

CENTRAL OHIO FOOD WASTE ACTION PLAN

2024 UPDATE

JUNE 2024



CENTRAL OHIO
FOOD WASTE INITIATIVE

Coordinated By:

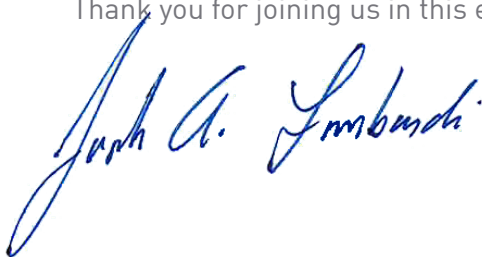
SWACO
FROM WASTE TO RESOURCES

LETTER FROM SWACO

One million pounds. This is the amount of food that is wasted every single day in central Ohio alone. It's a sobering reality considering the vast amount of financial and natural resources it takes to produce, harvest, and transport the food on our dinner plates. When food is wasted, not only are all of those resources lost, but so is the opportunity to donate edible food that could help families and individuals overcome hunger.

Fortunately, central Ohio excels at coming together to problem-solve, and the Food Waste Action Plan is a great example of that collaboration. By working together to advance the solutions outlined in this Plan Update we can each be a part of the progress towards reaching our shared goal to cut food waste in half by 2030.

Thank you for joining us in this endeavor.



Joe Lombardi

Executive Director, SWACO



CENTRAL OHIO FOOD WASTE INITIATIVE PARTNERS

Dozens and dozens of partners have worked with SWACO, and independently, to implement food waste reduction activities in our region. These logos represent a small but important slice of partners reducing food waste in central Ohio.



ABOUT THE CENTRAL OHIO FOOD WASTE INITIATIVE

Food waste is a complex and systemic issue that impacts the health of our society, economy, and environment in ways we often might not consider. Developing effective solutions for addressing this pervasive problem requires all members of the community (individuals, government, businesses, nonprofits, and institutions) to work together. The Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) formed the Central Ohio Food Waste Initiative (COFWI) in September 2018 to bring together a diverse set of stakeholders to help build a unified approach towards reducing food waste and leveraging it to benefit our region. The initiative takes a multifaceted approach to combating food waste across strategies that prevent wasted food in the first instance, rescue and redistribute edible food, and compost whatever food is no longer fit for consumption.



The **Central Ohio Food Waste Action Plan** (Plan) is the organizing action plan for COFWI. Developed in 2019 by stakeholders from the food, farm, health, education sectors, and public and private sectors, it identifies 20 solutions to reducing food waste through prevention, recovery, and composting strategies.

Read more about the formation of COFWI in the original [2019 Food Waste Action Plan](#).

THE 2024 ACTION PLAN UPDATE



Breakout group discussed current activities and needs during the 2023 COFWI Convening

Since 2019, when SWACO started to document the food waste activities of COFWI stakeholders, significant strides have been made in food waste reduction. This Plan update attempts to document the activities that COFWI partners have undertaken which are collectively making a big impact on food access, waste reduction, soil health, and carbon emissions in the central Ohio region.

To prepare for an update to the 5 year old Plan, SWACO reconvened the initiative in November of 2023. The 2023 COFWI Convening was attended by over 50 partners from 32 different organizations and businesses and provided a long needed opportunity to celebrate our collective progress towards reducing food waste in the region and to discuss persisting gaps and opportunities. Across multiple breakout sessions, partners discussed what needs remain to strengthen food waste prevention, donation, and composting in our region and where focus should be concentrated to make progress in the next 5 years. The ideas generated during this event and the activities that partners are already engaged in are captured in the 2024 update. A [Record of Learning](#) from the event is also available. The timeline on the following page highlights major milestones of the initiative while the hundreds of activities happening in our communities are reflected in individual solution areas throughout the rest of the document.

MAJOR MILESTONES IN FOOD WASTE REDUCTION IN CENTRAL OHIO

2016	Columbus and Franklin County Local Food Action Plan (LFAP) adopted. Goal D revolves around the prevention of food waste and recovery of edible food
	Waste Characterization Study conducted by SWACO identified food waste as largest single material entering the landfill (15% of total material)
2019	1st COFWI Convening Working Sessions
	Food Waste Action Plan Published
	City of Bexley Curbside Composting Program Pilot Year
	1st Food Waste Drop-off Program established in the City of Worthington
2020	SaveMoreThanFood.org is launched
	'Save More Than Food' food waste prevention campaign runs in central Ohio
	SWACO develops food waste prevention resources for teachers
2021	Virtual COFWI Convenings
	The Save More Than Food Campaign is evaluated
	Central Ohio communities partner with the Save More Than Food campaign
	The City of Columbus publishes the Columbus Climate Action Plan
2023	COFWI Convening
	Upper Arlington Curbside Composting Program Pilot Year
2024	City of Columbus Mayor Ginther signs Milan Urban Food Policy Pact
	Upper Arlington Curbside Composting Program becomes available city-wide
	Food Waste Action Plan 2024 Update Published



Proposed Solutions Prevention	
Residential	K-12/Institutional, Commercial and Industrial
A1 Consumer In-home Awareness Campaign	A2 School Curriculum and Program Campaign
A-3 & A-4 Grocery Retail and Food Service Point of Sale (POS) Consumer Messaging Campaign	A5 Employee Training/Education Campaign
	A6 Advocate for Improved Date Labeling



Proposed Solutions Rescue	
K-12/Institutional, Commercial and Industrial	
B1 Increase Capacity for Rescue Outlets	
B2 Food Rescue Promotion and Training	
B3 Support Sharing Tables and Food Rescue in Schools	
B4 Value-Added Products from Rescued Foods	
B5 Advocate for Increased Tax Deduction Benefits for Donating Food	



Proposed Solutions Recycling	
Residential	K-12/Institutional, Commercial and Industrial
C1 Catalyze Smart Growth of Community Food Waste Drop-off Programs	C4 Promote Existing Services and Programs
C2 Evaluate and Pilot Scalable Residential Curbside Collection of Source Separated Organics	C5 Promote and Pilot Food Waste Collection with Schools
C3 Promotion of Decentralized Food Waste Recycling	C6 Business Incentives and Resources for Diversion
C7 Food Waste Composting Feasibility Study	
C8 Increase Regional Competition and Capacity for Food Waste Recycling Solutions	
C9 Support Innovation and Entrepreneurs to Develop and Enhance Food Waste Prevention, Rescue, and Recycling Solutions.	

