



Impact Report

FY2025



Enabling Pathways to Employment for
Young Adults with Learning Differences



Note from Our Executive Director

Fiscal Year 2025 marked a milestone moment for Sunflower Bakery—the close of our FY2023–FY2025 Strategic Plan and a year that demonstrated just how far we have come in delivering on our mission. This was a year of growth, operational maturity, and most importantly real impact for the young adults we serve.

Over the past three years, we have expanded enrollment, launched and formalized our Culinary Arts program, achieved CARF accreditation, grown employer partnerships, and strengthened the financial and organizational systems that will carry us into our next chapter. None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary commitment of our students, staff, board, donors, employer partners, and community supporters.

As we close this strategic plan cycle, we do so with pride in what we have accomplished and with eyes firmly set on the future. The need for inclusive, quality workforce development has never been greater, and Sunflower is well-positioned to meet that need.

Thank you for believing in our students and in us.

With gratitude,

Jody Tick
Executive Director



ABOUT SUNFLOWER BAKERY

Sunflower Bakery is a nonprofit social enterprise that enables pathways to employment for teens and young adults with learning differences. Through our 26-week experiential training programs, students develop the technical, social, and professional skills needed to secure and sustain competitive employment. Our unique social enterprise model integrates students into every aspect of what we produce and sell, providing real-world experience while reinforcing classroom learning.

Revenue generated through our bakery, culinary, and hospitality operations is reinvested directly into our training programs, creating a sustainable model that advances both our mission and our impact.

FY25 Graduates

PASTRY ARTS GRADUATES

- Anna Aminzadeh
- Siham Amir
- Jalen Bain
- Theodore Breder
- Darius Brown
- Jordan Brown
- Emily Calderon
- Christianna Carter
- Joshua Coe
- Harold Dossou
- Lisa Katz
- Amelia Luna
- Jessica Rose Orthman
- Sabrina Sandoval
- Daniel Schnell
- Elaina Soriano
- Emma Ward
- David William Wilkinson

HOSPITALITY GRADUATES

- Julia Ahrens
- Ilana Barzel
- Diana Dang
- Tyson Feliciano
- Teresa Flores
- Amari Hall
- Sandhya Jain
- Charlotte Jones
- David Mckay
- Michael Elias Merhi
- Alexander Salvador
- Jon (Jack) Shero
- Hannah-Molly Susswein
- Emory Wells
- LeaVonne Williams
- Madison Wilson

CULINARY ARTS GRADUATES

- Jarod Briscoe
- Ben Katz
- Shiloh Khalfani
- Cameron Shorter
- Caleb Sterling



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FY25 Impact by the Numbers

- 51** Students Enrolled
- 90%** Completed Training
- 39** FY25 Graduates
- 64%** Placement Rate
- 70+** Employer Partners
- 27** Graduates Placed
- 35** Teens in Pre-Employment Program



FY25 Growth

In FY25, Sunflower generated just over \$2.05 million in total revenue, combining income from sales, grants, foundations, corporations, program fees, and donors to support our mission. Earned revenue growth through online sales helped strengthen overall financial stability as the organization completed its strategic plan.

Looking Ahead: Sunflower's Next Chapter

FY25 closed one chapter and set the foundation for the next phase of Sunflower's growth. As we look ahead, our priorities are clear:

-  **SCALE** Culinary Arts responsibly & sustainably
-  **STRENGTHEN** fundraising & marketing capacity
-  **DEEPEN** employer partnerships across all programs
-  **CHART** Sunflower's next strategic direction

FY25 Program Results

Pastry Arts

We enrolled 21 students who received more than 8,000 hours of instruction. The program continued to refine its curriculum through external review, ensuring alignment with industry expectations while maintaining accessibility for students with learning differences.

Hospitality

Hospitality enrollment increased significantly compared with previous years due to strong interest and the evolution of the program to better meet students' needs. We enrolled 22 students who received more than 6,000 hours of instruction and benefited from hands-on training, individualized support, and real-world work experiences designed to prepare them for competitive employment in the hospitality industry.

