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## 100 Companies Championing Women: An Analysis of Best Practices for Utah Companies

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### Setting the Stage

State leaders continue to boast that Utah is at the “forefront of innovative and awe-inspiring economic opportunity initiatives,”<sup>1</sup> with its robust list of accolades (e.g., the best-managed state in America, the top state for economic outlook and recovery, best economic outlook, best state to start a business). Yet, for the past eight consecutive years, Utah has been ranked as WalletHub’s worst state for women’s equality.<sup>2</sup> This includes being placed as 48th of 50th in “Workplace Environment,” which includes metrics such as income disparity, higher-income disparity, and the disparity in share of executive positions. Although some continue to justify or even dismiss this persistent ranking as insignificant, the metrics that WalletHub uses align with extensive research that confirms that many Utah women are not thriving in their workplace environments.<sup>3</sup> With the current talent shortage and the rising expectations of workers today—and for the state to continue to see economic success well into the future—Utah’s workplaces must create cultures that better support all Utahns.

Research on the importance of implementing flexible and family-friendly policies, programs, and practices in workplaces has been well documented.<sup>4</sup> In fact, there is a clear, direct link between companies that implement these types of strategies and the retention and advancement of women.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, many Utah companies are taking the lead in offering initiatives and benefits that are making a positive difference in their employees’ lives. Highlighting the best practices of these leading organizations can help all of Utah’s employers better understand how to implement policies and to create workplace cultures that support women and families.

To address the complex challenge, in 2022, the Utah Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity, the Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP), and the Cox–Henderson Administration partnered to launch a one-year initiative titled 100 Companies Championing Women (100 CCW). It was part of the Inspire InUtah campaign’s mandate to support women in the workplace at all levels, including entrepreneurs. Specifically, the 100 CCW highlighted businesses around the state that have incorporated family-friendly policies and practices and have implemented programs that improve recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing women employees and leaders. The overarching goal was to provide resources for women (e.g., networking, training, funding, and employment) and companies (e.g., strategies, tools, and best practices) that facilitate success now and in the future. This research and policy brief provides a summary of the data collected during this one-year public campaign.

### Study Background

From August 2022 to April 2023, Inspire InUtah advertised the 100 CCW campaign through social media, billboards, and professional networks. Companies were instructed to go to the 100 CCW website and complete an online application. The application asked the nominee to do the following:

- 1) Specify demographics of the company (i.e., number of employees, length of operation),
- 2) Select applicable flexible and family-friendly arrangements that the company currently offered (e.g., childcare support, flexible work),
- 3) Select applicable women-focused initiatives or efforts that the company currently offered (e.g., women employee resource groups, women leadership development programs), and
- 4) Write in responses summarizing up to six policies or programs already selected that they wanted to highlight.

A scoring system was developed to assess the companies that received a nomination. First, the number of family-friendly arrangements and women-focused initiatives were summed. Selected companies’ scores ranged, with the top scores being 22 of 23 possible points. Second, up to six written responses were rated for each company by four independent individuals, from 1 (weak benefit) to 5 (exceptional benefit), for a combined score of 30 possible points. After combining these two scores, the researchers evaluated the companies against a threshold, with larger companies having a higher threshold than smaller companies. The campaign ran until 100 nominated companies met the threshold for championing status, which happened in April of 2023 (see the Appendix for the list of the 100 companies). Because of the success of the present campaign, nominations will open again in August 2023 for a second-year campaign, which will present 100 companies for Utah’s 2024 “100 Companies Championing Women” recognitions. This brief represents a culmination of the 2023 100 CCW campaign and provides an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected through the nominations.

### Company Demographics

The 100 companies represent a variety of sectors and industries, including marketing, healthcare, insurance, nonprofit, technology, finance, retail, manufacturing, and arts. An assessment of the home offices for each company indicated that 55.0% were based in Salt Lake County, 25.0% in Utah County, 9.0% in Davis County, and 11.0% in other counties throughout Utah. Table 1 summarizes other demographic data about the companies.

