



# MAKE PROJECTS

EAT WELL. DO GOOD.

## Merging



## Agriculture



## Kitchens



## Employment

*2025 Vision and Growth Plan (Excerpt)*

## Executive Summary

Imagine a San Diego with a deep understanding and respect for all cultures. Now, imagine arriving to this inclusive, multicultural and multiracial San Diego through a shared journey of food and a beautiful urban farm that brings joy and delight to all. Welcome to MAKE Café, a revolutionary restaurant operated by and for refugee and immigrant women and youth. Operated as a social enterprise of, MAKE Projects (Merging Agriculture Kitchens and Employment), the MAKE Café is a unique farm-to-table restaurant that bridges cultures and closes the economic gap for low-income families. Along with international cuisine, MAKE Projects sets the table for an exchange of ideas and relationships. All this enables our true aspiration: uniting San Diego across all its social, racial, economic, and geographic lines.

### A Social Enterprise Multiplier

The mission of MAKE Projects is to empower refugee and immigrant women and youth with the confidence and job readiness skills to achieve their dreams. Since 2017, MAKE Projects has served over 250 individuals from refugee and immigrant backgrounds spanning 26 countries. MAKE Café provides transitional jobs to approximately 60 low-income individuals each year. Participants are paid \$15/hour, working 10-12 hours a week while participating in job readiness trainings and on-the-job professional coaching. Participants gain real-world employment skills, improve their speaking confidence, and build their resume all in a welcoming environment that strengthens their confidence and employability. Upon graduating the program, the employment team works with individuals to secure a permanent job.



### A True Triple Bottomline

Our unique identity is rooted in the diverse backgrounds of our inspiring trainees, bringing cuisine from places around the world unknown to most San Diego diners. Eating at MAKE Projects provides direct, life-changing opportunities for refugees and immigrants who are determined to learn, grow and succeed. Our outdoor restaurant and special events located on our working farm provide customers with an immersive, all-sensory experience. MAKE customers value the social impact of every dollar they spend at the MAKE Café, a unique restaurant that truly benefits society, the environment and our local economy all in one.

### Organizational Growth + Proof of Concept = Ready to Scale

MAKE Projects is ready to scale to its next level. While the COVID-19 pandemic certainly impacted the team and all our operations in 2020; we emerged with a new pandemic-proof business model that saw our farm increase over 300% in business income and a six-month waitlist for its CSA (subscription farm box). Our new outdoor restaurant concept replaced corporate catering, and through 2021, our business navigated two surges, professionalized its front of house operations, added a beer and wine license and emerged this past spring with triple the restaurant revenues. Since spinning off from the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in July 2021 and moving to fiscal sponsorship under Mission Edge San Diego, we have steadily grown our organizational capacity with a top-tier group of Advisory Board members. In addition to experienced industry professionals on its Board, the MAKE team also enjoys strong partnerships with many local industry advisors who have fallen in love with its mission and volunteer their expertise to see MAKE grow and thrive.

### Implementing the MAKE 2025 Vision and Growth Plan

MAKE Projects is seeking investors to help us launch into our next phase of growth: taking our proof-of-concept to scale. This means securing a larger indoor/outdoor restaurant facility and adjacent urban farm (approximately 8,000-10,000 square feet in total) to be able to grow our business operations to a full-time level and maximize all our social enterprise potential. Once established, MAKE Café and Farm will be 100% self-sustaining businesses and the organization would only require 25% of its total income from grants and philanthropy (to support its employment services). With a full-time restaurant and larger farm, MAKE Projects will be able to serve over 150 new participants each year.

## I. Mission and Vision

MAKE Projects' mission is to empower refugee and immigrant women and youth with the job readiness skills to achieve their dreams. Our dream is to serve 1,000 refugees and immigrants in San Diego County by 2025 through scaling up our social enterprise so that it funds 75% of our total operating costs. In so doing, MAKE Projects will also reduce its cost per participant to a third of current costs and become an efficient, self-sustaining business model for both business, nonprofit and environmental sectors.

