



working
communities
challenge

Working Communities Challenge KEYS TO SUCCESS


Collaborative teams are provided with
the necessary resources;

staff  time  expertise  focus 

to work across sectors;

public private nonprofit

and across boundaries;

towns regions urban rural 

to support community-driven economic
development

Long-term systems change
solutions are developed in
partnership with people with
lived experience.



Solutions to problems are created
with a learning agenda by
providing patient capital for
experimentation.



Working Communities Challenge, Greater Barre Area

6-Month Work Plan

January 1 - June 30, 2023

Increasing economic mobility and overall well-being for Greater Barre Area head-of-household women experiencing financial instability, through aligned coordination of employment support

Initiative Team Members & Partners

Capstone Community Action

Family Center of Washington County

Community College of Vermont

Central Vermont Adult Basic Education

Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation

Barre Partnership

Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice

Central Vermont Medical Center

Barre Area Development

City of Barre

Barre City Elementary & Middle School

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

Vermont Agency of Transportation

Center for Women and Enterprise

Vermont Foodbank

Farmers to You

Blue Cross/Blue Shield

Darn Tough

VT Mutual

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta

United Way North West

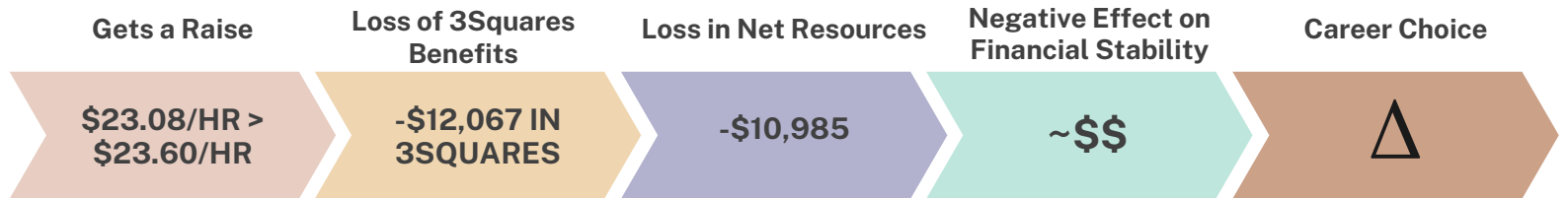
Goals






- Develop and implement Benefits Cliffs Employer Training and further establish VT CLIFF training tools and training calendar for Northern VT Working Bridges Resource Coordinators, Employers (Working Bridges network of 27+), and partner organizations (CVEDC, Capstone Community Action, Family Center of Washington County, Central Vermont Adult Basic Education, Working Fields, DownStreet Housing and Community Development, Vermont Center for Women & Enterprise). Ensure complementary components to *Strain for Employer Innovation Lab*
- Expand current innovation pilots that directly meet benefits cliffs bridging needs, including growth in partnerships and funding sources that couples employer, the business community, and traditional non-profit funding. Utilize the pilots as a demonstration of how to bridge the gap, and alter the employer mindset of traditional benefits to non-traditional benefits.
- Advocate for policies across sectors and geographic regions that ameliorate the effects of the benefits cliffs, educate on disparities and other equity issues, and convene though leaders and experience experts towards adaptive leadership
- Build partnerships towards sustainability beyond the funding period ending

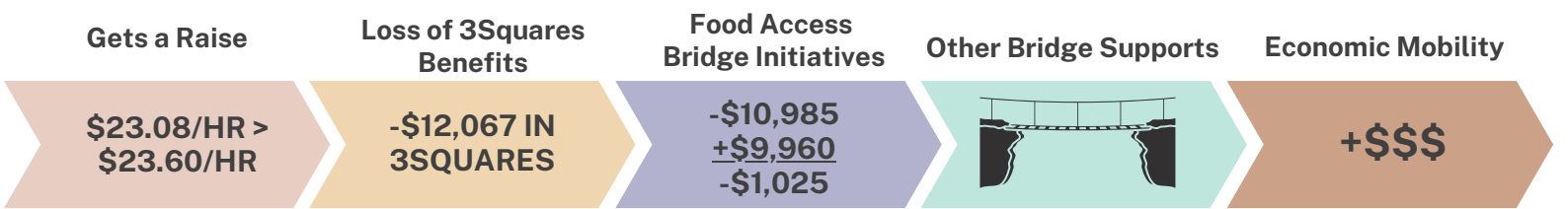
Strategies

- Utilize a locally-based benefits cliffs calculator accessible to program participants, worksite HR, WCC coaches and resource coordinators
- Develop benefits cliff counseling and employer training tools
- Explore, implement and share options for gap funds and models to bridge cliffs. Design, collect data and implement sustainability plans including health and economic equity collaboratives
- Support between program participants, coaches, resource coordinators with topics to guide navigation of barriers, leadership development, professionalism and hidden rules, available supports and programs
- Expand cohort of women in program – improve and expand recruitment/referral process (grow referral base with agencies such as Reach Up, Department of Labor and new Working Bridges Employers
- Expand/improve program as employment matchmaking/recruitment of workers & matching skills to open positions
- Working toward creating a shared culture/understanding around challenges and solutions around workforce retention w/employers, employees & community supports
- Sharing learning through Employer Collaboratives, regional partnership, Atlanta Fed partnership, and work with other WCC projects
- Developing/improving single point of access for employers and employees
- Expanding worksites supported by Working Bridges model

This is a real-life scenario of how Working Communities Challenge through the Working Bridges Program resourced an employee who hit the Benefits Cliffs so she could continue to advance in her career and provide for her family's basic needs



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| <p>Gets a Raise</p> <p>\$23.08/HR > \$23.60/HR</p>  <p>A head-of-household mother of 3 gets a raise from \$23.08 to 23.60/hr. (\$48,006-49,088 annually), a value of \$1,082</p> | <p>Loss of 3Squares Benefits</p> <p>-\$12,067 IN 3SQUARES</p>  <p>This increase in income puts her \$56 over the gross income limit and triggers a loss of food support benefits with a value of \$12,067</p> | <p>Loss in Net Resources</p> <p>-\$10,985</p>  <p>The increase in wages pales in comparison to the amount lost in food benefits resulting in a net loss in resources</p> | <p>Negative Effect on Financial Stability</p> <p>~\$\$</p>  <p>The loss of food support negatively impacts overall financial stability as other budget areas are sacrificed and/or debt is accumulated.</p> | <p>Career Choice</p>  <p>Choices made to leave workforce, ask for wage decrease, or choose a different position that has benefits that lead to increase of resources</p> |
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Employee Benefit Pilot Program

INNOVATIVE BENEFIT SUPPORT

Collaborating Agencies: Green Mountain United Way, Central Vermont Medical Center, Farmers to You, Vermont Foodbank (*first cohort only)*

This pilot project provided access to highly nutritious, locally grown food from Vermont farms at a highly subsidized cost to Working Communities Challenge participants, up to \$100 of groceries delivered weekly to a centralized location close to participating employer sites.

THREE 13-WEEK COHORTS
APRIL - DEC.

12

WCC FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD SERVED

\$975

Average dollar amount saved on food budget **per cohort** for an **individual participant**

"I've noticed the positive effects of healthier food. This program is vital for feeding myself and my kids."
- F2Y WCC Participant



NUTRITION

89%

Reported **increased comfort with cooking and increased fruit and vegetable intake** after 26 weeks of participation.