



ARUBA  
**FAMILY FRIENDLY**  
WORKPLACES

# Applicant Handbook



**PARENTING**  
FOR LIFELONG HEALTH  
"every parent, everywhere"

unicef   
for every child

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1.

## A Shared Vision for Aruba: The Story Behind the AFFW Certification



## Our Beginning

Aruba's efforts to build a supportive culture for parenting across government, civil society, and the private sector are rooted in nearly a decade of sustained national commitment. Over the years, coordinated initiatives have created a strong foundation for advancing parenting support and promoting wellbeing.

At the heart of this movement is a shared understanding: supporting caregivers is essential for creating healthy environments and long-term opportunities for families in Aruba.

The path toward this certification reflects years of dedicated work. The journey began in 2016 with the establishment of the Parenting Vision Committee, created to expand and reinforce parenting support across the island.

This decade-long journey represents a series of coordinated efforts signaling a broader cultural shift, now identifying family-friendly employment as a key driver of positive change. These efforts have laid the groundwork for establishing a National Family-Friendly Workplace Certification in Aruba, with the potential to create lasting and meaningful societal impact.

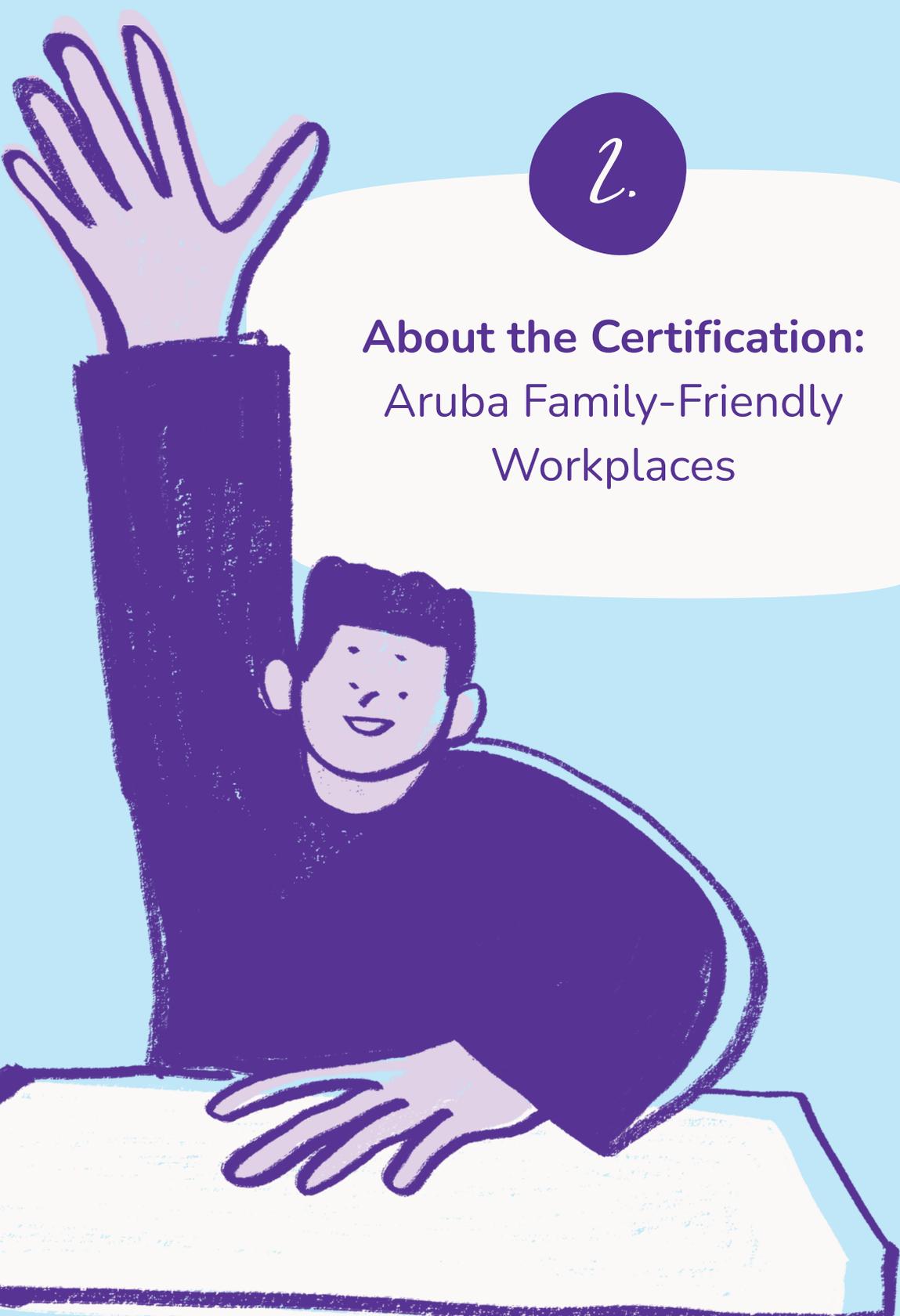
## Who We Are

The certification is led by the Directorate of Social Affairs, in collaboration with UNICEF The Netherlands and Parenting for Lifelong Health.

Our advisory committee brings together national representatives from the Government of Aruba, including the Ministry of Labour, and is further strengthened by the participation of civil-society organisations within the Parenting Committee: Centro Hoben y Famia, Fundación Respeta Mi, Fundación Pa Nos Muchanan, Stichting Wit Gele Kruis Aruba, and Stichting Tienda di Educación.

Private-sector partners also play a key role in the advisory committee, helping ensure that the certification reflects perspectives from across Aruba's workforce and business.

Together, we bring the voices of government, civil society, and the private sector, working side by side toward a shared vision for more supportive, nurturing, and family-friendly workplaces across Aruba.

An illustration of a person with a long, dark, cylindrical arm reaching upwards. The hand at the top is open and facing forward. The person's head and another hand are visible at the base of the arm, resting on a white rectangular surface. The background is a light blue gradient.

2.

**About the Certification:  
Aruba Family-Friendly  
Workplaces**

## What is the AFFW Certification?

The Aruba Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification is a national initiative, grounded in evidence and designed for Aruba's unique context. It welcomes all employers, from micro-enterprises to large corporations, and aims to create meaningful, lasting change in how workplaces support families. Through this certification, we're positioning Aruban companies as international leaders in workplace excellence.

