



Business Smart.
Family Friendly.
Future Ready.

Supportive Workplaces, Stronger Families

Thousands of North Carolinians Now Work for Family Forward NC[®] Certified Employers



2022-2023 BIENNIAL REPORT

FAMILY FORWARD NC® 2022-2023 BIENNIAL REPORT

The last two years have represented tremendous growth for Family Forward NC®—both within North Carolina and across the country.



We have consistently developed partnerships among economic development organizations and the North Carolina Department of Commerce, allowing us to continue to position family-friendly workplaces as an economic issue and Family Forward NC as one solution.

We launched our certification program, the only kind in the state and one of the few certification programs in the country.

We created a licensed version of our work called *How to Build a Family Forward Community*, which has allowed us to expand the reach of Family Forward NC outside of North Carolina to states across the country.

This report highlights all of the ways Family Forward NC has reached new heights—expanding our reach, recognition and impact—in 2022 and 2023.

The Family Forward NC® Employer Certification

The Family Forward NC Employer Certification, launched in 2022, designates employers that offer policies and practices that support the health and well-being of working families and children.

To achieve certification, an employer must offer best-practice policies in one or more of five main areas: 1. paid leave and wages 2. accommodations for pregnant and breastfeeding workers 3. child care 4. health and wellness benefits 5. scheduling practices

Family Forward NC defines best-practice policies through:

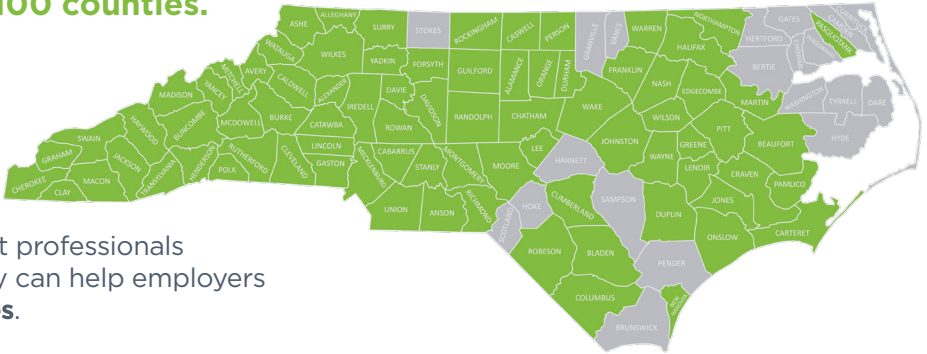
- the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation’s [Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Measures of Success and Action Frameworks](#)
- guidance from medical organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics or the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- guidance from our partners in early childhood organizations, including the Child Care Services Association, MomsRising, the North Carolina Breastfeeding Association, and others



OUR 2022-2023 IMPACT

We're in 77 of North Carolina's 100 counties.

- There are **20 counties** with at least one certified employer.
- We've presented our work locally or partnered with local organizations in **19 counties**.
- We've trained economic development professionals and small business counselors so they can help employers in their own community in **72 counties**.



Family-friendly workplaces are top-of-mind across the state.

We've helped **135 economic development professionals** understand the value of family-friendly workplaces to their communities.

We've also been featured in some notable places, like:

- in the North Carolina Department of Commerce's [state economic development plan](#) and in the [one-year progress report](#) for the plan
- at the 2022 NCWorks Partnership Conference
- at the NC Rural Center's 2023 Rural Summit
- at the North Carolina Manufacturing Conference, MFGCON, North Carolina's manufacturing conference
- in a webinar series for members of the North Carolina Economic Development Association
- at the 2023 Institute for Emerging Issues [Talent First Economics Forum](#)

Organizations across the country are recognizing our unique initiative and sharing it with their members and stakeholders including:

- The International Economic Development Council [Growing Your Workforce: Strategies to Raise Local Labor Force Participation](#)
- NC Institute of Medicine [Pandemic Preparedness, Response, and a Resilient Future for North Carolina, October 2022](#)
- US Department of Health and Human Services [2023/2024 Prevention Resource Guide](#)
- Women NYC [Towards A Working Future: A Child Care Toolkit for New York City Employees](#)

More than 6,000 North Carolinians (and growing!) now work for a Family Forward NC Certified Employer.

