



## Somerset Hills Learning Institute

### Program: A Growing Need to Grow

## Who we are

Founded in 1998, Somerset Hills Learning Institute is a nonprofit organization providing science-based education and treatment to individuals with autism. We prepare professionals to be autism-intervention resources beyond our walls and pioneer innovative treatment models. Our mission is to improve lives and empower people with autism to achieve greater independence.

## The program we are proposing

Three Meadows Farm is a social enterprise operated by Somerset Hills Learning Institute in Bedminster, NJ. The Institute's Sustainable Futures program addresses the urgent need to combat the 86% unemployment rate among adults with autism in NJ by providing career training and paid employment in hydroponic farming. We grow and sell Paradise Salad —a proprietary and unique salad blend — to local restaurants and grocers.

This proposal seeks to expand the Sustainable Futures program by doubling current operations and adding paid employment for adults with autism. Participants gain meaningful work experience, skills in planting, harvesting, and packaging produce, and the opportunity to contribute to their communities.

This expansion not only increases the number of people served but also enhances our infrastructure to sustain the long-term goal of building inclusive employment pathways for individuals with autism, demonstrating that they are capable, contributing members of the workforce when given appropriate training and support.

## What makes this a high-impact program

This program creates meaningful and measurable change for a community that faces significant barriers to employment. Individuals with autism often encounter systemic unemployment due to a lack of inclusive opportunities and job-readiness programs tailored to their learning styles. Sustainable Futures provides a structured, supportive environment where they can succeed.

The impact is twofold: first, participants develop practical job skills and interpersonal competencies that build self-confidence and independence. Second, the program educates the broader community by demonstrating the capacity of people with autism to thrive in integrated work settings.

Moreover, every graduation into employment reduces the future cost of care and dependency, generating both social and economic returns. The ripple effect extends to families, communities, taxpayers, and those who will come to learn from our replicable models — demonstrating the long-term value of investing in inclusive, sustainable employment models.

## **How we will make it happen**

Impact100 Garden State funding will allow us to overcome a critical growth barrier: the need to expand staff and infrastructure before realizing sales revenue (i.e., we can't expand our service reach without growing our customer base and we can't grow our customer base without increasing our service reach to include more participants.) To this end, we will use the grant in two key ways.

First, funds will compensate adult employees with autism and enable us to double our Sustainable Futures' program capacity and service reach - ensuring that our growing production needs are met. This will ensure that the program remains financially and operationally sustainable beyond the grant year.

Second, we will implement capital improvements to our hydroponic greenhouses to improve plant growth, reduce operational costs, maintain workplace safety, and create consistent work schedules. These improvements will support year-round operations while supporting the doubling of our service capacity.

## **How we will measure success**

We will track intern and employee skill acquisition through individualized training curricula and data on performance metrics like task completion, speed, and accuracy. Success will be measured by participant progress, program growth, and customer demand. These outcomes will guide future training goals and ensure long-term impact for program beneficiaries.