An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí
Sheachadadh PFN agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public Expenditure
NDP Delivery and Reform

Blended Working Evaluation Model

31 July, 2024

Foreword from the Secretary General

Since March 2022, the Blended Working Policy Framework for Civil Service organisations has provided a solid foundation for departments and offices to develop and review policies and adapt blended working practices in line with their business needs and service delivery requirements. The Civil Service remains committed to ensuring that our customers have uncompromised access to our services and that all public service delivery requirements remain efficient.

I am pleased to present a Blended Working Evaluation Model, designed to assist organisations in effectively assessing the impact of blended ways of working. This evaluation model is underpinned by the strategic objectives of our Better Public Services - Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy, fostering flexible models and new ways of working.

To support our strategic commitment, the evaluation model provides a mechanism for continuous improvement, enabling organisations to gain valuable insights, share learnings, and identify areas for enhancement. I encourage all departments and offices to implement a range of evaluation tools, as the data collected will inform future operational and policy decisions.

In recent years, the workforce has been evolving to be more flexible and accessible, while placing an increasing emphasis on the delivery of Better Public Services. In this context ongoing reviews of the impact of blended working on the workforce, organisations and all customers are essential. By capturing evidenced based data, we will be well-positioned to review and implement effective policies to meet the needs of our future workforce and customers.

I am delighted to endorse the Blended Working Evaluation Model for the Civil Service and look forward to the seeing how flexible and blended ways of working evolve to better serve our workforce and customers in the future.

Kind regards,

David Moloney

Secretary General
Department of Public Expenditure NPD Delivery and Reform

Introduction

The Blended Working Policy Framework for Civil Service Organisations (March 2022) enabled organisations to develop and embed blended working policies. Over recent years, Civil Service organisations have successfully utilised a range of diverse methods to review and adapt these policies in line with their business needs.

It is timely to provide an inclusive and consistent approach to review blended working across the Civil Service in order to support the evaluation and future development of blended ways of working. In recognition of this, a Blended Working Evaluation Model was developed to:

- **Assess the impact of blended working**
- **Gain insights into the impact of blended working on the workforce and organisation**
- **Share learnings and identify areas for continuous improvement across the Civil Service**
- **Evaluate and enhance flexible working models and new ways of working**
- **Meet the strategic objectives of the Workforce and Organisation's core theme of the Better Public Services - Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy**

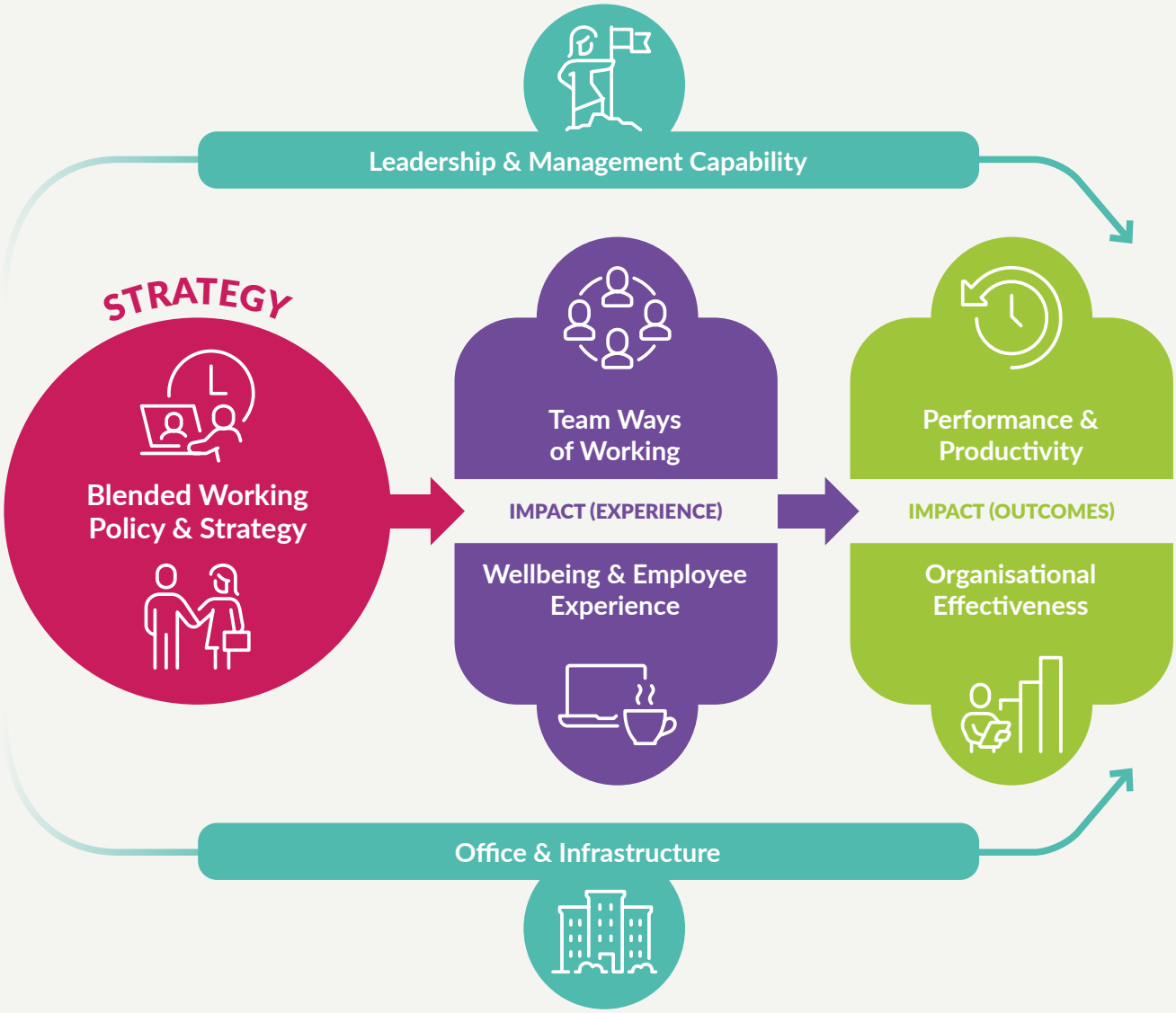
The Blended Working Evaluation Model allows organisations to balance business objectives, team effectiveness and capture the employee[1] experience with regard to blended working. Overall, this reflects a commitment to ongoing evaluation while ensuring there is a strategic focus on business needs, efficiency and excellence in service delivery.

