

# CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

2019-2022



## OUTCOME REPORT

5 RECTORY COTTAGES  
MELLS  
BA113PN

# WHAT WE DO

We are a social enterprise providing nature-based activities and therapeutic horticulture programs to alleviate the health and well-being effects of loneliness, whether as a result of social, economic, geographic, or generational isolation.

Supporting vocational & experiential learning by young adults, especially those with disabilities to improve their employability and participation in society

Providing an outdoor learning environment, encouraging connection and intergenerational learning

Improving the physical well-being of senior people and providing opportunities to socialise and connect

Based out of the Walled Garden in Mells, we operate a community plant nursery, work symbiotically with the Walled Garden Cafe, and will be soon launching a seed range and a seasonal outdoor community cafe in Victoria Park Frome.

## TRADING



### WALLED GARDEN NURSERY

Growing, caring for, and selling cottage garden perennial plants and herbs



### SHED SHOP

Selling and supporting locally made garden/craft products



### SEEDERY

COMING IN 2023 - Perennial and annual vegetable, cut flower, and wild flower seeds



### VICTORIA PARK CAFE

COMING IN 2023 - Outdoor seasonal community cafe in a park

## PROGRAMS



### WORKSKILLS LEARNING

**Work Skills Development:** Weekly sessions supporting young adults with development and autism challenges to gain work skills



### OUTDOOR LEARNING

**Workshops:** Low cost workshops on a range of nature-based activities and gardening skills

**Cook and Grow:** Outdoor cook and grow workshops for children and families

**Seeds of Connection:** Annual seed growing and plant swap program with social connection



### SOCIAL CONNECTION

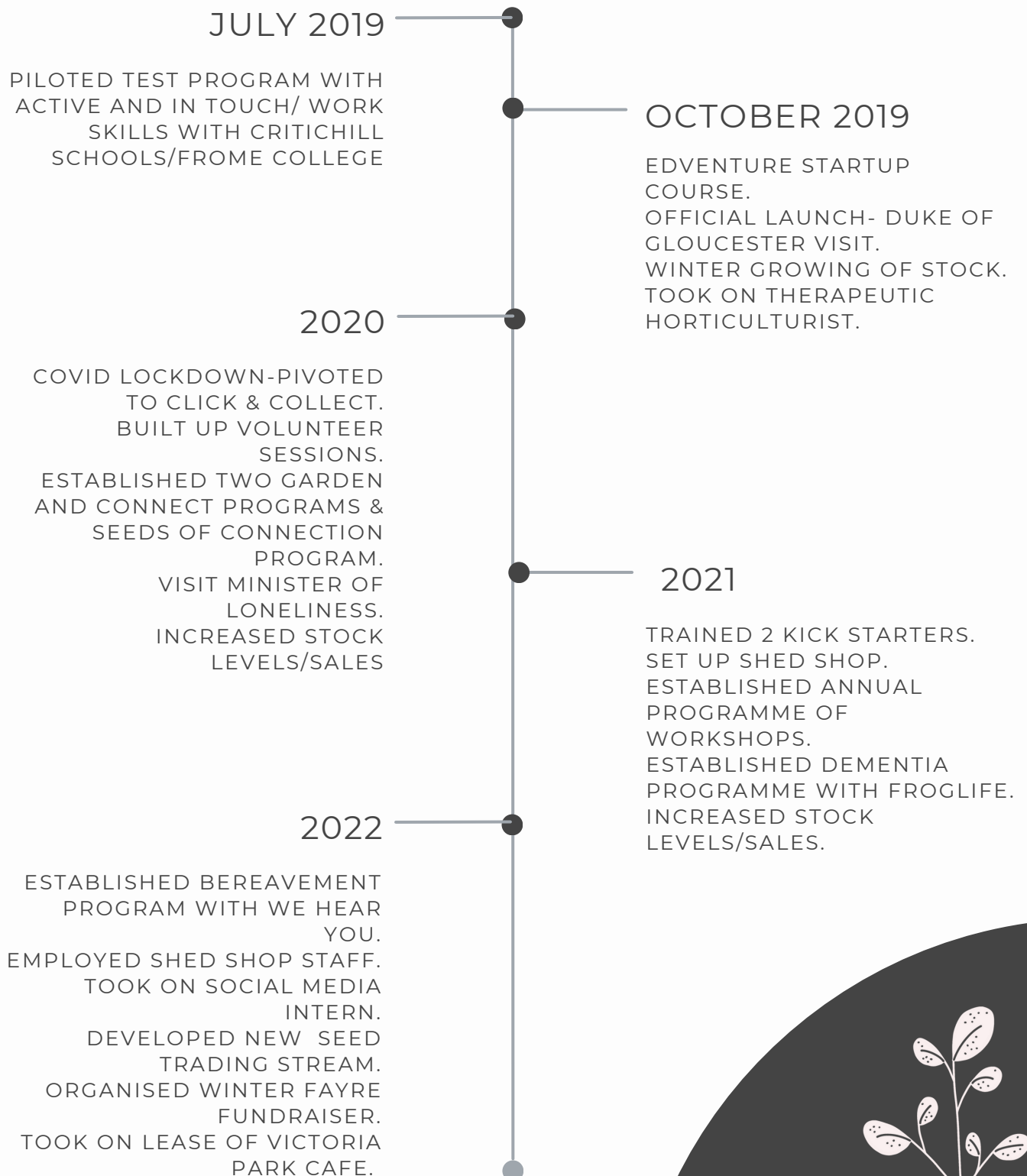
**Connect and Grow:** Three weekly sessions for those with mental and physical health challenges for adaptive gardening

