

# Benchmarking The Environmental And Economic Value Of Working Gear's Clothing Recirculation Program

Prepared by: Raj Chaudhary  
Prepared for: Sarah Beley, Director, Working Gear

March 2023

This report was produced as part of the **UBC Sustainability Scholars Program**, a partnership between the **University of British Columbia** and various local governments and organisations in support of providing graduate students with opportunities to do applied research on projects that advance sustainability across the region.

This project was conducted under the mentorship of **Working Gear** staff. The opinions and recommendations in this report and any errors are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Working Gear or the University of British Columbia.



**WORKING  
GEAR**



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

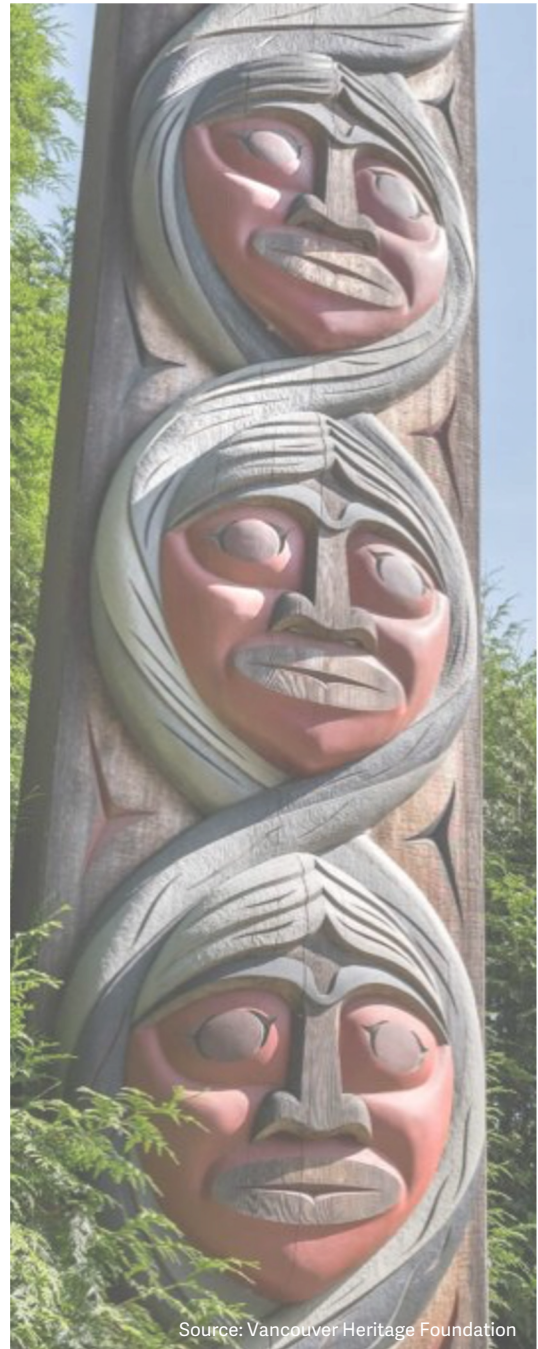
**sustainability**

# Acknowledgements

Vancouver sits on the unceded ancestral lands of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil- Waututh) Nations.

I recognize that many of the systems that resulted in the erasure of Indigenous histories and cultures are still in operation and are being maintained today. I hope that this project contributes to a more compassionate future.

I'd like to thank the team at Working Gear for their support during this project. I'd also like to thank Sarah Beley, who has been an invaluable mentor throughout this endeavour. Thank you, Sarah, for your knowledge, counsel, and friendship along the process.



Source: Vancouver Heritage Foundation

# Executive Summary

This report, prepared by a graduate student as part of the UBC Sustainable Scholars program, delves into the clothing recirculation initiative at Working Gear to analyze its environmental and economic impacts.

More than 1,100 people sought help through Working Gear in 2021. Of those, 29 percent said they would have otherwise had to pass up a job offer. And donors clearly see the value of the society's efforts: It received \$297,000 in tax-receipted donations in 2021, up from just \$1,700 in 2016, putting this small charity at No. 18 on Veritas Foundation's Fastest-growing Charities in Canada list. (Veritas Foundation, 2022)

Using a comprehensive literature review, an organizational scan, and interviews to establish a set of evaluation criteria, I evaluated the effects of the WG initiative - outlining the positive impact on society and revealing that Working Gear's initiatives have demonstrated a genuine commitment to promoting social and economic growth, creating new markets for used clothing and promoting local employment.

