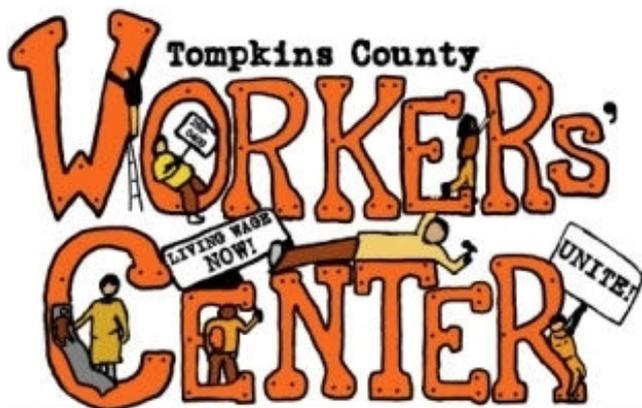


# CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE WORKFORCE STUDY

AUGUST 2017



**Alternatives**  
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

*Where Good Things Happen*

# CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE WORKFORCE STUDY

## background.

In 1994, Alternatives Federal Credit Union piloted the first biennial Living Wage research project to find the baseline it costs a single person to live frugally in Tompkins County. In 2006 The Tompkins County Workers' Center (TCWC) used this data to begin the very first Living Wage Employer Certification Program in the country. These programs have provided a template to other groups nationally.

In 2017, members of the Living Wage Task Force, including Alternatives, the Tompkins County Workers' Center and Just Consulting, conducted a brand new study to discover for the first time *how the voluntary Employer Certification Program affects its workforce and who makes up that workforce.*

## methods.

From April to June 2017, surveys were administered to all 104 Certified Living Wage Employers (CLWE) requesting their business' or organization's participation in the first Certified Living Wage Workforce Study. 53% of the CLWE agreed to participate in the study and sent requests to their employees to complete the online Worker survey.

## research questions.

To learn more about how the voluntary Employer Certification Program affects its workforce and who makes up the Certified Living Wage (CLW) workforce, the following research questions were investigated:

- Q1. What are the CLW worker characteristics (all workers and by current wage status)?
- Q2. What are the CLW worker characteristics of those who moved to living wage?
- Q3. Is wage the reason in pursuing current job?
- Q4. Has Certified Living Wage Employment made a difference in your life?
- Q5. How do Employers perceive their participation as a Certified Living Wage Employer?



# CHARACTERISTICS OF CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE WORKFORCE

	All Workers (n=215)	Percent (%)
<b>Length of Employment</b>		
0-3 months	8	3.7
3 months to 1 year	35	16.3
1 to 5 years	88	40.9
5 to 10 years	36	16.7
10+ years	48	22.3
<b>Previously Employed by TC</b>		
Yes, immediately before starting this job	104	48.4
Yes, but in the past	43	20.0
No never	68	31.6
<b>Previous Employer CLW?</b>		
Yes	20	13.6
No	92	62.6
I don't know	35	23.8
<b>Nature of Business</b>		
Retail	8	3.7
Non-profit sector	68	31.6
Government	18	8.4
Manufacturing	4	1.9
Contracting	6	2.8
Financial sector	30	14.0
Healthcare/wellness	19	8.8
Education	10	4.7
Business services	9	4.2
Services industry	11	5.1
Other	32	14.9



# CHARACTERISTICS OF CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE WORKFORCE

	All Workers (n=215)	Percent (%)
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>		
No high school degree	1	.5
High school degree	9	4.4
GED	3	1.5
Vocational school	3	1.5
Some college but no degree	21	10.3
Associate degree	33	16.2
Bachelor degree	75	36.8
Master degree	54	26.5
Doctoral degree	5	2.5
<b>Age Range</b>		
18-25	16	7.8
26-40	87	42.6
41-55	61	29.9
55 or older	40	19.6
<b>Gender Identity</b>		
Female	145	67.4
Male	54	25.1
Non-Binary	3	1.4
Prefer not to answer	2	.9
<b>Race or Origin</b>		
Asian	9	4.5
Black or African American	5	2.5
Hispanic or Latino	6	3.0
Native American	1	.5
White	163	80.7
Asian/White	2	1.0
Hispanic/White	2	1.0
Other	5	2.5
Prefer not to answer	9	4.5



# CHARACTERISTICS OF CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE WORKFORCE

	All Workers (n=215)	Percent (%)
<b>Preferred Language</b>		
English	184	97.9
English/French	1	.5
Chinese	1	.5
English/Spanish	1	.5
Vietnamese	1	.5
<b>Languages spoken at home</b>		
English	191	94.1
English/Nepalese	1	.5
Chinese	2	1.0
Chinese, Spanish, English	1	.5
English/Spanish	4	2.0
English/German/Chinese	1	.5
Vietnamese	1	.5
Russian	1	.5
English/Croatian	1	.5
<b>Veteran Status</b>		
Yes	5	2.5
No	197	96.6
Prefer not to answer	2	1.0
<b>Disabled</b>		
Yes	5	2.5
No	193	94.6
Prefer not to answer	6	2.9
<b># Dependents</b>		
0	116	56.9
1	36	17.6
2	32	15.7
3	13	6.4
4	4	2.0
5	3	1.5



# CHARACTERISTICS OF CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE WORKFORCE

## by current wage status

Demographic data were stratified by worker's self-reported current wage status to explore if there were any differences among worker characteristics by current wage status categories (living wage, above living wage, or salaried). Significant differences were found among the following characteristics: length of employment (chi-square = .002), educational attainment (chi-square = .013), and age range (chi-square < .001). There were no significant differences found among any of the other characteristics such as race or origin (chi-square = .598), gender identity (chi-square = .401), or previously employed in Tompkins County (chi-square = .184).

	Living Wage (n=64)	Above Living Wage (n=99)	Salary (n=52)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
<b>Length of Employment</b>			
0-3 months	4 (6%)	2 (2%)	2 (4%)
3 months to 1 year	15 (23%)	15 (15%)	5 (10%)
1 to 5 years	32 (50%)	42 (42%)	14 (27%)
5 to 10 years	8 (13%)	18 (18%)	10 (19%)
10+ years	5 (8%)	22 (22%)	21 (40%)

\*chi-square = .002

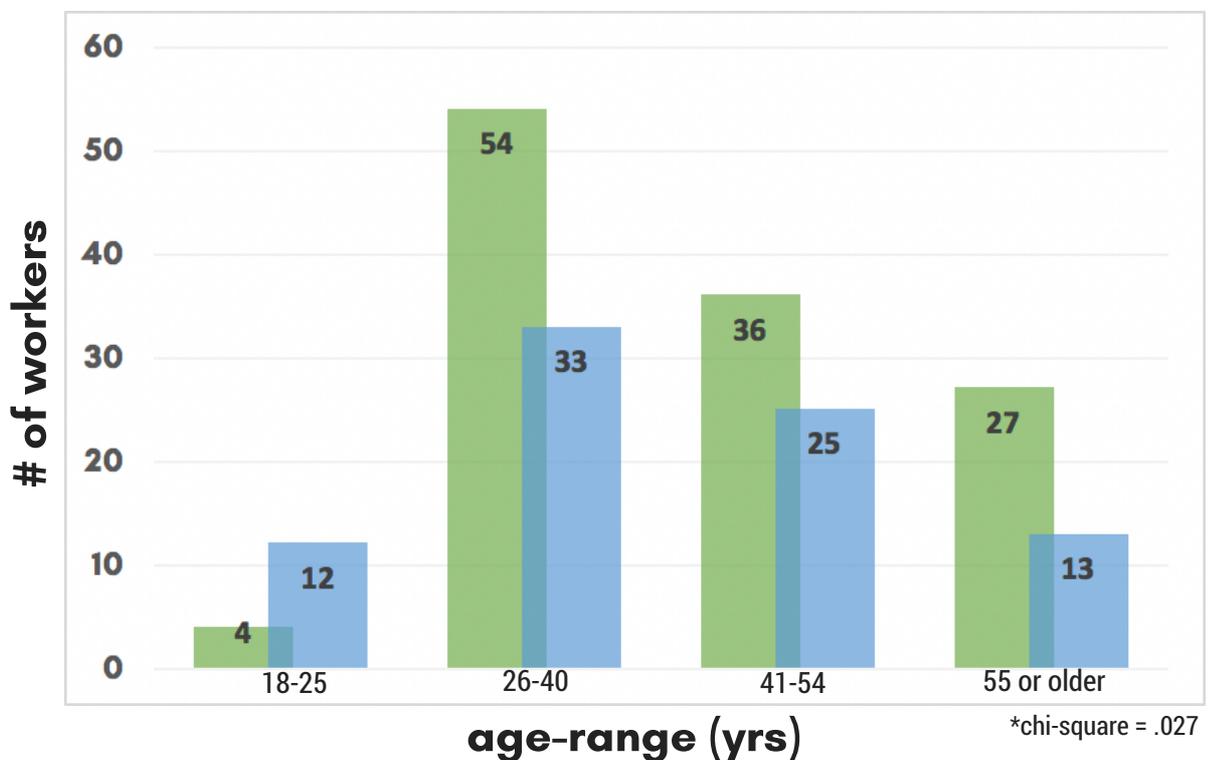
Significant differences were found among educational attainment (chi-square = .013) by current wage category. More workers at living wage had a high school degree as their highest level of education (n=6) compared to workers above living wage (n=2) or salaried workers (n=1). Above living wage and salaried workers had a greater number of workers with advanced degrees (masters and doctorates) (n=51) compared to only 8 workers at living wage with an advanced degree. Living wage workers were significantly younger than workers above living wage or salaried (chi-square < .001).

