He is a promising soccer player, and has hopes of being selected to play in the national team. He would like to work 6 hours a day, to give him more time for training. Alex, the manager, is aware that another staff member, Sara, would like to increase her hours now that her mother is in full-time care. And here is a golden opportunity. So Alex, Billy and Sara decide together how they will re-organise the tasks so that the work gets done (job re-design). Billy ends up working a 30-hour week, and Sara increases from 20 to 30 hours, and Alex is delighted at how well the arrangement is working.
2.2 Permanent part-time employment

People are contracted to work an agreed number of hours each week on a permanent basis. They are entitled to the same benefits (on a pro-rata basis) as their full-time colleagues.

During the strategic planning process, Karen, the strategic manager, and her team, discuss the skill sets they will need to have on board to achieve their business results. Their aim is to attract high quality applicants to the specialist positions, but their budget will only allow for part-time salaries. So it is quite by accident that Karen realises that it is not only the salary that people are attracted to. Obviously, offering part-time employment brings some very talented people out of the woodwork – people who wish to work part-time for family or lifestyle reasons.

2.3 Part-time employment on a temporary basis

Sometimes called “reduced hours”, part-time work on a temporary basis involves a written agreement between employee and employer that the person will work part-time for a period.

**Tips and traps**

- Part-time work on a temporary basis is often used when a person returns from parental leave, enabling them to balance their work and the care of their young child. It can be an arrangement that includes working from home (refer 2.5).

- For a worker who is caring for their elderly, frail parent while the main carer is away or sick, temporary part-time work may be a welcome option.

Daniel shares the care of his son, who has cystic fibrosis, with his partner Alan. When his mother dies, Alan flies to London for the funeral and to support his dad. Daniel discusses with his manager, Bill, the possibility of working part-time for the four weeks that Alan is expected to be away. This arrangement would involve others in the team sharing the tasks that Daniel would normally be doing, so Bill brings them into the discussion. Together they come up trumps!

2.4 Job share

Job-sharing is a system of work where two people take the responsibility for one full-time position. They divide the work, pay, holidays and other benefits between them according to the time they work.

**Tips and traps**

- Job-sharing offers a solution to part-time arrangements in a job that requires continuity and a full-time commitment.

- It works well when there are two people involved who have similar skills and good communication with one another.

Whina and Mere, both sole parents, have been working together on a community development project for the last two years. They notice that DIA is advertising a job that requires similar skills to theirs. They decide to make a job-share application. The selection panel recognises their collective strengths and evaluates them more highly than other applicants for the job.
2.5 Job split

A job split occurs when two people are contracted on an individual basis to do a full-time job. It is similar to a job-share except that their salaries and entitlements are assessed according to the individual’s experience and skill levels.

Tips and traps

- A job split is suitable when the two people are differently skilled and experienced, and will pick up different components of the same job. They need to communicate well with one another, as they are still accountable for making sure the whole job is done well, even though they have different areas of responsibility within it.

When Frank and his partner separated, they chose to share the care of their two pre-school children between them. Frank, wanting to minimise further disruption to the children’s lives, decided to avoid placing them in day care. He was looking to work the one week out of two that his children were with their mother. Because he loved his job, Frank was very reluctant to let it go, especially as it was undergoing exciting developments. He had an idea that Tilly, whom he had been consulting on IT matters, just might be interested in working within the organisation, and thought his manager might be drawn by the cost savings generated by that arrangement. They set the job up as a “job split” – with Frank retaining his permanent collective contract. (He received some income support as his reduced income was within the range of entitlement.) Tilly was put on a fixed term contract for 12 months. Frank and Tilly negotiated a clear performance agreement with their manager, and ensured that they communicated regularly about the job.

2.6 Part-year employment

Part-year employment offers employees a number of weeks’ unpaid leave per year. This means that employees work an agreed number of weeks per year, by agreement with the employer, with an agreed number of weeks’ unpaid leave, and are entitled to sick leave provisions on an accrued basis and annual leave provisions on a pro-rata basis. The arrangement must be agreeable to both the employer and the employee.

Tips and traps

- It is suggested that applications for part-year employment be negotiated on a year by year basis.
- This option is not restricted to a certain number of weeks of unpaid leave per year. The number of weeks is agreed between the employer and individual employees.
- Weeks to be taken as LWOP are agreed at the beginning of the arrangement and may be changed by agreement.
- Part-year employment is especially suitable in areas where workloads fluctuate during the year.
- This option enables businesses to retain employees who otherwise may resign because of family responsibilities, which make 52 week employment difficult or impossible.
- Part-year employment may allow employers to provide short term work opportunities for other employees who are on parental leave, career breaks or are seconded from another area.

Elizabeth’s elderly father, who needs constant care lives with her sister, Jane, in Timaru. Each July, their dad comes to Wellington for a change of scenery, and to give Jane a break. Elizabeth has negotiated to work 11 months of the year, so that she is free to care for her father during July.
2.7 Flexible working locations

Over the next few years, we are likely to see a steady increase in the incidence of working away from the office. Most jobs have portable components to them, which enables people to work from home at times. Increasingly, with laptop computers and telecommunication links, staff are able to manage their jobs effectively in their home, hotel or other suitable environment. Working from home enables people to both care for sick dependants and complete some of their work requirements. It is a means of reducing absenteeism and sick leave.

