



Advancing Equity Through Personal Stability, Economic Mobility & Food Security

2022-2025 Strategic Plan



A Letter to Our Community

I'm writing to share FareStart's bold path forward -- our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

This plan builds upon nearly 30 years of listening, learning and evolving. It also is informed by the pandemic, which exacerbated joblessness, poverty and food insecurity – particularly for Black, Indigenous, people of color, women and LGBTQ+ communities. This plan moves us forward in our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) journey and grounds our work in antiracism.

FareStart has and always will be committed to transforming lives, disrupting poverty and nourishing communities. And we will always be committed to food, life skills and job training. To realize our mission in a better, more equitable way, we need to make significant shifts in how we go about our work and ensure we center our efforts on the communities furthest from opportunity and most affected by poverty, homelessness and food insecurity. The impact of the pandemic makes this work more imperative than ever.

"To realize our mission in a better, more equitable way, we need to make significant shifts in how we go about our work and ensure we center our efforts on the communities furthest from opportunity and most affected by poverty, homelessness and food insecurity."

FareStart is well-positioned to help build back a more inclusive workforce by focusing on personal stability, economic mobility and food security. True transformation means changing the systems in which we operate and addressing the root causes of poverty, homelessness and food insecurity. Our endpoint is not the first restaurant job after graduation, or the nutritious meal delivered to the shelter. We must create pathways for graduates to move toward living wage jobs to become stable and thrive. We must focus on job and life skills that can be applied across various industries and address the barriers that prevent graduates from moving up the income ladder. We must expand employer partnerships to organizations that create a supportive environment, an opportunity for advancement and a pathway toward a liveable wage. We need to grow our consulting to share best practices with organizations aligned with our mission across the country. And we must collaborate with partners to fill gaps within the food system to increase access to nutritious, culturally relevant prepared meals to the communities who need them most.

FareStart aims to lead by example and must continue to become the equitable employer we expect of other organizations and partners. This means furthering progress in removing disparities within our own organization, including staffing and programming. As we move forward in our DEI journey, we must ensure everything we do advances race equity, and we must continue to build connections and collaborate with communities.

Next year marks FareStart's 30th anniversary. This strategic plan builds on our incredible history to ensure we continue to innovate to meet the evolving needs of our communities while creating transformational change. This work would not have been possible without the input of our volunteer strategic planning committee, the Board of Directors, staff, our partners and supporters. Here's to continuing to move forward – together.

With gratitude,



Angela Dunleavy
FareStart, CEO

Grounded in Our Purpose

Our Vision

Every individual has the opportunity to thrive in an equitable and just world.

Our Mission

FareStart transforms lives, disrupts poverty and nourishes communities through food, life skills and job training

Our Values

Acceptance: We build relationships based on the belief that the past informs but does not dictate the future.

Respect: We treat everyone with dignity, regardless of background or differences. We actively listen and seek first to understand. We are honest, even when it is difficult.

Openness: We create a culture of trust through transparency and open communication. We are open to new ideas.

Collaboration: Contribute positively to strengthen the organization and our impact through teamwork and through partnerships.

Accountability: We are responsible to each other, to our community and ourselves. We are committed to rigorous evaluation and making fiscally responsible decisions that align with our mission.

Inclusion: We provide a community of belonging, regardless of background. We value and seek out diversity.

Growth: We are a learning organization. We invest in continuous improvement and growth.

Our Commitment to Antiracism

FareStart defines antiracism as the clear acknowledgment that racism permeates organizations, communities, and industries, including our own. We recognize that we have a duty to be vigilant in addressing and confronting racism in how we make decisions, show up in our communities, build business practices and policies, and engage in intentional partnerships and philanthropic endeavors to fulfill our mission and vision.



Guiding Principles

Throughout the strategic planning process, FareStart was guided by a set of overarching principles.

- **Our work must be centered on people furthest from opportunity.** This requires advancing race equity to expand access and opportunities. We must ensure that people with lived experience are consulted and part of building the solutions. Our aim is to solve upstream challenges, addressing the root causes of poverty, barriers to employment and food insecurity.
- **Collaborating with communities is critical to success.** We are working to build an inclusive workforce and employment opportunities, so we must work in respectful partnership with communities to affect change. This includes how we stand up and show up in our communities to leverage our voice and resources for change. We must work to forge transformational, collaborative relationships and build trust with our students, graduates, partners, consulting clients and communities.
- **Jobs are only the starting point.** Our programs must provide a pathway out of poverty. We focus on developing job and life skills that can be applied across industries. We need to create partnerships with employers that provide a supportive environment for graduates and that work toward investing in the future of their employees and their overall well-being.
- **Food is our organizing principle.** FareStart was founded upon the concept that everyone needs dignified access to fresh, healthy meals, including where systemic racism impedes food availability and quality. Then, we provide pathways to careers through culinary and other food-based jobs that provide stability and economic mobility.
- **Innovation and entrepreneurship are part of our DNA.** We create social enterprises and are innovative in how we approach our mission. We are adaptable and continuously create programs and experiment with ways to expand our impact, both locally and nationally. We take a data-informed approach to measuring our effectiveness that map to our mission and goals, and course-correct when the environment changes.