APPENDIX A: DETAILED PREVENTION, RESCUE, AND RECYCLING SOLUTION AREAS

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C-1	Catalyze Smart Growth for Community Food Waste Drop-off Programs	Recycling	Residential	18
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C-3	Promotion of Decentralized Food Waste Recycling	Recycling	Residential	20
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C-6	Business Incentives and Resources for Diversion	Recycling	K-12/Institutional, Commercial and Industrial	23
C-7	Food Waste Composting Feasibility Study	Recycling	Residential, K-12/Institutional, Commercial and Industrial	24
C-8	Increase Regional Competition and Capacity for Food Waste Recycling Solutions	Recycling	Residential, K-12/Institutional, Commercial and Industrial	25
C-9	Support Innovation and Entrepreneurs to Develop and Enhance Food Waste Prevention, Rescue, and Recycling Solutions	Prevention, Rescue, Recycling	Residential, K-12/Institutional, Commercial and Industrial	26

Consumer In-Home Messaging Campaign

A-1	Target Audience: Residential	Solution Type: Prevention
	Opportunity Some of the most significant impacts on food waste generated within homes will result from consumer behavior change. Change must be affected by increasing consumer awareness and readiness to change baseline behavior related to purchasing, storage and handling, and preparation of food in homes.	
	Objective/Purpose Create consumer awareness about food waste and provide tips and resources for prevention and reduction. • Increase awareness of food waste and associated costs • Communicate about food waste directly to residents • Act as part of large-scale food waste prevention advocacy campaign (LFAP Action D-1: Expand food waste prevention education campaigns) • Provide consumers with tips/info on how to reduce wasted food (pair with tools, resources, FAQ's)	
	Measurement & Impact Measurement Metrics could include: • # Homes reached • # Impressions (communications, emails, online ads, social media) • Pre/post surveys measuring sentiment and consumer behavior change/actions	
	Key Partners SWACO, cities of Upper Arlington, Dublin, Bexley, Whitehall, Gahanna, and Columbus Potential Partners Central Ohio communities who have not run the SMTF campaign	
	2019-23 Key Activities Launch of Save More than Food (SMTF) In September of 2020, SWACO and the Central Ohio Food Waste Initiative (COFWI) launched the Save More Than Food campaign to provide residents in the region with the information and resources they need to reduce and divert food waste. Savemorethanfood.org serves as a living hub of tools and resources for residents, schools, businesses, and communities on the topics of meal planning, food storage and preparation, as well as food donation and composting. SMTF Testing in Upper Arlington With support from a \$60,000 U.S. EPA grant, SWACO, the City of Upper Arlington and Ohio State University evaluated the implementation of the SMTF Campaign in Upper Arlington . Food waste decreased by 21% in all Upper Arlington households over the course of the campaign. Residents who received additional materials about composting decreased their food waste by 42% ! Local Implementation Local SMTF Campaigns have been implemented by 6 communities reaching approximately 55,000 residents National Recognition Food waste reduction efforts of SWACO and partners were recognized in the New York Times and by NBC Nightly News	
	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities • Identify additional local partnerships that can enhance sharing of the campaign • Continue to develop and promote specific resources that help residents, schools, and businesses to reduce food waste • Implement community scale versions of the campaign in at least three Central Ohio communities each year	

School Curriculum and Program Campaign

A-2

Target Audience: K-12/Institutional, Commercial, Industrial

Solution Type: Prevention



Opportunity

Long lasting and meaningful behavior change in the residential setting will be a result of consumers changing behavior. This change will be a function of increased awareness about food waste, how it represents a misuse of resources, and why it is important environmentally, economically, and socially. Perhaps the most effective institution to engage in this type of awareness campaign is the school system.

Objective/Purpose

Develop educational resources that increase student awareness and participation in food waste reduction practices.

- Educate students on the importance of preventing food waste at home and in school
- Equip public educational institutions to influence cultural behavior and knowledge as it relates to reducing food waste.
- Reach students through a range of strategies:
 - Curriculum
 - Special projects (composting, etc.)
 - Field trips, special speakers

Measurement & Impact

- Students reached (messed)
- Programs implemented
- Diversion achieved in school-based programs

Other Needs/Considerations

- Align this activity with Recycling Solution 'promote and pilot food waste composting in schools'
- Aligns with LFAP Action Goal D-1: Expand food waste prevention education campaigns for consumers, local governments, pre-K-12 schools, and food businesses
- Aligns with LFAP Action B-12 Support the expansion of nutrition and food system education in Pre-K-12 curricula

Key Partners

SWACO, Columbus City schools, World Wildlife Fund, Local Matters

Potential Partners

School districts in Franklin County, technical schools and colleges with culinary programs

2019-23 Key Activities

Food Waste Warrior Curriculum

At the time of the Action Plan launch, partnerships with Central Ohio schools were already underway implementing [World Wildlife Fund's \(WWF\) Food Waste Warrior Curriculum](#) in Columbus City Schools. Results from the pilot program contributed to national learnings around school food waste and impacts of student engagement, the results of which are detailed in a [summary report by WWF](#).

