

Department Needs Assessment and Team Agreement for Department Head or Designee

Overview: Rutgers continues to be a university where teaching, the student experience, and research activities thrive through vibrant, in-person, on campus engagements among students, faculty, and staff. Work arrangements for employees must be guided by our ability to achieve the university's mission, and our commitment to effectively serve the needs of our students and patients.

Why this matters: Flexibility differs with each role, service population, work site, and work location. A Department Needs Assessment can bridge these differences, helping teams communicate and collaborate by discussing and agreeing to certain principles and guidelines that reflect the diversity of workstyles on the team. All workplace options for individuals should align with departmental business needs, in addition to alignment with Rutgers' flexible work arrangement (FWA) policy and guidelines.

Your role: As a Department Head, you have the opportunity to lead your team in establishing a team agreement that clearly outline how the team will work together and support diverse workstyles for applicable on-site and/or remote workforces.

Determining suitability for flexible work arrangements: To inform the conversation, Department Heads must first review position job descriptions to determine if flexible work arrangements are appropriate for their team dynamic. Many resources to aid in this evaluation are available in the FWA Guidelines.

Establishing team agreements: To create these agreements, you will need to facilitate an ongoing conversation with your team that considers business needs, individual needs, the needs of the team broadly, and how the needs of the population(s) you serve are best met. You'll need to ensure your team agreement encourages engagement and supports equity within your department.

We recommend that you complete the following steps:

Set the context with your team

Collaborate with your team by establishing the context of the agreement. For example:

- Who will be working from where (in a regular week)?
- What do you want to do in real-time and what can be done asynchronously?
- How and when you want to collaborate and communicate (i.e., recurring team meetings)?
- What equipment is necessary and available to complete tasks?
- How can you hold each other accountable?



Team Agreement:

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Consider your team's core priorities and existing dynamics

Take the time to consider the working patterns across the team. For example:

- What are the objectives of your team's work or current projects and annual goals?
- What is the nature of their work (e.g., collaborative or individual)?
- How long has the team been working together?
- Have they already been working in a hybrid environment?
- Which options would allow the team to deliver high performance and maximize flexibility?
- Are there occasions when it is important for the team to be together in the same location (new projects, projects with high interdependence, brainstorming or creative work, etc.)?

Team Agreement:

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Create alignment

Consider the ways of working that will enable team members to be at their best and how they will work together. For example:

- **Availability:** are there specific hours of the day that the team needs to be available, either in person or virtually (e.g., establish core hours and communication protocols, agree to response times for emails and questions, ensure coverage to address service population needs, etc.)?
- **Attendance:** which key events do team members need to attend, either in person or virtually (e.g., weekly team meetings, etc.)?
- **In-person expectations:** be clear on the occasions where the team is expected to be together in person to achieve business results (e.g., weekly meetings, project kick-off, etc.)
- **Performance expectations:** consider IT security protocols, security of records, confidentiality, accessibility during work hours, participation in meetings, deadlines, ensuring customers/colleagues needs are met, reporting hours or OT if applicable, etc.)
- **Team habits:** what are the daily practices that the team wants to adopt to ensure effective work in a hybrid environment (e.g., 50-minute meetings to ensure natural breaks are built into the day, sharing and respecting communication preferences (emails, calls, chat, etc.)?)

Team Agreement:

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Follow up regularly

Align with the team on how, when, and how often you will check in on how the team agreement is working. Agree on a process for requesting any changes to ensure the agreement remains flexible and responsive and that the team stays aligned.

Team Agreement:

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Capture and share team agreement and modified hours of operation if applicable

Document what was discussed and decided upon in the space provided for each section above. Alignment and ownership of team agreements is important, so invite feedback or further suggestions in case something was not captured during the discussion itself. Once feedback is incorporated, share widely with your team members and stakeholders.

Be sure to share the team agreement with other Department Heads to ensure there is alignment across your division.

If necessary, be sure to update websites and/or other platforms to ensure service population(s) are aware of your hours of operation.

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Enhance your skills for leading a flexible workplace

Leading in a flexible work environment is a skill that benefits from ongoing investment in professional development. Visit the Rutgers University Human Resources website for learning opportunities for department heads, supervisors, and employees.

FlexWork@RU Resources

- View the [FlexWork@RU Guidelines](#).
- View [Rutgers University Policy 60.3.22: Flexible Work Arrangements](#).
- Visit the [Future of Work website](#) to view the supervisor and employee training toolkits.
- Visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for answers to the most commonly asked questions.

Department Name: _____

Department Head/Designee: _____ Date Completed: _____

Additional Meeting Notes: