



**WORKING  
FIELDS®**

**2022 BENEFIT REPORT  
APRIL 2023**

# LET'S WORK TOGETHER



1889 Williston Rd Suite 100,  
South Burlington, VT 05403

[www.workingfields.com](http://www.workingfields.com)  
[secondchances@workingfields.com](mailto:secondchances@workingfields.com)

# WHO WE ARE

Working Fields is a mission-driven staffing agency that offers jobs and peer coaching to anyone seeking work.

Our unique model is designed to address systemic barriers to employment, enrich our workforce, and foster inclusive workplaces.

We currently operate in communities across Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts.



## THE WORKING FIELDS VISION

Our vision is to:

- Support people through recovery, post-incarceration and other life transitions by providing space and tools to restore belief in themselves
- Offer hope for a meaningful life that includes employment and the ability to manage challenges
- Create a community of workplaces that treat people with all types of life experiences equitably
- Empower all those facing systemic barriers to engage in the workforce, become self-reliant, and contribute to their community

# OUR COMMUNITY

We combine staffing with peer coaching — a form of personalized, strengths-based support from a trained peer — to provide a community-oriented approach to employment.

Here's how it works:

1. Jobseekers contact us seeking employment or are referred to us by a partner.
2. We match individuals to open jobs with local employers for a 'temporary-to-permanent' placement.
3. During a placement: Jobseekers receive competitive wages, peer coaching, and support resources.
4. When a placement ends: Jobseekers may convert to a permanent hire with the employer, start another placement, or continue on to employment elsewhere.

## JOBSEEKERS

Our person-first model helps jobseekers access employment while managing barriers and challenges like:

- Justice system involvement (convictions, incarceration)
- Substance use disorder & associated stigma
- Discrimination (race, age, gender, sexuality)
- Access to transportation, housing, & childcare
- Generational poverty



## EMPLOYERS

Businesses partner with us to employ and retain qualified people. As staffing and fair-chance hiring experts, we make it easy for employers to recruit from a larger, more diverse pool of talent dates.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We partner with community organizations, such as nonprofits and government agencies, to support our jobseekers. These groups provide vital services — such as recovery, childcare, legal aid, and housing — and regularly refer individuals seeking employment to Working Fields.



# OUR COMMUNITY IN 2022

**329 COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

**105 NEW PARTNERS**

**520 REFERRALS RECEIVED**



**STEPS TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**



In 2022, we deepened our community network to support our jobseekers and bring our services to a wider range of people. Our team joined career fairs, attended conferences, gave seminars, mobilized interns, and hosted events: cookie decorating, resume workshops, micro job fairs, drop-in hours.

We also expanded ties with a new territory in the Seacoast of New Hampshire and with the acquisition of alternative staffing agency Harmon Personnel Services in the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts.

“ [Working Fields] is instrumental in supporting the clients we work with.”  
 — Tammy Santamore, Emergency Shelter and Outreach Director, COTS



**78 ACTIVE EMPLOYERS**

**35 NEW IN 2022**

**17 DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES**

**12% GROWTH IN LOWEST WAGE**

In 2022, we placed jobseekers with 78 different employers. We also brought on several new employers with the goal of offering a wider range of jobs and wages. We now have partnerships with over 100 employers across three states.

This nearly doubled the number of roles available to our jobseekers and added 8 new industries to Working Fields, like teaching, healthcare, engineering, nonprofit service, and data administration.

Wages rose across the board as we gained partners, and as employers responded to the pressures of inflation and the labor market.

We also focused on building trust with and enhancing services for our employers. Providing education around people-friendly cultures and barriers to employment helps us reduce stigma for workers and manage challenging situations with the goal of retention.



