



Best Practices in Developing A Successful Food-Based Entrepreneur Pipeline

Mandela Partners (MP) is a non-profit organization that works to improve health, create wealth, and build assets through local food enterprises in low-income communities. With more than 15 years experience supporting community entrepreneurship and the growth of economically secure neighborhoods, MP developed this toolkit to provide a framework for Eden Area practitioners seeking to increase income-generation opportunities for local entrepreneurs in unincorporated Alameda County, with a focus on food-based businesses. “Best Practices - Developing A Successful Food-Based Entrepreneur Pipeline” centers community members and local assets in concept development, recruitment, selection, and growth of food-oriented development projects, with complementary business advising services and a network of resource providers integral in the success of Mandela’s development of brick and mortar businesses, retail incubator, and other community-based projects.

“To have my own restaurant on the corner of where I grew up, it’s a dream”
Jacquelynn Chancellor, co-owner of Jacquelynn’s Heart & Soul
and resident of Ashland Village

Engaging Community in Project Development

Mandela’s work is centered on a practice of community-led and community-directed development. That includes establishing relationships with existing leadership and community groups, and engaging with and in community spaces - such as housing facilities, senior centers, and public libraries. This practice not only ensures that community voice is uplifted in concept development, but also builds community buy-in and support for the project, and creates a pipeline for entrepreneur recruitment.



To engage community residents and stakeholders, Mandela partners with local leaders, project stakeholders, affordable housing resident coordinators, and various affinity groups to:

- **Lead focus groups & listening sessions**
- **Administer surveys**
- **Collect personal accounts**

These engagements are centered around food access and economic opportunity and are supplemented by commissioned independent market assessments to provide a robust view of wealth building opportunities. Once a food-based concept takes shape, additional feedback is gathered to ensure that the project is responsive to community needs and includes specifics that will support entrepreneur success.



For those are ready, Mandela offers advising regarding capital acquisition options:

- No-cost capital: crowdfunding, fundraisers, personal networks
- Low-cost loan products: Kiva, micro-lenders, CDFIs
- Start-up grants: when available

The goal of this comprehensive business development support system, is not only to provide a venue for entrepreneurs to build skills, but also cultivate an external network of support that includes other new and growth stage businesses.

Matriculation + Brick & Mortar Spaces

Because each business follows its own launch, growth, expansion arc, creating a successful food-based entrepreneur pipeline requires continual assessment of business readiness and planning for manageable growth. In the Ashland Market & Cafe (AMC) incubator space, after completing basic workshops, trainings, and experiential learning opportunities, selected entrepreneurs are offered a 1-year operator license to test their concept in a retail environment, after which the following is assessed:



For those business ready to grow into their own brick & mortar spaces, advising continue to:

IDENTIFY SPACE	Review cost-effectiveness; identify below-market opportunities if possible.
CAPITAL NEEDS	develop capital needs plan and financial projections.
NEGOTIATE LEASE	connect with Bay Area based pro-bono attorneys to review lease language or other legal documents before executing.

Take-Aways

- Developing a successful food-based entrepreneur pipeline requires a long-term investment of time, experienced staff, and resources.
- Engaging with and in community is necessary to ensure community-direction and to build buy-in that contributes to the long sustainability of a food-based project.
- A robust partnership network is a leading indicator of long-term viability.



Recruiting, Screening, and Selecting Entrepreneurs

Recruitment: Community engagement vehicles employed in project development are also leveraged to recruit entrepreneurs to take part in, lead, and/or operate the food-based projects. To that aim, the following is shared:

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS	Outlines the project, stakeholders, parameters of participation, and projected costs, providing a guide to interested entrepreneurs on how they can take part in and benefit from the project.
APPLICATION	After reviewing the RFA, entrepreneurs are invited to complete an application that collects basic business information, incorporates feedback collected through community needs assessments, and provides a baseline to structure support services including: culinary background, kitchen experience, if they have market-tested products, where they are in the process of formalizing their business, ideas for menu items & pricing, interest in and connection to the community, openness to prioritizing local hires, and character and professional references.
DROP IN HOURS	Mandela Partners holds 'drop-in' hours to answer questions and provide support to those needing extra help to complete the application.