We know that for children to thrive, parents and caregivers need support. Child wellbeing and family resilience form the foundation of a prosperous society, and workplaces have a powerful role to play in making that possible.

Through a clear and attainable pathway to recognition, the AFFW Certification encourages organizations to adopt family-friendly practices that help caregivers balance work and family life. In turn, companies benefit from higher productivity, stronger employee loyalty, better talent attraction and retention, and enhanced organizational excellence.

## Why did we create the AFFW Certification?

The AFFW Certification was born from listening. Employees, employers, and caregivers across Aruba told us what they needed most: flexibility, childcare support, stronger parenting and mental-health resources, and management that truly cares. This certification was created to walk alongside you, transforming those needs into real, practical improvements within workplaces across the island.

When you apply, you're joining a shared commitment to ensure that workplaces in Aruba actively contribute to family wellbeing, employee satisfaction, and our collective success.

## Approaching the certification with the right mindset

Your application represents a meaningful step in a broader journey to strengthen your organisation's culture and practices. Regardless of the outcome of your organisation's application, there will always be room to grow, learn, and share your experiences, and we encourage you to keep moving forward. Every effort you make contributes to a wider movement toward more supportive, nurturing, and family-friendly workplaces across Aruba.

## Common Questions

### Question

### Answer

### Application

<p><b>Is there a cost to apply?</b></p>	<p>We've designed the AFFW Certification to be accessible to every organization in Aruba.</p> <p>By taking part in this first phase, you are helping us build a sustainable model that keeps the AFFW Certification accessible and meaningful for all workplaces in Aruba. Your involvement contributes directly to a national effort to strengthen environments where families and employees can thrive.</p>
<p><b>Who can apply?</b></p>	<p>To ensure inclusivity and reflect the real business landscape in Aruba, where approximately 80% of enterprises are small and medium-sized (CBS, 2021), the AFFW Certification has been structured to be accessible, fair, and relevant to organizations of any size or structure.</p> <p>Eligible applicants include employers committed to driving social change and contributing to Aruba's progress, aligned with the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Micro, small, medium, and large companies legally established in Aruba.</li><li>• Private-sector organisations, government entities, and civil-society organisations.</li></ul>

