TEMPLATE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



*About this tool*

**PURPOSE:** To provide a guideline/template of how to structure a FAQs list for workplace modernization\*, as well as what content to include.

*\*The content of the FAQ might have to be customize to suit your respective workplace modernization project.*

**AUDIENCE:** All employees who are going through a workplace modernization project.

**USE:**

* in toolkits for managers, leadership and change agents
* on your intranet
* in a blog post
* in emails

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# General information

**Q. What is workplace modernization?**

A. Workplace modernization is happening across the government. It is aligned with the Blueprint 2020 vision and Beyond2020 framework for a modern, bright, sustainable, and flexible workplace that enables the public service to work smarter, greener, and healthier in order to better serve Canadians. We will also be contributing to saving tax dollars on behalf of Canadians by reducing our carbon footprint and by making better use of our financial resources in the long term.

Workplace modernization will not only change our physical office space, but will leverage technological solutions and emphasize worker mobility to be able to deliver services in modern and innovative ways. An important component of workplace modernization is the GCworkplace vision which is best supported by the activity-based working (ABW) design solution.

**Q. What is an activity-based working (ABW) environment?**

A. ABW is a new-to-government solution to workspace design. When designing an ABW environment, designers have a deep understanding of the activities performed by the occupants of the space and plan around that—rather than drawing boxes around each occupant. With ABW, instead of navigating long rows of cubicles, workers move between areas that feature bright shared spaces, quiet privacy booths, tech-friendly conference rooms, collaborative nooks and a variety of other workpoints, each designed with specific tasks in mind. With access to Wi-Fi and the latest technology, employees are able to work where and how they want.

**Q. How is ABW different from Workplace 2.0?**

A. ABW and Workplace 2.0 are both office design solutions. Certain elements of Workplace 2.0 are based on space allocation according to worker profiles planned around a static work environment, and finding savings through the reduction of space. Moving to ABW is not about reducing the space any further, it’s about using the space differently and in a better way. ABW translates into an unassigned work environment where all employees have equal access to various workpoints, and into a space designed for the type of activities performed by its occupants. In the end, it does allow for a more efficient use of the space as well as provides employees with a greater variety of spaces from which to accomplish their activities.

It’s about doing work where it makes sense, whether it’s at a workstation, collaborative area, meeting room, or even at home. ABW allows you to change work locations throughout the day to accomplish the work that needs to be done.

**Q. Will policies and procedures be changing to reflect the changes accompanied by a shift to ABW?**

A. Changes to policy and procedure suites will be necessary but will take some time.

[Detail any changes your organization is considering and how it will arrive at these changes.]

# [Title of your organization’s modernization project]

**Q. Why are we doing this?**

A. The modernization of the workplace is a priority for the Government of Canada. As well, the Public Service Employee Survey also reflects employees’ desire for a healthier work environment that is more supportive of work‑life balance. By modernizing our workplace, we can implement an environment that is more supportive of physical and mental health and that gives more power to employees to manage their work-life balance.

[List all the reasons for your organization’s specific modernization project. Lease renewal, growth, move, etc.]

**Q. What type of modernized workplace is our organization adopting?**

A. [Explain to what extent your organization will modernize.]

**Q. What’s this new way of working all about? How will employees have access to the information they require?**

A. [Employees may not understand what this new way of working is all about, so tell them how you will provide information about the new workplace (e.g. informational documents, informal discussions, the intranet page etc.).]

**Q. What’s the plan and timeline for this current project?**

A. [Go into as much detail as you can, even if you don’t yet have concrete dates established. If moving to a new location altogether, also explain where and why that location was chosen.]

**Q. When will the floor plans or design layouts be shared?**

A. [Give insight as to what stage of design the floor plans are in. Are they still being developed? Are they under review? When will they be ready to be shared?]

**Q. Are we doing this to generate cost-savings?**

A. Moving to an ABW environment is not a cost saving exercise—it’s about using the space differently and in a better way—, which in the end results in space utilization savings through reducing our footprint. In the past, we have not been designing for the way we actually work and we are now changing that.

**Q.** **Will there be a demonstration space set up to see what our new workplace will look like before we move in?**

A. [If your organization plans on making use of demo space, give information as to when, where and how employees can utilize this space.]

**Q. What amenities are included in our new space?**

A. [This question is not about work-related amenities, but general building amenities. Provide information as to food and beverage available nearby, as well as parking, public transit, bicycle racks, and showers/locker rooms.]