Our vision is of one united San Diego community that transcends social, racial, economic, and geographic lines and gathers over a common love of food, flavors and culture. We celebrate the immigrant experience, and all the contributions that refugees and immigrants bring to our community, economy and democracy. We believe in the power of food to bring diverse populations together, to unite a community, and educate each other about our history and differences as well as our commonalities.

Our motto is *Eat Well. Do Good.*



## II. Organizational Growth

Originally piloted in 2017 at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in San Diego, MAKE Projects was so successful that it became IRC's first project to spin off into its own organization. This is remarkable considering that when COVID-19 arrived in the US, the MAKE team had to reinvent nearly every business and program operation to survive and now thrive. The team was able to quickly achieve success with a new farm business concept, a weekly CSA (subscription farm box), which eventually increased farm business income by nearly 3x of the previous year and currently holds a six-month waitlist for new customers. Navigating two COVID surges in 2021 proved to be a bit more challenging as our MAKE Café business concept was split between To-Go sales and on-site dining. Here at the end of 2022 Q2 (April-June), the results are clear, our new outdoor restaurant emerged this past spring with a 3.5x increase in restaurant revenues over 2022 Q1 (January-March) results.

MAKE Projects proudly celebrated its first-year anniversary since spinning off from the IRC in July 2021. No doubt this separation and the resulting streamlined management structure, increases in fundraising capacity, and greater business/staffing agility contributed to MAKE Projects being able to weather the challenging impacts of 2021's delta and Omicron surges. MAKE Projects has a top-tier group of Advisory Board members who are soon to become Board of Directors. MAKE Projects has already established its organizational bylaws



and incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in the state of California. At the time of this writing, MAKE Projects was in the final stages of submitting its Form 1023 to the IRS under guidance from its pro bono legal counsel at Morrison Foerster. MAKE Projects is currently in a fiscal sponsorship partnership with the nonprofit incubator, Mission Edge San Diego, which is tentatively planned to end in December 2022 when MAKE Projects assumes its own legal entity and starts up an independent organizational infrastructure.



### III. Community Impact

As an employment social enterprise, our beneficiaries are paid trainees working directly in nearly all aspects of our food and farming business, from food preparation to serving customers. Most of our beneficiaries come from extremely low-income households with no previous work experience. Most adult refugee women have not progressed past a primary education in their home country. MAKE Projects' real-world, contextualized education provides a high-impact job readiness training experience that transforms the lives of refugee and immigrant women and youth.



***As of July 2022, MAKE Projects has trained over 250 refugee and immigrant women and youth since its inception in 2017.*** Over the past five years, MAKE Projects has steadily grow its reach and therefore generated a higher impact on the community. In 2021, our Social Impact team (one full-time Employment Coordinator, one Employment Coach AmeriCorps and 1-2 part-time volunteers) generated the following outcomes:

- 63 total trainees served: 39 youth and 24 adults (2021 only)
- 94% job placement rate for adult training program graduates
- Helped 52 individuals get jobs (current and past graduates)
- Paid \$70,060 in subsidized trainee wages



Since 2017, MAKE Projects' trainees have come from over 26 countries from around the world. Our inspiring 2021 participants shared cultures and traditions from Somalia, Vietnam, Mexico, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Burma, Thailand, Kenya and Iraq.