**Table 1: Company Demographics**

Category	%
<b>Total Employees</b>	
Fewer than 25	31.0%
25–49	13.0%
50–99	10.0%
100–299	12.0%
300–999	11.0%
1,000 or more	23.0%
<b>Length of Operation</b>	
3 years or less	13.0%
4–8 years	24.0%
9–15 years	12.0%
16 years or more	51.0%

The first section of results provides an overall look at the companies’ reported policies and programs. The remaining results sections are organized by the following categories: 1) family-specific policies and benefits, 2) flexible work policies and benefits, 3) professional development and leadership, and 4) other. In each of these sections, relevant quantitative and qualitative findings are summarized. The qualitative findings were derived from a thematic analysis of the written comments.

**Results Overview**

Table 2 provides an overview of the percentage of companies offering family-friendly policies and women-focused initiatives. Overall, the two most common efforts selected (both 90.0%) were flexible work hours and flexible location. Other policies and initiatives included remote work (87.0%), pay equity efforts (84.0%), Utah companies working to diversify their managers and leaders at mid to senior levels (80.0%), and paid family leave (76.0%). The policies and initiatives that were the least selected included tuition reimbursement (10.0%), returnships/return to work programs (19.0%), childcare support (21.0%), job sharing (21.0%), and part-time work with benefits (26.0%).

The UWLP did a similar study in 2020,<sup>6</sup> at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, focused on 100 of Utah’s “Best Places to Work,” with organizations that had been recognized in “Best Places to Work in Utah” lists from the *Salt Lake Tribune*, *Utah Business Magazine*, and the *Women Tech Council Shatter List*, as well as Utah companies listed in similar national rankings from Forbes and Glassdoor. The results from this study were comparable in some areas and differed in others. A few results included: remote work/flexibility with work location (92.0%), flexibility with working hours (full-time employees) (86%), paid maternity leave (75.0%), paid paternity leave (64.0%), paid family leave (59.0%), tuition reimbursement (55.0%), transition back-to-work support after maternity leave (47.0%), part-time professional roles (44.0%), returnships (20.0%), childcare support (e.g., onsite childcare, childcare reimbursement, emergency/back-up childcare)

(17.0%), and formal job-sharing program (4.0%). For another comparison, see the results from an April 2021 UWLP research and policy brief—*The Impact of COVID-19 on Utah Women and Work: Changes, Burnout, & Hope*—with a sample of 3,542 Utah women. Among other variables, the study collected data on the organizational support women perceived they had during the pandemic (see Table 5 in that report).<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2: Percentage of Companies Offering Family-Friendly Policies and Women-Focused Initiatives**

Category	%
<b>Family-Specific Policies and Benefits</b>	
Paid Family Leave	76.0%
Back-to-Work Maternity Support	68.0%
Unpaid Family Leave	66.0%
Adoption and Fertility Benefits	34.0%
Childcare Support	21.0%
<b>Flexible Work Policies and Benefits</b>	
Flexible Hours	90.0%
Flexible Location	90.0%
Remote Work	87.0%
Part-Time Professional Roles	52.0%
Compressed Work Week	40.0%
Part-Time Work Benefits	26.0%
Job Sharing	21.0%
<b>Professional Development &amp; Leadership</b>	
Diversity at Mid to Senior Level	80.0%
Strategies to Recruit Women	72.0%
Mentoring/Sponsorship for Women	65.0%
Women Professional Development	56.0%
Women Board Members	54.0%
Women Employee Resource Group	51.0%
Women Leadership Development	48.0%
Returnships	19.0%
<b>Other</b>	
Pay Equity	84.0%
Tuition Reimbursement	10.0%
Other	2.0%

Table 3 provides an analysis of what percentage of the above 23 categories were covered by each company, averaged across company size. Not surprisingly, the largest companies offered the most benefits.

**Table 3: Average Policy and Initiative Coverage by Company Size**

Company Size by Total Employees	Average # of Policies & Initiatives	As % of 23 Categories
Fewer than 25	11.5	49.8%
25–49	10.5	45.8%
50–99	11.0	47.8%
100–299	11.6	50.4%
300–999	12.6	54.9%
1,000 or more	14.4	62.8%

## Family-Specific Policies and Benefits

The most common family-specific policies and benefits offered by the 100 CCW included paid family leave (76.0%), back-to-work maternity support (68.0%), unpaid family leave (66.0%), adoption and fertility benefits (34.0%), and childcare support (21.0%).

