

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY BOARD

Hybrid Work Environment Subcommittee Report & Recommendations

1 December 2022

Subcommittee Members

- **David Abelson** - Abelson Partners, LLC
- **Amy Fitzgerald** - Government Affairs Director, Oak Ridge, TN
- **Celeste Greene** - Professor, University of Virginia
- **Frazer Lockhart** - Private Consultant
- **Nicole Martinez** - Associate Professor, Clemson University
- **Josiah Pinkham** - State and Tribal Government Representative
- **Michael Shapiro** - Private Consultant
- **Jake Washington** - Federal Portfolio Director, Jacobs

The Challenge

The COVID-19 Pandemic forced agencies to transition to a new way of working. As DOE-EM considers the post hybrid work environment, you seek lessons learned and best practices to reimagine how the agency can best perform its mission, taking into consideration the needs and equities of its **work force, partners & external stakeholders**

Charges

1. How can EM leverage hybrid and virtual flexibilities to enhance agility and flexibility?
2. How can EM empower federal and contractor employees with efficient workspaces and technology that minimize hybrid workplace challenges?
3. What are best practices to balance needs with a flexible hybrid workplace culture?
4. How can EM foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive hybrid work environment?
5. What are best practices for office hoteling?
6. How best to function with stakeholders in a hybrid environment? (added)

Subcommittee Topic and Recommendations

Topic 1. How can EM leverage hybrid and virtual flexibilities to enhance agility and efficiency?

- ▶ Utilize hybrid workplace tools to rapidly bring together dispersed expertise
- ▶ Use hybrid/virtual meetings to reinforce internal and external communications and relationships
- ▶ Identify and disseminate best practices across DOE/EM
- ▶ EM units should review internal and external interaction requirements to determine suitability for in-person, hybrid or virtual approaches
- ▶ Recognize the technical and mobility limitations of tribal and other stakeholders and create targeted communication approaches

Subcommittee Topic and Recommendations

Topic 2. How can EM empower federal and contractor employees with efficient workspaces and technology that minimize hybrid workplace challenges?

- Invest in meeting spaces that are adequately sized, well equipped, and staffed for effective hybrid communications
- Ensure that contractors deploy similar and compatible meeting space technologies
- Empower site management teams to determine what is best for the workforce given each site's unique circumstances
- Assign individual workspaces based on time in office, ranging from fully equipped workstations to hoteling

Subcommittee Topic and Recommendations

Topic 3. **What are best practices to balance mission needs with a flexible hybrid workplace culture?**

- Avoid a one size fits all approach, focus on the specific needs of each position and assignment
- Rethink how work is being done and what activities require or benefit significantly from in person interaction.
- Set clearly-defined expectations and procedures that ensure consistency between in-office and hybrid/virtual work
- Leaders must ensure that their organizations support onboarding, training, mentoring and effective team interaction

Subcommittee Topic and Recommendations

Continued Topic 3. What are best practices to balance mission needs with a flexible hybrid workplace culture?

- ▶ Unexpectedness and urgency of COVID drove hasty implementation
- ▶ Comprehensive planning and deliberate implementation is key for an effective hybrid environment
 - ▶ Analysis covers entire workforce - comprehensiveness
 - ▶ Worker engagement in planning - transparency
 - ▶ Involvement of HR/Diversity & Inclusion Office in policy setting - diversity and inclusion
 - ▶ Coordination of hybrid work designation with annual performance management
- ▶ Initial analysis matrix recommended to provide quick first step in the planning and analysis

Subcommittee Topic and Recommendation

Topic 4. How can EM foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive hybrid environment?

- ▶ Avoid a “one size fits all” approach
- ▶ Differentiate work activities best performed in-person, remotely, and where such a consideration is neutral
 - ▶ Mission requirements and effectiveness should dictate
 - ▶ Performance standards and expectations must be consistent
 - ▶ Clear administrative procedures, including time-keeping, must be established
- ▶ Involvement of HR/Diversity & Inclusion Office in policy setting - diversity and inclusion
- ▶ Leaders must be held to a higher standard and set the “return to work example

