# DRAFT Food Donation Work Group Recommendations Review February Meeting

To build consensus and craft recommendation language, Ecology will conduct a monthly survey from January through March 2025. We will continue [monthly meetings](https://waecy-wa-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpde-rpjMuG9TH8EU22k7jyFQklSDET34E) to discuss and refine the recommendations. By April 2025, we will have a final set of recommendations for the Food Donation Work Group legislative report that work group members agree on with concerns clearly addressed.

**Attending monthly meetings and submitting surveys are critical** – these are important opportunities for work group members to weigh in on what will appear in the final report.

With competing interests during legislative session, we are scheduling 1:1 meetings with work group members by request. This allows another way to participate during such an important time. Email FoodCenter@ecy.wa.gov to set a meeting.

## Voting for Recommendations

Vote and share feedback through Consensus Survey #2. When voting on the recommendations, evaluate each recommendation individually. This second survey will give members an opportunity to vote on updated recommendations that were further refined based on member comments and discussions. The Ecology research team will continue to use your feedback, both your rankings and any written feedback, on each recommendation to shape future consensus surveys. For example, in the written feedback on each recommendation, you can share context on how much funding is needed for your organization, express support or concerns on existing language, or suggest improvements to the writing.

### Timeline to develop recommendations:

* **Consensus Survey #1 – January 21-February7**
	+ This survey includes the first draft of recommendations and is your opportunity to share baseline feedback.
* **January Meeting –** [**January 21, 2025, 10 am**](https://waecy-wa-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpde-rpjMuG9TH8EU22k7jyFQklSDET34E#/registration)
* **February Meeting –** [**February 25, 2005, 10 am**](https://waecy-wa-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpde-rpjMuG9TH8EU22k7jyFQklSDET34E)
* **Extra March Meeting –** [**March 11, 2025, 10 am**](https://waecy-wa-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpde-rpjMuG9TH8EU22k7jyFQklSDET34E)
	+ **This meeting was added to continue the review and discussion of the first survey results**
* **Consensus Survey #2 – March 18- March 28**
	+ This survey refines the recommendations for consensus and asks for more detailed feedback.
* **March Meeting –** [**March 25, 2025, 10 am**](https://waecy-wa-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpde-rpjMuG9TH8EU22k7jyFQklSDET34E)
* **Consensus Survey #3 – April TBD**
	+ This will be the final vote for consensus and comments on the report recommendations.
* **Legislative Report Agreement – April TBD**
* **April Meeting –** [**April 22, 2025, 10 am**](https://waecy-wa-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpde-rpjMuG9TH8EU22k7jyFQklSDET34E)
	+ This is the final meeting before we begin Ecology’s internal legislative report process.

### Voting and levels of agreement

The Food Donation Work Group will use consensus-based decision making through an agreement scale assessment process. The final report must include recommendations with general member consensus while noting areas of concern. Work Group members should see any concerns clearly and accurately articulated in the record. All Work Group members must review and approve the final report. Work Group members should see any concerns clearly and accurately articulated in the record.

Work Group members will vote on potential recommendations using the agreement scale below. This tool points to topics that need more discussion and recommendations that have broad support.

The agreement scale:

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

## Work group Recommendation Themes

Through the [Organics Management Law 2.0](https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/organics-and-food-waste/2022-organics-management-law), the legislature assigned specific topics for the work group to discuss:

* Logistics to phase in edible food donation programs, including incentives;
* The food recovery network system necessary to support increased donation of edible food by commercial generators;
* Assess asset gaps and food infrastructure development needs;
* How to facilitate the creation of networks and partnership to address gaps and needs;
* Develop innovative partnership and models where appropriate;
* Actions taken, costs, and lessons learned by other jurisdictions in the United States that have enacted policies focused on reducing edible commercially generated food waste, including studying voluntary pilot projects carried out by commercial generators.

Out of 41 work group members, 25 organizations submitted recommendations, with some offering multiple suggestions, and two public submissions, totaling to 25 consolidated recommendations for Work Group consideration.

The recommendation themes include a call for increased funding, staffing, and incentives aims to strengthen food donation efforts, aligning with the Use Food Well Washington (UFWW) Plan to build sustainable programs. Support for the Food Center and agency partners is needed, especially in research, technical assistance, and outreach to improve food donation statewide. Research and discussions highlight themes such as logistics, transportation, partnerships, and infrastructure, with challenges including funding, collaboration, and logistical barriers.

### Fund the Washington Commodities Donation Grant Program

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 21 | 13 | 4 | 2 | 0 |

**Comments:**

* **No additional costs:** Emphasize that no extra costs should be involved.
* **Focus on smaller organizations:** Highlight the importance of considering smaller organizations, not just larger ones.
* **Funding diversification:** Advocate for funding to be distributed between both Feeding America and non-Feeding America nonprofits.
* **Food system capacity issues:** Mention concerns about pumping food into a system that cannot adequately handle it.

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

The Washington Commodities Donation Program, run by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), helps fund the donation of food that would otherwise go to waste. This food is redirected to Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs). If funded by the Climate Commitment Act (CCA), the program could significantly increase the amount of locally sourced food donated by Washington farmers ([Food Lifeline](https://foodlifeline.org/article/food-lifeline-endorses-campaign-to-maintain-washingtons-climate-commitment-act)).

Washington farmers and processors are eager to donate nutritious food, but the cost of transporting it from the fields or docks to hunger relief organizations creates an economic barrier. Expanding funding for this program would help eliminate that barrier and increase food donations to those in need.

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

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 16 | 14 | 6 | 2 | 1 |

**Comments:**

* **State-Level Tax Incentives**: Are there existing state-level tax incentives for food donors, or is this only a federal benefit? It’s important to ensure state incentives complement, rather than conflict with, federal tax incentives.
* **Impact of Incentives**: Tax incentives may not be effective in increasing donations, as businesses already receiving them may not benefit further. Incentives should not shift costs to other entities or compromise existing federal incentives.
* **Funding and Administration**: Adequate funding is necessary to improve donor training and standardize donation practices. A check-and-balance system should ensure donations are usable and not wasted or composted.
* **Long-Term Funding**: Incentives could act as a long-term funding source for food donation programs, aligning with broader policy goals.
* **Quality and Risk of Donations**: There’s concern about businesses not sorting inedible food, which could burden receiving organizations with disposal. The quality of food varies, especially if sourced from convenience stores, which may increase donations of low-nutrition items.
* **Community Infrastructure**: Community infrastructure must be in place to support donations. This includes ensuring that food pantries have the capacity to accept donations and can reject items they cannot use.
* **Involving the Entire Food Chain**: Incentives should involve all parts of the food chain, from farmers to packers and shippers, as they are essential to ensuring a steady supply.
* **Legal Protections and Education**: Businesses should be educated about legal protections when making donations, ensuring they understand the safeguards in place. Additionally, mobile app usage for donation management should be taught to food businesses.
* **Focusing on Donation Types**: It may be beneficial to focus on specific types of donated food or exclude convenience stores from the scope to avoid a high influx of low-nutrient items.

**Action** Expand state-level tax incentives to increase donation of edible food by:

* **Enhance Tax Deductions for Food Donations:** Increase the state-level tax deduction or offer tax credits for businesses that donate edible food to hunger relief organizations. This creates a financial incentive for businesses, such as grocery stores, restaurants, and manufacturers, to donate surplus food instead of discarding it.
* **Cover Donation-Related Costs:** Allow businesses to claim tax deductions for transportation, storage, and other donation-related expenses. This reduces the financial burden on businesses and could incentivize more food donation.
* **Broaden Eligibility for Donations:** Expand the types of businesses that can claim tax incentives for food donations. For example, include smaller businesses, senior care facilities, and convenience stores—currently, some businesses that don’t directly produce food are excluded from the incentives.
* **Create Special Incentives for Local Donations:** Offer additional incentives for businesses that donate food sourced locally. This could encourage more donations from Washington farmers and processors, helping to address both food insecurity and local food waste.
* **Increase awareness for tax incentives:** Increase awareness of these tax incentives through outreach programs, workshops, or partnerships with local business organizations. Many businesses may not be aware of existing incentives, and education could lead to more participation.
* **Simplify Process:** Streamline the process for claiming tax deductions for food donations. Reducing paperwork and making the process easier for businesses could increase participation in food donation programs.
* **Build Partnerships:** Work with local Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) to connect businesses with donation opportunities and help with logistics. By fostering partnerships, businesses may be more likely to donate surplus food.

