

Food Donation Workgroup

Legislative Report

Organics Management Law 2.0 ([HB 2301](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=2301&Initiative=false&Year=2023))

By

**Solid Waste Management Program**

Washington State Department of Ecology

Headquarters Office

Olympia, Washington

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**Related Information**

* **Use Food Well Washington Plan**
* **Food Center webpage**

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## List of Figures and Tables

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## Definitions

[Final list of definitions will be inserted here]

**Donor:** A person, corporation, association, or other organization that donates food to a DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATION.

**Donated Food Donation Organization (DFDO)**: Charitable non-profit organizations under section 501(c) of the federal Internal Revenue Code that distribute food free of charge. (King County)

**Food Recovery Organization (FRO**): an entity that engages in the collection and distribution of edible food from commercial food generators. (CA SB1383)

**Donor Kitchen:** A kitchen that is used by a DONOR to handle, store, or prepare food for donation to needy persons through a DONATED FOOD DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATION and which is not a residential kitchen in a private home.

**Business Organics Management Areas (BOMA):** Many businesses in Washington must arrange for organic materials collection, as required by [the 2022 and 2024 organics management laws](https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/organics-and-food-waste/2022-organics-management-law) expanding organics management and collection in the state. By July 1 each year we are required under [RCW 70A.205.545](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.205.545) to determine and post on our website areas in Washington where businesses must arrange organics management services to reduce their organic material waste.

**Organics Recovery Collection Areas (ORCA)**: By Jan. 1, 2027, cities and counties with a local solid waste plan must make year-round organics collection services available to:

* All residential customers, except multifamily residences.
* All non-residential customers that create more than .25 cubic yards of organic waste per week.

By April 1, 2030, all customers in these cities and counties, except multifamily residences, must receive organics and food waste collection service.

**Climate Commitment Act:** caps and reduces [greenhouse gas emissions](https://ecology.wa.gov/Air-Climate/Climate-change/Greenhouse-gases) from Washington’s largest emitting sources and industries, allowing businesses to find the most efficient path to lower carbon emissions.

**Danger zone:** Bacteria grow most rapidly in the range of temperatures between 40 °F and 140 °F, doubling in number in as little as 20 minutes.

**Cold chain management**– Interconnected cold storage system designed to keep food cold (reducing spoilage) from farm through the handling system to final purchase.

**Compost contamination** – Any “chemical, physical, biological, or radiological substance that does not occur naturally in the environment or that occurs at concentrations greater than natural background levels” found in raw collected organics and finished compost.

**Compostable product** – Any product specifically manufactured to break down in a compost system at the end of its useful life. May be made from plastic, paper, or plant fibers, along with other ingredients that provide necessary form and functionality

**Composting -** The biological degradation and transformation of organic solid waste under controlled conditions designed to promote aerobic decomposition. Natural decay of organic solid waste under uncontrolled conditions is not composting.

**Contaminant -** Any chemical, physical, biological, or radiological substance that does not occur naturally in the environment or that occurs at concentrations greater than natural background levels.

**Edible food** – Food that can be eaten by humans.

**Energy recovery** - A process operating under federal and state environmental laws and regulations for converting solid waste into usable energy and for reducing the volume of solid waste. The recovery of energy may include mass burning or refuse-derived fuel incineration, or other means of using the heat of combustion of solid waste that involves high temperature (above twelve hundred degrees Fahrenheit). ([WAC 173-350-100](https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=173-350-100))

**EPA Food Waste Hierarchy** – The Federal tiered system that promotes food waste prevention, in a tiered diagram, with source reduction at the top, then feeding people, feeding animals, feeding industrial conversion efforts, landfilling, incineration.

**Food** – Food or drink products for human consumption.

**Food Hub** - A centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products.

**Food rescue** - The process of collecting surplus food and donating it to organizations that serve people who need it.

**Food system** - The inter-related resources, inputs, production, transport, processing, manufacturing, retailing, and consumption of food as well as its impacts on environment, health, and society. Food systems are in a continuous state of change and adaptation.

**Food waste** - Waste from fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy products, fish, shellfish, nuts, seeds, grains, and similar materials that result from the storage, preparation, cooking, handling, selling, or serving of food for human consumption. “Food waste" includes, but is not limited to, excess, spoiled, or unusable food and includes inedible parts commonly associated with food preparation such as pits, shells, bones, and peels. "Food waste" does not include dead animals not intended for human consumption or animal excrement. ([RCW 70A.205.715](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.205.715))

**Food Waste Reduction Act** - ESHB 1114 – (RCW 70A.205.715)

**Good Samaritan Food Donation Act:** The Good Samaritan Food Donation Act under [Chapter 69.80.031 RCW](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=69.80.031), provides limited liability protection, both criminal and civil, for people who make good faith donations of food products to feed the hungry. This means the donor must act in “good faith” and donate “apparently wholesome foods.” The donor must follow food safety standards and handle food safely. The act does not release donors or hunger relief agencies from the duty of acting responsibly. Operate with judgment and diligence to make sure food is safe and wholesome.

**Greenhouse gas(es) (ghg)** - Includes methane (CH4), carbon dioxide (CO2), Nitrous Oxide (N2O), Water (H2O), and Ozone (O3) that absorb and emit infrared radiation which in turn warms the planet.

**Hunger Relief Organization (HRO**)– An organization that works to capture edible food from grocery stores, restaurants, and individual donors for distribution to those in need.

**Imperfect produce** – U.S produce grading standards assign “grades” to produce that indicate levels of “perfection.” “Imperfect produce” includes fruits and vegetables that do not meet grading specifications due to color irregularities, scars, damage, size, or shape, but are otherwise edible and nutritious.

**Jurisdictional Health Department (JHD)/ Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJ)** - A city, county, city county, or district public health department.

 **K-12** – Common designation for US schools – grades kindergarten (K) thru senior class in high school (12).

**Local** - A limited geographic area that can include neighborhoods, communities, cities and counties.

**Local government** – A local governing body that can include city and county governments.

**Pacific Coast Collaborative (PCC)** – A collaboration between California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and select local governments within those jurisdictions that promotes efforts to accelerate the transformation of energy systems, buildings, transportation, and food waste management within the region.

**Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)** – An accounting system for waste disposal through which people pay a graduated disposal rate based on the amount of waste they put out for collection (size of collection cart or number of bags).

**Prevention** – Avoiding the wasting of food in the first place and represents the greatest potential for cost savings and environmental benefits for businesses, governments, and consumers. (Also known as source reduction.) ([RCW 70A.205.715](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.205.715))

[**Public Participation Grants (PPG**)](ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Payments-contracts-grants/Grants-loans/Find-a-grant-or-loan/Public-participation-grants) – A Washington Department of Ecology grant program that provides funding to individuals and not-for-profit public interest organizations to increase public understanding and involvement in cleaning up contaminated sites and improving recycling and waste management

**Recovery** - The processing of inedible food waste to extract value from it, through composting, anaerobic digestion, or for use as animal feedstock. ([RCW 70A.205.715](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.205.715))

**Shelf-life** – The estimated time a food product will remain safe for human consumption.

**Supply chain** - A network between a company and its suppliers to produce and distribute a specific product to the final buyer. This network includes different activities, people, entities, information, and resources. The supply chain also represents the steps it takes to get the product or service from its original state to the customer.

**Sustainable food system** - A system that is profitable throughout, ensuring economic stability, has broad-based benefits for society, securing social sustainability, and that it has a positive or neutral impact on the natural resource environment, safeguarding the sustainability of the environment.

