



WASHINGTON SCHOOL FOOD SHARE PROGRAM GUIDE

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This program guide was initially written in 2017 and updated in 2023, post COVID-19 pandemic. Schools may decide how and when to implement food share table and donation programs considering ongoing health and safety concerns. You should coordinate with state and local health authorities and ensure that all food safety requirements are met.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CNP	Child Nutrition Program
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FUTP 60	Fuel Up to Play 60
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDC	National Dairy Council
NFL	National Football League
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
OVS	Offer Versus Serve
PHF	Potentially Hazardous Foods
RBL	Recess Before Lunch
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SFA	School Food Authorities
SFSP	School Food Service Program
SNA	School Nutrition Association
SNP	School Nutrition Programs
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WARM	EPA Waste Reduction Model
WSBE	Washington State Board of Education
WSDA	Washington State Department of Agriculture
WSDOE	Washington Department of Ecology
WSDOH	Washington State Department of Health
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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SECTION 1

How to Use the Guide



1. HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed this guide in partnership with EarthGen. It is aligned with EPA's [Wasted Food Scale](#) (Figure 1-1), which prioritizes actions to prevent and divert wasted food. The scale prioritizes actions that prevent and divert wasted food from the disposal with tiers of the scale highlighting different pathways for preventing or managing wasted food, arranged in order from most to least preferred. This guide focuses on the steps required to recover potentially wasted food in schools to minimize waste and reduce food insecurity.

In this guide, “wasted food” refers to specific types of unwanted edible food that students throw away that is otherwise acceptable for consumption, such as unopened packaged foods and uneaten whole fruit. The term “food scraps,” which appears in the appendices, refers to inedible food (e.g., cores, peels, or pits) or partially eaten meals (that cannot be re-served) sent to the landfill.

This section provides an overview and responses to the following questions:

- What is a school food share program?
- Why are school food share programs important?
- Who should use this guide?

What is a school food share program?

A school food share program aims to prevent and minimize wasted food and share wholesome, nutritious, edible food with those who need it so that food is not wasted at school. Schools that participate in food share programs collect foods like whole fruit and unopened packaged cafeteria items to share within the school and/or in the community. Such programs may involve redistribution of foods within the school, and/or collection and donation of foods to nonprofit organizations.

Why are school food share programs important?

For many Washington families, free and reduced school meals are an important source of food for students. As Washington food insecurity rates increase during large-scale disaster events and situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, so too does the importance of feeding hungry students through school nutrition programs. School food share programs ensure that schools optimize their reach and feed as many people as possible within the school and surrounding community.

Kids learn best when their needs are met. A skipped or partial meal may lead a student to feel frazzled and anxious.¹ Over time, students may fall behind a grade level and might not graduate from high school due to a lack of essential nutrition and energy during their journey through the education system. School food share programs aim to provide food to those who need it within the school via share tables and reservice of food items that otherwise would have gone to waste.



Figure 1-1. The [Wasted Food Scale](#) shows the best ways to prevent and divert wasted food.

¹ Jepkemboi G. (2018). The Effects of Hunger on Physical and Cognitive Development of Children. In: Szente J. (ed.). Assisting Young Children Caught in Disasters. Educating the Young Child (Advances in Theory and Research, Implications for Practice), vol. 13. Springer, Cham. Available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62887-5_10

HOW DOES A SCHOOL FOOD SHARE PROGRAM WORK?

Redirect recoverable, edible food to the community instead of the landfill.
Your school can participate using the strategies that are right for your community!

