



# Project Launch Program Evaluation - Kitchens For Good

## CALVIP Grant Program Board of State and Community Corrections

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Barriers to employment are common among individuals in disadvantaged communities and those with histories of criminal justice involvement. These barriers include stigma related to poverty or conviction status, lack of employment skills, instability, and lack of education. For those who have been incarcerated previously, experienced homelessness or time in the foster care system, the rate of unemployment is higher than in the general population, ranging from 27-42%.<sup>1</sup> In a location like San Diego, which hosts the 4<sup>th</sup> largest population of people experiencing homelessness in the country, this reveals a critical need. Further, amongst those on community supervision (probation/parole), the risks of returning to prison are especially high and exacerbated by these barriers. For example, nearly 50% of California parolees return to prison within three years of release, making recidivism a critical problem.<sup>2</sup>

**Kitchens For Good’s (KFG) Project Launch Apprenticeship** program assists individuals who are overcoming histories of incarceration, homelessness, foster care, mental health issues, or victims of domestic violence to launch meaningful careers in the culinary and hospitality industry. Through Project Launch, Apprentices obtain the education and training they need to be employed in the culinary industry, are connected to an Employer Partner who provides a paid apprenticeship, and ongoing support through engagement with KFG staff. The program aims to increase employment stability and wages, reduce instability due to life circumstances, and reduce criminal justice system involvement.

This report provides the program evaluation results from process and outcome evaluation studies of the Project Launch Program. KFG partnered with researchers from the School of Public Affairs at San Diego State University to perform the program evaluation. This report summarizes the adjustments and improvements made to the program during the project period and provides findings from analysis of administrative records, a pre- and post-training survey of Apprentices, and interviews with Apprentices and KFG Staff.

During the program period, Project Launch served 212 Apprentices, resulting in an overall completion rate of 61%. The program achieved this high completion rate despite numerous challenges and barriers to implementation, primarily resulting from COVID-19.



## *Goals Accomplished*

The evaluation of Project Launch was driven by four primary goals with accompanying objectives. Below is a snapshot of the key findings.

### **1) Deliver the Project Launch Apprenticeship programs with fidelity to the program model.**

Due to changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including research restrictions, staff and Apprentice turnover, and restaurant industry impacts, the Project Launch program made numerous adjustments that made assessing fidelity challenging. However, some unintended outcomes, including the implementation of an innovative staffing model, *Works*, have resulted in program changes that show potential to continue or increase the positive influence of the KFG Apprenticeship model.

### **2) Evaluate the impact of KFG on reducing violent and non-violent recidivism among apprentices.**

The majority of KFG Apprentices (59%) reported having legal system involvement, which poses a barrier to employment and increases the risk of future involvement. Across the program period, there was a very low rate of violent recidivism (1.4%) and non-violent recidivism (2.8%) among Apprentices.

### **3) Improved employment outcomes for Project Launch Apprentices.**

Upon completion of the Project Launch Training, 60% of Apprentices were employed, with 45% still employed full-time after two months, and 16% actively looking for new positions. Wages grew an average of 30 cents per hour over the program period.

### **4) Improve upon instabilities and barriers to employment in Apprentices' lives.**

Information from the pre- and post-training surveys indicated that Apprentices showed improvements in their mental health, including improved self-esteem and lower depression. Apprentices also showed decreases in impulsivity. Interviews revealed additional improvements in receiving social support and a positive working environment from KFG.

## *Implementation Highlights*

In implementing Project Launch, KFG experienced some positive programmatic changes that appear linked to increased enrollment, promotion, and retention of Apprentices.

- **Curriculum redesign.** Over the course of the program period, KFG altered the Project Launch curriculum to achieve the same instructional goals and course hours in fewer weeks. They also implemented a weekly stipend tied to attendance to improve Apprentice retention and respond to the economic needs of Apprentices. KFG also began simulating the restaurant environment by hosting a Mock Cafe in each cohort where Apprentices practice what it is like to work in a fully operational restaurant kitchen.
- **Trauma-informed approach.** KFG began transforming the Project Launch environment by implementing trauma-informed principles to daily practice, including Wellness Wednesdays, alcohol prohibitions in the kitchen and KFG events, and promoting prosocial interactions in the kitchen setting.

### *Problems/Barriers to Implementation*

KFG encountered several challenges during the implementation of Project Launch, many of which resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these challenges led to innovation, while others remain areas for continued growth.

- **Staff and Apprentice turnover.** KFG experienced substantial staff turnover and reductions in enrollment during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges persisted into 2021 when the grant program launched. Staff turnover alongside curriculum changes resulted in elements of instability. Retention of Apprentices was diminished due to health and economic challenges.
- **Data collection challenges.** KFG had not participated in a program evaluation of this type before, so the infrastructure for data collection needed to be developed. During the program period there were two main data collection hindrances. First, the database used by KFG underwent changes that meant continuity of data between cohorts was disrupted and certain comparative analysis could not be performed. Second, research restrictions from SDSU related to the COVID-19 pandemic meant the systematic observations were unable to be collected.
- **Effects of COVID-19 on the Culinary Industry.** COVID-19 especially affected the culinary industry, resulting in restaurant downsizing or closures and greater competition for jobs.

### *Unintended Outcomes*

One of the unintended outcomes of the challenges and successes in operating Project Launch was establishing the innovative alternative staffing model, *WORKS*.

The *WORKS* model allows KFG to be the employer of record and connect promoted Apprentices to paid on-the-job training with Employer Partners, while supplying Apprentices with healthcare benefits and as needed support to maintain their employment. This program is in the early stages but shows incredible potential to serve the Project Launch Apprentices through their entire culinary training program.

### *Lessons Learned*

Throughout the project period, the infrastructure around data collection and analysis came into focus and the process of working on this evaluation study highlighted ways current data collection processes could be leveraged for measuring ongoing performance. Another lesson learned relates to the continued fostering of a welcoming and nurturing environment where people can heal as well as innovate, from Apprentices creating new recipes in the kitchen to program staff developing new strategies to respond to Apprentice needs and sustain motivation and engagement.

### *Conclusion*

The KFG Project Launch Program was successful in achieving many of its objectives related to the stated CalVIP project goals. KFG strengthened its curriculum and program delivery, developed innovative organizational approaches to culinary training including implementation of a trauma informed culture and design of the *Works* alternative staffing model, and enhanced its data collection and tracking procedures.

KFG's Project Launch Apprenticeship program continues to innovate as it provides people in need of employment training support with a nurturing and positive learning and working environment, as well as resources and support for increased stability in the face of adversity.

# PROJECT LAUNCH DESCRIPTION & GRANT PROGRAM

## *Program Overview*

Kitchens for Good (KFG) is a community-based organization that provides culinary training and certification to individuals that face barriers to employment, such as conviction records, lack of employment history or skills, and housing instability. The primary program offered by KFG is Project Launch, which hosts training curriculum in culinary, baking, and hospitality. Project Launch operates under an Apprenticeship model, where Apprentices are engaged in education programming while they receive on-the-job training and earn a living wage.

Project Launch Apprenticeship Programs is a 20-month program that begins with a 10-week curriculum in which apprentices undergo basic culinary training (360 hours) supplemented with workforce-readiness workshops, followed by 17-months of paid on-the-job training (approximately 2,460 hours) with an Employer Partner. The curriculum emphasizes *'life skills'* such as conflict resolution, communication skills, résumé writing, and financial literacy and *'knife skills'* such as food safety and culinary or baking techniques. Each week, Apprentices are introduced to different concepts and skills and assessed by instructional staff as to their performance and overall achievement.

Pre-2021 cohort Apprentices were hired by KFG to complete on-the-job training through the KFG catering service, which closed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After the closure of the catering service, Apprentices received on-the-job training through Employer Partners. In 2022, KFG launched the *WORKS* program, which is an alternative staffing model that provides Employer Partners with the ability to hire Apprentices and provides benefits and support during the beginning of the on-the-job training period.

In 2021, KFG was awarded a CalVIP grant by the Board of State and Community Corrections to evaluate the effectiveness of the Project Launch Program on reducing violence and improving other outcomes. This report provides information about the program evaluation results.

## *Program Evaluators*

KFG has partnered with Dr. Kimberly Kras, Associate Professor at the San Diego State University School of Public Affairs, and members of the research team, including Carina Rodrigues, Sheri Gudez, Gabe Collins, and Aby Sosa Ramos, to serve as the independent evaluators of the Project Launch project.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Kras and the research team have extensive experience in engaging with community and government partners to perform evaluation research. All team members are trained in the research methodologies and certified in conducting ethical human subjects research. IRB Approval was obtained from SDSU (#HS-2021-0044).

## *Goals & Objectives of the Project Launch Evaluation*

The evaluation study responded to four primary goals and their objectives:

- **Goal #1:** Deliver the Project Launch Apprenticeship programs with fidelity to the program model.
  - Objective #1: Enroll 36 Apprentices in the Project Launch per cohort.
  - Objective #2: Achieve 80% completion rate of the Project Launch program.
  - Objective #3: Adherence to the program model.
  - Objective #4: Post-training engagement and documentation with Apprentices and Employer Partners.
- **Goal #2:** Evaluate the impact of KFG on reducing violent and non-violent recidivism among apprentices.
  - Objective #1: Assess Apprentices' risk for recidivism and violent recidivism.
  - Objective #2: Reduce the incidence of violent crime recidivism.
  - Objective #3: Reduce the incidence of non-violent crime recidivism.
- **Goal #3:** Improved employment outcomes for Project Launch Apprentices.
  - Objective #1: Successful completion of Project Launch Program.
  - Objective #2: The rate of employment for Apprentices post-training will be maintained or increase compared to pre-training.
  - Objective #3: The wages earned by Apprenticeship will show demonstrable increases.
- **Goal #4:** Improve upon instabilities and barriers to employment in Apprentices' lives.
  - Objective #1: Address and support substance use disorder needs.
  - Objective #2: Address and support housing needs.
  - Objective #3: Address and support mental health needs.
  - Objective #4: Address and support healthy eating behaviors.
  - Objective #5: Address and support other needs as identified.