New SWACO Food Waste School Resources

In collaboration with local school districts, SWACO developed [12 new classroom and administrative resources](#) to help students build the connection between taking action to reduce food waste at school and the broader environmental, social, and economic benefits of their actions.

School Programs and Diversion

A number of school districts partnered with SWACO to reduce food waste in schools. Grants were awarded for the following projects:

- Hilliard City Schools implemented a district wide composting program, diverting 146,000 lbs of food waste and compostable service ware from 14 elementary and two 6th grade schools in 2018. The program was postponed in 2019-2020 due to school shutdowns during the pandemic and restarted in 2021.
- Columbus City Schools diverted 56,000 lbs of cafeteria food waste in 2019 as part of a composting and gardening education program in 5 elementary or middle schools.
- New Albany Intermediate School is piloting a food waste diversion program through 2024, collecting all lunchroom food scraps and switching to compostable service ware. About 50% of the schools' waste is now diverted toward making compost.

2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities

Development of a peer network of educators and education administrators through which to share food waste resources and best practices related to food waste education, food donation, and composting in schools.

Grocery Retail and Food Service Point of Sale (POS) Consumer Messaging Campaign

A-3 & A-4

Target Audience: Residential

Solution Type: Prevention



Opportunity

Grocery stores and food service point-of-sale establishments are common touch-points consumers have with food. Messaging in these spaces presents an opportunity to showcase the food waste prevention activities a business is undertaking as well as providing education to customers about the issue of food waste where they are already interacting with and thinking about food. A-3 and A-4 have been combined due to the similarity of activities identified as part of these solutions areas.

Objective/Purpose

- Create consumer awareness about food waste and provide tips and resources for prevention and reduction.
- Utilize the most common touchpoints in the supply chain related to In-home consumer food waste by messaging at the point of sale.
- Educate and influence consumers at the food retail level.
- In alignment with LFAP Action D-1: consumer food waste prevention education campaign.

Measurement & Impact

Measurement metrics could include:

- # of grocery and food service establishments utilizing educational campaign materials.
- # consumer impressions (with help of grocery retail teams).
- Pre/post surveys at the point of sale measuring sentiment and consumer behavior change/ actions over time.
- Surveys administered in advance of the campaign could also provide valuable information on current consumer awareness and identify specific areas that should be targeted with a campaign.

Other Needs/Considerations

- This solution is dependent on the willingness of grocery retail stores and food service establishments to participate.
- Aligns with LFAP Action B-11: Incorporate onsite nutrition education and counseling, shopping strategies and healthy food purchasing incentives at food retail.

Key Partners

SWACO, Giant Eagle, Kroger

Potential Partners

Ohio Restaurant Association, Ohio Grocers Association, restaurants, cafes, cafeterias, and other food retail establishments

2019-23 Key Activities

- SWACO advertised its Food Storage Guide at Giant Eagle stores from November 2023 to January 2024. A scannable QR code found on shopping carts and within the dairy and produce sections at 14 Central Ohio Giant Eagle and Market District locations took shoppers to the digital Food Storage Guide.
- Several grocery retailers including Kroger and Meijer have already developed or are currently developing food waste educational materials on their own as well as partnering with companies like Flash Foods to sell foods that are near their "freshest by" date that would otherwise get thrown away.
- Save More Than Food has made over 10 [consumer engagement resources](#) available to food service establishments and other businesses.
- SWACO engaged 5 local food service "Food Waste Champions" to implement, assess, and promote tried and tested food waste prevention and diversion approaches. Findings are being used to inform a business food waste incentive program being developed for 2024/2025.

2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities

- Grocery POS Engagement: Evaluate success of Giant Eagle advertisements in engaging shoppers and pursue similar partnerships if deemed successful.
- Food Service POS Engagement: Engage businesses in COFWI through formal programs such as incentives or a certification which can also be used to communicate food waste reduction practices to customers and promote the Save More Than Food Campaign.

Employee Training and Education

A-5

Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial

Solution Type: Prevention



Opportunity

In the commercial setting, employee practices are critical to reducing food waste generated both in back-of-house and front-of-house settings. Institutional guidelines should support best practices such as rightsizing portions, low waste food prep, appropriate food handling and storage, etc. However, in the food service industry where employee turnover is high, guidelines are often only as effective as the training which ensures they are followed.

Objective/Purpose

Establish and distribute simple and effective employee training resources to prevent and reduce food waste.

- Regional food service workers are trained in best practices.
- Utilization of currently trained staff and managers knowledgeable in the areas of ServeSafe.
- Leverage local

Measurement & Impact

Development of resources and case studies showcasing institutional training practices and the impact within the business.

- # Food service employees trained
- # Programs providing training
- # Trainers, individual workshops, etc.

Other Needs/Considerations

- Understand if there are existing relationships for education targeted at regional foodservice.
- Culinary program curriculum.
- Recruit a champion faculty member at training program.

Key Partners

SWACO, Ohio Restaurant Association, food rescue organizations including Food Rescue Columbus and Rescuing Leftover Cuisine

Potential Partners

OSU Culinary Institute, Columbus State culinary science program, Ohio Manufacturing Association

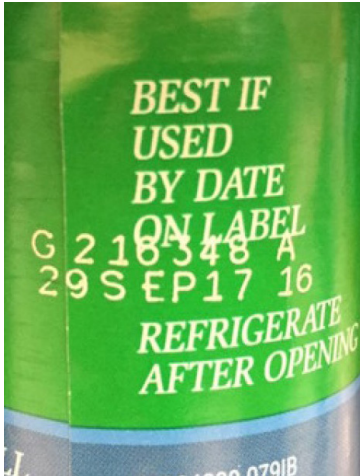
2019-23 Key Activities

- Five businesses implemented food waste reduction strategies in their operations as part of SWACO's Food Waste Business Champions program between June 2019 and June 2021. These collaborations and trainings resulted in over 23,000 pounds of diverted compost and two ongoing food donation programs.
- 30 food businesses (incl. manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and restaurants) were interviewed in 2022 to help SWACO assess the spectrum of interest and readiness to implement different food waste reduction (prevention, donation, and composting) strategies. A major finding pointed to focusing on food donation as an easy to implement, potential money-saving, and immediate opportunity to reduce wasted food. SWACO will build out resources to assist businesses based on this research.

