



FARESTART

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2028



A LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

At FareStart, we help adults and young people move out of poverty, gain stability, and access greater economic opportunity. Through hands-on job training and personalized support, we prepare students to reach their career goals and build the foundation for a stronger future. In fact, 97% percent of our students report that our programs help them achieve their goals.

For more than 30 years, FareStart has never stood still—we've evolved, innovated, and reimaged what's possible. As we look ahead, we proudly adapt again to ensure every graduate has the opportunity to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

Our Board of Directors and staff came together to chart a course for FareStart's future to ensure the continued success and sustainability of our organization. At its center is a clear and unwavering focus on our students—they are our North Star. Many of our students have overcome systemic barriers, including poverty, housing instability, and past incarceration, making it hard to get and keep a job. Yet they show remarkable resilience and determination to reach their full potential. This Strategic Plan strengthens job training and career pathways, enabling more students than ever to access opportunities and secure meaningful employment. We believe this plan also contributes to our larger community in the form of wages, tax contributions, reduced cost on public resources, and food benefits.

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Food remains the organizing principle of our work. It is a universal human need, and it connects us across communities, cultures, and experiences. The skills learned in a kitchen build confidence and critical life skills while opening doors to careers. Our students also play a vital role in feeding the community—a powerful source of pride and connection for many who have experienced food insecurity. At the same time, our food-based social enterprise businesses sustain our mission by funding programs in a lasting way.

Through this plan, FareStart will continue to transform lives, disrupt poverty, and create lasting impact, all while staying true to our vision: that every individual has the opportunity to thrive in an equitable and just world. It is our roadmap for supporting students and advancing opportunity for years to come.



Patrick D'Amelio
FareStart CEO



Janice Javier
FareStart Board Chair

VISION, MISSION, & VALUES



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

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

VALUES: **Acceptance**

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

Openness

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

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.

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.

Collaboration

We 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.





OUR FOCUS & STRATEGIES

Guided by four strategies over the next three years, we strive to support our students in transforming their lives while strengthening the broader community through our social enterprise model focused on job training and employment.

The food service industry is an ideal starting point for training and employment—it offers low barriers to entry while providing a dynamic environment to build and refine critical job skills. While many graduates begin their careers in the food sector, the durable and transferable skills they gain allow them to succeed in a wide range of industries.

Achieving this transformation is an organization-wide effort, with every team member, program, and partner playing a role in implementation to achieve impact. We will maintain a steadfast focus on program quality and student experience, while growing in a way that is both achievable and sustainable. Our approach is reinforced by clear accountability at every level, including annual goals, department workplans, and individual objectives, ensuring the whole organization is aligned and driving these strategies forward.

STRATEGIES

1.

Deliver high-quality job training that equips students with the range of skills needed to secure and keep employment.

- Deliver relevant, industry-informed training—both hands-on and classroom-based—that equips students with the technical and durable, transferable skills to be competitive for in-demand roles.
- Apply a research-based, trauma-informed approach across all training and student services, strengthened by case management, wraparound social services, and employment support.
- Leverage data for continuous improvement, by using student assessments and employer feedback to refine training, service delivery, and student outcomes.



2.

Strengthen the employer ecosystem to improve job quality and remove barriers to employment.

- Develop and sustain mission-aligned employer partnerships that offer high quality jobs with strong benefits, transparent wage progression, and advancement opportunities that support graduates' long-term career mobility.
- Equip and support employers to understand the value of, and effectively employ, retain, and advance, individuals overcoming barriers to employment.
- Engage and activate alumni networks to support graduates' career navigation, mentorship, and advancement, while increasing employment referrals and strengthening peer-to-peer connections.





3.

Grow programmatic impact and expand reach through consulting.

- Strengthen student training within existing social enterprises to operate at full capacity.
- Strengthen and expand high-quality partnerships that increase enrollment, support rigorous training, and provide employment preparation.
- Provide consultation and expertise to other organizations to develop and grow job training programs nationally.

4.

Scale social enterprises to support FareStart's financial stability and provide training-rich environments that meet the needs of a growing student population.

- Strengthen operations, refine sales strategies, and boost market visibility to drive revenue growth across existing social enterprises.
- Identify, research, and pursue new ventures that expand job training opportunities for students while generating additional, sustainable revenue streams.
- Ensure social enterprises operate as high-quality, training-rich environments by prioritizing exceptional instruction, hands-on learning, and measurable skill development.



COMMITMENTS

To advance the strategies outlined in this Strategic Plan, FareStart has identified a set of commitments that guide our work and hold us accountable to students, staff, and the broader community. These commitments reflect a dedication to sustainability, equity, and continuous learning and improvement, providing a framework for measuring success and maintaining excellence across every aspect of the organization.

- **Mission Integrity:** Stay true to FareStart’s core purpose, vision, and mission while exercising flexibility and innovation in how we implement strategies to meet evolving needs.
- **Partnership & Community Engagement:** Foster strong, mutually beneficial relationships with employers, donors, volunteers, and other community members to expand reach and shared impact.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Ensure long-term financial sustainability by balancing social enterprise, fundraising, and public funding, allowing FareStart to grow while maintaining stability and impact.
- **Employee Development & Organizational Culture:** Deepen employee development and organizational culture, by investing in professional growth, promoting employee well-being, and cultivating a culture of trust, collaboration, and shared purpose.
- **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion:** Honor diversity, equity, and inclusion through our values, leadership, and every aspect of our work.
- **Data & Technology:** Leverage data and modernize technology for improved efficacy, enhanced decision-making, and strengthened accountability.



OUR IMPACT & TARGETS



All our work is in service of the change we want to see in our community, and we are grateful to our board, volunteers, donors, partners, and staff for their commitment to empowering our students. When our graduates are employed, they gain stability and increased economic opportunities. Government spends less on homelessness, incarceration, food benefits, and mental health services, and our community is stronger.

To help drive us towards maximum impact, we have set targets that outline the key outcomes we aim to achieve through the implementation of this Strategic Plan. They are informed by benchmarking against peer organizations and a careful balance of ambition with sustainability, ensuring growth that strengthens programs while maintaining quality year over year.

BY THE END OF 2028 WE WILL:



Enroll **500 students** annually across job training programs, the highest enrollment to date in FareStart's history.



Achieve graduation and employment outcomes that **meet or exceed Catalyst Kitchens' national benchmarks** for workforce development social enterprise organizations.



Ensure sufficient kitchen and service spaces to support expanded job training while **growing social enterprise revenue by 20%**.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Strategic Plan reflects the involvement of board members, staff, and insights from students, graduates, employers, supporters and other partners. We extend special thanks to the Strategic Planning Committee for their guidance and dedication in shaping the plan's direction.

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*members of the Strategic Planning Committee



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