



2022 Family-Friendly Focus



The Family-Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program is a partnership among First 5 San Luis Obispo County, the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce and the County of San Luis Obispo. This FREE initiative, housed within the Chamber, aims to help businesses hire and retain employees, support working parents' balance between job and home life, and bolster the economic vitality of our communities. The program builds on the SLO County Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit which was created by the "We Are the Care" Initiative – a countywide coalition dedicated to addressing local child care and related work-life balance challenges faced by local families.

APRIL HERO: Tolosa Winery

When you give back to your employees and their families, you help to build a strong and fiercely loyal team. That's what Tolosa Winery believes—and the approach is yielding great outcomes on a number of levels.

Established in 1998 and located in the Edna Valley area of San Luis Obispo, Tolosa has 60 year-round employees with additional seasonal workers hired each harvest season. Over the last two years, the winery watched its employees' professional-personal life balance improve greatly from the ability to work at home, a move initiated amid COVID-19 to keep people safe and operations running. Many employees expressed gratitude for the newfound flexibility it allowed for their families. That feedback was a catalyst for additional changes, prompting the company to not only encourage the hybrid model for its office staff but to also start offering a 4/10 weekly schedule for its production team (four ten-hour days). The new compressed schedule gives those employees three-day weekends, yielding even more family time. Plus, taking advantage of the extra time off for appointments and errands means employees can be more focused and productive when they are on the job. Once again, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

The pandemic, coupled with the growing popularity of remote work, has accelerated the implementation of compressed work weeks and similar plans. Research shows that compressed work weeks have many benefits. They're good for employers who save money on utilities,

overhead and operating costs and see increased productivity. They serve to improve customer service, as organizations can remain open longer to the public, particularly if employees' days off are staggered. They're also a smart move toward sustainability, helping to lower the carbon footprint by reducing overall energy consumption, including emissions accrued via commute time. The practice is taking hold all over the world, and growing evidence suggests the U.S. is beginning to follow suit, as more firms weigh the pros and cons while paying close attention to the intellectual capital of individual employees and their businesses collectively.

But these kinds of cultural shifts start at the top. Tolosa gives primary credit to its CEO, June McIvor, who encourages her team to think outside of the box. She is continuously advocating for employees, whether it's modified schedules, additional time off, educational opportunities, or a platform to be heard. The company is committed to opening the door to conversation on individual needs instead of sticking to a blanket, one-size-fits-all plan. Tolosa understands that San Luis Obispo County can be a fantastic place to raise a family and that as an employer they are playing a key role -- that healthier families equate to healthier communities and better quality of life for all. We look forward to Tolosa's continued example of innovative family-friendly workplace practices and its expanded presence on the Central Coast with the opening of a new tasting room in Paso Robles this summer.



To learn more about the Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit, visit slofamilyfriendlywork.org. For information on the Family-Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program, contact the SLO Chamber's Workforce Development Manager, Christina Lefevre Latner, at (805) 786-2762 or christina@slochamber.org. To learn more about early-childhood related initiatives, go to first5slo.org.