**Value-added food processing hub** - Small scale, community-oriented food processing cooperatives to minimally process select crops, primarily from small and mid-sized farms, or to re-package large quantities of food into smaller packages for individual or small group use.

**Wasted food** - The edible portion of food waste. ([RCW 70A.205.715](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.205.715))

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## Executive Summary

In 2024, the Washington State Legislature passed HB 2301, directing the Department of Ecology to establish a Food Donation Workgroup to identify ways to improve the rescue of edible food from commercial sources. This effort supports the state’s broader goal to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030, as outlined in the 2019 Food Waste Reduction Act. With one in six Washingtonians relying on food assistance (WSDA) and an estimated 480 tons of food waste coming from commercial generators annually, there is a significant opportunity to expand food rescue efforts (ReFED).

From July 2024 to April 2025, Ecology convened eight meetings with 41 Workgroup members, gathering input through discussions, surveys, recommendation worksheets, and a review of national best practices. Analysis revealed consistent challenges—such as limited funding, staffing, infrastructure, and logistics—as well as opportunities for stronger collaboration and standardized practices across sectors.

The Workgroup identified 18 recommendations to enhance Washington’s food donation systems. [Include statement on if/where consensus was not reached] Key priorities include expanding funding, creating tax incentives, improving transportation and storage infrastructure, supporting education and outreach, and increasing data and mapping tools. These recommendations aim to reduce edible food waste, strengthen the statewide food recovery network, and ensure more nutritious food reaches those in need.

## Introduction

### Background

In 2024, the Washington State Legislature passed [House Bill 2301](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=2301&Initiative=false&Year=2023). Section 701 of the bill ([Appendix A](#_Appendix_A._Legislative_1)) directed the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) to convene a Food Donation Workgroup (“the Workgroup”) to study and recommend strategies for improving the rescue of edible food from commercial generators, including food service providers, grocery stores, and food processors.

This directive comes at a critical time. While approximately one in six Washingtonians rely on food banks, pantries, or meal programs for assistance, an estimated 40% of the food produced in the United States is wasted (WSDA, DATE). A significant portion of this food is lost along the supply chain before it can reach those in need. Common barriers to edible food rescue include limited storage and transportation capacity, as well as insufficient funding and staffing.

According to the *Draft 2024 Washington State Hunger Relief Capacity Report*, 77% of participating organizations serve their communities through food pantries. Although the overall number of organizations reporting capacity challenges has declined slightly, the top five barriers remain consistent: availability of volunteers (59%), freezer space (59%), refrigerated space (59%), dry storage space (48%), and access to other necessary supplies (38%). Notably, 5.6% of organizations continue to refuse food donations due to capacity limitations—highlighting an ongoing gap between surplus and need.

Washington’s commitment to addressing food waste is not new. In 2019, the Legislature unanimously passed the Food Waste Reduction Act ([RCW 70A.205.715](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=2301&Initiative=false&Year=2023)), which set statewide goals to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030, relative to 2015 levels. A key component of this goal is the reduction of wasted edible food.

Commercial food generators in Washington are estimated to contribute approximately [480 tons of food waste](https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break_by=sector&indicator=tons-surplus&state=WA&view=detail&year=2023), representing 13.1% of the state’s overall food loss. This represents a significant opportunity to advance food rescue initiatives and move closer to meeting the 2030 food waste reduction goals.

The Workgroup was established to address these challenges and support the state’s broader efforts to reduce food waste. The Workgroup focused on three strategies to increase access to edible surplus food and to keep food out of landfills: preventing food waste at the source, rescuing surplus edible food, and managing remaining materials through recovery systems such as composting or anaerobic digestion. Through collaborative partnerships and ongoing dialogue, the Workgroup identified actionable recommendations grounded in research and stakeholder input.

## Research Summary

### Research Process

The Food Donation Workgroup’s research process was designed to develop actionable recommendations to improve food donation practices in Washington State. Between July and November 2024 and again from January through April 2025, the Department of Ecology facilitated this work in close collaboration with 41 Workgroup members ([Appendix E](#_Appendix_E._Workgroup)).

Over the course of eight meetings, Ecology and Workgroup members identified 18 actionable recommendations. Meetings were held monthly, providing a forum for members to discuss barriers, share experiences, and explore potential solutions related to food donation and recovery. [Statement on where consensus was not reached if needed]

**Data Collection and Engagement**
Initial data collection took place from July to November 2024 through meetings and surveys. Monthly surveys, structured around key research questions from the legislative directive, were used to gather additional insights. Survey responses were analyzed using SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), frequency analysis, and thematic analysis. This process revealed 10 recurring themes: Logistics, Partnerships, Infrastructure, Incentives, Technology, Best Practices, Policies, Pilots, Transportation, and Metrics.

**Recommendation Worksheets**
From August to November 2024, Ecology solicited detailed proposals through recommendation worksheets from Workgroup members and the public ([Appendix D](#_D._Recommendation_Worksheet)). A total of 30 worksheets were submitted—27 from members across 25 organizations, and 2 from public contributors.

Key themes from these recommendations included:

* **Funding, Staffing, and Incentives:** A strong emphasis on the need for sustained funding and workforce capacity to support food donation, aligning with priorities in the *Use Food Well Washington (UFWW) Plan*.
* **Support for Research and Outreach:** Members identified a critical need for expanded technical assistance, research, and outreach—particularly for the Food Center and agency partners—to enhance statewide food rescue infrastructure.

**Literature Review**
To supplement input from the Workgroup, Ecology conducted a literature review of best practices, barriers, and opportunities in food donation from other jurisdictions. This helped contextualize the recommendations within broader regional and national efforts.

Key Research Insights
The process yielded valuable insights into the ongoing challenges and opportunities within the food donation system.

The Workgroup identified key systemic barriers and opportunities:

* **Funding and Staffing** remain critical gaps for organizations involved in food recovery.
* **Infrastructure Challenges**, like transportation and cold storage, limit donation capacity.
* **Collaboration and Standardization** across sectors are needed to streamline food rescue operations.

These findings form the foundation for the Workgroup’s final recommendations and align closely with Washington’s statewide goals under the UFWW Plan and the 2030 food waste reduction targets.

[Space for graphics or other summary info]

## Workgroup Recommendations

### Recommendations Summary

1. Fund the Washington Commodities Donation Grant Program
2. Develop State-Level Tax Incentives to Increase Donation of Edible Food
3. Create a Voluntary State Food Rescue Fund Through a Point-Of-Sale “Round Up” Fee
4. Evaluate Opportunities for Carbon Offset Credit Generation from Food Donation
5. Expand Washington State’s Farm to School Program
6. Invest in School Food Rescue Infrastructure and Programs
7. Support a Comprehensive Approach to Food Donation Transportation Infrastructure
8. Fund Food Center Grants and Pilots to Support Transportation, Cold Storage, and Food Donation Infrastructure
9. Fund Local Health Jurisdictions to Create Standardized Best Practices for Documenting and Tracking Food Donations
10. Provide Alternative Funding Mechanisms to Help HROs Hire Staff to Secure More Donations
11. Support HROs in Properly Managing Inedible Food by Reducing Waste Management Costs
12. Enhance Accessibility and Flexibility of Public Grant Funding
13. Identify Barriers and Standardize Food Donation Best Practices
14. Support the Food Center Education and Outreach Campaigns
15. Support the Food Data Hub to increase access to standardized data tracking
16. Fund a Statewide Collaborative Food Donation and Recovery Map
17. Strengthen and Streamline Food Rescue by Supporting Existing Infrastructure and Collaboration
18. Create a No-Fee Certification Process for Food Donation

### Fund the Washington Commodities Donation Grant Program

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 16 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 0 |

**Recommendation:** Fund the [Washington Commodities Donation Grant Program](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=43.23.330).

