

# 18 REASONS



# 2024 Impact Report

Increasing food security through the power of home cooking

# From Kitchen to Community: Cooking Our Way to Food Security



As we end our year together, I am filled with gratitude for your unwavering support of 18 Reasons' vision to transform lives through the power of home cooking.

In all our programs, we bring people together to share the joys and challenges that come with making good food part of our everyday lives. At 18 Reasons, we are changing the way our students think about food, and recentering good food and home cooking as the foundation of health and community.

This year, we grew our Food as Medicine program to offer home-delivered healthy food paired with online cooking classes to over 400 Medi-Cal members each week, helping them heal diet-related diseases like type 2 diabetes.

We expanded our Cooking Matters program to bring free cooking and nutrition classes to thousands of kids, teens, adults, and families, sending participants home with a bag of groceries to practice the skills they learned in class.

We deepened partnerships with nonprofits and healthcare providers to grow our Nourishing Pregnancy program, providing food and social support to Black and Latine parents facing food insecurity.

We welcomed Chef Gracie to our 18th St teaching kitchen, where her expertise as a chef and teacher has helped our students gain confidence and expand their culinary horizons.

The 18 Reasons model of combining food access with food skills education continues to demonstrate its effectiveness. We understand that access to nutritious food is just the beginning – equipping people with practical skills to prepare meals with confidence and joy is the key to lasting change.

In 2025, we will expand our healthcare partnerships, grow our presence in the East Bay through our new pop-up series and eventually a permanent physical location, and continue to invest in the long-term health of our communities.

Invest in food security by making a donation today.

A blue ink signature of Sarah Nelson.

**Sarah Nelson,**  
Founder and Executive Director



For more information  
about volunteering, donating, or  
partnering with 18 Reasons,  
please visit [18reasons.org](https://18reasons.org)



# Our Programs Change Lives

## Ana Villalobos

### Cooking Matters, Peer Health Educator

For fourteen years, Ana has been a driving force behind 18 Reasons' community health initiatives, supporting our growth into a widespread movement for healthy eating and active living. "I believe I was born to serve others with passion and compassion," she says, a philosophy that led her to train cohorts of Peer Health Educators who now deliver thousands of classes throughout the community for 18 Reasons. Her impact is perhaps best illustrated by a young participant who, after learning to cook in her class, began shopping weekly with his mother and cooking healthy meals for his younger brother – transforming his family's relationship with food. "We're not creating new leaders," Ana explains, "they are already leaders - we're just giving them the tools to help them do the work they were meant to do." Through her dedication to 18 Reasons, Ana continues to plant seeds of health and hope that grow into sustainable community change, with former students now leading their own programs and inspiring the next generation of healthy families.



## Brian & Emilia

### 18th Street Kitchen Participants

After discovering 18 Reasons just blocks from their Mission District home, Brian and Emilia dove into cooking classes starting with Beginner's Boot Camp. Nine classes later, they've mastered everything from knife skills to their now-signature dessert—an apple crumble with cardamom Chantilly cream. Through supportive instructors like Gracie, they found not just culinary education but a welcoming community that transformed their approach to cooking and sharing food with others. "Whether hosting dinner parties or sharing techniques from class," they reflect, "18 Reasons has fundamentally changed how we experience food and build community around our table."



## Martha Monzón Echeverría

### Nourishing Pregnancy, Amada Participant

When a clinic representative in Oakland introduced her to the Nourishing Pregnancy program, Martha already understood the fundamental connection between nutrition and maternal health. Through the program, she discovered new ways to prepare nutritious meals and expanded her culinary horizons—particularly with recipes like massaged kale salad, which transformed her perception of ingredients she previously avoided. While she valued all aspects of the program, the educational components stood out as especially impactful, providing crucial information that supported her throughout pregnancy and beyond.



