

FOOD & ORGANICS SUBCOMMITTEE: MEETING #2

Meeting Date/Time: Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 1:30pm-3:30pm

Meeting Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82052737206?pwd=Bfgu0guOmjNr2nIZ5GGPG0oiGDfO5w.1&from=addon>

Attendees

Subcommittee Members

Elaine Blatt, Oregon DEQ

Maya Buelow, Lane County

Elizabeth Cole, City of Beaverton

Jeanette Hardison, No Food Left Behind - Corvallis

Sydney Tamplin, OSU Student

Holly Stirnkorb, Metro

Staff

Facilitator: Pea Hamilton, Start Consulting Group

Subject Matter Expert: Bryce Hesterman, RRS

Researcher: Allegra Starr, RRS

Notes

Key Takeaways

- The subcommittee refined its focus areas to align with the EPA food recovery hierarchy: prevention, donation/rescue, and downstream management.
- Many strategies cut across multiple focus areas, highlighting the need for a holistic, systems-based approach.
- Local expertise and existing programs (e.g. Metro's initiatives) provide a strong foundation for developing regional strategies.

Topics

Refining Focus Areas

- Shifted from initial categories to align with EPA food recovery hierarchy:
 - Prevention (upstream)
 - Donation/rescue (midstream)
 - Downstream management
- Discussed challenges in categorizing strategies that span multiple areas
- Considered reorganizing by audience (residential/commercial) or policy type

Food Waste Prevention Strategies

- Commercial food waste mandates with education requirements
- Residential awareness campaigns (e.g. ugly fruit promotion)
- Date labeling education and policy
- Upcycling support for businesses (e.g. grocery stores making prepared foods)

Food Donation/Rescue Strategies

- Technical assistance for businesses to support donation
- Online hubs to connect donors with recipients
- Partnerships with food banks and rescue organizations
- Education on food safety and donation best practices

Downstream Management Strategies

- Commercial food waste collection mandates
- Support for composting and anaerobic digestion infrastructure
- Animal feed as a food waste management option

Cross-Cutting Strategies

- K-12 education programs covering prevention, donation, and recovery
- Technology solutions and apps spanning multiple focus areas
- Data tracking tools to inform efforts across the hierarchy
- Regional partnerships and campaigns (e.g. "Food Waste Stops With Me")

Ideas

- The group discussed organizing the focus areas around the EPA's food waste hierarchy of prevention, donation/rescue, and disposal/recovery. This provided a more structured framework.
- Some examples of prevention strategies discussed include:
 - Commercial food waste mandates with education/outreach requirements.
 - Residential awareness campaigns on food waste prevention.
 - Grocery store upcycling of near-expired produce into value-added products.
- For donation/rescue, strategies included:
 - Technical assistance to businesses to support food donation.
 - Developing tools to match food donors with rescue agencies.
 - Partnerships with organizations like the Oregon Food Bank.
- The group recognized that some strategies, like education programs, could span multiple focus areas. They discussed ways to visually represent those cross-cutting initiatives.
- The participants shared many examples of existing programs and initiatives in the region that could inform the strategies, like Metro's commercial food waste policies and Lane County's food waste reduction challenges.

Considerations

Categorization and Framing:

- The group grappled with how to best categorize and frame the focus areas, considering options like "upstream/midstream/downstream", the EPA's food waste hierarchy, and audience-based categories (residential vs. commercial).
- There was discussion around ensuring the categorization made sense for the local context and aligned with how participants typically think about these issues.

Scope and Influence:

- The participants considered the relative scope and influence the local jurisdictions have in different parts of the food system (e.g. more influence on consumers vs. manufacturers).
- There was a recognition that some strategies may require partnerships or regional coordination to be effective.

Holistic Approaches:

- The group acknowledged that many effective strategies may be cross-cutting and span multiple focus areas.
- There was interest in finding ways to represent those holistic, systems-level approaches in the final recommendations.

Existing Initiatives:

- The participants shared numerous examples of existing programs, policies and partnerships in the region that could inform the strategies.
- Leveraging and building upon these established efforts was seen as important.

Feasibility and Impact:

- In selecting strategies, the group wanted to balance high-impact approaches with what was realistically feasible for local governments to implement.

Questions

- How do we distinguish between the commercial food waste mandate and the requirement for record-keeping and tracking? Are those the same thing or different?
- Is there a way to indicate whether we're using a mouse or a trackpad in this Canva whiteboard tool? That can impact navigation.
- When we talk about upcycling, is that considered prevention or midstream? Because it's taking food that would otherwise be waste and turning it into a new product.
- Should we move the 'commercial food waste mandate' strategy down to the 'downstream' category, since it's more about collection and management rather than prevention?
- How do we differentiate between 'rescue' and 'upcycling' - are those considered the same thing or different?
- Should we consider organizing the focus areas around audience (residential vs. commercial) rather than the upstream/midstream/downstream framing?
- Where should we put a tool we developed that provides data and tracking across prevention, donation, and recovery - does it fit under all three focus areas?
- Should we try to align the terminology more closely with the traditional 'reduce, reuse, recycle' framework that people are familiar with?

Action: Research and analysis

- RRS to research the benefits and consequences of the various strategies and goals identified by the group.
- The group agreed to send any additional resources or examples they think could be helpful for RRS to review.
- There may be a need for some follow-up communication with the group in the next couple weeks to get additional input on resources and how the regional concept could fit with the strategies.
- The group discussed the possibility of creating a "cross-cutting" or "overlapping" section on the whiteboard to capture initiatives that span multiple focus areas.
- There was an acknowledgement that the group has a lot of existing knowledge and experience to draw from, so tapping into that expertise will be important for the research and analysis.