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

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 6 | 11 | 8 | 2 | 13 |

**Comments:**

* **Voluntary Program**: A voluntary, short-term campaign like the "Use Food Well" initiative could encourage retailers to participate, with consumers voluntarily choosing to fund the program sporadically. More stable funding sources are needed for long-term consistency.
* **Consumer Education and Fund Distribution**: It’s unclear who would fund consumer education efforts to encourage round-ups or whether there would be financial support for retailers to execute these transactions.
* **Round-Up Option**: Retailers should have the option (but not the obligation) to offer a round-up donation feature at checkout, integrating this into their existing donation programs if they choose. The round-up should remain voluntary, not mandatory.
* **Program Enforcement and Management**: The program’s enforcement and management structure is unclear, especially in terms of how funds will be collected and distributed. Clarifying this process is necessary, as it could be costly and difficult to manage equitably.
* **Support for Food Waste Reduction**: Exemptions for food sales from venues focused on reducing food waste should be considered. These initiatives, which lower prices, should not be hindered by additional regulations.
* **Cost vs. Value of Round-Up**: The financial impact of round-up fees versus the cost of running the program needs to be clarified. There’s a lack of understanding about whether the funds raised would justify the implementation and management costs.
* **Impact on Local Businesses**: The mandatory or optional nature of this program could create burdens for local businesses, especially given the variety of POS systems. Many businesses already donate to charities and may not want to be required to implement a round-up program.
* **Negative Public Perception**: A mandatory round-up program could generate negative perceptions, especially if consumers are already contributing through other charitable initiatives. This could lead to a sense of being "punished" for being good consumers.
* **Regressive Nature of Sales Taxes**: Round-up initiatives could disproportionately affect lower-income consumers, as they would be asked to fund programs that benefit low-income groups, adding to the burden on those who can least afford it.
* **Alternative Funding Models**: Businesses already partner with non-profits to donate, depending on the season or other circumstances. Given the current funding situation, the round-up initiative may not be necessary at this time.

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

This proposal aims to create a sustainable funding program by implementing a voluntary "Round Up" fee at the point of sale for all 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 funds collected would then be distributed annually to eligible and registered Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) across Washington State.

The money raised would directly support the efforts of HROs in rescuing and recovering surplus food. This initiative addresses the critical need for funding mechanisms to bolster HROs and reduce food waste, while engaging consumers in supporting food recovery efforts. This recommendation aligns with efforts to expand funding for food recovery programs and strengthen the state’s food donation infrastructure.

### Develop Rules and Incentives Prohibiting the Dumping of Inedible Food to Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs)

**January Survey Consensus Results**

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

**Comments:**

* **Inclusion of nutrition policies:** Donating foods that contradict an HRO’s (Hunger Relief Organization) nutrition policy should be avoided to prevent relationship strain between HROs and retailers/donors.
* **Prohibition of sending unusable food to food banks:** Sending food that is unusable to food banks for donation collection should be penalized or fined.
* **Support for food banks as sorting facilities:** Food banks should be supported as sorting centers for directing food to composting, livestock feed, or processing.
* **Concerns with onsite retail food donations:** Offering free food onsite at retail locations could cause confusion and disrupt existing donation schedules.
* **Simplified donation programs:** Donation programs should remain straightforward and consistent.
* **HROs’ right to refuse donations:** HROs should have the ability to refuse donations if needed.
* **Support for grants on food waste prevention:** Support for grants that focus on preventing food waste by businesses and improving donation processes. Food Center Grants.
* **Education and resources for food disposal:** Provide education and resources for affordable food disposal options, such as donations to local farmers or composting.
* **Flagging "donation dumping":** Create a system for nonprofits to flag donors who are “dumping” food and require further training or a pause in donation pickups until the issue is resolved.
* **Penalties for waste:** Language should include penalties or meaningful actions related to donation dumping, like tax credits being reduced if food must go directly to composting.
* **Discounted food on mobile apps:** Encourage the sale of discounted food via mobile applications, providing businesses with a menu of donation and sale options.
* **No penalties for good faith donations:** Donations made in good faith should not be penalized.
* **Concerns with rule-making for dumping:** Start with a study to determine the scope of food dumping before implementing rules or enforcement.
* **HROs as final line of defense:** HROs should have the final say on donations, with more education and prevention opportunities available.
* **Incentivizing quality donations:** Incentivize donations of quality food and standardize donation practices across platforms and distribution.
* **Caution with food preservation language:** Be cautious with language around incentivizing businesses to donate food earlier to avoid promoting overproduction or excessive waste.
* **Monitoring food safety:** Concerns about food safety and how it would be monitored for donated food preservation, as well as liability issues for retailers offering food for free.
* **Concerns about illegal liability risks:** Ensure that donations are not prohibited by laws, such as dumpster diving bans, and that there are no legal or liability risks for retailers.
* **No support for penalizing human error:** Punishing businesses for good faith donations or human error is concerning, and clearer language is needed.
* **Clarification on "dumping":** Only penalize intentional "dumping" of food, not accidental mistakes.

**Action:** Establish rules and incentives that prevent the donation of inedible or unsaleable food to Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) by:

* **Rulemaking:** Directing Ecology to work with Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and Commerce on a statewide rulemaking process.
* **Earlier Donations:** Incentivizing businesses to donate a higher percentage of edible food earlier in the food life cycle. This could be achieved through increased tax credit incentives and widespread education about available incentives, encouraging businesses to donate food with longer shelf lives.
* **Free food onsite:** Offering incentives for retailers to make “unsaleable” food available for free to consumers onsite, rather than donating food that may no longer be edible or safe for consumption.
* **Food Preservation:** Promoting the use of food preservation services as part of the donation cycle to extend the shelf life of food before it reaches HROs.
* **Grants and Prevention:** Supporting Food Center grants that focus on preventing food waste by food businesses and improving their food donation processes.

This proposal aims to create a more effective donation process by encouraging businesses to donate quality food before it becomes unsellable. It also supports efforts to reduce food waste, improve food quality, and strengthen hunger relief programs.

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

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 30 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 1 |

**Comments:**

* **Title Revision**: The title needs to be revised, as many points go beyond the "farm" aspect.
* **Inventory Management Grants**: Include grants to support inventory management solutions for better food donation and distribution. Food Center Grants.
* **ELFC and The Wholesale Finder**: The Wholesale Finder, a derivative of the WA Food & Farm Finder, provides a robust database to connect producers with school districts. It requires $200,000 annually to cover its standard operating costs.
* **Educational Campaigns**: Add educational campaigns that focus on the proper valuation of food and emphasize the importance of minimizing food waste.
* **Out of Scope for Current Bill**: Issues related to recovered food in schools are beyond the scope of the current bill and do not need to be included in the recommendations.
	1. What is the relationship between farms, food rescue, and our school systems?
	2. What opportunities do we have to bridge these connections?
* **School Limitations**: Schools are unable to accept recovered food due to limited time and staff for prepping raw food. They also need kitchen upgrades, permits, and pest management to handle food processing.
* **Staffing and Support for Schools**: Questions remain on how schools will get the additional staff needed to manage recovered food properly.

**Action:** 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) available grants to support buying local food for schools. Farm to school is a model for programming and activities that includes serving locally produced foods in cafeterias and child nutrition programs in K-12 schools, childcare, and preschools; educating students about food and agriculture; and school gardens or other farm-based education.