Paid family leave was offered by 76 companies, and over half of these companies offered additional details of the benefits by describing the importance they placed on meeting the needs of growing families. The length of this leave for new mothers ranged from 2 weeks to 36 weeks with 12 weeks being most common. In addition, 30 companies mentioned offering paid leave for secondary caregivers, which ranged from 2 to 20 weeks. Of the 68 companies that offered benefits to accommodate new mothers returning to work, 19 shared information about offering reduced, flexible, or hybrid work schedules. Other strategies included cross-training between teams and having a discussion group for returning mothers. Several larger companies provided a lactation room.

Unpaid leave was offered at 66.0% of the 100 CCW. Some companies mentioned that they were “willing to work” with employees facing long-term absence due to surgery, health concerns, or end-of-life care for a loved one. This leave was offered for several reasons, including when employees’ needs went beyond the paid leave already offered, when positions were part-time and not covered by full-time benefits, or when a small company that did not offer paid leave would work with their employees as needed. Eight companies expressed “a strong emphasis on work/life balance” and offered unpaid “time off to manage personal and family affairs.”

The analysis showed that 34 companies also offered adoption/fertility benefits. Nineteen companies highlighted their adoption benefits in the qualitative section, with one company offering up to \$10,000 to cover costs. Most of the benefits mentioned were similar to those offered for birth parents. In terms of fertility benefits, a few larger companies included up to \$40,000 for egg donations and surrogacy. One company noted that they offered abortion benefits as well.

Childcare remains a top concern for women who are employed throughout the state of Utah.<sup>8</sup> Because of this, as one nominator stated, “Providing a solution increases equity among our team members.” Fifteen companies commented on their focus to alleviate childcare concerns, with ten companies offering on-site childcare. In most cases, onsite childcare was set up in partnership with quality businesses already recognized within the childcare industry. Other companies offered childcare credit, flex spending accounts, or cash bonuses for the birth of a child. All organizations that offered childcare support in some way believed it was a critical offering today to recruit, hire, retain, and support their employees.

## Flexible Work Policies and Benefits

The most common flexible work policies and benefits offered by the 100 CCW included flexible hours (90.0%), flexible location (90.0%), remote work (87.0%), and part-time pro-

fessional roles (52.0%). Less commonly selected options included offering a compressed work week (40.0%), part-time employment with benefits (26.0%), and job sharing (21.0%).

“Flexible work hours” was one of the top three benefits selected during the nomination process. This flexibility for full- and part-time employees included choosing hours and shifts that allowed them to tend to the needs of their children (e.g., school schedules, medical appointments, sickness), working set core hours along with flex hours, and holding virtual meetings at convenient times. Of the 90 companies with flex work hours, a total of 42 expressed strong support for meeting the needs of women. Comments reflecting this support included, “We understand family comes first,” “My company empowers women by helping them maintain their careers and achieve their full potential without sacrificing their personal lives,” and “Our culture has always promoted and provided the flexibility that employees need to be successful both at work and in their personal lives.”

Most companies (90.0%) also offered flexible location work options for at least some of their employees’ work hours. For example, 26 companies indicated that their employees could work remotely if their tasks could be completed professionally and in a timely manner. Some nominators mentioned that they provided home office equipment for employees and that they “transfer employees to other office locations,” as needed. A related second option (i.e., “remote work”) was also listed, and 87.0% of the 100 CCW offered that choice as well. The 20 companies making comments regarding this option offered either full remote work or a hybrid of remote and in-office work.

In terms of the remaining selections, part-time professional positions were available in 52 of the 100 organizations, which included some of the most senior leaders in a few workplaces. Seven companies commented about prioritizing professional part-time positions and providing leadership opportunities and ways to advance part-time employees. Interestingly, 26 companies even offered full-time benefits to part-time employees. Compressed work was an option in 40.0% of 100 CCW, with some offering 4/10-hour days and others offering 4/9-hour days with Friday afternoons off. Finally, of the 21 companies offering job sharing, three companies reported cross-training employees and others mentioned having a formal job-sharing partnership allowing two or more employees to cover 40 hours of work.

