



FareStart’s Barista and Customer Service Program

Summary

FareStart’s Barista and Customer Service Program provides hands-on job training in café settings and soft skills training to youth and young adults experiencing poverty. The program serves youth and young adults through two program tracks. The education track services youth at risk of not completing high school and requires youth to attend school while participating in the intervention. The employment track serves young adults who are out of school and struggling to maintain stable employment and requires young adults to participate in work readiness activities to help them search for and keep a job. The Barista and Customer Service Program aims to build both technical and soft skills (including self-empowerment, positive relationship building, transferable workplace skills, and career interest exploration) to help participants complete high school or maintain stable employment.

Funding source



FareStart is a not-for-profit social enterprise that uses profits from operating several different food service businesses, including cafés, to reinvest in its businesses and support its training programs. FareStart also supports the Barista and Customer Service Program in particular with philanthropic and government grant funds.

Intervention description



The Barista and Customer Service Program serves youth and young adults with low incomes so they can develop employment skills through soft skills training and work experience; the work experience takes the form of on-the-job training in FareStart’s cafés across the Seattle region.

Services provided



Soft skills training; Supportive services; Training (*Occupational or sectoral training*); Work and work-based learning (*On-the-job training; Work experience*); Work readiness activities (*Job search assistance*)

Populations served

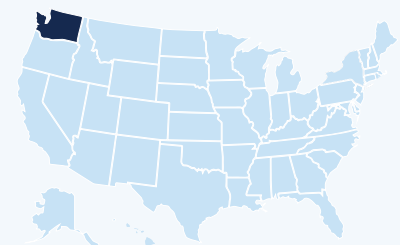


The Barista and Customer Service Program serves two groups through two program tracks. The first track serves youth ages 16 to 21 who are experiencing poverty and are enrolled in high school but not making adequate progress toward completing high school. Participants in this track are referred to the program from Seattle Public Schools Interagency Academy of alternative high schools across the city. The second track serves young adults ages 16 to 24 who are not in school, may or may not have a high school diploma or GED, are experiencing poverty or homelessness, and are experiencing barriers to employment.

Setting



Seattle, WA, and the greater King County, WA, region



Year first implemented

2005 (ongoing at the time of data collection)

What are case studies?

Case studies provide practitioners with information about innovative interventions that states, counties, community-based organizations, or other entities are undertaking to improve employment outcomes for TANF participants and other individuals with low incomes, especially public assistance recipients. **Case studies cover interventions not included elsewhere in the Clearinghouse because they have not yet been rigorously evaluated.**

The program provides services through two program tracks.

1. Education track. The education track serves youth currently enrolled in high school who are not making adequate progress and are not on track for on-time graduation. The goal of the education track is to keep young people in high school engaged in their education while providing job readiness skills. Students receive a stipend of \$30 per program day, contingent on regular school and intervention attendance. Participants interested in searching for work can also receive support with their job search. This intervention track is administered in partnership with Seattle Public Schools, which identifies eligible students and provides referrals to the intervention. On-the-job training occurs at cafés located within Seattle Public Schools buildings. Participants receive high school credits for participation in the program.

2. Employment track. The employment track serves young adults who are not in school and are experiencing barriers to employment (such as poverty, homelessness, lack of resources and job readiness skills, and transportation limitations). The goal of this track is to help young adults gain stable employment. The employment track emphasizes job search skills during the soft skills training. Participants receive \$20 per hour during their time in the intervention's barista work experience. The YMCA of Greater Seattle's Y Social Impact Center identifies eligible individuals and provides referrals to the intervention. Participants receive bus transit cards to support their participation.

The intervention includes two core components designed to build skills associated with educational persistence and job retention for youth and young adults in both tracks.

1. Soft skills training. The soft skills training curriculum covers four topics: self-empowerment, positive relationships with adults and employers, transferable workplace skills, and career interest exploration. FareStart staff developed and deliver this curriculum.

- **Self-empowerment** helps participants understand their value and build their self-confidence and self-esteem with respect to employment.

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- **Positive relationship building** offers guidance and support in developing trusting relationships with adults and building support networks. It includes training on managing interpersonal communication, problem-solving in the workplace, and other employment communication skills.
- **Transferable workplace skills** include topics such as work attendance, being on time, building resiliency for dealing with issues at work, and participants' rights as employees.
- **Career interest exploration** provides support in identifying potential career pathways that align with participants' interests and identifying jobs that are a good fit for their circumstances. It includes setting short- and long-term goals related to their career advancement.

The soft skills training also includes work readiness activities. Participants who are ready to look for work develop résumés and cover letters. They also prepare and practice for interviews.

2. Work experience (on-the-job training as a barista).

Participants receive on-the-job training as baristas. The training builds skills working with customers, handling cash, and cleaning. Participants work alongside one another and FareStart staff in a setting designed to reflect working conditions they might expect after they complete the intervention. This portion of the intervention was not active during the COVID-19 pandemic. FareStart plans to restart this component in 2022, with FareStart staff conducting on-the-job training and supervision.

Although FareStart began implementing the Barista and Customer Service Program in 2005, it has been offered solely as a 6-week virtual training since early 2020. The employment track requires 10 hours of training per week for 7 weeks, and the education track requires 8 hours of

training per week for 6 weeks. Staff deliver the intervention to cohorts of 10 to 12 participants. All participants receive a food worker/food handler card, a Chromebook laptop, and referrals to social services organizations as needed to support their participation in the program.

In 2022, FareStart plans to implement the work experience and on-the-job training component in person again, but soft skills training will remain virtual. The employment track will consist of four weeks of virtual soft skills and job readiness training, followed by four weeks of work experience and on-the-job training in one of the intervention cafés. FareStart plans to extend the average hours of program participation per week to 12 to 16 hours. The education track will remain virtual, though FareStart is considering options for offering in-person work experience and on-the-job training to this track again.

The intervention typically serves about 85 youth in the employment track and 75 youth in the education track annually, though participation has been lower during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent changes to state regulations related to requirements for supporting youth at risk of dropping out of school have increased demand by school districts for programs such as the Barista and Customer Service Program. Because of the state regulation changes,

More information



More information on this intervention is available at <https://www.farestart.org/barista-customer-service-program>.

FareStart anticipates expanding the reach of the employment track through new school district partnerships. According to program staff, the intervention costs about \$5,000 per participant (in 2020 dollars), on average, to implement in person.

Research on intervention to date

This intervention has not been rigorously evaluated for effectiveness. No evaluations or descriptive studies of the Barista and Customer Service Barista Program have been conducted.

Case study information sources



In summer 2022, the Pathways Clearinghouse collected information for this case study from a telephone interview and communication with program management at FareStart. The Pathways Clearinghouse also reviewed materials on the FareStart website. The Pathways Clearinghouse shared a draft of the case study with FareStart and incorporated revisions for accuracy and completeness. For more information about the methods for selecting and developing the case studies, please see the [Protocol for Pathways Clearinghouse Case Studies on the Pathways Clearinghouse project page](#).

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