

# NATIONAL WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY STUDY REPORT FOR MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Prepared by:

**KYRA CAVANAUGH**

President, Life Meets Work Inc.

**JENNIFER SABATINI FRAONE**

Associate Director, Boston College  
Center for Work & Family

**KATHY KACHER**

President, Career/Life Alliance Services, Inc.

**Consultant's Report**

# SECTION I

## INTRODUCTION

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is a State Agency in St. Paul, MN. The organization is seeking to expand access to workplace flexibility (e.g. flextime, flex plan, other flex) for its employees. The goal is for performance to be measured based on results rather than face-time in the office.

Through its participation in the National Workplace Flexibility Study, MnDOT has invested in exploring and discovering the impact of workplace flexibility on the organization by conducting a pilot program in two of its larger offices. Participation in surveys, focus groups, manager training, and other support activities allowed MnDOT to evaluate how flexibility is working in their environment and to determine what improvements can be made.

Overall, both managers and employees are favorable about workplace flexibility at MnDOT. Results of the National Workplace Flexibility Study indicate that after the pilot MnDOT managers and employees in the affected offices seem to better understand workplace flexibility. They would benefit from additional communications on: a) flex policies and procedures to assess availability, and b) how to make it most effective in their own individual departments. There is also some expressed concern regarding the level of support for flexibility across the organization. These concerns include a desire for greater support from senior leadership and greater consistency in the availability of flexible work options across different business units.

# SECTION II

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Boston College Center for Work & Family, Career/Life Alliance Services, Inc. and Life Meets Work Inc. (Research Team) have combined work experience of over 40 years in the areas of work-life and workplace flexibility, and have been working with organizational leaders around a shared interest in creating effective workplaces where employees feel successful in their work and nonworking lives. Over the years, numerous programs, policies, and initiatives for flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have been rolled out with much fanfare and optimism. Indeed, many benefits accrued for organizations at the forefront of this movement, such as improved recruiting and retention, employee engagement and job satisfaction.

Unfortunately, policies alone cannot create a successful workplace flexibility initiative, as demonstrated through numerous studies on workplace flexibility. Academic and corporate research has documented that while workplace flexibility programs are increasingly available, they are not always widely used for a variety of reasons, including poor communication, lack of organizational support and, most importantly, little or no training for managers on leading flexible teams (World at Work, 2011). For these reasons, there is inconsistency in the extent to which workplace flexibility programs are meeting the needs of employees and businesses.

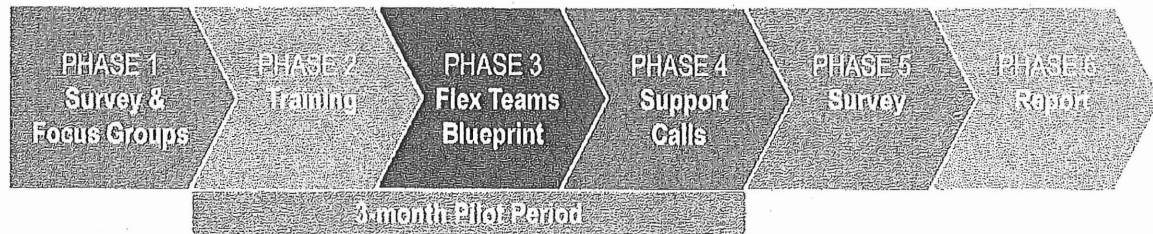
This report represents the first in-depth study on the impact of a targeted intervention designed to prepare managers for the challenge of leading a flexible (and often mobile) team. Here we present in detail the results of this intervention and the influence it had on managers, employees, and perceptions of organizational culture. We also include recommendations we believe to be essential in continuing to build a flexible work environment.

### **PURPOSE**

We believe that managers hold the key to successful, full-scale implementation of workplace flexibility, but they are often ill-prepared or unable to manage in a way that supports a flexible work culture. In this study, we identified and addressed managers' concerns and provided solutions to help them become effective leaders of flexible teams so that MnDOT can better achieve its strategic workforce goals.



## NATIONAL WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY STUDY PROCESS



This study provides a model for engaging managers in the wide-scale implementation of workplace flexibility. Tactics included change management concepts, ongoing supports for managers and teams, training elements and additional methods for overcoming dependence on face-time.

### MANAGER INTERVENTION

The research team developed a variety of interventions to prepare managers to lead flexible work teams. The first was a customized, in-depth manager training, *Working as a Flex Team*, that was based on feedback from focus groups and surveys obtained at the outset of this study. Training was delivered in-person or via web-conference and engaged managers in the following activities:

**FLEX TEAM AGREEMENT** Managers were introduced to Flex Team Agreements as a tool to encourage agreement on rules of engagement and team values around flexible teams.

**COMMUNICATION & TEAM-BUILDING TACTICS** Encouraged new ideas around communicating with team members working both inside and outside of the office. Shared best practice ideas for team-building that include team members regardless of location.

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES** Shifted the focus from face-time to results delivered by individual contributors.

**CULTURE MAP** Considered the current organizational culture elements that need to be protected and maintained as the environment becomes more flexible. Encouraged creative thinking to translate onsite activities to flex teams.

**TECHNOLOGY OPTIMIZATION** Based on tech tools available at MnDOT, managers were introduced to new ideas for managing work, communicating and best practices for staying connected.

**SUCCESS MEASUREMENT** Managers were asked to identify team metrics that could be used to measure the impact of flex on their teams.

**FLEX TEAM BLUEPRINT** Managers were asked to create a blueprint for their team to provide a model for how the team would work together going forward. The blueprint included all of the components covered in the training outlined above. They were given two weeks to meet with their team, discuss and agree on the terms of their Flex Team Agreement. Once finalized, they were encouraged to post it to a shared drive, ask team members to sign it, and use it as a guide going forward.



After training was complete, three support activities were offered to encourage managers to integrate training concepts into their daily management practices. Activities included:

**TWO WEEKS POST TRAINING: MANAGER'S BLUEPRINT FOR FLEXIBILITY CHECK-IN** The purpose of this call was to review the blueprint objectives and discuss questions or concerns managers had as they completed the exercise.

**SIX WEEKS POST TRAINING: MANAGER SUPPORT CALL.** This call was designed to help managers discuss their new perspective on flexibility. Managers engaged in a discussion on how they were using their newly acquired flexible management competencies.

**TWELVE WEEKS POST TRAINING: BEST PRACTICE SHARING.** Managers were invited to share three or four best practices they implemented since the training and the impact on day-to-day operations.

Throughout the post-training time period, managers also received weekly Reinforcement Emails that reminded them of key skills they learned during the training. These were brief, encouraging emails that included a concise tip and motivational statements.

## IMPACT OF MANAGER INTERVENTIONS

The intention of the study was to understand the impact that training and support activities would have on the managers participating in the pilot program. What we learned was that the impact went beyond improving the managers' competencies around managing a flexible and mobile team to employees inside the organization and their perception of the organization's culture. Outlined below is a summary of the changes experienced by both managers and employees during the pre- and post-intervention periods as reported through online surveys. Complete results and quotations from study participants are available in Section V of the report.

### MANAGERS FELT BETTER PREPARED TO LEAD FLEXIBLE WORK TEAMS

MANAGERS' ATTITUDES BEFORE STUDY	MANAGERS' ATTITUDES AFTER STUDY	MANAGERS' CONCERNS AFTER STUDY
48% received adequate training on available flexible work options	64% received adequate training on available flexible work options*	Flexible Work Arrangements being used inappropriately decreased 25%
52% understand MnDOT's flexible work guidelines	79% understand MnDOT's flexible work guidelines*	"I am not sure employees are working when I can't see them" decreased 32%*
67% understand how to respond to a request for flexibility	93% understand how to respond to a request for flexibility*	Concerns about how to evaluate flex requests decreased 25%
5% have measures in place to determine the impact flexibility has on team	43% have measures in place to determine the impact flexibility has on team*	Managers who were concerned that "employees who work flexibly make my job more complicated" decreased 24%

\*statistically significant findings  $p < .01$



## EMPLOYEE CONCERNS ABOUT NEGATIVE IMPACT OF FLEXIBILITY DECREASED

EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES POST-INTERVENTION
Concern about impact on customers decreased 20% *
Concern about colleagues being unavailable decreased 11% *
Concern about negative impact on productivity decreased 17% *
Concern about staying connected as a team decreased 10% *
Concern about flexible work options being used inappropriately decreased 12% *

\*statistically significant findings  $p < .01$

## SMALL CULTURAL SHIFTS IN ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FLEXIBILITY WERE EXPERIENCED

ATTITUDES ABOUT CULTURE PRE-INTERVENTION	ATTITUDES ABOUT CULTURE POST-INTERVENTION
48% believe leaders in the organization vocally support work-life balance for employees	62% believe leaders in the organization vocally support work-life balance for employees
10% believe the ideal employee is one who is available 24 hours a day	5% believe the ideal employee is one who is available 24 hours a day *
11% believe employees should expect to take work home on nights and/or weekends	1% believe employees should expect to take work home on nights and/or weekends *
17% believe that employees who work flexibly are less serious about their career	16% believe that employees who work flexibly are less serious about their career

\*statistically significant findings  $p < .05$

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The National Workplace Flexibility Study illustrated that the value of preparing managers to lead flexible teams has impact beyond their own comfort level. The culture of flex ultimately improved as a result of the process. These improvements were driven by:

- Improving the comfort level and skills to support culture change
- Encouraging discussion about challenges and concerns
- Introducing the Flex Team Blueprint that provides structure for flexible teams
- Evaluation tools to facilitate flex team management
- Adoption of communication, team-building and performance management strategies

Managers reported that by participating in training and developing their own team blueprint, they had achieved the following results:

- 67% reported their understanding of flexibility improved
- 39% reported they had a higher level of comfort discussing flexibility
- 33% experienced improvement in team communication
- 33% reported that team interaction improved
- 28% stated that the understanding of performance goals improved
- 17% noted that productivity improved
- 11% reported that team cohesiveness/connectedness improved
- 11% believed that use of technology improved
- 6% confirmed that customer service improved

When asked to share their experience related to the activities they reported:

*"The study brought some of the issues into clearer focus as well as promoting development of actual metrics."*

*"We were already using some flexible workplace techniques; but since the training we have more consistency in our communications and teambuilding."*



## RECOMMENDATIONS

This research demonstrates that taking a targeted approach to preparing managers to lead flexible teams is a great first step in changing the culture, but not the final step. It is imperative to continue to reach out to all levels of the organization including Human Resources, Managers, Senior Leadership and Employees. It is necessary to outline expectations and provide opportunities for everyone in the organization to talk openly about workplace flexibility as a business strategy.