**Tips and traps**

- When staff need to work from home, ensure that they have the means necessary to do their job effectively. They may need to come in to the office to pick up work and a laptop computer, or these could be couriered to them (if, for example, they cannot leave a sick child).
- If people are working off-site for an extended period, ensure that they are coming in to the office for meetings and as needed.
- It is a safeguard for all to be clear about the amount of work that is expected, and to check-in at intervals on progress. The practice of flexible working locations will be threatened if it is not utilised responsibly.

Fred’s partner has had a hysterectomy, with post-operative complications. After she comes home from hospital, Pat needs to stay in bed for a week. Fred arranges with his manager to stay at home and care for her until a family member is available in three days’ time. In the meantime, he works from home, checking data and completing a report. Extra work is couriered to him as he needs it. This arrangement is a lifesaver. For Fred, who has no sick leave available at a time when Pat is not earning; for Fred’s manager, who is relieved that the work is still getting done; and for Pat, who has welcome breaks from Fred’s fussing!

2.8 Children at work

There may be times when children come to work with their parents. The situation may arise that the worker may be working from home or on leave because their child has been unwell, yet may need to come in to work for a short period.

**Tips and Traps**

Having children at work usually works best for parents, children and colleagues if:

- it is not a frequent occurrence
- if the children are not at work for too long
- if they are quietly and happily occupied
- if the parent has checked whether colleagues are agreeable to children coming in to work.

Susie has been working from home for the last day while little Willie recovers from a spill off his bike. Susie’s manager phones and asks if she can come in to an urgent meeting that afternoon. Susie checks how long the meeting will be and lets her manager know that Willie will be coming with her.
3 Leave

3.1 Parental leave

Parental leave is the name given to a period of extended unpaid leave, which can be taken by either parent after the adoption or birth of a baby. From 1 July 2002 paid parental leave which is taxpayer funded, of up to 12 weeks is available to eligible employees. The person’s job is normally filled on a temporary basis. Parental leave, which is applied for in writing at least one month before leaving, may begin 6 weeks prior to the birth or adoption.

Tips and traps

- The eligibility criteria for parental leave depends on the contract the person is on and the length of time they have worked for DIA.
- The chances of retaining skilled staff are increased when contact is maintained with the person while they are on parental leave by:
  - sending them staff newsletters.
  - inviting them to work celebrations.
  - offering them temporary work.
  - telling them about vacancies in case they wish to apply.
- Staff returning from parental leave should let the employer know at least one month prior.
- Check to see if reduced hours on a temporary basis are desired.
- Ensure that the job of the person on parental leave is ready for them on their return.

When Erin was 6 months pregnant she told her manager, Betty, that she would be taking parental leave from 3 weeks prior to the due date of the baby’s birth, and that she expected, all going well, to be off work for 12 months. Erin confirmed these plans in writing. James was recruited on a 12 months contract to do Erin’s job.

After little Rosie’s birth, Betty and the staff continued contact with Erin, keeping her in touch with office news, and checking if she was interested in learning opportunities, one-off pieces of work or vacant positions that were being advertised.

Erin returned to work 12 months later, feeling in touch with what had been happening, and valued as a worker. For the next 6 months she worked reduced hours (temporary part-time). James, the temporary worker, was able to continue, and a new contract was drawn up for him – a fixed term, part-time contract for 6 months.

3.2 Dependant care leave

Currently, leave for the purpose of caring for dependants is deducted from a person’s sick leave entitlement.
Tips and traps

- There is a danger that people will reserve their sick leave for when they need to care for sick dependants, rather than take sick leave when they themselves are unwell.

- There are times when people can be out of both sick leave and annual leave. It is best if they discuss this situation with their manager, so that when they are required to take leave to care for sick family members, a workable option is available, e.g. an agreement to work extra hours at a later date; anticipated annual leave; special leave; leave without pay. If a staff member feels that their manager is tuned in to their circumstances, they are less likely to take unexplained absences.

Tom’s old auntie lives with his family. When his auntie goes into hospital in the nearby city, Tom needs to take a couple of days off work, to provide transport and liaise with doctors. However, Tom used up his sick leave a few months ago when he had pneumonia. His boss, Marilyn, is aware of the situation and has suggested to Tom that he either takes leave without pay now, or makes up the time on the odd Saturday during the busy period. Marilyn is cautious about Tom taking annual leave now, as she knows that he will need that later for a well-earned rest.

3.3 Bereavement/tāngihanga leave

When a person close to an employee dies, they may be granted bereavement leave on full pay. The amount of leave granted will depend on the circumstances. The Leave section of this database provides guidelines for managers.

Tips and traps

- Practices around dealing with grief and dying can vary considerably. Some people may prefer to return to work soon after the funeral. For others, there may be cultural beliefs and practices that need to be honoured. Sometimes, these obligations may involve long-distance travel to the tāngi (which may last for several days); considerable expense; and extended hospitality to family who may come from afar.