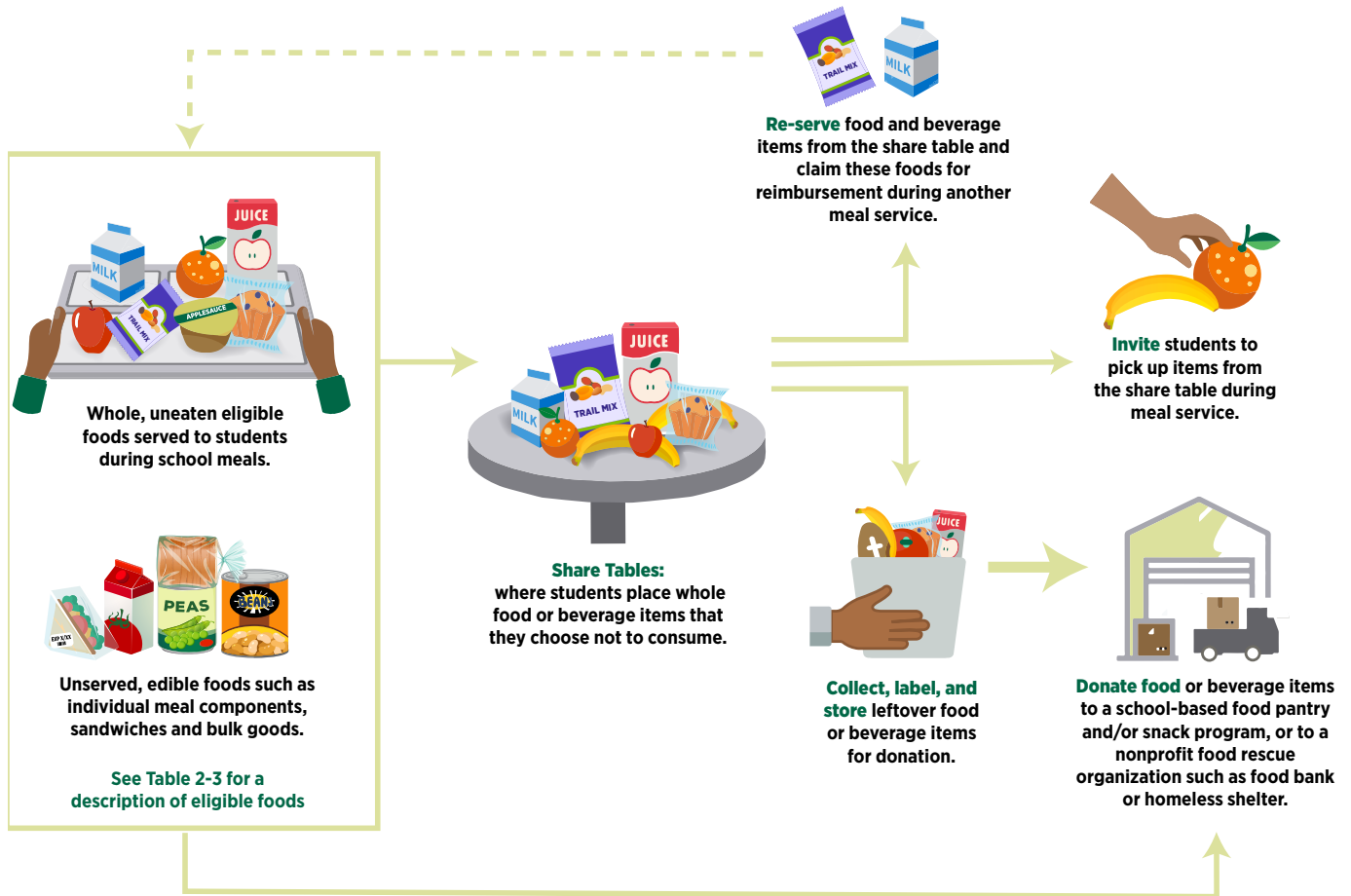


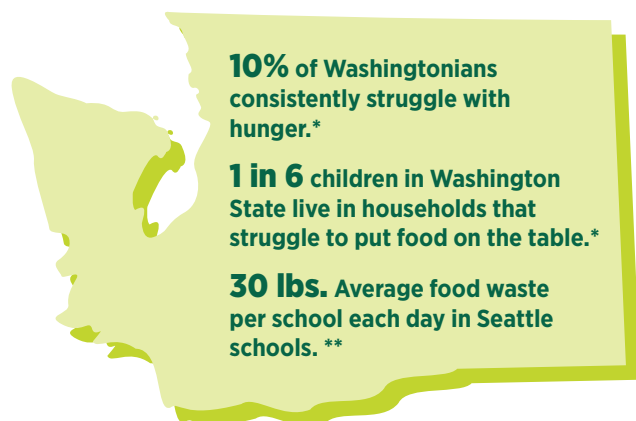
Figure 1-2. How does a school food share program work? This figure shows the various aspects of a school food share program. Starting on the left with the two categories of foods, follow the arrows to the right for ideas on how to divert otherwise wasted food from the landfill and back to feeding those in the school and the community.

