

# The Future of the Workplace in Government

- Overall Trends
- The Work-from-Anywhere Model
- Key Considerations
- Strategies to Prepare for the Workplace of the Future



**JOINT COUNCILS' EXECUTIVE MONTHLY REPORT**

Developed by the Research Committee

March 2022

# 1. Introduction

In the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic (“the pandemic”) drastically changed the way employees and organizations work. All around the world, government, education and healthcare sectors were forced to operate virtually, in many cases for the first time.<sup>1</sup> What was once an unthinkable way of working for many organizations, including the public sector, has now become an immediate reality.

As the public sector and other organizations prepare for the future of the workplace, various models are being explored. These models include:<sup>2</sup>

- **Work from Home:** Employees will work remotely, with no main office where they are required to work.
- **Return to the Office:** Employees will return to the office, requiring phases and new technology/procedures to ensure their safety and health.
- **Hybrid Model:** A combination of both the work from home and return to the office model. This model aims to create a work-life balance and in-person collaborative environments.
- **Work From Anywhere:** A combination of the above noted models that aims to provide a flexible work environment. This model enables employees to choose to work wherever they desire (i.e. at home, in the office, or even at a third-party space like a coffee shop).

One option that has been explored more frequently in government is the idea of adopting a flexible, work from anywhere (WFA) model for all or part of the workforce. In this Executive Report, the Research Committee will explore the WFA model further. The report will also highlight a number of key considerations related to the future of the workplace, as well as provide strategies to prepare for the future.

## Why is this Report Important?

- The future of the workplace is at a point of change and growth for many organizations around the world.<sup>3</sup> As jurisdictions across Canada prepare for the future of the workplace, they are increasingly exploring how to shift the workforce, how to rethink traditional processes, and how to reinvent the way it conducts work to ensure readiness for changes.
- In October 2021, McKinsey & Company presented on the topic of the future of work to the Joint Council’s. A key finding highlighted in the presentation was that “by 2025, 75% of the workforce will be millennials, who prioritize flexibility.” As a result, in the future, a flexible work environment is becoming a more permanent fixture wherever jobs allow.

## What is Covered in this Executive Report?

This report includes the following:

- Introduction
- Overall Trends
- The Work-from-Anywhere Model
- Key Considerations
- Strategies to Prepare for the Workplace of the Future

1. [The Future of Work: Governments’ Next Normal](#)
2. [Models to Defining the Future of Work](#)
3. [Annual Digital Open Government Forum: The Future of Work - Shaping the Public Service of Tomorrow Together](#)

## 2. Future of the Workplace: Overall Trends

A growing trend of recognizing employees as humans and helping them grow in all areas of their lives<sup>4</sup>

**The Human Experience Is Replace The Employee Experience**



Employees want to truly align with and live organizational values, not just hang them on the wall<sup>5</sup>

**Personal & Organizational Value Alignment Supports More Purpose-Driven Work**



- Organizations are releasing control over the work environment
- According to a recent study, many job seekers are increasingly searching for roles that offer flexible options in terms of hours and location<sup>6</sup>

**Flexible Work is Becoming the Norm**



There is growing importance for leaders to demonstrate adaptability, empathy and inclusivity to keep employees engaged and inspired. How leaders' model and support each of these reflects how well they understand the needs of their employees<sup>7</sup>

**Leadership is Evolving**



The pandemic demonstrated the need to bring mental and emotional well-being to the forefront of all organizations. [Gartner research](#) revealed budget increases across organizations to support mental and emotional well-being programs<sup>8</sup>

**Mental Health and Well-being Supports are Destigmatized**



Organizations are more likely to prioritize monitoring performance and results, rather hours clocked<sup>9</sup>

**Employee Monitoring Will Be Replaced By Performance Monitoring—And Trust**



According to a recent study conducted by McKinsey & Company, strong evidence suggests that the role of virtual work will continue as the COVID-19 crisis abates<sup>10</sup>:

**81%** of surveyed employees somewhat to strongly agreed that they “love working from home”

**86%** of surveyed employees would like to work remotely at least 1-day a week after the emergency

**70%** of surveyed employees report that the ability telecommute plays a role in the choice for their next job

**29%** of surveyed employees said they would consider switching employers if went back to a fully on-site model

4, 5, 6, 9. [The Future Of Work: 7 Trends And Tools You Need](#)

7. [The future of work is forcing an evolution in leadership](#)

8. [9 Work Trends That HR Leaders Can't Ignore in 2021](#)

