



MP Incubation Program Associate

About the program

Mandela Partners (MP) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving health, creating wealth, and building assets in under-resourced communities through food enterprises. By working with local residents, family farmers, and community-based businesses, MP employs a systems-based approach to address economic disinvestment, food insecurity, and health inequities. The organization builds on local assets to cultivate thriving communities, fostering sustainable solutions that promote economic and social resilience.

MP Incubation was born in response to the expanding informal food business boom of 2020. Participants in our Food Business Pathways programs were looking for sales channel opportunities to test out their products and business concepts. The program provides small food business owners and culinary entrepreneurs of color with resources such as kitchen training, culturally relevant technical support, and individualized mentorship. Through our incubator food hall, E14th Eatery + Kitchen, and formal partnerships with local farmers' markets, participants access low-barrier sales channels to test and refine their offerings, gaining exposure and building clientele. Entrepreneurs also engage in food "pop-up" events, scaling their businesses while contributing to the local economy and expanding food options in unincorporated Ashland. These efforts collectively drive equitable economic development and foster innovation within the culinary sector.

Key Areas of Responsibility

The **MP Incubation Program Associate** will play a key role in supporting Mandela Partners' incubation initiatives, including the E14th Eatery + Kitchen food hall, by providing essential operational, logistical, and relational support to early-stage food business owners in West Oakland, Ashland, and other disinvested East Bay neighborhoods. Working closely with the Incubation Program Manager, the Associate helps maintain a welcoming, functional, and collaborative environment for entrepreneurs using the shared kitchen space. The ideal candidate is solutions-oriented, organized, and passionate about food entrepreneurship, economic equity, and supporting local small businesses.

Reports To: MP Incubation Program Manager II

Key Responsibilities

Kitchen & Facility Operations (40%)

- Ensure safe and appropriate use of kitchen equipment; provide basic training resources and safety support to vendors and entrepreneurs as needed.
- Monitor cleaning systems and space practices to maintain a safe and sanitary shared kitchen.
- Support day-to-day kitchen and facility operations, including opening/closing responsibilities, managing kitchen schedules, and tracking equipment use.



- Maintain a consistent onsite presence, including after-hours support (particularly after 5 PM), to monitor space use and troubleshoot site needs.

Vendor & Entrepreneur Support (25%)

- Build positive, respectful relationships with entrepreneurs using the space.
- Provide real-time support for interpersonal and operational issues among vendors.
- Reinforce shared space etiquette, encouraging collaboration and clear communication.
- Track and communicate shared inventory and vendor needs in collaboration with the Program Manager.
- Provide mentorship and coaching support to vendors through Mandela Partners' coaching program practices to support business development and growth in collaboration with the program director/manager.

Maintenance & Administrative Support (20%)

- Coordinate with the Program Manager to schedule and track facility maintenance needs, including repairs, inspections, and vendor servicing (e.g., pest control, trash removal).
- Maintain proper documentation of site operational updates and issues.
- Assist in managing vendor onboarding processes, kitchen rental systems, and compliance records.

Community Engagement & Outreach (10%)

- Collaborate with the Program Manager and outreach team to promote E14th Eatery + Kitchen events, vendors, and activities.
- Support the execution of food pop-ups, vendor showcases, and workshops.
- Represent the program at community events, tabling, or partner meetings, as needed.

Community Produce Stand Support (5%)

- Provide setup support for the on-site community produce stand, helping to ensure access to fresh, local food for residents.

To Be Successful in this Role You Have:

- 3+ years of leadership experience in food or restaurant industry, ideally in a manager position or as an entrepreneur.



- Experience in small business coaching, or enthusiasm to develop this skill set.
- Demonstrated strength in project, time, and organizational management, with the ability to clearly track and communicate information, delegate tasks, prioritize effectively, and independently resolve issues in collaboration with associates and coordinators.
- A collaborative team-orientation, while retaining the ability to take initiative and complete work independently.
- Excellent judgment and the ability to proactively ask for guidance and support when needed.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, plus comfort and fluency in virtual and in-person group facilitation.
- Confidence working with and maintaining kitchen equipment and sanitation standards.
- Proficient in food safety practices and/or ServSafe certification.
- Demonstrated personal alignment with Mandela Partners' mission and values.
- Enthusiasm for and comfort with working with people of diverse backgrounds, familiarity with West Oakland and Ashland/Cherryland is a plus
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- Openness to giving and receiving feedback, with a learning and growth mentality.
- Comfort with navigating disagreement or conflict with care and diplomacy.
- Flexibility to work occasional evenings and special weekend events
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Schedule, Compensation & Benefits

The MP Incubation Associate job is part-time, approximately 28 hours per week. The salary range for this job is \$26-28 per hour, depending on experience. The MP Incubation Associate job is classified as non-exempt and therefore overtime-eligible. This job should expect up to 8 weekend hours per week to oversee E14th Eatery + Kitchen or attend a Saturday and/or Sunday farmers market. The exact weekly schedule will be determined with the supervisor upon hire.

While occasional remote work may be possible, this position is expected to be primarily on-site and in-person at our E14th Eatery + Kitchen space in Ashland (San Leandro), CA.

Benefits include accrued sick and vacation time, as well as paid holidays,.

Mandela Partners also provides unique benefits that support work-life balance and professional growth. Our offices close for a week in June in observance of Juneteenth and at the end of the year. All staff receive a professional development stipend, are invited to a weekly paid team lunch on Thursdays, and have access to at-cost pricing on wholesale produce, as well as a 50% discount on weekly produce box.

Steps to Apply

Please send a resume and cover letter detailing your experience, what excites you about this role, and why you feel you'd be a good fit to jobs@mandelapartners.org. There is no application deadline, but interviews will begin immediately.

EEO Statement

Mandela Partners is an equal opportunity employer and makes employment decisions on the basis of merit and job performance. Mandela Partners policy prohibits discrimination based on sex (including gender, gender identity, gender expression, transgender, pregnancy and breastfeeding), race (including traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles), color, national origin, ancestry, religious creed (including religious dress and grooming), sexual orientation (including heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality), age (40 and over), marital status, military or veteran status, genetic characteristic or genetic information, physical or mental disability, medical condition, reproductive health decision making, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local laws.

California Fair Chance Act

Mandela Partners will consider qualified applicants with a criminal history pursuant to the California Fair Chance Act. You do not need to disclose your criminal history or participate in a background check until a conditional job offer is made to you. After making a conditional offer and running a background check, if Mandela Partners is concerned about a conviction that is directly related to the job, you will be given the chance to explain the circumstances surrounding the conviction, provide mitigating evidence, or challenge the accuracy of the background report. Find out more about the Fair Chance Act by visiting the Civil Rights Department's [Fair Chance Act](#) webpage.