Source:

USDA. (2016). The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/use-share-tables-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA. (2012). Guidance on the Food Donation Program in Child Nutrition Programs. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/guidance-food-donation-program-child-nutrition-programs>

Additionally, food share programs reduce the amount of food sent to the landfill where it decomposes and releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Washington generates more than 1 million tons of food waste annually. Approximately 35% of the total food waste is edible food that goes into landfills.² By redirecting whole, edible food that would otherwise go to the landfill, a school food share program reduces greenhouse gas emissions and minimizes the environmental impacts of food waste.



*Northwest Harvest. Northwest Harvest: The Truth About Hunger. 2023

**King County. Reducing Food Waste in Schools. April, 2019.

Figure 1-3. Food insecurity in Washington.

Who should use this guide?

Washington schools and school districts should use this guide to recover wasted food and redirect it to the school community and/or donate it to local food banks and food rescue organizations. The guide presents step-by-step instructions for implementing a program at the school and school district levels and provides an overview of supporting legislation, helping the reader identify key internal and external stakeholders who can support program development. Schools and school districts should use the guide as follows:

- **At the school level,** schools should follow the step-by-step process in Section 2 of this guide for

developing and implementing a food share program. Schools and school districts will learn how to create a team, identify funding, and coordinate with the local health authority to conduct a baseline audit, set up share tables and donate wasted food to a local nonprofit organization feeding the community.

- **At the school district level,** districts should follow the steps in Section 3 of this guide for starting a food share pilot program. Districts will learn how to develop a strategy for a pilot program including how to determine pilot program duration and participation, identify and train staff, identify funding and provide program support and recognition for participating schools.

Readers should review the appendices at the end of this guide to access useful checklists, tips, resources and communication materials. The appendices provide the following resources:

[Appendix A. Policy Tools for Reducing Food Waste and Packaging at Schools](#)

[Appendix B. Federal, State, and Local Authority Related to Food Share and Donation](#)

[Appendix C. Communication Resources](#)

[Appendix D. Example Food Waste Audit and Diversion Guides](#)

[Appendix E. Recognition Opportunities](#)

[Appendix F. Key Resources to Support School Food Waste Reduction](#)

[Appendix G. Case Studies of School Food Share Programs in Schools](#)

Using this guide can contribute to Washington’s state-wide food waste reduction goals in the [Use Food Well Washington Plan](#). While this guide’s primary focus is helping schools establish programs, sharing this information with external community organizations can help highlight options available and safety protocols.

²Washington Department of Ecology. (2022). Use Food Well Washington Plan. Available at <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2107027.pdf>



SECTION 2

Start a Food Share Program at Your School



2. START A FOOD SHARE PROGRAM AT YOUR SCHOOL

Readers who want to start a food share program at a school should follow the steps in this section, using the checklist below as a step-by-step guide.

Checklist for Starting a Food Share Program at Your School

Identify Key School Staff and Volunteers. Engage and build trust with all staff early in the development of the program.

Identify key staff who will support and help run the food share program such as kitchen staff, facilities and custodial staff, teachers, school green team members, school nutrition staff, school principal, and others.

Conduct a Food Waste Audit to Gather Baseline Data. A food waste audit collects valuable information about the leftover, edible foods thrown away at the end of the meal period. Food waste audit results show what types and quantities of foods and other non-organic materials are being sent to the landfill.

Form and meet with the team who will conduct the food waste audit.

Meet with the food waste audit team to discuss the purpose of the food waste audit, define roles, and begin planning and training for the audit.

Review Table 2-2 for a checklist of audit steps. Use the audit results to identify the types and quantities of food discarded during meals. Use this information to determine if share tables and/or donation are a good fit for the school.

Identify Potential Funding Opportunities. After deciding if share tables and/or donation are a good fit, determine if funding is needed to develop and implement the program.

Review national, state, and local funding opportunities.

Determine How to Measure Program Success. Metrics for success are based on which aspects of a food share program a school chooses to implement.

Identify metrics to measure progress and success.
Communicate data collection and reporting requirements to key staff.

Understand the Federal, State, and Local Authority Supporting Food Share Programs.