Certified employers must undergo an in-depth application process to ensure they are offering policies and practices that support children and families before they are approved.

Quick Facts | Family Forward NC Employers



- **By the end of 2023, we had 35 certified employers**
- **The majority of our certified employers offer:**
 - » paid parental leave (ranging from one to 12+ weeks)
 - » remote work options (when possible)
 - » a set or predictable schedule
 - » health insurance coverage for employees and their dependents
 - » paid time off (PTO), defined as a single leave policy that covers all absences from work for vacation, short-term sickness (for employees and their family members), or personal reasons including a critical safety need
- **On average, certified employers have 50 or fewer employees,** which shows it's possible for small businesses to be family friendly!
- **Certified employers represent eight industries,** including manufacturing and industrial, media and communications, and nonprofits.
- **Certified employers have received media mentions across the state, including in the following publications:**
 - » News Herald in Morganton
 - » Blue Ridge Now
 - » Greater Fayetteville Business Journal
 - » Greensboro News and Record
 - » Winston-Salem Journal
- **In addition to the media coverage, our newly certified employers have shared stories** in their own blogs, on their websites, and in their social media using materials provided to them in a communications toolkit they receive when they become certified.

Here are a few examples:

- » [a web story from Capitol Broadcasting Corporation](#)
- » [a logo and mention on the employment page on BIOMILQ's website](#)
- » [a press release from the John Rex Endowment](#)
- » [social media posts from SPANISH FOR FUN!](#)
- » [a blog post by Unity Web Agency](#)

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Long-standing partnerships show our success over time.

Since the launch of Family Forward NC, partnerships with chambers of commerce, trade associations, economic development offices and individual employers have been key to the success of the initiative. Below is a quick snapshot of how three of those partnerships have evolved over time.

Greensboro Chamber of Commerce and The City of Greensboro

Family Forward NC first partnered with the City of Greensboro, Greensboro Chamber of Commerce and Action Greensboro in 2019, when [65 area employers](#) came together to learn about family-friendly workplaces as part of Action Greensboro's Talent Together Lunch & Learn series.



In 2023, the Greensboro Chamber became the first chamber of commerce in the state to become certified, and The City of Greensboro became the first metro city to be certified. At the announcement of the city's certification, Greensboro city manager Taiwo Jaiyeoba said, "I want everyone who works for us right now and those who are going to work for our city to understand that this badge means something," he said. "It means we're a place where you can actually live your life while at the same time producing your best. At the end of the day, it's got to be about family first, and then work gets better."

Over the next couple of years, Family Forward NC and Action Greensboro will work closely together as part of the Chamber's ensure the city

is prosperous, resilient, and ready for the future, with a vibrant workforce that includes young professionals, working parents and caregivers who feel supported, and businesses that want to stay in Greensboro or relocate to the area. Our goal is for Greensboro to become the first Family Forward NC Certified Community. Stay tuned for a larger public announcement in February!

Eastcut Sandwich Bar

Eastcut Sandwich Bar—a self-described "sandwich utopia" with one location in Durham and one in Raleigh—was our featured employer case study in April 2021. Eastcut offers family-friendly policies that are unusual in the restaurant industry—paid time off and paid parental leave—which have directly contributed to lowering turnover.



"Our turnover data has really gone in the right direction, and we've been able to attract stronger, more motivated and stable talent," said Brad Bankos, [one of the co-owners](#), in an interview for the case study.

Steve Wuench, Eastcut's other co-owner, also [served on the Advisory Council](#) of employers and experts who supported the certification creation, representing both the voice of small business owners and employers in the restaurant industry.