1 For ease of reference, civil servants are referred to generally as 'employees' or 'new appointees' in the Blended Working Evaluation Model booklet

Blended Working Evaluation Model

The purpose of the Blended Working Evaluation Model is to enhance an agreed strategy and to create a common language and reusable tools to support the effectiveness of blended working for all organisations. This provides a structure to evaluate blended working, to include (i) Strategy (ii) Impact (Experience), and (iii) Impact (Outcomes) of seven shared core components across the workforce and organisation.

The Blended Working Evaluation Model can be tailored to suit the needs of each organisation depending on how advanced the organisation is on blended ways of working.



Guiding Principles

The principles of the Blended Working Evaluation Model provide guidance and support to organisations in the evaluation process and these are as follows:

- Strategic focus on business needs
- Flexible and sustainable to meet localised business needs
- Future oriented with an emphasis on learning and continuous improvement
- Evidence based outcomes to inform future policy decisions
- Inclusive and responsive to the needs of the workforce and organisation

Core Components

The Blended Working Evaluation Model has seven core components. These core components are all interrelated and are essential to the evaluation process.

Blended Working Evaluation Tools & Metrics

Core Component	What are we evaluating?	Tools to assess the impact of blended working	Examples of insights and/or metrics to assess the impact of blended working
Blended Working Policy & Strategy	*Has your organisation developed a Blended Working policy and/or strategy that is committed to continuous improvement of blended ways of working that meets business needs?*	Blended Working policy Dashboard to review blended working per organisation Internal surveys focused on blended working	Policy compliance review Blended working uptake data (onsite attendance/offsite) Review blended working applications to include number of refusals Headcount, sick leave data, employee attraction and retention data
Leadership & Management Capability	*How are leaders and people managers empowered to support productive teams in a blended working environment?*	Job satisfaction survey and/or focus groups for teams and/or divisions Structured line manager focus groups Peer to peer learning Professional leadership development Management programmes on effective team ways of working Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) supports related to managing a blended workforce	Training participation data with developmental and support measures Manager effectiveness indicators such as team charters, training participation, coaching, turnover and mobility Senior management and HR feedback on manager effectiveness Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) reviews to collate data on how individuals contribute to the team and/or organisation objectives while blended working Data on the approaches to onboarding newly appointed employees Probation data
Office & Infrastructure	*What is required to optimise the infrastructure and technology requirements to enable effective blended working (onsite and offsite)?*	Access to collaborative technology tools and infrastructure to enhance the optimal use of office space Health & Safety and sustainability requirements Tracking budget and related expenditure	Innovative workplace design such as the use of office space and collaborative locations Meeting rooms booking data Targets to enhance access to digital technology Carbon footprint data Accommodation, accessibility to offices and infrastructure analysis and budget data