2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities

- Conduct outreach about food donation (i.e., safety principles, how to start a program) to food businesses across Franklin County leveraging partnerships with the Franklin County and City of Columbus Departments of Health
- Develop educational materials, case studies, and best practices based on the experiences of the businesses reducing food waste that can be shared with other businesses.
- Partner with health departments, food rescue organizations, food industry associations and other partners to provide free educational trainings, webinars, and workshops to regional food businesses on food donation and composting in the food business sector.
- Incorporate food waste reduction resources as part of regular city and county health department outreach.
- Partner with culinary schools to integrate up and coming chefs of food waste prevention, donation, and composting practices.

Advocate for Improved Date Labeling

A-6	Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial	Solution Type: Prevention
	Opportunity Confusion regarding interpretation of date labels on food packaging can lead to unnecessary wasting of food. Improving the consistent application, language and messaging related to date labeling can help to reduce waste.	
	Objective/Purpose Advocate for improved date labeling at the State level to alleviate confusion and reduce food waste.	
	Measurement & Impact Changes in policy that create clarity and consistency for date labeling standards.	
	Other Needs/Considerations Date labeling is both a state and national policy issue.	
	Key Partners Dr. Brian Roe (Director OSU Food Waste Collaborative), NRDC, ReFED, Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, City of Columbus	
	2019-23 Key Activities • Ohio State University researchers, including Dr. Brian Roe, have conducted research on food waste and date labeling. This empirical work, including Dr. Roe’s 2019 study on consumer date label behavior, is helping to inform local and national conversations about date labeling and food waste prevention. • SWACO provided comments in support of the federal Food Date Labeling Act and the Food Donation Improvement Act (which passed in January 2023).	
	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities SWACO and COFWI partners will continue to lend support towards federal initiatives to improve consumer information access and clarity.	

Increase Capacity for Rescue Outlets

B-1	Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial	Solution Type: Rescue
	Opportunity The robust network of rescue opportunities in Central Ohio can expand its current capabilities to store rescued fresh foods to extend the life and usefulness of those fresh foods and helping increase the amount of rescued food distributed with nutritional value.	
	Objective/Purpose Identify and promote equipment, methods, and resources for expanding capacity and reducing food waste at the end of the rescue chain. Work with partners to: • Increase capacity to handle fresh and prepared foods. • Improve and preserve nutritional value of rescued food.	
	Measurement & Impact • # Pieces of equipment installed. • Reduction of wasted food that requires disposal/collection for composting / increased # of food/meals distributed.	
	Key Partners SWACO, City of Columbus and Franklin County Depts. of Public Health, Food Rescue Columbus, Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, Mid-Ohio Food Collective other food rescue organizations, NRDC	
	2019-23 Key Activities • SWACO has supported its partners in food rescue through grants and worked to facilitate broader rescue coordination in the region. Partnership included: • Both Food Rescue US and Rescuing Leftover Cuisine received a SWACO Community Waste Reduction grant to increase their capacity to offer food rescue services through an improved phone application designed to more effectively connect volunteers to food donating restaurants and businesses. With the support of partner agencies and volunteers, these organizations redistributed over 7.5 million pounds of food from 2019 through 2023. • Prior to the action plan, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective received a SWACO Community Waste Reduction grant in 2017 and 2018 to expand capacity and storage for rescuing and redistributing food, which facilitated the rescue of nearly two million pounds of perishable food in those years. • Food Rescue Columbus, Food Soldier, the Westerville Area Resource Ministry and Crossroads World Outreach Ministries received a Food Waste Reduction Capacity Grant through a SWACO partnership with NRDC, to purchase cold storage equipment to increase ability to offer foods that require refrigeration and extend the shelf life of rescued food. • Columbus Food Rescue received funding from Governor DeWine to open a LaSoupe transform kitchen in Columbus that will process donated food into healthy cooked meals to feed the food insecure.	
	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities • Partner with local organizations and leverage local and national funding opportunities to expand capacity for food rescue outlets (e.g. via city/county food donation centers with cold storage capacity, staff capacity for rescues and education). • Pilot and support the development of further food rescue solutions and food waste technologies (see solution C-9).	

Food Rescue Promotion and Training

B-2

Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial

Solution Type: Rescue



Opportunity

Successful food rescue is dependent on the participation of establishments which have food to rescue and organizations that are available to distribute rescued food. Both generators and distributors rely on people to make this happen. Employees at retail or restaurants must understand how to support food rescue in addition to volunteers and staff with rescue operations. Opportunities include 1) increased promotion of available food rescue services and 2) education and training for food safety, food loss reduction and donation policies.

Objective/Purpose

Promote participation in food rescue activities to both generators (food retail and restaurants) and potential volunteers. Provide training and resources to enable participation.

- Increase the number of retail and dining businesses that contribute to rescued food.
- Increase the number of volunteers participating.
- Improve awareness and understanding of food safety best practices and rules.
- Recover more food for distribution to those who need it.

Measurement & Impact

- # of people attending trainings
- # of retail and foodservice establishments participating
- # of food/meals distributed
- # of volunteers

Other Needs/Considerations

- Includes prepared, fresh, and shelf-stable foods.

