

# CURRENT STATE ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

## Overview

The following document provides an overview of findings from a 2022 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) assessment conducted by Social Contract, LLC for HireAbility Vermont. The current state assessment sought to answer the following guiding questions:

1. How are DEIA principles currently considered and integrated at HireAbility, including in its policies, programming, hiring practices, and outreach?
2. How do key stakeholders (namely staff, participants, and partners) perceive HireAbility Vermont’s commitment to DEIA principles and practices?
3. What are the priority opportunity areas for DEIA improvement at HireAbility?

During this assessment, Social Contract, LLC successfully engaged HireAbility's stakeholders including 79 employees, 13 partners, and 11 participants via surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The following strengths and opportunities were noted.

## STRENGTHS

<p><b>Good representation of diversity in brand materials</b></p>	<p>HireAbility's new marketing materials reflect diverse populations through photographs and availability of materials in different languages. This representation was commended by staff and participants. The new website design was seen as a driver in boosting BIPOC participant numbers at the agency over the past year.</p>
<p><b>Favorable staff and participant satisfaction ratings</b></p>	<p>Staff and participants alike gave moderate to high satisfaction ratings to HireAbility, indicating that they would be likely to recommend the agency to a friend as a good place to work or receive services. Staff satisfaction was closely tied to the agency’s commitment to its mission and vision, as well as benefits such as hybrid work flexibility and robust professional development opportunities. Participant satisfaction was related to positive experiences with counselors and useful services including resume writing, job interview preparation, and assistive technology support.</p>
<p><b>Strong staff commitment to organizational mission and vision</b></p>	<p>HireAbility staff expressed strong personal commitment to the organization’s mission, vision, and participant-centered approach. Staff and partners recognize and appreciate that HireAbility’s leadership is committed to aligning the organization’s operations with their values.</p>
<p><b>Executive leadership commitment to innovation and improvement</b></p>	<p>The executive leadership of HireAbility received strong support from external partners and staff members who view the agency’s leaders as trailblazers of progressive and innovative leadership in the state.</p>
<p><b>Viewed as a strong partner within the support services ecosystem</b></p>	<p>HireAbility’s partners have a high opinion of the organization and credited HireAbility staff and leadership for being mission- driven and client- centered. Partners repeatedly noted that strong communication, collaboration, and innovation led to effective working relationships with the agency.</p>

# OPPORTUNITIES

<b>Improved staff feedback and accountability systems and spaces</b>	While staff appreciated the communication and internal information sharing that occurs at HireAbility, many expressed frustration that the communication often feels one way. Staff noted that there are not enough spaces for genuine feedback and/or dissent about ideas or initiatives for consideration. A culture of positivity was detected, leaving those who might have a critical response to an idea feeling isolated or sidelined.
<b>Increased diversity and representation among participants and staff</b>	Despite the limited diversity in Vermont, recruitment and outreach opportunities exist for increasing staff diversity to align better with participant demographics. Specifically, there are opportunities to expand participant diversity to better represent some of the shifting demographics in the state, particularly related to international immigration and pandemic-related internal migration.
<b>Increased staff capacity for culturally competent, well-informed engagement</b>	Staff noted a capacity and training gap related to cultural awareness, responsiveness, and humility for working with diverse populations. In order to truly meet the needs of an increasingly diverse participant population, staff identified the need for more training to understand cultural differences that may affect how various groups view disability, educational and employment priorities, family, and community.
<b>More workload equity among staff</b>	A key contributor to dissatisfaction and burnout among staff is heavy workloads. Frontline staff noted that some workloads are distributed unevenly across teams and this raises concerns around equity not only across staff but for participant outcomes.

Prepared By:

