



Catalyst Kitchens Diligence Trip Report  
Kitchens For Good, San Diego, CA  
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Focusing Philanthropy Staff

- Parnia Banki (PB)

Kitchens For Good, a Catalyst Kitchens model member

- Aviva Paley- Co-Founder and Senior Director
- Jennifer Gilmore- CEO

Guest

- Andrea Pierson

The Need

Economic hardship, lack of job skills, and stigma towards ex-cons causes parolees to face unemployment rate of 70-80% and high level of recidivism. From ages 18-24, foster youth experience unemployment rates of 40%. San Diego also holds the 4th highest population of homeless individuals in the nation.

Background

Kitchens for Good aims to break the cycles of food waste, poverty and hunger through workforce training, healthy food production and social enterprise. Through its culinary apprenticeship program KFG addresses the most immediate need of hunger by feeding the food lines, but also helps to shorten the line itself by giving unemployed people the skills to become self-sufficient.

- Project Launch is a tuition-free, certified culinary apprenticeship program that trains individuals with barriers to employment to launch their career in the culinary and hospitality industry.
- The program specifically serves individuals who are experiencing significantly high unemployment rates: formerly incarcerated adults, foster youth transitioning out of the system, survivors of domestic violence, individuals with mental health disorders, and individuals with histories of substance abuse.
- By providing technical skills, workforce readiness instruction, case management, and industry certification (food handlers certificate and culinary apprenticeship certificate), Kitchens for Good assists these individuals to become employed and self-sufficient.
- During full-day classes, students begin mornings by attending interactive lessons from the Career Coach, and a licensed social worker, on job readiness, workforce attitudes, and life skills.
- Students spend a majority of the school day in the kitchen learning nutrition and culinary skills and practice these skills by preparing nutritious meals for food insecure populations.
- Project Launch is a California certified culinary apprenticeship program, students engage in on-the-job training in Kitchens for Good catering and events enterprise. This provides students with the opportunity to begin earning while learning the culinary arts.
- The program has a strong track record in helping to break the cycles of poverty and help people reach self-sufficiency, with a **90% employment rate of graduates, earning an average starting wage of \$13.20 an hour.**



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### The Model

- Kitchens for Good is a 501(c)(3) and social enterprise with the mission to break the cycles of food waste, hunger, and poverty through innovative solutions in workforce training, healthy food production, and social enterprise.
- Core to its values, KFG believes that **all food has power and all people have potential**.
- In its kitchens, KFG bridges the gap between wasted food and hunger by rescuing surplus and cosmetically imperfect food from wholesalers and farmers and engaging students in a culinary apprenticeship program to transform these ingredients into nutritious meals for vulnerable populations. This approach addresses the most immediate need of hunger by feeding the food lines, but also helps to shorten the line itself by giving unemployed people the skills to become self-sufficient. Through the power of kitchens and cooking, students transform their lives from one of addiction, incarceration, homelessness, and unemployment, to lives of stability, employment, and a brighter future.
- In addition to tackling issues of food waste, hunger and poverty, Kitchens for Good ensures its own sustainability by building a profitable food enterprise at the core of every kitchen. These enterprises **include a robust catering and events operation and contract meal services**. **Kitchens for Good breaks the mold of typical non-profits by generating 59% of its budget through social enterprise revenue, reducing its reliance on philanthropy.**

### Observation

- I observed a class of 17 in week 5
- Line cooking session
- KFG has 30 full time staff
  
- Moved to new building 4 years ago
- Work with rescued or donated food. Prepare food for at risk communities - provide meals to rec centers, after school programs
- 3 month program - Knife Skills to Life Skills
- Kitchens for Good is currently training 100 students a year, or 5 cohorts of 20, at the Jacobs Center (the kitchen I saw), along with 30 students a year at the Moonlight Amphitheatre kitchen in North County San Diego. Kitchens for Good will be launching a third kitchen in April 2020 which will train an additional 50 students a year in a baking apprenticeship program.
- 75% graduation rate
- Students spend 10 weeks in training at Kitchens for Good. On week 11 students do a one-week internship at employer partners. This is an opportunity for employers to test out students and provide a learning opportunity. Most students are hired at their internship site.
- For those that are not hired they spend week 12 working one on one with the career coach on applications and job placement. Typically 100% of students are employed by graduation date, with some minor exceptions for students who are still interviewing.
- All students are enrolled in the apprenticeship program. Students must complete 300 hours of classroom learning at Kitchens for Good, followed by 2400 hours of On the Job Training (OJT) with employers. It takes approximately 11-18 months post-graduation to complete their OJT hours and gain their apprenticeship certificate.





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- Apprenticeship completion - this is something KFG is just beginning to track more closely. They became an apprenticeship program in October 2017, so students are only recently (in the last six months) completing their 18 months of OJT. To date, they've had 17 graduates complete the apprenticeship. Goal is that 60% of graduates complete the OJT requirements and get their certificate. The reason this is not higher is that with apprenticeship, it's not only employment or hours worked, but requires at least one raise or promotion within those 18 months. With 2 years of data on Apprenticeship KFG is looking at completion rates and identifying any barriers.
- The apprenticeship certificate is not from Kitchens for Good, but rather from the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards, the state agency that accredits our program.
- 86% of students are in jobs after 18 mos. Employment and wage data are collected monthly via a digital form that is texted or emailed to graduates. Data submitted by graduates are synced in Salesforce and tracked towards completion of apprenticeship hours.
- 88% receive a raise/promotion
- The data informs staff which graduates are struggling with employment and whether wages are growing or stagnant, so that staff can intervene with career coaching and case management.
- Staff are also informed when students do not fill out the form, so they can reach out and gather employment data and provide support. Students have to remain in touch while OTJ training because they need to get their certification. This solves the tracking issues prevalent with other members.

## Population served

- 60% are homeless or living in transitional housing. Work release programs count as transitional housing as these program typically only last for 3-9 months, and then students are left to find their next home, shelter, or sober living home to stay.
- Recidivism is 60-70 normally, it's 6% with their program
- Interviewed Tina and Madeleine- referred by YWCA Women's Shelter. They both mentioned that important to their success is the soft skills they've learned at KFG, ie learning to resolve conflict and gaining financial literacy.

## Take away

1. Graduation is high partially because KFG is not a first come, first served program, but an application-based program. They receive about 40-60 applicants per class. Target population is currently homeless, just released, newly sober, or mental health challenged, etc. They are not cherry-picking students but require students to have the necessary availability, and some level of stability before enrolling. For example, if a student does not have childcare in place, or does not have stable access to mental health medication, they offer them resources to contact, and tell them to reapply/enroll in the next class in 10 weeks when it's been taken care of. Or if a student has 10 court appearances scheduled in the coming weeks, they are told to enroll in a following class when they do not have a conflict with classes.
2. Program is full time and intensive, and essentially a simulation of the workplace - so they make sure students are ready for that kind of commitment.
3. KFG places huge emphasis on soft skills training that is preparing students for resiliency and workplace success. This includes 2 hours of workforce readiness training every day.





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4. Placement and retention - partially because hospitality is such a thriving sector in San Diego that jobs are plentiful. Retention can be attributed to strong follow-up and the 'carrot' of the apprenticeship certificate.

### **Business and partners**

- Of the \$4.8 mil budget, 55% is earned e.g. contract meals/catering and events
- More employers approach KFG because of reputation
- SD has a booming hospitality industry
- KFG has relationships with top hotels/restaurants like Urbano, Hilton, Marriott, Bernardo Winery



CATERING AND EVENTS

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