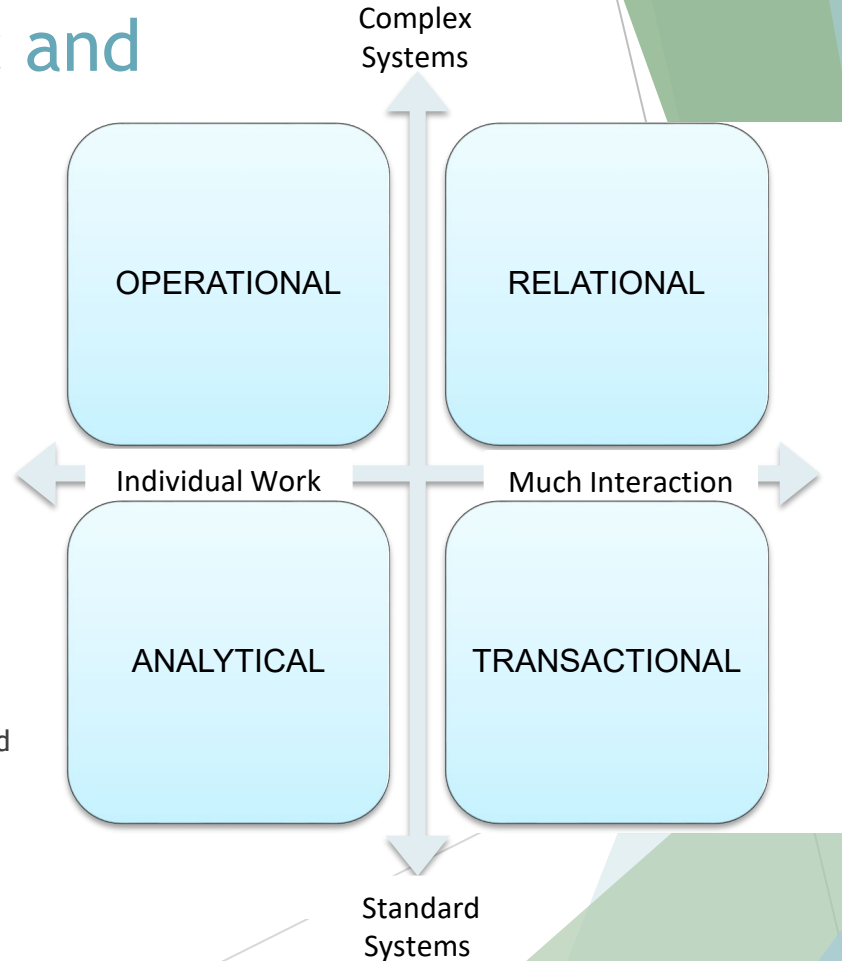
Subcommittee Topic and Recommendation

Operational - implement processes or operate equipment, often in the field; interaction high, but well-defined and consistent (Equipment operators, environmental sampling, field technicians, safety officers). Least appropriate for a hybrid environment.

Relational - involves people interfaces; interaction is the focus of the position (Managers, supervisors, stakeholder affairs) Usually less appropriate for hybrid environments.

Analytical - individual or small teams that require concentration; minimal interaction (Accountants, safety analysts). Most appropriate for a hybrid environment.

Transactional - completion of process steps and transfer to others; interaction varies widely (Procurement, records management, quality assurance). Can be appropriate for hybrid environments depending on the interfaces.



Subcommittee Topic and Recommendation

Topic 5. What are best practices for office hoteling?

- ▶ Establish on-line calendar tool for reserving hoteling stations
 - ▶ Floor plan tool for quickly locating assigned stations
- ▶ Separate hoteling stations from designated full-time stations
- ▶ Regular housekeeping important effective hybrid environment
- ▶ Well configured hoteling stations with on-site IT support
- ▶ Monitor user feedback for continuous improvement
- ▶ Initial analysis matrix recommended to provide quick first step in the planning and analysis

Subcommittee Topic and Recommendation

Topic 6. How best to function with stakeholders in a hybrid environment?

Stakeholder interaction in a hybrid work environment can vary widely based upon the complexity of the issues, number of participants, and extent of dialogue

- ▶ Understand the dynamics of each stakeholder engagement to best balance in-person and remote participation
- ▶ Consider the physical and technological limitations of under-represented stakeholder groups, including ability to travel and effectively participate remotely
- ▶ Avoid unintended inequities and in establishing the optimum hybrid environment
- ▶ Consider timeframes for decision-making from the stakeholder perspective to avoid apparent pressure to accelerate decision timeframes.
- ▶ Consider the ‘trust factor’ more inherent in face-to-face interactions

Summary & Conclusions

1. Avoid “One size fits all” approach - solutions must be tailored to circumstances and mission requirements of component units of EM
2. Component level leaders, especially field offices, must assess, implement, tailored hybrid workplace solutions to balance mission and stakeholder needs - and **lead by example**
3. Communicate continuously with staff and stakeholders and be prepared to adjust as necessary
4. Avoid unintended inequities that may manifest as a result of not fully understanding the capabilities of invested parties, and engage HR and DEI staff in policy-setting and a continual process of communication with stakeholders
5. Additional study is required to understand and develop hybrid solutions for each major field site/stakeholder community

Questions

The background features abstract geometric shapes in shades of green and blue. A prominent dark green shape is on the right side, overlapping with lighter green and blue shapes. The overall design is clean and modern.