# Workpoints

**Q. What is a workpoint?**

A. It’s any space where employees can perform their work, and is designed specifically to support different functional requirements. Each workpoint is equipped with furnishings and digital tools that support a variety of tasks and varying degrees of interaction or concentration.

**Q. What types of workpoints will be available to us?**

A. [Common workpoints can be found on pages 19 and 20 of the [GCworkplace Design Guide](https://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/gcwiki/images/2/22/GCworkplace_Design_Guide_-_April_2019_EN.pdf). List the types of workpoints you will be including as part of your workplace modernization and, as an additional option, the types of tasks that can be done in each of them. You could also add pictures of the future workpoints.]

**Q. What if I come to work and all of the desks are occupied?**

A. There will be enough workpoints to accommodate 100% of the employees if they all come to work on the same day.

The design of the space will ensure that there is more than enough workpoints for everyone and will support individual and collaborative work. Whether you are attending a meeting, collaborating with colleagues, or doing individual focused work, you will have enough options to support how you work in the new space.

**Q. What does unassigned seating mean?**

A. Unassigned seating means that employees will no longer have a dedicated workstation to sit at, store information, or keep personal effects. Employees will each have a personal storage locker to store their computer as well as personal items. In this environment, employees move away from a fixed point and choose the optimal setting based on their work activities, their personal preferences and workstyles.

**Q.** **How can you make sure employees do not fight for the “best spot” (e.g. by coming to work earlier)?**

A. The work environment we are establishing is not one that promotes competition for the most desirable workpoints. Employees should not feel they need to change their work hours to get a preferred spot. One of the 5 key design principles of an ABW environment is based on equal access to space. You are encouraged to vary where you sit on a daily basis to ensure everyone gets a chance to work from any workpoint. An ABW environment is designed with enough workpoints to accommodate 100% of the employees if they all come to work on the same day. You might not always get your favorite spot when you get in, but as you and your colleagues perform different activities throughout the day and move around, new workpoints will become available.

[Explain how your organization will address the situations where employees always use the same workpoint.]

**Q. Will we be provided with a document that explains how unassigned seating works?**

A. [How and when will you explain unassigned seating to your employees?]

**Q. Will I be able to reserve a workpoint?**

A. [Detail the steps your organization is taking **if** they are adopting a reservation system (including how to reserve, which workpoints can be reserved, for how long they can be reserved, etc.).]

**Q. Will there be a system for locating people on a day-to-day basis? Will colleagues have to search for each other?**

A. Having a tool (e.g. IM, Cisco Jabber, etc.) that enables employees to indicate where they are located creates a culture of openness and trust. It is more efficient to know where people are located in order to organize meetings, collaborate or interact—whether it is in person or virtually. ABW enables employees to collaborate through a variety of different settings (in person or virtually) which means that individuals may sometimes be dispersed from their teams. When adjusting to a new, modern way of working, it is understandable that the way that people used to engage with one another is placed under pressure (or needs to be organized in a different way). Fortunately, when employees have the mobility and flexibility to move around the workspace in a way that best suits them, they are more easily able to control their level of productivity by choosing how and when they connect with their colleagues. It is up to the individuals, teams and managers to determine suitable ways to connect and keep each other up to date. One positive aspect that we hear very often is that increased mobility in the workspace means that people are able to properly meet colleagues that they have only ever emailed before. Connection to one’s team is important, but connection to the wider organization is one of the biggest social changes that often occurs in an ABW workplace.

[List and explain the tool(s) your organization is adopting to connect people (including how to use them, when they will be available, if training will be provided, etc.).]

**Q. What equipment will be included in an individual workstation?**

A. The workstation will be equipped with all fixed furniture (i.e. sit-stand desk, ergonomic chair, monitors and required cables). Employees will bring their own notebook, power cord, mouse, keyboard, and basic office supplies, and they will remove and lock these in their personal storage locker at the end of each work day. Basic office supplies (pens, stapler, paper clips, etc.) will be available in an area that will be designated for that purpose (business centre).

**Q. Some people require dual monitors or oversized monitors. Will these be made available?**

A. Typical individual workstations will be equipped with either dual monitors or an oversized monitor. If you require special equipment and technology to complete your work, this will be addressed as part of the functional programming exercise.

**Q. Will there be exceptions to the unassigned desk rule?**

A. Prior to the move to a new unassigned environment, factors such as the duty to accommodate and the nature of the work being performed will be taken into account and exceptions will be granted on a case-by-case basis. If you believe you have a requirement for an exception to the unassigned desk environment, please discuss it with your manager.