### Develop Financial Incentives and Reduce Barriers for Standardized Food Donation Best Practices

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 23 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 0 |

**Comments:**

* **Prevention and Tracking Systems:** Focus on preventing food waste first, and use tracking systems to enable donations. Implement reporting on actual waste amounts, detailing the streams of donation, animal feed, compost, and landfill.
* **Free Audits and Technical Assistance:** Provide free audits, technical assistance, and training to businesses without any penalties for not following specific practices. Emphasize best practices over mandatory processes to encourage voluntary participation.
* **Food Waste Mobile Apps:** Include a component to support the development of food waste mobile applications. Encourage innovation by fostering partnerships with tech companies, government bodies, and community organizations to create modern solutions for reducing food waste.
* **Reporting and Certification Concerns:** Requiring annual reporting on training impact could discourage food donations. Avoid recommending a statewide certification program, as it may not increase donations or recovery rates and could create unnecessary complexity.
* **Use of New Grant Programs:** Leverage existing grant programs to fund these initiatives rather than consolidating them into a single recommendation, as the grants can support many of the ideas already proposed. Food Center Grants.

**Action:** Develop financial incentives and reduce barriers for standardized food donation best practices by:

* **Best Practice Research**: Direct the Food Center to collaborate with food businesses and local organizations to develop a comprehensive approach to employee training, engagement, and adoption of best practices for food donation.
* **Tax Credits/Breaks**: Offer tax incentives or credits to businesses that invest in food donation and waste prevention training, including deductions for training expenses or subsidies for businesses meeting state food waste reduction goals.
* **Grant Programs**: Establish funding opportunities, especially for smaller businesses, to cover the costs of implementing standardized food donation and waste prevention training. Food Center Grants.
* **Statewide Certification Program**: Create a state-sponsored certification program for businesses completing training on food donation and waste reduction, offering public recognition for their sustainability efforts.
* **Public Recognition and Awards**: Recognize and award businesses excelling in food waste reduction and donations, highlighting them in state campaigns and events.
* **Collaborate with Industry Associations**: Work with food industry groups to incorporate standardized training into their programs, helping disseminate materials and resources to businesses.
* **Provide Technical Assistance**: Offer free or subsidized support, such as on-site consultations and waste audits, to help businesses implement effective waste reduction and donation practices.
* **Monitoring and Reporting**: Track businesses' progress on food donation and waste reduction training, providing feedback and recommendations for improvement.
* **Annual Reporting on Training Impact**: Require businesses to report the impact of their training and food waste reduction efforts annually, ensuring accountability and long-term commitment.
* **Encourage Partnerships with Recovery Organizations**: Promote collaboration between food businesses and recovery organizations, supporting businesses that adopt standard practices for food donation through incentives and technical assistance.

### Create a Work Group to Research and Develop a Food Waste Protocol that Could be Adopted by the Carbon Registries Specific to the Washington State Carbon Market

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 7 | 6 | 18 | 3 | 6 |

**Comments:**

* **Concerns about the integrity of the carbon market:** Uncertainty about how reliable the carbon market would be for food waste reduction efforts.
* **Existing Food Waste Reduction Protocol:** A national protocol for food waste reduction already exists and could potentially be adopted instead of creating a new one.
* **Polluters paying for carbon impacts:** There's interest in holding polluters accountable for the full spectrum of impacts carbon emissions have on food systems and infrastructure resilience.
* **Ownership of carbon credits:** Clarification needed on who owns the carbon credit; it is understood that the food donor owns it.
* **High threshold for nonprofits to profit:** Nonprofits would need to achieve a very high level of food rescue to make significant income (e.g., $1,000) from the carbon market.
* **Incentives for infrastructure support:** The model supports infrastructure development via incentives, and it’s a good metric to track carbon usage reductions or increases.
* **Lack of connection to donation mission:** The carbon market proposal doesn’t seem directly related to the mission of the donation working group, which focuses on food rescue.
* **Opposition to a new work group:** Discomfort with the recommendation to create another work group, as it seems redundant and might be better handled separately.
* **Too early for the Carbon Market proposal:** Concerns that it’s premature to propose such a system for the Carbon Market.
* **Need for standardization and data collection:** Emphasis on the need for better data collection, standardization, and widespread adoption before diving into a carbon credit market.
* **Incentivizing quantity over quality:** Concern that the carbon market could incentivize donations based on quantity, not usefulness or nutritional quality, which could harm HROs.
* **Complexity and cost concerns:** The carbon market proposal is seen as a complex program with high costs and strict rules, making it not worth the effort.
* **Lack of expressed need in the community:** This proposal has not been identified as a fundamental need by those involved in food waste reduction in the area.
* **Big players vs. small businesses:** Concern about the imbalance between large players and small businesses or local communities, and how it may affect the effectiveness of the proposal.
* **Uncertainty about how it supports Hunger Relief Organizations:** There’s a question about how the carbon credit system would help create stable revenue for HROs, as the credits belong to the donor, not the recipient.

**Action:** The work group will explore effective practices to design protocols for the compliance carbon market that could be adopted by the carbon registries specific to the Washington State. These protocols will guide the development of a carbon credit system under the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) to support food waste reduction and food rescue efforts.

In 2019, the Washington Legislature passed the [**Food Waste Reduction Act**](https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=70A.205.715) to reduce food waste, particularly edible food, and set statewide reduction goals. To meet greenhouse gas targets, the[**Climate Commitment Act**](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.65) (2021) created a market-based program aimed at reducing carbon pollution.

The compliance market could provide incentives for food donation and help create stable revenue for Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs), encouraging more edible food donations while addressing food waste.

### Increase Funding for Local Health Jurisdictions to Develop, Monitor, and Enforce a Standardized System for Documenting and Tracking Food Donations

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 14 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 5 |

**Comments:**

* **Tracking to prevent waste & enable donations:** Emphasize the importance of tracking to prevent waste and maximize donations of excess edible food.
* **Encourage standardization of regulations:** Support for standardized food safety regulations across jurisdictions.
* **Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJ) involvement:** Local Health Jurisdictions should be involved, but they are already struggling with enforcement due to lack of funding and staffing.
* **Need for state-level resources:** Funding could provide additional resources and staff at the state level to assist LHJs.
* **Inconsistent language in the proposal:** The action, title, and description of the proposal are inconsistent and need clarification—focus on whether it’s about standardizing food safety laws or tracking donations.
* **Support for a unified system:** Recommend a unified system and training for LHJs, with oversight from the Department of Health (DOH).
* **Preempt local government policies:** A standard would require the state to prevent local governments from passing their own policies on food safety.
* **Confusion in wording:** The wording is confusing regarding funding for LHJs and tracking food donations, and whether it includes tracking nutritional quality.
* **Cost concerns:** The proposal could be costly and may divert funding from other hunger relief programs, potentially reducing donations.
* **Existing certification standards:** There is no need to reinvent food safety standards when existing certifications (e.g., ServSafe, FDA) can safely manage food donations.
* **DOH capacity concerns:** Doubts about the Department of Health’s capacity to monitor and enforce these proposed changes.
* **Existing systems at food banks:** Food banks already have systems for documenting donations, so the proposal may duplicate efforts without increasing food donations.
* **Time-consuming process:** Documentation and monitoring of food donations is time-consuming, and food safety rules can be unclear at times.
* **Need for clarification from WA DOH:** Greater clarification and priority from the Washington Department of Health is needed to streamline food safety rules.
* **No mandated enforcement:** There should be no mandates or enforcement for voluntary food donations to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and costs.
* **Avoid new taxes or fees:** Funding should not increase business costs or rely on new taxes or fees.
* **Avoid bureaucratic burdens:** The proposal could add unnecessary rules and bureaucracy, diverting money from food recovery efforts.
* **Burden on donors for documentation:** Support for making donors responsible for documenting and tracking food donations rather than nonprofits.
* **Fear of burden on nonprofits:** Concern that the proposal will eventually create an undue burden on nonprofits, making food donation processes more difficult.

**Action**: Increase funding to local health departments to establish and oversee a uniform system for food donation documentation, ensuring compliance with food safety standards.

Local health jurisdictions interpret food safety laws differently, which can lead to confusion and inconsistency across counties, businesses, and Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs). This lack of standardization can result in food waste and safety concerns. By creating clear, standardized food safety regulations, including proper temperature control, food labeling, and adherence to the Good Samaritan Law, food donations can be better managed, reducing waste and improving safety. This approach will help extend food shelf life, minimize liability, and support more food donations. Increased staffing can also lead to more prevention-focused technical assistance as more food businesses are reached.