- A manager may feel that he/she cannot treat people differently, and may have difficulty approving extended leave when it is needed. Managers need to keep in mind that patterns of grieving differ from person to person and from culture to culture, and that a person is more likely to be ready to return to work if he or she feels that they are being supported by their manager and colleagues.

- Awareness-raising about different cultural practices relating to death and funerals is needed for managers and staff.

When Matiu’s father passed away in Auckland, many relatives travelled from the Cook Islands for his funeral. As Matiu is the eldest son, he is expected to be the host for all the visitors during their stay in New Zealand, as well as overseeing the organisation of the funeral. Because of the circumstances – his position in the family and the cultural practices that need to be observed – Matiu needs to be away from work for some time and incurs considerable personal expense during this time. His manager, Malcolm, is aware of the cultural circumstances, as are Matiu’s colleagues. They keep in touch with Matiu periodically while he is away. Malcolm makes sure that the expectations around when Matiu will return to work, and whether or not he is paid for the full period he is away, are clear to them both. When he is able, Matiu comes back to his work family, appreciating the support he has received.

3.4 Special purpose leave (with or without pay)

In rare circumstances, leave with or without pay is approved by a manager.

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6 Refer to the provisions of the Holidays Act 2003 for the minimum entitlements for bereavement leave.
Tips and traps

- Special leave becomes an option when other forms of leave are not appropriate or other leave entitlements are exhausted.

- A manager may look at the possibility of special purpose leave once they are aware of the situation a staff member is in which may cause them to be absent from work for a period of time.

- A person, because of their position in the community, may need/wish to attend a cultural event/hui because of their position in the community as well as being a representative of DIA. Special leave may be appropriate in these circumstances.

- Alternatively, a person can take the initiative and explore the possibility of full-time or part-time special leave (with or without pay) with their manager.

When Rob’s partner became frail with cancer, the family wanted to care for her at home. Rob talked to his manager, Stuart, about taking an unspecified period of leave, pointing out that he had already used up his annual and sick leave. Stuart arranged for Rob to have special leave on pay until income support payments came through, and then again for two weeks over the time of the funeral, when costs for the family were particularly high.

Hemi’s hapu/home town community host a 5 day lecture session in Waipawa each August. Hemi and his manager have negotiated special leave with pay for 3.5 of the 5 days, because Hemi’s attendance will benefit both Hemi and the department. For the remaining 1.5 days Hemi has negotiated special leave without pay. In this way, his annual leave entitlements are not exhausted. Hemi is happy, and his manager and colleagues will be informed of what happens in the lecture sessions.

Department of Conservation – Balancing Work and Personal Responsibilities

1 Introduction

Purpose

This policy is designed to assist employees to balance work and responsibilities for children, dependants, other relatives or people to whom they have an obligation, or people with disabilities or illness. The situation may be an unexpected crisis or an ongoing commitment.

The Department recognises the benefits to both the Department and employees if the workplace is supportive of staff balancing conflicting demands of work and personal responsibility. It is also recognised that this is an important issue for many employees as well.

The outcome should benefit employees, minimise disruptions to work outputs, and help the Department retain skilled staff. The aim is to achieve desired conservation outputs while balancing the personal responsibilities employees may have.
Managers should view sympathetically proposals from employees for some flexibility to accommodate these demands, and the application of the policy is to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

**Impact on employees**

Most employees experience the impact of personal responsibilities on their work at some time in their working lives. Employees may have relatives or others for whom they have ongoing responsibilities or for whom they become responsible for a period.

Personal responsibilities affect both men and women. Men are increasingly playing an active role as parents, and are entitled to share parental leave with their partners. Anyone can have elderly or ill relatives.

Different values may also affect different employees’ personal obligations.

**Impact on the department**

If employees are distracted by worry about personal responsibilities, this may impair their work performance. It is in the interests of the Department to help employees manage any impact of their personal obligations on their work so that cost and disruption to work outputs are minimised. The Department cannot afford to lose skilled, experienced employees because they cannot balance their personal commitments with working.

**Constraints**

The following factors impact on both the Department and its employees in attempting to balance work and personal responsibilities:

- Many DOC workplaces are located in communities with limited facilities and few services.
- Policy decisions by other agencies, which are beyond DOC’s control, impact on DOC employees – especially in small communities, e.g. closure of rural schools and Correspondence School Units; introduction of the 4 term year; Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) criteria for childcare subsidies; government policy on market rentals for housing.
- Staffing numbers and small work units can make flexible working arrangements difficult.
- Financial and other constraints have influenced decisions not to subsidise or establish childcare centres, holiday or after school care programmes, or subsidise routine childcare costs.
- Working for periods requiring absence from home is a component of some jobs.
- Employees may find it difficult to take leave during school holidays when workloads are highest.
- It can be difficult for an employee to take full parental leave in remote locations, especially where the employee may be living in the only available accommodation.
- Working in remote locations can create stress for partners who may not be able to find suitable work, adequate social contact, shopping or leisure amenities and activities.
Elderly parents and dependants living a considerable distance away from the person’s work location can compound the worry of arranging suitable care for them.

There are, however, a number of policies that are within the Department’s control and resources, which can assist employees to balance work and personal responsibilities.

2 Principles

External obligations are likely to affect all employees at different times in their working lives. They may be short-term crises or long-term commitments.