**WHY Grow:** Monthly bereavement gardening session run in collaboration with We Hear You

**Talking Cafe:** Monthly signposting drop in session with Frome Health Connectors

**Hidden Harvest:** Harvesting unused nut and fruit crops from home owners to redistribute and reduce food poverty

# OUR STARTUP TIMELINE

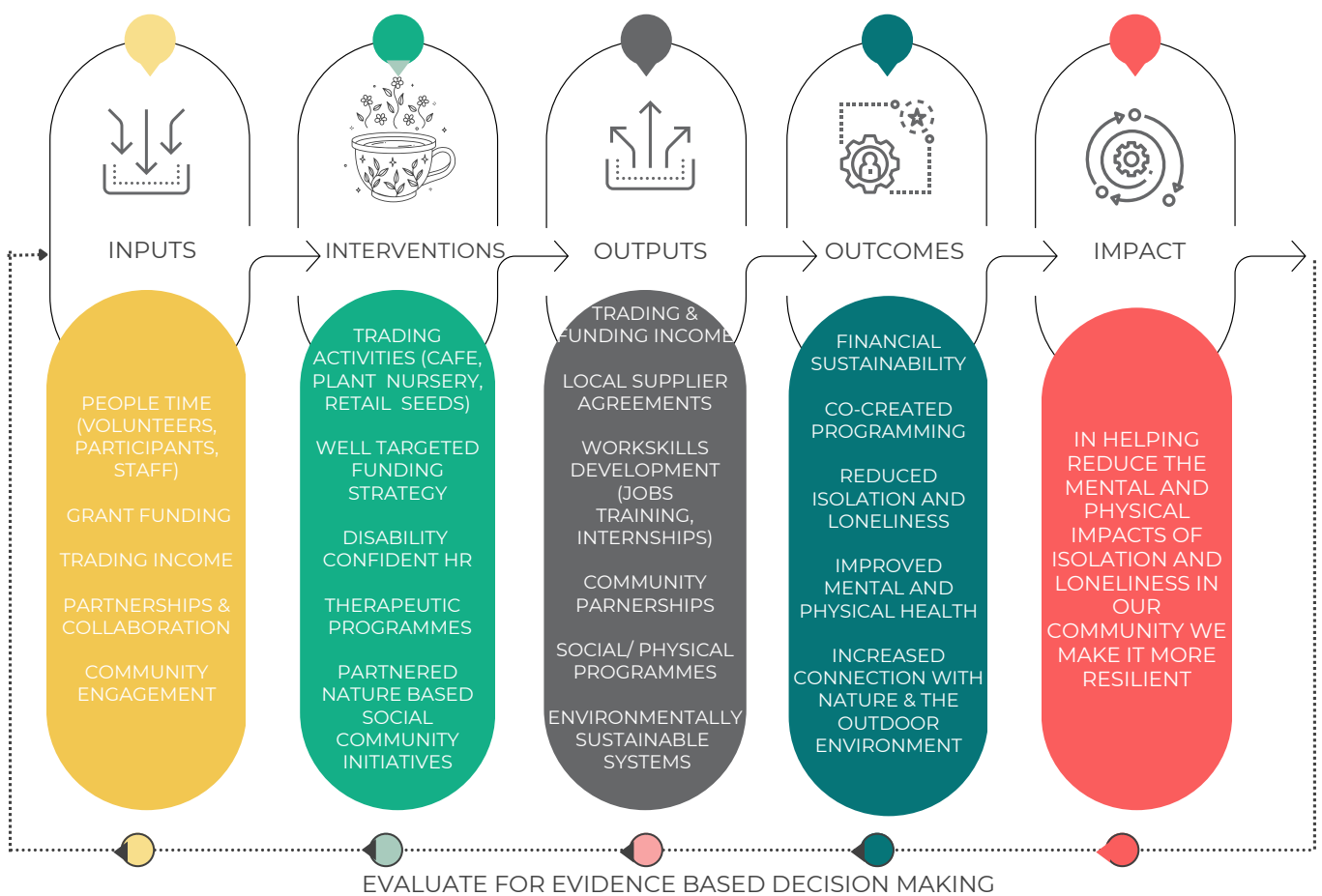


# HOW WE ENACT CHANGE

We enact change through the social and therapeutic programs we run and in the way we operate organisationally as a social enterprise.

Our logic model below shows the stepped ways in which we hope to make this change happen and helps us develop a framework that guides us in collecting the right data with which we measure this change. Although it's shown as a linear process, in reality it's iterative, messy, and ever evolving.

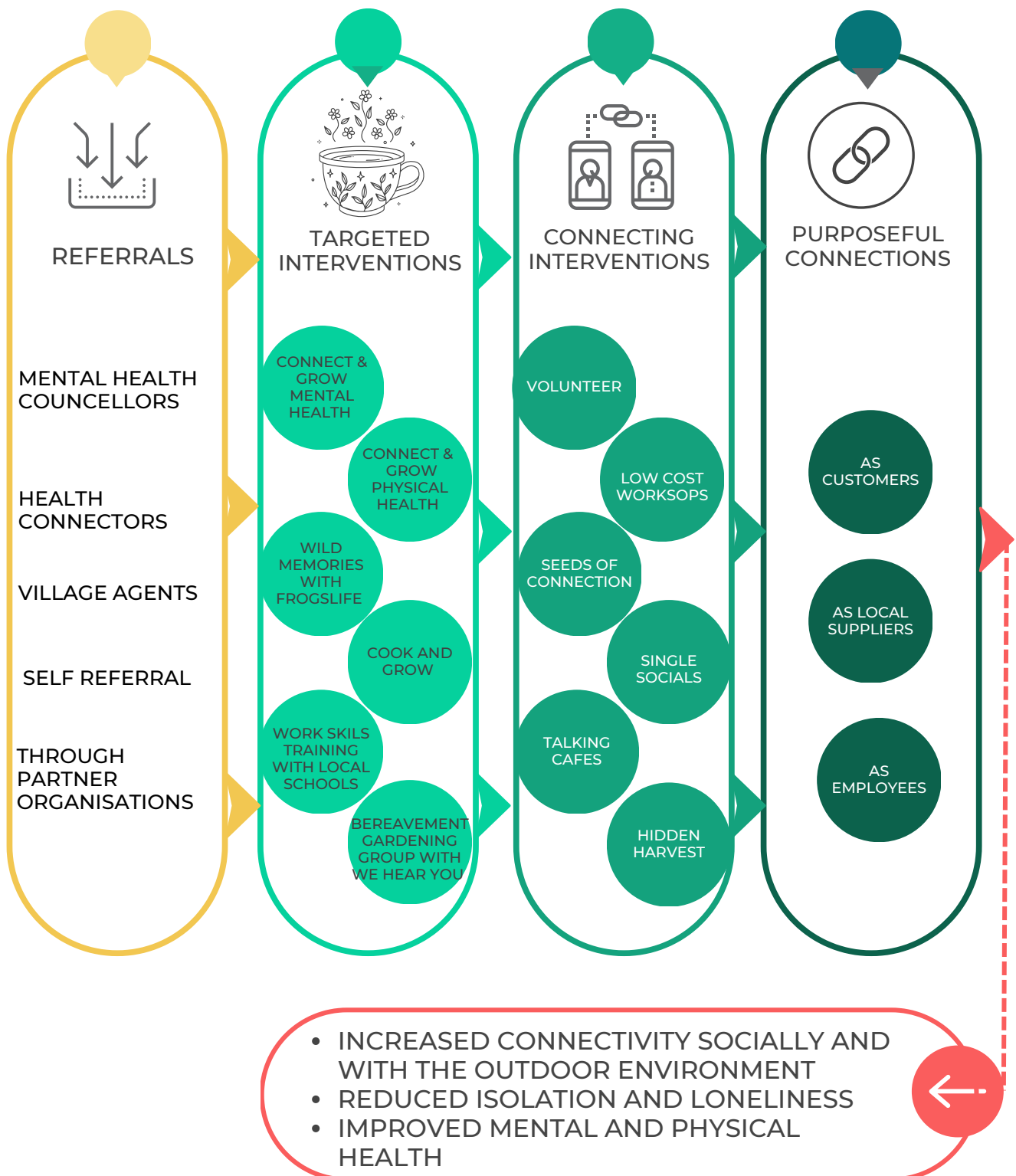
We only collect data that is meaningful in helping us improve how we work and how we support people through our programs.



Our logic model is based on the assumption that nature-based interventions lead to improved mental and physical health. There is a large body of research that supports this assumption.

# INTERVENTION PATHWAY

Over the last three years we have been developing targeted programs in collaboration with partner organisations to best meet the needs of their participants. We try an offer a transitional pathway so that people can continue to be engaged with the garden after a targeted intervention, by providing a pipeline through to more social or connected ways of engaging with the space.



# PEOPLE

For the participant gardeners that work with us in the garden there are a number of identified benefits including:



## LEARNING

Learning new skills is appreciated by those that come to the garden. People state that it supports their wellbeing by providing a sense of accomplishment, and gives them a new or renewed interest to focus on.

“

*The joy I felt at seeing those little seedlings sprout in my window sill early in the Spring gave me so much confidence to have a go at growing my own. ... and the best thing was being able to trade plants others had grown.*

Seeds of Connection

”

“

*During the pandemic coming here kept me sane, it was a little bit of normalcy when allowed through the lockdowns. Having that regular social connection a few hours a week did wonders.*

Volunteer

”



## SOCIAL INTERACTION

The social connections that people make are cited as one of the most important impacts for participants. For some, those connections are easily gained, for others it's more hard won as they overcome the challenges they experience from feeling cut off by their mental or physical challenges. Participants report that gardening takes the focus off their challenges and gives them a safe place to find ways of interacting that meet their needs and pace.

“

*Having something to get up for on Monday, a place to be that was calm and in nature, just got the week started for me, like I had a purpose. I found I wouldn't waste so much of the week avoiding things.*

Connect and Grow Mental Health

”



## ROUTINES

Regaining routine, structure, and purpose through attending regular weekly or monthly sessions is important to people who come to the garden, especially after the lockdowns, and for many people the garden has been a stepping stone back into a functioning life.

“

*I needed it to encourage myself to be creative again and for my mental health and it was such a tonic ...The setting and doing botanical plants in the garden is something that will long stay with me*

Somerset Skills and Learning  
Art and Mental Health workshops

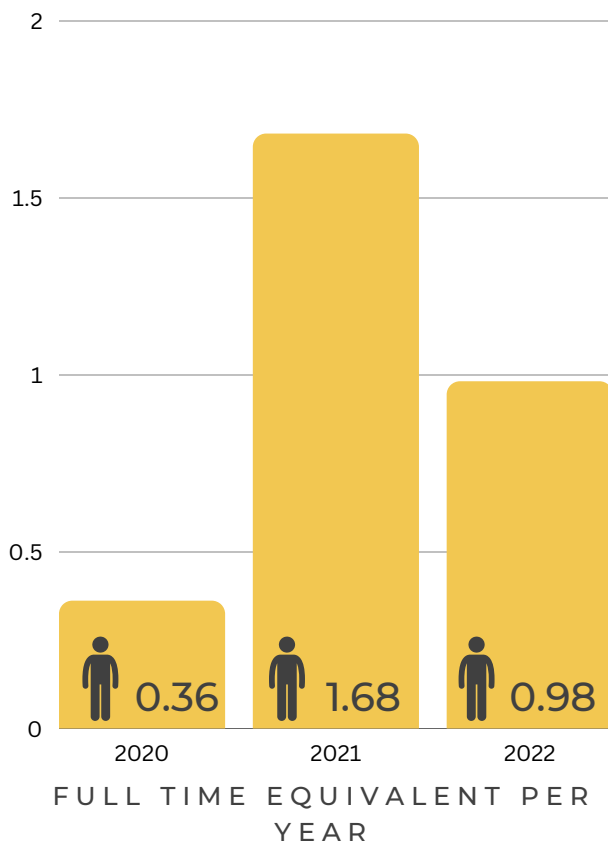
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## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The impact of being outdoors, in nature, helping things grow, and watching the seasonal changes with its life and death cycles, is something really valued by people who come to the garden. For some it's helped with improving their physical fitness and wellbeing, for others it's more about the therapeutic impact derived from the sense of connection to nature that comes with the calm and ancientness of the walled garden.

# PEOPLE



Developing employment opportunities is key to our work and we like to develop people from within and by getting to know people through our programs. We measure progress in this area by tracking our Full Time Equivalent staff numbers which gives a standard measurement we can track over the years.

As a start up organisation, we predominately worked with freelance contractors to deliver programs, run workshops, and help maintain the garden, but as we grow so does our staff.

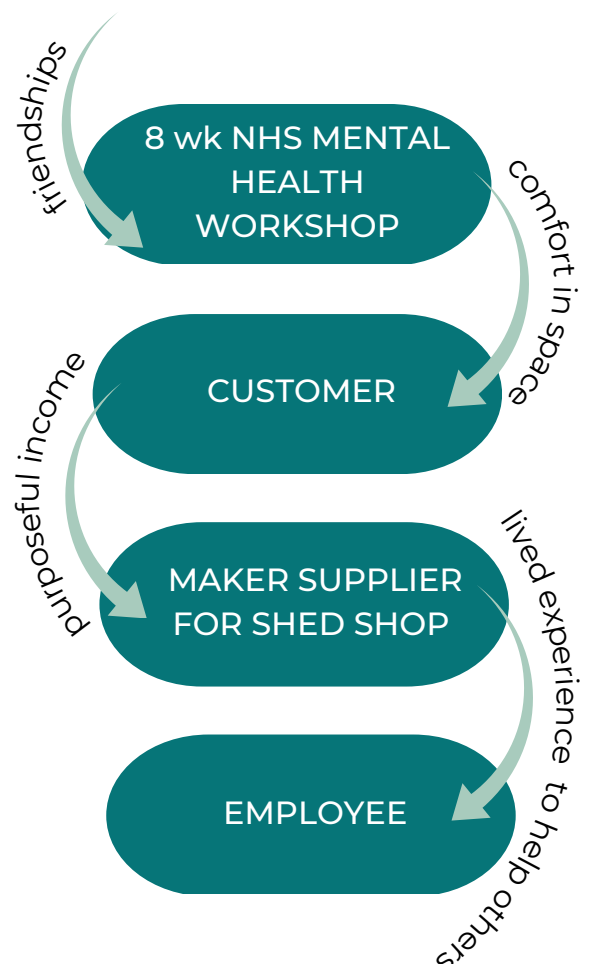
In 2021 we took on two kickstart apprenticeships and were delighted to be able to take on Alex beyond the kickstart term as our first part-time employee.

In 2022 we were able to employ three part-time staff to run our Shed Shop over the summer season and two social media interns.

## FOSTERING A SENSE OF CONNECTEDNESS

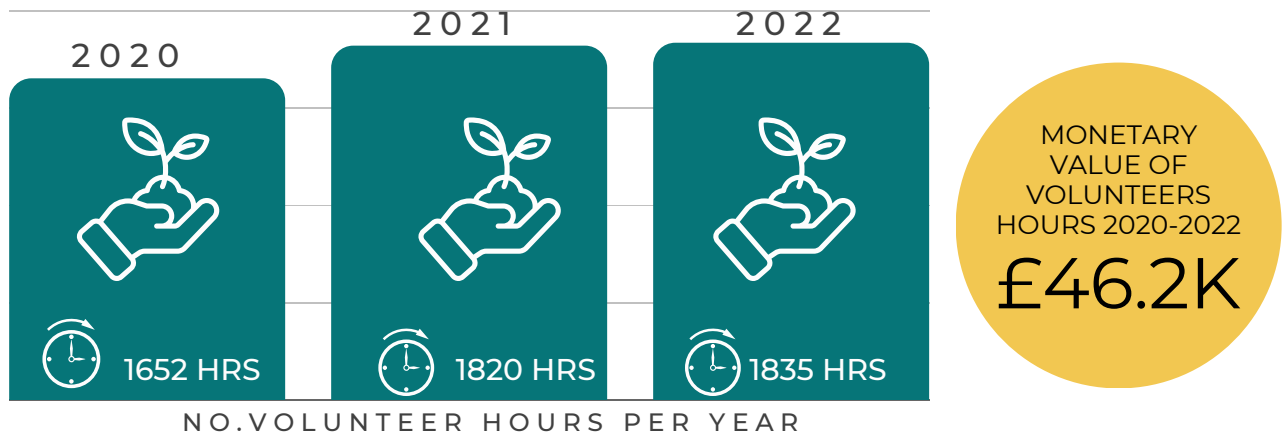
Through the work we do the concept of felt connection or 'connectedness' underpins the outcomes we strive for. It can relate to one's connection with their own senses, body and emotions; to friends, family and community; and to nature, and the wider world.

This illustration is a real life example of a journey of connectiveness that one of our participants has gone on with us over the last two years. From needing some support to overcome social anxiety brought on by the lockdowns to becoming a regular customer, a local supplier and then an integral part of our team and using those lived experiences to help support others.



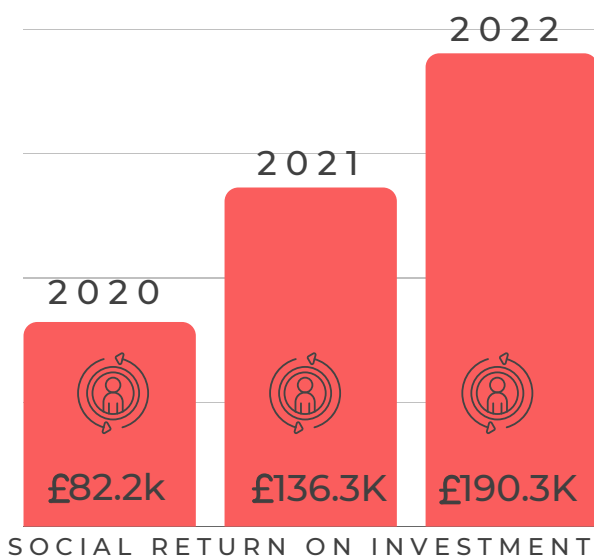
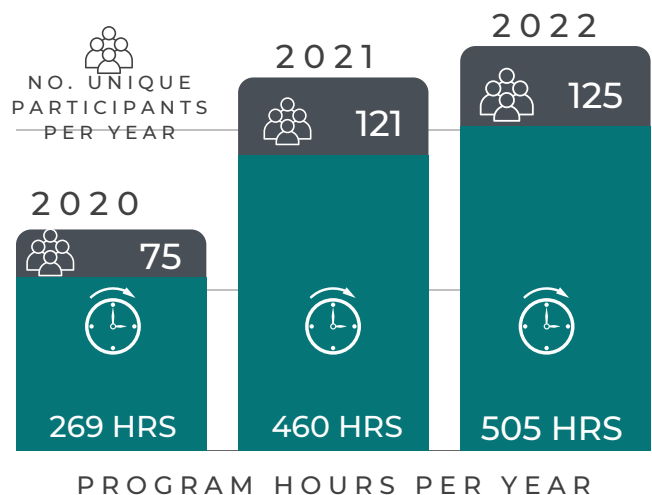
# PEOPLE