# Free Community Programs

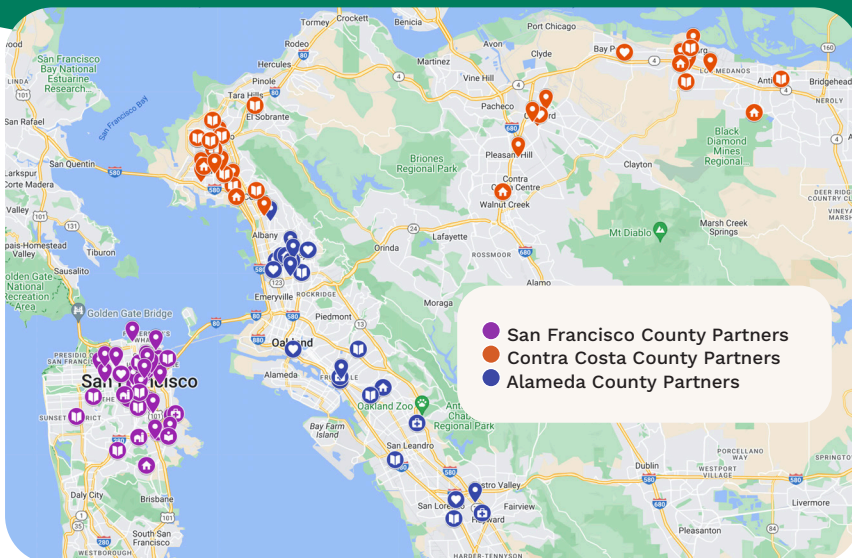
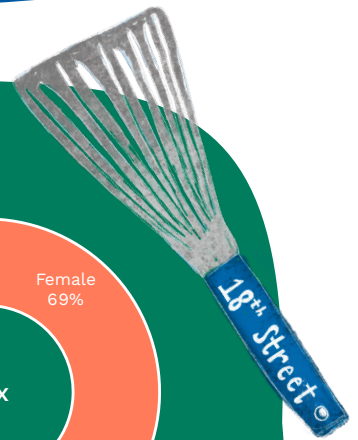
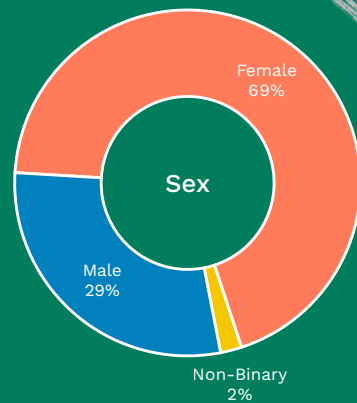
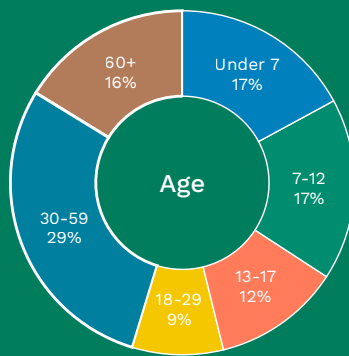
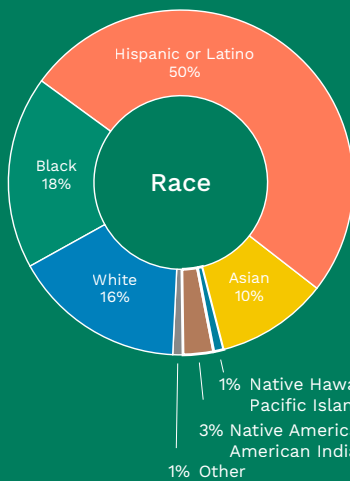
## The Need

At 18 Reasons, we know home cooking is a powerful tool for change. Through our free programs - Food As Medicine, Nourishing Pregnancy, and Cooking Matters - we teach thousands of individuals how to cook nutritious, affordable meals alongside their community. These shared learning experiences build lasting connections while empowering individuals with essential cooking skills that flourish well beyond the classroom.

Working alongside healthcare providers, schools, and community partners across Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco counties, we're addressing food insecurity and health inequities while building stronger communities.



## Who We Serve



## Where We Work

Our cooking and nutrition programs continue to reach students in their everyday environments - community centers, medical facilities, and schools. We remain committed to providing these valuable resources at no cost, sustained by the generous support of grants and donations.



# Food As Medicine: Not Just Food, But Hope



Getting diagnosed with a chronic illness can be a frightening journey into the unknown. Patients are often told to change their diet and lifestyle without a clear roadmap, turning food—once a source of joy—into a source of anxiety. In 2024, our Food As Medicine (FAM) program continued to change this narrative, expanding its reach and impact across diverse communities.

Making changes doable and delicious, FAM provides patients with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to manage their conditions using nutritious food. In 2024, we've grown significantly, now serving over 400 Medi-Cal members every week. Each member receives home-delivered nutritious ingredients paired with online cooking classes, helping them manage diet-related diseases like type 2 diabetes. Our key program components are:

- Bi-weekly delivery of ingredients for class recipes
- Weekly online interactive cooking and nutrition classes
- Recipes tailored to specific health challenges
- Social support from peers with similar diagnoses
- Relaxed interactions with medical professionals
- Up to 12 months of ongoing enrollment

## Putting Nutrition Advice Into Practice:

Our classes break down complex topics into implementable strategies. Our team discusses how different carbohydrates affect blood sugar levels and teach label reading, while peer health educators demonstrate delicious recipes using whole grains, vegetables, herbs, and spices.

