

Organics Management Guide Submission

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Select the Primary Entity Type Please identify the category that best represents your project: Brands and Manufacturers

Questions:

- 1. Background: Provide context for the program, project, or policy — why it was developed, when it began, and the problem or opportunity it addresses.**

A fast casual national restaurant chain had policies and procedures in place to minimize food waste, but their program did not distinguish between high quality surplus food and spoiled or otherwise inedible food waste.

As a result, the chain could not determine how much food diverted through their organics collection program could actually be diverted to a higher use (donation to communities in need). The restaurant partnered with Great Forest to conduct a series of targeted food waste audits to get the data they needed to make informed decisions about their organics diversion program.

- 2. Summary: Briefly describe the initiative, including its goals, location, and primary outcomes.**

The goal was to help the restaurant brand determine the feasibility of expanding their organics diversion program to include food donations.

To accomplish this goal, Great Forest conducted food waste audits at 3 locations of the national restaurant chain. The resulting data gave the restaurant chain deep insight into the composition of their food waste, identifying how much of it was high-quality and fit for

donation. With results from 3 stores, the brand was able to extrapolate their impact on a national scale and make plans to set up a food donation program for their outlets.

3. Percent of Overall Diverted Material: If available, include data or estimates on the portion of the community or organization's total diverted material no longer associated with the waste stream that this program or policy addresses.

The food waste audits conducted by Great Forest revealed that the restaurant chain could rescue an average of 26.7% of its daily food waste to feed the hungry, and that 97.6% of all audited surplus food was donatable as defined by the food rescue organization Replate.

The three stores had a total of 64.8 pounds of donatable food over the course of the audit. The proportion of surplus food within the total compost stream was consistent across the three audited locations – averaging 19%.

If the results were multiplied across all their outlets nationwide, the national chain estimated that it could put thousands of pounds of food back on the table each day, making a difference not only by reducing waste in their business operations nationally, but by also helping thousands of people across the communities in which they're located.

In short, the food waste audits determined that the restaurant chain could reduce waste and do good at the same time.

4. Key Program Elements or Policy Provisions: Describe the structure and main components of your program or policy. Explain the investments origins (who, how much). Please include as many of the following elements as applicable: What types of materials are being managed? (e.g., surplus recoverable foods, food scraps, wasted food. How are these materials managed? Who is responsible for managing them? (Organizations, agencies, businesses, or other entities) What products are generated, and how are they utilized or managed? (e.g., compost, animal feed, energy products) Who funds the management of these materials? (Funding sources, grants, partnerships) Who generates these materials? (Identify the origin: households, institutions, businesses, etc.)

- 1) Materials diverted: surplus recoverable foods, food scraps, wasted food.
- 2) Materials were identified and diverted from landfill through an organics diversion program
- 3) The business (restaurant chain) and the sustainability consultants and waste hauler/vendors/food rescue organizations they engage.

- 4) Food waste was diverted. Plans were made for the quality surplus food to be donated to communities in need.
- 5) The business funds this as part of their operations. By donating quality surplus food, the business may experience cost savings with lower waste costs.
- 6) Back-of-house kitchen staff as well as customers who do not pick up food orders, or who discard leftover food.
- 5. Regulatory Impact: Describe how laws, policies, regulations, and/or code have affected your program or project. This may include positive, negative, or neutral impacts. Consider noting which regulations apply, how they influenced implementation or operations, any challenges or barriers encountered, and how compliance requirements shaped program decisions.**

The Food Donation Improvement Act (FDIA) passed in 2023 expands protections for businesses and makes it easier for them to donate food. It updates the Bill Emerson Food Donation Act, passed in 1996, which establishes federal protection from civil and criminal liability for persons involved in the donation and distribution of food and grocery products to needy individuals.

- 6. Measurable Increase in Supply: Include data or qualitative outcomes showing growth in collection, diversion, or reuse volumes if available.**

see answers in #3

- 7. Behavior Change: Describe whether the initiative resulted in measurable behavior change and explain how you determined this. If behavior change occurred, outline the strategies that proved most effective. Please include any available data or evidence that supports your findings.**

The project helped the business decide on the feasibility of donating quality surplus food to feed the hungry, rather than just diverting it from landfill.

- 8. Benefits and Impacts (Economic, Environmental, and Social): Describe the economic, environmental, and social sustainability impacts of the program, policy, or initiative. This may include both positive and negative outcomes. You may address impacts such as costs or savings, job creation, waste reduction, emissions, resource conservation, community engagement, equity, or public**

health. Please include data or qualitative observations where available and note any trade-offs or challenges.

The project showed that businesses like this restaurant can reduce food waste and do good at the same time.

If the results are multiplied across all their outlets nationwide, the national chain could put thousands of pounds of food back on the table each day, making a difference not only in their business operations nationally, but also in the lives of thousands of people across the communities in which they're located. The potential goodwill they can generate is immeasurable.

9. How Stakeholder Buy-In Was Achieved: Explain how the program gained support from key stakeholders (e.g., government agencies, businesses, residents, nonprofits).

Education. We ensured that staff on the ground understood the purpose of the waste audits.

10. Stakeholders' Perspectives and Dynamics at Play: Highlight collaboration dynamics, challenges, or differing stakeholder interests and how they were addressed.

All stakeholders understood the value of having precise waste audit data to expand their organics diversion program.

11. Lessons Learned: Share what worked well, what didn't, and recommendations for others seeking to replicate your approach.

Businesses can reduce food waste and do good at the same time. Food-related businesses that generate a lot of surplus food should conduct targeted food waste audits to determine what they can divert from landfill, and how much can actually go to a higher-use situation like donations to the hungry.