To ensure accessibility and reach, recruitment tools are distributed in hard copy and online, in Spanish and English, and through the local network of leaders, stakeholders, community spaces, and community groups already in place.

"I first saw the opportunity on the community board of the building I live in. At first it was scary, but I thought this is an opportunity to show people who I am"

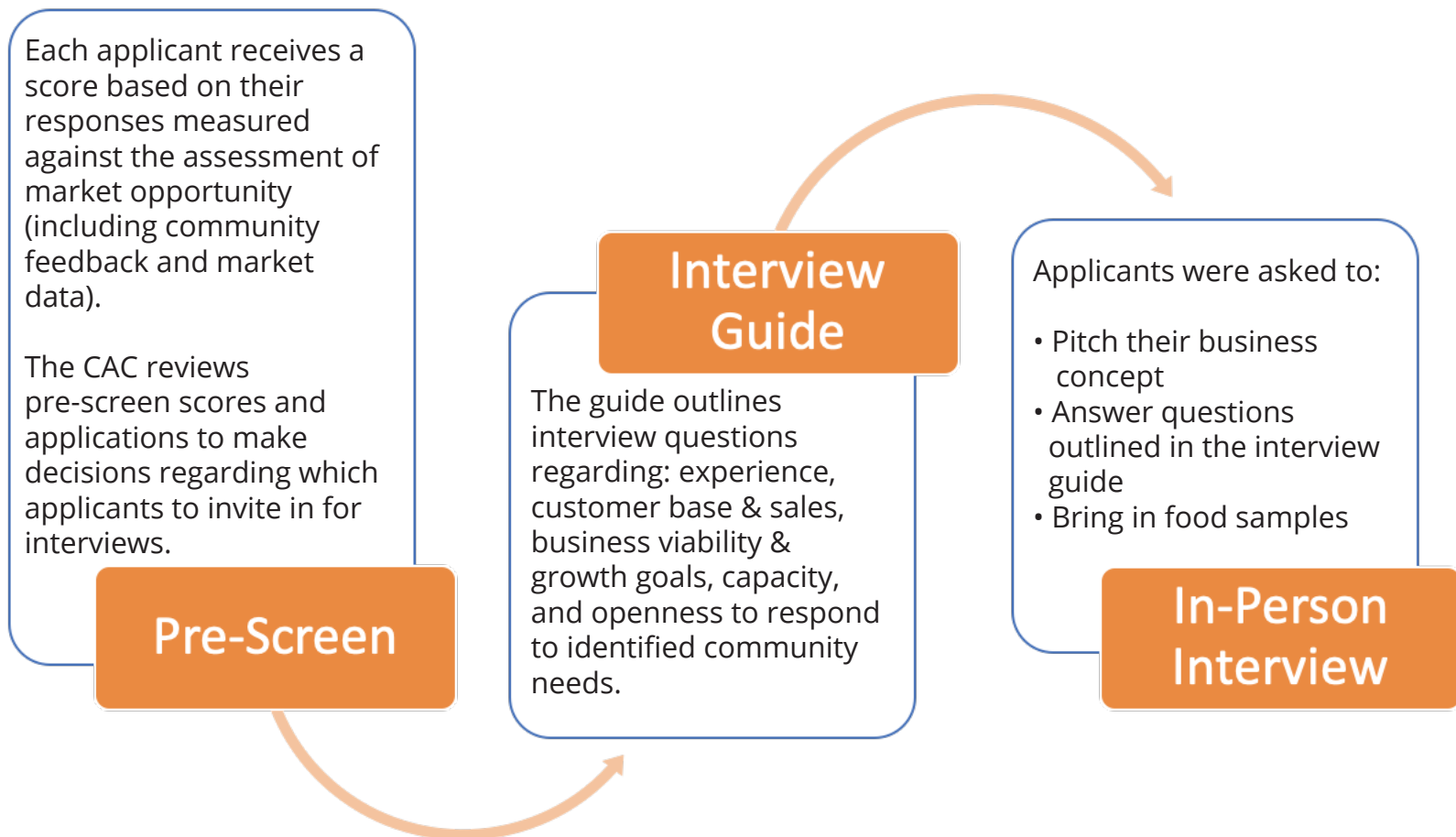
Andrea Marie, owner of AndreaMarie Cakes & Treats and Ashland Place resident

Screening & Selection: Beyond recruitment, the screening and selection process should engage community leadership to ensure that projects include and reflect the community's vision and that the process builds buy-in.