Working Toward a More Equitable and Just Future for All

Pandemic Impact

Before the pandemic struck, there were 53 million low-wage workers and 11.3 million out-of-work adults across the United States. Tens of millions more people lost their jobs amid the crisis. While more jobs have been added recently, there are still five million fewer jobs in September 2021 than in February 2020. Most of the impacted jobs are in low-wage industries, including foodservice and hospitality. The pandemic also highlighted the precariousness of low-income workers: lack of overall job security, benefits and upward mobility. Many of these individuals are also on the frontlines working in essential jobs as grocery store workers, delivery drivers, caregivers and other food-based jobs.

Black, Indigenous and other communities of color were hit especially hard by the economic fallout from the pandemic. While government safety net programs helped stem huge widespread spikes in poverty and hunger last year, significant disparities remain. For example, in the United States, Black Americans were 3.2 times more likely than white Americans to be food insecure, and Latinos were 2.5 times more likely to be food insecure than whites. Nearly eight percent of Black workers and over six percent of Latino workers were unemployed compared to 4.2 percent of white workers.

The pandemic also amplified challenges within the restaurant industry beyond low wages, benefits and growth opportunities. Across the Puget Sound region, the food industry lost the greatest number of jobs of all industries – more than 42,000 jobs or 36 percent of total jobs lost regionwide. Technology and automation greatly accelerated over the past couple of years, paving the way for some jobs to be eliminated while new opportunities emerge in fields like transportation and delivery, logistics, warehousing, distribution and technical positions.



FareStart's Path Forward

To guide FareStart's work over the next three years as we continue to respond to and recover from the pandemic, we developed a strategic framework based on three pillars rooted in our mission: Personal Stability, Economic Mobility and Food Security. These pillars will guide our work, our strategies and ultimately our impact as we build back a more inclusive workforce for the communities we serve and feed. Advancing race equity, centering people furthest from opportunity and community collaboration are cross-cutting themes across all the pillars.

We are leaning in to address the barriers and racism perpetuating poverty, homelessness and food insecurity. To be an antiracist organization, we must be focused on systemic change and getting at the root causes of poverty, in addition to treating the symptoms. While looking at external factors that we want to change and positively influence, we must ask ourselves hard questions about how FareStart needs to change to serve our communities better and help individuals thrive. We have had a lot to celebrate on our diversity, equity and inclusion journey; however, disparities remain. In recent years, we have increased enrollment in the number of students who are Black, Indigenous and other communities of color, but there are gaps in retention, graduation and job placement rates.

Our end goal is transformational impact where communities prosper, individuals thrive and poverty is disrupted.



Personal Stability

Key Strategy: Provide students with a collaborative approach to social services and job skills training through whole person, trauma-informed support and resources.

Strategic Impact: People overcoming trauma, adversity and systemic barriers become physically, emotionally and economically stable and ready for employment.

Strategic Priorities

Impacts

Develop and implement new employment offerings to staff to ensure the personal stability of team members responsible for delivering the FareStart mission.

Students and community receive exceptional service and training because staff have personal stability to do their best work.

Reshape job training programs to be student-centered and trauma-informed, include social services grounded in personal stability and self-empowerment.

Students have individualized supports and resources to support their social, emotional and physical needs.

Collaborate with community partners to enroll a diverse population of students that is statistically consistent with those in deepest poverty and furthest from opportunity.

Individuals furthest from opportunity successfully graduate from FareStart programs and receive culturally appropriate, trauma-informed services and training.

Advocate for policies and system improvements that address root causes and symptoms of poverty, homelessness and barriers to employment and support personal stability.

FareStart advocacy efforts result in the removal of systemic issues that perpetuate poverty, homelessness and barriers to employment and support personal stability.

Develop and deliver new job training tracks in FareStart social enterprise outlets and in partnership with employers and institutions.

More students are trained into entry level jobs that have higher wages, greater upward mobility and transferable skills.

Economic Mobility

Key Strategy: Provide students and staff with a foundation and pathways to career advancement through training, technical and financial literacy, social-emotional learning and resources.