Our free grocery deliveries eliminate the financial risk of trying new ingredients, allowing participants to experiment with unfamiliar foods and flavors without risking their already tight food budgets.

Looking ahead as we reflect on FAM's growth in 2024, we're excited about the future. We're not just teaching communities to manage chronic illnesses—we're empowering them to thrive, transforming fear into flavor and hope, one meal at a time.

FAM receives state funding and works with county health agencies, positioning 18 Reasons as a leader in the growing movement to provide nutrition and cooking education as a complement to traditional healthcare. And it's working. Improvements to participants' metabolic data is being measured clinically as part of the program:

**87%** report improvements in blood sugar

On average, participants experienced a **1.62** point reduction in A1c

*My A1C has gone from 12 to 8.1, I'm keeping my blood sugars under 130, and I've lost 17 lbs."* - Eloise

## FAM for Kids flourished in 2024:

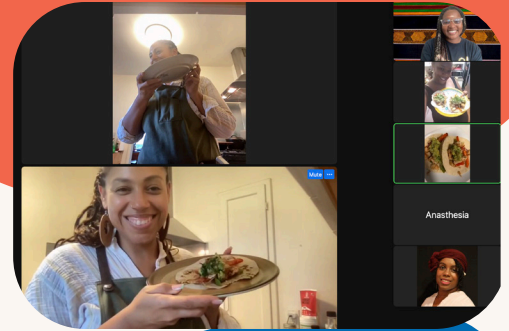
- New Spanish-language cohort introduced in April
- 'Graduate cohorts' started in July, offering advanced cooking skills
- Expanded to partner with Lifelong Medical in Richmond

This program engages children aged 8-13 and their families through cooking classes, nutrition education, physical activities, and expressive arts.



# Nourishing Pregnancy: Creating Our Village

Nourishing Pregnancy continues to be a groundbreaking 16-week cooking and health program that serves pregnant and postpartum parents, with a focus on Black and Latine communities, giving them the tools to ensure healthier pregnancies and overall well-being in a system where access to quality maternal healthcare is often unequal.

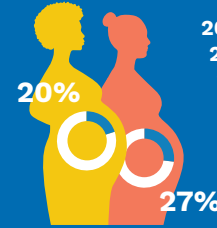


## The Need

Systemic racism continues to significantly impact maternal and infant health outcomes. In 2024, we've seen persistent disparities:



Black women face a **mortality rate 2.6x higher** than non-Hispanic white women



**20% of Black and 27% of Latine women** in San Francisco experience **food insecurity** during pregnancy

Nourishing Pregnancy addresses these issues by providing a safe, culturally affirming space that disrupts discrimination in medical settings and delivers critical care that participants might not receive elsewhere.

## Our Model

Our unique online model has allowed us to expand our reach across the Bay Area in 2024. The program includes the below curriculum highlights:

- Nourishing your First 40 Days
- Cooking techniques and recipes
- Sleep, exercise, and self care
- Lactation
- Perinatal Mental Health
- Building a support network



We all know it takes a Village to raise a child; Nourishing Pregnancy helps create a village of support for our birthers. The strength of our program lies with the strength of our partnerships.



**New in 2024:**  
We've expanded our support for birthing parents with diabetes through Medicaid-funded grocery delivery.

## The Impact

Key Findings from 2024:

**Compassionate Support**

**92%**

of participants felt more supported and less isolated

**Increased Access to Nourishing Food**

**84%**

of participants reported improved cooking skills and confidence

**Health Outcomes**

**88%**

healthy birth weight babies among program participants



*"This program didn't just teach me about nutrition; it gave me a community that understands and supports me."*

- Amani group participant



## Cooking Matters: Empowering Communities to Buy, Cook and Eat Good Food Every Day

Cooking Matters continues to empower thousands of food-insecure families in the Bay to stretch their food budgets while making healthier, delicious meals—putting nutritious food within reach. By combining hands-on cooking practice with culturally sensitive nutrition education and healthy grocery donations, we help participants unlock their culinary creativity and maximize their food resources.

Our approach fosters increased confidence and peer support, leading to sustainable improvements in shopping, cooking, and eating habits. Participants emerge with enhanced skills to make the most of their available resources, often implementing long-lasting positive changes in their dietary practices.