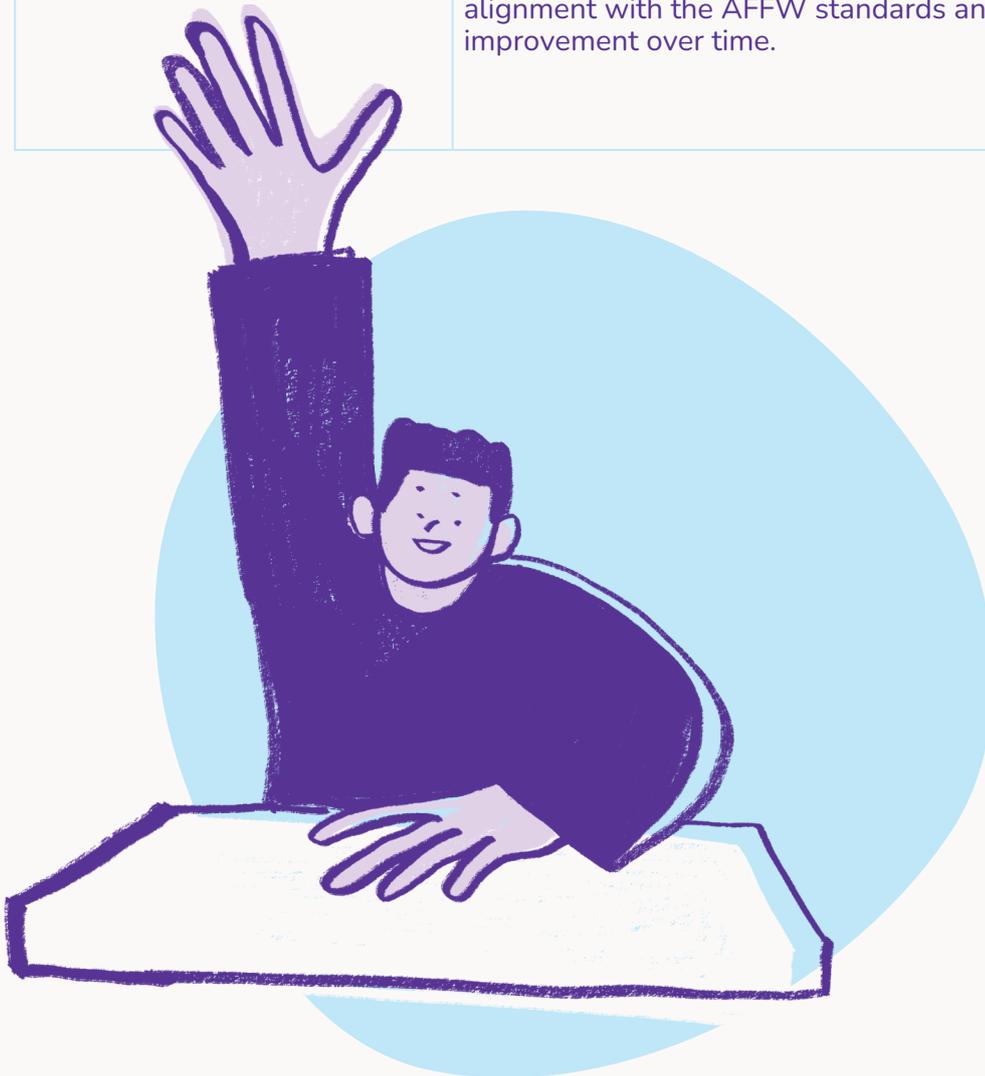
## Common Questions

### Question

### Answer

#### Certification

Who grants the AFFW Certification?	The Department of Social Affairs (DSA).
How long is the certification valid?	<p>The certification is valid for a period of two years.</p> <p>At the end of this period, organisations must complete a re-certification assessment to renew their status for an additional two years. This process ensures continued alignment with the AFFW standards and supports ongoing improvement over time.</p>



3.