### Invest inFood Waste Prevention Infrastructure and Programs at Schools

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 24 | 11 | 4 | 0 | 1 |

**Comments:**

* **Focused Funds for Long-Term Efficiencies**: Provide targeted funds for purchasing equipment that improves long-term food efficiencies, including technologies for tracking both pre-consumer and post-consumer food waste.
* **Food Waste Prevention Infrastructure**: Include broader food waste prevention infrastructure beyond milk dispensers, such as share tables and refrigerators in schools where students can access food and take it home, while maintaining health and safety standards.
* **Grant Support for Share Tables**: The grant program should support the expansion of share table refrigerators in schools, ensuring kids have access to surplus food, with the appropriate infrastructure and safety measures in place. Food Center Grants.
* **Encouraging Participation in Schools**: Schools and staff are uniquely positioned to decide how best to reduce food waste, but participation will depend on district willingness. The public school system and food service providers are often resistant to change, and staff and volunteers face time constraints.
* **Challenges with Milk Dispensers**: Milk dispensers are not relevant to food donation efforts and should be considered out of scope. They require refrigerated equipment, reusable cups that need on-site cleaning, or single-use cups, which create additional waste. They also increase food service staff workload.
* **Supporting Existing Relationships**: Ensure that support is provided to organizations and individuals already working with schools and districts, rather than creating additional burdens. These groups already have established relationships and are better positioned to implement change.
* **Federal Requirements and Grant Concerns**: Schools must comply with USDA requirements to avoid losing federal funds, and the need for schools to apply for grants individually could be an administrative burden, which should be considered when designing grant programs. Food Center Grants.

**Action:** Invest in food waste prevention infrastructure and programs at schools:

* **Food Share Programs**: Offer incentives for school districts to implement food share tables, where students can give their uneaten food to others. This reduces waste and helps ensure that food is not thrown away.
* **Create Best Practices**: Work with the health department to develop best practices for food recovery programs in schools. These guidelines can help create consistency across school districts of varying sizes.

Schools are an important setting for addressing food waste in Washington State. By implementing waste reduction strategies like milk dispensers and food share programs, schools can contribute to state waste reduction goals and educate students about reducing waste at home. This recommendation focuses on identifying gaps and building the necessary infrastructure to support these initiatives. Funding for this recommendation may be sourced through the Food Center Grants.

### Increase Accessibility and Flexibility of Public Grant Funding

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 25 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 1 |

**Comments:**

* **Support for Smaller Organizations**: Allow vital organizations, especially smaller ones serving non-English-speaking communities, easier access to funding. A simpler application process for "renewal" of two-year grants would help increase participation.
* **Technical Assistance for Applicants**: Provide direct technical assistance (TA) to help applicants navigate the application process, increasing access and ensuring more organizations can apply successfully.
* **Operational Funding for Long-Term Support**: Increase operational funding for facilities and transportation needed to rescue food. Funding should cover longer durations (more than 12 months) to ensure sustainability.
* **Personnel Costs**: Include personnel costs in grant funding, with funds increasing incrementally to maintain staffing levels necessary for the work to continue effectively.
* **Challenges for Smaller HROs**: It’s essential to make it easier for smaller hunger relief organizations (HROs) to access funds, as these groups often face significant challenges due to limited ongoing funding.
* **Inconsistent Funding for Food Purchasing**: Since the focus is on food donation, it seems inconsistent to include the "purchasing of food" as a fundable item within food donation grants.
* **Stability of Long-Term Funding**: The program could remain unstable if funding is cut over the course of a four-year cycle, rather than being allocated through a consistent two-year cycle.
* **Applicability of Grants**: Clarify which grants these recommendations apply to, and whether they will be incorporated into the grant rulemaking planned by the Department of Ecology. Food Center Grants.
	1. **Responsibility for Funding**: A question remains about who will be responsible for funding these initiatives, which needs to be addressed to ensure the sustainability of the program.

**Action:** Increase accessibility and flexibility of public grant funding through:

* **Equitable Access**: Make grants more accessible by offering flexible funding, simple applications and reporting, covering food purchasing and administrative costs, and eliminating matching requirements. Increasing access to grant recipients, including food businesses, is important to make critical infrastructure and measurement investments at the food business level.
* **Extend Grant Cycles**: Extend grant cycles from two to four years to provide stability, support job creation, and allow organizations to focus on long-term food recovery efforts. Include a mid-cycle check-in to assess progress and make necessary adjustments.

Grant programs are crucial for increasing capacity and expanding food waste reduction efforts. However, limitations in funding consistency and complexity hinder many organizations. By simplifying the process and offering flexible, longer grant cycles, grants will be more accessible to both small and large organizations, helping them achieve sustainable food recovery goals.

### Create Grants for Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) to Hire Employees Food Center Grants.

**January Survey Consensus Results**

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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** |
| 19 | 13 | 7 | 0 | 1 |

**Comments:**

* **Hire from Client/Volunteer Pool**: Encourage organizations to hire from their existing client or volunteer pool to create employment opportunities within the community.
* **Grant Flexibility for Staffing**: Include the same grant flexibility in staffing needs as outlined in Recommendation #10, particularly for multi-year grants.
* **Sustained Funding for Transportation and Staff**: Transportation is a key challenge for many HROs, and having trained drivers could greatly improve operations. This should be considered as part of long-term, sustainable funding, rather than relying on short-term grants.
* **Food Safety Training**: Include funding for food safety training, documentation, and other related support for employees hired under these programs.
* **Integration into Other Funding**: Integrate staffing and training needs into broader grant funding or rolled into Recommendation #12 for a more streamlined approach.
* **Sustainability Over Grants**: Grants should not be the primary funding source for staffing; instead, a sustainable long-term funding model should be prioritized.
* **Risks of Hiring Additional Employees**: Adding more employees may create issues such as jealousy and power struggles within organizations, potentially stifling innovation and collaboration among volunteers.
* **Stability of Two-Year Grant Cycle**: The two-year grant cycle may not provide enough stability to support a hired position long-term. Consider alternative funding models that offer greater security.
* **Self-Supporting Employment Infrastructure**: Clarify the long-term goal for this employment infrastructure and whether it aims to become self-sustaining over time, much like a lower-cost option for grocery stores compared to waste sorting fees.

**Action:** Provide funding to help HROs hire employees, allowing for more flexible pickup schedules, including evenings and weekends. Funding could also support job training programs, such as a 6-month program leading to a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) or contracting transportation services.

Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) face staffing shortages, relying on volunteers which can be unreliable and lead to missed pickups, spoilage, and program instability. By funding staff positions and offering fair wages and benefits, HROs can improve operations, reduce turnover, and increase food donations, benefiting both employees and the communities served. This recommendation addresses gaps in the infrastructure needed to support food rescue efforts

### Fund Transportation Infrastructure for Food Donation

**January Survey Consensus Results**

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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** |
| 25 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

**Comments:**

* **Support Multiple Models**: Ensure legislation supports various models like food lockers, "freedges," and mobile hubs, avoiding the burden of physical addresses that strain real estate.
* **Mobile Food Hubs**: Develop food hubs that are mobile to maximize reach and minimize the need for fixed locations.
* **Transportation Infrastructure**: Include funding for both dry goods and refrigerated transportation infrastructure, addressing logistics for food recovery.
* **Funding for HRO Employees**: Provide funding specifically for HRO employees who manage transportation logistics, ensuring the smooth operation of food distribution.
* **Transportation Infrastructure Priorities**: Establish clear priorities for types of transportation infrastructure solutions and evaluate their impact. Integrate this into food recovery grants.
* **Retail Donation Partners’ Role**: Mandate that retail donation partners contribute to funding infrastructure and transportation for food distribution.
* **Sustainable Funding for Drivers**: Ensure that funding for drivers and transportation is sustainable and not reliant solely on grants, similar to successful programs with partners like DoorDash.