### Curriculum Highlights

- Learning about nutrition labels, food groups, and balanced eating
- Vegetables, whole grains, and fruits - making nutritious AND delicious choices
- The hazards of sugar-sweetened beverages and the importance of water
- Grocery store tour and shopping trip with the class
- A free hot meal and bag of groceries at the end of every class



**78%**

of program participants reported increasing confidence in their ability to buy healthy foods for their families on a budget after the course.

**79%**

of the program participants reported increasing confidence in their ability to cook healthy foods for their family on a budget after the course.

**84%**

of Cooking Matters for Teens participants reported that they will share the information they learned in Cooking Matters classes with their family and friends.

### Partner Spotlight: Berkeley High School Food Pantry Internship

Throughout the 2023-24 school year, 18 Reasons managed the Food Pantry internship at Berkeley High School's Academy of Medicine and Public Service Program. In partnership with Berkeley Food Network, we empowered students to address food insecurity in their community.

Throughout the program, 15 Berkeley High students distributed over 500 lbs of groceries, including a separate line for their peers and teachers. Additionally, our internship lead conducted cooking classes using pantry ingredients, teaching valuable culinary skills and nutrition knowledge.

This partnership not only provided essential food resources but also created professional development opportunities and fostered a sense of community engagement among students.



**1,000+**  
**pounds**

of food  
distributed  
monthly

**30+**

high school  
students  
reached  
through the  
program

*“This class series has heightened my awareness of how important fresh fruits and vegetables are in our diets and how delicious healthy eating can be!”*

- Cooking Matters Participant



# 18th Street Kitchen: Learn, Cook & Connect With Your Community

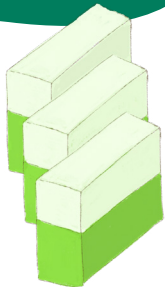
Our 18th Street Kitchen in the San Francisco Mission District continues to be a vibrant hub for culinary education. Our kitchen offers a diverse range of paid programming for the community, including hands-on cooking classes, butchery workshops, tasting seminars, and private events.

These offerings attract curious home cooks seeking to enhance their culinary skills and knowledge.

Our diverse team of chefs creates a welcoming kitchen where students explore global culinary traditions while building confidence and community. Each cooking class deepens our roots in the Bay Area, creating spaces where neighbors gather to learn, share stories, and celebrate the joy of home cooking.

## Culinary Adventures: Learn, Cook, Explore

Malaysian Pastries with Chef Linda



Tamalada and Friends with Chef Annelies

Flavors of Iran with Chef Helia

Transforming Tofu with Chef Marie



*“I will now think of my life in terms of before the vinaigrette and after the vinaigrette—that’s how amazing this is”*

**Brown Butter Bonanza Participant**

## Chef Gracie - 18th St. Kitchen Head Chef & Culinary Manager

This year, we welcomed Gracie Schatz as our Head Chef, bringing her 15 years of diverse culinary expertise to our program. Gracie’s journey spans from baking in Oregon to farming in Italy, from butchering in San Francisco to founding a food justice nonprofit. A guest instructor for seven years, she now leads our kitchen full-time, expanding our offerings in butchery and seasonal cuisine. Gracie’s passion for exploring food’s role in culture, identity, and community perfectly aligns with our mission, elevating our culinary education to new heights.





# Thank You to our Teaching Team

Thank you to our diverse and passionate teaching team who make our programming possible. Their expertise and creativity empower our community with the confidence needed to buy, cook, and eat good food every day.



## Peer Health Educator Program:

Peer Health Educators (PHEs) are Cooking Matters graduates who serve as nutrition and cooking education contractors, sharing linguistic and cultural backgrounds with participants to create authentic connections. Their hands-on approach makes healthy cooking accessible and enjoyable for everyone, from seasoned home cooks to kitchen beginners, guiding participants to prepare flavorful dishes that nourish both mind and body.

## AmeriCorps:

AmeriCorps members play a vital role in leading our Cooking Matters classes while gaining hands-on experience in nonprofit operations. This dynamic one-year service position serves as a launching pad for members to pursue advanced education and diverse careers in nutrition, culinary arts, and community health.



## Cooking Matters Volunteers:

As our programs continue to expand, our growing network of volunteers - including dietitians, home cooks, professional chefs, and students - plays an increasingly vital role as nutrition and cooking educators. Their dedication has enabled us to reach more communities than ever before while maintaining the personal connections that make our programs successful.