**Business Benefits:**  
Why Family-friendly  
workplace practices and  
policies matter



## Supporting families is good business

When workplaces support families, everyone wins: parents thrive, children flourish, and businesses grow stronger. We know from global research that family-friendly practises and policies offer your organisation real advantages:



### Helping your business perform better

Family-friendly practices are linked to stronger business outcomes. Research shows that highly engaged teams can achieve profit margins up to 23% higher than their peers.<sup>1</sup> For businesses in Aruba, adopting these practices can also strengthen your reputation in the community, helping you to attract new customers.



### Attracting and retaining the right people

Flexibility consistently ranks as one of the most valued workplace benefits. Globally, 71% of employees say they would stay longer in a role that offers genuine flexible work,<sup>2</sup> while 4 in 10 have left or considered leaving a job because it was missing.<sup>3</sup>

Based on evidence around the world, family-friendly practices help organisations stand out as employers of choice, particularly for millennial and Gen Z talent.



### Reducing turnover and building loyal teams

Replacing staff is costly and time-consuming. Family-friendly measures such as flexible scheduling, paid leave, and childcare support reduce turnover, strengthen team stability, and lower recruitment costs.<sup>4</sup>

Employees who feel genuinely supported are more loyal and motivated: 89% of employees in family-friendly workplaces are more likely to recommend their organisation as a great place to work compared to those in workplaces without such practices.<sup>5</sup>



## Encouraging innovation and growth

Family-friendly practices advance broader commitments to Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG), Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), strengthening the organization's overall excellence.

## Protecting family well-being

Building family-friendly workplaces is one of the most strategic investments a service-driven economy like Aruba can make. The AFFW Certification strengthens companies by enhancing their ability to attract and retain talent, creating healthier and more resilient teams, and supporting the long-term development of the island's human capital. When organisations prioritise the wellbeing of parents and caregivers, they contribute directly to a healthier, more inclusive workforce and a stronger community by:



## Reducing stress & improving work-life balance

Family-friendly policies help attract and retain talent, reduce employee absenteeism, improve performance, lower stress, and strengthen community wellbeing.

In our national Family Friendly Workplaces Survey (May–June, 167 employees), 97.6% of parents said they would use a childcare allowance, 88% welcomed on-site childcare, and 94.6% would join wellbeing workshops. Nearly half identified mental and emotional stress as their biggest challenge. Caregivers also emphasized the strong need for predictable schedules, fair leave, and flexibility. Fostering reduced employee absenteeism and better performance.



## Improving early childhood development

Family-friendly workplaces and policies give parents the time and resources they need to provide nurturing care, which is essential for children's healthy early development. Paid maternity and paternity leave strengthens the bond between parent and child, supporting secure attachment and responsive care.<sup>6</sup>



## Improving mother and infant health

When mothers receive workplace support for breastfeeding, infants experience better health outcomes, including fewer infections, lower rates of illness, and stronger long-term wellbeing.<sup>7</sup> Mothers also benefit: breastfeeding for at least 12 months reduces the risk of Type 2 diabetes and lowers lifetime breast cancer risk.<sup>8</sup> Supporting breastfeeding in the workplace strengthens families and reduces healthcare costs for employers and the wider community, making it not only the right investment for wellbeing, but also a cost-effective one that saves organisations and public service money in the long run.



4.

**AFFW Community**  
What the AFFW Certification  
gives employers

When you achieve AFFW Certification, your organisation becomes part of a global network of forward-thinking employers. You gain recognition for your efforts, stand out to potential employees, and receive ongoing guidance to help you continue strengthening your workplace. The Certification is designed to help your organisation grow, learn, and be celebrated for its commitment to supporting the wellbeing of families across Aruba.

## The AFFW Organisation Roadmap

Every organisation that applies receives a short feedback summary. It highlights strengths, points out areas for improvement, and offers simple next steps to guide future progress. It serves as a roadmap to help your organisation continue growing.

We encourage all applicants to use this feedback to create an action plan and move forward on their journey to becoming more family-friendly, regardless of the certification outcome.