The report concludes that Working Gear sets an example for other organizations by prioritizing sustainable practices and social responsibility. The findings underscore the need for organizations to adopt sustainable and socially responsible approaches to promote positive impacts on society and the environment.

# Glossary

- **Sustainability:** The ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It involves balancing economic, social, and environmental factors to ensure the long-term viability and resilience of a system.
- **Circular Economy:** A regenerative economic system that aims to keep resources in use for as long as possible by reducing waste and maximizing the use of materials through recycling, reusing, and repurposing. It is based on designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems.
- **Finite Materials:** Resources that are limited in quantity and will eventually be depleted over time, such as fossil fuels, minerals, and certain types of timber. Once these resources are used up, they cannot be replaced or replenished within a meaningful timeframe.
- **Recycle:** The process of collecting, processing, and converting used materials into new products. It involves breaking down waste into raw materials and using them to create new products, reducing waste sent to landfills and conserving natural resources.
- **Reduce:** The process of minimizing waste generation by using fewer resources and producing less waste in the first place. It involves making conscious choices to decrease consumption, use products more efficiently, and avoid excess packaging, ultimately reducing the amount of waste that needs to be managed.
- **Reuse:** The practice of using a product or material multiple times, either for its original purpose or for a different one, before disposing of it. It involves extending the lifespan of a product, reducing the need for new products to be produced, and ultimately reducing the amount of waste generated.

- **Clothing Recirculation:** Extending the lifespan of clothing items by reselling, swapping, donating, or upcycling them instead of disposing of them. It aims to reduce the amount of textile waste that ends up in landfills and promote a more sustainable and circular fashion industry.
- **Environmental Impact:** The effect that human activities have on the natural environment, including the air, water, land, and living organisms.
- **Economic Impact:** The effect of an event, policy, or action on the economy and the efficiency of achieving desired outcomes.
- **Social Impact:** The effect that an event, policy, or action has on the well-being and quality of life of individuals and communities, including their social and cultural norms, values, and behaviours.

# Contents

## 1 Project Context

- 1.1 Project Overview
- 1.2 Project Approach

## 2 Organizational Context

- 2.1 Values
- 2.2 Organizational Setup
- 2.3 Operational Setup

## 3 Literature Review

- 3.1 Key Initiatives in BC
- 3.2 Assessing Environmental Impact
- 3.3 Assessing Economic Impact
- 3.4 Evaluation for Small Scale Organizations

## 4 Evaluating Impact

## 5 Way Forward

## References

# 1 PROJECT CONTEXT

## 1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Founded in 2009, Working Gear is a social enterprise that removes the final barriers to employment, allowing society's most vulnerable to access work with safe, properly fitting personal protective gear, including quality steel toe boots, which comply with safety regulations. Working Gear also provides office and interview attire to marginalized individuals returning to work. In 2021, Working Gear helped over 1300 people return to work. (Working Gear, 2021)

Most of Working Gear's donations are new items from corporate donors who send their excess stock, dead stock, and returns. Many of these donations are unused or in excellent condition. At the same time, some are unsuitable for Working Gear's programming (e.g., non-steel toe footwear or casual t-shirts), while others are much-needed items. Over the last two years, corporate donations to Working Gear have increased substantially, which has resulted in a surplus of footwear and clothing. To address this surplus of clothing, Working Gear has been hosting monthly free clothing pop-ups, which has helped sustainably recirculate the clothing.

In 2019, Working Gear wanted to understand their reclaiming metrics better. The most straightforward metric they could manage was to start weighing the donations, which they did for over a year and measured 6 tons of donations. Given that they have a large footprint in terms of circulating clothing

in the Downtown Eastside (DTES), the organization is curious to know their impact from an environmental aspect as well as from an economic perspective. (Working Gear, 2022)

Many research projects on diverting textile waste focus on consumer end responsibility, highlighting consumers' need to purchase less even though the manufacturers are still producing surplus amounts of clothing. These extra items are still in the economy and may end up in landfill. Traditional textile waste studies focus on the value of purchasing second-hand or upcycled products. While these efforts are noble, they do not address the effects of more affluent consumers on the price of second-hand clothing. Over recent years many low-income consumers have been priced out of thrift and second-hand clothing. Furthermore, upcycling only sometimes seems scalable or a feasible solution to large amounts of textile waste. That's why Working Gear is helping low-income consumers that have been priced out of second-hand clothing by providing clothing at no cost.

Hence, to dig deeper and develop a better understanding of Working Gear's clothing recirculation program, this project intends to achieve the following goals:

1. Develop an understanding and need for the clothing recirculation program.
2. Identify the benefits of the said program.
3. Establish potential factors.