Key Partners

SWACO, City of Columbus Dept. of Public Health, Franklin County Dept. of Public Health, Local Matters, Food Rescue Columbus, Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, Other food rescue organizations, Ohio Restaurant Association

Potential Partners

Local, regional, and national distribution sector businesses and food service companies.

2019-23 Key Activities

- SWACO provided grant funding to support Food Rescue US and Rescuing Leftover Cuisines in growing their rescue capacity by increasing increased promotion and donor trainings (See B-1 Key Activities).
- Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health developed Food Donation brochures through a SWACO grant and distributed them to 10,000 Central Ohio food businesses as part of the annual licensing renewal process.
- As part of the Food Business Champions program, SWACO trained staff at 5 businesses on food donation (See Solution C-6). Two businesses established ongoing programs to donate their excess food beyond the champions program term.

2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities

- SWACO will facilitate a Food Donation in Businesses working group in 2024 that will support or add to the opportunities already listed.
- SWACO, the City and County Departments of Public Health will develop a donation magnet and include it in regular inspection of food businesses. An annual training will be developed to empower health inspectors to advocate for food donation.
- Develop and promote food rescue training materials such as videos and "how-to" guides for food businesses based on the experiences of Champions (See solution C-6).
- Co-promote these training and educational resources with regional associations.

Support Sharing Tables and Food Rescue from Schools

B-3	Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial	Solution Type: Rescue
	Opportunity Schools often produce tremendous amounts of food waste. Sharing tables and rescuing edible food from schools has developed into a best practice around the county. These programs help reduce the amount of food waste generated and help to ensure disadvantaged students and families have access to nutritious foods.	
	Objective/Purpose Establish resources and provide training to help schools launch sharing tables and connect with food rescue organizations.	
	Measurement & Impact • # of schools participating in sharing tables. • # of schools participating in food rescue.	
	Other Needs/Considerations • Aligns with LFAP Action D-3: Recommend changes to policies, zoning and health codes that support and encourage food waste recovery and diversion.	
	Key Partners SWACO, Hilliard City Schools, Columbus City Schools, Food Rescue US, and Rescuing Leftover Cuisine Potential Partners Ohio Department of Education Office of Nutrition, Ohio Department of Agriculture	
	2019-23 Key Activities • SWACO developed share table implementation tools including a guide to starting a share table, pre-designed announcements and reminders, and how-to signage. The COVID-19 pandemic hindered the promotion and distribution of these resources. • Food Rescue US established partnership with dining staff in Upper Arlington and Bexley school districts to divert excess food from schools to nearby receiving agencies. 2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities • Development of a peer network of educators and education administrators through which to share food waste resources and best practices related to food waste education, prevention, and donation. • SWACO will convene a working group in 2024 to focus on increasing food donation in schools. The work of this group will inform the development of resources to guide schools in developing food donation programs. • Promote existing resources for share tables and food donation and identify additional resources necessary to support these practices in schools via such means as webinars, workshops and/or technical assistance.	

Value-Added Products from Rescued Foods		
B-4	Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial	Solution Type: Rescue
	Opportunity Processing potential food waste into value-added products has proven to be an innovative approach to food rescue. Value-adding increases the economic value and job creation potential from food waste streams. Some examples include dehydrating foods, alternative flour sources, and prepared meals such as soup.	
	Objective/Purpose Support businesses and entrepreneurs to start or expand value-added products from rescued foods.	
	Measurement & Impact • # of businesses value-adding rescued foods • Amount of food diverted	
	Key Partners SWACO	
	2019-23 Key Activities • SWACO has been building relationships with dozens of food waste generators, innovators, haulers, and composters. Along the way, they've worked to make connections between these entities to support entrepreneurs across the food waste sector. • SWACO and Rev1 Ventures collaborated to identify potential food upcycling innovations that could be piloted in Central Ohio (See solution C-9).	
	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities SWACO to support businesses in creating innovative value-added food upcycling options by helping them to identify and connect with funding opportunities.	

Advocate for Increased Tax Deduction Benefits for Donating Food

B-5	Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial	Solution Type: Rescue
 Key Partners NRDC, ReFed, WWF, Dr. Brian Roe (Director OSU Food Waste Collaborative), Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic	Opportunity Financial incentives are one of many drivers for businesses to donate or divert potential food waste. Increasing tax deduction benefits for donating food may increase food rescue efforts.	
	Objective/Purpose Support legislation that increases tax deduction benefits for donating food.	
	Measurement & Impact Legislative actions	
	Other Needs/Considerations Aligns with LFAP Action D-4: Provide training, tools and economic incentives for new and existing food businesses to develop, adopt and implement food waste prevention plans.	
	2019-23 Key Activities - In 2023, NRDC, ReFed, WWF, and the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic developed a Food Policy Action Plan with recommendations for the Biden-Harris Administration to support the nation's 50% food waste reduction goal. The plan includes expanded incentives for food rescue and donations that provide a model for local policy action. - SWACO contributed to the groups' report "Opportunities to Reduce Food Waste in the 2023 Farm Bill" that provides recommendations across food waste prevention, surplus food rescue, food waste recycling, and coordination in food waste policy in the 2023 Farm Bill. 2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities - SWACO and COFWI partners will continue to lend support towards federal initiatives to support increased tax deductions for food donation.	

