



# 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.

## MAY HERO: The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County

As deeply as The Land Conservancy cares for and tends to the diverse landscapes in SLO County, it makes the same heartfelt effort for its 25+ employees and families. This local non-profit has served the Central Coast for 38 years and, in that time, has discovered how incredibly worthwhile family-friendly policies and practices are to its essence as a community-centric organization that connects people to the land and to each other.

A major shift happened between 2012 and 2015, during what you might call a bit of a baby boom at The Land Conservancy, when several employees became new parents all around the same time. The organization decided it needed to offer better paid leave for its young families and, as such, started bolstering its benefit package. The Land Conservancy integrated with California's paid family leave and medical leave programs and offers its employees up to 14 weeks of their full-time pay for a qualifying event or situation. The organization makes up the difference between what the state pays and their regular pay, giving employees 100% of their salary while on leave.

This specific policy was not in place when Kaila Dettman, who is now the Executive Director there, had her first child in 2011. She recalls feeling the squeeze of hospital bills and significant life change while trying to take her full maternity leave, even though The Land Conservancy offered other benefits. Dettman has since witnessed the many positive aspects of generous PTO and flex perks, including high recruitment and employee retention rates, especially among the management and director-level staff. While the approach requires some extra administration

and paperwork, Dettman says, from a cost-savings standpoint it fits into what they would expect to pay an employee in a given year. The return-on-investment for employees' well-being is significant; they report feeling supported and less stressed, and all who have used the program have returned to work after their leave.

Like Dettman, the Board, Deputy Director and Operations Manager have also been instrumental in developing a culture of care for working parent-employees. The Land Conservancy allows babies and children at the office (most common when schools are closed), although remote-work capabilities have reduced the need overall. It also offers comprehensive insurance plans, paid holidays and even paid time, once per quarter, for hiking at one of their properties... significant others and children are welcome!

As a non-profit, The Land Conservancy pays special attention to spending its funds responsibly. While similarly structured organizations can't always pay the top salaries, family-friendly policies make it possible for highly skilled individuals to remain part of the team and to thrive. Many businesses, both small and large, are learning they can't afford NOT to offer these kinds of benefits, as they are so closely linked to a healthier community and better quality of life. We're grateful for and inspired by the example The Land Conservancy is setting on the Central Coast!



To learn more about the Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit, visit [slofamilyfriendlywork.org](http://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](mailto:christina@slochamber.org). To learn more about early-childhood related initiatives, go to [first5slo.org](http://first5slo.org).