## EVALUATION RESEARCH DESIGN

KFG and SDSU worked closely to develop the data collection plans and measures for the program evaluation. The research design involved process and outcome evaluation studies including both quantitative and qualitative methods. We collected our information for the studies from these primary sources:

- Kitchens for Good Administrative Data
- Apprentice Pre and Post Training Survey
- Employer Partner Survey
- Interviews with KFG Staff and Apprentices
- Criminal History Data

### *Changes to the Research Design*

We encountered a few issues in performing the research as initially designed. First, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, researchers were unable to conduct routine site visits at KFG and collect fidelity checklist data or observational field notes.

Researchers did conduct some field observations over the latter portion of the grant period, and while not on a routine basis, those observations provided rich information about KFG operations and culture. Similarly, because the program underwent several curricular changes over the grant period, there is a break in continuity of programming in ways that impact our ability to assess fidelity or impact.

For example, the planned weekly and monthly Apprentice Assessments shifted several times over the course of the grant period or were not collected by KFG staff. The lack of routinely collected monthly check-ins meant that collecting referral data to needed services was inconsistent and the analysis could not be performed.

Second, due to program attrition (mostly related to COVID-19), we could not perform the statistical comparisons to previous cohorts because the sample sizes are too small and the previous cohort data are incomplete. Third, the initial design of interviewing Employer Partners (EPs) shifted to a survey format due to the high demand on EPs in their engagement with Apprentices. The survey yielded a low response rate (n = 4). However, unintended outcomes such as curriculum changes, the adoption of a trauma-informed model, and the launch of the KFG *WORKS* staffing agency, have yielded positive impacts on the organization and its functioning, and are described in this analysis.

SDSU worked closely with KFG to respond to the programmatic changes and conduct the remaining or updated research plans to perform the process and outcome evaluations.

### *Process Evaluation Study Methods*

For the Process Evaluation study, SDSU collected and analyzed data related to assessing the implementation process of the Project Launch program. The process evaluation study considered the following process indicators: 1) curriculum training implementation, 2) adherence and fidelity to the program model, 3) experiences and feedback from staff and apprentices.

Data collected by SDSU included interviews with Staff (n = 13) and Apprentices (n = 9) and periodic field observations. KFG provided metrics through their administrative data to assess the achievement of program goals and objectives. Appendix B shows the process measures and data sources, including those amended due to the implementation challenges. We rely on descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis strategies including thematic analysis and NVivo software to code and analyze the interview data and observational fieldnotes.

### *Outcome Evaluation Study Methods*

For the outcome evaluation, SDSU analyzed KFG administrative data and independently collected recidivism data to conduct outcome analyses. A list of outcome measures and data sources related to each objective is in Appendix B. Outcome evaluation data consisted of information gathered by KFG on Apprentices beginning at program entry through post-training, for a total of up to 20 months of data, though data gathering became less consistent the further away from the training program Apprentices became. Program completion is defined as promoting from the in-class Project Launch training curriculum to on-the-job training with an Employer Partner. Administrative data includes demographic information, background information, criminal history, and program specific information.

SDSU gathered additional information via a pre- and post-training survey strategy. Apprentices were recruited to complete interviews in their first and last weeks of program training. We also conducted a risk assessment using the Risk Matrix 2000 and performed a review for recidivism indicators. The review for recidivism indicators shifted from official records to a triangulated process using open access resources and KFG administrative data.<sup>4</sup> The outcome evaluation study uses bivariate

descriptive statistical analysis to understand the changes, if any, in relevant factors outlined in the objectives.

In addition to quantitative data analyses, qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with staff and apprentices to understand the lived experiences of individuals involved in this program. These data provide feedback to KFG to improve service delivery, and program development and expansion.

## RESULTS

### *Project Launch Apprentice Profile*

The study sample for the evaluation period consists of Apprentices who have completed or not completed the Project Launch program beginning in January 2021 to June 2023. A total of 212 Apprentices enrolled in the Project Launch Program at KFG. Over the course of the grant period, **129 Apprentices completed the program** (promoted to on-the-job training) and 83 Apprentices enrolled and attended but did not complete the program. Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the Apprentices. There were no statistically significant differences between those who promoted and those who did not and demographic characteristics.

**Table 1. Apprentice Demographic Profile (n = 212)**

<b>Demographic</b>	Mean (SD)/Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	
<i>Male</i>	48%
<i>Female</i>	46%
<i>Non-binary</i>	2%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
<i>White</i>	40%
<i>Black/African American</i>	21%
<i>Multi-racial</i>	16.5%
<i>Native American/American Indian</i>	3.3%
<i>Asian</i>	2.8%
<i>Other</i>	2.8%
<b>Ethnicity*</b>	
<i>Hispanic</i>	40.7%
<i>Non-Hispanic</i>	55.7%
<b>Age</b>	40.3 (.89)

\*Not all participants responded to this question (n = 203).

KFG’s target population experiences an array of employment barriers. Table 2 shows a breakdown of the types of barriers Apprentices are facing, reported during the Project Launch intake process:

**Table 2. Potential Employment Barriers (n = 212)**

<i>Potential Employment Barrier</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Justice System Impacted</i>	59.9%
<i>Domestic Violence Survivor</i>	4.5%
<i>Former Foster Youth</i>	3.5%
<i>History of Mental Health</i>	34.7%
<i>Substance Abuse Challenges</i>	51%
<i>Unhoused/Experiencing Homelessness</i>	22.8%

There were no statistically significant differences between those who promoted and those who did not and employment barriers faced upon entry into Project Launch. This suggests there are no emergent disparities in the possible program success based on demographic characteristics or individual backgrounds, like criminal justice system involvement.

### *Process Evaluation Results*

The primary goal of the process evaluation was to assess whether Project Launch was implemented with fidelity to its model, curriculum, and educational standards (Goal 1).

#### **Implementation Challenges**

There were numerous barriers to meeting implementation fidelity as expected at the beginning of the grant, the foremost of which were related to continued COVID-19 disruptions to programming, staff reorganization & turnover, and curriculum changes, and restrictions on SDSU researchers performing planned data collections. However, KFG’s response to COVID and other challenges resulted in some unintended outcomes that have had a positive impact on program operations and Apprentice success.

- 1) Apprentices were unable to attend or complete the program due to COVID-19 related issues.

In the initial period of the grant program, KFG experienced decreases in Apprentice attendance to classes and/or increased attrition in its programs related to attendance. During peak pandemic, many apprentices were exposed to or contracted COVID-19, which

impacted attendance and forced many to rejoin a later cohort or drop out of the program entirely. Additionally, limited childcare available during the pandemic impacted some Apprentices' attendance and retention, as it made it difficult for them to complete the in-person workforce readiness classes and their on-the-job training.

## 2) Staff reorganization and turnover.

During the project period there was much staff turnover across the KFG employee roster, including hiring a new Program Director and career coaches. Changes in the instructional staff also disrupted curriculum delivery in the early part of the program period.

## 3) Challenges facing the restaurant industry.

Restaurants across the nation struggled with partial openings and shutdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in San Diego, the unemployment rate rose from 4% to 15% in April 2020.<sup>5</sup> The service industry in the United States is experiencing a new phenomenon known as the Great Resignation, resulting in high rates of job vacancies. Although the restaurant industry is regaining momentum, wage issues, understaffing, and negative customer interactions have resulted in higher burnout rates among restaurant workers who are pushed to seek employment in a different industry. Studies show that, even if restaurant employers provide higher salaries, restaurant workers are not interested in returning.<sup>6</sup> This new phenomenon could give overlooked employees the opportunity and context to negotiate better work circumstances.

## 4) Changes in data collection.

As described in the changes to the research design, an implementation challenge related to data collection practices and changes or restrictions occurring during the program period. During the program period, KFG shifted the way in which it collected and synced data in its Salesforce database. This change meant disruptions in continuity of the Apprentice data that limited the ability to compare previous cohorts with more recent ones. Data collected by SDSU was also disrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions on conducting human subjects research. On site observations were halted and interviews were conducted via Zoom during the early period of the program.

## Unintended Outcomes

In response to the challenges KFG faced in implementing Project Launch, some unintended outcomes emerged, which have had a positive impact on the program's functioning, Apprentice engagement, and overall operations.

### *Curriculum Changes*

In response to COVID-19 disruptions, industry changes, rising inflation, and Apprentice needs, the curriculum for Project Launch experienced some changes. First, the curriculum shifted from 12 weeks of instruction to 10 or 11 weeks (depending on how the calendar fell). Early in the project period, KFG began experimenting with changes in the timing of training delivery, aiming to achieve the required hours of instruction in fewer weeks. This meant that cohorts were not consistently 12 weeks as initially prescribed. Instead, some cohorts were in session for 11 or 10 weeks. The most recent series of cohorts (since 2023) have been following a 10 week plan. These changes rendered the initial observation and fidelity checklist component of the project obsolete, though it can be implemented in a future study.

KFG also redeveloped its assessment process to be more responsive to priorities of Employer Partners. To better meet employer performance expectations, KFG instituted a stronger focus on attendance, more knife skills practice, and more focus on building speed in the kitchen. KFG also implemented additional features in their program, such as providing kitchen uniforms earlier in the program, accessible tablets to perform work, and beginning kitchen work earlier in the program. To support improved training completion and job retention, KFG also began the process of identifying and addressing case management needs during the applicant screening process.

### *Trauma Informed Approach*

COVID-19 revealed the need for increased attention to individual well-being and improvements within organizations to support staff and clients. KFG staff began implementing practices and policies in the day-to-day operations grounded in a trauma-informed case approach.<sup>7</sup> This included a shift away from a "no tolerance" sobriety policy, towards one that encouraged honest conversations and minimized exposure to triggering situations (such as alcohol in the kitchen or at organizational events). Additionally, the use of aggressive or profane language was discouraged, so as to be sensitive to those who may have come from unstable or domestic violence situations. The hiring of staff with social services experience served as a key driver of this cultural shift within KFG.

