



JONAS C., MARIAN D., & ROBERT H. ERB CHARITABLE FUND PROPOSAL

Contact Information

Organization Name: **Baker Industries, Inc.**
 Address: 184 Pennsylvania Ave, Malvern, PA 19355
 Phone: 610-296-9795
 Website: www.bakerindustries.org
 Year Incorporated: 1980
 FEIN: 23-256025

CEO Name: Nicholas Watson
 CEO Email: nwatson@bakerindustries.org
 Board Chair Name: Richard C. III
 Board Chair Approval (check here):
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest: Human Services Education

Mission: **EMPLOY** those who have the most difficulty in getting and holding jobs, **TEACH** the work ethic through real work experience, **PROVIDE** job readiness training in a trauma-informed environment, **ACT** as a transition step toward gaining and maintaining outside employment, and **HELP** those who are both able and unable to move on to reach their highest level of achievement.

Geographic Area Served: The Philadelphia Metropolitan 5-County Area

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: We employ a mix of low/no-income, vulnerable adults, specifically people with disabilities, those with substance use disorder, ex-offenders, and the homeless. In 2025, we served 191 individuals, of which an average of 60 workers successfully transitioned into becoming independent and productive members of their communities (at an average wage of \$18.36/hour).

Annual Budget \$2,769,750

86% of budget for program expenses
7% of budget for administrative expenses
7% of budget for fundraising expenses
100 % total

8 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
22 # of Board Volunteers
150+ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
1,500 # of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources: The sale of our services, Edwin Hall 2nd Charitable Trust, Two Fundraisers, Individual Donations, and JTS Foundation.

Amount Requested: \$25,000 – Very Grateful for Anything

Proposal Summary: Baker Industries is a diverse and inclusive 45-year old nonprofit workforce development program that provides hope and opportunity for low/no income vulnerable adults as described above. Our purpose is to integrate these individuals into the workforce through regular work at one of our two industrial facilities in an accepting and trauma-informed environment. Program participants are paid a real wage while learning fundamental work and collaboration skills and participate (**while still getting paid**) in workshops, counseling, and coaching designed to foster self-esteem and job readiness. On average we engage about 200 individuals each year from the Philadelphia Metropolitan region in our program. Over our history an average of 50 participants progress to better work in the regular economy, becoming independent and productive members of our community. For those who are unable to be mainstreamed, we provide long-term employment at our Malvern Facility. We typically do this without reliance on any government support. **Baker truly changes lives.**

GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

1. Overall aims, key initiatives, key achievements & distinctiveness

Baker Industries is a 45-year-old nonprofit workforce development program dedicated to providing hope and opportunity to low- and no-income adults facing significant barriers to employment—including disability, parole/probation, substance use disorder, and homelessness. We create a trauma-informed, inclusive environment at our two Philadelphia-area facilities, where participants earn a real wage while learning essential work and collaboration skills.

Each year, we engage around 200 individuals in paid employment combined with workshops, coaching, and counseling that build self-esteem and job readiness. On average, 49 participants annually transition to better jobs in the broader economy, gaining independence and contributing meaningfully to their communities. About one-third of our participants live with disabilities that limit their ability to move on to other employment. For them, Baker offers long-term, supportive work and a caring community. We are proud to offer a unique model that brings together people with a wide range of challenges into a single, integrated workforce development setting.

Since our founding, over 12,000 vulnerable adults have participated in our program, with more than 2,500 moving into higher-paying jobs—breaking cycles of poverty and dependence. In doing so, we've helped strengthen families and communities across the region.

Baker Industries serves both those who transition into competitive employment and those for whom we provide a long-term source of meaningful work. In 2026, we aim to support more than 200 individuals and see at least 70 “graduates”—all earning a living wage—on a path toward stability and self-sufficiency.

We are somewhat unique in that we do not accept any government funding, we deal with four different segments of the vulnerable adult population and we pay our participants whether they are on the production floor getting job readiness training – they do not have to choose between earning and learning.

Our Mission Statement:

- **EMPLOY** those who have the most difficulty in getting and holding jobs,
- **TEACH** the work ethic through real work experience,
- **PROVIDE** job readiness training in a trauma-informed environment.
- **ACT** as a transition step toward gaining and maintaining outside employment, and
- **HELP** those who are both able and unable to move on to reach their highest level of achievement.

2. Funding request

• What specific needs & issues are being addressed, via what programs and services?

Our vocational training and rehabilitation initiative is aimed at assisting hundreds of low or no-income individuals facing significant barriers to employment. As mentioned above, our focus is on four key groups of vulnerable adults. The necessity of our program is underscored by the persistently high poverty rate in our city, exceeding 20%, which hampers overall growth and prosperity. This poverty is fueled by various factors, including the annual influx of 35,000 formerly incarcerated individuals into our region and the pervasive impact of the opioid crisis. Additionally, the underemployment of adults with disabilities contributes to this issue, with only 22.7% of them employed in 2024, according to a February 2025 study from the U.S.

Department of Labor. We firmly believe that meaningful employment is pivotal in addressing these challenges. Research confirms that stable employment significantly reduces recidivism rates, supports recovery efforts, and enhances housing and financial stability. Our tailored trauma-informed workforce development program delivers tangible, measurable benefits to our community by facilitating individuals' transition into mainstream employment. This, in turn, fosters individual, societal, and economic well-being while alleviating pressure on strained public resources.

The majority of our disabled population tends to remain in our program as there are so few employment opportunities for them. Because we do not accept any government support, there are no limitations on how long they can remain in our program; and as a result, Baker tends to become their social world as well as their work world. Helping these four groups of people will enable them to begin to liberate themselves and those around them from the cycles of poverty, violence, crime, and dependence that had previously trapped them. The benefits of such a transformation both to the individual and to the community are priceless. Through this approach, Baker Industries helps individuals rebuild their lives while delivering measurable benefits to the broader community. As participants transition into the workforce, they gain confidence, purpose, and economic independence. At the same time, our program alleviates pressure on overburdened public systems and contributes to the overall health of the regional economy. By investing in people and creating pathways to employment, Baker Industries plays a critical role in fostering inclusive growth, personal transformation, and long-term societal resilience.

The entire premise of our program is that there is no better setting in which to teach good work habits than a real place of work which is driven by concepts similar to the general workplace. While our foundational program has remained very much the same, each year, based on the feedback we receive from our participants, staff and trauma consultant, we have continually altered and improved our approach. Foundational work behaviors like timeliness, reliability, quality, collaboration, and integrity are emphasized. We also offer mentoring and support, and help our people with other issues, such as housing. In addition, in 2016 we began to use the **services of job coaches to work both one-on-one and in small groups on the production floor** – a very successful program modification. In addition, our entire staff underwent extensive training in Trauma Informed Supervision, which is refreshed on an annual basis. **Programming at Baker touches the lives of all participants. From morning huddles to workshops to community engagement, our program is rooted in realistic, commonplace approaches that lead to a stable, healthy, and productive life. In 2018, we launched an innovative Job Readiness Program. Based on trauma-informed principles, the 24-week intensive program helps individuals build critical thinking skills, increase self-awareness, and enhance communication skills through workshops and partnerships with various collaborating organizations.**

- **Why is it important to fund this now?**

As indicated above, the need for our very special program has never been greater. The Baker Program, now in its 45th year, operates as a Social Enterprise, quietly sustaining a successful workforce development program for over 44 years. With strong financial management and a diverse donor base, we operate independently of government funding. Our mission garners support from various private foundations, corporations, and individuals. Our primary challenges each year involve expanding our customer base, which provides approximately 33% of our annual revenue, and securing new funding sources. Thanks to the dedication of our team, we impact between 125 and 200 lives annually. Our consistent financial stewardship, built on sound business practices, enables us to navigate challenges, as evidenced during the 2020 Covid-19 crisis. Our private foundation supporters are very loyal; however, in order for us to remain resilient and committed to serving the community we must find new funders each year to ensure our sustainability.

- **How will results & impact be demonstrated?**

About one-third of our participants report disabilities (physical and cognitive) and seek an extended, part-time employment opportunity at Baker where they can establish vocational and social skills in a supportive work environment. About two-thirds of our participants will come to Baker in transition from prison or drug addiction. Approximately half of those will rely on Baker as a short-term transition step to stabilize and organize as they move to home locations and seek their next opportunities. The second half are ready to challenge themselves to achieve regular employment. They join Baker to improve their job-readiness and leverage real work experience into a living wage job in the regional economy. All of our participants will earn a regular hourly wage and perform real work for real customers as part of a fully integrated, high performing team.

We measure our impact by achieving a number of outcomes each year. First, we measure the total number of participants served. This metric is shaped year-to-year based on the amount of commercial work we earn from customers as well as the broader labor market. In 2025, we served 191 participants – just slightly less than in 2024 (196) and more than in 2023 (157). We hope to serve 200+ participants in 2026.

Second, we measure placements, which are our most important impact. In 2025, 60 individuals progressed from Baker to regular employment at an average wage of over \$18.00/hr. This was an increase over 55 in 2024 and 44 in 2023. Our graduates find employment in a wide range of industries including manufacturing, distribution, maintenance, retail, healthcare, hospitality, and more. We work hard to stay connected to graduates through their first year of employment post-Baker - providing guidance and encouragement. Each job placement has a powerful economic impact. Recidivism decreases, use of social services moderates, wage taxes are paid, and local businesses fill vacancies with productive workers. We estimate - conservatively - that each individual who graduates from Baker to a better job generates at least \$25K in incremental economic value to the community. during their first year. We should exceed 70 placements in 2026.

2025 Placement Statistics: Total – 60 // Male – 77%, Female – 23% // African American – 52%, Caucasian – 25%, Hispanic – 22%, Asian – 4% // Average Hourly Wage – \$18.36
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An outcome that is not quantifiable, but very real, is the satisfaction and self-confidence individuals develop while working at Baker Industries. For many, Baker is the first regular work experience they have had for many years...or ever! Our disabled adults have faced a lifetime of limited work opportunities and isolation. Providing a secure and supportive environment that supports individuals challenged by disability and trauma is more important than income to many of our participants. **At Baker, everyone is accepted and given the room to grow. We cannot put a number on this impact, but we know it makes a difference. ###**