An effective policy on balancing work and personal responsibilities can benefit both employees and the Department by enabling employees to manage personal obligations, while maintaining work outputs and retaining valuable skills and experience.

The Department cannot interfere or take responsibility for its employees’ personal obligations. It can, however, take steps to help employees meet their family commitments and also continue to do a good job. This is in everybody’s interests.

Helping employees balance work and personal responsibilities requires good management practice taking into account:

- The needs of employees with personal commitments.
- Operating requirements.
- The impact on other employees – in that workplace and elsewhere.
- Costs and benefits to the Department.

Although it is recognised that the policy will not be able to cover every individual situation, it must be applied fairly across the Department.

Without compromising achievement of its conservation results, or the service the Department provides, the Department’s approach is to try wherever possible to allow employees to meet personal responsibilities.

Managers will respond objectively to proposals from staff for some flexibility to accommodate their personal obligations, subject to means being available to ensure that the work of the Department is done on time and to the required standard.

There will, however, be occasions when application of the criteria set out in this policy, and the need to be consistent and fair to all employees, lead to a manager declining an employee’s request in terms of the discretionary provisions in this policy.

3 Specific policies

Workloads

Many employees work unpaid extra time either at work or by taking work home. The Department does not expect this. Employees who find that they cannot fulfil their work commitments within the specified working hours should discuss this with their manager.

Solutions may include:

- Ensuring that business plan commitments are realistic given levels of staffing and skill available.
Better organisation of work time by the employee and their manager.

Review of business plan commitments if circumstances change during the year.

Setting realistic performance standards during PPR interviews, and keeping workloads under review throughout the year.

Where overtime is unavoidable and agreed to in advance, employees should either be paid for the time or take time off in lieu. Commitments of employees above the overtime bar are to be monitored to ensure that they are not being expected to work unreasonable hours.

**Work organisation**

Where work organisation is creating pressures for an employee beyond the workplace (e.g. a parent is required to be away from home for lengthy periods), affected employees and their managers are encouraged to consider options for organisation of work to achieve outputs while interfering less with employees’ family lives.

Options which could be considered include:

- Rotating such work among as many employees as possible.
- Offering suitable projects as training and development opportunities nationally.
- Reviewing the length of time staff are required to be away from home without a break.
- Offering such work to employees with relevant skills who are willing and able to spend time away from home.

**Work demands outside working hours**

When employees are required to attend to departmental business outside their normal working hours, this should be monitored to ensure that it does not impose an unreasonable burden on the employee and his or her family. Time off in lieu or flexible working hours agreed in advance, enable employees to compensate for this intrusion of their work into their personal or family time. Responsibility for this type of work should also be shared as widely as possible amongst employees so that it does not fall unfairly on a few.

There are unavoidable occasions (such as residential training courses) when employees must be away from home. Overtime is not payable for attendance at courses, seminars, conferences etc., or for travelling outside the ordinary hours of work.

Organisers of meetings and courses will endeavour as far as possible to schedule the programme to minimise time away from home.

**Flexible working hours**

The use of flexible working hours as outlined in the relevant section of the employee’s applicable Collective Agreement, Individual Agreement or Individual Employment Contract/Agreement should be explored. In some work situations – especially in the field – operational requirements may limit flexibility.

The following guidelines are provided to help managers decide if it is appropriate to agree to the use of flexible working hours whilst balancing operational requirements.
Flexible working arrangements may cover:

- Arrangements to work a different pattern of hours from the normal pattern in the work unit.
- Occasional/ad hoc flexible arrangements to meet one-off situations (e.g. to enable an employee to take a child to a specialist appointment, or attend a school event).
- A temporary arrangement to cover a difficult period (e.g. school holidays).
- Managers should view requests for flexible arrangements objectively, taking into account whether the job can be done:
  - To defined standards.
  - Within the required timeframe.
  - Without unreasonable impacts on other employees.

In considering proposals from employees, managers will take into account:

- The employee’s reasons for seeking the arrangement.
- The impact on other employees.
- The impact on output/productivity.

Some positions preclude flexible working hours for an individual employee. Where the work requires the incumbent to be available during regular core hours, this should be indicated in the Job Description.

**Part time work**

Employment may be available on a permanent part time or job share basis as long as the work is capable of being performed on that basis, and the manager agrees.

The following criteria are provided to help managers determine whether a job must be carried out by one full time person:

- Part time or job sharing is not appropriate if the same person must be available throughout the standard working day or week because continuity is essential to provide an acceptable level of service.
- Part time or job sharing may be possible where work can be broken down into discrete tasks or projects which can be allocated to more than one person, or where continuity is not required to provide an acceptable level of service.

**Part time/job share**

When considering a vacancy, managers should decide whether the position could be filled by some combination of part time work or job sharing.

Details of any part-time and/or job share conditions attached to a position should be discussed with the Human Resources Advisor and clearly spelled out in the advertisement – and in the Job Description – so that the would-be applicant is fully conversant with the terms on offer before lodging an application.
Part time work requested by employee

Reducing to part time hours may be agreed to for a limited specified period of up to 12 months. Such arrangements are subject to agreement by the manager and are to be formalised in writing by the manager so that all parties are fully aware of the terms of the new arrangement and their obligations.