## *WORKS Model*

One barrier to participation and completion of the Project Launch program was the challenges Apprentices faced in having no income during the training period. In 2021, KFG began providing a weekly stipend of \$200, aimed at incentivizing attendance and supporting the economic needs of Apprentices. In April 2022, KFG rolled out a new, innovative alternative staffing program dedicated to the hospitality industry, *WORKS*. In this program, Apprentices are employed by KFG and contracted with their Employer Partner for staffing. This model afforded Apprentices greater continuity in program services, like life coaching and soft skills training, as well as healthcare benefits, and competitive employment with individualized support throughout the transition from in-class training to on-the-job training. Apprentices who are on track to complete their 10-week training are onboarded as KFG employees and placed into jobs with employer partners allowing them to begin earning a paycheck while accruing on-the-job training (OJT) hours. Apprentices remain under *WORKS* employment supervision for at least 90 days. KFG staff continue to check in monthly with apprentices to ensure they have support and accountability in reaching their personal and professional goals as well as case management and referrals to wraparound services, as needed. After 90 days of OJT, employer partners may offer the Apprentices permanent employment.

Like traditional staffing companies, *WORKS* provides staff to employers and generates revenue by charging the employer a fee that covers the workers' wages, payroll taxes, workers comp, and a portion of operating expenses. Unlike traditional staffing companies, *WORKS*' primary goal is to increase workers' income and wealth building opportunities. To that end, the enterprise is committed to providing living wages, health benefits, savings plans, and support services to job seekers. According to one KFG staff member,

*"We're a very different model and what I'm finding out is there's huge potential. Secondly, the model is working out so well, and I give credit to COVID. Before COVID, when I tried to get into these locations with our demographic to get them a job, a background check became such a barrier and they weren't even going to, they closed the door on my face. But when COVID hit, and the lack of labor became much more open to ideas and different ways to create these partnerships has allowed the employee partner to come on board and the apprentice to get a better circumstance in reference to their careers."*

**Goal #1: Deliver the Project Launch Apprenticeship program with fidelity to the program model.**

**Objective #1: Enroll 36 Apprentices in the Project Launch per cohort.**

Over the course of the grant period, KFG enrolled 212 Apprentices. There was an average enrollment of 19 (range of 10-30) Apprentices per cohort during the project period across Baking, Hospitality Management, and Culinary programs. As noted, COVID-19 continued to be a barrier in recruitment, enrollment, and retention of Apprentices in Project Launch through 2021 and 2022.

**Objective #2: Achieve 80% completion rate of the Project Launch program.**

Completion is defined as promoting from the Project Launch training portion of the program to On-the-Job training. 129 Apprentices promoted from the in-class training to on-the-job training during the program period, a completion rate 61% across all cohorts. Completion rates across cohorts ranged from 33% to 82.3%. The industry and organization disruption from COVID significantly impacted apprentice engagement and completion. It also affected staff retention and led to structural changes that were ultimately beneficial but challenging in the moment. As the disruption from COVID abated and the organization changes were stabilized, KFG was able to achieve a much higher rate of apprentice engagement and completion over the grant period.

**Objective #3: Adherence to the program model.**

Throughout the program period, Apprentices who completed the program consistently met the 360 hour program instruction requirement, which is a baseline metric aligning with the standards. However, measuring adherence to the entire program model was difficult due to 1) COVID-19 disruptions in researchers collecting data via the planned fidelity checklist, and 2) changes in curriculum of each cohort.

COVID-19 restrictions meant the intended schedule of observing class and kitchen sessions and documenting aspects of fidelity was disallowed by SDSU for the first year of the study. Researchers were unable to attend classes in person early on and with any regularity due to COVID-19 restrictions on field research and additional challenges faced by KFG (e.g., illness, changes in instructors).

Second, the curriculum and format of each cohort changed enough to suggest that cohort to cohort content delivery may not be comparable. It should be noted, that regardless of content delivery adjustments in each cohort, the curriculum adhered to the required

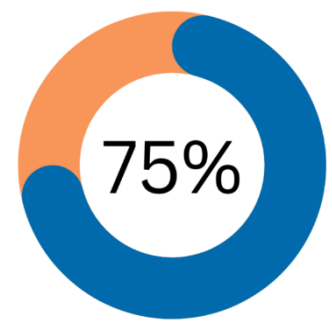


standard hours of instruction and basic content requirements for the Apprenticeship Certificate from the State of California. Nonetheless, we obtained rich data about the experiences of Project Launch Apprentices and Staff that will describe the perceptions of these changes, described later in this report, suggesting the program is moving toward a consistent curriculum delivery in the post-COVID era.

#### Objective #4: Post-training engagement and documentation with Apprentices and Employer Partners.

COVID-19 disruptions and staff turnover meant that consistent collection of monthly feedback did not occur on a routine basis until late 2022. Kitchens For Good developed and implemented a consistent feedback system for both Apprentices and Employer Partners. Apprentices are communicated with monthly after promotion, though data are only available for the most recent cohorts. Employer Partners are surveyed about the Apprentice's progress at the 30, 60, and 90 day checkmark, as KFG has determined that these first 90 days are the most critical for employment retention.

SDSU researchers gathered surveys from KFG Employer Partners, aimed at understanding the experiences they have with Apprentices and the Project Launch program. Researchers initially planned for interviews, but it became clear that scheduling and completing interviews with chefs/hiring managers would be burdensome on the participants. In 2023, researchers developed a survey via Google Forms for Employer Partners. The majority of participants (75%) reported "very satisfactory" performance of KFG Apprentices in their businesses. When asked about strengths of KFG Apprentices, one participant stated: *"students are hungry for knowledge and are a blank canvas to be molded how we see fit."* When asked about areas for improvement, another participant recommended setting *"Realistic expectations from employers with schedules and work that will be endured"* for Apprentices. Three quarters of participants (75%) indicated they were likely or very likely to hire a KFG Apprentice.



**Employer Partner is "likely" or "very likely" to hire a KFG Apprentice**

### Outcome Evaluation Results

This section describes the results of the outcome evaluation. We address the results related to Goals 2, 3, and 4 and their accompanying objectives.

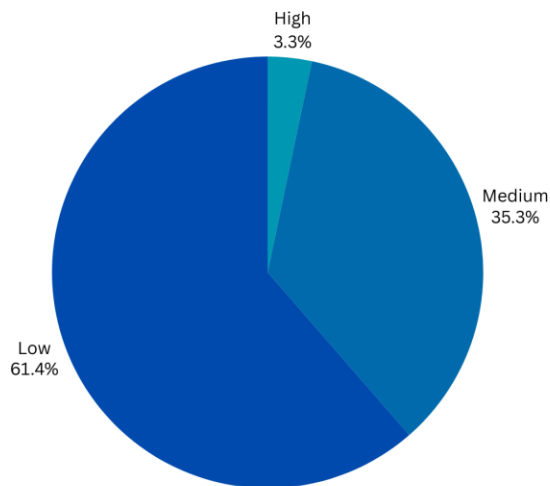
**Goal #2: Evaluate the impact of KFG on reducing violent and non-violent recidivism among apprentices.**

An important goal of the CalVIP program is to assess the impacts of community programming on recidivism, particularly violent recidivism. While KFG does not use the risk assessment for making program decisions, this information is useful for understanding how this already vulnerable population may be experiencing legal system involvement and offer more data in drawing connections between employment and negative outcomes.

**Objective #1: Assess Apprentices' risk for recidivism and violent recidivism.**

During the program period, we performed 197 risk assessments using the Risk Matrix 2000 Scale, which provides a robust calculation of risk for future violence that relies on static and easy to access data points related to one's criminal history and demographics.<sup>8</sup> The remaining 15 cases were excluded due to lack of information. The RM2000 produces a score falling into low, medium, high, and very high risk categories. The majority of KFG Apprentices scored in the low category (61%), with 35% in the medium category, and 3% categorized as high risk for recidivism (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Violence Risk Score Categories (n = 197)**



**Objective #2: Reduce the incidence of violent crime recidivism.**

During the program period, only 3 individuals were arrested for a new violent crime within 6 months of promotion from Project Launch program to On-the-Job training (**rate of 1.4%**). One limitation to our assessment was the lack of access to official records. Additional background checks were not permitted and access to other

databases was not obtained by KFG. Instead, researchers triangulated the recidivism data by accessing numerous web-based resources and conferred with KFG administrators who had specific knowledge of new arrests. All individuals who were documented as having a violent crime arrest scored in the high risk category.

Due to low base rates and data limitations, making meaningful comparisons of recidivism rates from prior cohorts to present is difficult. Nonetheless, the rate of Apprentices engaging in violent criminal behavior during or after the Project Launch training is extremely low.

### **Objective #3: Reduce the incidence of non-violent crime recidivism.**

During the program period, only 6 individuals were arrested for a new non-violent crime within 6 months of completing Project Launch (**rate of 2.8%**). The limitations described above for violent recidivism also apply to our assessment for non-violent recidivism. Nonetheless, the rate of Apprentices engaging in non-violent criminal behavior during or after the Project Launch training is extremely low. All individuals who were documented as having a violent crime arrest scored in the low (5) and medium (4) risk categories.

### **Goal #3: Improved employment outcomes for Project Launch Apprentices.**

The third goal of the evaluation study was to assess improvement in employment outcomes for Project Launch Apprentices.

### **Objective #1: Successful completion of Project Launch Program.**

During the program period, 129 Apprentices were promoted from the Project Launch Program to On-the-Job Training, resulting in a **61% completion rate**. While the aim was for 80% completion each cohort, as described above numerous external and internal challenges impacted Apprentices ability to complete the program.

### **Objective #2: The rate of employment for Apprentices post-training will be maintained or increase compared to pre-training.**

Upon completion of the Project Launch Training, 60% of Apprentices were employed, with 45% still employed full-time after two months, and 16% actively looking for new positions. One element supporting this continued growth is the newly implemented stipends and Works Program. Pre- to post-training comparisons were not conducted as the pre-training data on employment was not consistently captured by KFG.

### Objective #3: The wages earned by Apprentices will show demonstrable increases.

At the completion of this study, the average wage for Apprentices entering the workforce was \$18.38 per hour (current CA minimum wage is \$15.50 per hour). During 2022 into 2023, the starting wages showed an increase of 30 cents per hour (\$18.28 per hour to \$18.65 per hour). The wage potential associated with the *WORKS* program suggests that Apprentices hired through the KFG staffing model will earn more, on average, than those who acquire their own employment. This assessment is in progress.

### Goal #4: Improve upon instabilities and barriers to employment in Apprentices' lives.

One opportunity presented by the evaluation study was capturing the other measures of success and challenges present in Apprentices' lives. To perform this assessment, researchers conducted a pre-post training survey of Apprentices to capture information across an array of life domains, including substance use disorder, housing, mental health, healthy eating behaviors, and any other needs as they arose during the project period. We also draw from observations of Project Launch activities and interviews with staff and Apprentices. We had hoped to triangulate this with case note information collected in the KFG Salesforce database, but the richness and detail of the information was lacking.

We compared the pre and post survey respondents on key questions. Where applicable we perform statistical analysis on a subsample where we could match pre- and post-survey responses (n = 46).

#### *Pre-Post Survey Sample Characteristics*

There were 108 Apprentices who completed a pre-survey and 91 Apprentices who completed a post-training survey. Because Apprentices could voluntarily identify themselves, there are matched pre-post surveys for 46 Apprentices. Below, we report demographic characteristics for the pre-survey participants, which were only collected at the pre-training survey conducted at the beginning of the Project Launch program as most of these demographics are static or unlikely to change within the 10-12 week program period (see Table 3).

There were not many differences between demographic categories and other factors. However, men were more likely women than to have been on probation or parole in the past ( $X^2 = 11.909, p = .008$ ). People of color were more likely to cook more often for friends and family ( $X^2 = 16.865, p = .010$ ) and more likely to eat vegetables more often ( $X^2 = 43.063, p = .000$ ) than their white counterparts. Men were more likely than other gender identities to eat meals from restaurants more often ( $X^2 = 35.202, p = .010$ ).

**Table 3. Pre-Training Survey Participant Demographics (n = 108)**

<b>Demographic Characteristic</b>	<b>Percent/Mean (SD)</b>
<b>Age</b>	38.1 (13.11)
<b>Gender</b>	
Men	46%
Women	47%
Non-binary	3%
Prefer not to say	1%
<b>Race/Ethnicity*</b>	
white	33%
Black/African American	26%
Hispanic/Latino	36%
Asian/Asian American	2%
Native American	3%
Pacific Islander	1%
Other	10%
<b>Education Level</b>	
8th grade	4%
Some high school	12%
High School Diploma/GED	40%
Some college	31%
Associate's degree	6%
Bachelor's degree or higher	4%
<b>Household Income**</b>	
Unsure	12%
Less than \$20,000	54%
\$20,001 to \$34,999	18%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	2%
<b>Dependents</b>	
Yes	52%
No	48%
<b>Prior Probation/Parole Experience</b>	
Yes	59%
No	41%
<b>Prior Prison Experience</b>	
Yes	63%
No	37%

\*Does not equal 100% because participants could respond to more than one category.

\*\*Not all respondents answered this question (n = 85).

**Objective #1: Address and support substance use disorder needs.**

At the beginning of Project Launch, 66% of Apprentices reported a history of substance use. Of those who identified a history of substance use, 83% indicated they sought treatment.

In the post-training surveys, 26% of Apprentices indicated experiencing substance use challenges during the Project Launch program, of which 92% reported seeking treatment. Importantly, the number of Apprentices experiencing substance use challenges was less, and nearly all individuals experiencing them reported seeking treatment.

### **Objective #2: Address and support housing needs.**

At the beginning of Project Launch, 70% of Apprentices considered their living situation unstable. Most Apprentices (40%) reported living in residential or transitional housing.

In the post-training surveys, 71% of Apprentices indicated experiencing housing instability, with 36% living in residential or transitional housing. When comparing responses on matched surveys, all but one Apprentice reported the same living arrangements, with this Apprentice moving from living with family members to renting a room.

### **Objective #3: Address and support mental health needs.**

At the beginning of Project Launch, 50% of Apprentices reported mental health diagnoses, of which 100% reported engaging in treatment. In the post-training surveys, 28% of Apprentices reported mental health diagnoses during project launch, of which 98% reported engaging in treatment.

We also assessed mental health status using the Behavioral Activation for Depression Scale (BADs).<sup>9</sup> BADs measures the actions one takes to alleviate depression symptoms and reflects a total score across the items (possible 63 points), where a higher score means more actions taken toward alleviating depression. In the pre-survey, Apprentices scored an average of 38.7 ( $SD = 8.02$ ) out of 63, indicating a moderate score. In the post-survey, Apprentices scored an average of 41.0 ( $SD = 4.54$ ), indicating a statistically significant increase ( $t(45) = -1.819, p = .038$ ).

We also assessed mental health status using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.<sup>10</sup> This scale measures one's self-esteem where a higher total score (out of 50) indicates higher self-esteem. In the pre-survey, Apprentices scored an average of 37.8 ( $SD = 8.44$ ), indicating just above average positive self-esteem. In the post-survey,

Apprentices scored an average of 39.2 ( $SD = 7.72$ ), indicating an increase, though the difference was not statistically significant ( $t(45) = -1.460, p = .07$ ).

**Table 4. Average Score on Mental Health Measures from the Apprentice Survey**

Measure	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Change
Behavioral Activation for Depression	38.7	41.0	+
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	37.8	39.2	+

As revealed in interviews and on-site observations, the implementation of trauma-informed practices may be central to the increase in mental health stability. For instance, in the interviews with Apprentices, one noted:

*“They really boost your confidence up. And they like, pay attention to you. I mean with the things they tell us, the way they teach us, the way they independently want us to like present meals and you know, they help us even with our language even though I have a filthy mouth. You know, it’s a great place. Every day they ask us how we’re doing. They actually like make **you start becoming aware of the good. I guess it’s Kitchens for Good, right!**”*

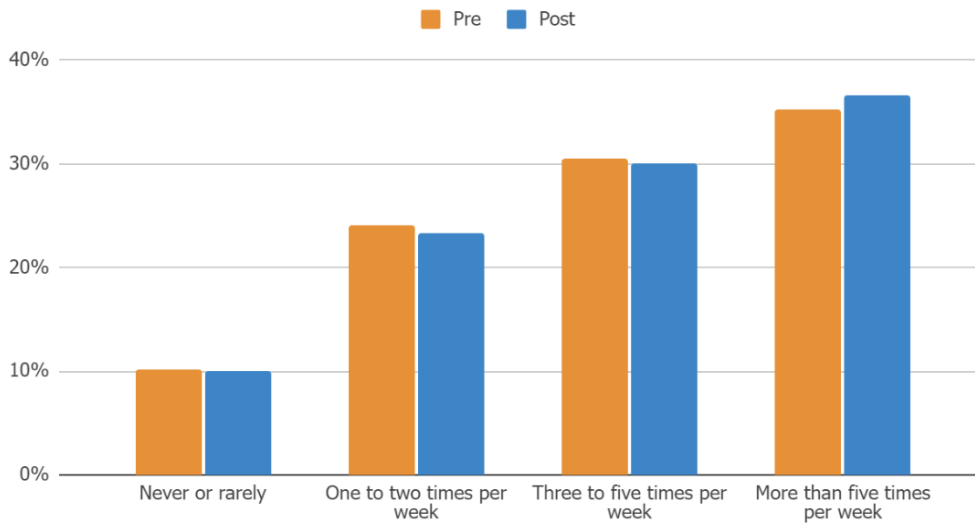
**Objective #4: Address and support healthy eating behaviors.**

In addition to traditional measures of disadvantage, KFG is in the unique position to potentially impact the health and well-being of its Apprentices through its culinary training. In pre-training surveys, 83% of participants reported having enough to eat at home on a weekly basis compared to 90% of participants post-training. More generally, participants were asked if they have enough resources to support themselves. At pre-training, 45% of participants indicated yes, compared to 56% post-training.

The survey also captured information about specific nutrition and eating behaviors. The series of figures below reflect Apprentices responses, pre- and post-training, on several questions about healthy cooking, consumption of healthy foods, and describing overall health.

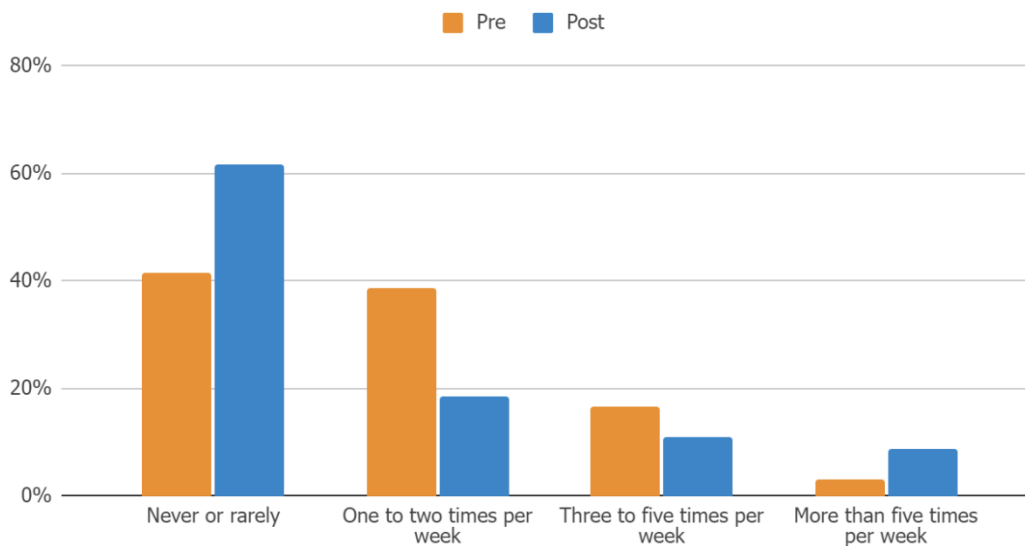
The majority of Apprentices eat home cooked meals more than five times a week, and this is consistent in the pre- (35%) and post-training (36%) surveys. There was a slight increase in the number of Apprentices cooking more than five times per week at the end of the training period.