# OUR COMMUNITY IN 2022

**297** JOBSEEKERS PLACED IN JOBS

**50** CONVERTED TO PERMANENT HIRES

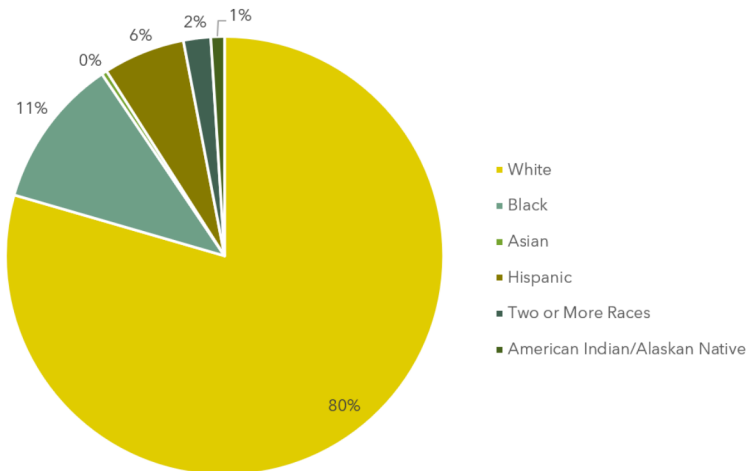
Since our founding in 2017, we have worked with nearly 2,000 jobseekers. After upgrading our database in 2021, we were able to build a clear picture of this community for the first time. The data below is all self-disclosed and represents around 75% of our jobseekers during 2022.



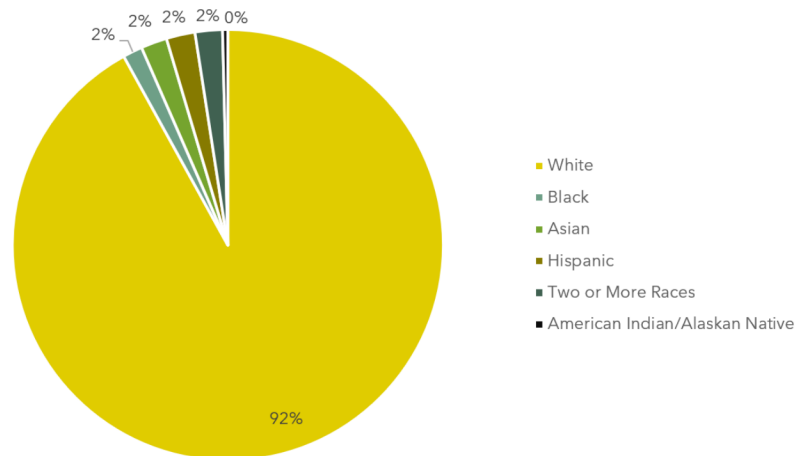
The majority of our jobseekers identify as in recovery from alcohol or substance use disorder, and/or had justice involvement. These often co-occur and are a core expertise of Working Fields. We worked mostly with men, likely due to several factors (for instance: the high proportion of men in justice populations, availability of gender-specific alternatives, childcare as a barrier, jobs in male-dominated industries).

We found that our jobseeker population is more diverse than the general population of Vermont, which shows the intersectionality of race in many systemic barriers to employment.

Demographics of Working Fields Associates (Self-Disclosed)



Demographics of Vermont (Source: 2020 VT Census)



Our demographic breakdown reinforces the importance of our community partners: we received steady referrals from partners like Probation & Parole offices and Turning Point Recovery Centers. To expand our impact, we will continue to partner with organizations that support marginalized communities.



While on a Working Fields placement, jobseeker Lisa Goodrich won the 2022 National Staffing Employee All-Star award from the American Staffing Association, winning for the entire U.S. industrial sector. She still works full-time with her employer!



## Measuring Our Impact

# PROGRESS TO GOALS

Working Fields achieved the majority of our company goals in 2022. We focused heavily on workforce development for our internal staff and our jobseekers, and will continue to scale our impact in 2023.

### 2022 GOALS

#### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Cultivate our culture
- Enable our teams
- Increase workplace equity
- Raise the average wage

#### SCALING OUR IMPACT

- Grow each market by 1-2 placements
- Expand out of state
- Increase outreach to raise referrals
- Establish environmental metrics & goals
- Improve internal data

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We improved our service delivery by cultivating our culture, developing our team's skillsets, and increasing internal support. This centered around a "Living Our Values" program: Love, Equity in Action, Gratitude, Honesty and Humility, and Stability. Staff also received regular trainings, from Mental Health First Aid to best practices for retention, and peer coaches received more resources and tools.

We also addressed some of the inequities that come with a temporary staffing model, such as lack of benefits. We enhanced our jobseeker experience by upskilling our team; providing higher wages, more positions, and proactive support interventions; and working with employers on culture or wage changes.

## SCALING OUR IMPACT

Overall, Working Fields grew notably in 2022. We did not hit our goal of regularly adding 1-2 placements in each region, but we expanded within Vermont and beyond in New Hampshire and northern Massachusetts. Our outreach efforts, newly developed intern program, and expanded network brought in more referrals from community partners to connect us with jobseekers.

This report shows the improvement of our internal data collection. This will be a continued area of focus, supplemented by qualitative data, as we capture the experiences of our community.