Payment for work by employees’ partners in remote locations

In some Area Offices/Field Centres in remote locations, employees’ partners carry out support duties, which are important to the efficient and effective operation of the Department in that location. Where this is predicted in advance, arrangements to recognise the particular circumstances are agreed at the time of appointment.

If it becomes apparent after taking up a position that unforeseen essential work is being done by a partner of a DOC employee because of staffing levels in remote locations, the employee should discuss the situation with their manager with a view to reaching an appropriate arrangement either to reduce the workload or compensate the partner.

Employment of near relatives

The Department has a policy and process to be followed when considering near relatives of current employees for employment or putting in place any restrictions to manage either reporting relationships or risks of collusion where near relatives are employed.

Working from home

The Department has a policy and process to be followed when considering applications from employees to work from home.

Tour of duty postings

Some permanent Conservancy positions are approved by GMT for filling on a tour of duty posting basis for a specified period, up to 5 years, to meet both the operational needs of the Department and the interests of the employee. Decisions to designate a position for tour of duty posting are based on the remote location or the nature of the work.

Such postings will assist employees to plan moves within the Department taking into account future requirements of their families.

In defining such positions the Department will take into account such factors as:

■ Degree of isolation.
■ Access to community services including schooling.

Personal travel by employees in remote locations

Time

The Department recognises that employees in remote locations will from time to time need to travel on family business or to access some services during office or retail hours.
Managers may approve occasional time for such travel during working hours, or allow employees to make up time on a case-by-case basis, taking into account:

■ The reason for the travel.
■ Work requirements.
■ Availability of services within the immediate location.

Use of departmental vehicles for private or combined personal/work purposes
Approval for private use of departmental vehicles by employees and/or family in isolated localities, who do not possess their own vehicles, will be restricted to exceptional circumstances.

Employees who are authorised to use departmental vehicles for private use are to pay for all private running costs, except in case of an emergency.

All of those travelling in departmental vehicles must comply with departmental policies and safety requirements.

Use of departmental boats
Where there is adequate public transport to and from islands, this should be used if at all possible. There should be written agreements between the Conservator and employees living on islands who consider they need to use departmental boats for travel for private business, or to transport family members, covering the circumstances in which this is acceptable. All of those travelling on departmental boats must comply with departmental policies and safety requirements.

Transfers on health, safety or welfare grounds
The Department’s Recruitment, Selection and Appointment policy provides for approval to be given for a vacancy not to be advertised where the internal transfer of a particular employee is for reasons of health, safety or welfare.

4 Resolution of differences
Where a manager and employee cannot agree on the application of discretionary provisions in this policy, the early advice of the Human Resources Advisor should be sought.
Guide to Developing a Work-Life Balance Work Plan

This section supports the development of the work-life balance work plan as described in Chapter Five, section 5.3.3 of the Work-Life Balance resource. The two main steps in developing a plan are defining the parameters and planning for the work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define the work-life balance work plan</th>
<th>Plan for the work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Following this part, the project scope should be agreed.</td>
<td>Following this part, the project plan will be completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Describe the background</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify tasks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What is the problem?</td>
<td>■ What needs to be done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Why is the project being done?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Consider the business case</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Draft a project goal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assign responsibility to tasks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What is the broad outcome to be achieved?</td>
<td>■ Who should be accountable for what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What value will be gained?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop objectives</strong></td>
<td><strong>Schedule activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What are the key results?</td>
<td>■ What is the timetable for the work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What are the results desired by the end of the project?</td>
<td>■ What order do tasks need to be completed in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■</td>
<td>■ How long will each task take?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identify resource requirements</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify milestones</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Consider people, equipment, money, space required</td>
<td>■ What are the important points in this work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Define boundaries</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify deliverables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What is the scope of the project?</td>
<td>■ What are the outputs of this project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What does the project include?</td>
<td>■ What will be produced?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What is not covered by the project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7 Some of the information in this section has been adapted from Trade Union Congress. Changing Times – a TUC Guide to Work-Life Balance, London, TUC, 2001
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define the work-life balance work plan</th>
<th>Plan for the work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identify links</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify risks and strategy for risk management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What other internal projects are occurring and what is their relevance to this project?</td>
<td>■ What could go wrong with each of the activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Who are the key people involved in other projects and who will be useful contact points?</td>
<td>■ How can the team lessen the risk of failure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identify stakeholders</strong></td>
<td><strong>Look at parameters</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Who has an interest in the project?</td>
<td>■ When are the important deadlines?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Who will need to kept informed or be consulted?</td>
<td>■ What are the budget constraints?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ What about limitations on other resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identify assumptions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify assumptions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What are the assumptions that are being made in the planning? Be explicit.</td>
<td>■ What are the assumptions that are being made in the planning? Be explicit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan for reporting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plan for reporting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ When will reporting occur?</td>
<td>■ When will reporting occur?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Who will the reporting be to?</td>
<td>■ Who will the reporting be to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ What format will the reporting take?</td>
<td>■ What format will the reporting take?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communication Plan Template and Example

This section supports the development of a communication plan as described in Chapter Five, section 5.3.4 of the Work-Life Balance resource.