When eating your main meal at home, how often do you usually eat home cooked meals?



However, Apprentices reported rarely or never cooking for friends in the pre-training survey (41.7%) and this grew to 61.5% of Apprentices in the post-survey reporting they never or rarely cook for friends. Those who cooked meals for family and friends more than five times a week also increased from 3% to 9%.

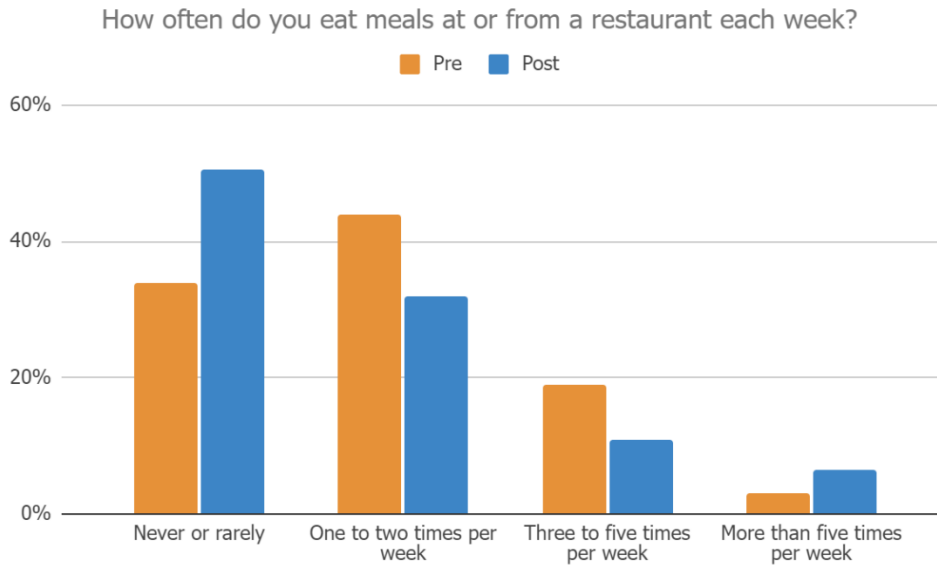
How often do you cook meals for family and friends (not in your immediate household) each week?



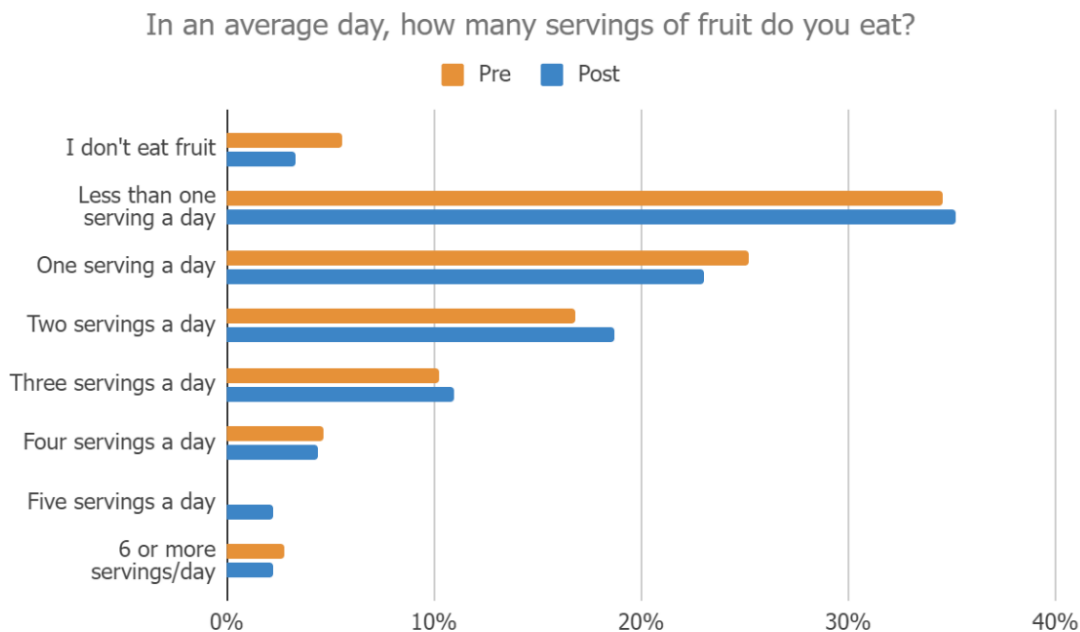
Most Apprentices never or rarely (34%), or one to two times a week (44%), eat meals in a restaurant. This increased in the post-training survey (never or rarely = 55%),



indicating that Apprentices were eating away from home less often after Project Launch training.



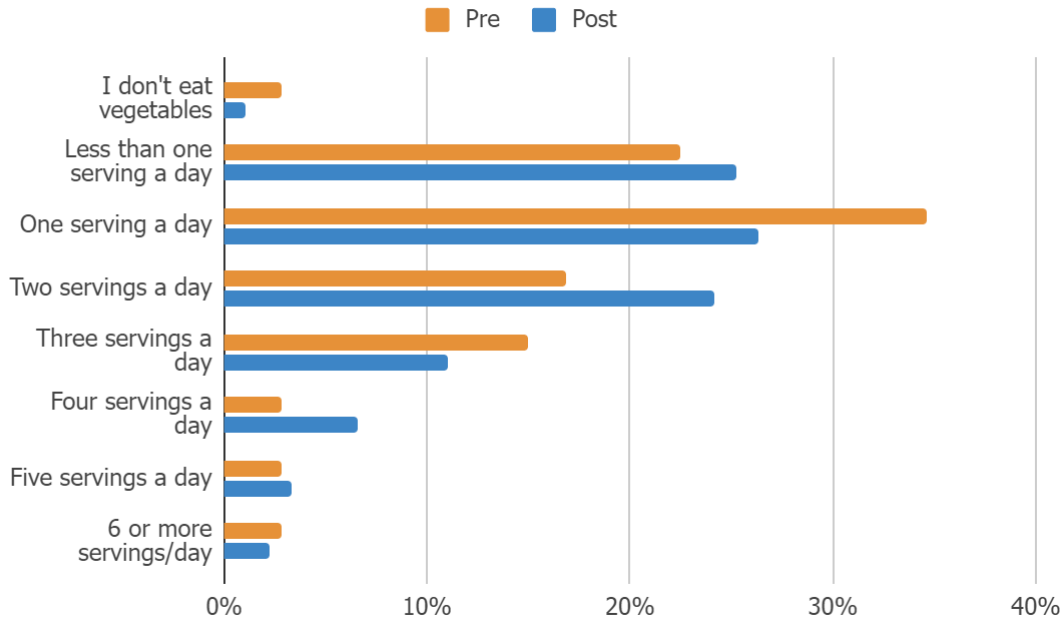
The majority of Apprentices eat one or less than one serving of fruit per day, and this is consistent at the beginning (60%) and end of the Project Launch program period (58%). There was an increase in Apprentices reporting eating five servings a day (2.2%).



Most Apprentices eat one or less than one serving of vegetables per day, and this is consistent at the beginning (57%) and end of the Project Launch program period

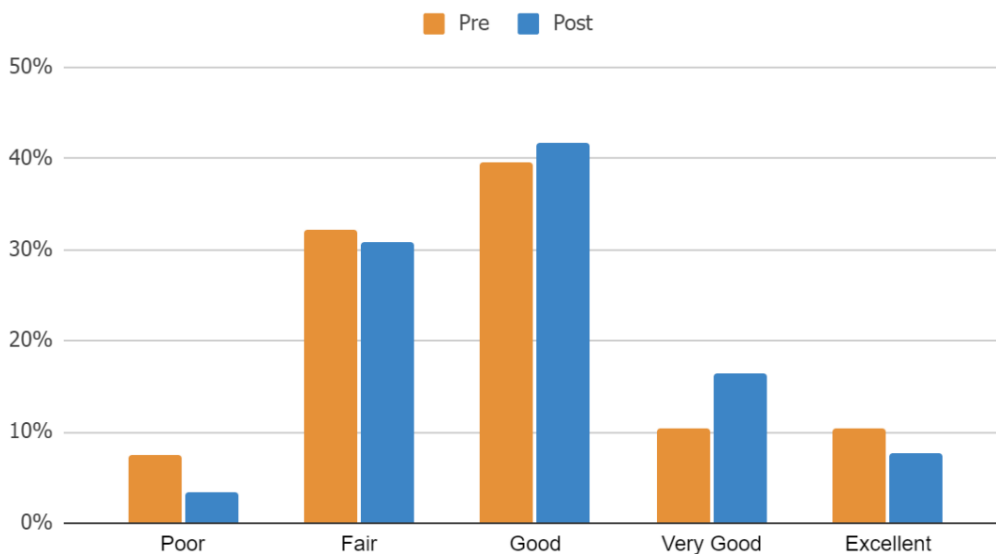
(51%). There was an increase in Apprentices reporting eating two (17% to 24%) and four (3% to 7%) servings a day.

In an average day, how many servings of vegetables do you eat?