Washington farmers and processors are eager to donate nutritious food, but transportation costs to hunger relief organizations create an economic barrier. Sustaining funding for the Washington Commodities Donation Program (WCDP) would help eliminate this barrier and increase food donations to those in need.

Run by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), the WCDP redirects surplus food to Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs), preventing waste. Initially funded with one-time money in state fiscal year 2025 (SFY2025), sustained funding through the [Climate Commitment Act (CCA)](https://ecology.wa.gov/Air-Climate/Climate-Commitment-Act) could significantly increase donations of locally sourced food ([Food Lifeline](https://foodlifeline.org/article/food-lifeline-endorses-campaign-to-maintain-washingtons-climate-commitment-act)).

This recommendation supports diversifying outreach and applicants as funding is maintained. The Workgroup found that applying the [HEAL Act](https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/environmental-justice/heal) to the RFP process could expand the program to diverse groups. Collaborations with the [Department of Enterprise Services](https://des.wa.gov/about/agency-overview/initiatives/supplier-diversity-state-contracts), which specializes in supplier diversity, equity, and expanding bidding access, could also strengthen the program.

**Workgroup Comments:**

Funding: Unreliable or unstable funding, distribution models need to be reviewed for efficiencies, increased diversification of awards, Explore alternate funding opportunities and don’t limit to CCA.

Rec #4 maybe? Identify Unintended consequences for HRO and carbon credit, focus on prevention where there is more methane and carbon reduction benefits, Look at impacts to OML and food diversion.

### Develop State-Level Tax Incentives to Increase Donation of Edible Food

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 9 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 1 |

**Recommendation:** Develop state-level tax incentives to increase donation of edible food by:

* **Develop Tax Deductions for Food Donations**: Partner with the Department of Revenue to create state-level tax deductions or credits for businesses donating edible food to hunger relief organizations, incentivizing donations over disposal.
* **Tax Credits/Breaks**: Offer tax incentives or credits for businesses investing in food donation and waste prevention training, including deductions for training expenses and subsidies for meeting state food waste reduction goals.
* **Cover Donation-Related Costs**: Allow businesses to claim tax deductions for transportation, storage, and other donation-related expenses, reducing financial burdens and encouraging more donations.
* **Broaden Eligibility**: Expand tax incentives to include more types of businesses, such as small businesses, senior care facilities, and convenience stores, ensuring donated food meets current nutritional guidelines.
* **Simplify Process**: Streamline the tax deduction process for food donations by reducing paperwork, making it easier for businesses to participate.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Funding:** Small business can’t afford more fees, not a short term funding option

**Policy:** ensure nutritional guidelines represented, do not allow 3rd party transportation fees as charitable donations, broaden eligibility and simplify deduction process

**Incentives**: do not support a recommendation that incentivizes businesses to continue perpetuating vast quantities of food surplus because they will be rewarded for donating it, State tax doesn’t encourage quality food donation

### Create a Voluntary State Food Rescue Fund Through a Point-Of-Sale “Round Up” Fee

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 3 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 5 |

**Recommendation:** Create a food donation and rescue fund through a voluntary point-of-sale "Round Up" fee at the register.

This recommendation aims to create a sustainable funding source for food recovery by implementing a voluntary "Round Up" fee at the point of sale for food retailers. Customers would have the option to round up their purchase totals to the nearest dollar, with the difference going into a state-controlled fund. The Washington State Department of Agriculture would then distribute these funds annually to eligible and registered Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) across the state.

To avoid competing with existing fundraising efforts or placing a burden on customers, the initiative would be centered around specific events or periods focused on food waste prevention, recovery, and environmental awareness, such as Food Waste Prevention Week (4/7-4/11), Earth Day/Week (4/22-4/25), World Environment Day (6/5), and International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (9/29).

The funds raised would directly support HROs in rescuing and recovering surplus food, addressing the critical need for sustainable funding to bolster food recovery efforts and reduce food waste. This initiative aligns with broader efforts to expand funding for food recovery programs and strengthen Washington’s food donation infrastructure, while engaging consumers in supporting these vital causes.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Funding:** Concern will not generate necessary funds, more detail how funds will distribute and used, concern around staffing capacity to manage, not an effective program,

**Policy:** could be viewed negatively by consumers, wrap into CCA program, cannot deduct donation off taxes (consumers), monetary value of collected funds compared to the cost of implementation/managing funds, already have voluntary round up programs in place, I do not believe we need a state sponsored and event based voluntary round up program

**Retailers:** administrative cost on retailers, need more clarity about who is impacted (ALL retailers across state?) Should be left to the discretion of retailers to implement,

### Evaluate Opportunities for Carbon Offset Credit Generation From Food Donation

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 4 | 10 | 6 | 2 | 3 |

**Recommendation:** This recommendation calls for funding at least one full-time employee (FTE) at Ecology to evaluate opportunities for voluntary credit generation from food donation through ongoing international, national, and regional carbon markets.

By identifying opportunities for food donation to generate offset credits, we can create strong incentives for businesses to donate edible food, while providing Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) with a sustainable revenue stream. This initiative would encourage more donations of edible food and significantly reduce food waste, benefiting both the environment and those in need.

The Workgroup finds it crucial that HROs retain the credits associated with food donations, as they are the ones directly diverting food from landfills and providing it to communities. This policy would not only foster collaboration between public and private sectors, but also ensure that the organizations doing the vital work are recognized and rewarded for their efforts.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Funding:** Can existing resources be used instead of FTE ecology => FC staff?, budget proposals in session reduce CCA funding- table for now, FTE too much, look at diversifying funding outside of CCA

**Policy:** not to perpetuate a cycle of overproduction, Extremely broad and undefined, trustworthy nonprofit would act as the beneficiary for this carbon credit reimbursement, process is time-consuming and meticulous data gathering – staffing capacity at HRO level, out of scope, how does this encourage donation

\*need to fix the title to match documents

### Expand Washington State’s Farm to School Program

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 17 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

**Recommendation:** Expand the [Washinton State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Farm to School program](https://agr.wa.gov/departments/business-and-marketing-support/farm-to-school-toolkit) by allowing grants to support the purchase of surplus local food for schools. The program brings locally produced foods into K-12 school cafeterias, childcare centers, and preschools while educating students about food, agriculture, and sustainable practices.

Incorporating surplus food into this program reduces waste by diverting it from landfills, supports local farmers by creating a market for surplus produce, and strengthens the local economy. Additionally, it helps combat food insecurity by providing nutritious meals to students and offers educational opportunities for students to learn about agriculture and sustainable food systems.

By supporting the purchase of surplus food, we foster a healthier, more sustainable future for students and communities, while reducing food waste and supporting local agriculture.

**Workgroup Comments:**

 **Funding**: Lack of resources for schools to implement, title add “with grants”

**Policy:** focus on stable contract/deliveries, combine recs 5 and 1, out of scope, need to tie to food rescue and donation more for recommendations, combine with rec 6, purchase of surplus food does not limit to wasted food – out of scope

### Invest in School Food Rescue Infrastructure and Programs

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 15 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 |

**Recommendation:** Invest in food rescue infrastructure and programs within schools to reduce food waste, promote sustainability, and strengthen community engagement.

* **Food Share Programs:** Encourage school districts to implement food share tables, allowing students to donate their uneaten food, reducing waste and fostering a culture of sharing.
* **Develop Best Practices:** Collaborate with the health department to create standardized food recovery guidelines for schools, ensuring consistency and effectiveness across districts.

Schools play a pivotal role in addressing food waste in Washington State. By adopting food rescue strategies like food share programs, schools can directly contribute to meeting state waste reduction goals while nurturing a sense of community. These initiatives engage students, families, and staff in reducing waste and sharing resources, creating a culture of sustainability that extends beyond the classroom.

Moreover, as students learn about waste reduction at school, they carry these lessons into their homes, multiplying the impact throughout their communities.

By leveraging existing school infrastructure, such as kitchens, community partnerships, and local organizations, we can enhance the effectiveness of food rescue programs while minimizing costs.

This recommendation aims to fill critical gaps in the food recovery system, building a robust, sustainable network that strengthens communities and ensures the responsible use of resources. Funding for these efforts could be sourced through initiatives like the Food Center Grants.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Funding:** How will it be funded

**Policy:** capacity of school districts to implement and make changes, redirect surplus food back to students and their families, include prevention and tracking, follow federal guidelines for donation, follow DOH and LHJ food safety guidelines, offer vs serve, share tables, adequate time to eat

**Distribution:** difficult for small HRO’s due to volume and bulk donations from schools

### Support a Comprehensive Approach to Food Donation Transportation Infrastructure

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 17 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

To address the critical transportation and infrastructure challenges faced by Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) and food donors, this recommendation outlines a comprehensive approach to strengthen food donation systems across Washington State. By improving transportation networks, expanding cold storage facilities, and leveraging existing resources, we can increase the efficiency and reach of food recovery efforts, ensuring that more nutritious food is diverted from landfills and reaches communities in need.

**Key Recommendations:**

* **Expand Transportation Infrastructure:**
	1. **Cover Transportation Costs for HROs:** Provide funding or tax incentives to support HROs in hiring drivers, purchasing vehicles, and covering maintenance costs. This will help address the high costs of long-distance trucking and last-mile delivery, ensuring food reaches those in need quickly and efficiently.
	2. **Develop Smaller Drop-Off Sites:** Fund the creation of additional drop-off locations, particularly in rural areas and food deserts. These sites could include refrigerated lockers for food safety and accessibility, reducing transportation costs and easing last-mile delivery challenges.
	3. **Launch Managed Transportation Systems:** Implement an independent managed transportation system to optimize food donations, ensuring that food is delivered to HROs within 24 hours. This system would use data matching and community demographics for equitable distribution, while providing Commercial Driver’s Licensing (CDL) training opportunities.
	4. **Create Centralized Networks for Municipalities:** Establish a centralized transportation network that allows municipalities to share trucks and routes for food pickups and deliveries to HROs. This will improve coordination, reduce redundancy, and streamline the logistics of food recovery efforts.
* **Develop Cold Storage and Refrigeration Solutions:**
	1. **Create Statewide Incentives and Grants for Cold Storage:** Provide grants or incentives to help HROs and food donors fund refrigeration, freezers, and refrigerated transport. This will address the challenge of preserving perishable food for donation, ensuring fresh food is available for redistribution and reducing food waste.
	2. **Decentralized Cold-Chain Facilities:** Advocate for cold storage facilities closer to the consumer rather than relying on large, centralized warehouses. This will improve access to refrigerated storage for HROs and food donors, reducing logistical challenges and ensuring food safety.
	3. **Address High Electricity Costs for Refrigeration:** Offer support for HROs to manage the high costs of refrigeration and freezing, particularly in areas where food donations and recovery are more concentrated.
* **Leverage Existing Infrastructure and Explore Cost-Sharing Opportunities:**
	1. **Utilize Underutilized Infrastructure:** Identify and repurpose existing underutilized warehouse spaces for food storage and distribution. This can include partnerships with commercial entities to incorporate their unused spaces into the food recovery network.
	2. **Explore Cost-Sharing with Retail Partners:** Facilitate partnerships between HROs and retail businesses to share the costs of transportation, cold storage, and food diversion. By incentivizing retailers to contribute financially, we can reduce the financial burden on HROs.
* **Optimize Food Donation and Recovery Logistics:**
	1. **Develop Third-Party Transportation Solutions:** Explore partnerships with logistics companies and others to reduce HRO reliance on volunteers and improve the efficiency of food transportation networks.
	2. **Focus on Resilient Local Hubs:** Invest in building capacity for resilient local hubs throughout the state, decentralizing food recovery and last-mile distribution. This will help ensure more equitable access to food donations across all regions.

Transportation remains one of the biggest challenges in food recovery efforts. Many HROs struggle with high transportation costs, staff shortages, and limitations on refrigerated storage. By funding transportation infrastructure, creating smaller drop-off sites, and improving cold storage capacity, this recommendation aims to reduce logistical barriers, improve food safety, and ensure that more nutritious food reaches those in need. These efforts will also reduce food waste, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and promote more sustainable food recovery practices.

By funding these initiatives through existing resources, such as the Food Center grants, and fostering public-private partnerships, Washington State can build a more robust food donation transportation network that benefits both donors and hunger relief organizations while improving the efficiency and scalability of food recovery efforts.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Funding:** How will this be funded, examples of potential solutions rather than expecting FC grants to execute extensive list

**Policy**: Inappropriate for state to pay for transportation costs => rather Pilot ways to reduce costs, combine recs 7 and 8 => then have pilots as examples rather than specifics to implement, extremely vague statements for complex systems, need guiderails and understanding some current systems work.

### Fund Food Center Grants and Pilots to Support Transportation, Cold Storage, and Food Donation Infrastructure

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 17 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 |

**Recommendation:** This recommendation focuses on funding the Food Center Grants for pilot programs to support essential infrastructure improvements in the food donation supply chain. By increasing funding for transportation, cold storage, and food donation processes, we can help Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) improve their operations and meet the growing demand for rescued food. This approach will also incentivize the donation of quality food, reduce food waste, and improve the efficiency of food recovery programs.

**Key Actions:**

1. **Increase Funding to Support Research and Pilot Programs:**
	* **Pilot Transportation and Logistics Systems:** Fund pilot programs that test new food transportation networks, including small load delivery solutions and decentralized cold-storage hubs. These programs will optimize food rescue and increase efficiency.
	* **Pilot Small Load Delivery Programs:** Provide funding or incentives for pilot programs that support smaller, more frequent food deliveries. Smaller loads are easier to manage and can be more efficient for HROs that struggle with large food donations due to capacity limitations.
	* **Support Research for Food Donation Practices:** Increase funding to research best practices in food donation and waste prevention. This will help develop scalable models for food recovery across the state.
2. **Fund Food Donation and Waste Prevention Initiatives:**
	* **Incentivize Food Donation and Waste Prevention Training:** Use Food Center Grants to assist smaller businesses or schools in implementing standardized food donation practices, providing training on food waste prevention and safe donation practices.
	* **Promote Education on Food Disposal Options:** Offer grants for educational programs that teach businesses and HROs about affordable and sustainable food disposal methods, including composting, donations to local farmers, and food recovery partnerships.

This recommendation focuses on leveraging Food Center Grants to address key infrastructure gaps in food donation transportation, cold storage, and waste prevention. By supporting transportation networks, cold storage solutions, and streamlined donation processes, we can create a more efficient and sustainable food recovery system. Increased funding for pilot programs, research, and grants will help HROs expand their operations, improve food donation practices, and reduce food waste. This holistic approach will not only benefit HROs and food donors but also strengthen hunger relief efforts across the state.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Funding**: concern how to fund

**Policy**: combine recs 7 and 8, not to perpetuate a cycle of overproduction for donation's, emphasize prevention

### Direct the Department of Health to Provide Local Health Jurisdictions Guidance on Standardized Best Practices for Food Donations

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 13 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 1 |

**Recommendation:** Direct the Department of Heath to provide guidance for all local health departments on standardized best practices for food donation.

Local health jurisdictions interpret food safety laws differently, leading to confusion and inconsistency across counties, businesses, and Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs). This lack of standardization can contribute to food waste and safety concerns. The Department of Health (DOH) should work with local health jurisdictions on providing guidance for best practices and standardizing of communication between donors and HROs.

DOH’s guidance should be developed in collaboration. The process should focus on identifying challenges and barriers between the donors, HROs, and LHJ, so the DOH can prioritize best practices and standardizations that are needed to improve consistencies in interpreting food safety regulations. DOH will work within the RCW code and provide guidance on traceability, create standards for food labeling for de-packaging, temperature control, and adherence to the Good Samaritan Law.

Additional multi-year funding opportunities can provide an increase in prevention-focused technical assistance, both web based and physical pamphlets to reach additional food businesses providing additional clarity and consistency in donatable practices. Collaboration between DOH, LHJ, donors and HROs will help reduce uncertainty in what is donatable and encourage more food donations.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Policy:** How to implement without reducing food donation, unrealistic, needs more fleshing out – who will be doing the work and how it will be funded, concern with mandatory reporting and non-compliance penalties, change title to “support”

**Funding**: Add FTE to help LHJ

**Data tracking:** can help but over time, no immediate benefit, helps with understanding what is wasted and donated => BP

### Provide Alternative Funding Mechanisms to Help HROs Hire Staff to Secure More Donations

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 9 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 1 |

**Recommendation:** Provide funding mechanisms to help Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) hire staff, enabling flexible pickup schedules (including evenings and weekends) and supporting job training programs, such as a 6-month Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) program, transportation contracts, and food safety training for new employees.

HROs often rely on unreliable volunteers, leading to missed pickups, spoilage, and instability. By funding staff positions with fair wages and benefits, HROs can improve operations, reduce turnover, and increase food donations, benefiting both employees and the communities served.

To ensure sustainability, this funding should offer flexibility in staffing, including multi-year grants, and integrate with broader funding models to provide long-term stability. Additionally, the program should prioritize hiring from existing client or volunteer pools to create local employment opportunities.

Transportation remains a key challenge, and trained drivers are essential for efficient operations. Long-term, sustainable funding for staffing and transportation services should be prioritized over short-term grants.

This recommendation addresses gaps in food rescue infrastructure, fostering a self-sustaining employment model that encourages innovation and collaboration.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Policy:** Why is this a rec, how does current options change – already options out there, combine recs 7&8 , focus on infrastructure gaps,

**Funding**: Funding could be used better in other areas, long-term funding needed=> reliance on govt funding risky, how realistic is this rec.

**Title:** edited to "Identify sustainable funding for”

### Support HROs in Properly Managing Inedible Food by Reducing Waste Management Costs

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 6 | 10 | 4 | 1 | 4 |

**Recommendation:** Support Hunger Relief Organization’s (HROs) in managing inedible food by reducing waste management costs through the following actions:

* **Subsidize Waste Management Fees for HROs:** Provide subsidies or grants to lower tipping fees and waste management service costs. As food donations increase, many HROs will need more frequent or larger waste removal services. Reducing these fees will alleviate financial burdens and ensure proper disposal of inedible food.
* **Develop Flexible Diversion Programs:** Create guidelines that support various methods for diverting inedible food, including composting, anaerobic digestion, and animal feed. Allow HROs to choose the best diversion method based on their specific needs, resources, and capacity. This will enhance flexibility and efficiency in managing food waste.
* **Encourage Cost-Sharing with Retail Partners:** Facilitate partnerships between HROs and retail businesses to share the costs of waste management and food diversion. Incentivize retailers to contribute financially to the disposal of inedible food, helping reduce HROs’ financial burdens.
* **Clarify Diversion Partnerships and Expectations:** Clearly define the role of "diversion partnerships" for HROs, ensuring these collaborations are practical and manageable. Provide clear guidelines to help HROs efficiently manage inedible food.

Despite food rescue efforts, much of the donated food remains inedible or spoiled and must be disposed of properly. HROs often bear high disposal costs, creating a financial and logistical burden. By subsidizing waste management fees, developing flexible diversion programs, and fostering cost-sharing with retailers, this recommendation ensures that inedible food is diverted from landfills and managed sustainably. These measures will reduce HROs' financial strain, enhance food waste reduction efforts, and help build a more sustainable food recovery system in Washington State.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Policy:** To move to "neutral" I would suggest removing "subsidize waste mgmt fees" and also talk with the individual who described that most food is inedible. Should this be included in the narrative in this manner? Focus language on retailers responsibility to provide quality donatable food, look at possible part of a technical assistance program

**Funding:** Concern around retailers cost sharing= already strapped budget especially for small businesses, rewording to say HRO's will be subsidized or re-imbursed, support funding for flexible diversion programs

**Out of Scope**- "ancillary recommendation" I would delete "Properly" in the title

### Enhance Accessibility and Flexibility of Public Grant Funding

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 13 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 |

**Recommendation:** Enhance accessibility and flexibility of public grant funding through the following measures:

* **Equitable Access:** Simplify the application and reporting processes, eliminate matching requirements, and offer flexible funding that covers both food purchasing and administrative costs. This will ensure smaller organizations, including those serving non-English-speaking communities, can access critical resources for infrastructure and food recovery.
* **Extend Grant Cycles:** Increase grant cycles from two to four years to provide stability and allow organizations to focus on long-term food recovery. Include a mid-cycle check-in to assess progress and adjust as needed.
* **Support for Smaller Organizations:** Provide targeted technical assistance to help smaller organizations navigate the application process successfully. These organizations often face challenges due to limited resources, and simplifying the process will encourage greater participation.
* **Operational and Personnel Funding:** Increase funding for long-term support, including facilities, transportation, and personnel costs. Funds should incrementally increase to support staffing levels and ensure sustainability.

By simplifying grant processes, extending grant cycles, and increasing operational support, these changes will improve access to funding for a wider range of organizations, particularly smaller ones. This approach will enhance the sustainability of food recovery efforts and promote long-term capacity-building, ensuring a more equitable and effective food system.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Policy:** simpler application for renewal or extension of 2-year grant, don’t make sense as a standalone and would be better integrated into other grant recommendations

**Funding:** Unstable if programs end mid cycle 4=> 2 years,

### Identify Barriers and Standardize Food Donation Best Practices

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 13 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 |

**Recommendation:** TheFood Center will use a collaborative approach to develop a cohesive, statewide approach to overcome barriers to standardized food donation best practices by integrating research, incentives, and technical support for food donors and Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs).

Standardizing food donation processes will significantly improve food recovery efforts in Washington State, reducing food waste, increasing donations, and supporting hunger relief. By providing technical assistance, fostering partnerships, and ensuring the adoption of consistent procedures, we can create a sustainable, scalable solution to food waste reduction that benefits both donors and hunger relief organizations.