When you earn the certification, you will gain:

- **Public recognition and visibility**
  - Be publicly recognized as a certified Family-Friendly Workplace through the AFFW website, official government platforms, and national award events.
  - Display the AFFW Certification badge across your organisation's communication platforms as a clear symbol of your commitment.
  - Be featured in the Public Registry of Certified Workplaces, with visibility by sector.
  - Gain national and global visibility that strengthens your reputation with customers, employees, and partners.



- **Business and operational benefits**

- Increase productivity, reduce operational costs linked to staff turnover and communicate your organisation's commitment to ongoing innovation to attract future generations.
- Join a community of leaders dedicated to family-friendly practices, with opportunities for networking and shared learning.
- Become eligible for government incentives, such as free access to parenting programs offered by recognized NGOs.

- **Continuous learning and support**

- Access communication materials and training directories to help embed family-friendly practices and policies.
- Receive biannual feedback to support the organisation continuous improvement.
- Use a communications kit to celebrate and share your achievements with staff and the wider community.



## Voices from the workforce

“

### Work-life balance and flexibility

“...we value the importance of work and personal life balance”  
– Tourism representative

“When a child has no school, he or she can accompany the parent to the workplace.”  
– Education representative

“

### Supporting families and communities

“Home, school, and society must be able to work together for children and adolescents’ well-being.”  
– Education representative

“To improve inclusion, gender equality, and wellbeing outcomes for families”  
– Tourism representative

“We encourage families to stay by offering amenities such as a kids’ pool and kids’ cave, so caregivers can feel confident that their children are safe.”  
– Tourism representative

“

### Reputation and competitive edge

“As a family-friendly hotel it is important to make the public aware that the hotel is a place that is family friendly for the guests and also value their employees and their family”  
– Tourism representative

“This will put our company in a positive light for current and future staff.”  
– Tourism representative

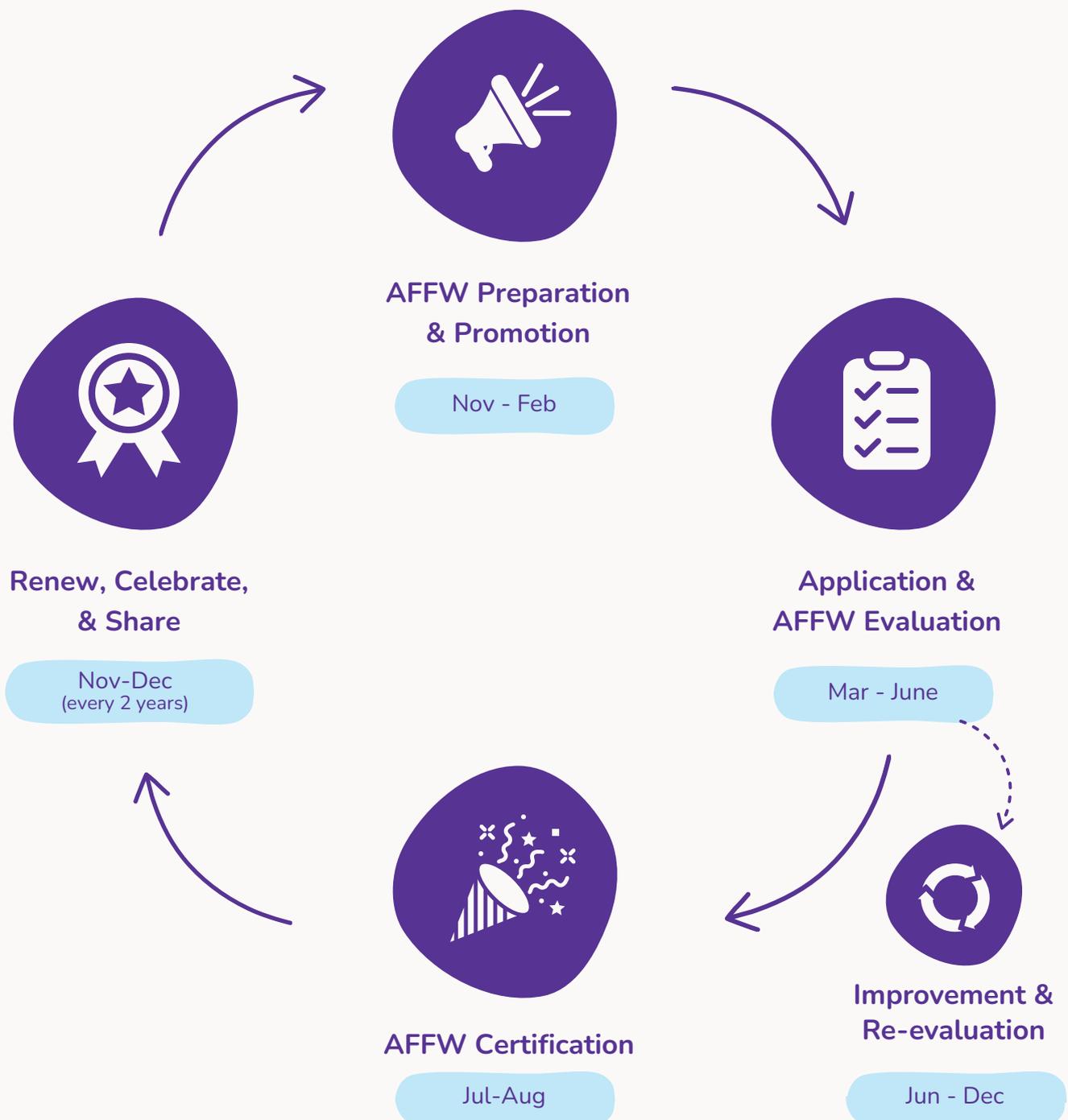
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**How to Apply:**  
Everything you need to know  
to get certified



