

Post-Pandemic Plan Template

All schools and units will complete this template and submit to HRBP@northwestern.edu by June 18. Schools and units should also utilize the provided School/Unit Rosters to outline required roles described in questions #2 below and submit with this template.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated fundamental changes in the way we teach, learn, and collaborate with each other. While the impetus of these changes was prioritizing the health and well-being of our community, the extended period of remote work unlocked new opportunities and provided a unique opportunity to rethink the traditional workplace environment.

Research shows that allowing, supporting, and encouraging Alternative Work Strategies enhances our ability to recruit, retain, and support a diverse, competitive, high-quality workforce. Based on the lessons we continue to learn from the COVID-19 experience, Northwestern is poised to evolve its work expectations.

The shifts will not occur at once: they will be iterative and they will amplify the profound sense of community that flourishes when we come together as educators, learners, and collaborators to advance the University's mission and strategic priorities. While we will deploy new and creative ways of working, in most cases our default modality will remain in-person for most employees most of the time.

As part of this shift, Northwestern is asking school/unit leaders to develop a post-pandemic plan that best serves their unique needs by filling out this Post-Pandemic Plan Template. Plans should align with the University's new Policy on Alternative Work Strategies and the guidelines outlined here. All plans are subject to central review. This planning process builds on and replaces the Return to Campus planning.

Post-Pandemic Workforce Guidelines

These guidelines, in tandem with the Alternative Work Strategies Policy, establish institutional expectations for post-pandemic work and introduce a range of workplace strategies that schools and units can utilize in the next stage of planning. They provide a framework for understanding where University-wide parameters will apply, and where there is flexibility at the school and unit operational level. These guidelines are subject to change at the discretion of University leadership, and as a result of public health requirements.

- School and units will outline their overall post-pandemic plan in this template in line with the Alternative Work Strategies Policy. Additionally, they must list certain Alternative Work Strategies for non-exempt (hourly) staff on the provided spreadsheet per the instructions below. Post-pandemic plans will go into effect between July 6 and September 7.
- Alternative Work Strategies should support University mission and stated [priorities](#), in particular priorities to:
 - Recruit, develop, and retain top talent and the next generation of leaders
 - Foster leadership talent, enhance staff engagement, and become an employer of choice
 - Foster diversity, equity, and inclusion

They should generally be based on the needs of the role, rather than accommodating the personal needs of the individuals currently in the roles.

- **The expectation is that the default work arrangement for the majority of employees is primarily in-person, and the remote aspect of most positions should account for some personal flexibility, while also retaining a material in-person presence.**
 - Exceptions to the overall recommendation can be made for certain, infrequent situations.
 - Any staff roles proposed to be 100% remote must receive written approval. Criteria for 100% remote roles can be found [here](#).
 - Roles in which an employee (faculty and staff) works outside of Illinois must receive written approval as outlined in the Alternative Work Strategies Policy.
- In developing their strategy, schools/units should consider Alternative Workforce Strategies that might be offered to staff not eligible for remote work or in addition to remote work arrangements, e.g., flextime or compressed work week.
- School and unit leaders will be equitable in making decisions regarding remote work, workspace assignment and re-assignments and all outlined plans must follow institutional policies, including Northwestern's policies against discrimination and retaliation.
- Alternative Work Strategies outlined by schools/units must have clearly outlined expectations for in-person presence. Schools/units should seek to maximize the value of in-person presence by ensuring that experiences and interactions deliver the value we place on in-person experiences, including relationship building, creativity, innovation, team building, collaboration, etc.
- Schools/units should think creatively about utilizing physical workspaces, technology, and other tools to best support the new and emerging ways that employees may use to perform their work and interact with colleagues, students, and visitors. Any incremental funding is the responsibility of the school/unit.
- Health and safety of our community continues to be a priority. Plans should ensure adherence with institutional, local, and state public health guidance.

School/Unit Post-Pandemic Plan

The following questions provide you with the opportunity to outline your school or unit's post-pandemic plan. This template offers a structure for school/unit plans to ensure Northwestern is coordinated in its overall approach. Plans will be reviewed centrally to ensure equitable decision-making across the University.

1. What are your school/unit's guiding principles or priorities in developing a post-pandemic plan?

2. Keeping in mind the University Guidelines above, please outline how you plan to evolve your school or unit's work strategy as we transition to post-pandemic reality.

Please note: Roles that deploy the following Alternative Work Strategies must be outlined on the School/Unit Roster and receive explicit approval. School/Unit rosters will be distributed by your HR Business Partner. The School/Unit Roster should be submitted along with this template to: HRBP@northwestern.edu.

- Roles proposed to be 100% remote work
- Roles working predominately outside of the State of Illinois
- Non-exempt (hourly) roles that utilize:
 - Compressed workweek
 - Seasonal hours for full-time employees who do not work a standard 37.5 or 40 hour workweek
- What Alternative Work Strategies do you plan to utilize? What is the anticipated breakdown of the staff that will fall into the categories of Alternative Work Strategies that you deploy? Please refer to the policy for definitions and examples of Alternative Work Strategies.

- b. What proportion of your staff do you anticipate returning to a fully in-person work environment?

c. What mechanisms and tools will you use to maximize the value of in-person presence?

d. How will you ensure equity when making decisions about whether roles are eligible for Alternative Work Strategies?

e. How will you manage departmental meetings, critical collaboration, and team building efforts with a staff that is both in-person and remote?

3. Northwestern acknowledges that there will be a transition period of exploration and adjustment in the “post-pandemic” world. How will you assess your plan’s effectiveness using six and 12-month milestones? Institutional metrics for success and measurements (e.g. surveys) may be developed to support institutional assessment efforts.

4. What additional resources are you investing to enable your school/unit's plan? What savings or efficiencies do you expect to realize as a result of deploying your plan?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin purple border, intended for the user to provide their response to the question above.

Appendix: Fully Remote Roles

Criteria for classifying a role as 100% remote

As with all Alternative Work Strategies, classifying a role 100% remote should be based on the needs of the role, rather than accommodating the personal needs of the individuals currently in the roles. Existing arrangements should be reevaluated using these criteria.

Fully (100%) remote roles must meet one of more of the following criteria:

- Market-driven justification. For example:
 - Equivalent roles at peer institutions are being marketed as 100% remote making it difficult for Northwestern to recruit, or
 - There exist specific recruitment needs
- Role requires a unique skill set/experience that is not available locally
- Broader recruitment will support Northwestern's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals