



## Reality Kitchen Nonprofit

### Funding Request 2026



## Executive Summary

Since 2013, **Reality Kitchen Nonprofit** has served the River Road Neighborhood as a Community Center and fully inclusive workplace setting where individuals of all abilities work and learn together. The larger Eugene/Springfield Community and Lane County have supported our growing mission and organizational operations and we continue to respond to local surveys and the area's expressed needs and requests for increasing services and programming.

Expanding our classroom space, offering diverse and enhanced learning experiences is in response to the many requests we regularly receive from individuals in Lane County who experience I/DD, their families and Services Coordinators who seek meaningful, community based, inclusive learning activities. All of these individuals are low to moderate income and we know that many of those we serve have experienced homelessness and periods of food insecurity themselves, which requires us to be sensitive when we're being creative about the opportunities we offer.

***With this in mind, we are coming to you with a request for funding to complete the work we started together last year. Our Completion Budget goal is \$190,976.00. We've made tremendous progress with your in-kind donations and financial support; with much to show and further to go !***



## Project Narrative

In 2024, a very generous member of the Jules Kessler Foundation, a donor advised fund of the Oregon Community Foundation, offered a Matching Dollar for Dollar Donation pledge to donate up to \$55,000.00 if Reality Kitchen could raise an additional \$55,000.00 to encourage small and large matching donations from the community. Our 2024 Campaign allowed us to respond to years of neighborhood requests for a General Store with locally sourced products and bulk foods, gathering and learning spaces and more. ***This one act of generosity has had an amazing impact on our Program, our River Road neighborhood and the larger Lane County community !***

Gratefully, the River Rd. Neighborhood and the larger Eugene/Springfield community came together to help us match and surpass that goal with the funds and in-kind donations that we needed to begin and move the project significantly forward, paying rent, and most of the costs for construction and needed equipment to develop and launch the “ River Rd.Community Center Project.”

***But we're not quite there yet !***



This Expansion Project is the combined effort of many neighborhood and community volunteers who have cleaned and painted, built and stained shelves and scrubbed bulk bins, hauled out recycling and made dump runs and more !

Early on in our development of the adjacent space, we lost our electrical contractor, which left us in a serious crunch, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 280 heard the call and came to our rescue to jump into action and make the lights come on ! And then, when the nearly \$40,000.00 bill came due, the rank and file and leadership tore up the invoice and told us, “This one is on us !”

When we learned that the State Fire Marshall had changed the code for outdoor use of gas appliances, we discovered the cost of getting an Ansel Fire Suppression System and hood would cost over \$25,000.00, which we did not budget for. After running down our options, Harvey and Price came to our rescue and charged us only \$7,500.00 to do the job !

So many neighbors and friends, businesses and financial donors like Eugene Sign and Awning, Harvey and Price and Handcraft Designs have continued to step up and stand with us ! This support has shown how everyone's response to the community call is truly making this a Labor of Love for all!



## The River Road Community Center

Currently, we serve 16 new individuals (Program Participants) each year and graduate 12 or more interns to focused work experiences in the bakery and cafe. We project expansion will increase those numbers offering 8 additional individuals increased opportunities, annually, to develop alternate, transferable employment and personal skills from diverse, community inclusive classes where residents join our Program Participants in sharing and learning together.

This expansion builds on 13 successful years supporting the employment goals of individuals with I/DD in our wholesale bakery and retail café. Growing into an adjacent space will provide increased options for community inclusive programming and employment experiences that will transfer to other community settings.

### The General Store

Offering our own breads, buns, hoagies, pretzels, sweet treats and pies, customers will find a wide range of locally, produced and packaged food items and beverages, as well as necessities, **for those of all income levels**. There will be premade sandwiches, soups, meals, other grab and go items, as well as a changing bulk item section. Partnering with local crafters will bring the best of Lane County to River Road, and this will be a training site for our Program Participants, learning transferable skills in inventory, sales stocking and customer service.



**Help us stock these shelves !**



### The Pretzel Wagon

We will offer a full and evolving breakfast/ lunch/ and dinner menu of freshly prepared street food cuisine featuring our own baked goods and in-house prepared meals. **True to our Mission, no one will be turned away hungry !** As another community inclusive training site, this will prepare our Program Participants with the skills required to be successful working on other food carts in the community.

### The Demonstration Kitchen/ Performance/ Community Gathering Space

This space will feature a flexible schedule as a classroom, video and audio production studio for online classes, social media projects and mostly an opportunity for our Program Participants and River Rd. neighbors to have the tools and space for their imaginations to take wing ! The community will benefit from having a community inclusive gathering space to learn, socialize and achieve their shared goals and interests, in a supportive and creative community accessible setting.



### Community Canning/Food Preservation Classroom and Prep Kitchen

We have read the surveys and heard the calls to develop this classroom and work space to bring neighbors and Program Participants together to collaboratively learn and practice skills at harvesting their local gardens and learn the process of food preservation, pickling and canning in a certified commissary kitchen. We offer all the refrigeration and equipment needed to share in this community inclusive activity.



## Organizational Narrative

### Our Mission Statement

***"To offer employment path experiences designed to nourish and inspire all learners, with and without disabilities, to thrive personally and professionally, with supports and resources in a community inclusive setting."***

Reality Kitchen Nonprofit is licensed to deliver Employment Path Services and provides professional development and job skills training activities to individuals who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities(I/DD).

We offer these activities in an integrated, community based setting where individuals of all abilities work and learn together. To dispel stigmas and maintain an inclusive workplace, we operate a wholesale bakery, retail café and market where we deliver in-person training classes offering experiences designed to fulfill their goals for independence, self-confidence and success in a supportive environment. In this way we are changing the perceptions of our community around the employment options available to individuals who experience I/DD.



Since moving to River Road in 2013, Reality Kitchen Nonprofit has provided a unique approach to the delivery of employment path services in an integrated community based setting and has supported and trained 84 young adults with I/DD. The opportunity to offer this program in full view of the general public directly involves the community in our daily, educational activities giving them an authentically informed perspective of the innate abilities and humanity of those with I/DD and an appreciation of Reality Kitchen as a community space where skills are learned, confidence gained and lives are changed.

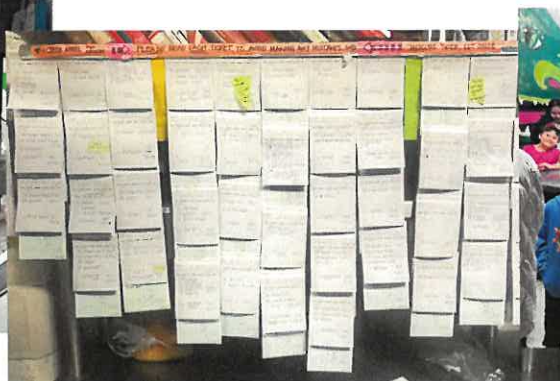
We are a licensed Provider Organization offering Employment Path services annually to 16 new individuals (Program Participants) who experience I/DD. This same population is an integral part of our organizational structure; 75% of our 41 employees are individuals who experience disabilities. They hold and maintain leadership and supported and regular staffing positions. Two individuals experiencing disabilities serve on our Board and 12 others with disabilities who serve on our Advisory and Stewardship Councils. It is also important to informing our decision-making and building of community and business partnerships that 55% are low to moderate income and nearly 35% have experienced homelessness within the past 10 years.



Mindful that half the people living in Lane County who experience homelessness have disabilities and face difficulties finding and keeping meaningful employment as well as maintaining housing, Reality Kitchen has remained committed to providing the resources required for those we support, (many with compromised immune systems), to be safe and have their needs met.

The opportunity to offer this program in full view of the general public directly involves the community in our daily educational activities, giving them an authentically informed perspective where skills are learned, confidence gained and lives are changed.

Our **Wholesale Bakery** produces and delivers baked goods for many of the area's food service businesses. In this way we have their back door open to us, developing professional relationships that extend to our Program Participants, who prepare, pack and deliver these products and are later positioned to seek employment opportunities.



Our **Retail Café**, and the soon to be opened General Store, are designed to provide regular opportunities for customer service skills to be practiced as our patrons and coworkers gain new impressions of the employment options available to individuals with I/DD. We hear from the community that their misperceptions are refreshed after having the opportunity to regularly and positively interact with and engage our staff with I/DD.



# ***An update and renewed request to help us stock our shelves.***

With the support of many generous donors, and a special thanks to McKenzie Commercial Construction, we have continued to build out the General Store with more new shelving and cabinetry, additional bulk bins and containers, jars and tubs, bulk honeys, oils and liquid soap dispensers, flour bins and scales and more to make your shopping with us a pleasure



We'll be sourcing most of our bulk items from local favorites Hummingbird Wholesalers and Mountain Rose Botanicals, Camas Country Mills, Glory Bee Distributors and others. We'll be ordering in local wines and ciders, and of course, kombucha. Our primary distributor will be Azure Standard Distributors out of Dufur, Or.

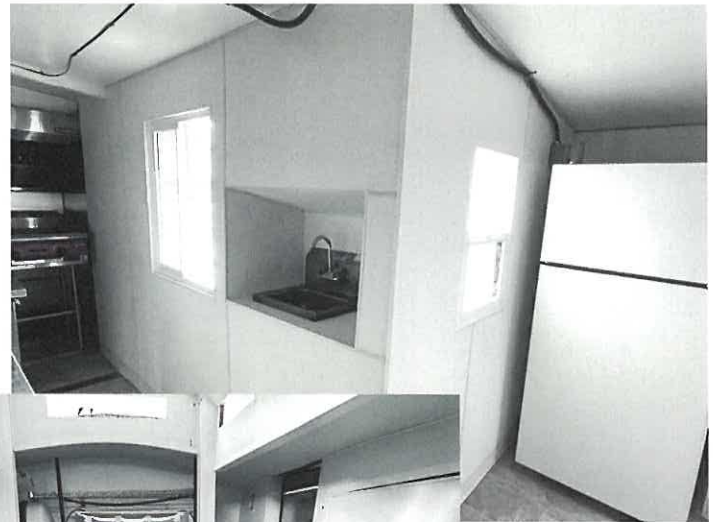
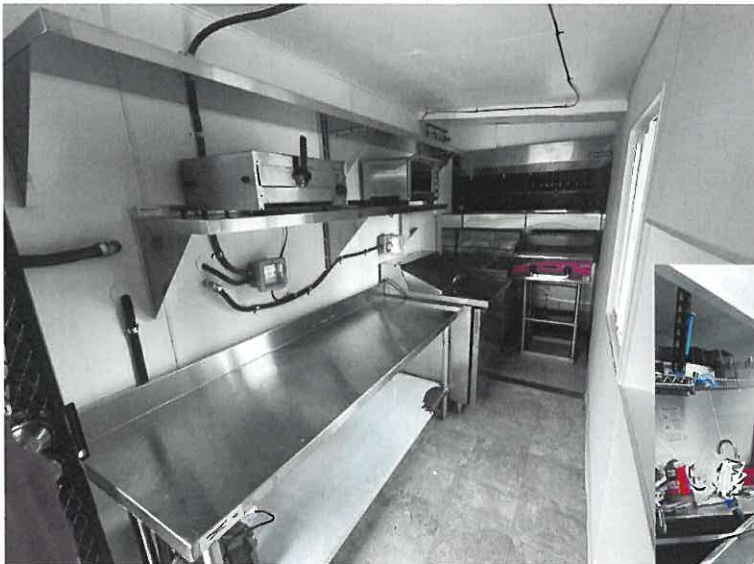
***Your help to stock these shelves will make all the difference to bringing this to life !***

Our signage on the front and the changeable reader board along the side of the building facing out to River Road is being provided by Eugene Sign and Awning.



## ***Pretzel Wagon update !***

Once all the structural and installation work was completed, we learned Lane Health would not be our licensing authority but the Oregon Department of Agriculture would be our “go to” folks, as well as for the General Store, which makes sense since they work with us for the wholesale bakery already.



Preparing the Pretzel Wagon for its opening has taken more labor and costs than anticipated, but the now finished product is impressive and will be a versatile kitchen with three fryers, a griddle top, a smaller deli counter with fridge and a larger fridge with freezer, separated kitchen and customer service areas, plenty of light and open windows for fresh air and a full compliment of hot holding and cooking appliances, multiple hand washing sinks, as well three comp. sink with plenty of shelving needed for to go containers and stock.

***Now if we could just agree on the menu of all the different food selections we're considering offering ! Got any suggestions ?***

**Budget Narrative**

Reality Kitchen Nonprofit benefits from a number of related income streams which support our organization financially, without solely depending on the generosity of supportive donors. This has proven to be a good model for us and carried us through the COVID Health event and all the challenges of operating a food services establishment, but, thanks to your kind support and the fact that we make the best pretzels and burger buns you'll find anywhere in Lane County, we're still growing and Building Community.

Our budget reflects the need to expand our classroom space to increase the numbers of individuals we serve, as well as offer alternative learning experiences to them and the neighborhood.

The **Center Manager** will be at the hub of the wheel and have the responsibility to be engaging, authentic and well informed by the many growing community relationships being made. As this is a new position, the role, responsibilities and duties of The Center Manager will be more defined in the first months of their first tenure, in coordination with the Executive Director. Broadly, these will include:

- Oversee and schedule all activities and use of the Center by Program Participants and staff, neighbors and residents, groups and others interested in accessing the Demonstration Kitchen Class/Intimate Performance and Community Gathering Space, the Food Preservation Class/ Prep Kitchen and the General Store.
- Oversee the ordering and stocking of all goods sold in the General Store and report directly to the Executive Director.
- Participate in an online training program and other professional development activities to be funded by Reality Kitchen Nonprofit as part of defining and establishing this new position.
- Attend monthly meetings of the River Road Community Organization and report back to Executive Director important updates and news.
- Enroll and attend regularly scheduled meetings of the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce and the Eugene City Club as a representative of Reality Kitchen and report back to the Executive Director and updates, news and/or information of interest.
- The Executive Director will perform a Progress Review each six months and report back to the Board of Directors the results of that review. Of course, the ED will regularly update the Board of The RRCC and the work of the Center Manager.

Fund raising and increased support for the position of the Center Manager will be important to consider and plan for into the second year of the position until the increased revenues from the General Store, Pretzel Wagon and other services can sustain the position.

**River Road Community Center Expansion Budget**

Expenses	Amount
<b>Completion Budget Needs</b>	
Stock for General Store	\$ 50,000.00
Start up Stock for Pretzel Wagon	\$ 5,000.00
Toast / Point of Sale System	
Purchase of Equip & 1 year cost	\$ 8078.80
Emerald Broadband fibre optics for Cafe/Bakery and Gen Store and Pretzel Wagon	\$ 2338.00
Salary for Chef for Pretzel Wagon \$23/hrX40hr/wk+Taxes X 52/wks	\$ 54,059.20
<b>Completion Budget needs Total</b>	<b>\$ 119,476.00</b>
<b>Center Manager Budget</b>	
Project Personnel Expenses:	
25/hr X 40/wk X 52wks	\$ 58,240.00
Non-Personnel Expenses:	
City Club of Eugene membership	\$ 150.00
Eugene Area Chamber membership	\$ 1,895.00
Transportation/mileage	\$ 2,600.00
Professional Development course	\$ 3,575.00
Office Supplies	\$ 3,240.00
Cell Phone	\$ 1,800.00
<b>Center Manager Total</b>	<b>\$ 71,500.00</b>
<b>Total budget</b>	<b>\$ 190,976.00</b>

**Milestone/ Key Dates**

*Sept. – Dec. 2026 Hire and Onboard 1.0 FTE Center Manager*

*Jan. 2027. Center Manager begins community outreach joining organizations, attending monthly River Road Community Organization (RRCO) meetings.*

*May 2, 2027 Center Open House for neighbors, community members, staff, family and friends to gather, discuss and evaluate plans for growth and activities ahead.*

*Aug 1, 2027. Center Open House discuss and evaluate how well the Community Center is reaching out and serving the interests and needs of our neighborhood and the Lane County community.*

*Dec. 5, 2027 Center Open House reviewing the past year and looking forward to continue building community on River Road. Evaluate the work of the Center Manager and strategize planning for the coming year.*

We engage our community in diverse ways including the annual "Polar Plunge," benefitting Oregon Special Olympics, hosting River Road neighborhood recycling projects and other activities.

We see our growing relationships reflected in many small and largeways that influence increased recurring donations and generous financial contributions, in-kind donations of equipment and services, as well as professionals who offer to volunteer their expertise and skills in support of our organization.

This is evidence of our community engagement and impact, and it means a great deal to our organization to have the opportunity to succeed at our goals.



It means a great deal to our organization to have the opportunity to succeed at our goal to increase our capacity to deliver our skills training and educational program in a Community Inclusive space.

**Other funding sources who have supported our growth and capacity building, include:**

- Business Oregon
- Oregon Department of Health and Human Services
- 100 Plus Women Who Care
- Chambers Foundation
- Larsen Family Foundation
- ReMax Integrity Foundation
- Donor Advised Funds of The Oregon Community Foundation
- Kevin Jones Family Foundation
- the Jules E.F. Kessler Community Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation
- ...and hundreds of other small and large donors in our recent capacity building/matching grant campaign and those who have helped us over the years. **Thank you so very much !**





June 8, 2025

To the Funding Committee

RE: Reality Kitchen grant application

The Executive Board of the River Road Community Organization is delighted to support Reality Kitchen's grant application. Long before they moved to their current River Road location, the community has expressed a desire for businesses that bring healthy food to the neighborhood. We engaged in a collaborative neighborhood planning process with the City of Eugene to identify needs and opportunities for the neighborhood. Surveys, focus groups, and community action meetings in the area around Reality Kitchen have all pointed to a desire for a general store and education/cultural space such as the one Reality Kitchen is now developing. The *2009 Lower River Road Concept Plan* documented these findings, stating :

“Lower River Road will be known as a center for nurturing small and local sustainable businesses, including those pioneering innovative new “green” technologies or approaches (energy, transportation, local food systems, etc.). These businesses will provide local jobs, and markets for locally-produced food, goods, and services.... The area will function as an important social and service hub or backbone for the wider lower River Road neighborhood. It will include safe, comfortable and attractive public areas and gathering places, along with essential and desirable businesses (grocery, farmer's market) ...”

As word has gotten out, some community members have stepped forward to volunteer and offer support for the store. In addition to addressing community needs, we are proud to support the educational non-profit mission of Reality Kitchen.

One of the delights of our neighborhood is to have coffee at Reality Kitchen and chat with neighbors as they come into the café. As the co-chair of the River Road Community Organization for the past ten years, this is one way I touch the pulse of the community. The vision for the General Store has emerged from years of engagement with the neighbors and the involvement of the community in identifying and planning for our needs. We eagerly anticipate its opening and urge your support.

Sincerely,

Clare Strawn

Co-chair River Road Community Organization  
541-285-4504

July 5, 2025

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposal by Reality Kitchen to open a General Store in the River Road neighborhood. I am writing first and foremost as a Special Educator and also as a River Road community member. From my perspective, drawn from my many years of Special Education experience, I have seen the limited opportunities for meaningful work for Neurodivergent young adult adults. Too often the opportunities include work that has no opportunity for connection, growth or development of skills.

Reality Kitchen is the exact opposite of that description.

Reality Kitchen offers engaging work for the young adults in the program that keep them interacting with their community. Reality Kitchen offers a wide range of roles and positions that allow for growth in essential skills for life and employment. Embedded in the program are mentor supports that help the young adults learn critical social skills in an experiential environment. In short, Reality Kitchen is a model for supporting our neurodivergent young adults, and creating a space where all people can join together in community.

Speaking as a community member, Reality Kitchen is a gift to the neighborhood and beyond. I regularly visit the café for baked goods and other delicious foods that they serve, and each time I leave, I notice that I am in a better mood than when I arrived. This is not true of everywhere in our modern world. There is a special magic to Reality Kitchen that goes beyond the essential service that they would provide to the neighborhood with a grocery store.

That being said a grocery store in the lower River Road neighborhood would be transformative. Aside from a convenience store or two and a farmstand with in frequent hours of operation, the neighborhood is essentially a food desert. River Road and the adjacent Trainsongs neighborhood are far from being the most resourced neighborhoods in town. A General Store providing all that Reality Kitchen plans to provide would be a gift to the neighborhood. Living in the lower River Road neighborhood for the past 15 years we have been wanting and waiting for a store just like what Reality Kitchen is planning to open. I am not alone in this feeling.

In conclusion, I urge you to provide grant support for Reality Kitchen's proposal. Thank you for your consideration,

Steven Korin,  
Eugene 4J Mentor Teacher for Special Education Teachers

July 9, 2025

Reality Kitchen Funding Committee  
645 River Road  
Eugene, OR 97404

RE: 2025 Grant request

To whom it may concern,

My wife and I began our involvement with Reality Kitchen several years ago when we heard about their program to help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities learn job skills that can then be utilized to find long-term employment in our community and gain levels of independence.

As parents of a young man with Autism and developmental disabilities, we struggle to find support and training for our son. Our countless attempts trying various programs has not worked out, primarily due to the lack of staff/employee understanding the need to adapt, talk and work with these young people at their level with patience, care and respect.

Jim Evangelista and Catherine Pickup have a deep background in special education and understand these young individuals. They have dedicated their lives to Reality Kitchen's vision and purpose. They are miracle workers and our community is incredibly fortunate to have them pushing to grow and expand their services that can benefit even more people.

From the moment our son was welcomed into their program he has blossomed in so many ways. He now has a sense of worth and confidence. He has developed socially and has made friends. He looks forward to working. He even participates in community events! Without Reality Kitchen, none of this would be possible.

As a business owner in Eugene with a large number of employees, I recognize the need for job skills training. Reality Kitchen offers individuals who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities a workplace setting where they get supported job skills training that truly helps individuals find long-term employment within our community and a path to success.



As a donor, I understand that there are many groups and organizations that ask for help. I would encourage you to support Reality Kitchen and the life-changing work they provide. This investment will provide immediate benefit to even more individuals who want and need help gaining job skills that will last a lifetime.

Best Regards,



Kevin Jones

Founder