- Synthesize all the gathered information to create a framework to evaluate the environmental and economic impact of Working Gear's clothing recirculation program.

## 1.2 PROJECT APPROACH

The approach for this project is based on my collaboration with Working Gear, my understanding of the project brief, and my experience as a graduate researcher with a keen interest in sustainability. To fulfill the project objectives, I adopted a four-phased approach:

- Phase 1 Preliminaries:** I collected preliminary information through my initial conversation with my mentor, developed a better understanding of how the organization operates and identified various stakeholders.

- Phase 2 Data Collection:** It involved in-depth discussion with the Working Gear staff and collecting gray literature such as annual reports and available data. I also conducted interviews with clients and a thorough literature review, including but not limited to similar initiatives and case studies.

- Phase 3 Analysis:** This phase involved synthesizing all the information gathered and using it to create an evaluation criterion to assess the impact of WG's initiatives.

- Phase 4 Environmental and Economic Impact:** The final phase involved using all the filtered information to display Working Gear's environmental and economic impact.

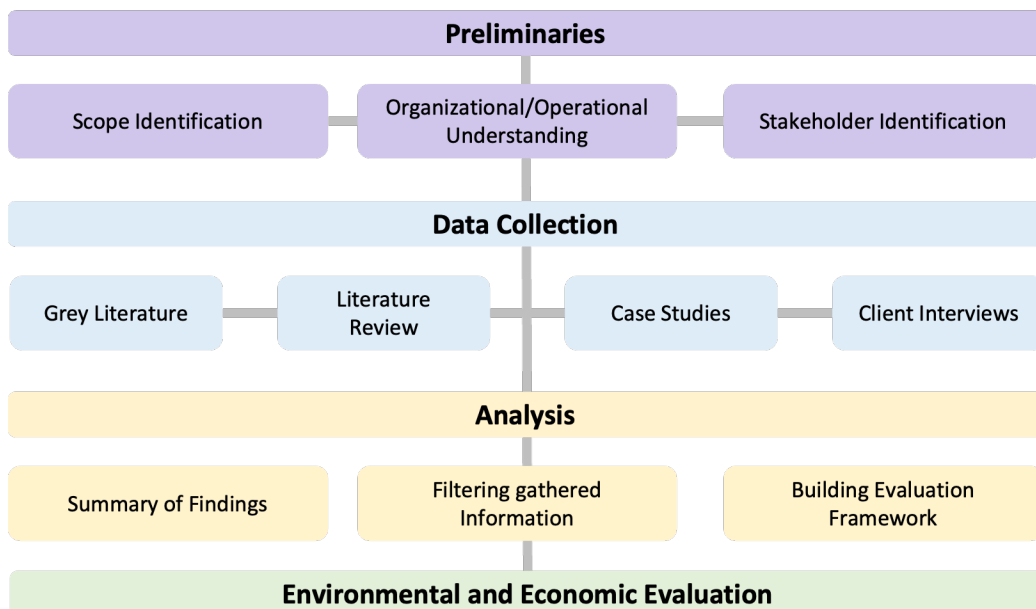


Figure 1: Project Approach

# 2 ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

## 2.1 VALUES

Many temporary employment agencies and construction companies are reluctant to hire prospective workers if they do not own their own clothing, gear, or equipment. Working Gear is a community-centered charity which helps remove this barrier to employment by providing work appropriate clothing and gear at no cost to participants. Working Gear also provides clients the access to a barber and hair services on-site to assist in preparing them to become work ready, build their self-worth, and reduce societal stigma they may face.

Working Gear strives to enhance the lives of its clients and community through its mission to create a sustainable impact. The organization is committed to addressing social inequalities and using its voice to advocate for positive change. Building long-lasting relationships is a key value that guides the organization, as it

recognizes the importance of listening and learning from those around them. By doing so, Working Gear is able to innovate, adapt, and solve problems more effectively.

Collaboration is the backbone of Working Gear, which partners with over 65 referral agencies and maintains connections with over 390 social workers, employment counsellors, and case managers. This collaborative approach helps Working Gear to achieve its goals of creating meaningful impact and providing support to those in need.

## 2.2 ORGANIZATIONAL SETUP

Working Gear follows a well-organized hierarchy that is geared towards achieving its mission of providing support to those in need. At the very top of the hierarchy are the executive director and board of directors, who oversee all operations and are responsible for the organization's overall success.