Culinary Arts

This year we formalized our Culinary Arts curriculum. What began as a pilot with two students in Beth Sholom's meat kitchen evolved into a formal training program. Throughout FY25, we trained eight Culinary Arts students in our new 4,100 square foot commercial kosher meat kitchen on Lewis Avenue. These students gained hands-on experience producing catering orders and other prepared foods.

Teen Pre-Employment

Teen programming serves as an important entry point for teens to be exposed to careers at an early age to inform their future career choices. Sunflower's Pastry teen program conducted eight sessions engaging 35 students. Each student learns basics of pastry and is introduced to employment readiness skills.

From Training to Employment

46 Employment Students

27 Graduates Placed

11 New Employment Partners

Job Services remained a critical bridge between training and employment. In FY25, the team worked with 46 students and successfully placed 27 graduates into competitive employment—a 64% placement rate within six months of program completion.

New employer partnerships in FY25 include Flik Independent School Dining/Compass Group, Williams Sonoma, MCPS, Insomnia Cookies, Sam's Club, Tatte, Brightview Senior Living, Moti's Market, Wegmans, and Summer House. This growth expanded employment opportunities for our students.

Employer Partnerships — 70+ Strong

Sunflower's 70+ employer partnerships are critical to our success. We work closely with local food and hospitality businesses to develop long-lasting partnerships and create pipelines for employment for our graduates. Our employer partners help ensure our training stays aligned with industry standards and trends, and their feedback directly shapes our programs—including the launch of Culinary Arts.



What Our Community Is Saying...

"They have helped me in many ways I didn't think possible..."

They have helped me have better self-confidence, self-esteem, and have better communication skills with customers."

— Mohammed,
Sunflower Hospitality Graduate

"Being part of the Sunflower community had a big impact on our whole family mainly

because Katya was able to see a future for herself in a way she hadn't before."

— Anne Phelps,
Parent

"The Sunflower associates that we work with have been an integral part of our team. When

you hire associates with learning differences, you find there are unique perspectives and solutions and ideas that you may not have come to at first."

—Chris Ervin,
Harris Teeter Store Manager

FY25 Beyond the Numbers

The Sunflower experience is truly transformational. Students who enter the program are not the same people when they leave.

The personal growth, self-confidence, and level of independence that develop as students advance through the program are among the most meaningful outcomes we witness. While not formally measured as workforce development metrics, these changes profoundly affect graduates' success in work and in life.

Sunflower celebrated Hanukkah by hosting our first-ever community Hanukkah party.

Families and friends came together to enjoy children's games, latkes, and plenty of holiday spirit. We were grateful to have VisArts and the National Capital Art Glass Guild join us to provide family-friendly art activities that added creativity and fun to the celebration. The event was especially meaningful as we also celebrated Sunflower's 15th anniversary as a nonprofit organization.



Student Spotlight | Dan's Story

Before sunrise each day, Dan's alarm would sound. By 6:30 a.m., he was out the door in Baltimore, ready to make a three-hour round-trip commute to participate in Sunflower Bakery's Pastry Arts program. Despite the early hours and long travel, Dan approached each day with excitement and determination. He had a dream of working in a professional kitchen.

Dan was always drawn to the energy and creativity of working in a kitchen. When he enrolled at Sunflower Bakery, he had worked at Wegmans for nearly four years, serving as a dishwasher in the prepared foods department. After graduating from Sunflower Bakery, a new door opened.

The Pastry Arts program at Sunflower gave Dan both the practical training and the individualized support he needed to thrive. He gained technical skills in pastry arts, including icing techniques, pastry preparation, and safe food handling practice. His instructors, like Chef Anna, tailored their teaching methods to support Dan's learning style, helping him navigate hurdles with compassion and expertise. This support, paired with Dan's enthusiasm, sparked remarkable growth—both personally and professionally—and an opportunity for a future that some thought was not possible.

Today, Dan still works at Wegmans but he is now icing cakes and danishes, contributing to the bakery team, and inspiring his colleagues each day.



FY2023-2025 Strategic Plan: Results at a Glance

FY25 marked the successful completion of Sunflower Bakery’s three-year strategic plan. Over this period, the organization focused on strengthening program quality, operating with a focus on efficiency, effectiveness, and consistency, and growing incrementally in response to employer demand and student interests.