Strategic Impact: Individuals with a history of economic instability, trauma and/or systemic barriers have greater access to equitable employment, financial mobility and career growth.

Strategic Priorities

Impacts

Develop and grow partnerships with opportunity employers, community organizations, training institutes, apprenticeships and higher education to provide career pathways, opportunities toward living wage jobs and advance race and gender equity for students and staff.

Both students and staff have greater access to training and education that lead to career growth and upward financial mobility.

Develop new job training curricula and job skills that can be applied toward living wage jobs within culinary and other food-based industries.

More foundational training with greater transferable skills and career pathways result in increased economic mobility and personal stability for students and staff.

Advocate for policies and system improvements that address root causes and symptoms of poverty and barriers to employment and support job training, equitable employment and pathways toward living wage jobs.

Systemic barriers to equitable employment are removed for people furthest from opportunity.

Provide strategic solutions to overcome barriers to employment by consulting nationally with nonprofits that train and businesses that hire individuals furthest from opportunity.

More individuals across the country have greater access to equitable employment and personal stability and upward economic mobility.

Food Security

Key Strategy: Collaborate with food security partners and with community-based organizations, to provide nutritious food and prepared meals to people and communities furthest from opportunity.

Strategic Impact: Individuals experience food security through nutritious, sustainably sourced and culturally relevant meals for increased sense of health and well-being.

Strategic Priorities

Impacts

Expand existing social enterprise and training to produce and deliver more nutritious prepared meals to youth and adults.

FareStart delivers excellent on-the-job training while providing food security to those impacted by hunger, resulting in increased access to nutritious food and meals.

Pilot and scale innovative ways to help fill food security gaps for individuals living in permanent supportive housing and communities furthest from opportunity.

Partner organizations have new modalities for delivering meals and food to individuals they serve, resulting in an increased sense of personal stability and improved health for clients.

Explore opportunities for a regional food recovery center to enhance food recovery system and yield a variety of ingredients for nutritious, culturally relevant and cost-effective meals.

Food security and job training efforts are scaled through a larger, more efficient meal production facility and collaboration with community organizations results in greater access to culturally specific meals and products.

Collaborate with community partners to develop and advance food security strategies that increase efficiency, quality and resources.

FareStart's food security efforts complement the greater hunger relief system and bolster the impact of community partners.

Advocate for policies and system improvements that address root causes and symptoms of hunger and food insecurity.

Increase health and well-being in communities systemically disenfranchised through inequitable access to nutritious, culturally relevant food.

Programs & Social Enterprises

FareStart disrupts poverty through innovative approaches centered on food and job training. We reduce food insecurity and provide pathways toward personal stability and economic mobility, all on a foundation of advancing race and gender equity. FareStart's social enterprises are mission-driven businesses that provide on the job training opportunities for students and revenue to fuel FareStart's mission.

Job Training & Wraparound Support

FareStart's job training programs for youth and adults provide a pathway out of poverty. But that is not enough; people need personal stability, so we provide housing, life skills, food, counseling and transportation to make job gains sustainable. We offer trauma-informed, whole-person support services to ensure a job turns into a thriving future. Since the beginning of COVID, all job training programs have remained virtual. We anticipate students returning to on the job training within our social enterprises in 2022.

Food Security & Hunger Relief

FareStart has provided nutritious meals to reduce hunger and food insecurity throughout the Seattle area since 1992. More than 14.6 million meals have been prepared and delivered. We collaborate with farms, restaurants, retail stores and other businesses to gather, glean and purchase food and ensure it goes to the people who need it most. When the pandemic struck in 2020, we temporarily closed the FareStart Restaurant and Cafés to expand our meals programming.

National Consulting

For nearly 20 years, FareStart has provided training, resources and consulting support to nonprofit organizations across the country interested in launching or growing food-based job training social enterprises. In 2011, we started stewarding a national membership network to share best practices and create community to reduce poverty, joblessness and hunger.