10. [What employees are saying about the future of remote work](#)

### 3. The Work-from-Anywhere Model

The work-from-anywhere (WFA) model is a combination of the work from home, return to the office, and hybrid model. The WFA model aims to provide a flexible work environment by enabling employees to choose to work wherever they desire (i.e. at home, in the office, or even at a third space like a coffee shop).<sup>11</sup> The model leverages several tools and technologies making it a success (such as remote access, visual collaboration, organization management, data sharing, and much more). To be effective, organizations must be able to manage projects in real-time, while also being able to manage employees, share documentation, and conduct team meetings virtually. Some organizations are taking the WFA model to the next level by integrating virtual reality and augmented reality into their remote workflow, enabling them to manage businesses even more efficiently. According to the remote work statistics in 2021, organizations are embracing the idea of hiring employees remotely<sup>12</sup>. The statistics also show that employees enjoy working from home or anywhere they want. In return, they are even willing to give up some of the other employee benefits they received in the past. Some key benefits of the WFA model includes:



11. [What does “work from anywhere mean”? why and when should companies consider this concept?](#)

12. [The Ultimate List of Remote Work Statistics - 2022 Edition](#)

13, 14, 15. [Trend Watch: The Future of Work-from-Anywhere](#)



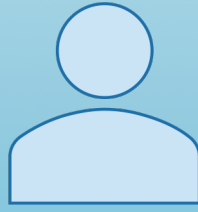
## 4. Key Considerations of the Future of the Workplace

Over the past few years governments (at all levels) invested in digital transformation to future-proof their organization. The pandemic significantly accelerated this trend as it forced organizations across sectors to allow employees to work remotely and set up digital infrastructures that would allow them to be productive outside of the office.

As remote work becomes a normal part of work, organizations are prioritizing their digital transformation efforts, focusing particularly on how to blend the virtual and physical workplace. To do this effectively, one important factor organizations are leveraging is technology. Specifically, how technological capabilities such as artificial intelligence, machine learning and virtual reality can enable and elevate human capabilities, rather than replace the human workforce.<sup>16</sup>

As organizations continue to explore what the future of the workplace will look like, there are additional factors that need to be considered, especially if the future is digital. These factors include the following:

- 16. [How to create a workforce equipped with the skills of the future](#)
- 17. [The Untold Side Of Remote Working: Isolation And Lack Of Career Progression](#)
- 18. [5 Common Virtual Team Challenges \(and How to Overcome Them\)](#)
- 19. [Future of Work: Covid-19 Reveals Cybersecurity Threats in Digital Transformation Efforts](#)
- 20. [The Software Developer Shortage in the US and the Global Tech Talent Shortage in 2022](#)



### Employee Isolation

One challenge employees may face is spending more time on their own, especially if they live alone. It may seem peaceful and calming to some, but it may be depressing for others. There is a risk that employee isolation might lower morale and overall productivity.<sup>17</sup>



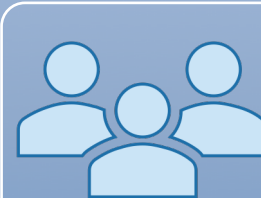
### Communication Gap

Efficient, effective communication is the foundation of any functioning group, and it is especially crucial for remote teams. Coordinating virtual team members can be challenging, and communication can be a barrier when employees are working remotely (i.e., team management, performance tracking, and employee supervision). When communication fails, a number of problems arise. Work progress suffers, employees can feel isolated from the team and organization.<sup>18</sup> As a result, it is crucial to prioritize communication in any future of work strategy.



### Cybersecurity

During the pandemic, cyberattacks increased across organizations worldwide. As a result, cybersecurity is more sensitive and important than ever before.<sup>19</sup> If the future of the workplace is digital, greater investment and adaptation to cybersecurity is essential. Governments must examine their cyber strategies and implement concrete measures to promote a more reliable and trustworthy internet to protect organizations, as well as employees and clients.



### Talent Management

Leaders everywhere are overseeing a major shift in the job market. According to [U.S. Labor statistics](#), as of December 2020, the global talent shortage amounted to 40 million skilled workers worldwide.<sup>20</sup> This has prompted organizations to rethink how they attract, retain, and manage talent. Remote work expands the candidate pool to address the talent shortage for critical roles needed in the future (i.e. information technology professionals). It allows organizations to recruit beyond its physical location to attract and recruit highly skilled professionals. However, organizations must also invest in hyper-personalized training (i.e., boot camps, virtual training and digital learning boards) to upskill current employees.