This collaborative approach, with its emphasis on flexibility and inclusivity, will foster long-term sustainability, positive environmental impact, and community-driven solutions to food insecurity.

This streamlined approach highlights the need for a collaborative, flexible strategy to overcome barriers in food donation. By combining research, technical support, and incentives, it ensures that food donation best practices can be easily adopted across different sectors. This recommendation makes the case for a sustainable, scalable solution to food waste and hunger relief through the following key actions:

* **Best Practice Research & SOP Development:**
	1. Collaborate with Food Businesses & Local Organizations: Direct the Food Center to research effective food donation practices and create standardized SOPs for food donation, rescue, and recovery. Ensure SOPs are adaptable for both small and large operations.
* **Focus on Prevention & Tracking:**
	1. Prioritize Waste Prevention: Encourage businesses to focus on reducing food waste at the source while using tracking systems to monitor donation streams (donated food, animal feed, compost, landfill).
	2. Implement Reporting Systems: Encourage businesses to report donation data, ensuring transparency and accountability, and offering insights into the program's effectiveness.
* **Free Audits & Technical Support:**
	1. Offer Free Support: Provide free or subsidized waste audits, technical assistance, and employee training to encourage voluntary participation in food donation best practices.
	2. Support Food Donation Apps: Partner with tech companies to create user-friendly mobile apps for tracking food waste and donations.
* **Public Recognition & Industry Collaboration:**
	1. Reward Excellence: Establish state campaigns to recognize businesses excelling in food donation and waste reduction, inspiring others to follow suit.
	2. Collaborate with Industry Groups: Partner with food industry associations to integrate standardized food donation training and best practices into their existing programs.
* **Partner with Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs):**
	1. Support Donor-HRO Collaboration: Facilitate partnerships between food businesses and HROs to streamline donations and ensure food safety.
	2. Provide Training & Resources to HROs: Equip HROs with the knowledge and resources to handle food donations effectively, focusing on food safety and best practices.
	3. Co-Develop resources: Create media, handouts, and toolkits to support donation. Resources are also needed for starting a food recovery program, including sample community agreements, and other best practices.
* **Inclusive & Multilingual Resources:**
	1. Ensure Accessibility: Provide SOPs and training in multiple languages to ensure broad accessibility, especially for communities with limited English proficiency.
	2. Adopt State Guidelines: Work with the Department of Health (DOH) and local health jurisdictions (LHJs) to create consistent, clear food safety guidelines.
* **Leverage Existing Funding:**
	1. Utilize Food Center Grants: Tap into existing funding programs like Food Center Grants to support these initiatives efficiently, avoiding the creation of new funding streams.
* **Monitor & Provide Feedback:**
	1. Track Progress: Regularly monitor businesses' food donation efforts, providing constructive feedback and recommendations to improve donation volume and food safety.

**Workgroup Comments**:

**Narrative:** broad statement, not specific about what the incentivizing to businesses would look like, best suited to target donors, word "approach" is overused, originally two separate items? It feels a bit like a word salad, likely support this recommendation if it is more clearly written.

**Title:** Title should be edited to "Provide technical assistance to address barriers and standardize..."

**Policy:** already know how to capture and distribute wasted food. Breaking down corporate barriers could help, monitoring efforts feel more adjacent to the stated goal and could be better placed in #15, overlaps with the work Food Lifeline, both donation apps and HRO partners pick up food at a store would get messy and competitive, doesn't bring along additional burdensome tasks

**Funding:** Is Food Center adequately staffed to provide free audits and on-site technical support

### Support the Food Center Education and Outreach Campaigns

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 14 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 |

**Recommendation:** Fund and expand the Food Center’s education and outreach initiatives to build strong community partnerships and drive local engagement:

* **Continue Food Waste Reduction Campaigns:** Expand the ["Use Food Well"](https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/organics-and-food-waste/sustainable-food-center/food-waste-reduction/holiday-food-waste) campaign to help individuals and businesses reduce food waste, emphasizing cost savings, practical strategies, and food rescue. Encourage surplus food donations to local food banks and hunger relief organizations, preventing waste and supporting communities.
* **Raise Awareness on Food Donation Quality:** Educate donors on the importance of quality and safety in food donations. Promote early donations through incentives and education on tax credits to encourage businesses to donate edible food earlier in its lifecycle.
* **Promote Safe Food Handling Education:** Offer training for businesses and consumers on safe food handling practices throughout the entire food lifecycle, fostering accountability and reducing waste.
* **Build and Strengthen Partnerships:** Support ongoing work to forge stronger partnerships between governments, local organizations, and food businesses. This can include initiatives like the [Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment](https://pacificcoastcollaborative.org/food-waste/) (PCFWC), which connects food businesses, government agencies, and non-profits to tackle food waste together and [Eat Local First](https://eatlocalfirst.org/). Building these local, cross-sector partnerships ensures a collective and sustained effort to reduce waste.
* **Public Recognition and Awards:** Acknowledge and celebrate businesses and community organizations that excel in food waste reduction and donations, elevating their efforts in state campaigns and events, and encouraging others to follow suit.
* **Expand ReFED Resources:** Direct the Food Center to expand [ReFED resources](https://policyfinder.refed.org/?_ga=2.186634414.685498087.1742328769-505915872.1724687035) on existing state and federal policies and incentives, ensuring local businesses and organizations are aware of available support.

The Food Center’s programs are essential in reducing food waste across Washington. By fostering community partnerships and local engagement, these efforts will raise awareness, improve food handling, and empower individuals and businesses to act, contributing to sustainable practices that benefit both communities and the environment.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Policy:** Consolidate recommendation 13 and 14, and I will support, I would delete specific reference to REFED and instead say "resources.", Relevant work including food donation and quality education and training already covered under #8, #9, and #13, partnership and resource building could be specified under #17,

**Funding**: be accomplished within existing resources?

**Title**: edited to: "Implement a statewide education and outreach campaign"

### Support the Food Data Hub to increase access to standardized data tracking

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 10 | 6 | 8 | 0 | 1 |

**Recommendation:** Support the Food Data Hub research to increase access to standardized data tracking. Data tracking supports food donation by:

* **Optimizing Logistics:** It helps coordinate collection, manage inventory, and ensure timely delivery to reduce waste and improve efficiency.
* **Identifying Needs:** It tracks donation patterns to target resources effectively and address food gaps.
* **Enhancing Accountability:** Provides detailed records for reporting to stakeholders and ensures transparency.
* **Building Partnerships:** It helps align donations with community needs and facilitates collaboration with businesses and nonprofits.
* **Measuring Impact:** Allows organizations to evaluate their success and improve strategies.
* **Incentivizing Donors:** Provides feedback to donors on the impact of their contributions, encouraging more donations.
* **Ensuring Food Safety:** Tracks handling, storage, and expiration to comply with safety regulations.

Currently, tracking donated food lacks standardization and often misses key data, like tracking inedible food quantities. The Food Center’s Food Data Hub research can support food donation by sharing best available data, data collection best practices, and increase access to standardized metrics for improved coordination. This will help Washington State meet its food surplus goals, improve food rescue efforts, and support informed decision-making across the food donation system.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Policy:** not requirements to track data on behalf of large and small retailers, could help but it will take time, money, and cooperation to roll out, clarify what data HRO's would be needed or required to submit = proprietary data

**Title:** edit title to "Create a Food Data Hub with access to standardized surplus food data tracking"

### Fund a Statewide Collaborative Food Donation and Recovery Map

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 12 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 2 |

**Recommendation:** Fund a statewide map to connect food donation organizations, distributors, Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs), transporters, and compost facilities, integrating key contact information and resources. This tool will create a centralized, accessible platform for food donors and partners to connect with local organizations, improving the efficiency of food recovery efforts.