**Action:** Increase funding to expand transportation infrastructure by:

* **Covering Transportation Costs**: Provide funding for Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) to hire drivers and purchase vehicles or offer tax incentives for using established food transportation services. This will support long-distance trucking and last-mile delivery, ensuring food reaches those in need quickly and efficiently.
* **Developing Smaller Drop-Off Sites**: Fund the creation of more drop-off locations, particularly in rural areas and food deserts, to reduce transportation costs and ease last-mile delivery. These sites could include refrigerated food lockers to maintain food safety and accessibility.
* **Pilot Program for Small Load Deliveries**: Offer funding or incentives for a pilot program that supports smaller food deliveries. Many HROs struggle with large loads due to capacity limitations, so smaller, more frequent deliveries could increase efficiency and ensure more food is rescued.

Transportation is a major challenge for food rescue programs, with barriers such as staff shortages, high costs of refrigerated trucks, and infrastructure limitations. This recommendation aims to address these gaps by improving transportation efficiency and capacity. By funding transportation, creating drop-off sites, and exploring small load programs, we can ensure that more food gets to those who need it. Reliable transportation infrastructure will increase food donations, improve logistics, and enhance the effectiveness of hunger relief efforts. Funding for this recommendation may be sourced through the authorized Food Center grants.

### Support Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) to Compost Inedible Food

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 18 | 11 | 7 | 1 | 3 |

**Comments:**

* **Compost Bin and Service Costs**: Covering the costs of compost bins and services would significantly help HROs by providing proper disposal infrastructure.
* **Cost-Sharing with Retail Partners**: Explore more opportunities for cost-sharing from retail partners to help reduce financial burdens on HROs.
* **Disincentives for Donors**: Support disincentives for donors rather than increasing state funding to address food waste issues.
* **Fee Subsidies vs. Administrative Burden**: Favor subsidizing composting fees rather than creating additional administrative burdens for HROs.
* **Reconsider Composting Language**: Urge the Department of Ecology to reconsider the language in the recommendation, allowing alternative diversion methods like Anaerobic Digestion and Animal Feed, in addition to composting for inedible food.
* **Focus on Reducing Waste Management Fees**: Emphasize the reduction of waste management fees instead of solely focusing on composting solutions.
* **Challenges with Microplastics**: Composters are facing issues with microplastics from food packaging, which affects the quality of compost.
* **Clarification on Diversion Partnerships**: Seek clarification on what "diversion partnerships" entail for HROs and how they will impact food recovery operations.
* **Unintended Consequences for Donors**: Concerns that funding for HROs may lead donors to care less about the quality of food they donate, addressing symptoms rather than root causes of food waste.
* **Flaws in BOMA Process**: The BOMA process is flawed, and similar issues should not be repeated for HROs.

**Action:** Support HROs to compost inedible food by:

* **Reducing Waste Management Fees**: Offer funding to subsidize tipping fees or create grants that reduce waste management costs for HROs. As food donations increase, many HROs will need more frequent or larger waste removal services.
* **Developing Diversion Programs**: Create rules requiring HROs to establish diversion partnerships for spoiled or inedible food, like the Business Organics Management Area (BOMA). These diversion plans will help HROs efficiently manage inedible food and prevent it from going to the landfill.

**Overview**: Despite food rescue efforts, a significant amount of food is still inedible or spoiled and must be composted. Many HROs face high disposal costs for this food, often handling the waste themselves. By reducing waste management fees and helping HROs set up diversion programs, this recommendation will help alleviate disposal costs and improve food waste reduction, ensuring inedible food is properly composted rather than sent to the landfill.

### Increase Access to Commercial Kitchens and Food Processing Facilities for Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) and Food Donors

**January Survey Consensus Results**

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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** |
| 17 | 13 | 7 | 0 | 2 |

**Comments:**

* **Larger Scale Opportunities**: Support efforts to expand food recovery and processing opportunities at a larger scale, focusing on creating sustainable solutions.
* **Food Processing Partnerships**: Food Lifeline's partnership with Fare Start, where food is processed (e.g., apples made into applesauce), could serve as a model for other HROs and might not require policy changes.
* **Clarification Needed on "Increase Access" and "Food Preservation"**: Definitions for terms like "increase access" and "food preservation" need to be clarified to ensure shared understanding.
* **Professional Food Processing Support**: Support for food processors to handle food according to HRO specifications, ensuring professional handling and preservation, is preferable over HRO staff processing food themselves.
* **Sustainable Kitchens for HROs**: Setting up and funding cost-effective kitchens "owned" by HROs would help make food preservation and processing more sustainable in the long term.
* **Decreasing Food Waste Through Processing**: Encourage food waste reduction by extending shelf life through food processing, which could provide more opportunities for collaboration and communication.
* **Obstacles in Permitting**: Address obstacles faced by HROs in securing permits for food processing and consider state support, both financially and administratively, to overcome these challenges.
* **Collaboration and Integration**: Promote integration and collaboration among organizations like Commonwealth Kitchen in Boston as a model to enhance food processing and preservation efforts.
* **HRO Staff Limitations**: Processing food in-house by HRO staff might not be feasible for many organizations due to labor constraints and lack of expertise. The eligibility for processing grants should be broader to include food businesses that can be contracted for this work. Food Center Grants.
* **Priority of Transportation Over Processing**: Funding transportation for HROs should be a higher priority than funding food processing facilities, which is not as urgent at this time.
* **Finding Commercial Kitchen Space**: Access to commercial kitchen space is a significant challenge, and it’s important to check with other nonprofits and jurisdictions that have researched this issue for potential solutions.

**Action:** Enhance Food Center Grant funding to support access to commercial kitchens and food processing by:

* Providing grants to enable HROs to process food “seconds” and cosmetically imperfect products rejected by retailers, turning them into value-added products. This will extend shelf life and improve access to nutritious food, especially in communities with limited access, such as seniors, youth, and those experiencing homelessness.

Food donations to HROs range from bulk produce to prepackaged grocery items. However, many HROs lack access to commercial kitchens or food processing facilities, limiting their ability to handle certain types of food and leading to wasted potential. By funding access to these facilities, we can help HROs preserve fresh food and create value-added products, making it easier to distribute food to underserved communities. Processing food not only reduces spoilage but also increases flexibility for HROs with limited storage options. This recommendation addresses critical infrastructure gaps and incentives needed to boost food donation and recovery programs.

### Fund Pilot Transportation Networks for Food Rescue

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 18 | 13 | 6 | 2 | 1 |

**Comments:**

* **Clarification on Data Matching and Equity**: More clarity is needed on what "data matching and community demographics for equitable distribution" would mean in practice.
* **Rural and Remote Areas**: Consider how the proposed system would be effectively leveraged in rural and remote areas, ensuring access to resources in these locations.
* **Funding Transportation Pilots**: Suggest including “funding transportation pilots” as one of the solutions under the Food Center Grants to test and improve food distribution methods.
* **Integration with Existing Transportation Infrastructure**: Explore how existing transportation infrastructure from other organizations can be integrated to avoid duplicating efforts and ensure efficiency.
* **Efficiency of Existing Transportation Specialists**: It may be more efficient to rely on existing transportation specialists rather than developing new systems or infrastructures.
* **Pilot Program in Arizona**: Consider a pilot program similar to one in Arizona, where all stakeholders have a vested interest in the success of food distribution efforts.
* **Human Labor for Matchmaking**: Over-reliance on automation for food matching could be risky; human labor should be included to ensure the process is effective and adaptable.
* **Open Source and Transparent Networks**: Any networked system for food recovery should ideally be open-sourced and transparent to promote trust and collaboration.
* **Ongoing Funding for System**: Pressure should be applied to ensure ongoing funding is included as part of grant requests to ensure sustainability.
* **Equitable System Design**: Emphasize the importance of building the system equitably, particularly in areas where infrastructure is lacking or barriers to food distribution exist (e.g., Okanogan).
* **Flexibility and Potential Conflicts**: While Recommendation #12 offered flexibility, this proposal may conflict with current grocery rescue programs. Third-party partners could add burdensome reporting requirements.
* **Non-Exclusive Contracts and Rural Networks**: Contracts should not be exclusive or biased, and rural network collaborators should be recognized as solution providers without adding unnecessary costs.
* **Cost Considerations**: Acknowledge the costs involved in implementing and maintaining these systems.