Three-Year Growth Highlights		
METRIC	FY2023	FY2025
Annual Enrollment	33 Students	51 Students
Annual Graduates	24	39
Employer Partners (new/yr)	7 new	11 new
Fundraising Revenue	\$788K	\$1.03M
Government Funding	\$143K	\$287K
Total Sales	\$745K	\$868K

Strategic Pillars: Key Outcomes

PROGRAMS Enrollment increased 55%, while the number of graduates grew from 24 to 39, reflecting both expanded program capacity and stronger participant outcomes. Our Culinary Arts Program evolved from an idea into a fully operational workforce development program with its own commercial kitchen, creating new pathways to employment for adults with learning differences. We also strengthened our employer engagement efforts by convening and hosting our first annual employer meeting, bringing together workforce partners to learn more about their experience working with our graduates. In addition, Sunflower earned a one-year CARF accreditation, an internationally recognized credential that confirms our programs and services meet rigorous standards of quality and excellence in health and human services.

OPERATIONS Our social enterprise continued to gain momentum, with sales increasing 17% from \$745,000 to \$868,000. To meet growing demand and better serve our customers, we expanded bakeshop operating hours and days and introduced donuts to our product offerings. We also opened our new Lewis Avenue facility, which includes a commercial kosher meat kitchen and significantly expands our culinary production capabilities. To ensure we remain responsive to customer needs and market opportunities, we continued our customer feedback survey process and completed a Culinary Program market study to inform future growth and product development.

FUNDRAISING Fundraising revenue increased by 31%, growing from \$788,000 to more than \$1.03 million, demonstrating strong confidence in Sunflower’s mission and impact. Government funding more than doubled, increasing from \$143,000 to \$287,000 and growing from 18% to 28% of total fundraising revenue. During the year, Sunflower became an EARN Maryland grantee, providing critical support for workforce development programming. We also secured a federal appropriation that recognized the importance of our work and included a visit from U.S. Senators Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen, who saw firsthand the impact Sunflower is having on the lives of teens and adults with learning differences.