An example of a communication template is given below. It can be useful to structure the planned communication activities under the communication goals if appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Key messages</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Timeframes</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the distinct groups of audience for the message, for example Minister, CE, union representatives, staff who need work-life balance, staff who are resistant to work-life balance initiatives, senior managers, line managers, HR staff.</td>
<td>Identify the issues that key messages need to cover and provide examples of possible messages.</td>
<td>Consider internal or external focus, written, oral or visual delivery, informal or formal etc. Use a range of options.</td>
<td>Be specific as to when communication milestones will be met.</td>
<td>Identify who will be responsible for each communication task. Who will develop the material? Who will deliver the message?</td>
<td>Describe how the outcomes of each message will be assessed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An example of what might be included in a work-life balance communication plan follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Key messages</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential employees</td>
<td>Describe how the organisation supports work-life balance and how employees are supported to achieve work-life balance. Provide examples of initiatives. For example:</td>
<td>Recruitment material, Organisation’s external website, Statement of Intent</td>
<td>30 March 2006</td>
<td>HR Manager (recruitment material), Public Relations Manager (external website), Business Planning Manager (Statement of Intent)</td>
<td>When periodically surveying job applicants on how they find the recruitment process, include question about their impression of the organisation’s approach to work-life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients of organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>there are effective policies and practices in place that mean employees are supported to balance their work and personal lives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the organisation is supportive of its employees specifically in helping them achieve work-life balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>many people within the organisation have flexible hours and work part-time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Communication Goal:** Empower individuals – show individuals what they can do to further work-life balance for themselves and for others around them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Key messages</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| All staff  | Show people how work-life balance can work. Describe what is possible and how to go about achieving work-life balance. Acknowledge and dispel myths about work-life balance and address fears and apprehension. For example:  
- everyone can achieve better work-life balance  
- achieving work-life balance does not mean that you can’t progress. It means you are managing your work well  
- work-life balance is not just about family needs. It is about everyone achieving a balance with their work and personal lives  
- you can access information about work-life balance initiatives and examples by looking at the Human Resources section of the Intranet. | Leading story on Intranet  
Work-life balance Intranet page  
Message in one of the chief executive’s general speeches to staff  
Pamphlets for coffee tables, notice boards, etc. | 30 May 2006 | HR staff        | Conduct a random phone survey of staff. Contact 15 staff before and 15 staff after the communication material is distributed to see if there is a difference in awareness of what they can do to further work-life balance for themselves or for others around them. |
Roles and Responsibilities of the Parties at each Step of Work-Life Balance Interventions – expanded description

Possible roles and responsibilities for each of the parties in relation to the five levels of intervention set out in Chapter Five of the Work-Life Balance resource are listed here. They are guidelines only, and should be read with the following caveats in mind.

The union role in relation to work-life balance (whether at strategic, paid organiser or delegate level) will depend on the working relationship that has already been established between the union and senior management, the existence of a partnership agreement in the case of the PSA, and established protocols. It is likely to vary considerably from one government organisation to another.

During the implementation phase (intervention level 3), the roles of the HR manager and leaders will vary according to the organisational decisions taken about who is responsible for ensuring that the work-life balance programme is established and that it progresses as planned. The roles and responsibilities identified at level 3 are therefore more general or more qualified than at other levels.

In this section, there is no extended list of roles or responsibilities for individuals seeking work-life balance for themselves, as the focus here is on those who have organisational responsibility for work-life balance. That is, the concern here is with the position held by any individual that requires them to take some role or responsibility for work-life balance in the organisation.

The roles and responsibilities for each party are arranged in the following order:

- employee
- union
- HR manager
- line manager
- senior manager

For a description of these roles, please refer to Chapter Three of the resource.
Employee

General focus:
■ respects colleagues’ and manager’s work-life balance needs
■ participates in development and monitoring of organisational work-life balance strategy.

What the employee can do:

1 Undertake work-life balance assessment and needs analysis
■ familiarise self with relevant organisational policy
■ be pro-active and lobby for work-life balance, e.g. talk with HR manager, EEO network, union, own manager, manager’s manager, talk with colleagues for support
■ be clear about own needs
■ volunteer possible solutions, bearing in mind the organisation’s requirements
■ be willing and open to participate in needs analysis process.

2 Develop a strategic approach to work-life balance
■ where appropriate, contribute ideas to, or provide comment on, the development of a work-life balance vision
■ assist in the identification of the work-life balance areas of focus that are priorities for the organisation
■ provide comment in proposed areas of focus for work-life balance.

3 Plan and implement a work-life balance programme
■ if a member of a work-life balance committee, contribute to the development of work-life balance initiatives
■ if a member of the work-life balance committee, contribute to the development and drafting of the work-life balance plan
■ if a member of the work-life balance committee, participate in the development of the communications strategy
■ during testing of messages, provide feedback on the impact of messages and mode of delivery
■ demonstrate commitment to using work-life balance provisions honestly, responsibly and fairly with respect to their employer and colleagues.

4 Evaluate the effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives
■ enquire as to when and how the work-life balance plan is being monitored, and when a progress report will be available
■ sit on the work-life balance committee and participate in structuring the evaluation process
participate as requested in activities that are part of the work-life balance evaluation process, e.g. talk about own experience of work-life balance in the organisation in individual interview or focus groups.

