

FOOD & ORGANICS SUBCOMMITTEE: MEETING #3a

Meeting Date/Time: Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 2:00pm-4:00pm

Meeting Link: <https://recycle.zoom.us/j/9175200555>

Attendees

Subcommittee Members

Elaine Blatt, Oregon DEQ

Maya Buelow, Lane County

Jeanette Hardison, No Food Left Behind - Corvallis

Elizabeth Cole, City of Beaverton

Holly Stirnkorb, Metro

Staff

Facilitator: Pea Hamilton, Start Consulting Group

Subject Matter Expert: Bryce Hesterman, RRS

Researcher: Allegra Starr, RRS

Notes

Key Takeaways

- Commercial intervention campaigns face barriers like staff turnover, time constraints, and difficulty making the business case for prevention
- School/institution programs need tailored approaches due to varying requirements and infrastructure
- Donation/rescue efforts are complex, with many informal actors and competing interests between food banks and for-profit companies
- Data collection on food insecurity exists but is fragmented across organizations; integrating datasets could improve targeting

Topics

Commercial Intervention Campaigns

- Examples:
 - Waste tracking analytics
 - Staff training
 - Smart inventory management
 - Portion/menu redesign
- Local programs:
 - Metro's Food Scraps Stops with Me
 - Corvallis' No Food Left Behind
 - DEQ's Bad Apple campaign
- Barriers:
 - Making business case for prevention
 - Staff turnover and training challenges
 - Time/resource constraints for small businesses
 - "Sign blindness" and space limitations for signage
- Funding often through local government grants or private capital

Prevention in Schools and Institutions

- Need to separate schools as distinct category due to unique challenges
- Examples:
 - Share tables
 - Offer vs. serve
 - Milk dispensers
 - Timing of recess
- Barriers:

- Federal requirements on meal service
- Variability between schools/districts
- Need for "champions" at each site
- Equity concerns with front-of-house programs
- Funding sources vary widely - some districts have city funding, others none

Gleaning Programs

- Many small-scale, volunteer-driven efforts exist
- Oregon Food Bank involved but not primary focus
- Barriers:
 - Liability concerns for farmers
 - Informal nature makes tracking difficult
- Opportunity for government to support through grants, liability protection

Food Donation and Rescue

- Complex landscape of food banks, pantries, and informal efforts
- Apps like Too Good To Go emerging but not widespread in region
- Barriers:
 - Cold storage/infrastructure needs
 - Competing interests between food banks and for-profit companies
 - Lack of prepared food rescue capacity
- Oregon Food Bank key partner but not all items are donated

Food Insecurity Data Collection

- Some efforts underway (e.g. UO project in Lane County) but fragmented
- Opportunity to integrate datasets from food banks, health depts, etc.
- Could improve targeting of food rescue/redistribution efforts

Ideas

- Splitting schools/institutions into their own category, as they have unique challenges and needs compared to other commercial entities.
- Exploring the role of local government in providing funding, space, and other support for food rescue/gleaning organizations.
- Concerns about the role of companies like Divert that may be prioritizing their own interests (like anaerobic digestion) over true food rescue and donation.
- The need for more comprehensive data and mapping of food insecurity, food donation networks, and food waste in the region.
- Leveraging existing programs and partnerships, like the work Metro has done with the Oregon Food Bank, as a foundation to build upon.
- Identifying barriers like lack of funding, storage/refrigeration space, and staff time/capacity for smaller organizations.
- Exploring how to better integrate informal/volunteer-driven food gleaning efforts with more formal food bank and donation networks.

Considerations

Funding and Resources:

- Lack of dedicated funding for food waste prevention and donation programs, often relying on grants and volunteers
- Need for affordable storage/refrigeration space for food rescue organizations
- Challenges with staff time and capacity, especially for smaller organizations

Coordination and Partnerships:

- Importance of collaboration between local governments, food banks, nonprofits, and businesses
- Concerns about competing interests from companies like Divert that may prioritize their own operations over true food donation
- Need to better integrate informal food gleaning efforts with more formal donation networks

Data and Mapping:

- Lack of comprehensive data and mapping of food insecurity, donation networks, and food waste in the region
- Efforts underway, like the work at the University of Oregon, to improve food system data and analysis

Unique Needs of Different Sectors:

- Recognition that schools and institutions have very different challenges and needs compared to commercial businesses
- Importance of tailoring approaches and solutions to the specific context

Policy and Regulations:

- Role of mandates and policies (like composting requirements) in driving action on food waste
- Potential for aligning food donation efforts with broader climate and sustainability goals

Questions

- What is the difference between "donation awareness" and "increasing donation" - is one more about communication/education while the other is about infrastructure/capacity?
- Are food banks the only recipients of gleaned food, or are there other market/open distribution channels as well?
- How informal/untracked is the food gleaning that happens directly between volunteers/community members and homeowners/farmers?
- What role can local governments play in providing funding, space, or other support for food rescue/gleaning organizations?
- How comprehensive is the data and mapping of food insecurity, donation networks, and food waste in the region? What efforts are underway to improve this?
- What are the barriers around funding, staff capacity, and infrastructure (like refrigeration) that food rescue organizations face?
- How can the informal food gleaning efforts be better integrated with the more formal food bank and donation networks?
- What role do policies and mandates (like composting requirements) play in driving action on food waste prevention and donation?
- How can food donation efforts be better aligned with broader climate and sustainability goals?
- What examples or lessons can be drawn from other regions, like Seattle or San Diego, that have tackled these issues?

Action: Research and analysis

- Explore examples and lessons from other regions like Seattle and San Diego that have implemented successful food donation and food waste reduction programs.
- Dive deeper into the data and mapping efforts underway, like the work at the University of Oregon, to understand food insecurity, donation networks, and food waste in the region.
- Investigate the role and operations of companies like Divert - how they are impacting food donation versus diversion to anaerobic digestion.
- Analyze the funding sources, costs, and cost-effectiveness of different food rescue and donation programs, including government grants and private investments.
- Assess the unique needs and challenges of different sectors like schools/institutions versus commercial businesses when it comes to food waste prevention and donation.
- Research best practices for integrating informal food gleaning efforts with more formal food bank and donation networks.
- Explore policy levers, like composting mandates, that can drive increased food waste prevention and donation.
- Examine how food donation programs can be better aligned with broader climate and sustainability goals.
- Identify barriers around funding, storage/refrigeration, staff capacity, and other resources that hinder food rescue organizations.
- Catalog existing food donation and rescue programs in the region to understand the current landscape and identify gaps or opportunities for expansion.