The Food Center is currently researching the development of a map to link surplus food generators with local HROs. This recommendation expands that effort into a collaborative network of community partners, leveraging infrastructure across sectors. Key partners like the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), USDA, EPA, local health departments, and organizations such as Eat Local First and the Seattle Good Business Network will be involved, with a focus on food safety, equity, and logistics.

This map will facilitate cross-sector collaboration, connect food donors and recipients, and support disaster preparedness and emergency housing needs. It will also streamline donation processes, addressing gaps in food rescue and recovery efforts.

To maximize efficiency, existing mapping tools should be integrated to avoid duplication and enhance outreach. Integrating systems like Feeding America's proprietary data and the Eat Local First initiative will expand the map's reach and encourage greater adoption by making it useful for both sales and food rescue.

Data transparency is crucial—donation data should include context (e.g., why donors have high or low donation numbers) to foster better understanding and usage. Sustainable management and maintenance of the data must be ensured, with clear funding and long-term support plans in place.

By enhancing food donation coordination, supporting collaboration, and integrating with existing resources, this statewide map will strengthen food recovery efforts across Washington, ensuring long-term success.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Policy**: do not support the development of a public-facing statewide map as proposed, unintentionally create challenges rather than solutions, Displaying donor data publicly may lead to unintended competition among HROs, inaccurate or outdated map could result in a steady influx of inquiries to donors, creating confusion, more inclined to support this initiative if it were designed as an internal tool accessible to key stakeholders, Private market solutions seem more effective than asking the state to do this work, would help, but it will take time, money, and cooperation, proprietary information from donors

**Title**: edit title to: "Create a statewide...."

### Strengthen and Streamline Food Rescue by Supporting Existing Infrastructure and Collaboration

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 15 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 |

**Recommendation:** Strengthen and streamline food recovery efforts by supporting existing infrastructure and creating a 24/7 food rescue system that improves donation coordination, food safety, and data tracking:

* **Enhance Existing Non-Profits and Hubs:** Focus on improving the efficiency of existing food hubs and non-profit organizations. Support and strengthen current food hubs to better connect small farmers with consumers.
* **Incorporate Commercial Kitchens and Permitted Food Processing Facilities:** Ensure that commercial kitchens and food processing facilities are integrated into the food recovery process to enhance food preservation and extend shelf life.
* **Equity and Inclusivity:** Ensure that food recovery efforts are equitable, providing access to all communities, including underserved areas. This includes avoiding the creation of new hubs and instead leveraging existing infrastructure to promote greater accessibility.
* **Collaboration and Coordination:** Avoid duplicating existing food hubs and directories. Explore partnerships to maximize the impact of available resources. Consider integrating private marketplaces to connect food donations to a wider audience, stimulating local economies and supporting small-scale producers.
* **Logistics and Transportation:** Use refrigerated trucks to quickly move perishable items from hubs, ensuring minimal spoilage. A hub-and-spoke model for transportation may offer a feasible solution to overcome budget limitations while improving distribution efficiency.
* **Clearing House for Non-Food Bank Operations:** For organizations not handling distribution, establish a clearing house to efficiently allocate food to local distribution points, ensuring a streamlined, community-based approach to food recovery.
* **Centralized Communications and Secondary Marketplace:** Create a platform to notify users about available food, improving transparency and coordination. An open, live inventory system will allow recipients to view available food, fostering equitable and efficient food distribution.

Mapping and sharing existing food rescue infrastructure is essential to avoid duplicating resources. By leveraging and improving current systems, we can ensure that food rescue efforts are efficient, equitable, and sustainable while increasing overall capacity for food donations.

Workgroup Comments:

**Policy:** don't really understand the logistics behind how this would be implemented and by who, Seems redundant to #7, go beyond ECY's scope, specifics such as "use refrigerated trucks..." when this may not always be necessary

**Narrative:** mish mash of ideas. These ideas need to be distributed to other recommendations! connected to 7&8

**Funding:** how would this be funded

### Create a No-Fee Certification Process for Food Donation

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. Whole-hearted endorsement | 4. Support with Some Reservation | 3. Neutral | 2. Don’t Like but Will Support | 1. Do Not Support |
| 8 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 4 |

**Recommendation:** This recommendation supports Ecology partnering with Department of Health (DOH), Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), and local health jurisdiction partners to create a state-supported, no-fee certification process for organizations receiving and distributing donated food. This process would provide a clear and streamlined pathway for organizations, ensuring food safety and supporting increased food recovery efforts across the state without creating unnecessary barriers.

The certification process would aim to address challenges related to food donation liability and provide consistency across Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs). It would also clarify the responsibilities of Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) and donors, ensuring they meet food safety standards without imposing extra costs or creating burdens on small organizations like church soup kitchens or gleaners. Certification would be voluntary for organizations, and no fees would be charged to HROs or donors.

The process would complement existing regulations (such as the [WAC 246-215](https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-215)) and build on best practices from programs like the Public Health Seattle King County (PHSKC) registration system, ensuring consistency in registration without duplicating efforts. It would focus on nutrition and safe handling practices while promoting equity and accessibility, particularly for underserved communities.

By focusing on reducing liability concerns and enhancing the coordination of donations, this certification process will support and strengthen food recovery efforts, ultimately increasing the volume of food recovered and redistributed to those in need.

**Workgroup Comments:**

**Policy:** fee would be an additional barrier, the fundamental reality is this will quickly result in a substantial drop in food donors**.** Addressing the liability concerns/perceptions of donors may partially be addressed through focused communication, Consolidate with recommendation 9 and I will support, Certification isn't a necessary qualifier in our food recovery, but it could be an equalizer with corporate, we feel that this would in fact create unnecessary barriers, paperwork and make donating and access to donations more burdensome.

**Narrative:** I don't recall this one from before. and I don't see the justification for it

**Funding:** reservations about funding source to implement and staff, question the strength of this recommendation in terms of execution and follow up. Given the current climate of HROs losing federal and perhaps state funding,needs to be tied in with funding to support kitchens and storage facilities that need upgrades to pass health inspections.

### Areas of Future Research

## Conclusions and Looking Ahead

Washington State has an urgent and achievable opportunity to rescue more edible food, reduce waste, and feed more people. The Workgroup’s findings and recommendations represent a meaningful step toward building a more efficient, equitable, and sustainable food recovery system. With a strong foundation of research, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with existing state plans like the *Use Food Well Washington Plan*, these recommendations are both timely and actionable.

As Washington moves toward its 2030 food waste reduction goals, continued collaboration will be essential—across government agencies, Tribal partners, businesses, nonprofits, and communities. Implementing the Workgroup’s recommendations will require investment, policy support, and cross-sector coordination, but the potential benefits are clear: reduced environmental impact, stronger local food systems, and better access to nutritious food for Washingtonians.

By acting on these recommendations, Washington can lead the nation in edible food rescue and set a lasting example of how public policy, innovation, and partnerships can work together to solve complex challenges by using food well.

