

Brochure 3 of 4

Advancing Family-Friendly Policies

Building Family-Friendly Workplaces: A Toolkit for Business



BACKGROUND

Advancing family-friendly policies—which include understanding workplace-specific challenges and priorities, planning and developing family-friendly policies, implementing these policies, and measuring the effectiveness of these policies—should fit real workplace conditions, budgets, and infrastructure. There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

UNICEF's Toolkit guidance outlines how organizations can take a practical, step-by-step approach, starting with what is feasible, adapting to their context, and improving over time.

Rather than a one-time rollout, advancing family-friendly policies is an ongoing journey. It involves testing what works, integrating policies into operations, gathering feedback, and refining approaches to ensure they deliver for both employees and business.

WHAT ARE FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES?

Family-friendly policies are workplace measures and arrangements that enable employees to balance their work and family responsibilities. UNICEF takes a child rights lens, recognizing that when employees are supported as caregivers, businesses benefit from a more stable, productive, and engaged workforce which in turn creates a nurturing environment for children's development.

Family-friendly policies can include:

- A mix of paid parental leave (e.g., maternity, paternity, parental, child caring, emergency leave)
- Flexible working arrangements
- Breastfeeding support
- Affordable and quality childcare
- Protection of basic labour rights

Family-friendly policies are inclusive of all types of families and caregiving arrangements, including single parents, adoptive and foster families, LGBTIQ+ parents, kinship carers, and others.

FOLLOW A 4-STEP FRAMEWORK

Adopting the following 4-Step Framework supports effective implementation that is phased and practical, focusing on real-world application and continuous improvement over time.

1

Understanding Challenges and Priorities. Build an understanding of workplace-specific needs, barriers, and priority areas.

- What implementation barriers are in the industry?
- What are unique challenges the business faces?
- What are your employees' caregiving needs and priorities?

2

Planning and Developing Policies. Develop practical, context-appropriate policies that align with your capabilities. To design family-friendly policies that work consider:

- Are the policies inclusive, sustainable, and flexible?
- What existing resources and support can the company leverage?
- What culture or social norms should the company be aware of?
- What is the state of physical and digital infrastructure required to implement these policies?

3

Implementing Family-Friendly Policies. Ensure adoption and uptake internally and across the value chain.

- How can buy-in from key internal stakeholders be secured?
- How can businesses promote uptake through effective communications?
- How can businesses promote uptake with suppliers and franchises?

4

Measuring Family-Friendly Policies. Track effectiveness of family-friendly policies in achieving business goal.

- What key considerations should be taken into account in business reporting?
- How can policy effectiveness be tracked using metrics to assess outputs and outcomes?

MEASURING IMPACT

Monitoring and measuring impacts ensures policies are working and support continuous improvement and implementation over time. Focus on simple, practical indicators and make adjustments over time:

For workers:

- Use and uptake of policies
- Employee feedback and satisfaction
- Reduced absenteeism and return-to-work rates after leave

For operations:

- Productivity and workforce continuity
- Turnover and recruitment costs

KEY CONSIDERATIONS THROUGHOUT YOUR JOURNEY

Successful advancement of family-friendly policies is shaped by worker engagement, phased approaches, and practical solutions to real-world challenges.

1) Employee Engagement. A key success factor is employee consultation and dialogue. Policies are more effective when shaped by real worker input. This improves both design and uptake.

- Engage employees early to understand needs and barriers
- Utilize feedback to refine how policies are implemented
- Involve workers across the organization including employee unions and associations

2) Phasing Your Approach & Managing Costs.

Advancing family-friendly policies does not need to be immediate or large-scale. A phased approach reduces risk and makes the journey more manageable.

- Start with lower-cost, high-impact changes such as flexible schedules and leave adjustments
- Explore partnerships or where government resources can be leveraged
- Phase in more complex investments over time

3) Common Challenges and Practical Solutions.

- Operational and workflow constraints: Adapt policies to fit operational and workflow realities such as shift schedules and required physical presence.
- Low uptake or awareness: Train managers, communicate clearly, and normalize use so workers feel able to use policies.
- Limited resources and infrastructure: Start small, phase implementation, and use partnerships where needed, such as childcare.

DIFFERENCES ACROSS SECTORS

Advancing family-friendly policies will vary by workplace and must be adapted to real working conditions. The examples below present how different companies have advanced family-friendly policies while addressing challenges in their sectors.

- **Farms:** Seasonal and rural contexts require flexible, community-based solutions. In tea farms in Rwanda, the introduction of mobile childcare support led to up to **34% higher productivity** among workers than those without childcare.
- **Factories:** Shift-based production and fixed schedules require well-designed coverage systems. Evidence from UNICEF's Mothers@Work programme in Bangladesh highlights that paid maternity leave is a critical driver of workforce retention, with **60% of women** citing it as their primary reason for returning to work.
- **Offices:** Digital and lower-risk environments enable broader flexibility. Macquarie Group's implementation of parental leave and flexible working policies resulted in a **97% return-to-work rate**.
- **Service-oriented workplaces** must balance employee needs with consistent service delivery. Costco's investment in competitive wages in the US, Puerto Rico, and Canada has supported strong workforce retention and advancement, with **85% of newly promoted warehouse managers** having started as hourly employees.

TAKE ACTION TODAY

Learn more and identify practical first steps with the UNICEF Building Family-Friendly Workplaces Toolkit at:

<https://www.unicef.org/childrightsandbusiness/workstreams/global-supply-chains/family-friendly-workplaces>.