

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

JUNE 2023

Project Background

Like other major employers, the University of Iowa has used lessons from COVID-19 era operations to **modernize policies and practices for flexible work**. Since its start in 2020, the Future of Work@Iowa project has examined the potential for remote and hybrid work, flexible schedules, and similar arrangements in a residential campus environment. The project supports the university's [strategic plan](#) priorities, including goals for holistic well-being and success.

University Human Resources (UHR) and cross-campus partners conducted a **pilot implementation** of flexible-work practices during 2021-2022. The pilot demonstrated that flexible work is a useful option for roles that can be performed from remote locations or on alternative schedules. It can expand services, save space and money, support employee well-being, and help the university compete for talent.

This report summarizes implementation milestones and assessment data from the year since the pilot concluded. New service-satisfaction measures and the 2022 Working at Iowa engagement survey further indicate that flexible work has become an effective, established option for employees in select roles.

Flexible work is not the new norm. Most faculty and staff roles require on-campus work that provides the residential campus experience students expect. The pilot and subsequent experience described in this report show how the University of Iowa can provide both selective flexibility and a robust student experience.

Micro-Unit Accomplishments

In May 2022, UHR assigned a **micro-unit of existing staff** to lead implementation of flexible work arrangements. This group of staff focused on communication, risk mitigation, training, assessment, and evaluation. Specific accomplishments include:

- **Unified systems:** UI Health Care and the main campus now share common systems for documenting work arrangements and generating related reports.
- **Performance review integration:** Supervisors can now assess remote, hybrid, or flexible-schedule arrangements during annual performance reviews. For employees with active in-state arrangements, the online Performance Review Tool asks supervisors to review existing arrangements and extend them as-is or work with employees on modifications.
- **Multi-state review:** The university established a compliance committee and contracted with employment-law firm Ogletree Deakins to consult on out-of-state work arrangements. The firm delivered recommendations on managing out-of-state work and will continue to assist with risk mitigation—see additional information below.

- **Remote-employee residency attestation:** Employees with fully remote work arrangements annually confirm their state residency (whether Iowa or other states).
- **Supervisor training:** New training on leading remote and hybrid teams covers preparation for successful remote/hybrid experiences, ongoing engagement with employees working remotely, and holding crucial conversations in remote/hybrid environments. Of the 125 supervisors who've completed the training:
 - 97% said they learned a new skill or information they can apply in their work.
 - 98% said they have the confidence to apply this skill/information in their work.

Multi-State Implementation

Work performed outside the state of Iowa requires special attention to payroll and tax situations, multi-state labor laws, employment eligibility verification, and other issues. Out-of-state arrangements are subject to additional documentation and review.

The vast majority of remote/hybrid employees work from locations within Iowa. Units must provide business rationales—for example, a hard-to-fill position or a uniquely qualified candidate—to support out-of-state work. As of May 2023, only about 5% of remote/hybrid employees worked outside the state.

In spring 2022, the university established the Multi-State Compliance Committee to collaborate with outside vendor Ogletree-Deakins on decisions related to out-of-state employment practices. The committee:

- Received individual risk assessments from Ogletree-Deakins for all 50 U.S. states and Washington, D.C.
- Benchmarked practices at peer institutions
- Performed ongoing review and alignment of payroll tax withholding and reporting for out-of-state employees
- Delivered recommendations to leadership
- Created and implemented an annual work-location attestation process

An advisory committee to be established during summer 2023 will continue to clarify and implement out-of-state work policies and practices.

Effective Outcomes

Assessment was an important aspect of the pilot implementation and April 2022 report. Follow-up assessments have yielded similar findings. This experience demonstrates remote/hybrid employees can provide effective service, even in select customer-facing roles.

Student Wellness

Pilot summary: Students preferred online/phone appointments for basic information and stress management, versus in-person meetings for fitness and nutrition information. Both formats showed similar satisfaction levels.

Follow-up findings: Students today prefer online/phone meetings for all services besides fitness. In-person appointments have increased, but students continue to express similar satisfaction with both meeting formats.

Student Legal Services (SLS)

Pilot summary: 95% of student clients rated online and in-person appointments as similar in quality. About 48% said they prefer online meetings for future appointments (versus 13% who prefer in-person meetings).

Follow-up findings: Students continue to have the option of booking online or in-person meetings. For fiscal year 2023 to date, 60% have selected online meetings. SLS continues to offer online options to meet student needs, provide staff flexibility, and save on office space.

University Counseling Services

Pilot summary: Clients generally preferred in-person counseling but reported 99% satisfaction with both in-person and online services.

Follow-up findings: No change since 2022—most clients choose in-person counseling but want to retain online options. All services scored a 99% satisfaction rate.

University Human Resources

Pilot summary: Online services showed a 95% satisfaction rate among campus human resources professionals.

Follow-up findings: Satisfaction with service-delivery methods—including online services—has risen to 98%. About 12% would prefer another service-delivery method than the one they experienced, down from 27% in 2022. Email, especially, is more regularly used and preferred.

Workplace Engagement

The 2022 Working at Iowa survey of staff and faculty segmented respondents by work arrangement. Remote and hybrid respondents generally reported higher levels of agreement with survey items, including these key statements:

Q1: I know my work expectations.

	% agreed
On-campus	95%
Hybrid	95%
Remote	98%

Q8: My unit focuses on excellent service.

	% agreed
On-campus	91%
Hybrid	97%
Remote	97%

Q10: My unit supports work and personal life.

	% agreed
On-campus	78%
Hybrid	92%
Remote	92%

Future Focus

Over the next year, ongoing management will focus on:

- Continuing to emphasize residential campus student experience in decisions about policies, general practices, and day-to-day operations.
- Supporting supervisors who lead remote/hybrid teams.
- Developing cultural practices and opportunities that enhance engagement among all employees regardless of work location.
- Forming an advisory committee to finalize longer-term policy and processes associated with out-of-state remote work.
- Conducting biannual reviews to determine the impact of work arrangements on retention, workplace engagement, and other factors.