## 5. Strategies to Prepare for the Workplace of the Future

It is possible that in the post-pandemic world, things will not completely return to the way it once was. According to the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#), it is estimated that nearly 70 per cent of the world's workforce – and about 80 percent of all employers – are located in areas of the world where workplace closures are either recommended or required.<sup>20</sup> With many employees preferring the flexibility that working from home offers compared to commuting to an office each day, it is likely that employers are going to maintain some level of this convenience in the future, perhaps in a WFA structure.

The following are some strategies organizations should consider as they prepare for the future of the workplace:

### Additional Materials on the Future of the Workplace:

- [Best practice guidelines for the future of work](#)
- [6 Strategies to Prepare the Workforce of the Future](#)
- [Government's workforce transformation playbook](#)
- [How 'work from anywhere' can build the city of the future](#)
- [Canadian findings on the future of work](#)
- [Thriving anywhere](#)

20. [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Second edition](#)

21. [Why the future of work is human-centric](#)

22, 23. [Building the future-ready workforce](#)

## Strategies to Prepare for the Workplace of the Future

<b>Human-centric work design</b>	Organizations must ensure their strategy is centered around the needs of their employees. To do this, four key areas must be considered in the design of the strategy: flexible working arrangements, health and safety, user-centric solutions in the future of work, and maintaining employee satisfaction levels. <sup>21</sup>
<b>Deploy workforce planning and analytics to rethink and rearchitect work more broadly</b>	Any effort to redesign work and reimagine the workforce must be rooted in the organization's business strategy and goals. Workforce planning and analytics begins by understanding the internal and external factors that will affect an organization's business and workforce in the years to come (i.e., if time consuming human tasks can be replaced by AI-based tools). It also helps organizations better ensure employees whose jobs are affected are given the opportunity to develop their skills to stay relevant in an ever-evolving labour market. <sup>22</sup>
<b>Respond to constant change by modernizing the learning strategy</b>	Traditional organizational learning strategies are ideally suited to the stable, regimented workplaces and workforces of previous years. Building a future-ready workforce requires organizations to modernize their learning strategy so that it focuses on providing what employees need and want in a way that's relevant and in a context that make sense for each person. <sup>23</sup>
<b>Leverage Lessons Learned</b>	Partnership and collaboration on the future of work between levels of government and the private sector is essential. Although there is no "one size fits all" approach, there have been lessons learned with valuable insights emerging that are sparking ideas about how to navigate through the current pandemic toward a new working model. It is important that these lessons are shared and leveraged by leaders.



## For Further Reading

- [Future of Work Report - Canada Beyond 150](#)
- [GCworkplace: A modern workplace for the new public service](#)
- [Future of work: 10 key trends for the next 10 years](#)
- [The future of work in government](#)
- [Our Work-from-Anywhere Future](#)
- [What Your Future Employees Want Most](#)
- [Managers May Be the Key to the Future of Work](#)

## Other noteworthy articles:

[How AI is transforming public sector customer service](#)

[How design thinking can improve digital public services](#)

[Improving digital government experience](#)

[How to design an omnichannel AI ecosystem for optimum customer engagement](#)

[How Improving Customer Experience Can Help the Employee Experience](#)

## Research Repository

Access the Citizen First [Research Repository](#).

Recent entries on the research repository:

[Accessible Government Services — Joint Councils' Executive Report February 2022](#)

This report includes the following: Defining Vulnerable & Underserved Populations, Common Accessibility Risk Factors, Leveraging Modern Approaches and Technologies, Efforts in Government, and Guidelines to Improve the Accessibility



## Trends in the Daily Newsletter



According to [State Tech Magazine](#), during the COVID-19 pandemic, governments have enhanced their call centers to increase their flexibility. A key part of that evolution has involved cities and counties deploying artificial intelligence, including conversational AI technology. Such technology can enable government agencies to answer residents' questions more efficiently and reduce barriers citizens might face in receiving government services or responses.



Many companies have detailed privacy rules to protect the personal information of customers and employees. But unless the protocols are enforced they aren't worth the paper they're written on. That was the Data Privacy Day message from Brent Homan, deputy commissioner for compliance at the [Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada](#) (OPC).



The public sector is [an attractive target for cybercriminals](#). This is evidenced by the growing number of successful and highly-publicised attacks. While public sector organizations are becoming more digitally mature, many are overstretched and under-resourced, particularly when it comes to matters of cybersecurity. The right cybersecurity and technology partner has become essential in helping the public sector mitigate, manage, and remediate this growing threat.



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