Apprentices reported some increases in health at the post-training survey compared to the pre-training survey. Fewer Apprentices reported poor or fair health in general (40% vs. 34%), and more reported good, very good, or excellent health at the end of training compared to the beginning of training (60% vs. 66%).

In general, how would you describe your health?



**Objective #5: Address and support other needs as identified.**

Additional areas reported in the survey included social support and impulsivity.<sup>11</sup> Social support was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS).<sup>12</sup> This scale measures the level of agreement with statements about the social support someone experiences in total, but also across three relationship types: family, friends, and significant others. This is measured on a scale of 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating more perceived support. In the pre-survey, Apprentices scored an average of 4.76 (*SD* = 1.61), indicating that most report an average level of support. In the post-survey, Apprentices scored an average of 4.51 (*SD* = 1.66), indicating decrease in perceived overall social support. There are several subscales in the MSPSS which measure perceived social support from significant others, family, and friends, separately. Perceived social support decreased in all categories but these changes were not statistically significant. Perceptions of social support are very dynamic, and its possible external factors are reflected in Apprentices perceptions that are not related to social support. Interviews with Apprentices uniformly revealed that KFG offers important support for them to pursue their employment goals (see more in the Successes section of the report).

Another area of interest is impulsivity, which may be related to stability behaviors and completion of training programs. Impulsivity is measured using a modified version of the UPPS Impulsivity Scale.<sup>13</sup> There is an overall total (out of 5), as well as scores for three sub areas including (lack of) Premeditation, Urgency, and (lack of) Perseverance. Higher scores indicate greater impulsivity. In the pre-survey, Apprentices scored an average of 2.24 (*SD* = .23), indicating low levels of impulsivity. In the post-survey, Apprentices scored an average of 1.94 (*SD* = .35), indicating a statistically significant reduction in impulsivity overall ( $t(45) = 6.299, p < .001$ ). Across the three subareas, there were statistically significant reductions in impulsive behavior.<sup>14</sup> See Table 5 for a breakdown of these subareas.

**Table 5. Social Support and Impulsivity Measures from the Apprentice Survey**

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Pre-Survey</i>	<i>Post-Survey</i>	<i>Change</i>
<b>Social Support</b>	4.76	4.51	-
<i>Family</i>	4.61	4.47	-
<i>Friends</i>	4.68	4.41	-
<i>Significant Others</i>	5.14	4.71	-
<b>Impulsivity*</b>	2.24	1.94	-
<i>(lack of) Premeditation*</i>	2.05	1.89	-
<i>Urgency*</i>	2.55	2.08	-
<i>(lack of) Perseverance*</i>	2.11	1.82	-

\*denotes a statistically significant change.

## *Perspectives of Staff and Apprentices*

A core element of the evaluation study involved on-site observation and interviews with Apprentices and Staff, and brief surveys with Employer Partners. We analyzed these data sources to identify the perceived strengths and challenges of the Project Launch Program. We organize these domains thematically and present relevant excerpts and quotes when needed.

### **Successes**

#### **Apprenticeship Model**

One of the primary successes shared by both staff and Apprentices is the nature of the Apprenticeship model that KFG offers. The structure and support of the Apprenticeship model was identified as a core element of success, as described by one Apprentice:

*“There's so much support and, and, you know, you're gonna go to a paid apprenticeship program somewhere, or a paid apprenticeship position somewhere after you're done with your classroom training? You know, it's just huge. It's so huge. So valuable.”*

The program structure, particularly providing financial resources allows Apprentices to engage with their culinary training while alleviating some concerns with missing out on income. For example, one Apprentices stated, *“I guess you would call it job security because you're able to get placed with a job a lot easier. I guess the job security and the money.”* This was essential, especially for Apprentices who were trying to care for family members and/or trying to establish more stable housing.

The Apprenticeship model also aims to support Apprentices as they face challenging circumstances. These individual circumstances typically underlie one of the prevailing concerns with maintaining employment: Attendance. According to one staff member:

*“The biggest issues in this industry and with our apprentices are people that no-call-no-show. Attendance. Something happens in their personal life, and they drop off. So, we are constantly trying to engage them. Find out what the obstacles are; if they're having something in their personal life, what can we do to help you overcome whatever that obstacle is. So you know, if it's childcare that's come up, we'll try to get them resources for that. If it's their car broke*

*down, we'll get them bus passes. We try to work through whatever that kind of obstacle is."*

In addition to the foundation of support through the program structure, Apprentices highlighted how the model builds their confidence and allows them to see themselves in ways they didn't think possible.

*"The program gives you goals and outlines, and they are achievable. They're not something that they just say like, "oh, you could possibly be this"...KFG really tells you, "you can be this, you're gonna be this...you put in the work, you're gonna achieve this." Every week we see that, you know? Every week we make something that we didn't think we could make. And it's tangible. And you can hold, you can go, "damn, I did that." You know? So that builds confidence in, "what can I do next week?""*

The Apprenticeship model also offered a motivation to work and avenue for building purpose. One Apprentice stated,

*"What about KFG changed my life? Is that I want something different. I wanna work. I never worked a day in my life. So me being here Monday through Friday is just a big achievement for me, you know? Me waking up every day, me wanting to go to work now, start making money, stay away from my old like stomping grounds and you know, I wanna be somebody."*

Apprentices also identified the small class sizes and one-on-one counseling, and aftercare approach as essential to their success. KFG allows for Apprentices to return to the kitchen anytime to continue practicing their skills even after they have promoted and begun on-the-job training: *"It's intimate class sizes, so you actually get to know your cohort. And they actually- and the staff here gets to talk to you one on one. And the after care is even better, like it's like, "Come on through! if you just want- if you want to work with your knife skills, you're always free to come in. Anytime, anytime". And I'm like, "That's what I need."*

Staff also identified strengths of the program. One staff member noted how the changes in chef instructional staff has elevated the environment, culture, and level of programming. The staff member stated:

*"Since [the new Chef Instructors have] taken over, you see that as an elevation of training. You see the elevation of them understanding the industry. I think she's really brought a different element all the way across. I think one of the*

*biggest things that I helped facilitate, but she boosted it to the next level, was getting that Mock Restaurant."*

Staff indicated one of the deficits facing many Apprentices when they transitioned to on-the-job training was not knowing "what it's like to be on the line." Not knowing what that meant, and learning Apprentices were demonstrating solid technique, but couldn't perform with enough efficiency, the staff member took it to the instructional staff and developed the Mock Restaurant. According to one staff member,

*"So I was like, "Is there a way to simulate this? Can we simulate a line? What does it look like?" And they're like, "Yeah, I think we could do that." And so that's how Mock Restaurant started was, "Let's simulate this line." But then when she took over, she just took it to a whole 'nother level. They started doing the menu and all that stuff, and she did the different stations and just really took it to a whole 'nother level. Now we've seen success. So now you're seeing success because even though they get a short stint of what it looks like behind the line or on the line, they now have that experience...So I think that that has probably been one of the most successful things that I've seen here at Kitchens For Good."*

### **Implementing the WORKS Program**

Another hailed success of the KFG Program model is the WORKS alternative staffing model. As described above, WORKS employs Apprentices directly and supports their employment with the industry across San Diego. The Works program also helps keep Apprentices engaged, received consistent Employer Partner feedback, and support employment in the crucial months at the beginning of the job. According to one staff member:

*"It's proved to be great in the fact that we're way more engaged with them. They're our employee for that first 90 days [of on-the-job training]. They're answering to us. The first 90 days at any job, that transition is the most crucial. So, the fact that they're our employee for that time keeps us way more engaged. [HR] is reaching out to the apprentice, finding out what they're- if they have issues, or how they're feeling about the job. And meanwhile, [we're] reaching out to the employer partner and getting assessments on how the apprentice is doing. So, it's a good way to keep everybody engaged."*

Another staff member shared that the WORKS model helps Apprentices remain connected to KFG, which can continue providing other resources necessary to help

them remain employed. One staff member offered some examples: *“Our model speaks to, ‘you call, we answer,’ and we will be able to navigate through the issues that may come up. And a flat tire, we’re going to send them in an Uber. Childcare, we give them some opportunities there. So we have all these resources that might help them get to work on a regular basis where normally they don’t have a resource.”*

### **Positive Learning Environment & Working Culture**

The mission of KFG and orientation of its staff provided a positive culture for Apprentices. This was particularly true for Apprentices with troubled pasts. One Apprentice stated: *“They don’t care about our past. All they care about is our present and future. And to see us succeed. That’s why they always give us positivity, encouragement, you got this.”* A staff member echoed this sentiment about the culture:

*“I think one of the greatest strengths of Project Launch is the ability to build a rapport with the apprentices and cultivate a community, a sense of community, where the apprentices don’t feel like they’re coming in to go to school, they don’t feel like they’re coming in to go to work, they feel like they’re coming in to do something fun. So, they’re learning. They’re learning a lot about themselves. They’re learning a lot about each other. And of course, they’re learning about, you know, different techniques in the kitchen, and, and professionalism.”*

### **Selecting Partners Aligned with the Mission**

Another strength of the KFG program model is continued focus on the organization’s mission of being “dedicated to transforming lives.” This extends to the relationships and partnerships that staff build with Employer Partners. One staff member reflected on how they build Employer Partnerships: *“Yeah, I think most places just want you to show up, be eager to learn, and do the job. And they don’t judge on the past circumstances of their life. But that’s also the partners we choose, you know. So, there’s some companies that act interested in partnering, and then- you can tell they just want bodies. I need to make sure they’re committed to our mission, our people, and that they’re super supportive. Otherwise, it’s not going to be a good fit.”*

### **Implementing a Trauma Informed Approach**

Part of the positive culture of Project Launch and KFG is linked to the focus on trauma-informed approaches. This shift was in response to many factors, acknowledgement of the “various histories of trauma” Apprentices have, their current

circumstances, the pressures of COVID-19. KFG implemented “Wellness Wednesdays” where Apprentices are done with instruction at 12:30 pm on Wednesday so they can use the remainder of the day to attend to any needs they have, like appointments, extra instructional support, and acquiring resources. According to one staff member:

*“What you'll see here that you don't really see in other programs is that there's a lot of wellness here... We have Wellness Wednesdays, and that is supported by the instruction team... Because if you are not well here and here, then you're not going to have the ability to go into your jobs and then continue to thrive because you're not getting the support that you need. And so, the training plus the support, I think that those two things have probably been the success of this program. When [Apprentices] realize that we put this in place for you so that you can go and do what you need to do, they're like, "Whoa, that's amazing.”*

Another staff member reflected that Apprentices “*build this team and they get very comfortable, and they know it's a safe space. It helps them transition out of that. Whatever they had going on in their background, it doesn't completely resolve it, but it gives them the opportunity and the vehicle to be able to grow and move through that and become the best person that they can be, or at least go in that direction.*”

## Challenges

Apprentices and staff identified a few challenges that KFG faces in operating Project Launch.

### Consistency in Program Model

Staff reported one of the primary challenges they experience is the ongoing changes to the program model. Over the grant period, the program changed from a 12- and 11-week curriculum to settling on a 10-week curriculum for the 2023 cohorts. While the number of training hours remained the same as required by accreditation, the shift in program weeks also meant changing instruction and day-to-day routines. One staff member stated, “*But reinventing the wheel, so to speak, every cohort is rough.*”

Another concern related to the program model was the perception of expanding too quickly. This has impacts for staffing and retention, particularly when the organizational structure changes and administrators don't expect to fill some vacancies or offset additional job duties. One staff member stated:



*“Before you expand too much, I feel like we put the cart in front of the horse a little bit, and shoring up some infrastructure and some other things, and being able to hire some people that were that left. Then now they're not going to rehire some marketing people. It leaves a lot of holes, and it leaves a lot more stress on other people. Then there's burnout. You can just see it. I love the program. I love what it does. But it's one of those things that it just chews and spits people out.”*

Another concern with staffing related to competitive salaries and consistency in role clarification and alignment. One staff member stated, *“There's a lot of turnover and that obviously impacts the program. And so I don't know how, but I think the program is run really well. I think they do a lot of really, really good things. I think in terms of organizing the business, and making sure that they retain the talent that needs to be here in order to keep it going and keep consistent needs to be reevaluated, however that is.”*

### **Tensions between KFG Culture and the Restaurant Industry**

While the influences of the trauma-informed approach have been viewed as a successful shift in KFG culture, it does reveal tension with the reality of the kitchen environment. One staff member explained this potential concern:

*“There are two things that kind of battle each other. The kitchen is not the most trauma informed place ever. And on top of it, we are teaching and instructing adult apprentices. So, a lot of the trauma informed approaches, although I think that they're good and they come from a good place, I think some of them get taken a little bit too far as far as what a realistic expectation of the kitchen is and preparing the apprentices for going into a real-life kitchen or restaurant where probably nobody on that staff is trauma informed. So, it's nice to have that knowledge here and it's nice to teach that, and it's nice to model that good behavior, but then also keeping in mind that we're going into a kitchen where F-bombs get dropped on a daily basis. And not necessarily sheltering the apprentices from a lot of things instead of teaching about it and setting expectations and having the apprentices know what professionalism in a kitchen looks like versus sheltering them from it.”*

The suggestion from this staff member is to blend trauma informed approaches with other forms of boundary and expectation setting to increase Apprentice preparedness for the variety of kitchen environments they might experience.

## Potential Stigma Associated with Programming

One challenge identified by Apprentices was potential stigma from the KFG program being linked with supporting disadvantaged people, especially those who are formerly incarcerated. One Apprentice stated:

*"I was on the internet the other day and ...it said this program is for formerly incarcerated people. And I kinda felt like that would hinder my success because I could be a great cook and there could be someone next to me that's a regular cook. But if he went to Cordon Bleu whatever for cooking, and I was a formerly incarcerated person at Kitchens for Good, they would've cared, they might pass me up. I want people to know me as a cook first, not as formerly incarcerated...I don't wanna be in that umbrella. You don't have to say that I'm formerly incarcerated to anybody, ya know? Let me figure that out. Just say that I'm low income, I'm struggling, I'm impacted, whatever. But the wording of formerly incarcerated, I think it hinders my opportunities. And they say like all these employer partners they have, they already know what's going on, that's fine. But what if I wanna go out of [KFG], ya know? And they're gonna be like where were you at? Uh Kitchens for Good. How long? Oh, formerly incarcerated?"*

The Apprentice was concerned that the reputation of KFG providing training programming for system-impacted people, despite serving people with all kinds of background, may lead to assumptions made by prospective employers (particularly not partnered with KFG) about an Apprentices pas that make them less competitive for a position.

## Common concerns Among Apprentices

Staff and Apprentices highlighted common concerns that Apprentices experience that often go unnoticed or unprioritized. For example, while Apprentices are provided with their kitchen clothing, they sometimes lack access to launder it regularly. One staff member noted: *It's a challenge, even for those who are sober living or transitional living, because they have one day a week they can do washes. That's just not really feasible for the industry they're working with, with grease stains and dirt stains and literally everything, batter stains, flour, you name it.* Other staff agreed citing some Apprentices will do spot-cleaning on stains because they can't wash the uniform regularly, and noted this could negatively affect Apprentices because of hygiene issues.

Other issues facing Apprentices persist due to their individual circumstances. KFG supports Apprentices to maintain sobriety but recognizes the challenge in maintaining it especially in the face of any changes in someone's circumstances.

*"People are going to try to figure out ways to self-medicate. We have a zero-tolerance policy for that, so we will ask people to leave. But it is a challenge when, I would say, people come into the program sober one year, six months, whatever that is, and then, through no fault of their own, communicate with other people in the program who maybe aren't sober. Then it becomes, because that person's more recreational and this person is from a recovery standpoint, and even though this person's recreational doesn't have the same connection with the alcohol and drugs, it can take other people and tailspin them to a point and a degree where they don't wake up at night. They overdose. They do a lot of other things. It's a really scary situation."*

Staff suggested more training in recognizing the needs around substance misuse and how to support people who may be relapsing or close to relapsing. This situation was particularly acute when considering the risk for overdose. Staff remarked how they encountered Apprentices who may have been high, or potentially overdosing and were not equipped to respond. Similar deficits in training related to those who are in recovery and on medically assisted treatment programs. One staff member detailed the nuance of the issue with substance use disorder and KFG staff's capacity to respond:

*"We are supporting folks who have an extreme addiction to many different things. And so, we as staff should be given the training to be able to identify whether or not that person is on methadone versus is high. In the time that I've been here, I've seen numerous people relapse and they're relapsing here, and so I want to see a little bit more of a stricter guideline around supporting our folks. We don't want to get them in trouble, and we keep telling them that, "We're not here to get you in trouble. We want to support you. If this is still a challenge, let us support you."*

When faced with someone who comes to the program under the influence of substances, the current protocol is to send them home, but that response feels incomplete according to some staff members, *"But what does that do? At the end of the day, sending somebody home? What does that do? And so, it's placing just better guidelines around that, getting the staff fully trained and acclimated, or hiring a staff member that's a SUD counselor to be able to identify. Now I'm not saying test people,*

*but there just has to be something because that is a challenge. So, then we're placing those people into employment. It's not going to stop. So how do we get these folks better support around it? So that's one thing I'd like to see from leadership."*

Another issue faced by Apprentices is transportation. Transportation impacts attendance in the program as well as consistently showing up for work. This issue particularly affects people who are system-impacted and under community supervision, as described by one staff member:

*"I would say it has less to do with their criminal background and more to do with transportation. We have opportunities further up north that they're just not allowed to pass, go, some where they would walk too far, like Shelter Island, where they don't have a transit system. So, if they walk too far in between a bus stop, that might alert their parole officer that they're walking in the wrong direction, or maybe they're walking in the wrong part of town. So that's something else we have to be very cognizant of. They have to be within a certain few hundred meters of public transport. Otherwise, those geo locations might alert. If their employer hears an alert go off on their ankle monitor, that's not something that he can put a headphone in. It'll be loud enough for everyone to hear. So, it's like, "How can we try to mitigate those situations so it's not embarrassing, that they can still do their job and are able to go into work, hopefully without any harassment."*

An Apprentice also confirmed transportation and program/employment locations as an issue, wishing KFG could have more training options outside of San Diego. The Apprentice stated,

*"I think that it would be cool to be able to have a Kitchens for Good in a lot of other areas too, not just in San Diego, but other places too. Because there's some people that say, for instance in my program, a lot of what deters them from not coming to Kitchens for Good is because wherever they're going after they get released, they don't have it. They don't have it there. So that's what stops them from choosing this program, which it really sucks because a lot of people that I've told, that I've talked to that said, "Hey, Kitchens for Good, you should go. It's an amazing program," they're like, "But I'm not going to live in San Diego when I get out." So, they just avoid it. And I feel like a lot of people lose out on this experience because they're not in other places other than San Diego."*

## Enhancing Career Readiness Aspect of Programming

Staff pointed out that KFG has a strong element of career development and preparation but identified this as an area for continued growth. For example, staff suggested this could be integrated into the daily curriculum, highlighting the variation across Apprentices in workforce readiness due to circumstances of KFG's target population. One staff member stated: *"I think we could strengthen maybe our workforce readiness portion of the class. We do spend time on that; but maybe it could be a little more of a daily part of the program, and not just a few weeks. Most come out ready, but we do have some that aren't job ready at the end of the program."* Other areas that staff and Apprentices noted could be strengthened were interpersonal skills, language barriers, technology deficits, and record keeping (especially for hospitality cohorts).