## Professional Development and Leadership

The most common professional development and leadership practice offered by the 100 CCW was the companies’ efforts to have gender diversity at both mid and senior levels (80.0%), followed by strategies to recruit women (72.0%) and mentoring and sponsorship programs for women (65.0%). Slightly more than half of the organizations also provided professional development specifically focused on women (56.0%), worked on increasing women board members (54.0%), and had women employee resource groups (ERGs) (51.0%). Fewer had specific women leadership development

programs or opportunities (48.0%), while only 19.0% offered return-to-work or returnship programs.

For companies' efforts to have gender diversity at both mid and senior levels, 32 companies provided some additional text. These comments focused on the importance of seeing women succeeding at every level of their organizations and most often referred to women's presence in the C-Suites. According to some nominators, having women at the highest levels appears to increase the hope and ambitions of other women throughout the organization. As one submitter stated, "Women know that anything is possible." Along with mentioning women in top leadership, a few nominations specifically mentioned the presence of women of color in those positions as being important. One submission stated, "Our goal is to get women in seats at the tables where decisions are being made," while another mentioned that women's ideas and work at the top levels are "highly valued and respected." Finally, one company representative stated, "We truly believe that having a diverse leadership team is not only important for creating a more inclusive workplace culture, but it also helps us better understand and serve the diverse needs of our clients and customers as well as gives us better insight into the habits of our consumers."

In terms of companies' strategies to recruit women, 24 companies provided additional details about their efforts. Several nominators discussed the importance of using inclusive language in job postings, having diverse hiring panels, and training their hiring managers on recruitment strategies and unconscious bias. Several organizational representatives mentioned a variety of ways that they recruit employees, including reaching out to women's groups, networks, and organizations; connecting with diverse ethnic communities and organizations; and, even in nontraditional female fields, recruiting equal numbers of male and female student interns. Others used recruiting agencies to diversify their pool of applicants, while another mentioned that having half of their department heads as women and implementing a variety of family-friendly policies and benefits is important in recruiting as well. Many company representatives stated that intentionality is critical to their successes.

Among the 65.0% of companies selecting the option of offering mentorship and/or sponsorship programs, 25 added comments to explain how it is a "best practice" for them. Although some companies said they offer this for men and women, others had women-specific programs. These programs included a mix of "flexible" to more "structured" and included one-on-one coaching or mentoring; group or circle mentoring; monthly lunches for mentors/mentees to meet, sometimes combined with leadership workshops; and informal to formal mentee/mentor pairing. Some nominations talked about how companies outsourced these types of offerings to existing community programs that have mentoring. They also ranged from short-term (3 months) to longer-term (2 years) opportunities.

Many of the 100 CCW also stated that they provide women-specific professional development opportunities and have women's employee resources groups (ERGs). While only a handful of companies offered formal internal women's leadership programs aimed at advancing women to higher positions, nearly half (48.0%) supported women's development in a variety of ways. This included monthly speakers or workshops and annual women's conferences. In the case of 13 companies, these opportunities were part of a formal ERG that focused on professional development, networking, recruitment, mentoring, and education for women. At least 16 companies recorded using external resources and organizations to connect women with professional opportunities such as attendance at conferences and summits, virtual trainings, memberships in professional organizations, and training programs with partner companies.

Although only 19 of the 100 companies offered return-to-work programs, this is an emerging topic of inquiry, interest, and discussion. Four companies shared more details about their programs, which included elements of training, development, part-time work designs, support systems, and professional development. Most of these initiatives were like paid internships, but with deeper and richer responsibilities and opportunities. These included directed learning experiences with options to move into full-time work.