## Citations

[After April 22: We will move hyperlinks into citations with final recommendations]

##

## Appendices

### Appendix A. Legislative Directive

[Section 701](https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2301-S2.SL.pdf?q=20240408111253). WORKGROUP TO STUDY FOOD DONATION BY 4 BUSINESSES. (1) The department of ecology's center for sustainable 5 food management created in chapter 70A.207 RCW must convene a work 6 group to address mechanisms to improve the rescue of edible food 7 waste from commercial generators, including food service, retail 8 establishments, and processors that generate excess supply of edible 9 food. The Workgroup must consider:

 (a) Logistics to phase in edible food donation programs, including incentives

 (b) The food recovery network systems necessary to support 13 increased donations of edible food by commercial generators

(c) Assess asset gaps and food infrastructure development needs. The Workgroup must also facilitate the creation of networks and 16 partnerships to address gaps and needs and develop innovative partnerships and models where appropriate; and

(d) Actions taken, costs, and lessons learned by other 19 jurisdictions in the United States that have enacted policies focused 20 on reducing edible commercially generated food waste and from 21 voluntary pilot projects carried out by commercial generators of food waste.

(2) The department of ecology must submit a report to the legislature by September 1, 2025, containing the recommendations of the Workgroup. The Workgroup shall make recommendations using consensus-based decision making. All meetings of the Workgroup must be carried out in a virtual-only format. The report must include recommendations where general stakeholder consensus has been achieved and note varied opinions where stakeholder consensus has not been achieved.

(3) The department of ecology must select at least one member to the Workgroup from each of the following:

(a) Cities, including both small and large cities and cities located in urban and rural counties, which may be represented by an association that represents cities in Washington

(b) Counties, including both small and large counties and urban and rural counties, which may be represented by an association that represents county solid waste managers in Washington

(c) An environmental nonprofit organization that specializes in waste and recycling issues

(d) A statewide organization representing hospitality businesses

(e) A retail grocery association

(f) The department of ecology

(g) Two different nonprofit organizations that specialize in food recovery and hunger issues

 (h) Three different hunger relief organizations that represent diverse needs from throughout the state

(i) The department of agriculture

 (j) The office of the superintendent of public instruction

(k) The department of health

l) One large and one small food distribution company

(m) An organization representing food processors

(n) An organization representing food producers

(o) A technology company currently focused on food rescue in Washington; and

(p) Two open seats for appointed members of the Workgroup to nominate for department of ecology appointment if gaps in membership are identified

### Appendix B. Food Donation Workgroup

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| --- | --- |
| 2nd Harvest | Eric Williams  |
| Bellingham Food Bank | Mike Cohen  |
| Benton-Franklin Health District  | Honor Crawford |
| Careit | Alyson Schill  |
| Cascadia Produce | Jeremy Vrablik  |
| Charlie's Produce  | Cherie Barokas |
| City of Seattle  | Liz Fikejs |
| City of Spokane  | Jill Reeves |
| Clark County | Celina Montgomery  |
| Colville Confederated Tribes  | Jeanie Kent |
| Copia | Kimberly Smith |
| Divert | Holly Yanai |
| Eat Local First | Maressa Vallient  |
| Feeding Washington | Rod Wieber |
| Food Lifeline | Melinda Saletta |
| Food Northwest | Chris Cary |
| Free Food For All | Louis Terminello  |
| GoodRoots Northwest | Stacey Crnich |
| King County  | Kelsey Bailey  |
| Kittitas County Public Health Department | Melissa Schumaier |
| Leanpath | Lynn Zhang |
| Miracle Food Network  | Doug Robertson |
| Northwest Food Alliance | Chef Tom French  |
| Northwest Grocery Association | Brandon Houskeeper |
| Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  | Jessica Seale  |
| Pierce County  | Karen Hultgren  |
| Safeway/Albertsons | Chris Arndt |
| Seattle Good Business Network | Erin Adams |
| Snohomish County Health Department  | Emily Rhoden |
| Snoqualmie Tribe  | Roy Hillis |
| Sustainable Connections | Brandi Hutton |
| Tacoma-Pierce County Health District | Christina Sherman |
| Thurston County Food Bank | Dean Crabapple |
| Too Good To Go | Chris Spinelli |
| Washington Department of Health | Sammy Berg |
| Washington Food Coalition | Trish Twomey |
| Washington Food Industry Association | Katie Beeson  |
| Washington Hospitality Association | Samantha Louderback  |
| Washington State Department of Agriculture | Katie Rains  |
| Washington State Department of Ecology | Alli Kingfisher |
| Zero Waste Washington  | Heather Trim |

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### Appendix C. Community Agreements

#### Community Agreements

1. Treat other Workgroup members, facilitators, and speakers with respect.

2. Allow one person to speak at a time and listen actively to others; thinking of a rebuttal often means you are not listening.

3. Come to Workgroup meetings with an open mind.

4. Assume best intent.

5. Intend no malice with what you say, assume no malice in what you hear.

6. Represent your interests and those of your constituents while being constructive; don’t disagree just to disagree – add a solution.

7. Be present and engaged throughout the meeting

8. Come prepared to use meeting time productively

9. When possible, provide data and information to support statements

10.If you find yourself in a speaking role throughout a meeting, move back into a listening role to make space for others. If you find yourself mostly in a listening role, move into a speaking role.

### D. Recommendation Worksheet

This document is intended to assist in research efforts only. Boxes can be left blank or incomplete. Please email worksheets to FoodCenter@ecy.wa.gov.

**DATE:**

**TITLE:**

**ORGANIZATION MAKING RECOMMENDATION:**

**ANALYSIS PREPARED BY:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Summary of Issue**Please provide background on the issue the recommendation works to solve or improve. |  |
| **Summary of Recommendation**Please provide a summary of the proposed recommendation. |  |
| **Barriers and Incentives** Are there rules, legislation, or perceptions that create barriers to solving the issue? Are there incentives that would help the recommendation succeed? |  |
| **Summary of Resources** Please list and estimate the resources needed to make the recommendation happen. (For example, labor, finances, equipment, etc.) |  |
| **How do we measure and evaluate success?**Please describe any metrics or evaluation criteria that can be used to measure the success of this recommendation. |  |
| **What are the social impacts to this recommendation?** Please estimate the social benefits and value of this recommendation. |  |
| **What are the environmental impacts to this recommendation?** Please estimate the environmental benefits and value of this recommendation. |  |
| **What are the economic impacts to this recommendation?** Please estimate the economic benefits and value of this recommendation. |  |
| **Research**Please provide research or literature citations that support this recommendation. |  |
| **Are there consequences to this recommendation?** Please share any known or assumed positive or negative consequences to this recommendation. |  |
| **Any additional comments?** |  |

### Appendix E. Workgroup Meetings

#### July 30, 2024

Kick-off meeting: State of Food Rescue in Washington

Survey #1 touched on the research questions for the legislative report, challenges and opportunities for food donation and recovery.

#### August 20, 2024

Presentations by Safeway/Albertsons and Lifeline

Survey #2 focused on recommendation priorities

#### September 24, 2024

Logistics and Data

Presentations by Copia, Careit, Thurston County Food Bank and Too Good to Go

Update on Survey Summary Memo’s #1 and #2

Survey #3 focused on data collection

#### October 22, 2024

Funding and Incentives

Presentations by Leanpath, GoodRoots NW, Cascadia Produce, Seattle Good Business Network

Survey #4 focused on general pulse of recommendations from the group

#### January 21, 2025

First vote on recommendations

Presentations by Northwest Food Alliance

#### February 25, 2025

Second vote on recommendations

#### March 25, 2025

Third vote on recommendations

#### April 22, 2025

Legislative Report draft review and comments

1. www.ecology.wa.gov/contact [↑](#footnote-ref-2)