## 18th Street Kitchen Volunteers:

Our volunteers bring warmth and expertise to 18th Street Kitchen, where they create welcoming spaces by managing setup, guest services, and instructor support. Their dedication and hospitality are essential in fostering the vibrant, safe and communal atmosphere for our guests.

## 18th Street Kitchen Chef Instructors:

Our Chef Instructors foster inclusivity and community through the art of home cooking, ensuring good food is within everyone's reach. They understand that cooking goes beyond recipes—it's about nourishment, connection, and the joy of coming together.

## Maternal Care Specialists:

Nourishing Pregnancy brings together an exceptional team of diverse birthing professionals - including doulas, lactation consultants, maternal wellness specialists, and culinary experts - who connect virtually from across the nation. Through these dedicated experts, we create an intimate and safe space where expecting and new birthers find genuine community and comprehensive support throughout their birthing journey.

## 18 Reasons Staff:

Our 18 Reasons' team embodies our vision of creating equity and belonging through the transformative power of home cooking. Our dedication to empowering our community with confidence and creativity in the kitchen makes good food accessible to all.



# 18 Reasons 2025 Strategic Priorities

Our vision is to create equity and belonging through the transformative power of home cooking. 18 Reasons' strategic 3-year plan sets ambitious goals to deepen the impact of our programs while investing in the strength and resilience of our organization.

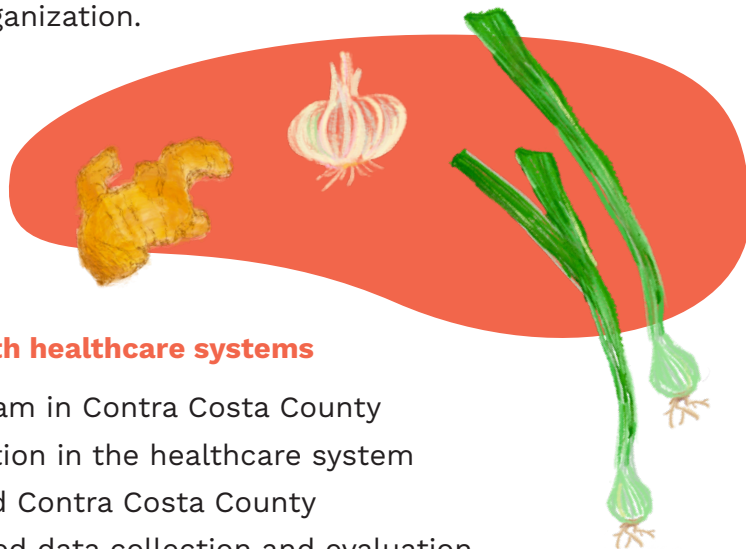
## Our Strategic Plan for 2025:

1

### Deepen Healthcare Partnerships

**Grow impact and sustainability by partnering with healthcare systems**

- Continue to grow our Food As Medicine program in Contra Costa County
- Disrupt experiences of racism and discrimination in the healthcare system
- Expand the Food as Medicine program beyond Contra Costa County
- Continuous improvement through strengthened data collection and evaluation



2

### Open a new physical location in the East Bay

**Build on years of East Bay partnerships to deepen our impact**

- Complete a successful expansion campaign in support of the new location
- Open a new teaching kitchen and program hub in the East Bay
- Invest resources in strengthening free community programs and engaging community in the East Bay

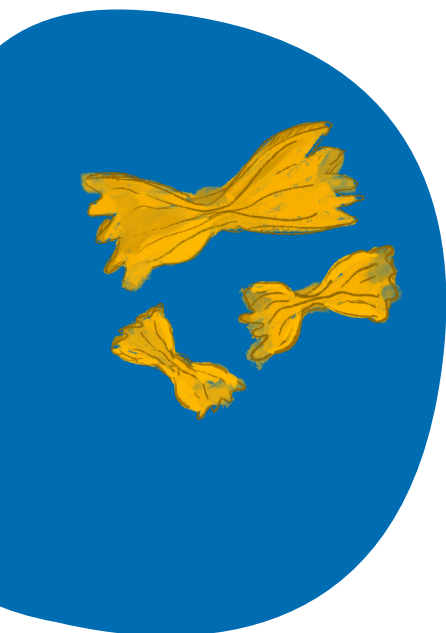


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### Build a strong and sustainable organization that values its people