Human Resource leaders play a key role to ensure ongoing, post-training success. It is important to review and update your flexible work and telework policies, especially as they pertain to your union agreements since they were developed many years ago and there is a good deal of confusion around what they contain. A re-launch of these policies, including a full-scale communications and training effort is highly recommended to reduce manager confusion and encourage employees to feel comfortable engaging in flexible ways of working.

It is also recommended that the results of the study be shared with study participants and senior leaders to reduce misunderstandings around flexible work and encourage managers and employees to discuss it. HR leaders can also identify orientation and other training opportunities within which the message around workplace flexibility can be embedded.

The Flex Team Blueprint has proven to be a strategic tool for teams, and teams throughout the organization should be encouraged to develop their own Blueprint to improve existing processes and practices around team efficiencies and behaviors. HR leaders can facilitate this process by positioning themselves as a resource for both managers and employees who may have questions or challenges related to working flexibly.

Managers will continue to play a primary role in the success of flexible work. To ensure that there is consistent use of flexibility as a business strategy, ongoing opportunities to share best practices should be established and/or integrated into current manager/leadership development.

Employees and managers look to Senior Leadership to set the tone and promote the culture of the organization. To continue the growth of flexible work at MnDOT, additional support from Senior Leadership is necessary and can be accomplished with some key actions. Senior leaders should be open to discussing workplace flexibility as a business strategy when interacting with groups and discussing organization goals, especially those that revolve around people and space management. They can also demonstrate the value of their own and their employees' personal lives by openly sharing stories about working flexibly and working flexibly themselves.

Employees also have a critical role to play in ensuring that flexible work is successful at MnDOT by utilizing flex work to meet business needs as well as personal needs. Employees currently working a successful flexible schedule should share their stories, including how they are staying connected to their team and the positive impact flexibility has on their productivity and overall wellbeing. They should also be encouraged to take a pro-active approach to understanding how flexibility works at MnDOT and engage in open dialogue with their managers.

Taking a broad approach to integrating workplace flexibility that encompasses all levels of the organization will 1) increase understanding of and comfort with flexibility, 2) decrease concerns and myths that have been associated with flexibility, and 3) ensure successful culture change across the organization. A more extensive and detailed list of recommendations is provided in the full report.

## CONCLUSION

Over the past two decades, forward-thinking and well-intentioned organizations have created numerous policies and programs for providing flexibility around when, where, and how people work. Organizations find themselves with pockets of flexibility where innovative managers are making it work. Full-scale implementation remains elusive. In most cases, flexible work programs fall short of meeting the goals set by the organization. The HR, Diversity and Work-Life professionals responsible for these programs are left to speculate why flex has not been fully embraced by, or adopted into, their corporate culture.

Over the last 2 years, our research with leading organizations has yielded new insights as to why policies or programs alone are insufficient for making flexible work arrangements a reality. Preparing managers to lead flexible teams (by providing them with the necessary tools and training) is imperative when it comes to overhauling the post-industrial workplaces that exist today. The good news is that the process of doing so is manageable and effective in delivering results by increasing managers' comfort and capability with the management of flexible teams, and by prompting meaningful shifts in organizational culture.

# SECTION III

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In 2008, the Boston College Center for Work & Family published an extensive report of flexibility entitled **Overcoming the Implementation Gap: How 20 Leading Companies are Making Flexibility Work**. The study was designed to move beyond simple lists of programs and policies to provide details as to how to implement and sustain Flexible Work Arrangements. One of the primary lessons from the study was that manager resistance is often the largest obstacle to overcome when implementing a workplace flexibility initiative. The study team recommended engaging managers through comprehensive training to help promote increased utilization and effectiveness of flexibility.

A study called **Alternative Workplace Strategies in the Current Economy: Results from New Ways of Working's Benchmarking Study** conducted by New Ways of Working, LLC cited executive buy-in and manager resistance as two of the top three barriers to wider implementation of workplace flexibility.

The Booz Allen study, **On Demand Government: Deploying Flexibilities to Ensure Service Continuity**, reviewed the implementation of flexible work programs by federal governmental agencies. In it, they attributed the lackluster implementation records of most agencies to manager resistance.

According to the National Work Life Measurement Project: 61.2% of managers indicated that flexible work arrangements had, "no effect on work group productivity." However, approximately one-third of managers indicated that their work group was more productive "because it included employees who used flexible work arrangements" (from BC-CWF's **Measuring the Impact of Workplace Flexibility**). While managers may be reluctant to implement flexibility, when they do they observe a neutral or positive impact. Supporting managers through the implementation process is a key element to this cultural change.

At IBM, for example, after rolling out flexible work options, manager training, and other support systems to flexible arrangements, nearly all managers (94%) reported positive impacts of flexible work options on the company's ability to retain talented professionals.

Finally, a joint study by the Sloan Foundation and AARP, **Making Work More Flexible: Opportunities and Evidence**, found managers overwhelmingly supported flexibility, but most stated that they don't know how to make it work.

Please refer to Appendix - Section 2 for research study references.



# SECTION IV

## METHODOLOGY

### **PRE-SURVEY**

The MnDOT Pre-Survey was conducted between the dates of January 16-25, 2013. An email was sent by MnDOT Human Resources to inform participants to expect the survey invitation. This was followed by the actual survey invitation sent from Boston College Center for Work & Family. One week later, a reminder to complete the survey was sent, allowing several additional days to complete the survey. The survey instrument is attached as Appendix A.

Participation was strong at 63% overall with 98 surveys completed out of the 156 sent:

- Managers: 21 respondents
- Individual Contributors (Salaried): 26 respondents
- Individual Contributors (Hourly): 51 respondents

### **FOCUS GROUPS**

One focus group was conducted in January 2013. Focus group totaled 19 participants, including managers from the two designated pilot groups. A brief synopsis of the focus group is included in the Appendix. Kathy Kacher of Career/Life Alliance Services, facilitated and recorded the onsite session with the MnDOT managers. Informed consent forms were signed by participants at the beginning of the session.

## TRAINING

Managers were invited to participate in one onsite Working as a Flex Team workshop facilitated by research team member Kyra Cavanaugh. 18 managers attended one, 3-hour workshop which was held onsite at MnDOT headquarters on February 6, and 15 managers attended one live, 90-minute webinar which took place on February 20, 2013. A total of 33 managers received training.

Training materials included a presentation deck, Working as a Flex Team Workbook, and Flex Team Blueprint Template. The following topics were covered in each workshop:

- Overview of the NWFS Study Methodology
- MnDOT Manager Concerns (taken from the pre-survey and focus groups results)
- Flex Continuum
- Considerations for Evaluating Flex Requests
- Trust-Control Continuum
- Flex Teams Agreement
- Communication and Team-Building Tactics
- Creating a Culture Map
- Performance Management Strategies
- Optimizing Technology
- Setting Team Goals
- Instructions for Completing Flex Team Blueprint

With each topic, strategies, tips and best practice advice were provided to participants who were asked to share their own experiences and ideas as well.

The workshop method included small group discussion, large group participation, individual reflection, and facilitator presentation. A companion workbook was distributed which workshop participants were encouraged to use.

## **FLEX TEAM BLUEPRINT**

Workshop participants were invited to complete a Flex Team Blueprint within 30 days of attending. Blueprint templates were distributed during the workshops and were also available electronically.

The Flex Team Blueprint is a tool that teams can use to negotiate and agree on the following aspects of working together:

- Section 1: Flex Teams Agreement
- Section 2: Communication and Team-Building Tactics
- Section 3: Extending Our Culture beyond Our Workspace
- Section 4: Performance Management Strategies
- Section 5: Optimizing Technology
- Section 6: Measuring Success

The goal of the blueprint process was to:

- Replace old structure of working together (or lack thereof) with a new one
- Improve communication, connectedness and performance
- Clarify expectations
- Take new risks
- Identify ways to measure team improvement

After receiving instruction during the workshop, managers were asked to draft the blueprint, and then share the draft with their team members to prompt discussion and negotiation. Once everyone on the team agreed with the terms of the blueprint, the manager was encouraged to finalize and distribute it to their team members. As part of the blueprint process, the team determined the frequency with which to review and update the blueprint.

15 Flex Team Blueprints were submitted to the research team. To improve efficiency, some managers shared their draft of the blueprint with peers who used it as the basis to develop their own. In other cases, senior managers drafted the blueprint and asked subordinate managers to customize it for their teams.



## **SUPPORT ACTIVITIES**

As part of the National Workplace Flexibility Study (NWFS), we understand that ongoing support is an important and often overlooked component for managers as they create flexible work environments. By "ongoing support" we mean tools and resources that are available to leaders after an initial rollout or training is complete. To capture the impact and value of ongoing support in this study, we developed four support events that managers were invited to attend after the initial training.

### **SUPPORT EVENT I:**

#### **REVIEW BLUEPRINT EXERCISE FROM THE TRAINING (2 WEEKS POST TRAINING)**

The purpose of the initial support activity was to ensure that managers complete the Flex Team Blueprint they received during the training and to answer questions, address concerns and share early best practices. This one hour virtual support activity was facilitated by research team member Kathy Kacher. The format of the event was as follows:

1. Introductions
2. Based on the needs of the group, the facilitator led a discussion to capture additional ideas or resources to help managers complete the Blueprint.
3. The group then reviewed the high-level objectives of the Blueprint and discussed questions or concerns managers had as they completed the exercise.
  - a. Flex Team Agreement Shared best practices in Agreement development and lessons learned.
  - b. Performance Management Strategies Discussed new strategies that had been developed since the training occurred and ideas for new ways to measure performance.
  - c. Culture Map Provided two or three new practices that were covered during this exercise.
  - d. Communication and Team-Building Tactics Of the 25 communications and team building ideas in the workbook, participants selected one or two they tried and discussed the impact they had on the team.
  - e. Optimizing Technology Discussed technology preferences of each team and shared new practices the teams began using based on the training.
  - f. Measuring Success Reviewed how each manager engaged their teams during this process.
  - g. Blueprint Maintenance Discussed on-boarding ideas to be implemented when new employees join a team or when there is a change in management.
4. We wrapped up the event by inviting each manager to ask additional questions and, if their Blueprint was not complete, when they intended to finish it.

## **SUPPORT EVENT II:**

### **MANAGER SUPPORT CALL (6 WEEKS POST TRAINING)**

The purpose of the second support activity was to provide a facilitated discussion on managers' progress as they worked to implement the competencies they learned during the training, and to provide feedback on lessons learned and best practices. This one hour virtual support activity was facilitated by research team member Kathy Kacher. The format of the event was as follows:

1. Introductions
2. We invited attendees to provide an update now that their Blueprints had been completed.
3. Each manager shared their update, including any surprises or questions they had along with a statement from the list that they would like to improve.
4. When each manager had provided their input, the facilitator led the group through a discussion around improving their competencies around managing flexible teams, sharing best practices and challenges that others were invited to help resolve. The session closed by going around the group and asking each manager to state one new practice they were going to implement based on the discussion.

## **SUPPORT EVENT III:**

### **BEST PRACTICE SHARING (10 WEEKS POST TRAINING)**

The purpose of the third support activity was to increase the effectiveness of the manager training program and to foster a sense of community by asking managers to share best practices. This one hour, in-person activity was facilitated by research team member Kathy Kacher. The format of the event was as follows:

1. Introductions
2. Two managers were selected to share their best practices with the group and answer questions
3. Managers were then asked how they would continue to keep the Blueprint relevant in their work groups.
4. The session closed by asking each manager to state one new practice they planned to implement based on the discussion.

#### **SUPPORT EVENT IV: REINFORCEMENT EMAILS (ONGOING FOR 12 WEEKS POST TRAINING)**

In order to extend learning beyond the workshop and support calls, the study administrator sent emails to managers on a weekly basis with reminders about key training tips, best practices, tools and tips.

Examples:

*Reinforcement email #2 - You have probably received the invitation to participate in the Flex Blueprint Check-in call and now is the time to complete the document. Remember that you should be including the team's feedback in the development of the Blueprint so today, schedule a time to bring your team together to discuss the Virtual Teams Agreement.*

*"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." Henry Ford*

*Sincerely, Human Resources*

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*Reinforcement email #5 - If you're like most people, you're busy... very busy. There's always more to do than time to do it. As a result, some things that you should be doing just don't get done. To make sure you follow through on what you've learned in the flexibility training, I urge you to turn your goals into ACTIONS. PUT YOUR ACTIONS ON YOUR CALENDAR. In fact, if those action steps aren't on your calendar, you probably won't do them. Your actions may be checking in with three of your team members and asking if they have what they need to successfully complete a project – or consider a virtual happy hour to celebrate a recent success.*

*Write them down and place them where you're sure to see them. Commit to taking these actions and cross them off as they are completed.*

*Sincerely, Human Resources*

### **POST-SURVEY**

The MnDOT Post-Survey was conducted between the dates of May 10-May 24, 2013. An email was sent by MnDOT to inform participants to expect the survey invitation. This was followed by the actual survey invitation sent from the Boston College Center for Work & Family. One week later, a reminder to complete the survey was sent, allowing several additional days to complete the survey. Additional reminders were sent specifically to managers who had participated in the training and support activities to encourage their feedback.

Participation, at 50% overall, was not as strong as the pre-survey, although the number of the managers responding remained constant: The responses were broken down in the following:

- a. Surveys Sent: 156
- b. Surveys Completed: 78
- c. Managers: 21 respondents
- d. Individual Contributors (Salaried) : 21 respondents
- e. Individual Contributors (Hourly): 36 respondents



# SECTION V

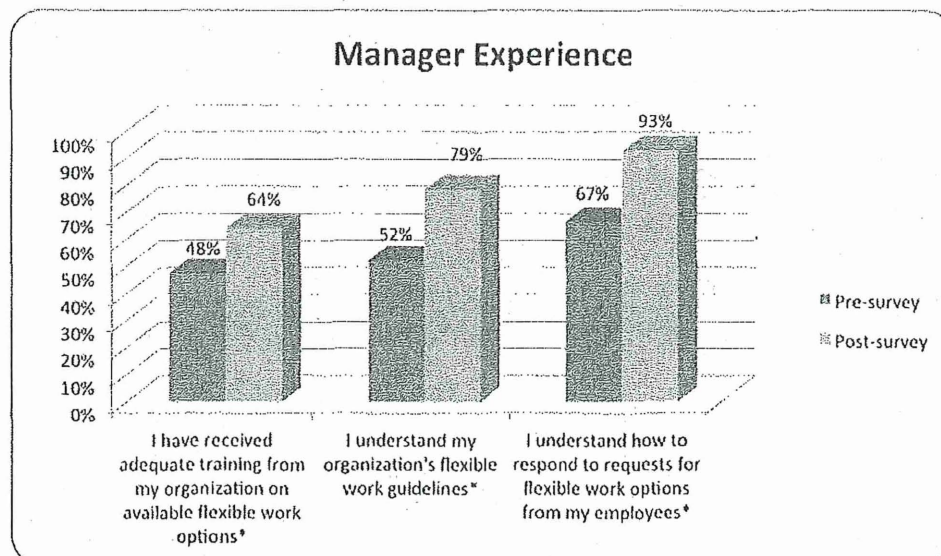
## STUDY FINDINGS

The goal of this study was to identify a process by which managers could become more comfortable employing flex as a business strategy for their teams. The hypothesis was that training, support activities and a structured approach to creating a team blueprint would help managers overcome their concerns about flex, reinforce their commitment to flex with their employees, and help change the culture of MnDOT to be more flexible.

This approach proved to be effective as evidenced in the findings:

### 1. MANAGERS ATTITUDES ABOUT FLEX AS A BUSINESS STRATEGY IMPROVED

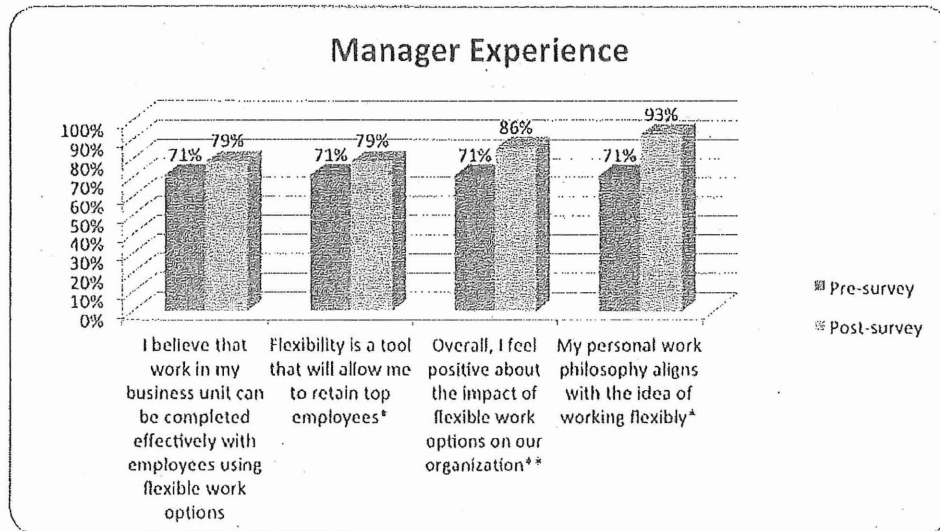
Managers have a greater understanding of how flexibility can work at MnDOT as a result of their participation in training and support activities. The changes outlined in the charts below demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in their level of understanding based on participation in the study pilot.



*\*statistically significant findings  $p < .01$*

Managers expressed a higher level of confidence that flexibility is a tool or strategy that can be successful in their

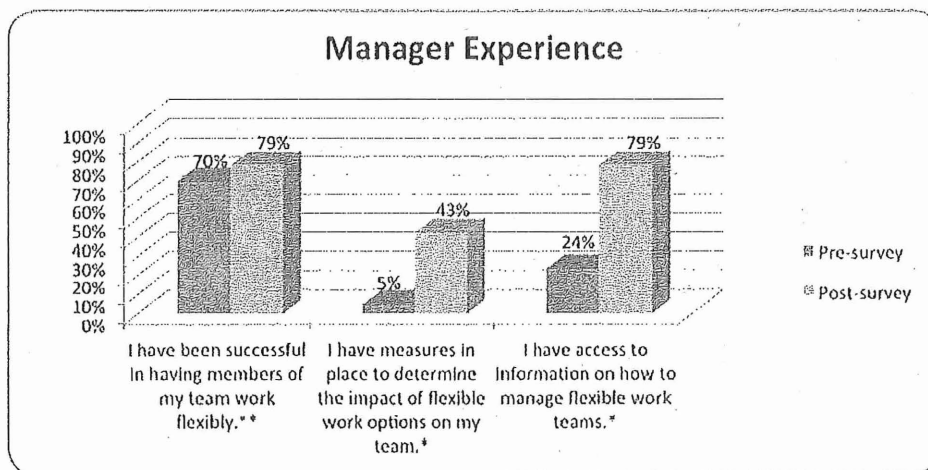
business unit, allowing them to retain talent and complete work effectively. Their overall positive feelings about flexible work improved, as did their agreement that flexible work aligns with their personal philosophy.



\*statistically significant findings  $p < .01$

\*\*statistically significant findings  $p < .05$

Managers also report having more of the information and tools they need to successfully support flexible teams. They increasingly have reported success using flexibility on their teams.



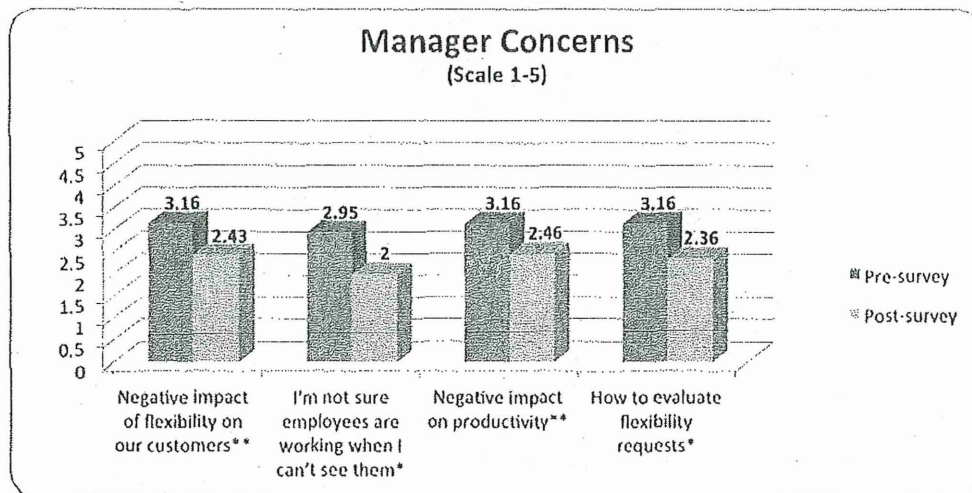
\*statistically significant findings  $p < .01$

\*\*statistically significant findings  $p < .05$

## 2. MANAGER CONCERNS OVER TEAM EFFECTIVENESS DECREASED

Through participation in the flexibility pilot, many concerns that managers had about using flexibility within their teams decreased, some quite significantly. These concerns were ranked by survey participants using a 1-5 sliding scale, with 1 representing "No concern" and 5 representing "a great deal of concern."