# Q2

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE WORKFORCE moving into living wage

The next research question explored differences based on workers who had moved into living wage employment compared to workers who were already at or above living wage. 41% of the Workers (83 of 204) previously held jobs with wages below living wage (at minimum wage or higher than minimum wage but below living wage) compared to 59% of Workers' (121 of 204) wages were at or above living wage. With the exception of age-range, there were no significant differences in characteristics among workers based on moving into living wage status or remaining at or above living wage. Workers who moved into living wage status had a greater proportion of Workers in the 18-25 year old age-range and fewer in the 55 or older age-range category (chi-square = .027). Workers moving into living wage had fewer advanced degrees (masters and doctorates) compared to Workers who were already at or above living wage, but the difference was not significant (chi-square = .057).

**Workers' age range by workers who moved into living wage compared to workers already at or above living wage**

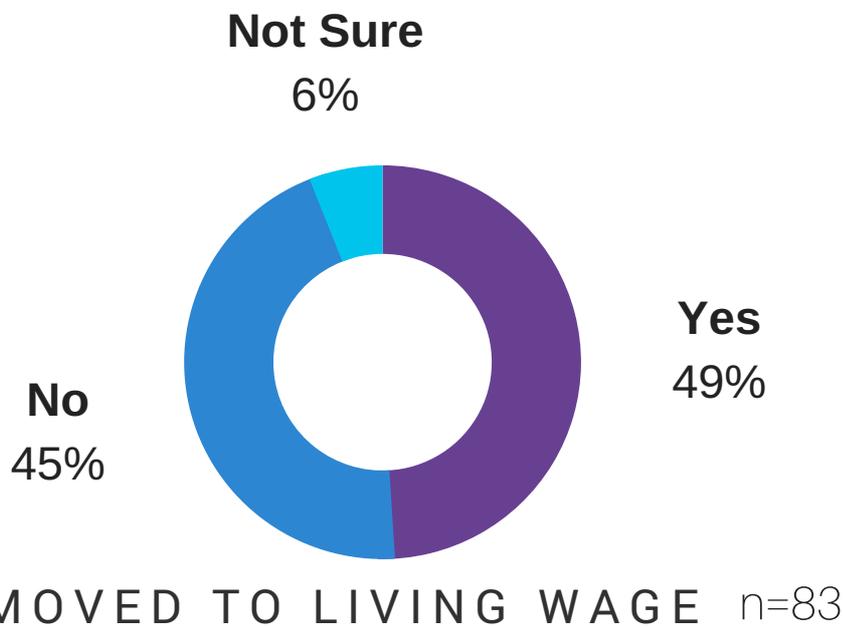
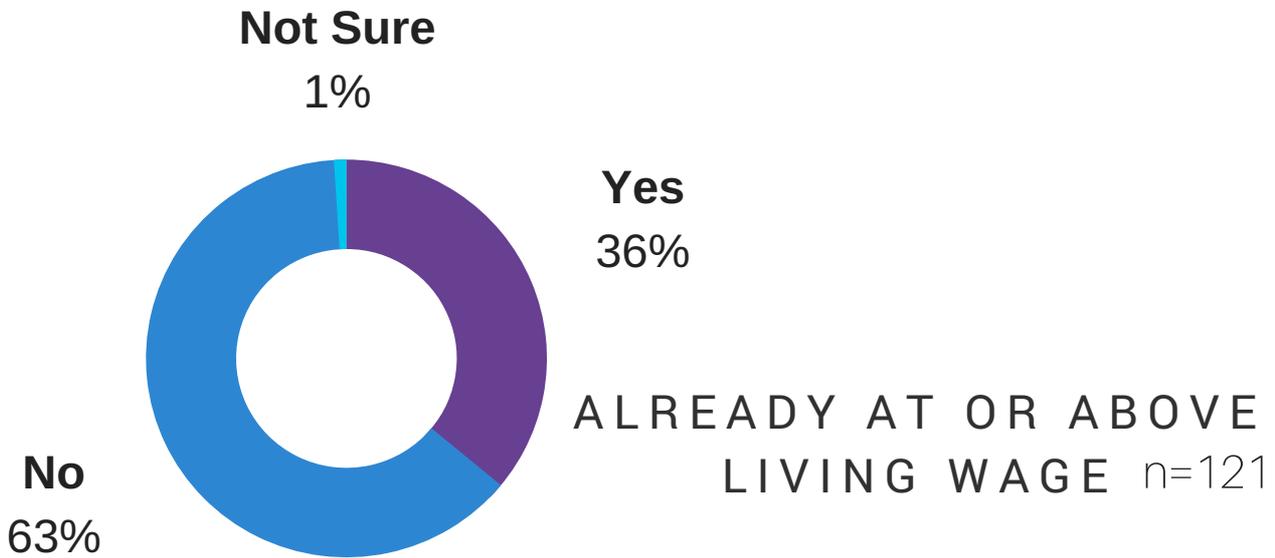