**Action:** Fund pilot transportation networks dedicated to food rescue by:

* Launch an independent managed transportation system to optimize food donations and efficiently distribute them to Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) within 24 hours. This system would use data matching and community demographics for equitable distribution and leverage private sector expertise while providing Commercial Driver’s Licensing (CDL) training opportunities.
* Create a centralized transportation network for multiple municipalities to share trucks and routes for food pick-ups and deliveries to HROs, improving coordination and reducing redundancy.
* Explore third-party transportation solutions to reduce HRO reliance on volunteers, with potential partners like Careit, Copia, and other technology and logistics solution providers.

Transportation is a critical gap in food recovery, with many organizations relying on their own vehicles, leading to inefficiencies. These pilot projects offer public-private partnerships to improve food distribution, reduce waste, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and create community benefits. By optimizing food collection, tracking, and delivery, these pilots will build the infrastructure needed to scale food rescue efforts across the state.

### Develop Local Distribution Centers or Community Food Hubs

**January Survey Consensus Results**

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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 | 11 | 10 | 1 | 2 |

**Comments:**

* **Donation Partnerships Requirement**: Consider requiring food organizations of a certain size (e.g., food retail stores) to have donation partnerships in place, similar to the French model, to ensure consistent food donations.
* **Focus on Improving Existing Non-Profits**: Instead of creating new organizations or hubs, focus on increasing the efficiency of existing non-profit locations for food recovery.
* **Inclusion of Commercial Kitchens**: Ensure that commercial kitchens and permitted food processing facilities are included in food recovery efforts to enhance food preservation and processing capabilities.
* **Equity and Inclusivity**: Make sure that food recovery efforts are equitable and inclusive, ensuring access for all communities.
* **Collaboration with Existing Resources**: Avoid duplicating existing food hubs and directories that support retail and wholesale operations. Explore collaboration opportunities to maximize the impact of available resources.
* **Hub Logistics**: Consider using refrigerated trucks for hubbing quickly expiring commodities to reduce spoilage points, rather than relying on fixed locations.
* **Clearing House for Non-Food Bank Operations**: If the food bank is not handling distribution, establish a clearing house to sort and allocate food efficiently, ensuring a local approach to food distribution.
* **Integration with Private Marketplaces**: Integrate private marketplaces with larger audiences of consumers to enhance food recovery and stimulate local economies, supporting small-scale producers and making recovered food available to a broader public.
* **Support Existing Food Hubs**: Rather than creating new hubs, support and strengthen existing food hubs. For example, Food Lifeline is developing a community food hub to connect small farmers with consumers.
* **Fiscal Considerations and Hub Logistics**: The logistics of creating new hubs may be challenging due to budget constraints, and the hub-and-spoke model for transportation could be an effective solution but may not be feasible due to state budget limitations in the short term.

**Action:** Create 24/7 food recovery hubs to receive, store, and distribute food surplus from grocery stores, restaurants, and farms at any time. These hubs would improve donation coordination, food safety, and data tracking for better reporting.

* **Centralized Communications Platform**: A platform to notify users of available food, streamlining the flow and ensuring transparency for all potential recipients.
* **Secondary Marketplace**: An open, live inventory system where recipients can easily view available food, improving efficiency and equity in food distribution.

The current food recovery system is fragmented, leading to missed opportunities. A centralized food hub would provide storage, portioning, and efficient delivery coordination, allowing smaller organizations to better manage large donations. These hubs would also reduce transportation costs, foster collaboration, and increase overall food rescue and donation capacity.

### Increase Funding for Food Center Research

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 15 | 7 | 16 | 0 | 2 |

**Comments:**

* **Food Accelerator Grant Program**: Develop a standalone Food Accelerator Grant Program to fund innovative food waste reduction projects. Food Center Grants.
* **Focus on Public Health Benefits**: Implement programs with proven public health benefits, such as produce prescriptions and nutrition programs, to reduce food waste.
* **Leverage Academic Research**: Use graduate students and capstone projects to assist in food waste reduction research and development.
* **Avoid Incentivizing Overproduction**: Be cautious not to incentivize overproduction solely for the purpose of obtaining more donations, as this could create unnecessary waste.
* **Avoid Government Centralized Research**: Be mindful of not duplicating efforts, as organizations like ReFed are already leading much of the research on food waste. Focus on piloting solutions instead of centralized government research.
* **Balance Fund Allocation**: Strike a balance between funding research and implementing practical, immediate solutions to food waste reduction.

**Action:** Increase funding to support research and pilot programs to:

* Test in-store discounts and customer notifications to make food donations more immediate and reduce transportation needs.
* Study on-site food spoilage at Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) to better understand waste and improve operations.
* Assess the types of food not being donated and identify gaps in donation programs.
* Evaluate the feasibility of food processing systems to extend shelf life before donation.
* Research the logistics and infrastructure for rescuing food from large distribution centers, including temperature-controlled storage and transport.
* Examine the impact of early donations and how incentives could encourage businesses to donate fresher, usable food.
* Develop a Food Center Accelerator Grant program to fund innovative pilot projects for food waste reduction.

There are still many unknowns in the food donation and recovery system. By increasing funding for research and pilot programs, the Food Center can identify best practices and innovative solutions to tackle food waste and donation challenges in Washington. This investment will lead to better strategies, more efficient systems, and ultimately reduce food waste while supporting local communities.

### Support the Food Center Mapping Project to Support Food Rescue and Recovery

**January Survey Consensus Results**

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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** |
| 20 | 10 | 9 | 1 | 0 |

**Comments:**

* **Statewide Map for Food Rescue**: Edit to "Fund a statewide map" that tracks food donations and resources, ensuring it integrates with existing systems, like Feeding America's proprietary data.
* **Collaborative Network with Regulations**: Create a collaborative network with consistent rules and regulations, requiring large food organizations to have contractual relationships with donation partners.
* **System Integration**: Ensure the platform integrates with existing systems used by participants, enhancing adoption. Collaborate with the Eat Local First initiative to develop a platform serving both sales and rescue purposes.
* **Transparency in Data**: Data about donations should provide context (why donors have low/high numbers) and not just raw figures. Avoid creating duplicate efforts by supporting existing programs.
* **Maintainability of Data**: Acknowledge the high maintenance required to keep food donation data up-to-date from various sources. Clear funding and management plans are necessary.
* **Combining Recommendations**: Clarify the relationship between this recommendation and #17 and #16. Consider combining them to streamline the approach and avoid redundancies.
* **Leverage Existing Mapping Tools**: Instead of creating a new system, leverage existing food mapping infrastructure to avoid duplication of efforts.
* **Sustainability of the Map**: Be cautious about creating a new map that lacks the proper funding and management for long-term sustainability.

**Action:** Fund a statewide map that connects food donation organizations, distributors, Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs), transporters, and compost facilities, including essential contact information. This will create a centralized resource for food donors and partners to easily find and connect with local organizations.

The Food Center is currently developing a map to connect surplus food generators with local HROs. This recommendation expands the existing map to include a collaborative network of community partners with extra infrastructure capacity, creating an organizational chart that can share resources. This map will also integrate key partners like Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and local health departments, focusing on food safety, equity, and logistical frameworks.

This centralized resource will foster cross-sector collaboration, help grow the community of food donors and recipients, and even integrate disaster preparedness and emergency housing support.

A statewide map will streamline food donation efforts, enhance collaboration, and address gaps in food rescue and recovery. It will make it easier for all partners to connect and maximize the impact of food donations across Washington State.

### Support the Food Center Education and Outreach Campaigns

**January Survey Consensus Results**

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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** |
| 25 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 1 |

**Comments:**

* **Education and Outreach Campaigns**: Edit to "Conduct education and outreach campaigns." Eat Local First can support these efforts through its communication channels and integration into the WA Food & Farm Finder.
* **Research on Food Overproduction**: Expand to include research and identification of food producer overproduction, including its effects on food banks, population health impacts, food is medicine strategies, and the impact of HRO nutrition policies.
* **Focus on Food Quality and Safety**: Emphasize food quality, safe handling, and compostable labeling as more impactful areas of focus. Remove unrelated items that fall outside the scope of food donation.
* **Infrastructure First**: Prioritize infrastructure needs first, as there hasn't been notable impact from current education and outreach campaigns.