## CONCLUSION

The KFG Project Launch Program was successful in achieving many of its objectives related to the stated CalVIP project goals. KFG strengthened its curriculum and program delivery, developed innovative organizational approaches to culinary training including implementation of a trauma informed culture and design of the *Works* alternative staffing model, and enhanced its data collection and tracking procedures.

In terms of program impacts on Apprentices, data collection difficulties and low base rates meant that we were unable to statistically ascertain impacts on recidivism; however, only 9 Apprentices experienced an arrest in the 6 months following program participation. Over the course of the grant period, Project Launch saw increases in program promotion to on-the-job training and wages earned. These are noteworthy accomplishments, especially in the post-COVID period.

Improvements in client well-being also occurred during the program period, including decreased impulsivity and depression, and increased self-esteem, and positive changes in perceived health and eating behaviors. While Apprentice's perception of social support in their lives did not show significant improvements via the survey, interviews showed that Apprentices derive important support from the KFG program and additional measures should aim to capture this.

The program evaluation study also revealed areas for continued growth identified by researcher observation, staff and Apprentice interviews, and Employer Partner

surveys include: 1) developing staff knowledge and capacity around critical need areas (like substance use disorder); 2) continue building support mechanisms for Apprentices to overcome challenges that interfere with employment consistency (like transportation and childcare); 3) improving Apprentice healthy eating and nutrition behaviors through additional education; 4) enhance data reporting capacity, especially to account for impacts of the new *WORKS* alternative staffing model; and 5) enhance program stability through staff retention efforts and continuity in curriculum practices.

KFG's Project Launch Apprenticeship program continues to innovate as it provides people in San Diego in need of employment training support with a nurturing and positive learning and working environment, as well as resources and support for increased stability in the face of adversity.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A. Logic Model

**The goals of the KFG CalVIP project are to conduct process and outcome evaluation studies that assess the effectiveness of KFG in:** 1) delivery the Project Launch program with fidelity; 2) reducing violent and non-violent recidivism (arrest/conviction) among program Apprentices; 3) contributing to the increase employment stability and wages during the Apprenticeship period; and 4) contributing to the increase in Apprentice stability by assessing for, referring to, and providing relevant services.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Goals	Medium-term Goals	Long Term Goals
Staff & Volunteers	Apprentice Case Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals referred, accepted, rejected</li> <li>Social needs assessments</li> <li>Apprentice pre-post training survey</li> </ul>	Increased knowledge and skills	Maintaining Apprenticeship/employment with Employer Partner	Increased full-time employment
Culinary curriculum and training	Culinary Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hours in the classroom/kitchen</li> <li>Weekly performance assessments</li> <li>Successful Promotion from Apprenticeship Program</li> </ul>	80% Completion of culinary training (graduation)	Wage stability/increase	Increased wages earned
Employer Partners	Workforce Readiness Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hours in the workplace</li> <li>Monthly Check-ins</li> <li>Wages earned</li> <li>Arrests</li> </ul>	Begin on the job Training with Employer Partner)	Continued improvement in stability	Reduced recidivism
Research Partners (SDSU)	Apprenticeship		Improvement in instability/barriers to employment (housing, substance abuse, family dysfunction, etc.)		Stability in non-employment areas
Funding (CALVIP and other sources)	Civic Engagement				

## Appendix B. Process & Outcome Evaluation Study, Goals, Objectives, Indicators, and Data Source

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Data Source</b>
Goal #1: Deliver the Project Launch Apprenticeship programs with fidelity to the program model	#1: Enroll 36 Apprentices in the program per cohort	# of Apprentices enrolled in each program and cohort	Apprenticeship Application KFG Database
	#2: Achieve 80% program completion rate	# of Apprentices who complete the curriculum	KFG Database
	#3: Adherence to the program model	Delivery of curriculum as designed Apprentices' achievement of program curriculum	Observations Staff Interviews Apprentice Post-Training Survey
	#4: Post-training engagement with Apprentices and Employer Partners	# of Staff follow-up contacts with Apprentices	Staff Interviews
Goal #2: Evaluate the impact of KFG on reducing violent and general recidivism among apprentices.	Objective #1: Assess Apprentices for risk of violent and non-violent recidivism	Violence Risk level as assessed by the Risk Matrix Scale	KFG Salesforce Database In-person interview Record check
	Objective #2: Reduce the number of arrests for violent crime.	# and rate of arrests for violent crime # and rate of reconvictions for violent crime	KFG Salesforce Database Record check
	Objective #3: Reduce the number of arrests for non-violent crime.	# and rate of arrests for non-violent crime # and rate of reconvictions for non-violent crime	KFG Salesforce Database Record check
Goal #3: Successful completion of the Project Launch program and improved employment outcomes.	Objective #1: Successful completion of Project Launch Program.	# of Apprentices who complete the Project Launch Program Apprentice performance during Project Launch Program	KFG SalesForce Database Program Check-ins with Staff
	Objective #2: The rate of employment for Apprentices post-training will be maintained or increase compared to pre-training.	# of Apprentices employed during post-training period	KFG Salesforce Database
	Objective #3: The wages earned by Apprenticeship will show demonstrable increases.	Average dollar per hour wage earned by Apprentices Post-training Change in average dollar per hour wage during post-training period	KFG Salesforce Database
Goal #4: Improve upon instabilities and barriers to employment in Apprentices' lives.	Objective #1: Address and support substance use disorder needs.	# of Apprentices with reported substance use disorder history # of Apprentices with reported relapse concerns during Project Launch # of Apprentices referred to SUD services	KFG Salesforce Database In-person Interview Apprentice Pre-Training Survey



		# of Apprentices entering SUD programs # of Apprentices reporting SUD concerns during Post-training	
	Objective #2: Address and support housing needs.	# of Apprentices with reported housing instability at program entry # of Apprentices with reported housing concerns during Project Launch # of Apprentices referred to housing support services # of Apprentices entering housing support programs # of Apprentices reporting SUD concerns during Post-training	KFG Salesforce Database Apprentice Application In-person Interview Apprentice Pre- and Post Training Survey
	Objective #3: Address and support mental health needs.	# of Apprentices with reported mental health needs histories # of Apprentices with reported mental health needs during Project Launch # of Apprentices referred to mental health support services # of Apprentices entering mental health support programs # of Apprentices reporting mental health concerns during Post-training	KFG Salesforce Database Apprentice Application In-person Interview
	Objective #4: Address and support improved health eating behaviors.	Improved ratings on array of healthy eating behaviors	Apprentice Survey
	Objective #5: Address other needs as identified.	Needs as identified	Apprentice Survey

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<sup>1</sup> Couloutte, L. & Kopf, D. (2022). Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people. Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>

<sup>2</sup> California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (2023). Recidivism Report for Offenders Released from the CDCR in Fiscal Year 2017-18. Office of Research.

<sup>3</sup> Additional acknowledgement includes Alexandra Spencer who assisted with data collection in the first year of the project.

<sup>4</sup> As part of the application process for the Project Launch program, KFG conducts criminal history background checks on all prospective apprentices in order to determine criminal justice involvement. This data was shared with and analyzed by SDSU to evaluate the impact of KFG on reducing violent and non-violent recidivism among apprentices. Individual criminal histories were tallied based on criteria from the Violence Risk Matrix 2000 Scale, which provides a robust calculation of risk for future violence that relies on static and easy to access data points related to one's criminal history and demographics (see Thornton, 2010). The measure produces a score falling into low, medium, high, and very high risk categories based on the following data: Felony arrests (violent, property, drug); Felony convictions (violent, property, drug, burglary); Misdemeanors arrests (property, drug); Misdemeanor convictions (property, drug). Files documenting these data were annotated to note apprentices' name, date of birth, offense type, charge type, and legal disposition. Counts of each type of offense present on the background check were entered into a spreadsheet under the aforementioned felony and misdemeanor categories. Researchers assessed recidivism by conducting a web search using numerous online resources – e.g., county inmate locator websites, CDCR, and VineLink – and conferring with KFG administrators who had specific knowledge of new arrests. Additional offenses found online that were not present on the background check provided by KFG were noted on the spreadsheet under an "Additional Arrests" column.

<sup>5</sup> Employment Development Department. (2020). State of California. <https://edd.ca.gov/>

<sup>6</sup> Johanson, M. (2021, October 12). Why Service Workers are so Burned Out. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20211007-the-service-roles-that-lead-to-burnout>

<sup>7</sup> Harris, M. E., & Fallot, R. D. (2001). *Using trauma theory to design service systems*. Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

<sup>8</sup> Thornton, D. (2007). *Scoring guide for risk matrix 2000.9/SVC*.

<sup>9</sup> Kanter, J.W., Mulick, P.S., Busch, A.M., Berlin, K.S., & Martell, C.R. (2006). The Behavioral Activation for Depression Scale (BADs): Psychometric properties and factor structure. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 29, 191-202.

<sup>10</sup> Rosenberg, M. (1979). *The conceiving self*. New York: Basic.

<sup>11</sup> We initially included the TCU Criminal Thinking Scale (<https://ibr.tcu.edu/forms/tcu-criminal-thinking-scales/>), but removed it from the study after TCU acknowledged racial/ethnic bias in its performance (Sease, T.B., Joe, G., Pankow, J., Lehman, W.E.K., & Knight, K. (2022). A psychometric reevaluation of the TCU criminal thinking scales (CTS), *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 61(3), 135-147, DOI: 10.1080/10509674.2022.2045528)

<sup>12</sup> Zimet, G. D., & Farley, G. K. (1988). Perceived social support. *Journal of personality assessment*, 52, 30-41.

<sup>13</sup> Whiteside, S. P., & Lynam, D. R. (2001). The five factor model and impulsivity: Using a structural model of personality to understand impulsivity. *Personality and individual differences*, 30(4), 669-689.

<sup>14</sup> Results from t-tests for the UPPS subscales: (lack of) premeditation:  $t(45) = 2.96, p = .005$ ; urgency:  $t(45) = 5.50, p < .001$ ; (lack of) perseverance:  $t(45) = 4.55, p < .001$