[Some details of this answer may not apply to your organization, so edit as required.]

**Q. How will conflicts be resolved? For example, an individual does not follow the clean desk policy and fails to reset the workstation?**

A. Communications and change management will play an important role in making sure employees adopt the new ways of working. Specific situations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in collaboration with managers, directors and directors general. As well, general business rules or an etiquette will be developed in collaboration with employees and then communicated.

**Q. Are there examples of existing unassigned ABW environments?**

A. Yes, there are successful projects in many of the regions across Canada. Have a look at the following [Project Story Collection](https://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/GCworkplace_Project_Story_Collection) created by the Workplace Solutions team at Public Services and Procurement Canada.

[If your organization wants to add additional information from these projects available to employees, make a note of how you plan to do so.]

# Storage

**Q. What kind of storage will I be assigned? What do I do with my personal items and files?**

A. [Include information specific to your organization.]

**Q. How big are the personal storage lockers?**

A. [Include the dimensions that apply to your organization.]

# Ergonomics

**Q. How will ergonomic needs be met across all workpoints?**

A. Ergonomics will be factored into the design for all workpoints; they will be intuitive, fast and simple to use. ABW environments encourage employees to move to different places in the office throughout the day and are less likely to encourage sedentary activities. Training and information on the various ergonomic settings will be made available to everyone.

[List the type of ergonomic accommodations your organization will adopt as part of your modernization project (height adjustable desks, ergonomic chairs, articulating monitor arms, etc.) and when these accommodations will be put into effect.]

**Q. Where can I find information on how to adjust a workpoint to my preference?**

A. To familiarize yourself with the office ergonomics guidelines and principles, please consult the website [add link to info that is available to your organization]. Also, make sure you have taken the mandatory online ergonomics training.

**Q. Where can I find more information on ergonomics and duty to accommodate?**

A. If you are concerned about an individual ergonomic need or a specific accommodation need, you must discuss it with your manager. There are departmental resources available (e.g. Occupational Health and Safety, Disability Management Program, etc.) to provide advice and guidance to managers and employees related to these individual situations.

**Q. I already have a desk chair that is comfortable and suits my needs. Can I bring it with me?**

A. Individual health and safety needs will be managed on a case by case basis, through the duty to accommodate policy. Each workstation will be equipped with an ergonomic chair. If you believe you have a requirement to keep your current chair, please discuss it with your manager. [Include additional information as required].

# Health and wellness

**Q. How will individual health and safety needs be managed in an unassigned environment?**

A. Individual health and safety needs will be managed on a case by case basis, through the duty to accommodate policy. If you believe you have a requirement for an exception to the unassigned desk environment, please discuss it with your manager

**Q. What are the plans regarding any duty to accommodate requirements in an unassigned environment?**

A. Nothing changes with regards to our responsibilities related to duty to accommodate in an unassigned environment. We will continue to meet our obligations for medically supported duties to accommodate.

**Q. How will cleanliness be managed?**

A. A clean desk policy will be enforced for all workpoints. It is every individual’s responsibility to reset their workpoint at the end of each day.

**Q. Are we going to have to clean up our workpoint every time we move during the day?**

A. Employees are not expected to clean up an individual workpoint if they leave it for one hour or less and plan to return to it (lunch, meeting, call, etc.). Otherwise, employees must clean up each workpoint when they leave it. Unscented wipes will be available throughout the space to assist employees in keeping workpoints clean.

[This information may not apply to your organization, so edit as required.]

**Q. Given the open environment, how is the additional noise going to be managed?**

**A.** ABW environments generally include three functional zones; more interactive, noise-generating workpoints are grouped together and away from quiet, individual workpoints in order to manage acoustics and better support concentration and collaboration.

**Q.** **How will first aiders and floor wardens be identified in an unassigned seating area?**

**A.** First aiders and floor wardens can identify themselves with a plastic card/flag/pin that travels with them when they set up where they work on any given day. By increasing the amount of volunteers for these roles, the likelihood or potential for a first aider or floor warden to not be easily identified will decrease.

[This information may not apply to your organization, so edit as required. Another solution can also be identified.]

# Technology and information management

**Q. Where do I keep personal files or other hard copy files?**

A. Requirements for filing cabinets were identified by team representatives and will be provided accordingly in order for employees to store active paper files. Files that are no longer active could be stored in the file room until they are scanned and saved into GCdocs.

[This information may not apply to your organization, so edit as required.]