**Action:** Fund and expand the Food Center’s education and outreach initiatives to:

* **Continue Food Waste Reduction Campaigns**: Build on the "Use Food Well" campaign to help individuals and businesses reduce food waste. Focus on cost savings, practical tips, and strategies for preventing food waste at the residential and commercial levels.
* **Raise Awareness on Food Donation Quality**: Educate donors about the quality and safety of donated food, ensuring they understand the impact of late donations and the importance of safe food handling across all stages, from production to donation.
* **Promote Safe Food Handling Education**: Provide training for businesses and consumers on the full food lifecycle, emphasizing safe handling practices to reduce waste and increase accountability.
* **Support Compostable Product Labeling Education**: Help consumers and businesses understand compostable product labeling and reduce contamination at composting facilities. Promote transparency in marketing and “greenwashing” prevention.
* **Continue building partnerships**: Support ongoing work to build partnerships between governments, local organizations, and food businesses, including the Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment (PCFWC), which connects food businesses, government agencies, and non-profits to tackle food waste.

The Food Center’s education and outreach programs play a crucial role in reducing food waste across Washington State. By continuing to invest in these campaigns, we can expand awareness, encourage better food handling, and help businesses and individuals take action to reduce waste. This will support Washington State’s food waste reduction goals and create a lasting impact

### Support the Food Data Hub to Develop Online Database for Standardizing Metrics

**January Survey Consensus Results**

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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 | 12 | 10 | 2 | 1 |

**Comments:**

* **Leverage private business expertise:** Utilize the expertise and resources of private businesses to support the initiative.
* **Regional tailored prevention solutions:** The hub should recommend customized prevention solutions for different regions.
* **Collaboration on best practices:** Encourage collaboration between organizations and stakeholders on best practices for food donations, including food safety rules and effective handling for HROs (Hunger Relief Organizations).
* **Proposed edit for clarity:** Suggest revising the action to "Create a food data hub online database" for clearer communication.
* **Tracking beyond weight/volume:** Emphasize tracking food donations by grocery category, and focus on nutritional quality, not just weight/volume.
* **Be explicit about tracking goals:** Recommend clearly stating that tracking should cover waste, including overproduction, and donations of excess edible food.
* **Adoption by private organizations:** The proposal would benefit from additional details on how the Department of Ecology would promote the adoption of these tracking metrics by private businesses.
* **System management and updates:** Questions about who would manage and update the food data hub system, with a focus on accuracy and ease of data collection.
* **Clarification on incentives vs. requirements:** Confusion about the term "incentivize" being replaced with "require" in the proposal. There’s concern that requiring retailers to adopt this system without compensation could be ineffective.
* **Retailer adoption challenges:** The proposal would be more successful if retailers were incentivized financially, as requiring it without compensation could lead to resistance from the retail industry.
* **Uncertainty about the hub's usefulness:** Hesitation about whether the food data hub will be built and whether it will guarantee use or participation.
* **Data ownership issues for food banks:** Food banks don’t own the data regarding donated products and therefore may not have the right to release it.
* **Counterproductive requirements for donors:** Requiring food donors to track their surplus donations could be counterproductive, leading to fewer donations and more food waste.
* **Unclear benefits of the Food Data Hub:** Some individuals don’t see the benefits of creating or using a Food Data Hub database for tracking donations.

**Action:** Support the Food Data Hub research to develop online database for standardizing metrics and measurements by:

* **Partner with Key Stakeholders**: Support the Food Center’s work with the Food Data Hub to standardize food donation metrics. Collaborate with donors, Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs), tech providers, health jurisdictions, and community partners to define metrics that track the quantity, quality, and variety of food donations.
* **Track Donations by Grocery Category**: Develop a unified system to track grocery donations according to national standards (e.g., Healthy Eating Research), moving beyond weight and volume to include retail dollar value. This will better capture the financial and logistical impacts of donations.
* **Fund Data Collection Systems:** Provide funding to pilot and expand data collection systems that are user-friendly, accurate, and compatible with existing systems (e.g., transportation, climate reporting). This funding should include user testing to ensure the system is accessible and meets the needs of all stakeholders.
* **Incentivize Data Tracking:** Require food donors to track their surplus food donations. This will improve waste prevention, offer insights into food waste, and increase donations to support Washington State’s goals.

Currently, the tracking of donated food lacks standardization and often misses key data, such as inedible food. By creating a shared online database with standardized metrics, we can improve coordination, increase data accuracy, and streamline the donation process. This will help Washington State meet its food surplus goals, improve food rescue efforts, and support informed decision-making across the food donation system.

### Support the Food Center to Create Online Baseline Toolkit for Donors and Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs)

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 18 | 10 | 8 | 1 | 3 |

**Comments**

* **Proposed edit for clarity:** Edit to "Create an ..." and emphasize communication about health of HRO clients and connection of donations to diet-related disease.
* **Collaboration on best practices:** Food Lifeline has numerous resources that we can offer.
* **Celebrate/highlight those already doing the work:** acknowledge individuals and organizations that actively engage in sustainable practices to reduce food waste.
* **Tracking beyond weight/volume:** Include discounted sales, composting, repurposing leftovers, improving inventory management to prevent over-purchasing. Food waste tracking systems solves the data fragmentation issue.
* **Education and Outreach Campaigns:** educating communities about the environmental impacts of food waste.
* **Unclear if it will be utilized:** not a fan of static data systems that in practicality field operations don't use. A repeat of similar resources has already diluted the info channel so to speak.
* **Focus on Community interaction:** takes too much energy and awareness to get people to the resource verse directly community based, doing the work.
* **Potential unintended consequences:** We're not sure we're in favor of the donor scorecard due to potential negative unintended consequences.

**Action:** Support the Food Center to create online baseline toolkit for donors and HROs by:

* **Create a Baseline Toolkit for Donor Communication**: Collaborate with donors, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), tech providers, and other partners to develop metrics that track the quantity, quality, and variety of donated food, as well as training, food safety protocols, logistics, and environmental impacts. This toolkit will help streamline communication and standardize processes for donors and HROs.
* **Develop a Toolkit for Starting a Food Recovery Program**: Create a step-by-step guide tailored to different types of organizations. This could include essential resources such as information on the Good Samaritan Law, tax benefits, food date labeling, and safety standards for staff and volunteers.
* **Provide a Sample Community Agreement**: Offer a template for HROs and donors to establish clear objectives, processes, and points of contact. This will help standardize partnerships and reduce the administrative burden on HROs.
* **Establish a Donor Scorecard**: Partner with agencies like the Department of Ecology, Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), and Washington Food Coalition to create a voluntary donor scorecard. This system will help HROs work with donors to improve their food donation practices over time, with publicly available data to encourage improvement and community impact.

**Overview**: Current data tracking is fragmented, focusing only on basic metrics like food weight and number of donations. This limited data creates inefficiencies and hinders the identification of opportunities for improvement in transportation, communication, and business practices. By creating a standardized toolkit and data-sharing system, we can address these gaps, streamline partnerships, and improve food donation and rescue efforts across the state

### Support Food Center Grants to Improve Transportation and Cold Storage in the Rescued Food Supply Chain

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 30 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

**Comments:**

* **Decentralized cold-chain facilities:** Advocate for cold storage facilities closer to the consumer, rather than large, centralized cold storage warehouses.
* **HRO access to refrigeration:** Emphasize the need for Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) to have access to reliable refrigeration, freezers, and refrigerated transport.
* **Possible duplication with other recommendations:** Question if this idea overlaps with other existing recommendations and if it should be combined with them.
* **Funding concerns:** Raise the question of who will pay for these facilities and systems.

**Action:** Create statewide incentives and grants to help Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) and food donors fund cold storage, transportation, and manage high electricity costs associated with refrigeration.