Catalyze Smart Growth for Community Food Waste Drop-Off Programs

C-1	Target Audience: Residential	Solution Type: Recycling
	Opportunity Drop-off programs can provide economically feasible options for the collection of food waste. Food waste drop-off collection can take many forms. Some examples include utilizing small scale composting operations at existing community gardens, and offering collection services at farmers markets, which is taking place currently.	
	Objective/Purpose Evaluate most feasible and sustainable approaches for community food waste drop-off programs, adapt and evaluate programs based on pilot projects.	
	Measurement & Impact • # of food waste drop-offs • Participation levels at drop-offs • Amount of organic material diverted • Document and learn from challenges	
	Other Needs/Considerations • Educational components for users of the drop-offs. • Communication and promotional efforts. • Proper management of drop-off sites, preventing them from becoming a nuisance. • Coordination with LFAP Action Plan D-3: Support zoning and health codes that encourage alternative food waste recovery and diversion.	
Key Partners SWACO, the cities of Bexley, Columbus, Dublin, Gahanna, Grandview Heights, Grove City, Hilliard, New Albany, Upper Arlington, Westerville, Whitehall, Worthington	2019-23 Key Activities • Before 2019, Central Ohio did not have any municipally organized food waste drop off opportunities for residents. From 2019-2023, SWACO Community Waste Reduction grant funds helped 11 communities in Central Ohio launch food waste drop-off programs and 22 drop-off locations. Collectively, these sites diverted more than 3 million pounds of food waste from the landfill between 2019 and 2023. • SWACO hosts quarterly meetings for communities with drop offs to share lessons learned and contribute to the development of standardized signage and a Community Food Waste Drop-off Best Practices guide.	
Potential Partners Central Ohio communities in Franklin County without any kind of organics collection program.	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities • Expand drop-off programs to Central Ohio communities by providing grant funding and technical support. • Promote the Save More Than Food campaign alongside food waste drop-offs with communities launching these programs. • Continue to measure the performance of drop-off programs and adapt the program for the unique circumstances of each community.	

Evaluate and Pilot Scalable Residential Curbside Collection of Source Separated Organics

C-2	Target Audience: Residential	Solution Type: Recycling
	Opportunity Providing convenient collection to one of the largest generators of food waste – single family household residents – can dramatically reduce the amount of wasted food sent to landfills and increase the opportunity for recycling into compost. Source Separated Organics refers to multiple types of organic material being collected together, such as food waste, yard waste, and other compostable items. Developing cost-effective models and incentives for this type of collection will be key to success.	
	Objective/Purpose Pilot projects with a small sample of residential households will allow SWACO and its collaborators to test models for curbside collection of source-separated organics, learn from the experience, and inform the development of a feasible program suitable for communities throughout the region.	
	Measurement & Impact • Participation of households • Diversion by households/pounds collected • Costs for collection and delivery to processing site	
	Other Needs/Considerations • Implementation of this solution will be informed by outcomes of the Feasibility Study and innovation by existing service providers and entrepreneurs. • Aligns with LFAP Action D-3: Recommend changes to policies, zoning and health codes that support and encourage food waste recovery and diversion.	
Key Partners SWACO, Cities of Bexley, Upper Arlington, and other communities that are interested in establishing curbside food waste collection.	2019-23 Key Activities • The City of Bexley implemented curbside compost collection in 2019. Since its inception through 2023, Bexley residents have diverted over 1,757,000 lbs. of food waste. Almost 42% of residents participate. • SWACO staff engaged communities across the country to evaluate their programs and practices to develop possible models and recommendations for future programs. • The City of Upper Arlington piloted a curbside organics diversion program in 2021 as part of USDA’s Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) Cooperative Agreements program. 700 households participated in the pilot year and helped to lay the foundation for a permanent curbside program. As of 2024, the program is open to all city residents and has over 1,000 participating households.	
	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities • Create a workgroup of local communities that are interested in implementing curbside organics collection; develop standard, replicable models for curbside food waste collection throughout the region including detailed program elements, timelines, and bidding documents; bid and implement the programs.	

Promotion of Decentralized Food Waste Recycling

C-3	Target Audience: Residential	Solution Type: Recycling
	Opportunity Decentralized composting has limitations but is an important part of organics recovery in any place, has a very low environmental impact compared to centralized organics recovery, and supports food sovereignty/ food justice. While residents can compost food waste through backyard composting and vermicomposting, opportunities exist to grow decentralized composting to the community scale and allow for increased local recovery of organics and access to compost.	
	Objective/Purpose Identify, pilot, and promote low-impact options for residential and community food waste recovery. Developing support resources, materials, and incentives that enable residential participation.	
	Measurement & Impact • New and existing resources available and promoted • Participation levels • # compost bins and # rebates for bins given out annually • Estimated material diverted	
	Other Needs/Considerations • Aligns with LFAP Goal B-5: Grow capacity and enhance viability of civic agriculture to allow more residents to grow food for themselves and their neighbors. • Aligns with LFAP Goal D-2: Leverage food waste reduction resources and strategies to increase the number of residents who access training, education, and equipment for effective backyard composting. • Aligns with LFAP Action D-3: Recommend changes to policies, zoning and health codes that support and encourage food waste recovery and diversion.	
	Key Partners SWACO, Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District, Franklin County Dept. of Economic Development, central Ohio communities, Local Matters, Ohio EPA, Ohio Organics Council, Ohio Hispanic Coalition, Franklinton Farms	
	2019-23 Key Activities • As part of the Community Backyards Program, the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District and SWACO provided 4,934 residents with a discounted rodent-proof compost bin or a rebate for a bin of their choosing. The program has grown every year since its establishment with more residents interested in composting. • SWACO and Columbus Public Health convened City of Columbus environmental health experts to evaluate regulations surrounding community-scale composting resulting in SWACO sharing policy recommendations for updates to Columbus City policies. • The Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Board created the Urban Agriculture Zoning Recommendations Project Team with the objective of identifying zoning recommendations and best practices to enable and support small-scale urban agriculture in the county. In 2023, staff focused on research, capacity building, and developing relationships with City, County, and SWACO staff to co-create models and best practices for potential updates to local urban agriculture, community garden, and residential composting regulations. In 2024 the group will produce a final report that identifies recommendations for jurisdictions to revise and strengthen their zoning codes to allow small-scale urban agriculture land uses to flourish.	
	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities • Engage health departments in evaluating and implementing policy changes to enable greater flexibility for composting at community garden sites. • Identify partners who can provide training and educational resources to community gardens for managing on-site composting piles. • Promote increased participation in proper backyard composting through public training opportunities and strategic partnerships. • Provide funding to incentivize purchasing of backyard composting units that are easy to use, maintain, and are rodent proof.	