Finally, 13 companies provided additional comments about women on boards, with most just explaining their current board composition. Two stated that they had board gender equality when the companies were formed, and that continues to be important to them. About half of the organizations stated that they had taken either the [ElevateHER Challenge](#), which encourages organizations to increase the percentage of women on their boards, or the [ParityPLEDGE](#), a public commitment to interview at least one qualified woman for every open vice president, C-Suite, and board position. The gender composition of the board was a strategic and intentional decision for these companies.

## Other

This final category of "Other" included three subcategories. The most common of these included practices and policies around pay equity (84.0%), with tuition reimbursement (10.0%) and other (2.0%), being discussed as well.

First, pay equity efforts were a priority to 84 of the 100 CCW, and 33 of these organizations highlighted their efforts in the qualitative portion of the nomination. Many nominators discussed increasing transparency, while others talked about ensuring that their wages and benefits were based on market data with an eye to internal equity by gender and race. In many cases, the senior leadership team evaluated pay equity during every annual review to ensure consistency, but some organizations appear to be conducting an analysis or evaluation twice a year or even quarterly. Comprehensive salary evaluations, surveys, or audits have become a common

practice for most of the 100 CCW, particularly mid to larger organizations. A few companies said that they hired an independent third party to do their review of employee compensation to remove internal bias. Considering compensation across roles was also noted as important since market rates for some roles are higher than others. “Paying what a job is worth” or “skill-based compensation” were terms used in several submissions. Consistency across departments was also something many mentioned, along with pay scales. Companies’ comments agreed with the statement of one nominator: “Pay parity has now become a key cornerstone in ensuring employee satisfaction.”

Second, the company nominators also included comments about tuition reimbursement, as well as others. Four of the 10 companies that mentioned tuition assistance provided comments. The most robust offering included hiring a vendor who helped employees finish degrees, from GEDs to graduate degrees in traditional and nontraditional ways. Other comments included the importance of companies being engaged in the community and supporting their employees to serve on boards and commissions, as well as running for public office. Words used to describe the culture of these 100 CCW were proactive, caring, enthusiastic, welcoming, supportive, appreciative, concerned, enriching, inclusive, innovative, and focused on employee wellbeing and work-life balance.

## Summary & Recommendations

Analyzing the benefits, policies, and practices of the organizations recognized as the 2023 100 CCW provided a sampling of what Utah businesses of all sizes are doing to support employees and their families. By highlighting businesses around the state that have incorporated family-friendly policies, as well as implemented developmental programs to advance women, the 2023 100 CCW initiative has provided information about best practices that companies—large or small—can consider. As mentioned previously, national and international research<sup>9</sup> continues to find that these types of

organizational strategies are linked to improved recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing of women employees at all levels.

We recommend that all employers compare their current offerings to see how they align with the list of family-friendly policies and women-focused initiatives found in Table 2. Of course, it is important to remember that this study includes only 100 of tens of thousands of companies operating in the state of Utah. Although each entity is unique in terms of challenges, opportunities, and resources, there are opportunities for all Utah companies to create more inclusive workplaces for women by being thoughtful about ways to support all employees and their families most effectively. Since workplaces also include public entities (e.g., local and state governments, schools, and universities), we also encourage these entities to do the same. State legislators should also consider research-based public policies that will help Utah have more family-friendly workplace environments.

There are several important resources and tools for companies in Utah to learn more. The UWLP has an “[Organizational Strategies Toolkit](#)” that brings together related resources. In addition, the “[Organizational Strategies & Workplace Culture](#)” area of focus for [Utah’s Bolder Way Forward](#) is being led by the [Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunities](#), [Women Leadership Institute \(WLI\)](#), and [Pluralsight](#). [WLI’s ElevateHER Challenge](#) can be a powerful way to help companies start, learn, and continue conversations.

## Conclusion

When businesses consider organizational-level strategies, initiatives, and programs, including family-friendly practices and policies that support all employees and help them thrive, Utah can increase the representation of women in businesses around the state, which is important to ensure more women and their families can thrive. Strengthening the impact of women can strengthen Utah’s economy and communities.

