



WORKING BRIDGES
Simple solutions, major impact.

An employer collaborative managed by

United Way of Chittenden County

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THE UNIQUE WAY WE WORK IS
HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

WE UNITE
THE WHOLE
COMMUNITY
TO WORK TOGETHER



EDUCATION →

WE EXPECT all children, youth and young adults will have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

INCOME →

WE EXPECT all people will be empowered to meet their basic needs and be financially stable.

HEALTH →

WE EXPECT all people will have access to the supports and necessary care for optimal health and well-being.



Photo by Stephen Mease

Target Population

A public-private, multi-sector, employer collaborative that is **focused on business solutions—** job retention, productivity and advancement of workers earning between \$10 and \$19 / hour.

Working Bridges--Then and Now

The Early Years

United Way wanted to end poverty

- Provided training to community
- Employers saw relevance to workers
- Began with a concept a group of employers could make a difference
- Good for business

Today

UWCC promoting family financial stability

- Training employers ongoing
- Engaging employers in solving social problems
- Demonstrating impact on lower wage earners
- Impacting our systems through collective impact

Premise One—Behind Working Bridges

A good, steady, reliable job puts people on the pathway to financial stability.

Premise Two

Life issues can overwhelm a good employee's ability to get to work, be present at work and succeed at work.

Premise Three

A group of employers can design and test innovative workplace practices to help employees--*regardless of life circumstances*-- minimize work disruptions, retain jobs, advance jobs and improve financial stability.

Before WB, Employers Said...

I have a really good employee who leaves work at the same time every month, without clocking out and without permission from her supervisor.

I tried to give an employee a \$.50 per hour raise and he refused it. It does not make sense.

I am hiring great people and workers from the new American population, but realize our typical benefits do not address their needs. Can you help?

Employers Working to Solve...

- High turnover in the ranks of low-wage workers
- Unscheduled tardiness & absenteeism hurt productivity
- Too much time of supervisors and managers dealing with non-work related issues
- Workers unprepared for advancement
- Safety record was stagnant
- Benefits and wellness strategies did not meet the needs of lower-wage workers
- Improve morale and stability of the workforce

Working Bridges—The Model

- Employers share resources to minimize employment barriers and improve financial stability and wellbeing of lower-wage earners and their families.
- Employers are the innovators of key strategies.
- The workplace is the platform for services.
- UWCC is the backbone, lead and a funder.

The 3 Rs of Working Bridges



Working Bridges Key Activities

- Training for employers—HR, supervisors
- Employer Innovation Collaborative
(formerly called the Employer Workgroup)
- Shared On-site Resource Coordinators
- Programs at workplaces
 - Income Advance Loan
 - Financial Education Workshops and Coaching
 - GED, ELL, Sector-based Skill Training and Classes
 - Mobile Tax Preparation/EITC program
- Evaluation—measure retention and productivity (RBA)



Integrated Financial Stability Model

Goal: Employees achieve family financial stability.

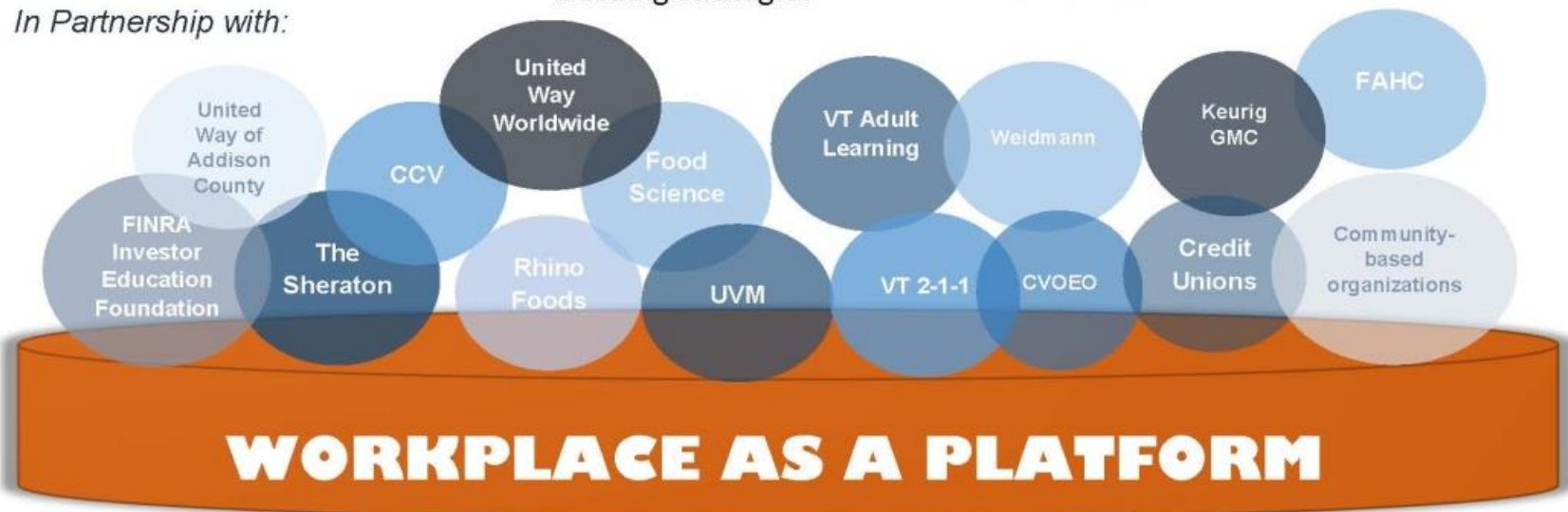


- Onsite Resource Coordinator
- Partnership with community resources
- Revamping employment/HR policies
- Income advance loan
- Mobile tax site

- Earn It, Keep It, Grow It (EKG) classes
- Financial coaching volunteers
- RCs as financial coaches
- Income advance loan
- Mobile tax sites with asset building strategies

- GED classes
- ELL classes
- Moving to sector-based skill training (i.e. Sheraton)
- Workforce development collaboration

In Partnership with:



Triple Results



- **Employees**



- **Employers**



- **Community**

- **Accessing resources**
- **Retaining jobs**
- **Improving financial stability**
- **Standard practice – privacy and dignity**

- **Low cost, highly valued employee benefit**
- **Changing policies and practices**
- **Retaining workers, saving turnover costs improving workplace morale**

- **Reducing poverty**
- **Benefiting from collective response**
- **Engaging employers**
- **More stable family incomes**
- **Changing social services approach**

Funding and Sustainability

Costs

- Staff costs
- Program costs
- Operational costs

Revenue (Current)

- Employers pay a fee-for service for RC
- United Way of Chittenden County
- Private grants and other philanthropy (FINRA Foundation, IBM)
- State and federal funding (possibilities)

What It Takes and My Best Advice

- A neutral, well-respected organization with capacity to drive it
- Champion employers
- An onboarding strategy for employers (ROI)
- A common agenda/focus to unite the partnership
- A plan to fund it and sustain it
- Openness to change and innovative ideas