Core Components	What are we evaluating?	Tools to assess the impact of blended working	Examples of insights and/or metrics to assess the impact of blended working
	How does your team align with the organisational culture/values and meet business needs while blended working?	Team charters and/or cross team working groups Structured focus groups with team Pulse surveys for teams to gather insights on the blended working experience	Evidence of team working groups and/or team charters with supporting metrics Key metrics related to the usage and/or effectiveness of online collaboration tools and data
	How do you optimise the employee experience, engagement and wellbeing in a blended working environment?	Pulse surveys and/or structured focus groups for managers and employees Pre and post-interviews at induction and throughout the onboarding phase Exit interviews conducted and feedback collated PMDS reviews and feedback on experience	Key insights that influence career decisions Induction experience and feedback data Engagement and welfare data such as the Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey (CSEES) and CSEAS data Turnover and mobility data Sick leave and absence data
	How do you optimise individual and team work performance and productivity to meet business needs in a blended working environment?	Task Productivity: assess if the blended working model is contributing to achieving the agreed work outputs and is meeting business needs Social Productivity: assess if the blended working model is contributing to a meaningful collaborative work experience with colleagues Learning Productivity: assess if the blended working model is contributing to the quality of the learning and development experiences	PMDS reviews and ongoing feedback of the employees' contribution to achieve agreed objectives Structured focus groups and engagement with senior management via peer group networks to provide comparative insights and transferrable data Digital literacy training and development data
	How can you ensure that your organisation is effectively delivering key business objectives in a blended working environment?	Organisational workforce data dashboard Organisational culture survey Customer and/or stakeholders survey Effective organisational communication to employees and stakeholders Talent attraction and retention strategy	Culture scores to capture indicators of employee engagement, team effectiveness and trust Governance and compliance awareness data Workforce statistics and data such as turnover, absenteeism, headcount, retention and mobility Customer and stakeholder satisfaction surveys on service delivery Organisational Capability Review Organisational effectiveness performance metrics Management board reports and various senior management networks feedback

Workforce Data Themes

The Blended Working Evaluation Model introduces key workforce themes that enhance the evaluation process. These themes provide various data sources and metrics that correlate with blended working, each aligning with a core component(s). This alignment offers an adaptable approach to support the evaluation process.

Employee satisfaction and engagement: There are various metrics or surveys related to the employee experience, satisfaction, engagement and wellbeing in the context of blended working. Metrics provide insights into the perceptions of the workforce particularly for employees at various stages of the career cycle. Induction can play a significant role in retention and valuable insights can be captured through induction surveys, new appointee focus groups and exit interviews. Moreover, gathering insights from line managers on their perspective of managing a team while blended working also provides a balanced view to employee satisfaction and engagement.

Performance evaluation: There are methods for assessing employee performance and productivity in a blended working environment. Performance evaluation, facilitated by methods such as PMDS and key performance indicators, offers a quantitative and qualitative view on productivity within blended work arrangements. A broader comprehensive review of task productivity, social productivity and learning productivity provides scope to evaluate the achievement of tasks/work outputs, the depth of meaningful social connections with colleagues and the quality of the learning and development experiences while blended working.

Utilisation of technology: There is a focus on analysing data related to the use of digital tools and platforms for communication, collaboration and training in blended working environments. This is evidenced through online meeting data and alternative collaboration and engagement tools to showcase the integration of digital resources that support blended working.

Workforce dynamics: It is important to track turnover rates, manage exit interviews, monitor mobility within the organisation and demographic trends to understand how blended working effects the composition and retention of the workforce and the organisational culture. Turnover rate analysis shed light on retention strategies and the adoption of blended working. Additionally, an Equality Impact Assessment on blended working and/or customer satisfaction surveys can also provide in-depth insights.

Office infrastructure and resource management: It is beneficial to evaluate office space utilisation, accessibility, desk booking patterns and resourcing statistics to optimise infrastructure and support the needs of a blended working model. Infrastructure and resource management, observed through office space utilisation and resourcing statistics guide decisions on workspace allocation and support systems. Additionally, access to collaborative technology tools and infrastructure are important factors in an evaluation process. In this regard, particular emphasis on sustainability and health & safety is required.

Governance and compliance: It is advisable to assess compliance with regulations and policy and awareness of health & safety requirements in the context of blended working. The adherence to a Data Protection policy ensures alignment with regulatory standards while blended working.

Learning and development: It is beneficial to focus on analysing data to gauge employee engagement and manager proficiency in leading effective blended working teams and practices. Particular emphasis could be placed on the impact of digital learning in order to determine what learning and development activities are more suited to online rather than in person delivery. In addition, this data will inform bespoke training initiatives to support working effectively in a blended working environment, specifically for induction and/or onboarding new appointees to an organisation.

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