workers who moved into living wage (n=83)

workers already at or above living wage (n=121)



# WAS WAGE THE REASON IN PURSUING YOUR CURRENT JOB?



\*chi-square = .009

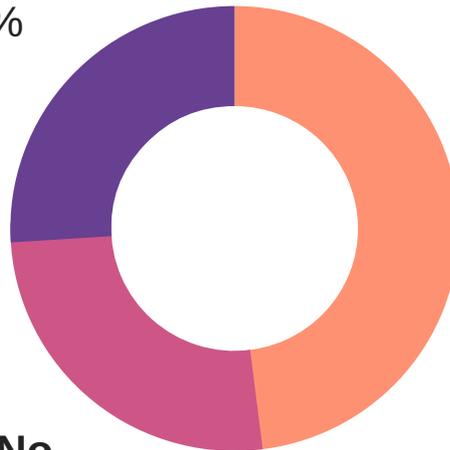
There was a significant difference in wage being the reason workers pursued their current job by change in living wage status. 49% of workers who moved from below minimum wage to a certified living wage said 'yes' wage was the reason for pursuing their job compared to 36% of workers who were already at or above living wage. 63% of workers who were already at or above living wage said 'no' wage was not the reason for pursuing their current job compared to only 45% of workers who moved to living wage.

# Q4

## HAS CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE EMPLOYMENT MADE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE?

**Not Sure**

26%



**Yes**

48%

**No**

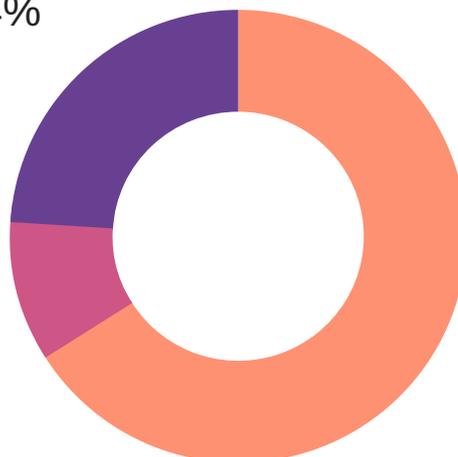
26%

**ALREADY AT OR ABOVE LIVING WAGE** n=121

There was a significant difference in how workers perceived CLWE making a difference in their lives. 66% of workers who moved from below minimum wage to a certified living wage said 'yes' CLWE made a difference in their life compared to 48% of workers who were already at or above living wage. Only 10% of workers who moved to living wage said 'no' CLWE did not make a difference in their life compared to 26% of workers who were already at or above living wage.