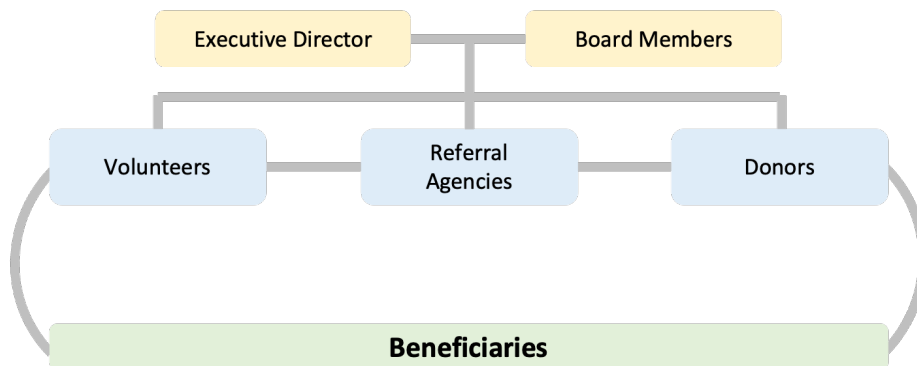


Figure 2: Organizational Setup

In addition, volunteers play a crucial role in the organization, helping with pop-up events, barbershops, and other initiatives that help benefit the clients. Referral agencies like WorksafeBC, City of Vancouver etc. are also vital to Working Gear's organizational setup, as they connect people in need with the organization's services. Finally, donors, including but not limited to organizations like Keen and Big K, provide donations essential to the Working Gear's success. All of these groups work together towards a common goal of preparing clients for work opportunities and enabling them to succeed in their respective careers.

**2.3 OPERATIONAL SETUP**

Working Gear's operational setup is designed to process donations efficiently and distribute them to those in need. The organization accepts donations from various sources, including individuals and corporate donors. Once received, the donations go through a thorough quality check

process involving three steps. The first step involves identifying the specific programming needs of the organization, such as the user groups and intended use of the clothing received. Next, any items that do not align with Working Gear's specific programming needs are passed on to other partnering agencies, ensuring that they are still being put to good use. Finally, any remaining items are donated to those in need, either directly from the Working Gear office or through frequent public pop-up events.

As a result of these steps, the organization is able to provide high-quality clothing to its clients, preparing them for work opportunities and empowering them to succeed in their careers. In addition, this efficient operational setup allows the organization to continue receiving donations and meeting the needs of those in the community who require its support. The cycle of donation, quality check, and distribution to those in need continue to drive the success of Working Gear, significantly impacting the community.

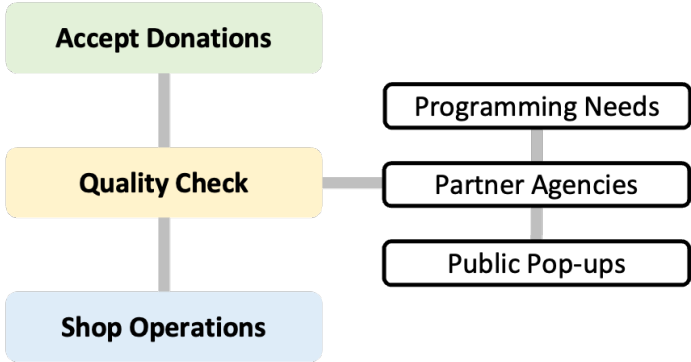


Figure 3: Operational Setup

# 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to research, a significant amount of leftover clothing goes to waste each year. Various factors, including the fast fashion industry, consumer behaviour, and lack of recycling and disposal options, cause this issue.

One study by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation found that the fashion industry produces 92 million tons of textile waste each year, with a significant portion of that being leftover clothing. The fast fashion industry is a major contributor to this issue, as it encourages consumers to buy cheap, disposable clothing that is often only worn a few times before being thrown away.(Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 2019)

Consumer behaviour also plays a role in the amount of leftover clothing that goes to waste. For example, many people purchase more clothing than they need and often discard perfectly good items simply because they are no longer in style or no longer fit. In addition, many people need to be made aware of how to dispose of clothing or recycle it properly, leading to more waste.

There are also limited options for recycling and disposal of clothing. While some charities and organizations accept used clothing donations, many remain in landfills. This is because the recycling process for textiles can be expensive and complicated, and there currently needs to be more facilities and infrastructure in place for textile recycling.

Overall, the issue of leftover clothing waste is complex and multifaceted, involving factors such as the fast fashion industry, consumer behaviour, and recycling and disposal options. Addressing this issue will require a combination of industry changes, consumer education and awareness, and improvements to recycling and disposal infrastructure.

The issue of leftover clothing and its impact is not unique to any particular country, and Canada is no exception. In fact, Canada is among the top 10 countries in the world for textile waste per capita, with an estimated 12.5 kg of textiles per person per year ending up in landfills. The following are some of the issues related to leftover clothing and its impact in Canada:

- **Environmental impact:** The textile industry is one of the largest polluters globally. The report estimates that approximately 85% of all textiles in North America end up in landfills, and it can take up to 200 years for synthetic fibres to decompose. The decomposition of materials in landfills also contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.(Waste Reduction Week Canada, 2021)
- **Economic impact:** The cost of textile waste in Canada is approximately \$3.3 billion annually. This cost includes the cost of landfilling textiles, the loss of resources used in the production of materials, and the loss of

potential revenue from recycling and reusing textiles. The report recommends investing in textile recycling infrastructure, supporting the development of a circular economy, and reducing textile waste through education and awareness.(National Zero Waste Council, 2022)

- **Social impact:** The fast fashion industry has been criticized for perpetuating a culture of disposable clothing, contributing to unsustainable consumption patterns, and often exploiting workers in the supply chain. There is a need to address the root causes of textile waste, including the fast fashion industry, by promoting sustainable and ethical clothing production and consumption practices.(Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2013)

These studies suggest that textile waste is a significant issue in Canada, with environmental, economic, social, and health impacts. To address this issue, there is a need to invest in textile recycling infrastructure, promote sustainable and ethical clothing production and consumption practices, and increase awareness of the impact of textile waste.

### 3.1 KEY INITIATIVES IN BC

British Columbia (BC) has implemented several clothing recycling initiatives to divert textiles from landfills in order to promote a circular economy and contribute to the environment. The following are some examples of these initiatives:

1. **Textile Collection Program:** The City of Vancouver launched a

textile collection program in 2015, which allows residents to drop off used clothing and textiles at various locations throughout the city. The collected textiles are then sorted and sent to local charities or recycling facilities.(City of Vancouver, n.d.)

2. **Clothing Donation Bins:** Several organizations, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and Diabetes Canada, operate clothing donation bins throughout BC. These bins allow residents to donate gently used clothing and textiles, which are then sold in thrift stores or sent for recycling.
3. **Community Clothing Exchange:** The Victoria Women's Transition House Society operates a community clothing exchange program, which allows residents to donate and exchange clothing and textiles for free. This program provides a sustainable alternative to purchasing new clothing and promotes community building.(Victoria Women's Transition House Society, 2019)
4. **Textile Recycling Program:** The non-profit organization, Zero Waste Society, operates a textile recycling program in Greater Victoria. This program accepts used clothing, linens, and other textiles, which are then sorted and sent for recycling or repurposing.(Philip Bellefontaine, 2020)
5. **Upcycling Workshops:** The organization, My Sister's Closet, operates upcycling workshops in Victoria, which teach residents how to repurpose and transform

old clothing and textiles into new items. These workshops promote creativity and sustainable fashion practices.

6. **Recycle BC's Textile Recycling Program:** In partnership with municipal governments, Recycle BC has implemented a textile recycling program across the province. Residents can drop off used clothing and textiles at designated locations, including recycling depots and some retail stores. The collected textiles are sorted and processed for reuse or recycling.
7. **Value Village's "Reuse, Reduce, Reward" Program:** Value Village has partnered with local charities in BC to promote textile recycling and offer rewards to customers who donate their used clothing. Customers can receive a discount coupon for future purchases when they donate clothing at participating locations.
8. **Metro Vancouver's Textile Waste Reduction Program:** Metro Vancouver has implemented a program to reduce textile waste in the region. The program includes public education campaigns, partnerships with local businesses and charities, and research into textile waste reduction strategies.(Metro Vancouver, 2023)
9. **UBC's Clothing Swap:** The University of British Columbia (UBC) hosts an annual clothing swap to encourage students and staff to exchange their unwanted clothing for something new to them. The event promotes sustainable fashion and diverts

clothing from landfills.(UBC Sustainability, 2014)

10. **Reclaimed Canada:** Reclaimed Canada is a social enterprise that operates in BC and Alberta, offering textile recycling and repurposing services. The company partners with charities and businesses to collect used clothing and textiles, which are sorted and processed for reuse or recycling.

Overall, these initiatives demonstrate the commitment of BC communities to reduce textile waste and promote a circular economy. However, more work needs to be done to increase awareness and participation in these programs and to address the root causes of textile waste, such as unsustainable consumption patterns and the fast fashion industry.