## Certification Cycles

- The AFFW Certification follows an annual cycle, with one new application round opening each year.
- **Once granted, the certification remains valid for two years.** Certified organizations must demonstrate continuous compliance and the effective implementation of all required standards to maintain their certification's validity and remain eligible for renewal at the end of the two-year period.
- If your organization does not obtain certification on its first submission and receives feedback, it will have six months to resubmit and be re-evaluated for certification.



# Understanding the Applicant Journey

1.



Learn about the AFFW Certification through the Applicant Handbook

2.



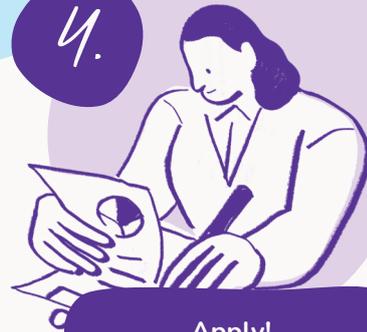
Check if your organization is eligible

3.



Share manager onboarding

4.



Apply!

5.



Send out AFFW employee experience survey

6.



Certification results!

# How does the application process work?



## Step 1: Learn about the AFFW Certification

To ensure you're prepared for each step of the application process, it's important you read all the necessary preparation documents before completing the application form:

- Applicant Handbook
- Manager onboarding
- AFFW Website



## Step 2: Check if your organization is eligible

Before starting the application, your organization must ensure that it is eligible to apply. To proceed, your organization must:

- Be legally registered in Aruba.
- Be committed to contributing to family wellbeing through continuous training and learning for all employees.
- Have supporting evidence, from the last 12 months, for all of the assessment criteria.

Find the Eligibility Test on the AFFW official website.



## Step 3: Manager Onboarding

Once you've confirmed your eligibility, your organization must ensure that its leadership and management have reviewed, agreed to, and committed to the foundations outlined in the AFFW Managers onboarding.



#### Step 4: Application Submission

Your organisation's designated contact point will submit the online Application Form and the required evidence showing how your organisation meets the AFFW criteria.

Only organisations that meet all mandatory requirements in the Application Form are eligible to proceed to the Employee Survey Experience. Organisations that do not fully meet these requirements in the Application Form cannot progress to this stage and are required to strengthen their evidence and apply in a future certification cycle.



#### Step 5: Employee Survey

After submission, employers will receive a link to the Family-Friendly Experience Survey, which should be shared with employees.

Managers and leadership play a key role by clearly communicating the purpose of the survey, encouraging participation in a transparent and supportive way, and ensuring participation is voluntary and free from coercion, to enable honest and meaningful feedback.



