

# Mezzanine-Stage Finalists

## Catalyst Kitchens

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**Plan:** Catalyst Kitchens works to replicate, strengthen, and scale foodservice social enterprises that provide job and life skills training for individuals facing significant barriers to employment. The Catalyst Kitchens model has three key components; empowerment through comprehensive, applied training; sustainability through foodservice social enterprise; and nutritious meals for communities in need.

**Problem:** Poverty is a vicious cycle whose multiple causes and manifestations—under/unemployment, lack of job skills, homelessness, hunger, malnutrition, despair, addiction and social dysfunction—are self-reinforcing.

**Solution:** To break this cycle requires a comprehensive approach that provides accessible and tangible job skills training, together with services to address issues such as housing, mental health and addiction, which may prevent such training from being effective. This training must deliver both applied technical skills—through “real-world” experience—as well as employability and other “soft” skills that are essential to both get and keep a job. Furthermore, in order to be successful long-term, these efforts must achieve a level of sustainability—through self-generated revenues—in order to reduce dependence on grant and donor funds and increase model efficiency. A final key success factor, scalability, can only be achieved by creating partnerships and collaborations among existing service providers.

**Evidence:** After a successful four year pilot, Catalyst Kitchens was officially launched as a collaborative network in 2010. In 2011, member programs across 18 states provided training to over 1,400 individuals facing significant barriers to employment—individuals who were homeless or on the verge, who had only a limited formal education, who had served time in prison or had no place to turn. Over 60% successfully completed the program and 86% of them have achieved a successful outcome, be it stable housing, further education and/or a living wage job. Together, these member organizations produced over 4.2 million low-cost, nutritious meals for their communities. Over the next four years, Catalyst Kitchens will launch 50 new programs, quadrupling annual training capacity to 6,000 individuals, with over 10 million nutritious meals produced and delivered to those in need, and over \$15 million in self-generated revenues, with all net proceeds being used to sustain the mission.

**Scaling Strategy:** Catalyst Kitchens addresses the cycle of poverty and hunger in two ways:

1. **Through model replication.** Catalyst Kitchens documents the model, develops and delivers services that support and facilitate the launch of new programs and the strengthening of existing organizations.
2. **Through a collaborative, leveraged network of like-minded organizations.** By facilitating synergies and efficiencies through peer collaboration, defining, tracking and ensuring common standards and metrics and securing corporate sponsorships as well as direct funding opportunities for members.

**Growth Capital:** The Catalyst Kitchens financial model requires a healthy mix of self-generated revenue—through members’ dues and fees-for-service—and private donations to fund network growth. The plan between now and 2015 requires \$1.7 million from grants and close to \$1 million in self-generated revenue.

**Capacity:** Catalyst Kitchens is a program founded by National Director, David Carleton and incubated under FareStart. The Catalyst Kitchens’ five full time staff team benefits from the strategic support of a highly experienced leadership team including FareStart’s CEO and Board of Directors, and a dedicated Advisory Council that includes network members and partners as well as experts in legal counsel, investment and wealth management, international social venture partnerships, and restaurant development.