### 3.2 ASSESSING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Assessing the environmental impact of clothing recirculation programs requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. Several research studies have attempted to evaluate the environmental impact of clothing recirculation programs, including the following:

1. **Life Cycle Assessment (LCA):** LCA is a widely used methodology for assessing the environmental impact of a product or service throughout its life cycle, from raw material extraction to end-of-life disposal. There are several studies that used LCA to compare the environmental impact of three textile waste management strategies: landfilling, incineration, and recycling. The study found

that recycling had the lowest environmental impact regarding greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and resource depletion. (Moazzem et al., 2021)

2. **Material Flow Analysis (MFA):** MFA is a methodology for analyzing the flow of materials through a system, such as a clothing recirculation program. A study used MFA to assess the environmental impact of a clothing swap event in South Korea. The study found that the event had a positive environmental impact in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and saving resources. (Odey et al., 2021)
3. **Social Life Cycle Assessment (S-LCA):** S-LCA is a methodology for assessing a product or service's social and ethical impacts throughout its life cycle. A study used S-LCA to evaluate the social implications of a clothing recirculation program in Sicily Italy. The study found that the program had a positive social impact on job creation, income generation, and reduced textile waste. (Lenzo et al., 2017)
4. **Ecological Footprint Analysis (EFA):** EFA is a methodology for assessing the environmental impact of a product or service in terms of land use, water use, and carbon footprint. A study used EFA to assess the environmental impact of a clothing recirculation program in China. The study found that the program had a positive environmental impact in reducing carbon emissions and water use. (Wu et al., 2022)

However, small-scale clothing recirculation programs such as Working Gear require different considerations than larger-scale programs. They demand a tailored approach that considers the specific characteristics of the program and the local context. For instance, breaking the aforementioned processes into simpler terms regarding the data availability and scale of the organization can yield the needed environmental impact.

### 3.3 ASSESSING ECONOMIC IMPACT

Assessing the economic impact of clothing recirculation programs can be a complex task, as it involves analyzing the costs and benefits of the program for various stakeholders, including consumers, retailers, and the broader economy. However, there are several research studies that have attempted to assess the economic impact of clothing recirculation programs, including the following:

1. **Cost-benefit analysis:** A study used this analysis to assess the economic impact of a clothing recycling program in China. The study found that the program had a positive economic impact in terms of generating revenue and reducing waste disposal costs for local governments. (Xu et al., 2022)
2. **Input-output analysis:** Input-output analysis is a methodology for analyzing the interdependence of different economic sectors. A study used it to assess the economic impact of clothing reuse and recycling in the UK. The study found that the sector had a positive economic impact in terms of generating employment and supporting the broader economy. (Gray et al., 2022)



- 3. Social Return on Investment (SROI):** SROI is a methodology for assessing a program's social and economic value. A study shows how it's being used for various organizations in India. The study found how a Self Help Group in India had a positive economic impact in terms of generating income for low-income communities. (HIH India, 2022)

Similar to the environmental impact, these methods can't be replicated for local organizations; hence, they must be altered to fit the criteria and the local context.

### 3.4 EVALUATION FOR SMALL SCALE ORGANIZATIONS

After a thorough review and consideration of the practices mentioned above and the research, the following factors are most suitable to determine the impact for small-scale organizations:

#### 3.4.1 Environmental Impact:

- 1. Quantity of Clothing Recycled:** This can be measured by tracking the amount of clothing collected and recycled in the program.
- 2. Reduction in Landfill Waste:** This can be measured by comparing the amount of clothing diverted from landfills to the total amount of waste generated.
- 3. Carbon Footprint Reduction:** This can be measured by analyzing the energy and resources used in the recycling process and comparing it to the energy and resources used in the production of new clothing.

- 4. Water Footprint reduction:** This can be measured by analyzing the amount of water used in the production and recycling of clothing.
- 5. Used of Renewable Energy Sources:** This can be measured by tracking the use of chemicals and toxins in the production and recycling processes and comparing it to the use of these in traditional production methods.
- 6. Public Awareness and Education:** This can be measured by tracking the number of participants in the program and their level of understanding of the importance of reducing waste and protecting the environment.
- 7. Financial Impact:** This can be measured by analyzing the costs associated with the program and comparing it to the cost savings from reduced waste and resource usage.

The data collected for each of these components can be used to create an overall score for the environmental impact of the program and help identify areas for improvements.