Our Employment staff regularly tracks and reports out on a monthly basis the number of new applicants (waitlist), new enrollments, total enrolled, 1:1 employment service touchpoints, job applications, job offers, job placements, job retention, and client testimonials. Individual and group employment services for participants include:

- Overcoming employment barriers (childcare, transportation)
- Conducting several mock job interviews
- Supplemental job readiness trainings outside of MAKE Café work hours (resume development, job applications)
- Coaching and performance feedback on MAKE Projects Five Performance Values: Time Management, Communication, Professionalism, Stress/Conflict Management and Teamwork

## IV. Business Plan

Centered around food and culture, MAKE Projects is comprised of two interconnected business lines: an indoor/outdoor restaurant embedded within a beautiful, working urban farm. To achieve MAKE Projects' full social impact and business potential, we seek to grow MAKE Café and Farm into a full-service, brick-and-mortar restaurant operating five days a week for breakfast and lunch. The restaurant would be nestled alongside a 10,000 square foot working farm (triple our current size) and together form a best-in-class private events venue. Evenings will be open for special event catering as well as hands-on workshops on the farm (our current "Farm Experiences" are already prototyping this business line), tasting menus, lectures, and cultural performances.

### Market Demand Analysis

San Diego County is home to approximately 3.3 million people with the second highest percentage of millennials (born between 1980 and 1994) in the nation, comprising nearly one-third of the San Diego County population. Consumer purchasing behaviors – particularly among millennials, the largest and most diverse cohort in U.S. history – have shifted due to the growing awareness of the connection between food, the environment, and health. (*The State of the Food System in the San Diego Region*, 2019). Furthermore, the average San Diego household consumer expenditure is higher than both state and national averages, with food as one of the top three household expenditures and 43% of San Diego household food dollars spent eating out. MAKE Projects' food business is located within a steady and essential part of the consumer marketplace. MAKE Projects' four target consumer groups correlate well to San Diego's demographic changes and socioeconomic composition:

- **Community Advocates** are driven by racial and social justice, environmental protection (especially, climate change mitigation) and is reflected in the rise of consumer activism and socially responsible investing.
- **Health Enthusiasts** are driven by active, outdoor lifestyles; plant and gardening hobbies; and plant-based diets and nutrition.
- **Food Connoisseurs** seek fresh, locally grown foods as well as flavorful foods that are new and tell a story.
- **World Travelers/Urbanites** are well-traveled and reflect San Diego's increasing urbanization and international composition.

MAKE Projects fulfills a growing demand by consumers to use both their discretionary income and food dollars consciously in the service of their personal ethics, politics, and lifestyles. MAKE Projects' social enterprise mission meets a growing consumer demand to channel their voice, vision and generosity amidst severe economic disparities, social fractures, and environmental threats.

### Competitive Analysis

MAKE Projects is well-situated in a landscape of other non-profit organizations and employment social enterprises (ESE) in San Diego County, e.g., *Kitchens for Good*, *Olivewood Gardens*, *RiseUp Industries*, *Center of Employment Opportunities*. None are direct competitors to MAKE Projects and there is plenty of room of collaboration and mutual support. Within the traditional foodservice sector, MAKE Projects' fits within the local, farm-to-table sector as well as niche restaurants featuring international cuisine. Given the immersive customer experience at the café as well as our cultural arts events and farm tours, MAKE Projects is also



competitive within the leisure, recreation, and entertainment sectors. From our social mission and global menu coupled with a sensory-rich urban farm and café, one is hard-pressed to find any comparable business that possesses our unique brand identity and market position.

## **V. The Team to MAKE it Happen**

A strategy is only as good as its implementation. MAKE Projects is a team of doers.

### ***Leadership***

MAKE Projects was founded by its Executive Director, Anchi Mei. Anchi developed and piloted MAKE Projects while managing an array of community food and farming projects at the IRC in San Diego. Previous to IRC, Anchi was an urban designer and planning consultant in the San Francisco Bay Area at MIG, Inc. Anchi is an REDF Accelerator 2021 alumni, a current member of the San Diego Community College District’s Trustee Advisory Council and the San Diego Food System Alliance’s Stewardship Committee.