As an example, the Ashland Market & Cafe - a community food hall & gathering space developed by Mandela Partners in collaboration with community and County agencies - provided opportunity for four local vendors to sell prepared food in a retail environment. As part of the entrepreneur selection process, a 12-person Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed, comprised of leadership that had been engaged in development of the food hall concept.

With the support of Mandela Partners, the CAC drove the selection process by screening and scoring applications, drafting a guide to structure the interview process, and eventually inviting candidates in for in-person interviews. The process is outlined below:



Following interviews, the Community Advisory Committee selected the inaugural entrepreneur cohort having employed the pre-screen, interview guide, and their personal understanding of neighborhood needs.

Preparing Entrepreneurs to Successfully Operate Food-based Business Opportunities



To support the launch and growth of viable community-based businesses, entrepreneurs are invited to participate in various business development opportunities including: workshops, one-on-one advising, and trainings. Because Mandela's entrepreneurship programming targets under-resourced and under-served entrepreneurs - that either (a) do not self-identify as entrepreneurs but are producing a viable product or (b) are self-identified entrepreneurs looking for ways to start/grow/or expand businesses - business development opportunities are tailored to be relevant and accessible, with the goal to build entrepreneur skills & confidence.

"The incubation process is made easier because Mandela is there to guide us and bounce off ideas, brainstorm together"

Rene Lontoc, owner of Thank Que Grill



Basic Entrepreneurship Workshops: In partnership with Centro Community Partners, Mandela facilitates place-based business planning workshops that provide an opportunity to develop business concepts, brainstorm customer and sales channels, analyze product pricing, and draft a short form business plan using the Centro Business Planning App.

The Basic Entrepreneurship Workshop series comes to a close with a Pitch Night where participants pitch their business concepts to colleagues, friends, and other stakeholders. In addition to gaining skills and knowledge around basic business principles, the workshop series serves as a vehicle for participants to build the confidence to self-identify as business owners and speak to their long-term vision.

“The process allowed for us to put ‘pen to paper’ and actually go from just hustling, to having the confidence to say ‘I own a business’. [We] think on a broader scale and are given the measure of growth from kitchen to a retail space. We have more at stake now.”

LaShawn Raybon, owner of I AM Cafe

Training & Experiential Learning Opportunities: The Basic Entrepreneurship Workshop series serves as the first phase of the entrepreneurship development pipeline, as graduates continue to receive support through the Mandela Entrepreneurs Advising Program and vetted business development partners.

Programming includes **one-on-one advising sessions, group workshops, and culinary industry specific trainings**, that focus on: menu and recipe development, food costing, permitting, culinary skills, equipment, standard operating procedures, and food safety. Field trips to comparable projects and commercial kitchens are made available so that entrepreneurs can test, modify, and execute recipes in an active kitchen space.



‘Stage’ opportunities are also facilitated - new business owners work in and with established businesses to get hands-on experience with refined kitchen workflows and to gain exposure to strong business operations to model.

Training opportunities are tailored to meet the needs of each cohort of entrepreneurs, varying based on business stage and entrepreneur skills. Entrepreneurs are also connected to venues to market-test their products and grow customer bases via community pop-ups, markets, and other sales channels.



Engaging Community in Project Development

Sample Materials - Outreach Flyers



What kind of food do you want to see at Ashland Place?

Are you interested in selling your product?

ASHLAND PLACE

Food Hall + Market

FOCUS GROUP

We want to hear from you!