Volunteers support our work in a whole range of ways from working alongside people in our groups, to maintaining the garden and looking after the plants we grow and sell to raise funds. We have a volunteer Board of Directors and most operational functions, like fundraising, program development and event planning, would not happen without voluntary support. In 2022, 1835 hours were given in voluntary support. Over the last three years of operation, this equates to an underestimated monetary value of £46.2k (calculated at minimum wage)



In 2022 we ran 505 hours of targeted interventions and 125 unique people participated. We trialed three new programs that were all successful and will be rerun in 2023:

1. A monthly bereavement gardening program with We Hear You.
2. An Art and Wellbeing workshops with Somerset Skills and Learning.
3. A Cook and Grow initiative with Purple Elephant.



According to the Wildlife Trust *“Prescribing nature works – and saves money. A natural, community-based approach to health offers an important non-medical service that will deliver health prevention at scale and reduce the current burden on the NHS.”* They found for every £1 invested in specialised health or social needs projects that connect people to nature, there is a £6.88 social return. In the last three years we have generated a conservative estimate of £409.7k social return on investment



# FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

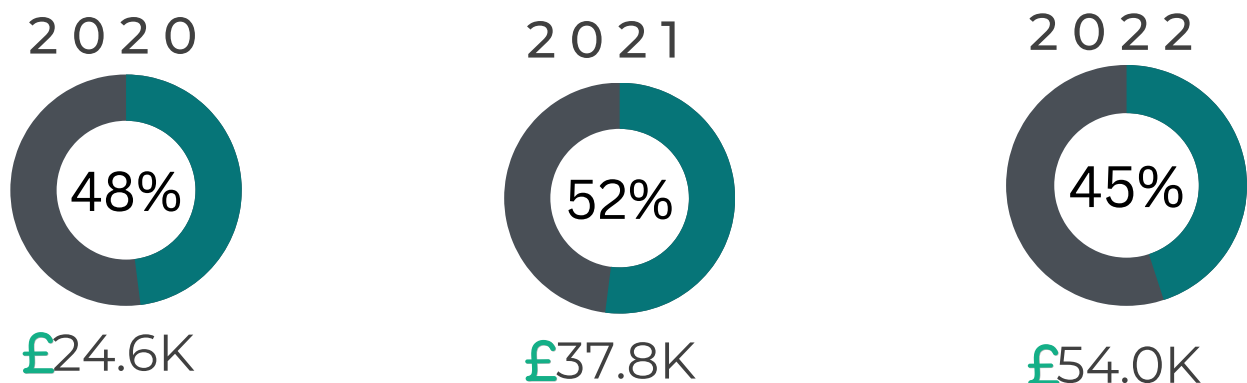
Social enterprises are uniquely placed to deliver important community programmes without over relying on traditional grant funding by building trading income streams that can increase their financial self sustainability. We do this by selling the plants our participant gardeners grow along with seeds, and other gardening related products.

Income from trading allows us:

- Independence on what programs we develop so that we are not trying to make our work fit the latest funding priorities.
- More flexibility to cover operating costs which are often a challenge to fundraise for.
- More innovation in how we work and the ability to pivot more quickly in tough times.

We measure how much of our income comes from trading in comparison to grant funding. In 2022 this ratio was 45% trading to 55% funding

## PERCENTAGE OF ANNUAL EXPENDITURE ACQUIRED FROM TRADING



### TRADING INCOME PER YEAR

How do our figures compare with other social enterprises? 67% of social enterprise earn between 75% and 100% of their income through trade\*. We have a way to go to reach our target of 75%. Our trading highlights include:

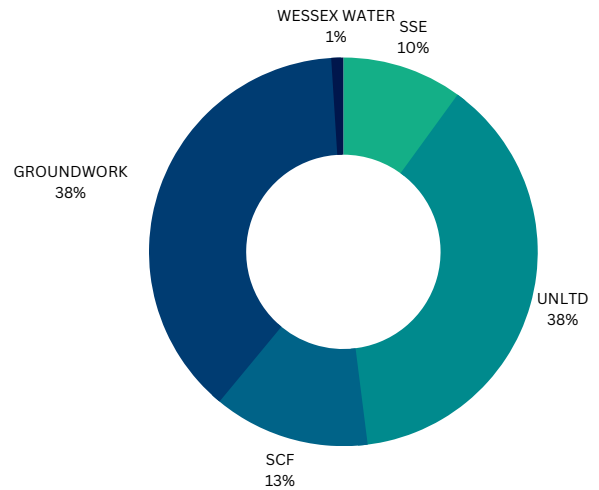
- We have doubled our trading income in the last two years.
- We sold nearly 5,800 plants in 2022, up from 3,500 in 2020.
- At the beginning of 2022 we were awarded a £20k Social Investment Loan and a grant for £10k by Somerset Community Foundation to help us leverage our trading potential. The investment enabled us to take some risks. We have been setting up a seed brand called Seedery as an income stream that we will launch in 2023. We also took on a new outdoor community cafe in Victoria Park Frome, opening end of March 2023.