As reflected in the chart below, managers' concerns about the negative impact on customers decreased 23%, concerns about whether employees are working when they can't see them decreased 32%, concerns about the negative impact on productivity decreased 22%, and concerns about evaluating flexibility requests decreased 25%.



\*statistically significant findings  $p < .01$

\*\*statistically significant findings  $p < .05$

*"By letting employees work from home when they couldn't get to the office due to weather and mild illness, we found that the team saved 32 hours in productivity"*

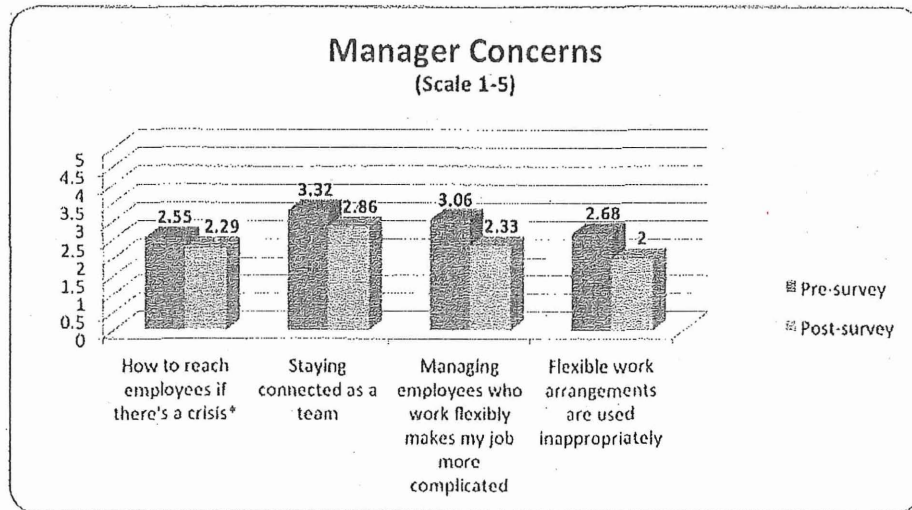
## 3. MANAGERS BECAME MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT MOST ASPECTS OF MANAGING FLEX

By positioning flex as a business strategy and replacing manager reluctance with actionable advice, manager concerns about how to manage flex decreased. These concerns were ranked by survey participants using a 1-5 sliding scale, with 1 representing "No concern" and 5 representing "a great deal of concern."

This included concern about flexible work arrangements being used inappropriately, which decreased 25%, reaching employees in a crisis (down 10%), staying connected as a team, (down 14%) and employees working flexibly making the manager's job more complicated (down 24%).

Through the course of the study pilot, and the development of the flex team blueprint, managers and their teams set parameters for communication and expectations which likely led to these decreases in concern reported by the managers.





\*statistically significant findings  $p < .01$

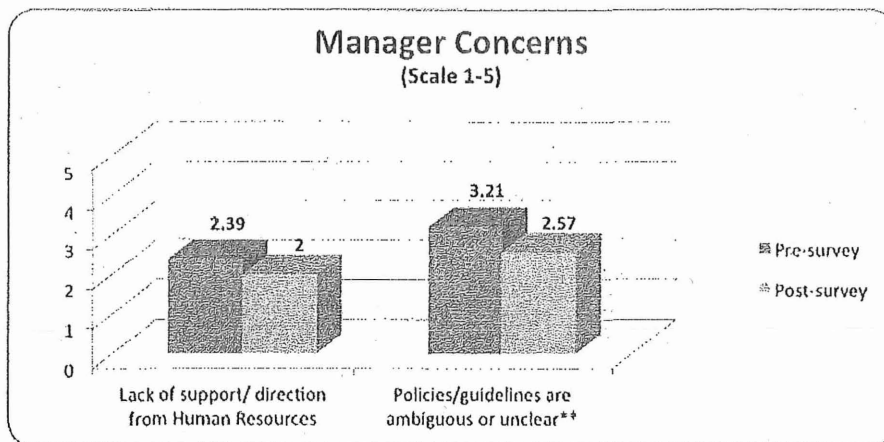
*"We put some new processes in place, including out of office notification and keeping our calendars updated."*

*"Communication between our units improved"*

Manager apprehensions about unclear policies and guidelines were reduced along with their concern about the lack of support and direction from Human Resources.

Per one survey respondent:

*"I think it's very important for employers to study flexible schedules. I am glad to see that MnDOT is taking a big step in the right direction."*

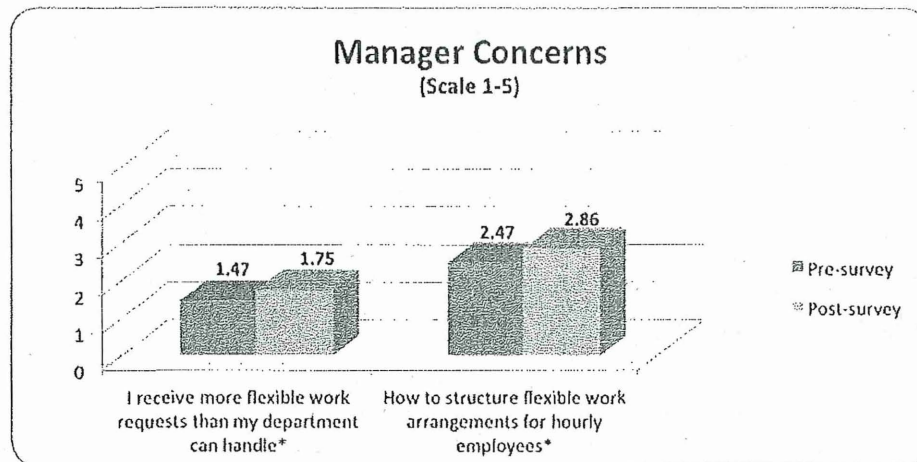


\*\*statistically significant findings  $p < .05$



Two areas of manager concern did increase, indicating the need for continued training and support for managers. The indicators that increased significantly were: a) concern about receiving more flexibility requests than the department could handle, and b) concern about how to structure flexible work for hourly employees. Perhaps over the course of the study pilot, managers began to receive a greater number of requests, contributing to this change. Across organizations and industries, structuring flexibility for hourly workers can be complicated. It appears that managers were more cognizant of that at the conclusion of the study.

*"After the training I spent a lot of time tracking down union contract information to figure out who could work a flex schedule and who couldn't."*



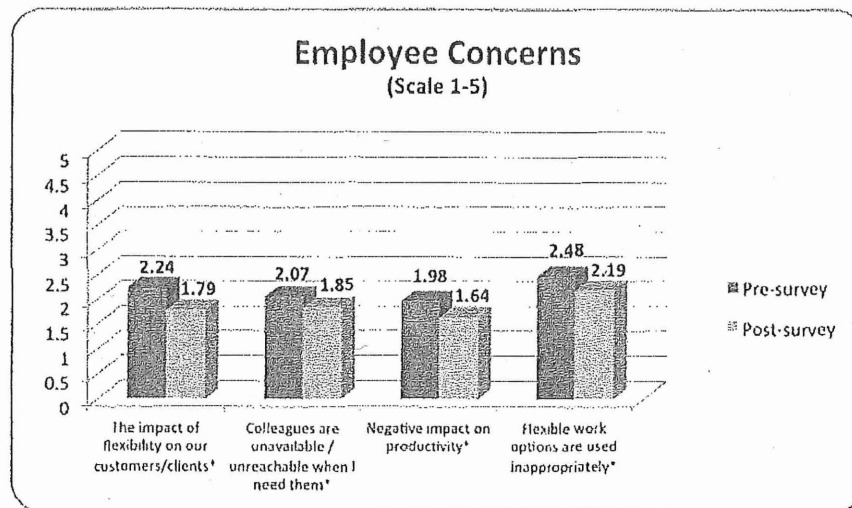
\*statistically significant findings  $p < .01$

#### 4. BY ENGAGING MANAGERS, SOME EMPLOYEE CONCERNS DECREASED

While many positive changes in manager attitudes were observed, employees were not similarly impacted. We did see some positive shifts in the level of concern reported by employees, but not to the extent that managers reported.

Per the chart below, employee concerns decreased regarding impact on customers, colleagues being unavailable, negative impact on productivity and inappropriate use of flexibility.

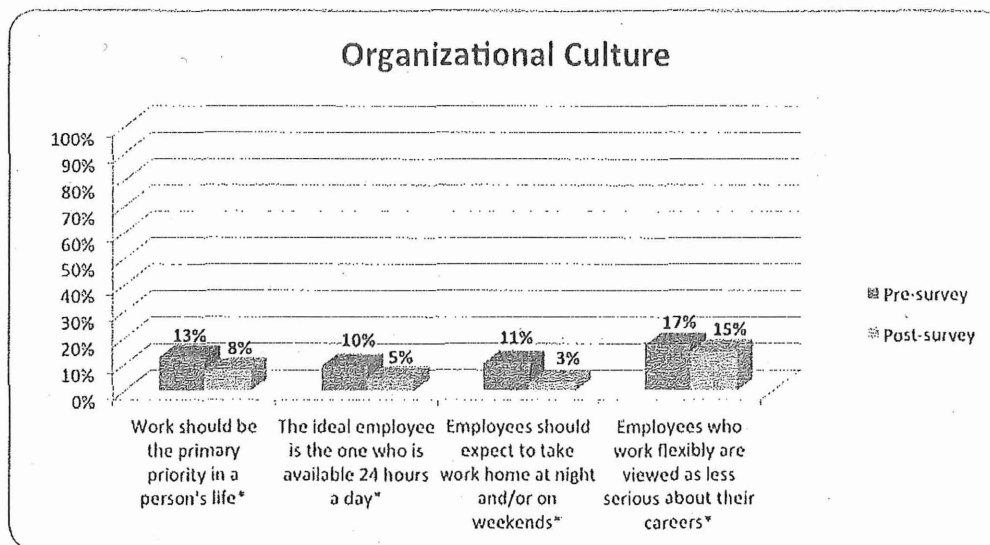
These concerns were ranked by survey participants using a 1-5 sliding scale, with 1 representing "No concern" and 5 representing "a great deal of concern."



\*statistically significant findings  $p < .01$

## 5. STEREOTYPES ABOUT THE “IDEAL WORKER” SHIFTED FOR BOTH MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES

Based on their managers' participation in the flex pilot, employees' perceptions about the culture of work at MnDOT are changing. There was a noted decrease in survey indicators of both managers and employees related to the perception that the ideal worker is one who is available 24/7 and puts work above all else, as indicated in the chart below.

