



GATE

4-day Workweek Pilot Assessment

(September-December 2024)



Background & Summary

Seeking to enhance well-being and boost productivity while maintaining work standards, GATE introduced a 4-day workweek pilot in September with a four-month duration. Staff were instructed to adhere to the policy strictly and do no work on Fridays. It was also emphasized that **the point of this pilot was not to condense a five-day workweek into four but rather reduce the number of days and hours that staff work overall**. At the start of the pilot, all GATE staff completed a survey to assess the baseline, recording their expectations and concerns. At the midpoint in late October, another survey was conducted for assessment purposes, and at the end of the pilot, staff engaged in 1:1 interviews.

The pilot concluded with positive feedback. All staff expressed satisfaction and noted an improved work-life balance. They indicated feeling more productive, motivated and focused during the four-day workweek. Additionally, staff reported adequate rest over the three-day weekend, significantly improving their overall mood, well-being and health. This balance has allowed them to enrich other areas of their lives by spending more time with family, exercising, taking courses and getting involved in local activism.

Measures for launching phase (September)

Upon launching the 4-day workweek pilot, GATE implemented a series of procedures to make a smooth transition:

- * standard automatic email replies were sent out;
- * a guidance document to support staff was created;
- * staff meetings were moments of discussion about how staff was managing and coping with the shortened workweek;
- * partners and frequent collaborators were notified about the pilot.

However, one exception was made to the 4-day workweek rule—staff needed to work on Fridays while traveling or at a conference.

Overall, staff spoke of feeling supported, but some admitted they might need additional support going forward to manage their workloads better, especially since newer staff have come from organizations with more grueling expectations and workloads.

GATE's initial concerns

Initial concerns at baseline included questions on prioritization, output, and compliance (ensuring staff adhered to a strict no-work policy on Friday). Staff also identified specific support they might require, including fluid communications and ongoing check-ins as the pilot unfolded. How would peer organizations and partners react was also a raised concern. Overall, all staff expressed optimism and enthusiasm for the pilot from the onset.

Midpoint review findings (late October)

At the midpoint review, staff expressed satisfaction with the 4-day workweek pilot. Staff noted:

- * Productivity has not been negatively impacted but rather increased;
- * Feeling less stressed and better able to devote time to family, activism and health-related concerns since they now have a three-day weekend;
- * Shorter workweeks better accommodate (some) staff's grueling travel schedules and allow them to recharge.
- * Feeling more motivated and thus more productive in their four work days.

However, some staff noted that due to work demands, they had to make some exceptions and occasionally work on Fridays. In this instance, staff acknowledged that they will hopefully be able to avoid work on Fridays going forward with additional staffing support. While some staff admitted that the first month felt "intense," most thought they had fallen into a **pattern of being more focused, efficient, and motivated** to complete the work in four days. The staff **rarely felt this pattern required them to work extra long days during any of the four work days.**

Sticking points

The occasional exception of working on Friday is the only sticking point that came up. As staff noted, even this point is likely part of a work in progress. Another potential sticking point was the reaction of peer organizations and partners. This initial concern included the fear that partner organizations, especially those with fewer resources (e.g., budget or staff), might judge GATE for such a policy. However, GATE staff reported that **organizations and partners have been very supportive.** Staff also expressed concern about coordination with external organizations and partners. Still, they don't believe the condensed workweek has impacted this negatively, and collaboration was still possible.

Success Modeling

GATE's 4-day workweek pilot has created a ripple effect, **encouraging some other organizations to wonder if they should pilot a similar initiative.** Although GATE can be seen as an organization with certain advantages among trans-led organizations, it still faces many of the same challenges and heavy workloads as others. Therefore, **successfully executing such a transition proves a model for other organizations.**

It's worth noting several **factors that likely contributed to the success** of this pilot:

- * All the staff, including leadership, bought in;
- * GATE is a relatively small organization;
- * No staff had performance issues;
- * Although GATE has a hard-working and high-productivity culture, its leadership has consistently stressed work-life balance.

Furthermore, staff noted that it was **meaningful and inspiring that leadership clearly cares so much about their well-being and prioritizes it** with concrete, tangible actions. One staff member even noted that while additional funds for professional development, for example, are appreciated, **this policy signaled a deep dedication and care for the staff as human beings.**

Achievements and importance

As staff understand the necessity of protecting their well-being, they have begun to decline work outside their work plans on certain occasions. Although one of GATE's priorities is staff well-being, one staff member remarked that it will continue to be essential to be responsive and nimble to the movement.

The staff even have jokingly wondered what they did on the fifth work day in the previous 5-day workweek model. This may indicate that when given more time, people will stretch duties out (i.e., take more time doing those tasks) or delay certain activities (i.e., not starting or completing tasks as quickly as they could because they knew they had an extra day, i.e., Friday to complete it). Staff say that they have become:

"masters at time management and much more focused."

Given the prevalence of burnout in the non-profit sector, especially in those organizations working with marginalized communities and human rights, this pilot showed to be innovative and future-oriented. **It allows staff to center their well-being and show up with more motivation and focus at work.** One staff noted:

"I have worked across different networks and organizations, and I feel that everyone often preaches wellness and uses it as a dangling carrot. GATE has been the exception to this finding because GATE is intentional about wellness and ensuring that the team is not too overburdened."

Staff observed that the pilot proved that leadership profoundly cares about their well-being. The fact that other organizations are considering replicating this model also speaks volumes. Staff have indicated that this model can, eventually, **help staff retention and avoid turnover (and associated costs).**

In short, all staff are pleased with the pilot and do not feel productivity has suffered. All noted an **essential boost to their morale and motivation.** Many also acknowledged that this has **helped them navigate challenging political and personal situations.** They have expressed appreciation for staff check-ins to share strategies and reflect on managing this new schedule. Staff strongly **agree to continue with a permanent 4-day workweek policy.** As one staff commented:

"We have enhanced our well-being without sacrificing efficiency as an organization."