#### 3.4.2 Economic Impact

- 1. Cost Savings:** This can be measured by comparing the costs associated with the program to the cost savings from reduced waste and resources usage.
- 2. Revenue Generated:** This can be measured by tracking the sales of recycled clothing and other products generated by the program.



3. **Job Creation:** This can be measured by tracking the number of jobs created by the program, including both direct and indirect employment opportunities.
4. **Stimulus to the Local Economy:** This can be measured by analyzing the impact of the program on local business and the overall economy, including any increased spending and investment.
5. **Return on Investment (ROI):** This can be measured by comparing the costs of program to the benefits it provides, including cost savings, revenues generated, and job creation.
6. **Consumer Awareness and Engagement:** This can be measured by tracking the number of consumers who participate in the program and their level of engagement of the program.
7. **Marketing and Brand Value:** This can be measured by analyzing the impact of the program on the company's brand and reputation, including any increased visibility, positive publicity, and customer loyalty.

The data collected from each of these components can be used to create an overall score for the economic impact of the program and help identify areas for improvement.

# 4 IMPACT EVALUATION

After considering the limited availability of data and a thorough literature review, client interviews and an organizational scan, the factors below best describe the environmental and economic impact of WG's clothing recirculation initiative.

## **Quantity of Clothing**

Working Gear has received substantial clothing donations, totalling 88,300 pounds in 2022, which was utilized to support community members in need. In addition, the organization has been able to distribute these clothing donations to clients in a manner that aligns with their programming needs, allowing them to prepare for and secure employment opportunities.

However, it's essential to consider the environmental impact of clothing production and consumption more broadly. The fashion industry is a significant contributor to carbon emissions and water pollution, and the growth of fast fashion has led to an increase in textile waste. While Working Gear's efforts to repurpose clothing donations certainly have a positive impact, more systemic changes are needed to address the fashion industry's environmental impact as a whole.

## **Reduction in Landfill Waste**

The efforts of Working Gear in preventing textile waste are crucial in

promoting sustainability. As previously discussed, the organization repurposed 88,300 lbs of clothing, including new construction shoes and other items that would have otherwise ended up in landfills. This significantly contributes to a more sustainable approach, benefiting both society and the environment.

The impact of textile waste on the environment cannot be overstated. Some materials can take hundreds of years to decompose in landfills, releasing harmful greenhouse gases and contributing to climate change. Therefore, Working Gear's efforts to prevent textile waste are critical in reducing the organization's carbon footprint and promoting environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, repurposing clothing also helps conserve resources, such as water and energy, that would otherwise be required to produce new clothing and textile materials.

## **Public Awareness and Education**

Working Gear has gained significant attention in recent years, with appearances on shows like "Holmes Family Effect" and coverage in news articles from outlets like CBC and Maclean's. The organization's regular pop-up events throughout the Metro Vancouver region have also helped to increase public awareness of their

efforts to provide high-quality clothing to those in need. Despite these successes, however, Working Gear has yet to strongly emphasize educating the public about the environmental benefits due to resource constraints.

While Working Gear's initiatives are commendable, there is significant potential to take their efforts to the next level by educating clients and the broader public about the positive environmental impact of clothing recirculation. By raising awareness of the benefits of repurposing used clothing, Working Gear could inspire more people to donate their unwanted garments and reduce the overall demand for new clothing production. Furthermore, educating the public about the environmental benefits of clothing recirculation could help foster a sustainable fashion culture and encourage individuals to make more eco-conscious choices in their everyday lives. Working Gear's strong community connections and public presence make it an ideal candidate to lead the charge in promoting clothing recirculation and sustainability education in the Greater Vancouver region.

### **Financial Impact**

Working Gear had a significant financial impact on the lives of those in need in 2022. With their help, 1200 clients have been able to secure employment and a better future. The organization further estimates that they will help approximately 1800 more people in 2023,

furthering their reach and impact in the community.

Considering the costs associated with job training and employment is essential, as they can be significant barriers for those facing financial hardship. On average, sending one person to work can cost between \$600 to \$800, which can be a substantial financial burden for many individuals.

Working Gear's contribution in 2022 alone is estimated to be around \$960,000, a significant investment in the community. By providing free clothing and job training programs, Working Gear is not only helping clients secure employment but also improving their financial well-being and contributing to the local economy. Their commitment to supporting the community is admirable, and their efforts have had a tangible impact on the lives of many.

### **Job Creation**

Last but not least, beyond its clothing recirculation initiative, Working Gear has expanded its operations and created three permanent employee positions. These positions have enabled individuals to gain stable employment and contribute to the organization's success.