Promote Existing Programs and Services for Composting

C-4	Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial	Solution Type: Recycling
	Opportunity A variety of service providers already exist in Central Ohio. Some provide services to large food waste generators only; others offer collection options for residents. On-site composting technology is also available for larger generators of food waste.	
	Objective/Purpose Promote existing options/service providers to businesses and events through Save More Than Food website and other outlets.	
	Measurement & Impact • Listing options on the Save More Than Food website • Pounds of food waste diverted as reported annually by service providers	
	Other Needs/Considerations • Aligns with LFAP Goal D: Prevent food-related waste • Work with service providers and agencies to ensure service providers and existing facilities are in compliance with rules and regulations	
Key Partners SWACO and local service providers	2019-23 Key Activities SWACO engaged with new providers, helping them to promote their services on SaveMoreThanFood.org and connect them to businesses and communities looking to manage their food waste.	
	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities SWACO will continue to update the Save More Than Food website as local companies develop new resources and services for reducing and diverting food waste. Additionally, SWACO will work with local food waste and compost haulers to better promote and target their services to relevant audiences and encourage COFWI partners to link website visitors to the Save More Than Food website to help them connect with existing programs and resources.	

Promote and Pilot Food Waste Collection in Schools

C-5	Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial / K-12	Solution Type: Recycling
	Opportunity Schools provide an ideal platform for introducing waste reduction and diversion activities. Being foundational institutions dedicated to educating future generations, implementing practices such as food waste reduction and diversion helps to introduce and promote these beneficial activities within communities and families.	
	Objective/Purpose Promote resources, technical assistance, and support for establishing food waste diversion and composting opportunities in schools. Promote solutions that are adaptable and scalable.	
	Measurement & Impact • Resources developed • # of schools implementing donation and composting activities • Amount of food waste diverted (and reduced) • Potential savings from landfilling costs	
	Other Needs/Considerations This solution is dependent on capacity and available options of existing service providers. To implement such programs requires tremendous support for school administrations, including dedicated educational efforts, participation from staff, faculty, and students. Engagement and participation of the hauler/processor will be critical for success. • Aligns with LFAP Goal D: Prevent food-related waste	
Key Partners SWACO, Hilliard City Schools, Columbus City Schools, The Ohio State University Potential Partners The Columbus Foundation and other school districts located in Franklin County	2019-23 Key Activities • Columbus City Schools used SWACO grant funding to pilot school garden compost programs, resulting in 55,660 pounds of diverted food waste from cafeterias to garden compost piles. • Hilliard City Schools, with grant funding from SWACO, piloted compost collection from cafeterias in 16 schools resulting in 146,000 pounds of diverted food waste in 2019. • The Ohio State University’s Zero Waste Initiatives resulted in 19 university buildings adding new composting programs between 2019 and 2021, bringing the total number of serviced buildings to 34. • Hilliard received a 2023 Community Waste Reduction Grant to develop a Waste Reduction Roadmap for all buildings within the school district. The roadmap will lay out diversion opportunities, program specific cost analysis, ROI, projected disposal savings, and a strategy for ongoing education for administrators, staff and students. 2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities • Identify tools and resources to assist schools with implementing best practices for food waste collection. • Develop case studies and best practices based on the SWACO Community Waste Reduction grant recipients’ experiences to share best practices and learnings. • Evaluate regional school food waste collection opportunities through consortiums or other aggregated procurement approaches that align with existing or future compost infrastructure.	

Business Incentives and Resources for Diversion

C-6

Target Audience: Institutional, Commercial, Industrial

Solution Type: Recycling



Opportunity

Businesses are top generators of food waste. Cost, convenience, and ease of implementation are some of the biggest barriers to initiating food waste diversion practices. Providing programs, resources, and incentives designed for businesses will help to alleviate challenges and increase participation in food waste diversion activities.

Objective/Purpose

Establish incentives and resources to increase business participation in food waste diversion activities.

Measurement & Impact

- # of new programs, resources, and incentives offered
- # of program participants, resources, and incentives used
- Amount of food waste diverted
- Financial and environmental benefits from food waste reduction

Other Needs/Considerations

- Alignment with LFAP Action D-4: Provide training, tools and economic incentives for new and existing food businesses to develop, adopt and implement food waste prevention plans

Key Partners

SWACO, City of Columbus, local service providers

2019-23 Key Activities

- SWACO worked with five businesses or organizations in the food service industry to pilot and evaluate reduction and diversion programs as part of a Food Waste Champions Program. The champions included Wendy's (Clintonville), Local Cantina (Brewery District), Harvest Bar and Kitchen (Clintonville), OhioHealth's Dublin Methodist Hospital cafeteria, and Cameron Mitchell restaurant The Barn (Rocky Fork Creek). Over the course of 3 months, the champions diverted 23,000 pounds of food, started two new ongoing donation programs, and recorded learnings and insights to be passed on to other regional food businesses. While Covid-19 restaurant closures and restrictions led to delays and new challenges, pilot projects were able to adapt and continue to gather learnings.
- SWACO partnered with Rev1 Ventures to evaluate needs and opportunities for food waste reduction and diversion innovation. Currently, this partnership is working to trial several technologies with Central Ohio businesses including Winnow, a food waste management software for commercial kitchens.
- SWACO conducted research interviews with food businesses in 2022 to understand major barriers and opportunities for reducing food waste in their operations. Findings from these conversations were used to inform the development of resources and incentives.