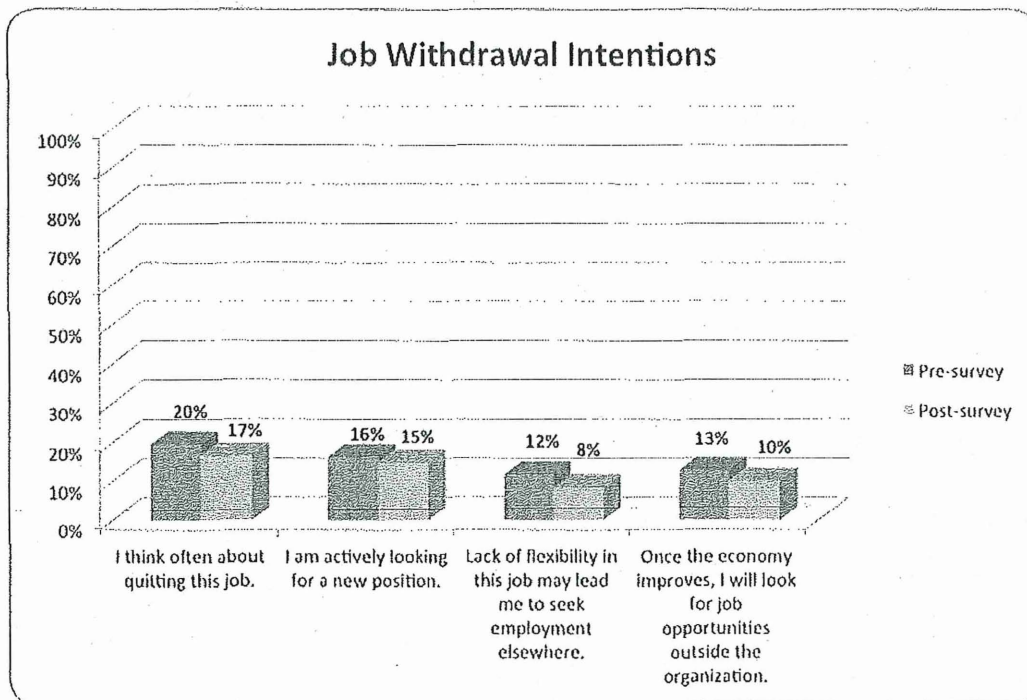


In addition to the results shown in the chart above, more MnDOT employees reported an increase in the perception that “leaders in the organization vocally support work-life balance for employees” which increased from 48% to 52%.

Opening the door and having discussions about flexibility provide employees with an opportunity to hold frank conversations about work and life can be an effective method of conveying leadership support for employees' work life challenges.

## 6. RETENTION AND JOB SATISFACTION IMPROVED

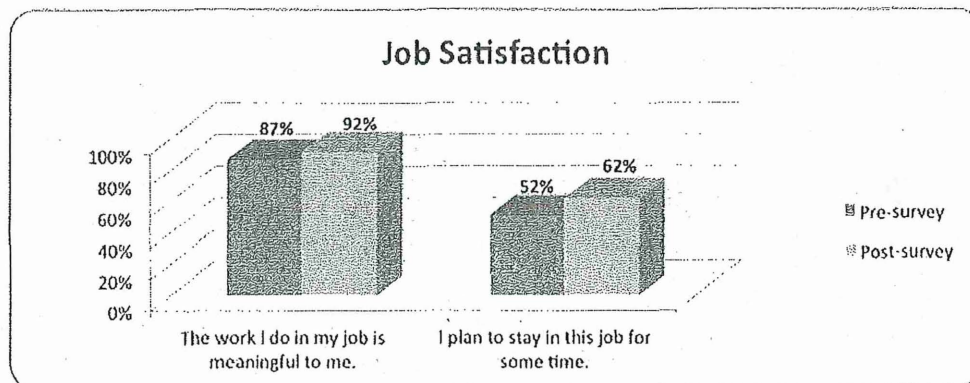
A clear trend of employees' intentions to continue their tenure at MnDOT emerged as the survey data were reviewed and analyzed. After the study pilot period, employees reported being less likely to seek employment elsewhere. The decreases in reported intention to leave the organization across four indicators were small, but consistent.



Employees were also more likely to report that their work was meaningful and that they planned to stay with the organization.

*"I think that it promotes better health for the employees and the organization by providing flexibility between work and home life."*

*"I feel that having one day a week from home will not greatly impact our group and its work flow. Personally it gives me a sense of freedom and independence and a greater appreciation for my job."*





## 7. MORE EMPLOYEES USED FLEXIBLE WORK

More MnDOT employees are working flexibly, with a particular increase in employees working under informal flex arrangements. This is most likely due to increased communication both formally and informally between coworkers, and from managers to their teams. As managers and employees have become more comfortable with flex, more have begun utilizing it.

### TELEWORK/FLEXPLACE

Before the study, 20% of respondents said they had a formal telework arrangement with their manager or HR. After the study, only 18% had a formal telework arrangement. This contrasts with an increase in the use of informal (or occasional) telework which was utilized by 22% at the beginning of the flexibility pilot and by 26% of respondents at the conclusion of the pilot.

### FLEX TIME

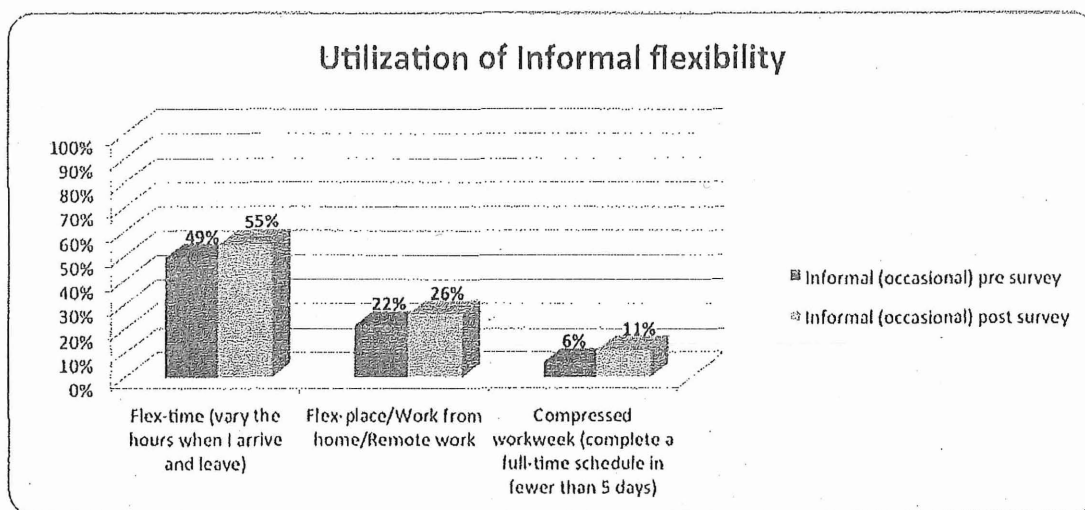
By the end of the study, 32% of respondents said they had a formal flex time arrangement compared to 30% before the study. Informal use increased from 49% to 55%

### COMPRESSED WORKWEEK

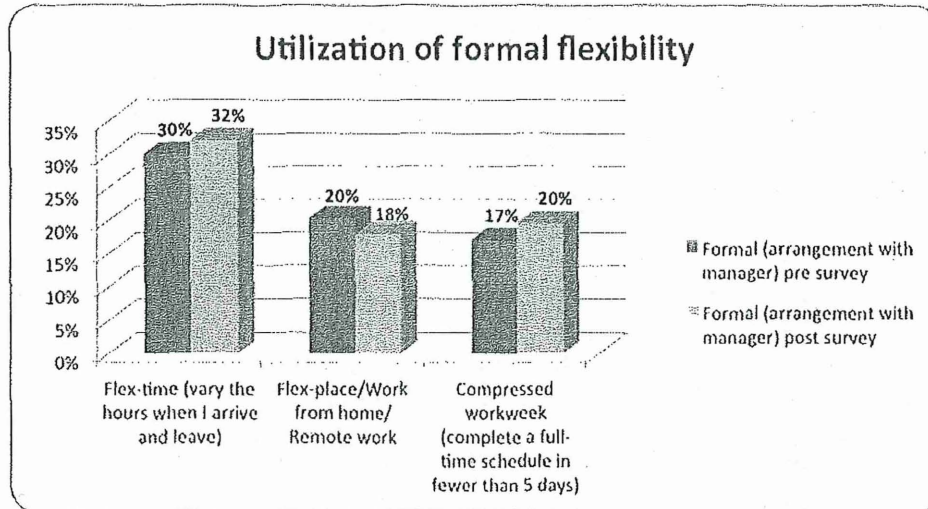
Use of compressed workweeks by formal arrangement increased from 17% to 20%, and the use of them on an occasional basis increased from 6% to 11%, nearly doubling.

Other forms of flexible work arrangements had extremely low utilization both before and after the pilot.

Use of formal flexible work arrangements increased, with the exception of formal "remote work arrangements" which decreased slightly. One hypothesis to explain this change, in conjunction with an increase in informal work from home arrangements, is that perhaps employees felt less of a need to formalize this arrangement with their supervisors after having gone through the process of discussing the Flex Team Blueprint and setting parameters for flexibility within their business unit.



In the words of one of the survey respondents, "With our work, flexibility is a must since much of the work is done in the field. We don't have a formal plan, but we are given the opportunity to do what is necessary to complete the job."