**Not Sure**

24%



**No**

10%

**Yes**

66%

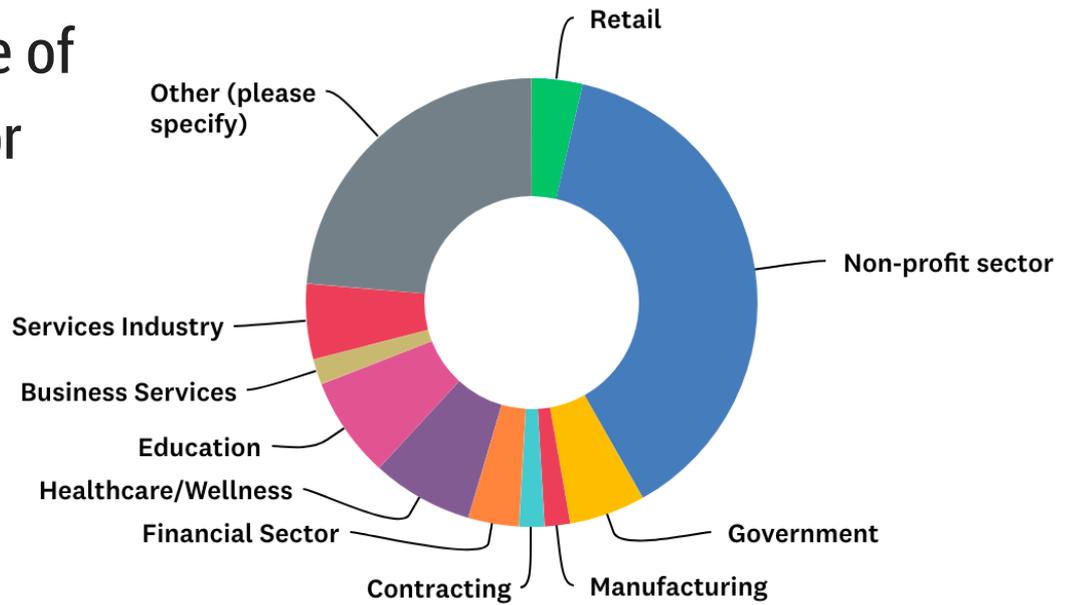
\*chi-square = .013

**MOVED TO LIVING WAGE** n=83

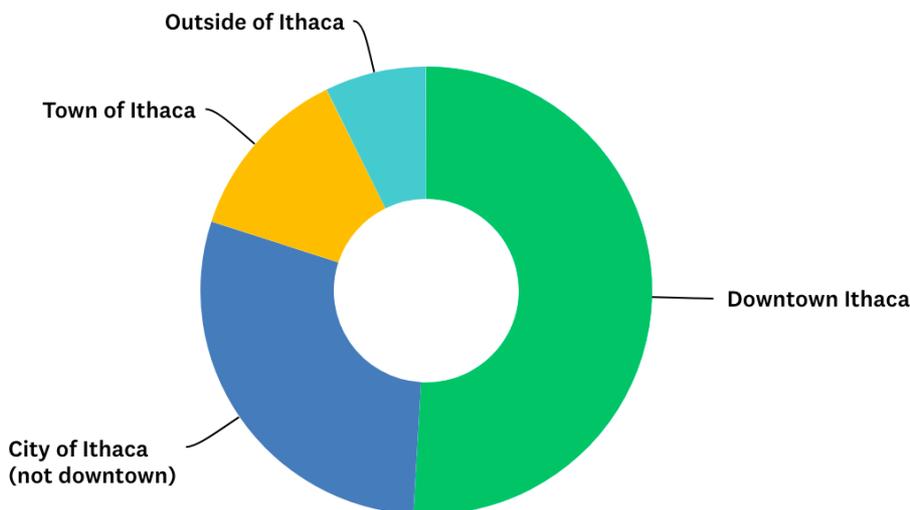
# Q5

## HOW DO EMPLOYERS PERCEIVE THEIR PARTICIPATION AS A CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER?

What is the nature of your business or organization?