\*Social Enterprise UK. 2021. No Going Back – State of Social Enterprise Survey 2021  
file:///C:/Users/drsam/Downloads/https\_\_\_www.socialenterprise.org.uk\_app\_uploads\_2022\_05\_State-of-Social-Enterprise-Survey-2021-compressed.pdf

# FUNDING

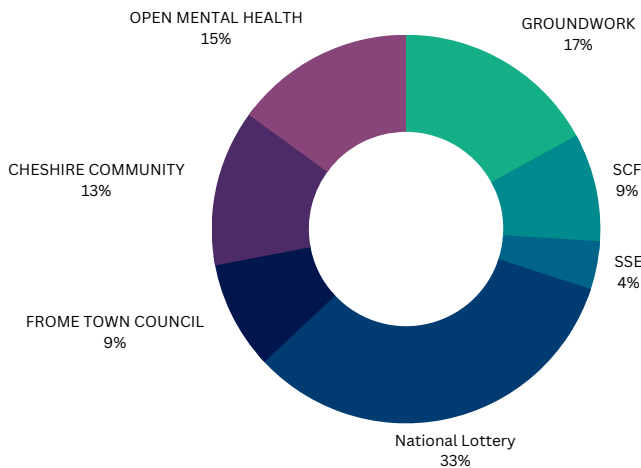
## 2020

Funding from Groundwork (Power to Change), Somerset Community Foundation and Unltd were the instrumental in helping us start up. The support helped us build up our stock levels, develop our nursery site, and take on a therapeutic horticulturist to developed our programs. Groundwork and Unltd proactively helped us through the challenges of lockdowns through practical, moral and financial support. Through running click and collect sales we were able to sell the 3,500 plants we grew through winter 2019 despite the closures.



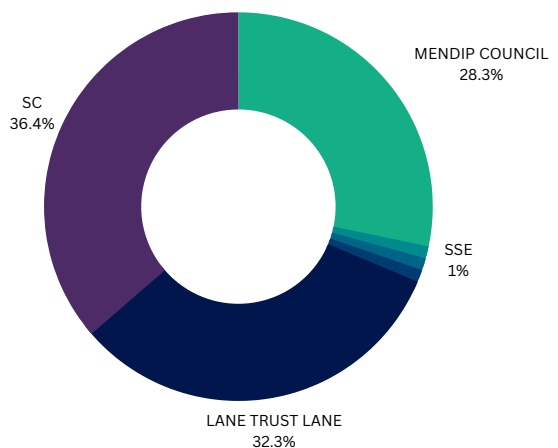
## 2021

National Lottery and Groundwork funding helped us to cover operational costs in 2021. In addition funding from Assura Community Fund, Open Mental Health, and Frome Town Council enabled us to run our key targeted interventions throughout the year which increased the number of people we were able to support.



## 2022

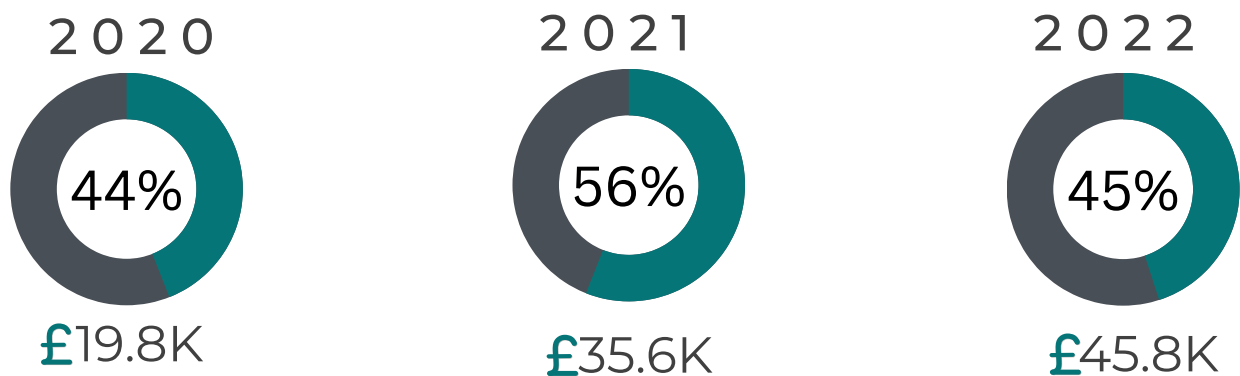
Funding in 2022 was focused heavily on developing our trading income. Grants and investments from Mendip Council and Somerset Community Foundation helped us develop new income streams that will support us in being more financially robust. A donation from the Lane Trust will support our therapeutic programs in 2023



# SUPPORTING LOCAL ECONOMIES

We prioritise buying and supporting local suppliers and service providers wherever possible. We look at how much of our annual expenditure we spend with local people, suppliers and service providers to support and build resilience in our local economy, which we define as within 15 miles of our site.