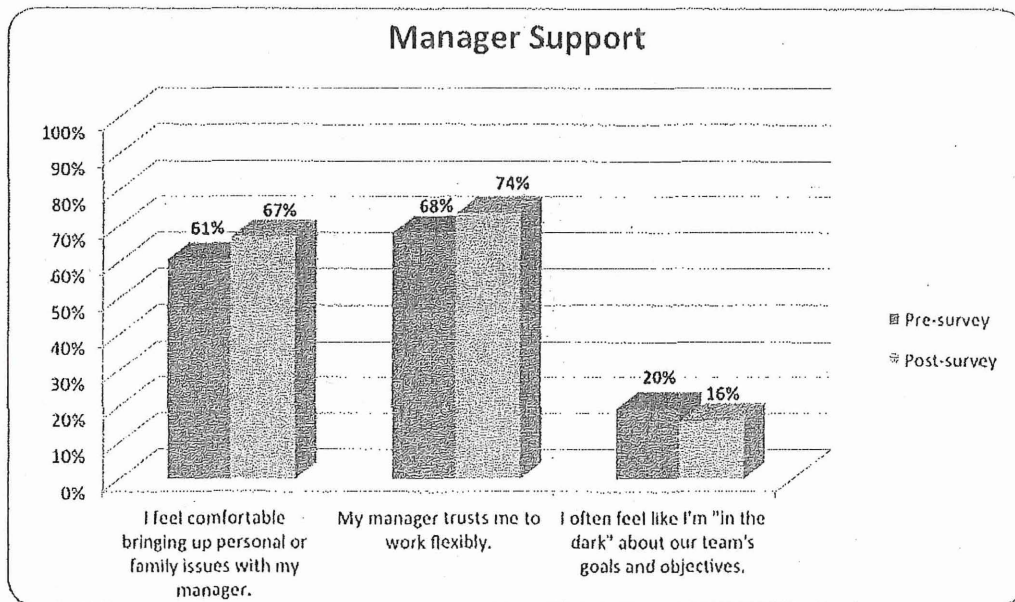


*"I like having flexibility with my start and end time and think it works well for all to have the same. It seems to be well supported. I think all positions should be accountable for letting others know if they will not be in the office or when they will be out of the office in the same way."*

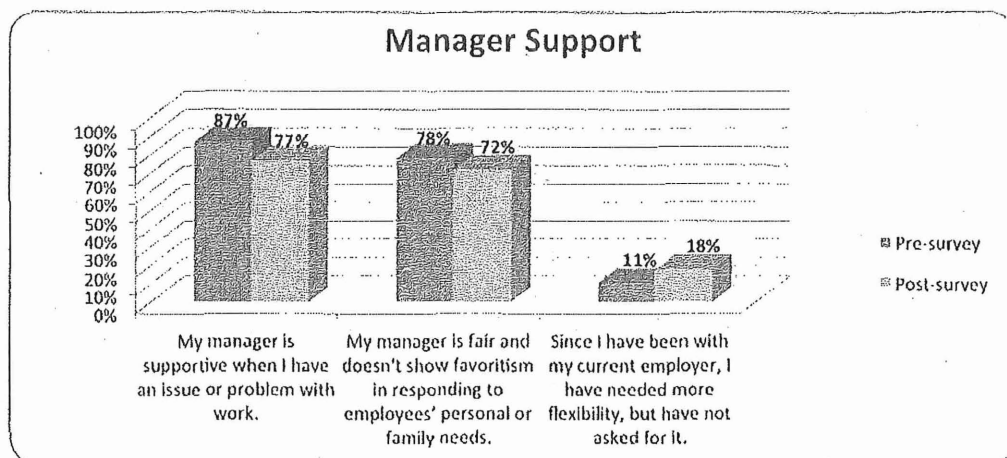
## 8. EMPLOYEES ARE NOT FULLY CONVINCED OF MANAGERS' SUPPORT FOR THEIR WORK-LIFE NEEDS

Positive changes in perception of managers' support regarding trust, communication of team goals and comfort in discussing personal issues were observed. At the same time, the data revealed "mixed messages" pertaining to manager support for employees' issues or problems at work, playing favorites, and hesitation to ask for flex.

Over the course of the study, employees' reported comfort in approaching their manager about flexibility, and the perception that their manager would trust them increased.



The data did reveal some decreases in manager support on certain indicators.



There was an increase in reporting from employees that they needed more flexibility on the job, but have not asked for it.

This hesitation was expressed by the following survey respondents:

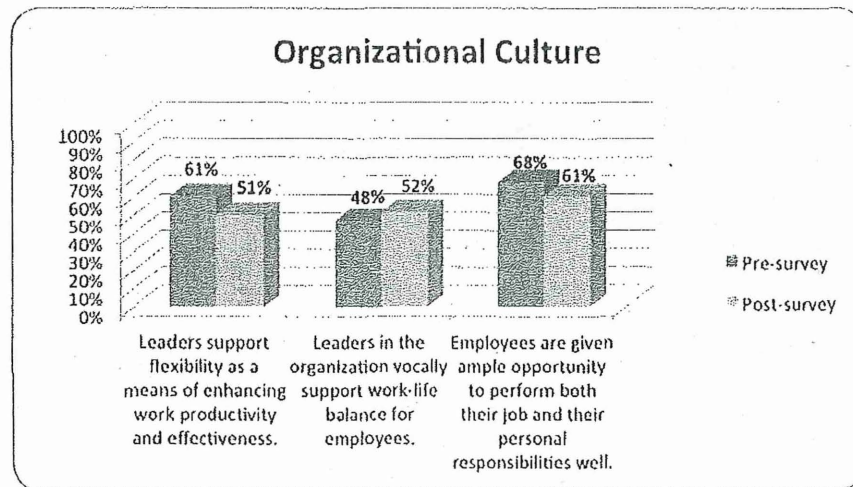
*"My telecommuting is limited to one day per week. I would like to try a 2 day per week in telecommuting; however, I am uncomfortable in asking the question. A year ago, I asked if I could make my schedule into a 4 day work week with 10 hour days, but I was then told my telecommuting day would disappear."*

*"Some managers won't allow it even when the job is well-suited for it. Their employees are not being treated the same as others who can have flexible work. It should be the same for all."*



## 9. CONCERNS PERSIST OVER LACK OF CLARITY AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FOR FLEXIBLE WORK POLICIES AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR EMPLOYEES

The data revealed some mixed messages about how managers and employees perceive the organizational leaders' response to flexible work. While there was an increase in observations of vocal leadership support, respondents (both employees and managers) were less likely to believe that leaders support flexibility as a means of enhancing productivity and effectiveness. There was also a decrease in the perception that employees are given ample opportunity to perform both their job and personal obligations.



Employees are still unsure whether flexible work will truly be supported by management. At the conclusion of the pilot, employees seemed less confident that their manager would be supportive of a flexible work arrangement. They also reported more negative experiences with flexible work and a slight increase in the perception that they don't have access to flexible work. Several employee responses to the survey characterized these concerns.

*"Make policies open and transparent to all employees. Do a better job of communicating flex options to all employees"*

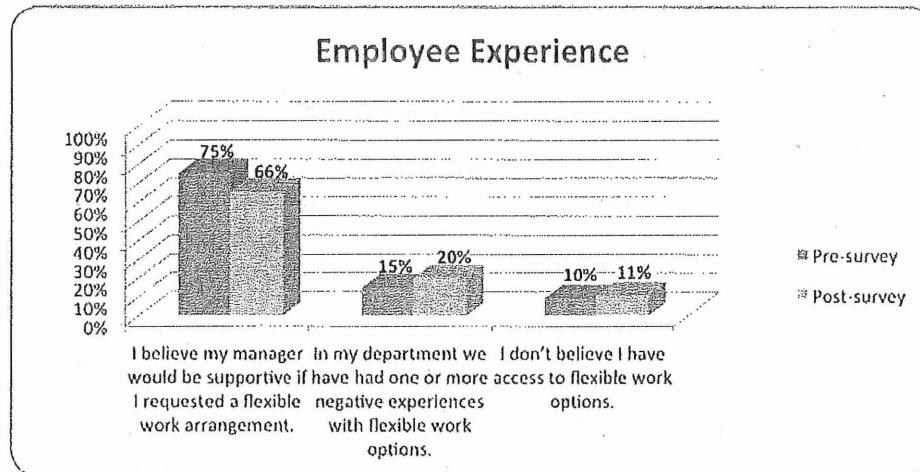
*"I have read the blueprint, but I am still unsure how much support there is for this with upper management"*

*"It seems that we did this work, had these meeting and are still unclear about what is allowed as far as acceptable workplace flexibility options AND what we need to do to start making them happen."*

*"Our leadership is well informed and adaptable. Most of our middle managers are not."*

One survey participant recommended:

*"Make policies open and transparent to all employees. Do a better job of communicating flex options to all employees" while another remarked "MnDOT HR needs to work with managers and build support for Flexibility"*



# SECTION VI

## EVALUATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY STUDY

The primary goal of the National Workplace Flexibility Study is to evaluate the effectiveness of manager training and supports on both managers and the employees that work for them. As part of the post-survey, the Research Team developed a number of questions directed at assessing the participation and impact of these activities. This section describes the responses to these questions.

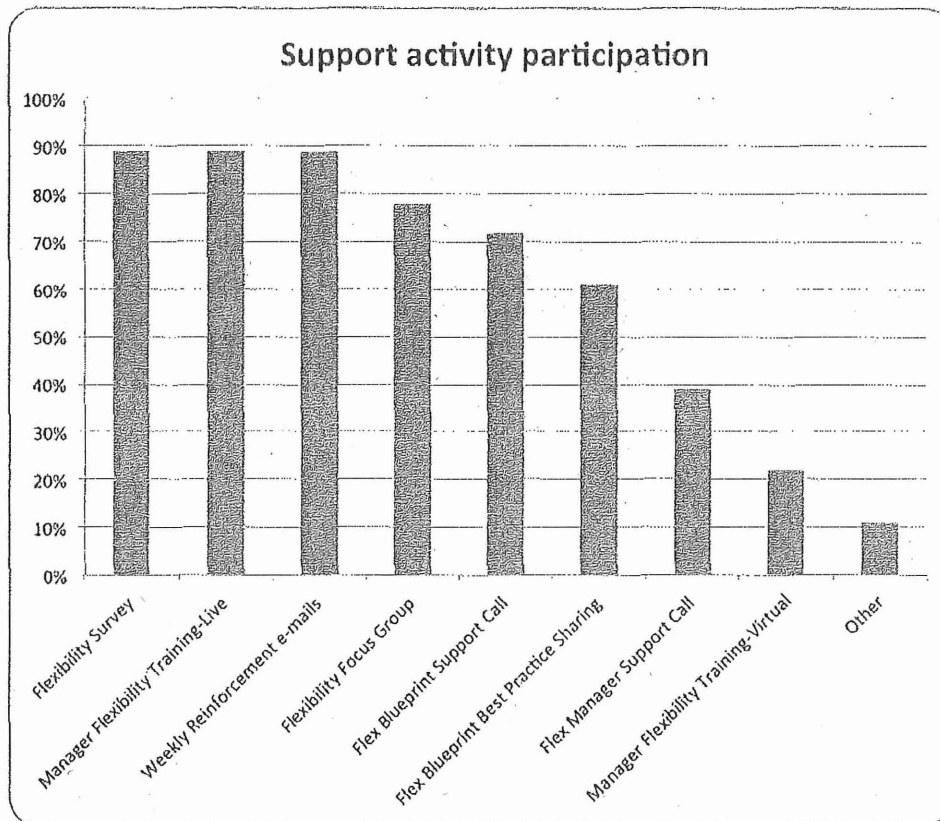
Most of the questions are targeted toward managers, as they were the participants in the pilot activities. Overall, 21 managers initiated the survey and 18 completed this section. This was the same number of managers who completed the pre-pilot survey, although due to the survey's anonymous nature, we cannot tell if the same managers took both the pre- and post-survey. Several respondents reported that they felt they needed more time to be able to assess the impact that the Blueprint process would have on their teams.

