

Cathy Bessant
President and Chief Executive Officer

Cathy Bessant is President and CEO of Foundation For The Carolinas, the community foundation serving Charlotte and a 13-county region. The fifth-largest community foundation in the U.S. with nearly 3,000 charitable funds, FFTC leads a variety of civic leadership initiatives in areas such as affordable housing, economic opportunity, public school reform, the arts and the environment.



Active in the region, Bessant received the Distinguished Service Award from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In addition, she was awarded the North Carolina Order of the Long Leaf Pine and was recognized by the Charlotte Business Journal with the Women in Business Lifetime Achievement Award. She chairs the North Tryon Vision Plan Advisory Committee and is co-chair of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing & Homelessness Strategy.

Bessant joined FFTC after a successful banking career, where she last served as vice chair, Global Strategy at Bank of America and as a member of the company’s executive management team.

After ranking No. 1 for three consecutive years, Bessant was inducted into the “25 Most Powerful Women in Banking” Hall of Fame by American Banker in 2020. Bessant was named to Barron’s “100 Most Influential Women in U.S. Finance” and she received WatersTechnology’s 2019 Women in Technology and Data Trailblazer Award. She has also appeared on Working Mother magazine’s “50 Most Powerful Working Moms” list.

Bessant serves on the board of directors of Zurich Insurance Group, serves as chair of the USA Field Hockey board of directors, and is on the advisory board for (and a graduate of) the University of Michigan Ross School of Business. As part of a leadership course at Ross, she summited Africa’s Mount Kilimanjaro, the world’s tallest freestanding mountain, in 2018. Along with her husband, John Clay, Bessant is a proud parent of two.