2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities

- Formalize learnings from engagement with businesses into best practices, case studies, and how-to guides to be promoted to Central Ohio food businesses.
- Formalize and pilot a business incentive program with prevention, donation, and composting components. Partner with local haulers and rescue organizations to incentivize businesses to pilot composting and rescue in their restaurants.

Food Waste Composting Feasibility Study

C-7	Target Audience: Residential, Institutional, Commercial, Industrial	Solution Type: Recycling
	Opportunity Scalable, reliable, and affordable options for food waste composting remains one of the biggest limitations to diverting food scraps within Central Ohio. While much of the food that is generated can be prevented from becoming waste, or rescued, composting capacity is a necessity for diverting food waste, with the potential for diverting the most amount of material.	
	Objective/Purpose The feasibility study will help to determine viable options for developing a scalable composting facility capable of accepting food waste and compostable materials from the Central Ohio region.	
	Measurement & Impact A 2020 feasibility analysis included the following: • Tons of food waste and other organic materials received • Contamination levels and amounts • Tons of marketable product produced • Reduction of food waste within the waste stream (next waste characterization cycle)	
	Other Needs/Considerations • In alignment with LFAP Action D-5: Build support for food waste recovery infrastructure among local leaders and large-scale food waste generators.	
Key Partners SWACO, community partners, industry participants	2019-23 Key Activities SWACO completed a preliminary feasibility analysis in 2020. The study explored local and regional partnerships, taking into consideration the capacity and support of existing facilities accepting food waste. Modeling and cost projections from the study continued to be further refined in 2021 and 2022.	
	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities • SWACO will continue to explore options for public or private partnership to establish a pilot composting facility within Franklin County. • Support expansion of facility capacity for food waste composting consistent with strategy C-8.	

Increase Regional Competition and Capacity for Food Waste Recycling Solutions

C-8

Target Audience: Residential, Institutional, Commercial, Industrial

Solution Type: Recycling



Opportunity

Capacity and market competition for food waste recycling solutions, such as composting, is currently one of the biggest barriers to increasing food waste diversion in the region. Evaluating and potentially pursuing recommendations included in the feasibility study may help to establish additional capacity and competition, helping to increase access to services and reduce costs. Other food waste recycling solutions may emerge as result of increased visibility and demand from businesses and residents.

Objective/Purpose

Support opportunities to increase regional capacity and competition for food waste recycling solutions. Advance scalable solutions that promote a resilient system for food waste recycling.

Measurement & Impact

- # of composting operations
- # of composting operators processing food waste in central Ohio or adjacent
- # of food waste haulers operating in Franklin County

Other Needs/Considerations

- In alignment with LFAP Action D-5: Build support for food waste recovery infrastructure among local leaders and large-scale food waste generators
- Exploration of local and regional partnerships

Key Partners

SWACO, Community Partners, Service Providers

2019-23 Key Activities

- Since the launch of the Action Plan, additional service providers have entered the market for food waste hauling, on-site industrial composting, and value-added products. Increased regional capacity has enabled some institutions like The Ohio State University to scale up composting and waste diversion programs.
- Funding from SWACO's Community Waste Reduction grant allowed the Columbus nonprofit Local Matters to purchase an on-site in-vessel composter. This equipment can divert 65 pounds of organic material per day, producing 100 pounds of finished compost per week, and serving as a food waste education tool for Local Matters programming.
- In 2021, SWACO issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to identify composting businesses that could design, build, and operate composting facilities.
- The Urban Agriculture Zoning Recommendations Project Team, created by the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Board, is working on a report of recommendations for jurisdictions to revise and strengthen their zoning codes to allow small-scale urban agriculture land uses to flourish. The report is set to be finalized in 2024.

2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities:

- Through cooperative actions with community partners and service providers, vet a yard waste and composting facility that serves Franklin County. The facility would reduce costs of compost services and ensure stable, long-term infrastructure to serve Central Ohio's community programs and possibly commercial generators of food waste.

Support Innovation and Entrepreneurs to Develop and Enhance Food Waste Prevention, Rescue, and Recycling Solutions

C-9	Target Audience: Residential, Institutional, Commercial, Industrial	Solution Type: Prevention, Rescue, and Recycling
	Opportunity Creating solutions to solve the complex nature of food waste requires creativity, ingenuity, and persistence. These solutions will likely emerge through innovative approaches and supporting entrepreneurs within the food waste arena. Leveraging public-private partnerships, economic development initiatives, businesses support resources, and grant opportunities could help to fuel advancements in food waste reduction and diversion services.	
	Objective/Purpose Through new and existing resources and partnerships, support innovation and entrepreneurs to develop solutions for enhancing food waste prevention, rescue, and recycling in Central Ohio.	
	Measurement & Impact • Number of new businesses or services being offered • Funding support, such as grants leveraged • New partnerships, programs, or resources offered to support food waste innovation	
	Key Partners SWACO, COFWI partners	
	2019-23 Key Activities • SWACO partnered with Rev1 Ventures to identify and pilot innovative solutions for waste reduction with businesses and institutional partners. One such innovative technology being piloted with local hospitals is Winnow, which provides artificial intelligence-powered food waste tracking technology for large institutional kitchens. • The Ohio State University awarded \$164,000 of startup funding between 2018 and 2021 to three businesses that aim to reduce food waste: a company repurposing coffee grounds for exfoliating body products, Green Scope Consulting, and a business that collects excess food from Ohio State dining locations to donate to local partners while also collecting data to optimize university purchasing patterns.	
	2024-2026 Goals/Opportunities • SWACO and COFWI partners will continue to support food waste entrepreneurs in Central Ohio through promotion and technical support. • SWACO support of food waste entrepreneurs through direct financial or program support, or partnerships with other mission-aligned organizations	