



February 5, 2019

DEAR READER,

In the summer of 2008, Hot Bread Kitchen was founded to create economic opportunity through careers in food. We envision a food system that equitably compensates talent and sustains a diverse workforce while celebrating culinary tradition and innovation, a mission we fulfill through our two signature programs. The first is our workforce development program, which offers US- and foreign-born women the professional training they need to succeed in the food world. We train women who face profound barriers to employment and economic insecurity, then place them in fair-paying culinary jobs with room for advancement. The second is our small business incubation program, which offers traditionally underserved entrepreneurs access to the capital, markets, and networks they need to grow their food businesses.

Ten years into this enterprise, we asked ourselves a natural question: *have we been successful?*

What happens to the people who learn, grow, and then graduate from our programs? What more do we have to do to further our mission, increase our impact, and realize the world we imagine for ourselves and the communities we serve?

These are the questions we set out to answer with this 10 year impact study, *Investing in Breadwinners*, which draws from interviews with alumni of our culinary training program and small business incubator. Research for this report has been iterative, with Hot Bread Kitchen staff, social impact experts, and a village of friends, supporters, and other key stakeholders offering their expertise and insight. We reviewed the data, we discussed, and we reviewed again; the process of exploration was full of discovery, learning, and contemplation.

We hope that the facts, findings, and voices we have captured in this report will further your work in economic development. Here are a few key personal reflections from learning through this process:

1) BEFORE CHOICE COMES CHANCE

Women who come to Hot Bread Kitchen's culinary training are seeking an opportunity to *pursue opportunity*. They need an entry point and are tired of being shut out from participating in the economy. What some women have described as the “giant door with open arms” they found at Hot Bread Kitchen is actually the social capital we provide through our skills-based, confidence-building training; language, cultural, and professional readiness; and a network of employers to get women to that first interview.

Similarly, our culinary incubator has become a home for a village of self-starting, women-owned, immigrant-owned, and minority-owned businesses that do not have traditional access to networks, start-up capital, kitchen facilities, and sales opportunities. With both of our programs, in other words, we are here for anyone who is willing to give their dream a best shot.

2) SECURITY STILL FEELS FLEETING

For so many women who live outside the economic mainstream and enter our training program, they do not know where their next source of income will come from. After gaining employment through Hot Bread Kitchen, women experience the drastic shift from having some sporadic work to having a reliable paycheck week after week. The past few years we have seen our target demographic for our training program—women of color and foreign-born women, who already experience poverty at disproportionate rates—facing increased social risks due to immigration policies, housing insecurity, intersectional discrimination, and rising income inequality. As a result, we have expanded our team to include social work supports and doubled down on a holistic approach to workforce development and personal empowerment.

At the same time, we have also been working to fill a void in the New York ecosystem of food entrepreneurship. For many entrepreneurs, the types of assistance that can meaningfully support start-ups and growing small businesses are in limited supply, even in New York City. In the fall of 2018, one of the city's largest privately-run incubators abruptly closed its doors and left nearly 150 small businesses without kitchen space, demonstrating the ever-present need for more government and non-profit support to keep small businesses open and small business owners on their feet. Hot Bread Kitchen deployed a rapid response program to 90 of these businesses and invited 18 into our kitchen.

3) HUMANS AT WORK

Recently, one of our alumnae shared that prior to Hot Bread Kitchen, she was working in a distribution warehouse and felt “just like a machine: no talking, no moving out of place, you just move around like a robot. I needed to feel human again.”

This sentiment captured exactly what motivates us at Hot Bread Kitchen: **we are working to help people launch careers that make them feel whole.** For so many people, the kitchen is a place of human congregation and creativity and activity; as our founder describes it in her foreword to this report, there is an “alchemy of kitchens.” For us, the kitchen is a vital place to build community and connection, but more importantly it is where we start to make work human.

Whether in the kitchen in our training program or in the shared space of our incubator, trainees and entrepreneurs work alongside one another at Hot Bread Kitchen. Our kitchens are peer learning communities that build connections, broaden worldviews, and make all the different pathways to success more visible.

Increasingly, we are starting to see other kitchens across the food industry look and feel more like ours. Culinary jobs are well-positioned to be at the forefront of economic development: with the minimum wage rising in New York City, we see restaurants, food manufacturing, and other culinary businesses making a point of improving job quality. We see employers providing benefits, offering set schedules, and accommodating temporary and family leave. We see an industry full of promise and possibility, one that offers the career opportunities we have been preparing our trainees and alumni for all along.

4) DREAM A LITTLE DREAM: AN ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESS MODEL

What has made it possible for us to provide all this economic opportunity is that Hot Bread Kitchen, from the beginning, was built on a foundation meant to last. By housing our training in our own commercial bakery and supporting our programs with earned revenue from sales of our global breads, we positioned ourselves to honor our mission.

But as a young organization, we learned that bread sales would never keep pace up with the demand for economic opportunity we saw in communities across New York City. We opened our doors to philanthropic support so we could continue to grow our impact and programming. With the support of city institutions, the philanthropy of early funders, and continuing capacity and growth stage funders over the past decade, we have been able to expand our outcomes well beyond our early reach.

Entrepreneurship is in Hot Bread Kitchen's DNA. We are surrounded by it with the enterprising women we train and the industrious start-ups in our commercial kitchen. As labor markets and consumer markets change, we too commit to evolving our business model to better serve our stakeholders and grow our mission.

As we have diversified our funding as a nonprofit to include earned revenue, corporate partners, foundations, and most recently City and State government funding, we are perhaps most excited to mobilize our base of Hot Bread Kitchen bread customers.

We are most inspired by your personal support. As an individual, you support our mission by believing in change-makers who stand for more than artisanal goodness. With your support, we can continue to build on the impact we have had over these past ten years and create more economic opportunity in our own community and beyond. We thank you for investing in us and the breadwinners we serve.

Your partner in creating economic opportunity,



Shaolee Sen, CEO



Hot Bread Kitchen creates economic opportunity through careers in food.

Hot Bread Kitchen | hotbreadkitchen.org/impact