### ***Operational Team***

MAKE Café’s unique menu is spearheaded by the tireless creativity and hard work ethic of Executive Chef/Trainer Andrew Gerdes. As a graduate of the French Culinary Institute in New York City, Chef Andrew brings 15+ years of fine dining and professional culinary experience from his years in Manhattan. Andrew is supported in the kitchen with Assistant Chef/Trainer Cindy Quinonez, who brings over 30+ years of culinary experience in institutional foodservice, private catering and local food system advocacy. The MAKE Garden is an extraordinary gem under the careful and passionate eye of Farmer Robbie Wilcox, who brings a decade of organic and small-scale specialty farming expertise from across the country. Our Employment Team is led by Abigail Bova, who brings three years of direct service working with refugee and immigrant clients in a social service setting. We have recently added a part-time Front of House (FOH) Supervisor to lead, train and manage the MAKE Café FOH team as both restaurant and private event businesses grow. Additionally, this core staff is supported by a part-time Program Assistant, two full-time AmeriCorps volunteers and an on-call base of graduates who work as experienced servers and trainers in the MAKE Café and private events.



### ***Resilient Staffing Model***

In the spring of 2022, MAKE Projects developed an innovative key to scaling its Café business growth with a transitional employment model. For our youth participants who enter into an eight-week program, we now announce in Week Seven the opportunity for exiting participants to interview for an on-call position. Given MAKE Café’s part-time business schedule, on-call staff have minimal work hours that allow them to continue job seeking and taking on another permanent job. We now have a robust base of experienced, passionate and trained program participants to serve in the Café and private events – despite all the current labor shortages in the restaurant and hospitality sector!

### ***Passionate Board and Industry Advisors***

MAKE Projects is honored to have an amazing slate of high-caliber Advisory Board Members that includes: Just in Time for Foster Youth Co-Founder and Development Director Diane Cox, IRC Small Business Supervisor Irene Bwayo,

Philanthropist/Entrepreneur Andy Ballester, and Food Business Consultant/Entrepreneur Ron Troyano. MAKE Projects has the good fortune to benefit from several amazing local industry partnerships, including one of San Diego’s most premier restaurant groups the Puffer-Malarkey Collective. Anchi has approximately seven restaurant and private event/catering company owners on speed dial for quick consultations and resources whenever there are hard questions and issues to navigate.

## VI. Scale and Sustainability

With all our 2022 proof of concept, the entire MAKE Team and Board are excited to take MAKE Projects to the next level – 100% facility build-out and significant scaling up of business and program operations. Our current location only allows us to operate the Café two days a week and on-site food storage facilities (dry and cold storage) have been maximized. Furthermore, the temporary, outdoor nature of the restaurant is subject to many weather and sound elements, requires time to set up and break down each day and is also at storage capacity for more Café equipment and materials to improve comfort and ambiance. With a consistent customer base and highly effective job readiness training model, the MAKE Café and Farm can become 100% self-sustaining when operating five days a week at a brick-and-mortar location.

The lease at our current location in North Park extends through the fall of 2023 at which point, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church plans to redevelop the outdoor site into building for mixed-use affordable. We believe this is a wonderful opportunity for the MAKE Projects team to simultaneously keep growing its managerial muscles steadily in the next 12 months. Simultaneously, the Executive Director and the Advisory Board have begun discussions and an active site expansion search.

### **Larger Facility**

To realize the MAKE Projects 2025 Vision, the organization seeks to expand to a brick-and-mortar 10,000-20,000 square foot facility with space for:

- An 80-person restaurant including both indoor/outdoor dining areas and full-scale commercial kitchen (6,000-8,000 square feet)
- Open space to triple our current North Park farm size (10,000 square feet) while also containing landscape areas for outdoor events, workshops and community education
- A small office that can accommodate 2-3 workstations and house MAKE Projects’ participant case management and programming needs



The ideal location would be centrally located in San Diego to be accessible to our job training participants living in City Heights and El Cajon, while also an attractive destination for MAKE Projects’ customers to enjoy their restaurant/private event experience.

**For a copy of the full and complete MAKE Projects 2025 Vision and Growth Plan, please contact MAKE Projects’ Executive Director Anchi Mei. Anchi can be reached at [anchi.mei@sdmake.org](mailto:anchi.mei@sdmake.org).**