### ***IMPACT ON MANAGER***

In the post-survey, we asked managers to describe their overall management experience. Fifty-six percent reported that they were highly experienced managers and 39% reported some experience as a manager, so there were very few novice managers in the group (self-reported). Regarding their experience managing flexible teams, 29% of managers reported that they were highly experienced, and 65% indicated that they had some experience with flexible teams.

Managers were offered a number of different activities to participate in over the course of the three-month pilot. The managers who completed the post-survey indicated a high level of participation in study activities as outlined in the chart on the next page.





Managers were asked to rate the value of the overall training and support activities they participated in, rating a 1 for "Not Beneficial" to a 5 for "Highly Beneficial." The Flexibility Training was rated a 3.4 on this scale, and Support Activities were rated a 3.1.

When asked to rank the value of the topics presented in the training, managers responded as follows:

1. Building flex team agreement.
2. Communication and team-building
3. Managing performance
4. Measuring success
5. Optimizing technology
6. Culture map

Managers were asked what recommendations they could provide to improve the training. Selected constructive comments included:

*"Broader focus. I felt that everything was geared toward telecommuting."*

*"More demonstrated examples."*

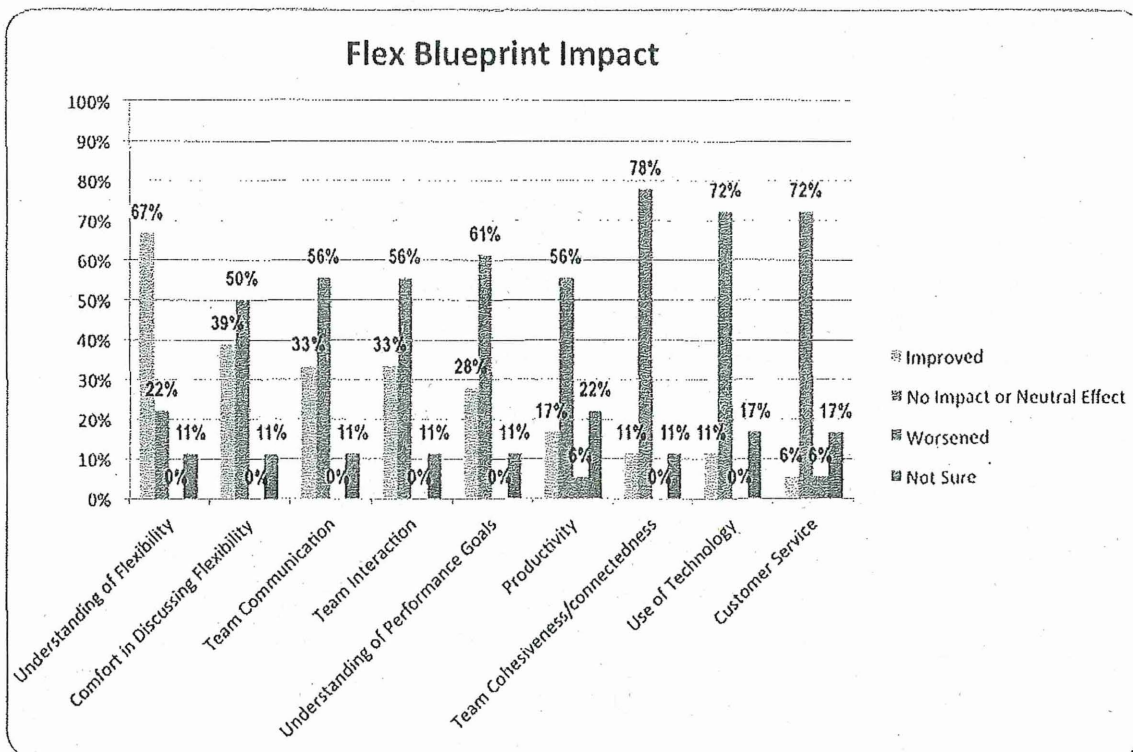
*"More examples of flex agreements, more MnDOT flex techniques that were vetted through our union environment."*

When asked "Did you complete a Flex Team Blueprint?" 94% responded "Yes", 6% responded "No." This self-reported number aligned with the actual number of blueprints received.

In post-study survey responses, managers indicated they had used these team metrics to evaluate the impact of the Flex Team Blueprint: communication, time management and use of e-calendars, measurement of time "lost" to sick leave or vacation/absenteeism, improved morale, more effective meetings, and service delivery effectiveness.

Managers who completed the blueprint and selected a metric to follow indicated some positive movement: respondents scored this as a 3.21 on a scale of 1-5. With 1 representing "worse", 3 representing "no change" and 5 representing "much improved." The 3.21 rating indicates that managers who selected a Blueprint metric felt that the impact was on average neutral to slightly improved.

For managers that did complete the Flex Team Blueprint, they generally noted a positive to neutral change in how their team responded to the Flex Team Blueprint process evaluated by each of the indicators represented in the chart below:



- 67% reported their understanding of flexibility improved
- 39% reported they had a higher level of comfort with discussing flexibility
- 33% experienced improvement in team communication
- 33% reported that team interaction improved
- 28% stated that the understanding of performance goals improved
- 17% noted that productivity improved
- 11% reported that team cohesiveness/connectedness improved
- 11% believed that use of technology improved
- 6% confirmed that customer service improved

In addition, nearly all respondents who did not report that these indicators “improved” responded “no impact or neutral.” Only 6% of respondents replied that productivity and customer service “worsened” in response to the implementation of the flex team blueprint.

When asked to rate the change experienced in their team, based on completion of the Flex Team Blueprint: scale 1 – 5 (much improved), 3.2 was the average score.

During training, managers were encouraged to involve employees in the completion of the blueprint, or at least engage them in a conversation about expectations for flex supportive behaviors and expectations. When asked in the post-survey, only 37% of employees indicated that their team had participated in the Flex Team Blueprint process, leading researchers to believe that managers didn't follow through on those team conversations as expected.

They were then asked for their reflections on the flex blueprint process in text form. Several of the characteristic comments are included below:

*“I don't know that it did much to increase our use of a flexible work place, that was already pretty well ingrained. But, it did provide a clearer understanding of some of the issues involved around performance management/measurement and communication, as well as raise awareness of how someone's being 'here' may impact others. For me, the most value lay in producing some actual metrics on the impact of allowing flexibility.”*

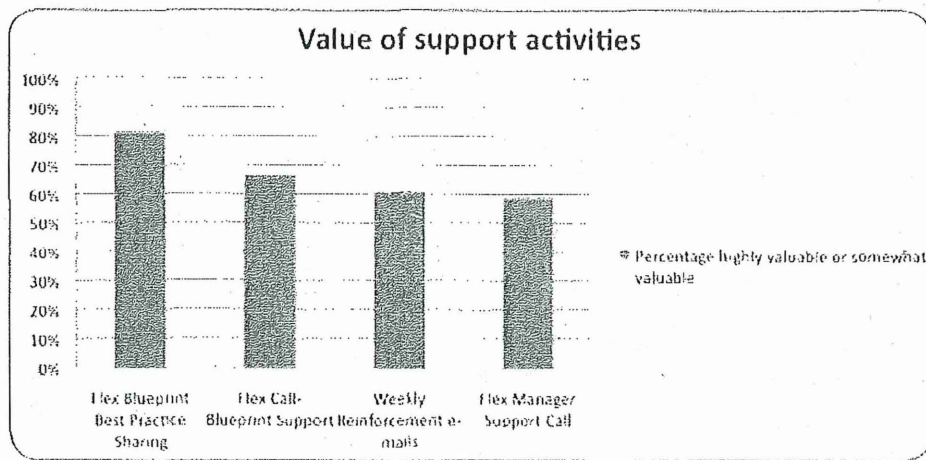
*“Our group had a meeting for input to the blueprint and then the supervisor created the flex team blueprint that was shared at a second meeting.”*

*“Just getting my supervisors to keep their e-calendars up to date was very positive.”*

*“I have read the blueprint, but I am still unsure how much support there is for this with upper management”*

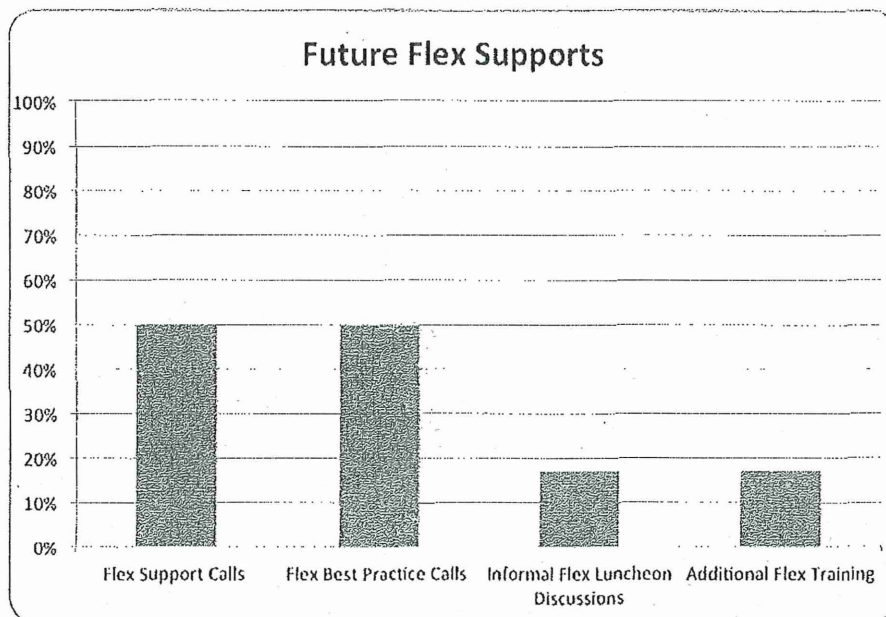


Managers generally felt that the support activities were valuable.



They indicated that the most effective support activities were the Flex Blueprint Best Practice Sharing call and the Flex Blueprint support call.

Participants were asked about what additional supports they would be interested in participating in after the conclusion of the study. These responses indicate areas for future planning that could be developed and offered by the MnDOT Human Resources team.