#### Step 6: Certification Results

All criteria are reviewed and scored. Organisations that meet the requirements receive certification for 2 years. Those still working toward them are encouraged to strengthen their practices and reapply in the next cycle.

## Application Form

You will complete and submit an online Application Form in the AFFW . This form guides the assessment by covering the seven certification criteria and asking about your current policies and practices.

It is also your opportunity to highlight what makes your organization unique and how you already support families in the workplace.

## Supporting Evidence

Along with the Application Form, you will upload evidence of your policies and practices. This might include policy documents, contracts, employee handbooks, photos of family-friendly facilities (such as lactation rooms), attendance records, or communications you have shared with staff. This evidence helps assessors understand not only what policies you have in place, but also how they are brought to life in practice in your workplace.

## Aruba Family-friendly Experience Survey

Employee voice is a core pillar of the AFFW Certification, ensuring that family-friendly practices are reflected not only in policies, but in everyday workplace experiences.

Given that over 80% of businesses in Aruba are small or micro-sized, survey participation requirements are adjusted by organization size to remain feasible and inclusive, while still producing meaningful results.

Every applicant must conduct an anonymised Aruba Family-Friendly Experience Survey with their staff and, based on organization size, comply with minimum participation requirements:



Organisation size	# Employees	Minimum Survey Participation
Micro	Fewer than 10 employees	At least 2 employees <b>or</b> 50% of staff (whichever is greater)
Small	10–49 employees	At least 30% of staff
Medium	50–249 employees	At least 25% of staff (minimum 15 respondents)
Large	250+ employees	At least 20% of staff (maximum 500 respondents)

Once your application is submitted, you will receive an automatic, official link to share the survey. Meeting the minimum participation thresholds will support a successful certification outcome.

## What happens with my application?

### Organization Evaluation

DSA will evaluate policies and practices against the certification criteria, considering the size of the organization.

A team of independent reviewers or an evaluation committee looks at your documentation and policies, applying the same consistent standards across all organizations.

### AFFW Certification Approval

Successful applicants are awarded the official Aruba Family-Friendly Workplace (AFFW) Certification, which is valid for two years and eligible for renewal upon demonstrating continued compliance with the required standards.

Applicants who receive feedback on specific criteria will be given defined periods to address, improve, and resubmit their documentation to achieve compliance.

### Celebrate and Share

Certified organizations are recognized nationally and promoted as employers of choice through the AFFW website, official communications, and award events.

### Certification Continuity and Growth

Certification is not the end of the process. Organizations are encouraged to maintain and strengthen their family-friendly practices and to reapply for renewal every two years, demonstrating continued commitment to these standards. In future stages of the program, bifurcating the certification into a “Commitment to Improve” and “Tier Achieved” system may further reinforce this strengths-based approach. Recognizing organizations that not only meet requirements but also show consistent growth and expanded impact.

6.

## Understanding Assessment: AFFW Assessment Criteria



## AFFW Criteria

The AFFW criteria were created through a collaborative and evidence-based process. We listened to employees, employers, government, civil society, and unions, and combined their insights with international best practices and local needs.

This means every criterion reflects what truly matters for families in Aruba and what organisations are ready to put into action:

### Criteria

### What it means for organizations

#### Leadership and Culture of Care



Leaders and managers are expected to help create an inclusive, family-friendly workplace culture. All managerial staff must complete and sign the AFFW Manager's Onboarding and take an active role in promoting these practices, ensuring policies are clear and employee rights are supported each day.

#### Supporting questions and required evidence:

- Share the AFFW Manager Onboarding to all managerial staff.
- How has your organisation communicated care and family-friendly policies and practices to employees in the last twelve months?
- Written policy or communication materials in a single PDF document that share family-friendly policies and practices within your organization.

#### Work-Life Flexibility



Organisations should support employees in balancing work and family life through flexible, family-centred practices. This criterion looks at the different types of flexibility your organisation offers, such as paid time off for emergencies or appointments, remote-work options, flexible or predictable schedules, and accommodations for caregivers. It also considers how employees experience this support from leadership and how comfortable they feel requesting these arrangements through the mechanisms your organisation has shared with them.