5 Review needs and strategic approach
be willing and open to participate in needs analysis process.

Union/s

General focus:
- assists members when required, to negotiate work-life balance solutions
- works in partnership with employer to represent members’ collective views, and develop a work-life balance strategy for the organisation.

What the union can do (at the strategic, paid organiser or delegate level):

1 Undertake work-life balance assessment and needs analysis
- be well versed in work-life balance issues
- be familiar with organisational policy
- understand the business drivers and values that can be used to ‘make a case’ for work-life balance
- work in partnership with the employer to identify work-life balance needs
- provide examples of work-life balance issues/solutions raised through union role/partnership forum
- clarify business drivers in partnership with management, acknowledging the business constraints and operating context of the organisation concerned.

2 Develop a strategic approach to work-life balance
- provide input into review of business case
- be able to articulate clearly why work-life balance is important to the organisation
- demonstrate personal engagement and buy-in to the reality of work-life balance
- contribute ideas for work-life balance vision
- contribute to the drafting of the work-life balance statement
- provide input into the development of the work-life balance consultation document
- provide comment on proposed areas of focus for work-life balance
- assist in the identification of the work-life balance areas of focus that are priorities for the organisation
- provide input into the development of the work-life balance policy.
3 Plan and implement a work-life balance programme

- assist in the identification of the mix of people to be involved in developing work-life balance in organisation
- contribute work-life balance ideas and solutions
- consider benefits to staff of proposed work-life balance initiatives
- contribute to the development and drafting of the work-life balance plan
- participate in the planning, designing and testing of the communication strategy to ensure a union flavour.

4 Evaluate the effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives

- ensure information gathered by the union is made available for monitoring the work-life balance plan
- consider the monitoring report and discuss implications with senior management
- sit on the work-life balance committee and participate in structuring/shaping the evaluation process
- provide information gathered by the union as evidence in the organisation’s evaluation of its work-life balance practices
- assist in ‘making meaning’/analysis of the information gathered in the evaluation process
- provide input into monitoring and evaluation cycles for the organisation.

5 Review needs and strategic approach

- work in partnership with employer to identify work-life balance needs
- provide examples of work-life balance issues/solutions raised through union role/partnership forum
- provide input into the review process and confirm or redefine the way in which the organisation understands and approaches work-life balance.

HR manager

General focus:

- develops a work-life balance strategy that meets the needs of the employees and the needs of the organisation
- ensures work-life balance is embedded in all HR policies (including provision of training and induction)
- supports individual managers to improve work-life balance in the organisation and find solutions to employees’ work-life balance needs
- provides assurance to management that the work-life balance strategy is being appropriately implemented in the organisation.
What the HR manager can do:

1 **Undertake work-life balance assessment and needs analysis**
   - familiarise self in depth with work-life balance issues e.g. websites, what other organisations are doing, literature
   - clarify the perceived drivers so far, e.g. why has the HR manager been asked to make this work a priority?
   - consider how well current policies cover legal obligations and how well they are used, e.g. talk with other HR staff, manager, and union
   - review policies to determine what currently exists in relation to work-life balance
   - identify connections with other business and HR initiatives
   - develop the profile of staff for needs analysis
   - gather information from staff and report on the findings
   - support management/union/s in understanding the internal and external environment and the identification of the key drivers for work-life balance
   - acknowledge the legitimate role and interest of the union in identifying work-life balance needs
   - provide support to senior management as required in the development of the business case.

2 **Develop a strategic approach to work-life balance**
   - ensure quality (relevance, union support, accessibility) of business case
   - where business case is inadequate, describe gaps and suggested process for remedy
   - support senior management/union in process of personal engagement and commitment to work-life balance
   - support the development of the work-life balance vision as required
   - coordinate the identification of the areas of work-life balance focus that are priorities for the organisation by:
     - collating and analysing the information
     - developing a consultation document
     - seeking feedback
     - redrafting and making recommendations to senior management
   - bring on board and manage specialist input, e.g. staff involved in business planning and the identification of future capability needs
   - draft work-life balance policy.

3 **Plan and implement a work-life balance programme**
   - identify mix of people to be involved in developing work-life balance in the organisation, and develop proposal for senior management
contribute HR perspective and ideas from HR research and body of knowledge

manage the process of identifying initiatives, where delegated

coordinate and manage the work-life balance committee, where delegated

coordinate the development and drafting of the work-life balance plan, if delegated responsibility, or contribute to development drafting of the work-life balance plan

bring on board and manage specialist input, e.g. corporate planning and finance staff

coordinate the development of the communications strategy, where delegated

bring on board and manage specialist input, e.g. internal communications/media staff

undertake designated responsibilities, as specified in work-life balance plan

if delegated responsibility for overall plan, maintain watching brief.

