

seai SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

People Strategy

2023 – 2025

Blended working
ACESA Panel
25th September 2024



Purpose

- The purpose of this presentation is to provide insights into SEAI's blended working policy.

Contents

- SEAI's blended working policy
- Research
- Benefits
- Challenges and Mitigations
- Summary & Recommendations
- Appendices

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Recap: SEAI's blended working policy

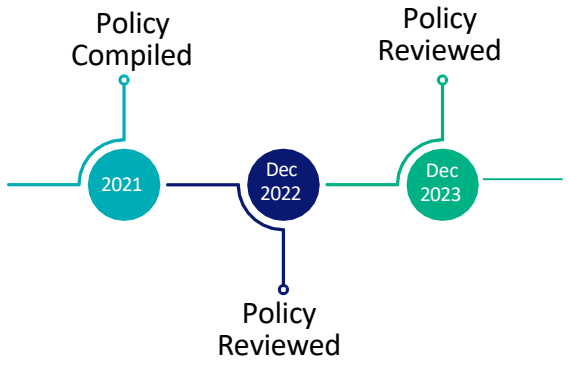
Our policy was devised based on



Research into other organisations



SEAI Implementation Group



Blended working is in keeping with

Other Public and Private Sector Organisations

(30+ other organisations incl. Bord Bia, OPW, Solas, Failte, ESRI, SFI, Marine, K+N)

Recruitment Agency Feedback

Feedback from recruitment agencies also points to some form of blended working as a norm

Feedback from New Starters

Over 80% of New Starters said that SEAI's Blended Working Policy impacted their decision to apply

Our current policy includes

- Minimum 2 days per week in office, up to 3 remote (role dependent)
- 1 x Anchor team day per week in office
- 1 x day of choice
- Expectation for flexibility / attendance for specific requirements (e.g training, meetings, 1/4ly 'all in' days)
- Exemptions from attendance for up to 12 months subject to HR and ELT approval
  - (10 requests since policy introduced, 8 approved)
- Ability for SEAI to alter approach or revert to full in person attendance if required

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Research supporting the SEAI model



The SEAI model is known as a ‘Flexible hybrid’ where there is a human centric approach to design. This includes employee input to design, refining the approach over time, offering choice, flexibility and autonomy, and measuring organisational results (KPI’s).

Gartner* research finds that ‘a Flexible Hybrid approach to work boosts employee performance, increases intent to stay and reduces fatigue’

WFH* Research reviewed 3 major studies of employee productivity in a WFH setting and found the research supported the statement that hybrid working ‘improves productivity and leads to happier employees’.

Other research and case studies from Grow Remote* and RTE report* Nov 2023 and Talent Summit survey March 2024 all point to hybrid working as a model in place since the pandemic

*Sources of research supporting the SEAI approach – links in appendix

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Benefits: Why we are confident that a blended working model is appropriate for SEAI at this time

Blended working arrangements align with our organisation's People's Ambition which speaks to inclusivity, engagement, experience, delivery, high quality, collaboration and innovation

Policy allows us to attract talent (70 direct and 20 agency roles recruited in 2023). We have recruited some specialist knowledge into central and regional offices where commuting 5 days per week would not be acceptable, but people are willing to commute 2 days a wk

We have more engagement with Learning & Development (L&D) activities which are more accessible and delivering higher participation rates

Certain central functions eg HR / L&D delivering across 4 locations with one central team - minimal downtime for travel

In today's environment, some form of hybrid working is effectively a requirement in a professional service organisation such as SEAI;. Staff are comfortable with the 2 days mandatory with choice of attending more frequently and goodwill/flexibility to attend in person when required

We are utilising space more efficiently

Our ways of working are supporting the SEAI Mission

We have adapted our 'ways of working'

Space Usage		
Location	Employees Allocated	No. of Desks Available
Cork	20	8
Dublin	250	201
Dundalk	15	25
Sligo	11	6

Staff Turnover		
Year	National	SEAI
2023	10%	6.40%
2022	18%	12%
2021	8%	5%

Training Delivered Online (2024)	14
Training Hours Online (2024)	109.5
Infosolves Delivered Online (2024)	5
Online Directorate Meetings (2024)	1

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Benefits: Why we are confident that a blended working model is appropriate for SEAI at this time

In 2023, we have delivered more **outputs** across the majority of workstreams than ever before

Staff turnover 2023 6.4%(2022: 12%) consistently less than the national average, **Sick leave** stats are 2% rolling days lost v 3.5% days lost national averages

We are delivering above our mandatory (6%) employees with disability – the latest survey showing we have 10% with **self-declared disability**

Our **gender pay gap** gender pay gap has narrowed (from 13.03% to 8.46%) 2023 - 2024

The mix of **male:female at SMT level** has shifted from 8(m):2(f) to 9(m):6(f) over the course of last 2 years

Talent Development working well with internal promotions 36 Internal promotions and 18 agency conversions over last 2 years

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Challenges & Mitigations



The blended working policy has got us to change the ways of working – in most instances for the better

Challenge	Response
Uncertainty at various points regarding SEAI approach / nuances	Addressed via regular communications / supports / policy re-issuing
Concern re management oversight of activity/output	Shifting of focus from 'being present' to deliverables and outputs – ongoing process. Training course for all managers with a focus inter alia on managing in hybrid environment under EDI programme
Concern re management of underperformance	Management of underperformance is challenging in all working contexts. The PMDS relaunch, training for managers and HR support utilisation enables strong performance management. Probation process has been driven to ensure utilisation and resulted in 3 hires not being retained longer than probation when issues identified during probation
Concern re 'flood' of applications for exemptions	10 applicants (8 approved)
Concern re onboarding of new joiners	On boarding process is operating more smoothly – onboarding overhauled with combination of mandatory early in-house presence with manager, wide availability of material, buddy and mentoring system
Difficulty of running hybrid meetings	Shift towards all in-person or 'all online' where at all possible – works effectively
Concern re levels of participation and effectiveness of townhall meetings and/or Directorate quarterly meetings	Remains a challenge to bring everyone together in person (space and logistics) but our online townhalls are working very satisfactorily: well attended and receiving good feedback – for many large companies this is normal and as a multi-centre location creates a level playing pitch
Perception that policy applied inconsistently	Reminders of policy to all, use of Ronspot for desk check in, but culture of trust remains important for success
Perception people not working as productively remotely –	Performance Management Development System (PMDS) updated and results / outputs continue to be measured, and policy relaunched to ensure expectations clearly stated and monitored
Concern re health and well-being	Health & Wellbeing group / H&S committee implementing range of initiatives to continue on, from supports provided during Covid

Summary and Recommendations

- Blended model is here to stay in professional service led organisations for the foreseeable future
- 'Right to request remote working' now enshrined in legislation (enacted March 2024)
- A recent survey (Talent Summit March 2024) would point to 2 days in office being most prevalent form of blended working a shift back from 3 day (2023) to 2 day (2024) – remains to be seen if this is a trend
- The SEAI blended working approach is enabling SEAI to achieve and exceed delivery targets across multiple areas, delivering against KPI's, budgets, expectations.
- By retaining the current arrangements (2 days mandatory) we are providing consistency for managers and staff
- We continue our current approach to blended working with continuous improvements to ensure it is an enabler of success.



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Thank you