#### Supporting questions and required evidence:

- Does your organisation offer flexible work arrangements to support your employees' family-related needs?
- Is there a clear mechanism for staff to request flexible work arrangements?
- Written policy or communicated material that clearly outlines and describes your organisation's flexible work policies or practices, including the mechanisms employees use to request these arrangements in a single PDF document.

## Family Learning and Wellbeing



Organisations should offer at least one workshop or training per year on parenting, wellbeing, or mental health to support caregivers' wellbeing. These sessions give employees opportunities to learn and strengthen the skills they need to care for their families while staying balanced, productive, and resilient at work and at home.

**Supporting questions and required evidence:**

- Provide details of at least one parenting, wellbeing, or mental health training activity delivered to employees within the past twelve months, including the title, date, provider credentials, and number of participants.
- Submit a single PDF providing evidence of the trainings submitted, including a brief description, photos, an attendance list, and provider details.

## Parental Leave



Organizations must provide at least 12 weeks of paid maternity leave and 5 days of paid paternity leave to meet the AFFW standard. If your organisation currently offers only the 2 days required by law, you may still apply, but must commit to reaching the 5-day standard within the next two years.

**Supporting questions and required evidence:**

- How many weeks of paid maternity leave does your organisation offer?
- Does your organisation offer at least 5 days of paid paternity leave? If not, the organisation acknowledges that the AFFW Certification standard is 5 days and is committed to meeting this requirement within the next two years.
- In the last 12 months, has your organization actively communicated or promoted the benefits and availability of your parental leave policy with employees?
- Does your organisation offer any additional parental leave schemes?
- Written policy showing clear compliance regarding the Parental Leave practices, communication and policies in a single PDF document.

## Criteria

## What it means for organizations

### Breastfeeding Policy



Employers must ensure dedicated time, suitable space, and support for breastfeeding in the workplace, promoting maternal health, infant nutrition, and family wellbeing.

#### Supporting questions and required evidence:

- How does your organisation support breastfeeding employees?
- If your organisation does not have a private and suitable space for breastfeeding, explain the reasons why a dedicated breastfeeding space is not currently available.
- Are there additional workplace provisions for expressing and storing breastmilk?
- How does your organisation communicate that it is a breastfeeding friendly space to both employees and customers?
- Provide evidence of your organisation's established communication practices regarding breastfeeding support in the workplace, along with any flexible work arrangements specifically provided to breastfeeding employees, in a single PDF document.

### Childcare Solutions



Organisations should support employees by providing a list of childcare providers, such as nurseries, daycares, home-based care, and after-school programmes, along with their contact information, and ensuring this is shared with all employees.

#### Supporting questions and required evidence:

- Does your organisation provide childcare solutions?
- Written policy or communication materials that clearly outline how your organization shares a list of childcare providers and supports employees in accessing childcare solutions, in a single PDF document.

### Workplace and Community Pulse



Organizations should foster a sense of community through clear policies and ensure that parent-friendly practices work effectively by conducting regular reviews, monitoring progress, and continuously improving their approaches.

#### Supporting questions and required evidence:

- Does your organisation have any additional Family-Friendly Workplace policies and/or practices not covered under these criteria?
- If applicable, provide supporting evidence of your organisation's additional Family-Friendly Workplace policies and/or practices.

## A shared journey forward

Applying for the **AFFW certification** is, above all, a **commitment to reflection, learning, and continuous improvement**. Regardless of the certification outcome, taking part in this process signals your organization's willingness to strengthen families, support caregivers, attract talent, innovate, and contribute positively to the well-being of Aruba's communities.

The AFFW Certification **is designed as a journey** rather than a one-time achievement. Each application offers an opportunity to recognize what is already working well, identify areas for growth, and take meaningful steps forward at a pace that fits your organization's reality.

In Aruba, family-friendly workplaces play a key role in building resilience, inclusion, and long-term social well-being. Every effort, regardless of size or result, contributes to that shared goal.

We warmly encourage you to see this process as an invitation to keep evolving and learning. We are grateful for your participation and look forward to continuing this journey together, **in support of stronger families and workplaces across Aruba.**

## Acknowledgements

### Aruba Family-Friendly Workplaces: Applicant Handbook

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