In the News

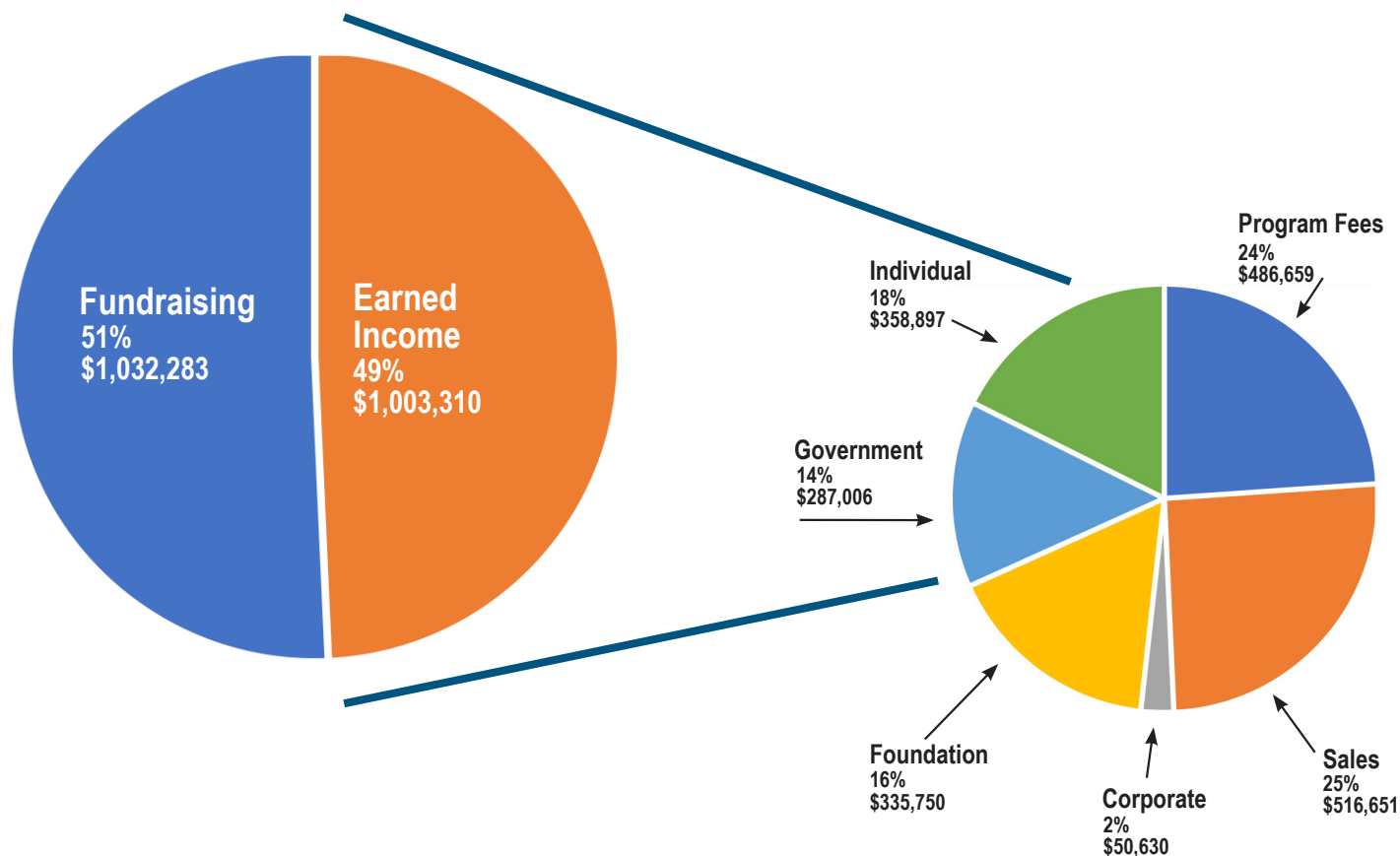
Over the FY2023–FY2025 strategic plan period, Sunflower Bakery was featured in 29 media outlets including television, podcasts, and print publications—reflecting growing community awareness of our mission and programs.



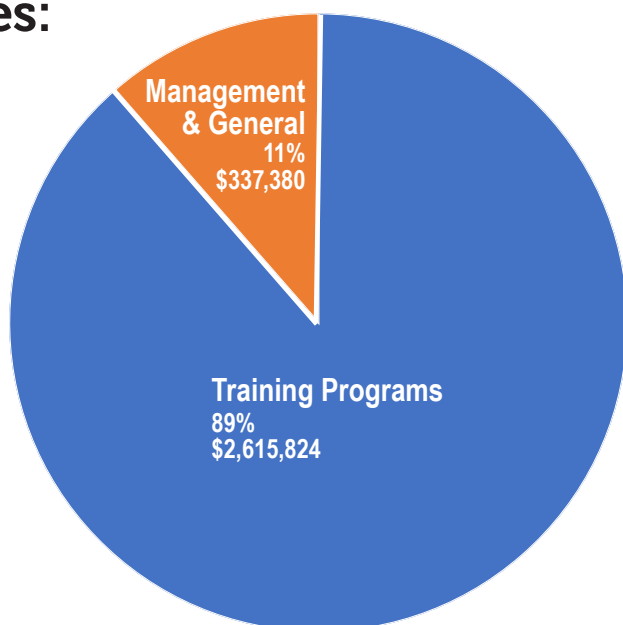
FY25 FINANCIALS

Revenue:

- 49% earned income (sales, program fees)
- 51% contributed income (individual gifts, institutional and government grants)



Expenses:



Thank You to our FY25 Donors

\$50K+

EARN Maryland
Maryland Department of Service
and Civic Innovation
The Morningstar Foundation

\$25k-\$50k

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If your name is misspelled or omitted, please accept our apologies and contact Development at 240-361-3698.

Thank You

None of this impact would be possible without our students, staff, board, donors, employer partners, and community supporters.

Your belief in the potential of young adults with learning differences continues to fuel Sunflower Bakery's mission and momentum.

Together, we are building pathways to employment
and a more inclusive workforce for all.



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