

# Recommendations - January Consensus Survey #1

To build consensus and craft recommendation language, Ecology will conduct a monthly survey from January through March 2025. We will continue [monthly meetings](#) 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](mailto:FoodCenter@ecy.wa.gov) to set a meeting.

## Voting for Recommendations

Vote and share feedback through [Consensus Survey #1](#) by February 7. When voting on the recommendations, evaluate each recommendation individually. This first vote is a baseline check on favorability of the Work Group's submitted recommendations. The Ecology research team will 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-February 7**
  - This survey includes the first draft of recommendations and is your opportunity to share baseline feedback.
- **January Meeting – [January 21, 2025, 10 am](#)**
- **Consensus Survey #2 – February – March TBD**
  - This survey refines the recommendations for consensus and asks for more detailed feedback.
- **February Meeting – [February 25, 2025, 10 am](#)**
- **Consensus Survey #3 – March – April TBD**
  - This will be the final vote for consensus and comments on the report recommendations.
- **March Meeting – [March 25, 2025, 10 am](#)**
- **Legislative Report Agreement – April TBD**
- **April Meeting – [April 29, 2025, 10 am](#)**
  - 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:

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

## Work group Recommendation Themes

Through the [Organics Management Law 2.0](#), 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.

## 1. Expand Funding for the Washington Commodities Donation Grant Program

**Action** Expand funding of the [Washington Commodities Donation Grant Program](#).

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](#)).

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.

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

**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.

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

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

This proposal aims to create a sustainable funding program by implementing a mandatory "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.

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

**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.

## 5. Expand Washington State's Farm to School Program

**Action:** Expand the [Washinton State Department of Agriculture \(WSDA\) Farm to School program](#) 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.

This expansion may include:

- **Expand Farm-to-School Grants:** Increase funding to help schools buy local produce, upgrade kitchens, and support local farmers.
- **Subsidize Local Food Costs:** Offer financial incentives to make locally grown food more affordable and accessible for schools.
- **Provide Resources:** Offer training, toolkits, and guidance to help districts integrate local foods into meal programs.
- **Hire Support Staff:** Employ farm-to-school coordinators to assist districts with local food sourcing logistics.
- **Create a Centralized Procurement System:** Develop a state-managed platform to simplify local food sourcing for schools.
- **Encourage School Gardens:** Fund and support school gardens, providing technical assistance and grants.
- **Integrate Agricultural Education:** Expand programs teaching students about agriculture, food systems, and nutrition.
- **Host Networking and Education Events:** Organize events for farmers, food service staff, and distributors to build partnerships.
- **Develop Food Service Partnerships:** Collaborate with distributors and food service providers to streamline access to local food.
- **Launch Public Campaigns:** Raise awareness about the benefits of farm-to-school programs and local food sourcing.
- **Advocate for Policy Support:** Work with lawmakers to support policies for local food procurement and farm-to-school funding.
- **Focus on Rural and Low-Income Schools:** Ensure resources are available to schools in rural and low-income areas and help overcome sourcing barriers.
- **Support Smaller Districts:** Provide additional technical assistance and funding for smaller districts to navigate local food sourcing.

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

**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.
- **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.

## 7. 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

**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](#) to reduce food waste, particularly edible food, and set statewide reduction goals. To meet greenhouse gas targets, the [Climate Commitment Act](#) (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.

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

**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.

## 9. Invest in Food Waste Prevention Infrastructure and Programs at Schools

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

- **Milk Dispensers:** Provide funding for schools to install milk dispensers, which reduce wasted milk and cartons by allowing students to take only what they need.

- **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.

## 10. Increase Accessibility and Flexibility of Public Grant Funding

**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.

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

**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

## 12. Fund Transportation Infrastructure for Food Donation

**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.

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

**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.

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

**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.

## 15. Fund Pilot Transportation Networks for Food Rescue

**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.

## 16. Develop Local Distribution Centers or Community Food Hubs

**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.

## 17. Increase Funding for Food Center Research

**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.

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

**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.

## 19. Support the Food Center 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

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

**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.

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

**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

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

**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.

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

**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.

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

**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.

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

**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.