FareStart Restaurant

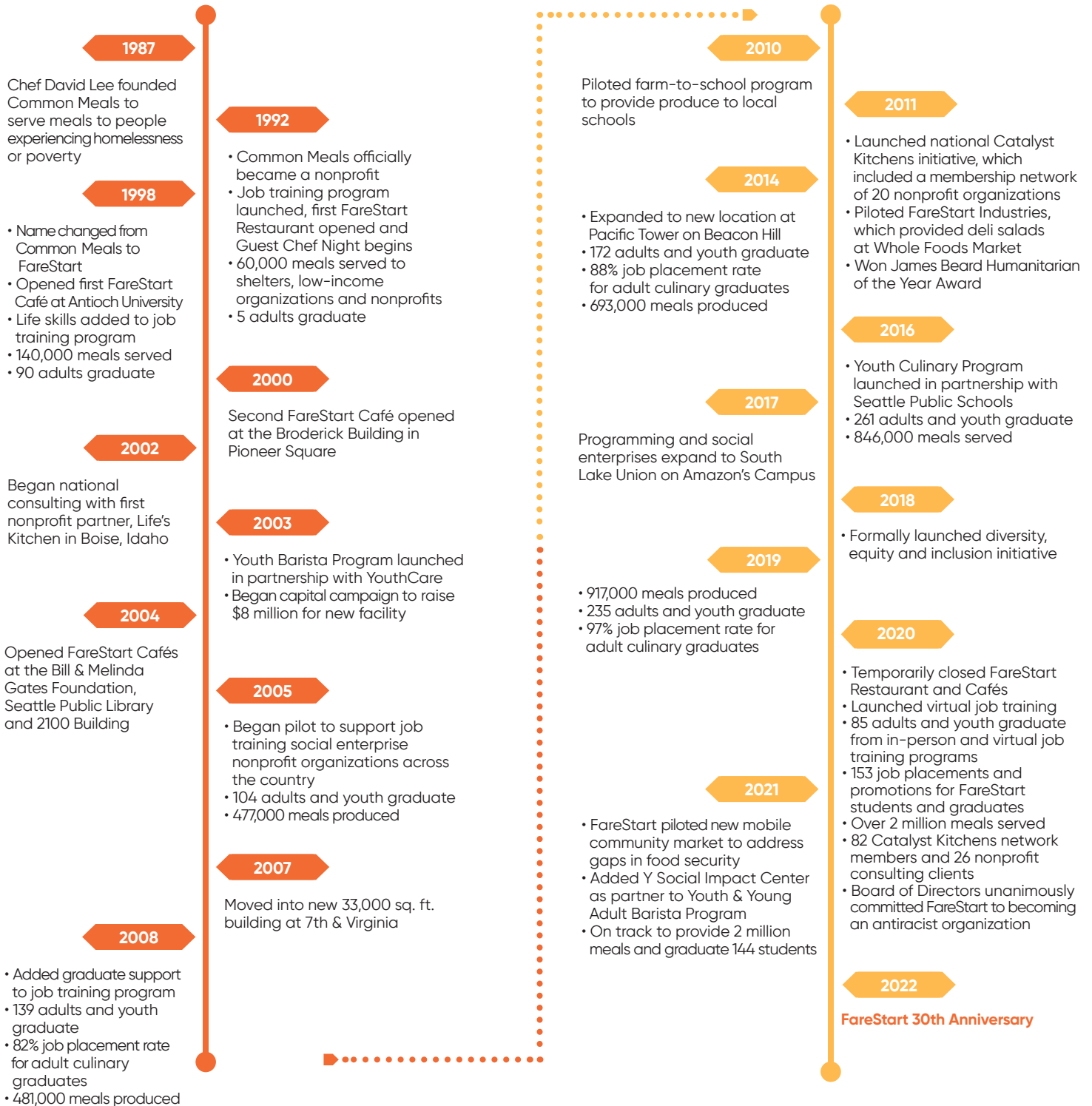
The FareStart Restaurant serves as an on the job classroom where adults get real-world experience while honing job skills. The FareStart Restaurant, along with onsite catered events, is expected to reopen in 2022.

FareStart Cafés

The FareStart Cafés offer espresso, coffee, breakfast, lunch and grab-and-go snacks. Our cafés are part of FareStart's job training programs for youth and young adults. The FareStart Café located in South Lake Union is open on weekdays. The Beacon Hill location is expected to reopen in 2022.

One Person, One Job, One Meal at a Time

In 1988, David Lee, chef and entrepreneur, recognized a need to make sure people experiencing homelessness or poverty had dignified access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food, so he founded Common Meals (later renamed FareStart). Lee understood in those early days that food was a powerful, uniting and transformational tool that could change lives. Over the past 30 years, there have been many special moments and milestones as FareStart has innovated and evolved while serving over 11,000 people experiencing poverty and providing more than 14.6 million meals to food insecure communities.



Join Us in Our Work

We rely on partners, students, volunteers, donors and staff. Join us in our work to help realize our vision for a more equitable and just future – for everyone.

Learn more by contacting us today.

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Endnotes:

- Brookings: Moving up: Promoting workers' upward mobility using network analysis
- Center on Budget and Policy: Tracking the COVID-10 Economy's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships
- Washington Post: USDA Food Insecurity Report
- Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County Regional Strategic Plan
- Community Attributes Inc. Food Industry Market Analysis