In our last report, we planned to establish environmental metrics. However, because we did not integrate this target into the creation of our annual company goals, we fell short.

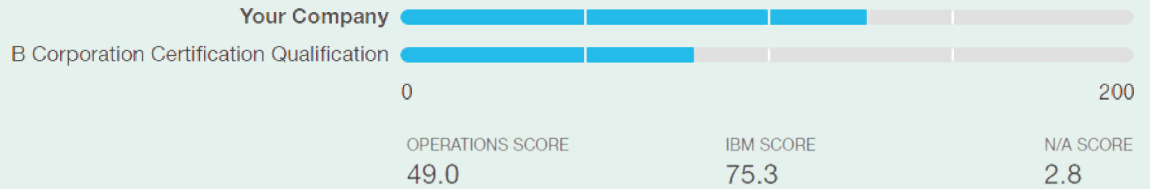


# Measuring Our Impact

## B LAB ASSESSMENT

As in 2021, Working Fields measured our 2022 impact using the B Impact Assessment tool (BIA). This assessment is used by thousands of businesses worldwide to assess stakeholder impact. The BIA score has two sections, Operations and Impact Business Models (IBM), which track five key impact areas.

**127.8**



Our 2022 score is 127.8, which is more than 10 points of growth from our 2021 score.

We are currently undergoing the verification process to become a certified B Corp.

BIA Scores Over Time

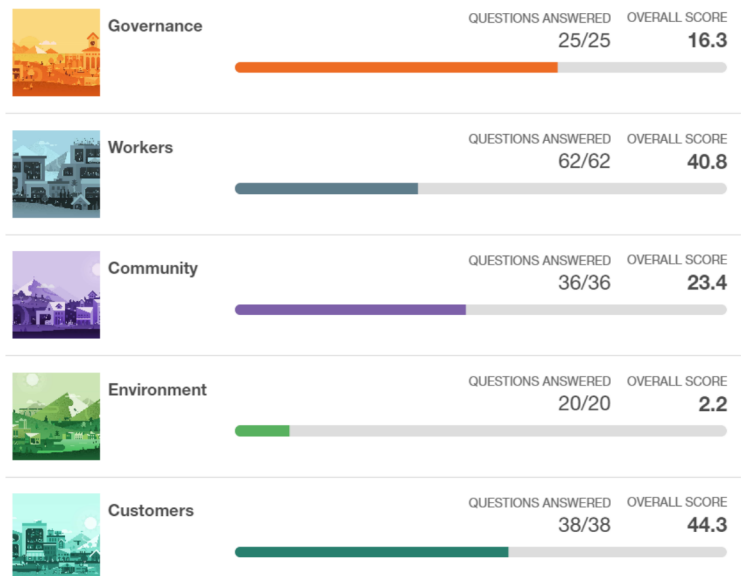


### STRENGTHS & GROWTH TARGETS

This assessment reflects the findings of our first report: Working Fields is designed to benefit our community and is successfully doing so.

During 2022, we focused on expanding our services for jobseekers and employers. Accordingly, our score rose primarily in the "Customers" area because of growth in our impact business models.

Our "Operations" score fell slightly, driven by the "Environment" and "Governance" areas, due to the lack of emphasis on those targets and internal restructuring. We plan to incorporate these areas into our company goals in 2023.



## Measuring Our Impact

# IMPACT BUSINESS MODELS

Using the BIA, we verified that our business model provides the following specific benefit:

- Workforce Development
- Serving Underserved Populations
- Economic Empowerment for the Underserved

We achieved the "Workforce Development" business model for the first time in 2022. In particular, our Customers and Workers scores rose as we invested in our jobseeker experience and worked to support more communities.



Here are some of the highlights of that work in 2022:

### FOR JOBSEEKERS

- Equipping peer coaches with technology and core community resources
- Training peer coaches in key early interventions, such as screening for health insurance
- Increasing the diversity of coaching staff to ensure jobseekers have peers they feel comfortable with
- Moving our shuttle to a high-demand area in Northwest Vermont, creating a route that allows people to access new workplaces
- Upskilling our staff to improve service delivery and support
- Providing a wider range of entry-level and high-skill jobs at competitive wages

### FOR EMPLOYERS

- Offering a discounted rate for employers who provide sick leave and paid time off
- Providing direct consultation or presenting to groups on inclusive, fair-chance workplace practices
- Encouraging transparent discussions about raising wages, leveraging our market expertise
- Streamlining internal operations, from candidate submissions to payroll
- Promoting retention by acting as an advocate and account manager for jobseekers

This analysis demonstrates that our impact business models have a significant impact, and our data collection shows that we are reaching our target population. The Working Fields model does increase the earning potential and career opportunities of our jobseekers.