## PERCENTAGE OF ANNUAL EXPENDITURE SPENT LOCALLY



## SPENT LOCALLY PER YEAR

In 2022 we spent more in our local economy than in previous years as we grew the organisation. Between 2020 and 2022 local expenditure rose from £19.8 to £45.8, an increase of 131%.

The ratio of local to non local purchases decreased though from 56% in 2021 to 45% in 2022. This was because some big expenditures of equipment and infrastructure, such as a new poly tunnel skin, could not be sourced locally. Our target for sourcing locally is 65% of our expenditure.

## PURPOSEFUL LOCAL INCOMES



We have been developing a network of local microgrowers that we buy plants from. These are usually senior people who love growing at home but don't want to market their plants. This program:

- Supports people at home to grow plants that they can turn into a purposeful income
- Fosters a sense of connectedness to the work we do in the garden
- Increases our capacity to stock plants when space limits us in growing them ourselves
- Keeps plants local to reduce transport miles and the opportunities for disease to spread
- Increase variety and uniqueness of our plant offering

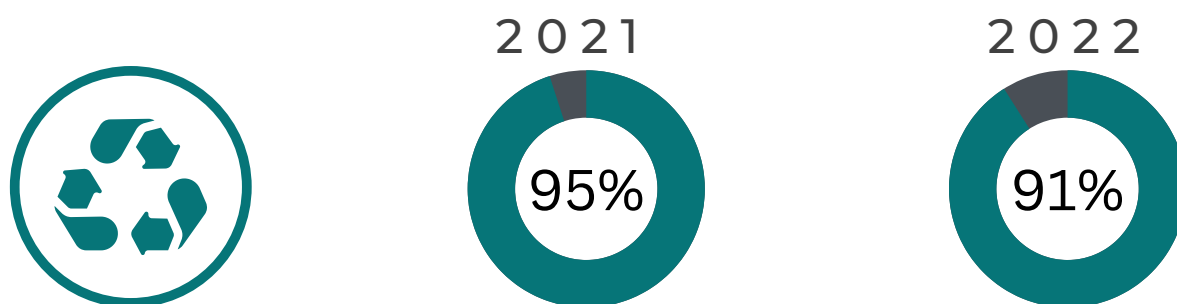
# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

As a nature-based green organisation, our environmental impact is also very important to us. The value of having a café and plant nursery within a walled garden means that we can create a mini ecosystem that employs a number of sustainable practices allowing us to reuse, reduce, and recycle between all the elements of the business.

For example: we reuse our plastic plant pots, we moved to peat-free compost in 2020, we grow organically, we compost both café and garden waste, we mulch annually to reduce water evaporation from the beds, introduced more drought resistant planting, have three different ponds including a bog garden to attract a variety of wildlife., we purchase compostable and recyclable packaging and containers, and buy local to reduce transport miles.

Since 2021 we have been able to track our non compostable waste by weight. In 2022 we recycled 91% of our waste.

## PERCENTAGE OF OUR WASTE THAT IS RECYCLED



For 2023, our key environmental project will be to increase our water capture abilities at the Walled Garden to be self sufficient in our water usage reducing our use of main supplies to maintain our plants.

# CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Registered name: Cultivating Community CIC  
Company Number 12114130  
Established 20.07.2019

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## Board of Directors

Dr Samantha EVANS: Managing Director  
Emily BRADLEY: Plant Nursery  
Andy JONES: Outreach and Networking  
Caroline BLAKE: Victoria Park  
Merryn PREECE: Program Development

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## Trading Names

### The Walled Garden Nursery

Email: [Thewalledgardnatmells@gmail.com](mailto:Thewalledgardnatmells@gmail.com)  
Address: 5 Rectory Cottages, Mells, Frome, BA11 3PN  
Telephone number: 01373 812597  
WS: <https://www.thewalledgardenatmells.co.uk/>  
FB; @thewalledgardenatmells  
Inst: @walledgardenatmells

### Victoria Park Cafe

Email:  
Address: Weymouth Road, Frome,  
Somerset, BA11 1HJ  
Telephone:  
WS: <https://www.victoriaparkcafe.org>  
FB: @Victoriaparkcafe

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### Seedery

Email:  
[Thewalledgardnatmells@gmail.com](mailto:Thewalledgardnatmells@gmail.com)  
Address: 5 Rectory Cottages, Mells,  
Frome, BA11 3PN  
Telephone number: 01373 812597  
WS: <https://www.seedery.co.uk/>