# HEARING FROM CLIENTS

Here's some quotes directly from the clients:

*"For us, Working Gear is family."*  
-Andrii and Katya

*There's no shame in asking for help. Stay the course and never give up on yourself. The right job is out there for your skills and knowledge -- you have to remain determined to find it."*  
-Gordon

*"I was blown away, I couldn't believe this place existed... Sarah and the team were so welcoming -- they helped me pick out everything I needed to get me ready for work. Working Gear was the helping hand I needed."*

- Merv

*"I was happy because my feet were dry on the job-site. Having dry feet is an underrated sensation."*

- John Phillip



Source: WG Annual Report



Source: WG Annual Report

# 5 WAY FORWARD

Working Gear's clothing donation program and various initiatives have undoubtedly brought about a significant positive impact on the lives of countless individuals, contributing not only to their financial well-being but also to environmental sustainability and job creation. The organization's efforts in repurposing clothing donations and preventing textile waste from ending up in landfills have also played a crucial role in reducing the organization's carbon footprint and promoting a more sustainable approach to fashion.

In addition to their impact on environmental sustainability, their efforts have also had a significant financial impact on the community. For example, the organization's free clothing and job training programs have helped clients secure employment opportunities, improved their financial well-being, and contributed to the local economy.

Overall, Working Gear's clothing donation program and initiatives have demonstrated a genuine commitment to positively impacting society and truly set an example for other organizations to follow and promote social and economic growth.

*"When I first came to working Gear, I didn't just get the suits that I needed, I got love from Sarah and the team. I immediately knew that I wanted to become a volunteer myself so that I can greet everyone with a big smile, just like how I was greeted my first time."*

- Michael



Source: Annual Report

# References

1. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2013). Closing the loop: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating green jobs through zero waste in BC. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, BC Office : Wilderness Committee.
2. City of Vancouver. (n.d.). Zero Waste 2040. <https://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/clothing.aspx>
3. Ellen Macarthur Foundation. (2019). Fashion and the Circular Economy. <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/fashion-and-the-circular-economy-deep-dive>
4. Gray, S., Druckman, A., Sadhukhan, J., & James, K. (2022). Reducing the Environmental Impact of Clothing: An Exploration of the Potential of Alternative Business Models. *Sustainability*, 14(10), 6292. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14106292>
5. HIH India. (2022). Social Return on Investment – Measuring impact in the development sector. <https://hihindia.org/blog/general/social-return-on-investment-measuring-impact-in-the-development-sector/>
6. Lenzo, P., Traverso, M., Salomone, R., & Ioppolo, G. (2017). Social Life Cycle Assessment in the Textile Sector: An Italian Case Study. *Sustainability*, 9(11), 2092. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9112092>
7. Metro Vancouver. (2023). Reduction and ReUse Programs. <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/solid-waste/reduction-reuse/clothing-waste/research/Pages/default.aspx>
8. Moazzem, S., Wang, L., Daver, F., & Crossin, E. (2021). Environmental impact of discarded apparel landfilling and recycling. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 166, 105338. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2020.105338>
9. National Zero Waste Council. (2022). Strategic Waste Management Plan.
10. Philip Bellefontaine. (2020). Committee of the Whole Report: Zero Waste Victoria.
11. UBC Sustainability. (2014). Clothing Swap. <https://sustain.ubc.ca/events/clothing-swap>

12. Veritas Foundation. (2022). No time for complacency as charities emerge from pandemic hibernation.  
<https://macleans.ca/sponsored/no-time-for-complacency-as-charities-emerge-from-pandemic-hibernation-analysis/>
13. Victoria Women's Transition House Society. (2019). Donating Houseware & Clothing.  
<https://www.womeninneed.ca/donate-to-win>
14. Waste Reduction Week Canada. (2021). Textile Waste Facts (Canada).  
<https://wrwcanada.com/en/get-involved/resources/textiles-themed-resources/textiles-waste-facts>
15. Working Gear. (2021). Annual Report. Working Gear.
16. Working Gear. (2022). Annual Report.
17. Wu, D., Wu, G., & Yang, H. (2022). Analysis of China's Embodied Ecological Footprint and Its Flows among Economic Sectors per Unit of Currency Production. *Land*, 12(1), 41.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/land12010041>
18. Xu, B., Chen, Q., Fu, B., Zheng, R., & Fan, J. (2022). Current Situation and Construction of Recycling System in China for Post-Consumer Textile Waste. *Sustainability*, 14(24), 16635.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su142416635>