However, these models are not perfect. Due to the structure of staffing, Working Fields does not control wages or workplace culture and can only act as an advisor. Wages have risen substantially, but many of our jobs still offer less than the livable wage as defined by the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

As challenges like housing crises, inflation and childcare grow, this earning power matters more. Employment is also not a magic solution: multi-pronged, systemic intervention is often required.

## Measuring Our Impact

# OPERATIONS

Working Fields experienced significant change during 2022, including new office locations and staff turnover. This resulted in a slight decrease to our Operations score, which assesses our performance across categories like Governance, Environment and Community.

Overall, our governance remains strong. We are mission-locked and on track to obtain B Corp certification next year. We continue to practice open-book leadership and financials.

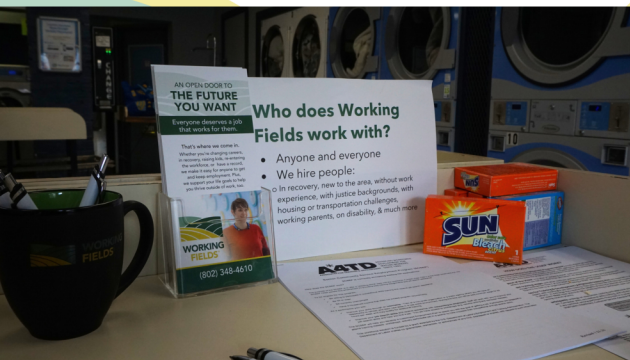
We are also focusing heavily on support and retention of Working Fields staff in 2023. As the BIA reveals, internal changes can impact the delivery of our services and fulfillment of our mission.

Gathering more feedback from our community, particularly jobseekers, is another way we can improve our operations. Our company value of Honest and Humility sets the expectation for internal staff to share feedback frequently with radical candor. Offering more opportunities for jobseekers, employers, and community partners to share their experiences will help us meet their needs, improve our service delivery, and establish radically honest relationships.

“If it wasn't for Working Fields, I really don't know how I would have gotten a job and a second chance to get my life together and reunite with my family. I have been in recovery for just over three years and have been able to take classes at CCV. I am now working for the Howard Center, which I have wanted to do for a long time, and I'm able to help others as I have been helped.”

— Justin Beebe, Working Fields Alum

Environmental concerns are a high priority for Working Fields staff, and climate change will increasingly impact our jobseeker and employer communities. In 2023, we will build this priority into our operations by intentionally incorporating environmental goals into our annual company goal setting. This may include short-term goals, such as standardizing our policy on biodegradable office products, and long-term goals, such as empowering a staff member to implement green programs or setting targets for the environmental impact of new employer partners.





## Increasing Our Impact

# GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

### COMPANY GOALS

- Deliver consistent messaging for the populations served.
- Cultivate our culture to reflect values and mission.
- Establish non-profit related entity expanding our supportive employment model to those with greater barriers.



### ENVIRONMENTAL

- Incorporate short- and long-term environmental goals and metrics into annual goal setting.

### REPORTING

- Gather robust and inclusive data to learn more about our jobseekers and the communities they identify with, such as housing status, disability status, and gender & sexual identity.
- Formalize processes and channels for jobseeker feedback, particularly after the end of a job placement, and continue gathering feedback from employers and community partners.

## BENEFIT DIRECTOR STATEMENT

On the other side of a global pandemic, 2022 brought a new kind of turbulence. Vermont, as much of the rural northeast, experienced the worsening effects of a nationwide childcare crisis, a housing crisis, and the looming threat of economic crisis. Despite these headwinds, Working Fields managed to scale our impact within Vermont and into New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

In our 2021 report, I wrote: *We often equate impact to charity, but make no mistake, Working Fields is a value-add to the Vermont economy.* A year later, this rings even more true. Investing in community infrastructure is simply good business. We are only as strong as our most vulnerable.

Working Fields continues to strengthen the local economy and serve our community, but we cannot do it alone. In 2023, let's work together. I invite our clients and stakeholders to support our work by addressing forces working against us: stable & affordable housing, livable wages, and access to sufficient childcare.

*Cassidy Petit*

Working Fields, Board of Directors & Benefit Director