**Q. How can I reduce my paper files?**

A. The move to a paper-lite/paperless environment requires everyone to pitch in and start reducing and organizing their information resources. Employees must focus on shredding or recycling transitory information that no longer has value, transferring inactive information resources of business value to the IM team, and digitizing active information resources and storing them in GCdocs. One of the most important things you must start doing in order to prepare for the future workplace is to clean your paper files, adopt GCdocs, and scan and save what is required on this information system.

[This information may not apply to your organization, so edit as required.]

**Q. How easy will it be to set up my computer if I have to connect all the wires?**

A. Employees will have to manually connect the required monitor cables available and the power source.

For example, if you usually do the same work, in the same type of workpoint every day, your daily set up should be pretty simple. If you’re usually in a lot of meetings, you will probably just tote your laptop around with you and can set up to work in a matter of seconds. For others who will use a few different workpoints throughout the day, with a keyboard, mouse and maybe a few files, it should only take a few minutes to get situated once you’re comfortable with the set-up process.

[This information may not apply to your organization, so edit as required.]

**Q. What about monitors? Is each employee keeping their own?**

A. No, each individual workstation will be equipped with two monitors or an oversized monitor along with all required cables to successfully connect to all types of laptops.

[This information may not apply to your organization, so edit as required.]

**Q. What about printers? How will this work?**

A. [Is your organization moving to a group printer system (where one printer serves a large group of employees)? Is it using another system? Tell your employees how printing will work in the new workplace.]

**Q. Will we still be expected to lock our notebooks at the individual workstations?**

A. No, notebooks and other personal equipment will be locked in employees’ personal storage lockers when they leave for the day.

# Mobility & flexibility at work

**Q. What is telework?**

A. Telework is an arrangement that allows employees to work from home or some other off-site location. Telework agreements between you and your supervisor can vary from the informal (an occasional day working from home) to a formal full-time telework agreement. Telework has been shown to increase productivity and efficiency levels, employee satisfaction and work-life balance.

**Q. Will teleworking be mandatory? Will I have to work from home?**

A. Telework will remain a voluntary option with the support of your manager. We encourage all who wish to try it to discuss this option with their manager**.**

**Q. How is telework related to workplace modernization?**

A. The modernization of our workplace is a cultural change that emphasizes *how* work is being done and not *where* work is being done. Telework can help employees meet both productivity and flexibility (work-life balance) objectives.

**Q. Are the working hours different for telework?**

A. Conditions of telework must respect the terms and conditions of employment and relevant collective agreements and this includes hours of work.

# Moving

**Q. Will I be provided with move instructions prior to the move?**

A. [Provide details on what information will you provide your employees prior to moving and when.]

**Q. How many boxes will I be allowed to pack?**

A. In order to fit into your personal storage locker, the personal files and belongings that you will bring with you should not require more than two boxes. It is essential for staff to continue to actively go through their workstations and file, store, shred, and remove as much as possible, in accordance with the relevant IM policies.

**Q. Will boxes, recycling bins, large garbage bins and shredding boxes be made available and when?**

A. [Tell your employees when and where any of the above will be made available.]

**Q. What if I’m away during the move?**

A. Employees who expect to be away at the time of the move should ensure that the necessary arrangements are made—either with their manager, accommodations representative, or a colleague—to prepare their workstations for the move. Please ensure that:

* your boxes are packed and properly labeled
* any secret documents are locked up in secured cabinets
* your notebook is locked at your desk, and the key to the lock—as well as the key to your new personal locker—, have been given to the person you have made arrangements with
* your other IT equipment (keyboard, mouse, etc.) is also left at your workstation with your notebook. In your absence, the person you have made arrangements with will put these items in your personal locker
* your office equipment (e.g. ergonomic chair) that is moving with you—if applicable—, is properly labeled
* you bring your mobile phone (if you have one) with you

# Questions, feedback?

**Q. If I have questions or I want to provide input to changes that are taking place, where do I go?**

A. Your feedback is always welcomed. We want to make sure you are getting the information you need and there are several ways for you to share your comments with us. Don’t hesitate to speak with your manager, or you can also forward your questions to the project team.

[Detail the steps your organization is taking to hear employees’ feedback, as well as the current means by which employees can provide feedback.]

**Q. Where can I go to get more information on our project and on ABW?**

A. [Provide a list of resources (internal and external) employees can use to get more informed. You can add the following to your list:

<https://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/GCworkplace>

<http://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/gcwiki/images/2/22/GCworkplace_Design_Guide_-_April_2019_EN.pdf>

<http://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/GCworkplace_Project_Story_Collection>]