Aeroflow Healthcare

Asheville-based Aeroflow Healthcare, a durable medical equipment provider, was one of the original employers featured in the original Guide to Family Forward Workplaces in 2018. We featured the company's [newly expanded paid parental leave policy](#) and newly opened pumping room for breastfeeding parents at its Asheville headquarters.

Since then, Aeroflow has continued to prove its commitment to its employees and its community, and our partnership has expanded.

In 2019, Jennifer Jordan, vice president of Aeroflow's Mom & Baby Division, celebrated [World Breastfeeding Week](#) with us by announcing the company's annual [Pumping Room Makeover Contest](#).



In 2022, Aeroflow's Director of Human Resources Marshall Staton shared a breakdown of the return on investment from Aeroflow's family-friendly policies to encourage other employers to become more family friendly. ["The result of offering these benefits is really almost impossible to quantify," he said.](#) It's been a huge success. In broad terms, our new parents are happy, they're healthy, they're engaged in the work that they're doing, and they're productive when they come back to work. The retention rate for new parents is extremely high... Because we've supported them through what is often a really challenging transition in their lives, they are loyal to the company and they often stay here long term. From a pure dollars and cents perspective, it also saves us money in recruiting costs and helps increase production of these employees."

Finally, in 2023, Aeroflow became a Family Forward NC Certified Employer—officially showcasing its commitment to children and families across North Carolina.

Licensing initiative encourages other states to become Family Forward.

Since the launch of our Guide to Family Forward Workplaces, we've been contacted by organizations outside the state of North Carolina who are looking to inspire employers in their own communities. So in 2022, we created a playbook to help other communities do just that.

Our How to Build a Family Forward Community resource takes what we've learned and shares it with early childhood and business leaders with the hope that they will use it to make their community more family-friendly, too. So far, leaders in six states – Kansas, Colorado, Minnesota, Florida, Montana and Pennsylvania – have purchased all or part of the licensed materials, and new initiatives based on Family Forward NC's work are launching across the country! Below is a quick snapshot of Bosses for Babies, an initiative of The Children's Movement of Florida.

Launched in 2022, [Bosses for Babies](#) is a statewide initiative designed to meaningfully engage business leaders in boosting their workforce and contributing to community prosperity through family-friendly policies. The Children's Movement of Florida purchased a license from Family Forward NC to use our Guide to Family Forward Workplaces as a research base for its own [Guide to Family-Friendly Workplaces in Florida](#), released in June of 2023.

"In this tight labor market, employee retention is becoming ever more critical in sectors ranging from tourism to manufacturing. Businesses need to consider creative solutions like offering child care and employee health services as they compete to attract and retain high-performing employees in their industries. The EDPNC—which works on the state's behalf in business recruitment, existing industry expansion, small business support, and tourism promotion—is eager to partner with Family Forward NC to help many of our state's businesses identify these types of resources."

Chris Chung, Chief Executive Officer, Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

Bringing in New Perspectives

Employers across NC continue to search for new ways to tap into talent and retain employees. We partnered with experts on these issues to share successful strategies in what a retention specialist called the “war for talent.”

For the NC Rural Summit and the North Carolina Manufacturing Conference, MFGCON, we shared the stage with The Industrial Commons to educate and engage employers about the value of a family friendly workplace and the power of employee committees to both workers and employers.

At a workshop at the Strategic Twin Counties Education Partnership Summit we interviewed the Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce President about why he sees addressing child care challenges in our state as an economic development issue for his community.

Where we're headed in 2024-2025

The next two years will bring continued growth. In 2024 and 2025, we will:

- pilot an initiative with the city of Greensboro to create a Family Forward NC Community Certification, with the goal of expanding that work to other communities across the state
- continue to expand Family Forward NC Employer Certification across the state
- continue building a bench of advocates who can advocate for public policy and reform;
- build out exclusive programming for certified employers
- share aggregate data and learnings from certified employers, creating the first statewide look at the landscape of family-friendly employers in North Carolina



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Family Forward NC® is an initiative of the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation.