



WORK OPTIONS

USING FOOD AS A FORCE FOR GOOD

ROOTED IN PURPOSE SINCE 1996

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Dear Friends and Partners,

2025 was a year of change. Many national shifts left us feeling unsettled and concerned for our families, our neighbors, and the future of our communities. Yet even in this time of disruption, we witnessed remarkable acts of personal courage and the growing strength that emerges when communities stand together.

It was also a year of transformation for Work Options. We faced economic challenges and made difficult decisions. With the support and guidance of a new Board of Directors, we adapted to better meet the needs of our students and community during an uncertain time.

As Work Options has evolved, so has our mission. We nourish communities by using food as a force for good, feeding those facing hunger and training individuals from historically excluded backgrounds to build stable, purpose-driven culinary and hospitality careers. Since 2020, we have distributed more than 500,000 meals to people experiencing food insecurity, including individuals experiencing homelessness, returning from incarceration, seniors, and immigrant families. We have invested over \$4.5 million to produce and deliver these meals in partnership with more than 15 community organizations.

At the same time, meal production has supported the training of 1,155 students over the past five years. Through hands-on culinary training, individualized employment planning, and job readiness support, including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy informed approaches, 75% of qualified graduates have secured and retained employment in the culinary field.

As we look ahead, we are focused on moving forward with purpose. We are expanding our reach to serve additional communities with nutritious meals while strengthening partnerships to support up to 50 students in advanced and pre-apprenticeship culinary training. With the leadership of our Board, we are also exploring a new employment program that will create a direct pipeline from training to local employers.

We are excited about the year ahead, beginning with the Culinary Classic Carnival at the end of May. This family-focused celebration will honor the Mosaic Campus community and mark the end of the school year with food from local chefs, games, and activities for all ages. We are also planning a fall gathering and will once again host a Thanksgiving meal for our Park Hill neighbors facing food access challenges.

We could not do this work without you. Every meal served and every student supported reflects the power of your partnership. Together, we are making a difference, and together, we will emerge stronger.

With deep gratitude,



Julie Stone | Executive Director of Work Options



We are PROUD to announce our new

MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS!



In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic created an urgent food access crisis for Denver's most vulnerable community members. Work Options recognized that it was uniquely positioned to respond, with trained culinary students, a commercial kitchen, and strong community partnerships already in place. What began as an emergency response quickly evolved into a year-round food access program. As communities navigate political instability and economic uncertainty, many individuals and families continue to face significant financial hardship, and food insecurity remains persistently high. In response, Work Options evolved its mission to reflect the growing need for food access alongside workforce development, making food provision a core pillar of its work since 2025.

MISSION:

"We nourish communities by using food as a force for good, feeding those facing hunger and training individuals from historically excluded backgrounds to build stable, purpose-driven culinary and hospitality careers."

VISION:

"No one is hungry, employment barriers are dismantled, and every individual has the opportunity to heal and thrive."



Programs

Using Food as a Force for Good



Work Options provides innovative meal solutions that are convenient, nutritious, and adaptable to the wide range of life circumstances that make accessing quality food difficult. Meals are fully prepared and accessible for individuals, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities, who may have limited time, mobility, or kitchen access. Designed to be both nourishing and culturally responsive, these meals uphold dignity, reduce stigma, and reflect the diverse communities served.

2025 IMPACT: Work Options provided 111,410 meals



109,000 meals to residents of Colorado Village Collaborative's Micro Communities at the Monroe and Steele Sites

2,260 meals were provided to Work Options program participants

First Thanksgiving community meal in 2025, serving 150 neighbors.

Programs

Culinary Job Training and Employment Support



Our Students

73%

HAVE BEEN
IMPACTED BY THE
JUSTICE SYSTEM



ONE IN THREE
HAVE
EXPERIENCED
VIOLENCE

36%

HAVE AT LEAST
ONE FELONY
CONVICTION

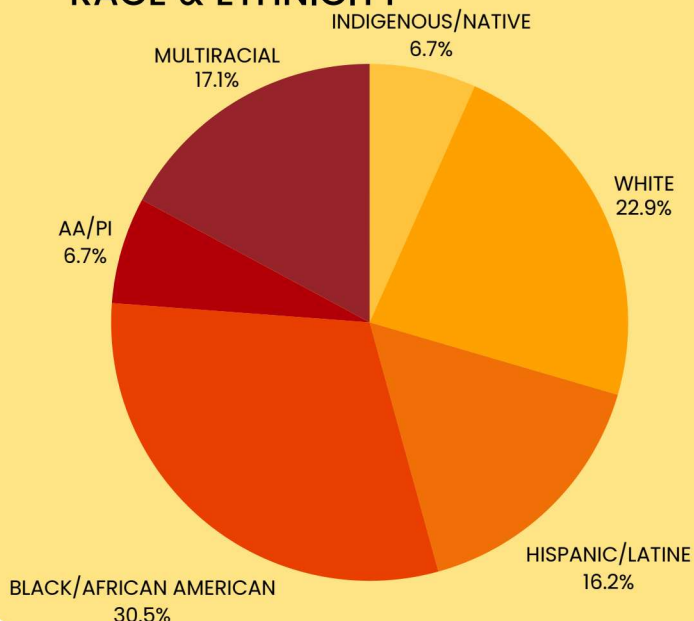


1 IN 4
did not graduate
high school

48%

ARE UNHOUSED
or in transitional
housing

HOW OUR STUDENTS IDENTIFY RACE & ETHNICITY



Work Options serves individuals ages 18+ at no cost to the student and operates year-round.

- Hands on culinary training and may move on to paid training. (Line Cook and Kitchen Manager Apprenticeship)
- Wraparound case management to remove barriers
- Employment support to help finding jobs

Students can access Work Options services for a lifetime.

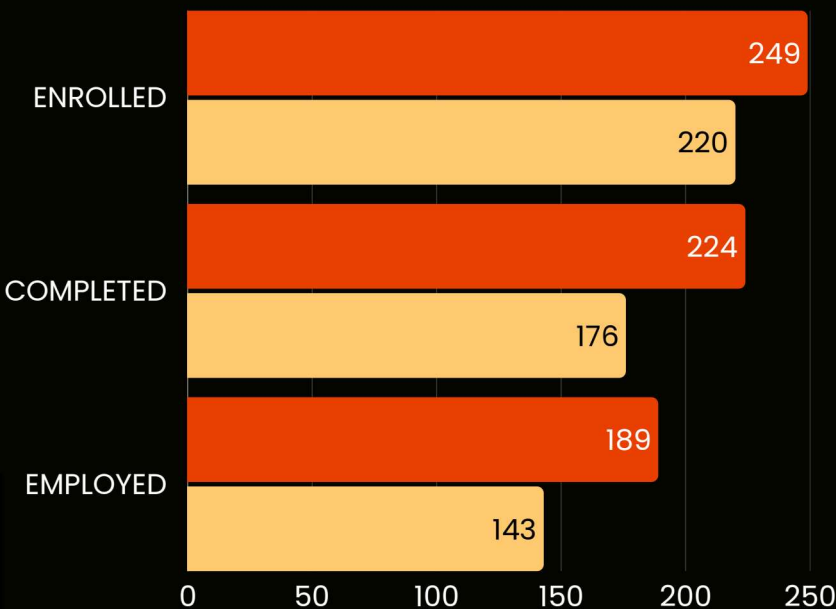
Programs

Culinary Job Training and Employment Support



2025 Outcomes

● 2025 ACTUAL ● 2025 GOAL



1537

CERTIFICATES

Participants earned industry-recognized certifications

5,980

HOURS

Training delivery included 5,980 hours of job readiness instruction

28,106

HOURS

Hands-on kitchen training, and of individualized case management support.

Sucess Story

“Five Points Tea Shop and Bookstore Introduces New Head Chef”

TeaLee's is 22-year-old Riyan McNeal's first leading role.