We're exploring a 'food hall + market' concept at Ashland Place that will support local entrepreneurs, bring you great tasting prepared foods, and provide a community building space.

PLEASE RSVP WITH:
Jessica Stevenson | RCD |
(510) 841-4410 x396



**DINNER +
CHILDCARE
WILL BE
PROVIDED!**

**THURSDAY
SEPT. 15th
6:00PM – 8:00PM**

**ASHLAND PLACE
Community room**

Mandela MarketPlace is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with local residents, family farmers, and community-based businesses to improve health, create wealth, and build assets through cooperative food enterprises in low-income communities.



Recruiting, Screening, and Selecting Entrepreneurs

Sample Materials - Interview Guide



Business: _____ Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

1. Why do you think your business would be a good fit for the Ashland Market + Cafe? How will your products enhance and support the community?

_____ / 20 pts.

2. What experience do you have making or selling prepared foods?

_____ / 15 pts.

3. Have you market-tested your product? How will you continue to test products?

_____ / 15 pts.

4. How do you hope to see your business grow in the next few years?

_____ / 10 pts.

5. Do you have a customer base? How will you develop your customer base?

_____ / 15 pts.



Recruiting, Screening, and Selecting Entrepreneurs

Sample Materials - Interview Guide



6. What is your capacity to operate the kiosk or cafe during the proposed business hours?

_____ / 15 pts.

7. Describe a recipe from your menu that incorporates healthy ingredients and/or fresh produce.
If you don't already have a healthy offering, are you interested in incorporating a healthy option? If so, please describe how you would do so.

_____ / 10 pts.

8. What does affordability mean to you? Please tell us the current price range of your menu items, or future menu items. Are you willing to prioritize affordability for community residents?

_____ / 10 pts.

OVERALL SCORE

(out of 110 possible)

Notes



Preparing Entrepreneurs to Successfully Operate Food-based Business Opportunities

Sample Materials - Standard Operating Procedures

Daily Food Safety Manager's Checklist

Employee Health and Hygiene: All workers in good health (no symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, jaundice, sore throat with fever, infected cuts or wounds on hand): YES NO

If no, sick worker excluded from establishment: YES NO

Food handlers are wearing effective hats or hair nets and clean clothes: YES NO

Observed effective hand washing when contaminated and at required frequencies: YES NO

Hand Wash Sinks: Soap _____ Paper Towels _____ Trash Can _____ Reminder Sign _____

Food Temperatures: Calibrated thermometers available (cleaned/sanitized between uses):

Ice Machine: Function and Temperature Check YES NO

Cold Holding (walk-in): Food Temperatures - 41°F. or below

Unit _____ Air Temp _____ Food Temp _____

All potentially hazardous ready-to-eat food in walk-in checked daily for proper date marking:

Marked with 7 day discard dates: YES NO Outdated food discarded: YES NO

Cross Contamination Prevention Measures Being Followed:

Raw animal products/dirty produce stored below and separate from ready-to-eat and cooked foods: YES NO

Raw produce thoroughly washed/scrubbed prior to slicing, peeling, or preparation: YES NO

Barriers used to prohibit bare hand contact with food (glove, utensils, deli paper) YES NO

Gloves changed frequently and hands washed upon changing: YES NO

Dish Washing Operation: All food contact equipment, countertops, cutting boards, and in use utensils washed with a detergent, rinsed with clear water, and then sanitized (at least every 4 hours of continuous use): YES NO

Final rinse temperature _____ (high temp/heat sanitizing machine only – min 180°F)

Sanitizer concentration _____ PPM (50-100 PPM Chlorine, 200-400 PPM Quaternary ammonium, 12.5-25 PPM Iodine)

Sinks set up in the proper order (1st - wash, 2nd - rinse, and 3rd – sanitize, air dry): YES NO

Wet Wiping Cloths: Clean/warm water: YES NO Sanitizer Solution Concentration _____ PPM

Cloths stored in solution between uses: YES NO Proper Test Strips for Sanitizer Available: YES NO

Signature: _____

Date: _____