Of those who requested additional flex training, suggestions included: webinar success stories, pitfalls, lessons learned with overview of specific things that have worked or not worked, role play, flexibility for hourly workers. Comments included:

*"Setting up remote desktop systems at home and explaining exactly what is acceptable "workplace flexibility."*

*"I feel that some of the older supervisors need some training on current technology. They are a bit old fashioned."*

One manager in the survey summarized the challenges ahead to make flexibility work optimally at MnDot:

*"There are three: 1) Working within the constraints of union contracts, especially as relating to overtime and seniority (with Flex work seen as a benefit by some employees). 2) Avoiding the appearance of favoritism as the nature of the work of one unit may not permit the same flex arrangement as another. 3) Achieving individual supervisor comfort."*

# SECTION VII

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the National Workplace Flexibility Study, and the Research Team's collective years of experience advising companies on contemporary work practices, we have compiled a list of recommendations for MnDOT to build upon the success of the study pilots. We have organized recommendations by groups within the organization who would be primarily responsible for implementing them, including Senior Leaders, Human Resource Professionals, Managers and Employees.

### ***HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS***

As the leader of talent management initiatives, HR is charged with managing change processes when it comes to workplace flexibility and other concerns related to the development of an effective workplace. We believe that there are a number of important ways that HR can work at all levels throughout the organization to grow flexibility and gain buy-in and credibility for flexibility as a strategic way of doing business. We believe that the combination of these actions will serve to positively impact the culture of the organization and will increase acceptance and utilization of flexible work options. These recommendations include:

1. **SHARE STUDY RESULTS** with pilot participants, and encourage efforts to expand the use and understanding of flexible work options. Results of the study should be shared organization-wide to elicit additional support.
2. **UPDATE POLICIES AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES ABOUT FLEXIBILITY.** Pay particular attention to the issues of flex in union contracts and simplify the process for accessing information about them.
3. **DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY,** provide regular education around flexibility and alternative work programs and coordinate ongoing support for managers that may include best practice sharing, articles, newsletters, and informal lunch sessions.
4. **ADVOCATE FOR FLEXIBILITY TO SENIOR LEADERS.** Develop a solid business case including data from this report to gain additional support from senior leadership.
5. **ENCOURAGE SENIOR LEADERSHIP,** Managers and Supervisors to convey a consistent message of support, expectations, and flex as critical to agency success.



6. **EXPAND THE USE OF FLEX TEAM BLUEPRINTS** to all teams since study results indicate this tool has the potential to facilitate team collaboration and performance. Expand the tool beyond the pilot groups so that other teams can benefit and encourage managers to engage in conversations with their teams to improve understanding of expectations, goals and support for flex practices.
7. **ACT AS A SUPPORT AND RESOURCE TO TEAMS ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION.** HR should position itself as a helpful resource for both managers and employees who may have questions and challenges about flexible work.
8. **CONSIDER ADDITIONAL EVALUATION** of the study at a later date. A number of survey respondents indicated that they did not feel the 3-month pilot period was an ample amount of time to evaluate the impact of the study.

## **SENIOR LEADERSHIP**

Employees and Managers alike look to Senior Leadership to set the tone and promote the culture of the organization. To continue the growth of flexible work at MnDOT, additional support from senior leadership is necessary:

1. **DISCUSS FLEXIBILITY** with managers and supervisors, making it a regular topic of discussion and conveying your expectations of support.
2. **BE OPEN TO HEARING MORE ABOUT FLEXIBILITY** and how its successful implementation can add strategic value to the organization. For example, hold regular listening sessions with HR, managers and employees.
3. **CONSIDER FLEXIBILITY AS A BUSINESS STRATEGY** when discussing organization goals and priorities, especially those that revolve around people and space management.
4. **DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU VALUE YOUR EMPLOYEES' PERSONAL LIVES** and flex as a key organizational strategy by openly discussing the value to your agency and modeling flexible work behaviors yourself.
5. **ACTIVELY SEEK OUT MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES** who are successfully using flexibility and highlight their practices (and results) as best practices at MnDOT.
6. **EXPLORE HOW FLEXIBILITY COULD WORK WITHIN YOUR OWN LEADERSHIP TEAM.** By modeling flexible behavior, leadership conveys support for the program. This creates a culture in which employees are less likely to fear that there will be negative implications for using flexible work options.
7. **CONSIDER UPGRADES TO TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS** to promote greater accessibility and efficiency in working from home.

## MANAGERS

Managers hold the key to widespread implementation and effective utilization of flexible work options. There are a number of ways that managers can further progress toward effectively integrating flexibility into their teams:

1. **COMPLETE FLEX TEAM BLUEPRINT** as a collaborative group effort to establish guidelines and parameters that work for your own team.
2. **POST FLEX TEAM BLUEPRINTS** in a shared space for all team members to review.
3. **ENGAGE IN ONGOING CONVERSATIONS** about the blueprint, your expectations, use of flexible work practices, and how all of it is impacting your team.
4. **OBJECTIVELY EVALUATE REQUESTS** for flexible work submitted by team members. Openly encourage flex utilization and make sure that employees feel comfortable coming to you with requests. Openly discuss how arrangements can meet both business and personal needs.
5. **PARTICIPATE IN ONGOING TRAINING** and support activities offered by HR.
6. **TALK OPENLY** with other managers, your employees and HR about your experience, the value of flex on performance, and share best practices.
7. **MODEL GOOD COMMUNICATION** and flexible working behaviors. Work flexibly yourself.
8. **EVALUATE EMPLOYEES BASED ON RESULTS.** Separate performance problems from flexibility issues.

## EMPLOYEES

Employees also have a critical role to play in ensuring that flexible work is successful at MnDOT. We encourage them to be active participants in the process through the following activities:

1. **DEVELOP FLEXIBLE WORK PROPOSALS** that meet the business needs, as well as your own personal needs.
2. **ROLE MODEL SUCCESSFUL USE** of flexible work arrangements for other team members.
3. **BE RESPONSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE** and keep channels of communication open when working flexibly.
4. **PARTICIPATE IN THE DEVELOPMENT** of your team's Flex Team Blueprint.
5. **SHARE YOUR OWN FLEX SUCCESS STORY** with others in the organization, through informal conversations or the organization newsletter.
6. **BE BRAVE** and ask your supervisor to consider your need for flexibility, even if you're not sure whether s/he is supportive.
7. **EDUCATE YOURSELF** on the policies and procedures for workplace flexibility at MnDOT. If you're not sure where to find the information or whether flex is appropriate or available for your position, please ask.

# SECTION IX APPENDIX

This appendix contains references and documents that were used to execute this study.

## ***SECTION 1: RESEARCH TEAM***

This study was conducted by:

**Kyra Cavanaugh**

President, Life Meets Work Inc.

1-847-825-5691

[kcavanaugh@lifemeetswork.com](mailto:kcavanaugh@lifemeetswork.com)

**Jennifer Sabatini Fraone**

Associate Director, Marketing and Communications

Boston College Center for Work & Family

617-552-2862

[jennifer.fraone@bc.edu](mailto:jennifer.fraone@bc.edu)

**Kathy Kacher**

President, Career/Life Alliance Services, Inc.

1-800-736-6416

[kkacher@clalliance.com](mailto:kkacher@clalliance.com)



## **SECTION 2: REFERENCES**

### **NATIONAL WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY STUDY**

Van Deusen, F. James, J. Gill, N. and McKechnie, S. (2008) *Overcoming the Implementation Gap: How 20 Leading Companies are Making Flexibility Work*, Boston College Center for Work & Family

Ouye, J., Nagy, G., Singer, B., and Langhoff, J. (2010) *Alternative Workplace Strategies in the Current Economy: Results from New Ways of Working's Benchmarking Study*, New Ways of Working, LLC

Booz Allen Hamilton (2010) *On Demand Government: Deploying Flexibilities to Ensure Service Continuity*, Partnership for Public Service

Pruchno, R., Litchfield, L. and Fried, M. (2000) *Measuring the Impact of Workplace Flexibility*, Boston College Center for Work & Family

Hardy, M. (2008) *Making Work More Flexible: Opportunities and Evidence*, Sloan Foundation and AARP Public Policy Institute

## **SECTION 3: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

### **SURVEY QUESTIONS**

### **DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FROM PRE- AND POST-PILOT SURVEYS**

### **FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM**

### **HIGHLIGHTS FROM FOCUS GROUP**

### Flagship Initiative — Workplace of Choice

Making MnDOT a Workplace of Choice involves *all* aspects of MnDOT – such as its people, programs, public support, etc. To help achieve the Workplace of Choice goal, MnDOT supports specific programs to foster attraction and retention of talented, dedicated staff.

#### Background

Originally begun under the auspices of the employee E-magination Jam in 2009, the Workplace of Choice goals were revamped in 2011, when stewardship moved to the Office of Human Resources. The following seven goal statements describe the vision of what MnDOT will look like as an employer of choice:

- The agency invests taxpayers' dollars wisely, fosters innovation and receives public support and acceptance for its programs and processes.
- The workforce reflects the community we serve. The agency reaches out to local communities for input and collaboration.
- The culture exudes an atmosphere of inclusion, clear communications, teamwork, honesty and mutual respect. Employees feel safe both physically and emotionally at work. They feel connected to each other and to the vision of the organization.
- The opportunities for employee growth include learning and training to develop new skills and relationships, professional and personal development and setting goals for the future.
- The leadership values are evident in all aspects of the agency's performance. Leadership development exists at all levels of the organization. Every employee has the capacity and responsibility to be an ambassador of our agency.
- The work is purposeful and challenging. Employees feel empowered by having their opinions listened to and by having their work respected. Employees can make choices and exercise some independence within their roles.
- Employees can find a work/life balance that allows them adequate time for achievement and enjoyment. The agency promotes a healthy workplace that includes arranging for flexibility, caring for employees and creating value and balance for the individual.

Under each of these goals the initiative aligns current and long-standing MnDOT programs that contribute to employees choosing MnDOT. Additionally, new projects and ideas for each goal area have been identified.

#### Challenges:

- Creating and embracing culture change within MnDOT takes time and effort – this isn't just a program, or even a series of programs.
- Media and legislative negative opinion of public workers.
- Working within the boundaries of bargaining agreements.
- Clear measures of success/progress – we have end state goals but not necessarily how to measure progress or when we get there.

#### Progress to date:

- Developed a Workplace of Choice Sounding Board – one representative from every office or district
- Leadership Development Program
- We are MnDOT: A Look Inside
- We are MnDOT Recognition Program
- Heroes of MnDOT Program
- Employee Engagement Survey

#### On the Horizon for 2013:

- Workplace Flexibility Study
- Recognition Programs Revamping
- Employee Engagement Survey Departmental Overview

#### Recommended action:

- Continue to pursue or support projects, programs and practices that make MnDOT an Employer of Choice.
- Use blueprint from workplace flexibility study to implement increased flexibility across the department.
- Develop appropriate measures that will help us tell the story of being a Workplace of Choice.
- Work on ambassadorship to influence public opinion where we can – starting with our family, friends, neighbors and communities.

#### For More Information Contact:

Lucy Kender  
Project Manager  
Office of Human Resources  
651-366-3409