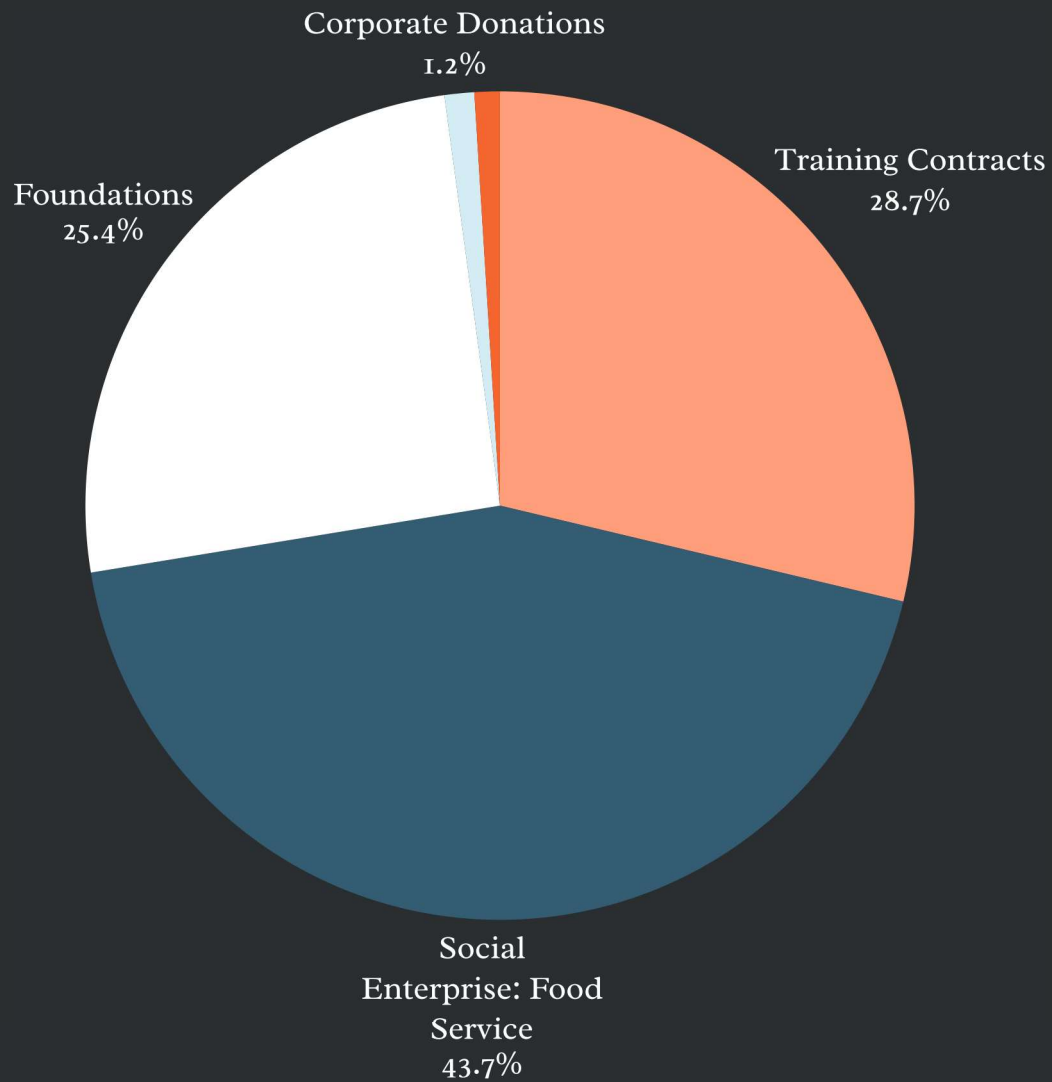
By Helen Xu March 18, 2025 – Westword



Although just 22 years old, McNeal has already amassed extensive experience in the culinary industry. Surprisingly, a career in the kitchen wasn't her initial ambition. However, at her mother's suggestion, Riyan enrolled in the Work Options culinary program — a nonprofit dedicated to equipping adults with the skills needed to pursue careers in the food service industry. “You learn things like knife skills, the proper ways to make eggs — from over easy to scrambled — how to dice vegetables, cook meats to the correct temperature, and much more,” McNeal recalls.

After graduating from the program in 2023, she joined Work Options as an intern and quickly proved her dedication and talent. Her hard work earned her a full-time role, where she took on various responsibilities — from managing the organization's food truck and catering services to running their café. Now stepping into her role as Head Chef at the Five Points Tea Shop and Bookstore, McNeal's story is a testament to the power of perseverance, mentorship, and hands-on learning — and a shining example of the opportunities Work Options continues to create.

2025 Financial Summary



**SKILLS FOR
EMPLOYMENT
SKILLS
FOR LIFE**

Supporting the community
and creating opportunities

**WORK
OPTIONS**

**WORK
OPTIONS**

**THANK YOU TO
OUR IN-KIND
DONORS**

**WORK
OPTIONS**

Mobile Culinary Classroom

workoptions.org | 720.944.3393



A team from BOK Financial provided financial education workshops for participants. One participant recently shared that through careful financial planning learned in the workshop, they now believe homeownership is possible.



Work Options hosted two University of Denver Masters in Social Work interns, who completed total of 720 hours towards providing case management and employment support



Shamrock Foods provided Work Options with \$13,000 rebate towards food costs



MSM Advisory Group donated in-kind hours valued at \$11,160 of strategic advisory, fundraising development, and communications support to Work Options



One Colorado Vincentian Volunteer total of 1,600 hours towards case management and employment support

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THANK YOU TO OUR
2025 FUNDERS!

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Labor and Employment



COLORADO
Department of Human Services



CD
OO **COLORADO**
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JOIN US!



PRESENTED BY:



**SATURDAY
MAY 30, 2025
11:00 AM – 3:00 PM**



Proceeds benefit Denver-Metro hunger assistance programs

FUN - CARNIVAL FOOD / GAMES - MUSIC

20+ Carnival Food Vendors

*Live Entertainment / D.J. Music
Carnival Contests / Games Adult +
Kid Friendly Activities Food +
Decorating Contests Face Painting
Sponsor logos*

Tickets

Adults \$20
Kids 5-17 \$15.00
Kids Under 4 Free

Tickets include
Food / Drink
All Carnival Activities

Mosaic Community Campus . 7150 Montview Blvd . Denver . CO . 80220