The majority of the Certified Living Wage Employers who agreed to participate were in the non-profit sector (38%). Of the 55 participating businesses and organizations, an equal amount (7%) were from education and healthcare and wellness businesses and organizations. There was also about 20% reporting their business or organization as 'other' with typical responses including consulting and law services. 50% of the businesses were located in Downtown Ithaca with 30% located within the City of Ithaca (but not downtown). Finally, about 12% of the businesses and organizations were located in the Town of Ithaca and 7% outside of Ithaca.



Where is your business located?



## HOW DO **EMPLOYERS PERCEIVE** THEIR PARTICIPATION AS A CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER?

### **Certified Living Wage Employers say:**

**45%** agree being a CLWE helps reduce turnover

**64%** CLWE positively affects employee relations

.....  
*"Enhances genuine brand of social responsibility."*

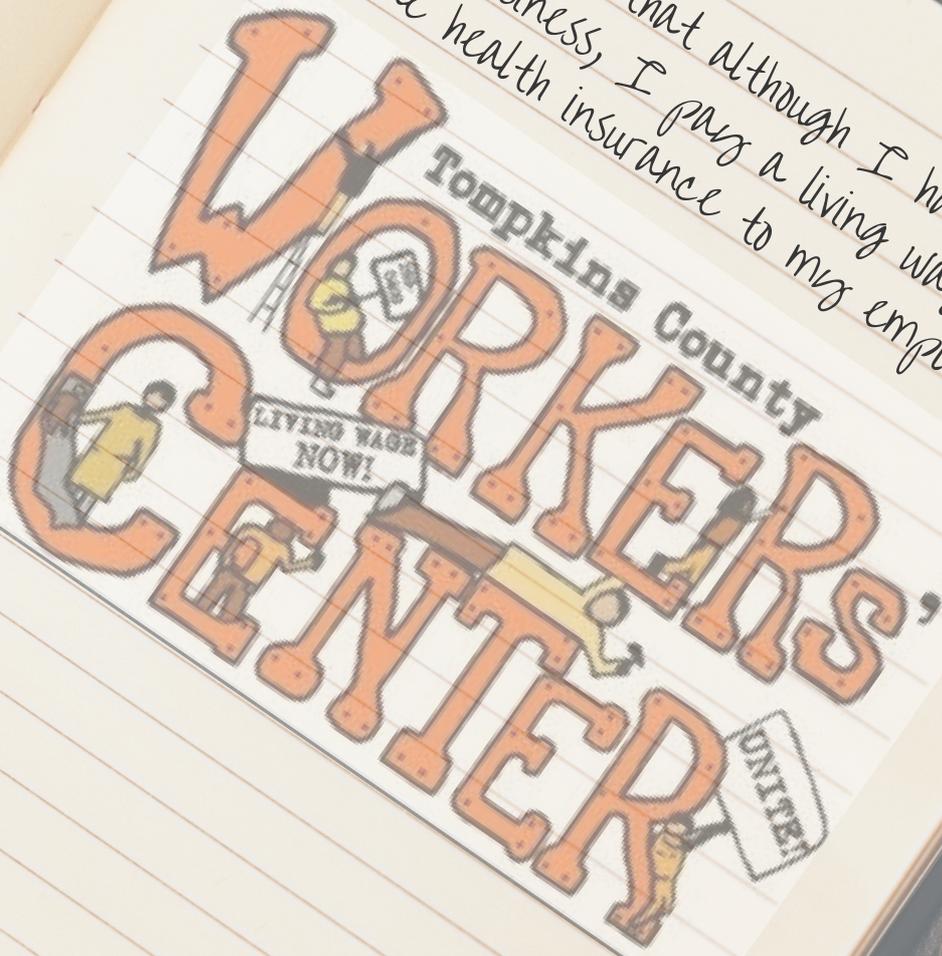
*Great for staff recruitment, reduces turnover, the right thing to do.*

*"Knowing that we are doing what we can to live out our mission to treat everyone (staff included!) equitably and fairly."*

.....

I feel proud that although I have a very small business, I pay a living wage and provide health insurance to my employees.

Tompkins County



Where Good Things Happen

JUST CONSULTING