**Overview**: Many HROs and large food generators face cold storage limitations, making it harder to preserve perishable food for donation. By expanding cold storage capacity, including transportation, more fresh food can be rescued and distributed to those in need, reducing food waste. Without proper refrigeration, HROs are limited to less nutritious, shelf-stable items, and food safety becomes a concern. This initiative directly addresses key infrastructure gaps, ensuring more nutritious food reaches communities while minimizing waste. The authorized Food Center grants may be used to help HROs and food donors purchase cold storage equipment to meet this identified barrier to food rescue and recovery.

### Direct the Food Center to Create a Standardized Process forCertification and/or Licensing of Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs) and Donors

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 8 | 11 | 8 | 3 | 10 |

**Comments:**

* **Edit for clarity:** Suggest revising the wording to "Create a..." for clarity in the proposal.
* **Concerns about formalizing the donation process:** Formalizing the donation process could discourage small businesses from donating, as it currently feels like a permit process.
* **No cost for certification:** Certification should not impose any costs on HROs or donating businesses.
* **Focus on nutrition in certification:** Nutrition should be a key aspect of certification for food donations.
* **Existing regulations under WAC 246-215:** A similar rule already exists under the Washington State Food Code requiring Donated Food Distributing Organizations (DFDOs) to register with LHJ food programs and report annually.
* **Inconsistency across LHJs:** There is a lack of consistency in enforcement and registration across local health jurisdictions (LHJs).
* **Ensuring HRO registration as 501(c):** Question about who would ensure that HROs are properly registered as 501(c) organizations.
* **No fees for HROs and donors:** Certification should not incur any fees for HROs or donors. The Public Health Seattle & King County (PHSKC) already offers a no-fee registration process for connecting donors with HROs.
* **Distinguishing from PHSKC registration:** The certification should not overlap with or confuse the PHSKC registration process.
* **Donors and recipients are already compliant:** Donors, if businesses, are already licensed and following food safety regulations, as are the recipient organizations.
* **Support for gleaners:** Ensure that gleaners are supported and not excluded by the certification process.
* **Capacity concerns for HROs:** Concerns about asking more from already limited-capacity, underfunded HROs. Will it allow more organizations to receive/distribute donations?
* **Scope of service concerns:** Uncertainty about how the scope of service for organizations will be determined, particularly for those that provide food as a secondary service.
* **Additional work for HROs:** Certification could create additional work for HROs, which are already a mix of simple and sophisticated organizations.
* **Concerns for small organizations:** Smaller HROs, like church soup kitchens, should not be subject to burdensome certification requirements.
* **Disincentive for donations:** The process may create a disincentive to donate, potentially reducing hunger relief efforts.
* **No certification for donors:** Donors, particularly businesses, should not be required to get certified or licensed to donate food.
* **Concerns about barriers to food rescue:** New certification requirements could create unnecessary barriers, especially for those already regulated by their county health department.
* **Opposition to additional hurdles for nonprofits:** Oppose additional mandatory licensing, as it is not clear that it will increase food donations.
* **No clear benefit for certification system:** Uncertainty about the need for a certification system and concern that it won’t actually increase the amount of food being donated.
* **Avoiding fees and revenue generation:** Certification should not be a revenue-generating operation and should not create additional costs for participants.
* **Unnecessary additional layers:** The proposal should not add more unnecessary layers of regulation or complexity.

**Action:** Direct the Food Center to begin rulemaking to establish a state-mandated certification and/or licensing process for organizations receiving and distributing donated food. This process would address the lack of formal governance and provide a clear path to official certification, increasing food recovery opportunities across the state.

Many businesses and HROs face challenges around food donation liability and the complexity of certification or licensing. A standardized process at the state level would reduce these barriers, helping organizations focus on food recovery and donation efforts. Additionally, this certification could potentially generate revenue for the state, supporting grants and other initiatives.

### Direct the Food Center to Expand ReFED Resources on State and Federal Policies and Incentives

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 11 | 8 | 17 | 1 | 2 |

**Comments:**

* **Redundant and unnecessary:** The recommendation seems redundant and unnecessary, as it can be done without a specific recommendation.
* **ReFED's role:** ReFED can handle the task, and the proposal doesn’t clearly explain how it adds value or differs from ReFED’s work.
* **Confusion about the recommendation's purpose:** Uncertainty about what the recommendation is aiming to achieve—whether it’s asking ReFED to expand their resources or asking the Food Center to duplicate efforts.
* **Lack of clarity on resources needed:** It's unclear what additional resources are required from the Food Center or how their existing resources should be cited.
* **Out of scope and not a priority:** The recommendation seems out of scope and not as significant as other recommendations in the proposal.
* **No conflict with Feeding America:** The proposal does not conflict with Feeding America's initiatives, but still appears unnecessary.

**Action:** Direct the Food Center to expand ReFED resources on existing state and federal policies and incentives.

Food donors and recipients vary in the types of food they handle, their operations, and their distribution needs, making food recovery challenging. A centralized resource highlighting available policies and incentives would increase transparency, helping both donors and recipients find the support they need. This will simplify access to resources, improve food recovery efforts, and increase the amount of food donated to those in need.

### Direct the Food Center to Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Food Donation, Rescue, and Recovery

**January Survey Consensus Results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5: Whole-hearted endorsement** | **4: Support with Some Reservation** | **3: Neutral** | **2: Don’t Like but Will Support** | **1: Do Not Support** |
| 20 | 13 | 3 | 0 | 4 |

**Comments:**

* **Research and SOP development:** After collecting research on current methods, trust the next level up to create standard operating procedures (SOPs) that can be effective.
* **Combine with recommendation #17:** Suggest combining this recommendation with #17 to improve efficiency and impact.
* **SOPs for all sizes of operations:** SOPs should span both small and large operations to enhance overall food recovery and distribution processes.
* **Suggested edit to "Develop standard...":** Recommend editing the action to "Develop standard..." and combining it with the benefit of recommendation #8.
* **Food Lifeline resources:** Food Lifeline has many resources that could be utilized in this process.
* **Involving HROs in SOP development:** Including HROs in the development of these SOPs is essential for ensuring they meet operational needs.
* **State-adopted guidelines and multilingual resources:** Call for state-adopted food safety guidelines, including multilingual resources, to support a wider range of organizations.
* **Consistent food safety regulations:** Government agencies (local health, WA DOH, WSDA, USDA, FDA, etc.) should provide consistent food safety regulations, including date labeling.
* **Partnerships with DOH and LHJs:** Collaborate with the Department of Health (DOH), local health jurisdictions (LHJs), and other partners on food safety guidance, SOPs, and training materials.
* **Looking to California's SB 1383:** Suggest using California's SB 1383 as a model for guidance.
* **Potential impact on donations:** While donors may feel more confident donating, it’s unclear whether it will make a significant difference for food waste recovery and distribution operations.
* **Assumption about HRO capabilities:** The assumption that HROs will deliver tools and education is problematic, as many may lack the bandwidth for such tasks.
* **Redundancy concerns:** Some feel this recommendation is redundant and could be combined with recommendation #21 for better efficiency.
* **Avoid mandatory requirements for education:** There’s concern about making education a mandatory requirement for HROs.

**Action:** Direct the Food Center to create SOPs for food donation, rescue, and recovery, including:

* **For Food Donors (Grocery Stores, Retailers, and Others):** Create a comprehensive SOP that guides donors at all levels. This should include information on the Good Samaritan Law, tax breaks for donations, food safety, date labels, and best practices for donating food, tailored to various organization sizes and locations.
* **For Hunger Relief Organizations (HROs):** Develop a program to educate donors on proper donation techniques, provide training materials on food safety and donation requirements, and offer technical assistance to stores with their own donation programs.
* **Multilingual Resources:** Ensure SOPs and training materials are available in multiple languages, especially for communities with limited English proficiency. Use diverse methods (e.g., in-person training, videos, posters) and provide regular follow-ups to reinforce learning.

Without standardized protocols, food donations often face inefficiencies, safety risks, and wasted opportunities. Donors may donate unsafe or inedible food, leading to higher disposal costs for HROs. By implementing standardized SOPs for all stages of the food donation process, we can improve food safety, reduce waste, and increase the volume of quality food donated. These procedures will ensure more reliable and effective food recovery, benefiting both donors and HROs.