**Strengthen internal systems**

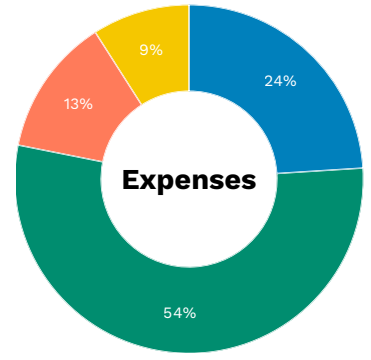
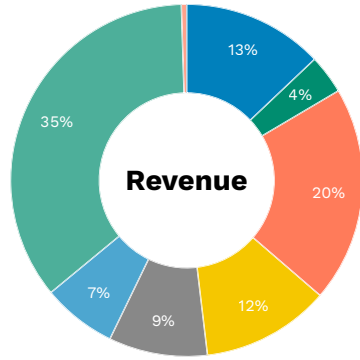
- Expand and diversify our donor, corporate partner, and volunteer base
- Build and sustain our cash reserves
- Leverage fee-for-service programming to support organizational goals
- Support a strong and connected work culture that supports our mission, vision, and values
- Grow our work as accomplices in anti-racism





# Leadership and Financials

We are grateful for our supporters who have partnered with us in 2024 to increase food security in the Bay Area.



## Revenue

18th Street Kitchen	\$481,021.52
CM Program Services Fees	\$133,201.88
FAM Program Service Fees	\$737,438.00
Special Events	\$438,582.84
Individual Donors	\$337,313.66
Foundation Grants	\$254,300.00
Government Grants	\$1,320,580.73
Misc Income	\$18,334.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,720,773.03</b>

## Expenses

18th Street Kitchen	\$776,902.61
Community Programming	\$1,752,853.92
Development	\$415,354.40
Management/General	\$292,891.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,238,002.38</b>

\*Oct 1, 2023 - Sept 30, 2024

## Leadership

- Sarah Nelson**, Founder and Executive Director
- Francesca Boulton**, Director of Community Programs
- Blair Leyva**, Director of Development & Communication
- Claudia Guerrero**, Director of Operations
- Theresa Salcedo**, Program Director, 18th St Kitchen
- Briana Tejuco**, Program Director, Nourishing Pregnancy

## Board of Directors 2024

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Shannon White Cogen, <b>President</b><br>Leadership Coach & Nonprofit Advisor     | Bill Rusitzky<br>CRO, AIKON                            |
| Merritt Richmond, <b>Vice-President</b><br>Educational Consultant                 | Liesl Schumacher<br>Chief of Staff, Android at Google  |
| Poonam Singh, <b>Secretary</b><br>Lead Counsel, Corporate, Asana                  | Calvin Tsay<br>Partner, Bi-Rite Family of Businesses   |
| Robert Rosner, <b>Assistant Secretary</b><br>Owner and Head Baker, Bob's Bread Co | Wendy Weiden<br>Principal, Wendy Weiden Food Solutions |
| Sarah Wigglesworth, <b>Treasurer</b><br>Community Member                          | Maria Ansari<br>CEO, The Permanente Medical Group      |
| Marian Baldauf<br>Vice President, Dodge & Cox                                     | Brian Elliott<br>Co-Founder, Future Forum              |
| Ruth Chang Hess<br>Nonprofit Consultant   | Ryan Hazelton<br>Executive Director, Mariposa Kids     |
| Sam Mogannam<br>Founder, Bi-Rite Family of Businesses                             | Gretchen Sandler<br>Philanthropist                     |
| Sarah Nelson<br>Executive Director, 18 Reasons                                    |  |

The following board members completed their service in 2024. We are grateful for their leadership and support:  
Priya Fielding-Singh, Suzy Obst, Rosabel Tao, Teyler Wallace.



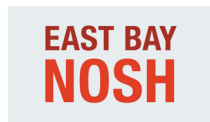
### Ranked a top cooking school by:

Thrillest, TimeOut, Brides.com, Good Housekeeping, Teambuilding.com, and The Spruce Eats.



### As seen in:

The Washington Post, Forbes, East Bay Nosh, Kayak and Inside Philanthropy.



### Major Corporate, Foundation and Government Funders

**Foundation Funders:** Bella Vista, California Healthcare Foundation, Common Spirit, UCSF, Clif Bar, Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, Sisters of St Joseph Healthcare Foundation, Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation, Kaiser Permanente

**Government funders:** Contra Costa Health Services, California Dept of Food & Agriculture, San Francisco Department of Public Health, City of Richmond, Alameda County Public Health Department, Los Medanos Healthcare District, Department of Healthcare Services, USDA

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