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Benefit Navigators Funding Request

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United Way's Working Bridges is an innovative program that improves job retention, stability, and advancement by connecting employees and students with community resources. By connecting with employees directly in the workplace, Working Bridges helps working Vermonters reach stability and thrive while supporting human resources departments, reducing employee turnover, increasing productivity, and supporting the local economy.

Across Vermont, affordability is no longer a challenge limited to those outside the workforce. It is a daily strain for working families—particularly **single-parent households**—who are employed full time, contributing to the economy, and still living one unexpected expense away from crisis.

Many of these parents, **most often women heading households alone**, work in essential roles that keep our communities functioning: **healthcare, hospice, nonprofit services, hospitality, and food service**. Despite steady employment, wages in these sectors frequently fail to keep pace with the cost of basic needs. As a result, thousands of **working Vermonters remain eligible for critical supports like SNAP and Medicaid**—not because they are disconnected from work, but because work alone is not enough.

For these families, public benefits like **SNAP and Medicaid** are not a safety net on the margins; they are a stabilizing force that **allows parents to stay employed**, keep their children fed and healthy, and avoid deeper economic freefall. Yet changes to enrollment guidelines, coupled with complex and often confusing administrative processes, put many at **risk of losing vital support**—not because of increased income or stability, but because they lack the time and support to navigate the system. For a single parent already balancing full-time work and caregiving, the loss of these supports can lead to a rapid return to scarcity.

The data points make this reality undeniable:

- In FY24, approximately 66,500 Vermonters received **SNAP benefits** each month, and nearly **29% were working families**.

- In FY23, **55% of SNAP** households with children had earned income.
- An estimated 84,000 **Medicaid**-enrolled adults in Vermont are employed, with **44% working full-time** and 31% part time. These workers are most commonly employed in healthcare and social assistance, retail, and food service.

This is where the **Working Bridges Benefits Navigator** plays a uniquely powerful role. By offering direct, workplace-based assistance to help working Vermonters maintain access to SNAP, Medicaid, and other supports—and by helping them navigate the broader ecosystem of community resources—Working Bridges strengthens economic stability at the individual, family, and statewide level. In doing so, it supports the very people who contribute every day through their labor, their taxes, and their care for others.