4 Evaluate the effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives

manage staff and processes necessary to gather the necessary information to monitor the work-life balance plan

assess achievement of objectives and activities in the work-life balance plan against specified measures

report achievement of work-life balance plan to senior management

determine (with work-life balance committee if one in place) the key evaluation questions

identify sources of information required, noting that which is available and additional information that needs to be gathered specific to the evaluation (e.g. individual interviews, focus groups interviews)

manage the evaluation process (whether conducted in-house or by contractors)

coordinate key people (work-life balance committee if available) to assist with ‘making meaning’/analysis of the key findings

provide report on findings and recommendations to senior management

develop (with work-life balance committee if one in place) ongoing monitoring and evaluation plan

identify key evaluation issues in work-life balance for the organisation

ensure HR systems can deliver the work-life balance information required of them over time.

5 Review needs and strategic approach

consider how well current policies are used, e.g. consult with staff, manager, union, and refer to results of monitoring

update the profile of staff

manage the needs re-assessment process and implement any agreed changes

trigger and coordinate the review process.
Line manager

General focus:
- explicitly communicates support for work-life balance initiatives
- walks the talk – leads by example
- implements organisational work-life balance strategy (including managing risk-averse work environments)
- works with individual employees to fairly and creatively manage work-life balance and find appropriate solutions (challenge existing practices, identify scope for flexibility and tailoring of options, identify opportunities as well as limitations).

What the line manager can do:

1 **Undertake work-life balance assessment and needs analysis**
   - demonstrate personal engagement with work-life balance principles and practice
   - generally familiarise self with work-life balance issues
   - familiarise self with work-life balance responsibilities, e.g. legal obligations
   - clarify own motivation as a manager for supporting work-life balance policy in organisation
   - encourage staff to participate in needs analysis process. Follow up to make sure it happens
   - lead by example by participating in needs analysis
   - provide input into the development of the business case.

2 **Develop a strategic approach to work-life balance**
   - generate ideas for work-life balance vision statement and provide comment on draft
   - provide comment on proposed areas of focus for work-life balance
   - provide input to work-life balance policy as requested.

3 **Plan and implement a work-life balance programme**
   - approve time for staff to be involved in developing work-life balance in the organisation
   - if a work-life balance committee member, participate in generating work-life balance initiatives
   - provide feedback on the workability of proposed initiatives
   - contribute to development drafting of the work-life balance plan, or coordinate the development and drafting of the work-life balance plan if delegated responsibility
   - if a member of the work-life balance committee, participate in the development of the communications strategy.
during testing of messages, provide feedback on the impact of messages and mode of delivery

model work-life balance in personal life.

4 Evaluate the effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives

provide information as requested as part of organisational monitoring of work-life balance

sit on the work-life balance committee as management representative

contribute to the work-life balance evaluation process – providing examples of work-life balance in action (or not) in own work area and across the management level.

5 Review needs and strategic approach

ensure staff participate in needs analysis process

lead by example by participating in needs analysis

provide input as requested.

Senior manager

General focus:

sets the environment that will make work-life balance work

walks the talk/leads by example by modelling work-life balance in his/her personal life

sets work-life balance performance expectations for managers, so they find solutions to work-life balance issues of employees

leads the development of the work-life balance strategy

ensures that the wider context makes work-life balance possible.

What the senior manager can do:

1 Undertake work-life balance assessment and needs analysis

generally familiarise self with work-life balance issues

familiarise self with work-life balance responsibilities, e.g. legal obligations

determine and articulate the drivers and motivating factors for exploring work-life balance in the organisation

create supportive environment to encourage staff participation in needs analysis, e.g. statements of support from the top via organisational newsletter, intranet

lead by example, by participating in needs analysis

provide input into the exploration of the business drivers for work-life balance

clarify the key drivers for the organisation, in partnership with the union/s.
2 Develop a strategic approach to work-life balance

- decide need for business case review
- provide input into review and take decisions about required changes to the business case
- be able to articulate clearly and persuasively why work-life balance is important to the organisation
- demonstrate personal engagement and buy-in to the reality of work-life balance
- lead the development of the work-life balance vision statement
- provide input into the development of the work-life balance consultation document
- make decisions on key areas of focus for work-life balance in organisations
- approve work-life balance policy.

3 Plan and implement a work-life balance programme

- assist in the identification of the mix of people to be involved in developing work-life balance in the organisation
- lead the work-life balance committee, where appropriate, or provide guidance to the work-life balance committee
- lead the development of the work-life balance plan
- delegate responsibility for coordinating the planning and drafting
- provide direction in the development of the communication strategy
- determine key communication messages for work-life balance
- sign off on work-life balance communication plan
- maintain oversight of the operationalisation of the work-life balance policy and the achievement of the work-life balance plan
- model work-life balance in personal life.

4 Evaluate the effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives

- actively seek feedback on monitoring of the work-life balance plan
- report results of monitoring to staff and the union/s
- undertake to address any issues that are of concern
- specify senior management issues that should be addressed as part of the work-life balance evaluation process
- participate in the work-life balance committee
- report findings of the evaluation to staff
- undertake to address any issues that are of concern in the evaluation process
- advise the HR manager or work-life balance committee of any specific issues that should be addressed as part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
5 Review needs and strategic approach

- create supportive environment to encourage staff participation in needs analysis, e.g. statements of support from the top via organisational newsletter, intranet
- lead by example by participating in needs analysis
- confirm or redefine the way in which the organisation understands and approaches work-life balance.

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