



FARESTART
Great Food. Better Lives.

A Model of a Long Term Solution

A Series: On Poverty and Homelessness – What Works?

Part 1: The Need, and What Works (see Vol. 4 Issue 1)

Part 2: FareStart and Homelessness Prevention – Paving the Way for Sustained Employment (see Vol. 4 Issue 2)

Part 3: Long-Term Solutions

Although FareStart works with populations in need beyond those who are unsheltered, homelessness is a pervasive and dire result of the joblessness and poverty that we are working every day to combat. This article is the last of three that look at how we as a community, and we at FareStart, are striving to solve a growing crisis.

If one thing is currently clear, it is that we are living in “interesting times” – politically, socially and economically. Income inequality – clearly visible in our cities’ homelessness crises and starkly evident in the voices from all over our country from those who feel left behind in the current economy – has pushed us to a new place in the national conversation about jobs and opportunities and how to make the economy work for all, not just some.

While local efforts to stem the growing tide of homelessness are necessary, the need to address the core problems of lack of access to economic opportunity and inequity is paramount. We cannot build our way out of homelessness because poverty, the root cause of homelessness, is not solved only by building more housing while housing costs continue to rise. If wages do not keep up with costs, our workers will continue to struggle, to be priced out and end up on the streets.

And while there remains much uncertainty as to what direction we are headed nationally on these issues, we at FareStart are certain that there’s never been a better time to double down on our core values (see sidebar) and our mission. We are stepping up to a clear and escalating need in our society to provide opportunities for more of our citizens to succeed and escape the cycle of poverty and its devastating effects such as homelessness and joblessness. We owe it to our most vulnerable citizens to create new pathways that help them survive that transition and step up to self-reliance. This is what we do at FareStart; it is where we excel, and in turbulent

political and economic times like these, we are rededicating ourselves to doing it better, more, and with greater impact.

Our work in the last three years to increase our local and national impact reflects our dedication to do more to help more people to transform their lives. We have seen an accelerating need for opportunities that lead to jobs with living wages, and are pushing forward with new and bold ways to serve more in need at higher levels of training. Progress includes:

- Our new **Youth Culinary and Customer Service Training Program**, operated in partnership with Seattle Public Schools, was launched in 2015 to offer opportunities to youth who are at risk of not graduating, to improve their outlooks through employability and support to stay in school and earn their diploma.
- We have enabled direct access to FareStart's Adult Training Program for individuals coming from incarceration in order to give ex-offenders a real chance at **successful re-entry**, greatly decreasing their risk of reoffending.
- With affordable housing increasingly difficult to secure, we have redoubled our efforts to **access transitional and permanent housing** for our adult graduates who use FareStart's shelter partners during training, providing rent assistance for move-in once they are stably employed.
- We are creating new avenues for our adult enrollees who are custodial parents to thrive at FareStart by offering stable, **daytime-only schedules** that helps parents stay on track during training and with their kids.
- We have continued to grow our national network and consulting practice, **Catalyst Kitchens**, to launch and scale food service social enterprises using the FareStart model across the U.S. and Canada.

All of these efforts work to prevent future homelessness and improve our graduates' future prospects. Our new training opportunity, made possible by a powerful partnership with Amazon, is a groundbreaking Food Service Apprenticeship Program that will offer the next step to our graduates and others to work to gain higher-level skills, thereby making living wage jobs accessible. (See cover article on our expansion for more details). It is FareStart's natural next step toward ensuring opportunities and sustainability, and securely moving people out of poverty and away from the risk of recurring homelessness in a time when the on-ramp to financial stability is becoming longer and steeper.

Cross-sector partnerships to support job training and social enterprise businesses, such as the one we are entering into with Amazon, have the potential to bring powerful innovative solutions to our most pressing social problems. We are heartened and excited to be participating in this promising collaboration and hope to see more of its kind to support innovative solutions to combat income inequality. This is the type of long term solution that has

legs – it involves the cooperation of corporations, non-profits and individuals who care about our communities' health, all working together, taking advantage of the strengths of all parties involved to advance progress.

FareStart's expansion is a direct response to our community's growing need. The opportunity to expand our food service to the Amazon campus fits perfectly with our strategic focus on wage progression for workers in poverty. Our new partnership with Amazon grew out of the recognition of a great opportunity, and out of the company and their employee's longtime support and interest in doing more to help us grow our impact. With a supporting grant and in-depth help from REDF (redf.org), a venture philanthropy organization that creates job opportunities and pathways to employment for people with the greatest barriers to work – we are able to invest in a greater effort to expand the possibilities for our graduates and other workers in need of higher-level foodservice training. In this partnership, FareStart brings 25 years of experience in running social enterprise businesses and in creating, expanding, improving and replicating programs that will make a real difference. Amazon brings long-term investment and support of our new venues, a built-in customer base, and new possibilities for increased partnership. The restaurant and foodservice business community – a key support for our programs and for our graduates since the beginning – brings new opportunities for career paths of all sorts. Our apprentices will bring the motivation and work ethic necessary to rewrite their life stories for the better. FareStart donors at every level will bring the support needed to invest in our programs, in our students, in our leadership, and our growth, all to make our community a better and more equitable place for everyone.

FareStart intends to launch and scale our apprenticeship program and then begin to replicate its model of transitional employment through our national Catalyst Kitchens program. In doing so, we will work to have more communities implement programs that directly support economic mobility for people of all kinds that have barriers to success in employment. If more diverse groups can work together in such partnerships to address inequity of all kinds, and communities continue to create affordable housing, access to services, education, training, and living wage jobs on a large scale, we can provide real pathways out of homelessness and poverty and realize a much more inclusive and just world.

FareStart's Core Values

FareStart's Core Values underpin everything we do. Our students and graduates could not succeed if our whole community did not live these values every day. With our expansion, our new partnership with Amazon, and new programming, FareStart is acting on our core values, particularly those of collaboration and sustainability, in a promising new way.

- **ACCEPTANCE.** Build relationships based on the belief that the past informs but does not dictate the future.
- **RESPECT.** Hold unconditional positive regard for each other, treating all with respect and dignity.
- **OPENNESS.** Provide an environment of open communication, honesty, acceptance and personal responsibility.
- **COLLABORATION.** Contribute positively to strengthen the organization and the community through collaboration and innovation.
- **SUSTAINABILITY.** Recognize that sound financial management and accountability are essential to the long-term health and sustainability of FareStart.