<sup>1</sup> Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity. (n.d.). *Accolades & rankings*. <https://business.utah.gov/accolades/>

<sup>2</sup> McCann, A. (2022, August 22). *Best & worst states for women’s equality*. WalletHub. <https://wallethub.com/edu/best-and-worst-states-for-women-equality/5835>

<sup>3</sup> Scribner, R. T., Madsen, S. R., & Townsend, A. (2021, November 4). *Sexist comments & responses: Study introduction and overview*. Utah Women & Leadership Project. <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/blog/2021/sexist-comments-and-responses-intro-and-overview>

<sup>4</sup> Lean In & McKinsey & Company. (2022, October 18). *Women in the workplace: 2022*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>

<sup>5</sup> Bohnet, I. (2016). *What works: Gender equity by design*. Belknap Press.

<sup>6</sup> Scribner, R. T., Vargas, M., & Madsen, S. R. (2020, December 2). *Flexible and family-friendly policies at Utah’s “Best Places to Work.”* Utah Women & Leadership Project. <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/files/briefs/27-flexible-family-friendly-policies-utah-best-places-to-work.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Hansen, J., Hartwell, C., & Madsen, S. R. (2021, April 6). *The impact of COVID-19 on Utah women and work: Changes, burnout, & hope*. Utah Women & Leadership Project. <https://www.usu.edu>

[/uwlp/files/briefs/30-impact-of-covid-19-on-utah-women-work-changes-burnout-hope.pdf](https://uwlp/files/briefs/30-impact-of-covid-19-on-utah-women-work-changes-burnout-hope.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Jemison, E., & Christensen, M. (2022, January 6). *The complex childcare landscape: Public policy solutions for Utah*. Utah Women & Leadership Project. <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/files/wp/no-5.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Lean In & McKinsey & Company. (2022, October 18); UNICEF. (n.d.). *Redesigning the workplace to be family-friendly: What governments and businesses can do*. <https://www.unicef.org/early-childhood-development/family-friendly-policies>

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## APPENDIX

### 100 Utah Companies Championing Women - 2023

97th Floor	Gauss Management Research & Engineering (GMRE)	Salsa Queen
Agent West Insurance	Go1	San Francisco House Native American Jewelry
Alternative Healing Utah	GPS Capital Markets	Sew Sweet Minky Designs
ARUP Laboratories	Health Catalyst	ShIPLEY Associates
Aviva Women	Hickman Land Title	Silvester & Company
Ballet West Academy	iHeartMedia	SixFifty
Beehive Meals	Instructure	Spectrum Recruiting Solutions
Bennett Enterprises	Intermountain Healthcare	Squire
Better Business Bureau	IsoTruss, Inc.	St. George City
Big Leap	Known Medicine	Stratos Creative Marketing
BookSmarts Accounting & Bookkeeping	LedgerGurus	Struck
Brandless	LendingClub	Taulia LLC
Canopy	Lendio	Tech Moms
CAPSA	MāHK Advertising	The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.
CashMan	Maven District	The Larry H. Miller Company
Catalyst Campus	Megastar HR	The Women's Leadership Institute of Utah
ChatBooks	Merit Medical	Thread
CHG Healthcare	Morgan Stanley	USANA
Cicero®	Motherly	Utah Advanced Materials Manufacturing Initiative
Clearfield City	Moxie Law	Utah Association of Realtors
Clozd	My Tech High	Utah Valley University
Clyde Companies	Northrop Grumman	W Collective
Comma Copywriters	Nu Skin	Wander
Cotopaxi	Okland Construction	Wasatch Front Regional Council
DigiCert, Inc.	Overstock.com	Wayne Brown Institute dba VentureCapital.Org (VCO)
Digital Respons-Ability	Park City Lodging	Weave
Dogtown Pet Spa	People's Health Clinic	West Tenth
Dominion Energy	Pura	Wilson Electronics
dōTERRA International, LLC	Recursion Pharmaceuticals	Women Tech Council
Dyno Nobel Inc.	Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Utah	Women Trade Center Utah
EDCUtah	Reset Your Nest	Zions Bancorporation
El's Pampered Paws	RevRoad	
Entrata	Rocky Mountain Power	
Ethik BLLC	RUMOR Advertising	
Extra Space Storage		