

Less than 3 months to the Implementation of Flexible Work Arrangement (“FWA”)

In today’s dynamic work environment, flexibility has become a crucial aspect of maintaining work-life balance and enhancing productivity. To address this, the Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests (the “**Guidelines**”) have been developed (involving the Ministry of Manpower, National Trades Union Congress, and the Singapore National Employers Federation) to provide a structured approach to managing such requests.

As we approach the implementation date of 1 December 2024, here are some key points from the Guidelines that we would like to share with you:

1. Definition and Scope

The Guidelines define FWAs as work arrangements where employers and employees agree to a variation from the standard work arrangement. They may fall into one or more of the following categories:

- a. **Flexi-Place:** working flexibly from locations other than the usual office location;
- b. **Flexi-Time:** working flexibly at different timings with no change to the total number of work hours and workload; and
- c. **Flexi-Load:** working flexibly with different workloads and with commensurate remuneration.

2. Eligibility and Application

Not all employees might be eligible for all types of FWAs. The Guidelines outline a fair process for employees to request flexible work arrangements, which typically involves:

- a. **Formal FWA Request:** Employees should submit a written request detailing the type of FWA they seek and the reasons behind it.
- b. **Eligibility Criteria:** The request should be assessed based on factors such as job role, impact on the team and clients, and operational needs.
- c. **Reasonableness:** Employers are encouraged to consider requests in an open and constructive manner to meet the needs of both the organisation and the employee in question.

3. Employer Responsibilities

Employers have a role in facilitating FWAs by:

- a. **Providing Clear Guidelines:** Outlining the types of FWAs available and the application process.
- b. **Open Communication:** Conveying expectations for the use of FWAs (such as expected work deliverables, evaluation of work performance and conditions for the continued use of FWAs).

4. Employee Responsibilities

Employees are expected to:

- a. **Provide Justification:** Clearly articulate why the FWA is necessary and convey it in a responsible manner.
- b. **Be Flexible:** Show willingness to negotiate and adapt the proposed FWA if necessary.
- c. **Maintain Performance:** Ensure that their work performance meets the company's standards despite the FWA.

5. Review and Adjustments

The Guidelines stress the importance of regular reviews to ensure that FWAs remain effective and relevant.

6. Promoting Work-Life Balance

At its core, the purpose of FWAs is to support employees in achieving a better work-life balance, which in turn can lead to higher job satisfaction and productivity. The Guidelines advocate for:

- a. **Employee Well-being:** Recognising that flexible arrangements can help reduce stress and improve overall well-being.
- b. **Productivity Gains:** Understanding that well-rested and satisfied employees are often more productive and engaged.

Conclusion

The Guidelines offer a balanced approach to managing flexibility in the workplace. By providing clear processes for requesting, evaluating, and implementing FWAs, the Guidelines aim to create a fair and supportive work environment. Employers, employees, and unions are encouraged to work together to ensure that flexible arrangements contribute to a productive and harmonious workplace.

As the deadline of 1 December 2024 is just less than 3 months away, employers should expedite the implementation process as an avenue to signal to your current and prospective employees that you are progressive, understanding, and responsible.

Should you have any queries as to how this update may affect you or your organisation or require further information, please do not hesitate to email us.



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This article is intended to discuss the implementation of flexible work arrangement ("FWA"), and it is not intended to be comprehensive, nor should it be construed as legal advice. This article is updated as of 9 September 2024.

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