Review the legal framework to understand how to safely implement your program.
Understand and establish protocols to meet the food safety requirements for share tables.
Establish clear guidelines for food donation.
Inform the health department that you are setting up this program.

Implement Your Food Share Table.

Review the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) guidance on share tables.
Meet with key staff and volunteers.
Review how to set up and monitor share tables.
Learn how to store collected foods safely and in accordance with state and local laws.
Consider conducting another food waste audit to measure changes in food waste.
Adapt as needed! It is important to adjust and adapt during implementation.
Document your food share table roles and process for use by future coordinators.

Donate Food.

Review USDA guidance on food donation and the [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#).
Contact potential recipients and discuss the food available for donation.
Collect, weigh, label, and store food for donation.
Coordinate pickup or dropoff of food.
Consider establishing a school food pantry.

Get Started!

Food share programs may focus solely on sharing food that would otherwise be wasted *within a school*. They may also involve collection of food from share tables, as well as food not yet served that would otherwise be wasted, and donation of these foods to local nonprofit organizations. This section will help you determine which food share strategy is right for your school, taking into consideration the amount of recoverable food available and the level of effort required to store and transport food to a local organization.

This section presents the following steps for developing a food share program at the school level:

- Identify key school staff and volunteers
- Conduct a food waste audit to gather baseline data
- Identify potential funding opportunities
- Determine how to measure the success of your program
- Coordinate with the local health authority
- Implement a food share table
- Donate food to outside organizations

What Organizations Support Participation in Food Share Programs?

- The USDA Food and Nutrition Service allows and encourages the redistribution of previously served, whole and/or unopened food and beverage items in the following ways:
 - » Share tables where students may pick up extra items or where items may be served and claimed for redistribution during another meal service.
 - » Donation to a nonprofit organization.
- The Washington State Department of Health published [School Food Donation Guidelines](#) to provide food safety guidance for school programs wishing to recover and provide food to food-insecure students or donated food distributing organizations such as food banks.
- For food donation, schools are protected from liability under the federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act and the [Washington RCW 70A.205.040 Section 103](#).

See [Appendix B](#) for more information.



A. Identify Key School Staff and Volunteers

Identify key staff who will help run the food share program, including kitchen staff, custodial staff, and the school principal. Organize a meeting to talk with them about their roles and responsibilities. Table 2-1 provides examples of key staff essential for program implementation. Engage and build trust with all staff early in the

development of the program. This establishes an open line of communication that will help to identify opportunities and challenges that can be addressed in real time. It is especially important to engage early with facilities, custodial, kitchen, and other staff in the cafeteria who will support the logistics of a food share program. Example discussion questions and prompts to help staff engagement are available in [Appendix C](#).

Table 2-1. Key School Staff and Volunteers

Role	Description
School food share lead(s)	School personnel who will take point on organizing and implementing food share tables and donation logistics. They will interact with school district personnel as needed and should fully understand state and local food share table and donation guidelines.
Nutrition staff representative	This representative can provide guidance about USDA requirements, linked in Appendix B as they relate to school food share and donation.
Food waste audit team	If a school has no baseline data for food waste generation, this team will need to conduct a food waste audit. Identify three to five people who can support implementation of an audit. They may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School nutrition staff representative • School administrator • Students • Teachers • Parent volunteer and/or green team leader
Food share table and donation team	Identify at least three to four staff or volunteers who will implement and help educate school personnel and students about the logistics of food share and donation. <p>Staff may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School administrator • Kitchen staff • Facilities and custodial staff • Teachers <p>Volunteers may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Green team members
Student leaders	Identify student leaders to help school staff implement the program.

B. Conduct a Food Waste Audit to Gather Baseline Data

Before beginning a food recovery program, effectively gauge the amount of uneaten food at your school by conducting a food waste audit.

What is a food waste audit? Students and staff collect all leftover edible food from school breakfast or lunch (whole and partially eaten) and weigh it at the end of all mealtimes over a set time. At the end of a food waste audit, you can see what types and quantities of food are being wasted and at what times of the day, with the goal of understanding what leftover foods can be donated. A waste audit should answer the following questions:

- Look at whole, uneaten edible foods to determine how many pounds or gallons of food and beverage items are wasted during a typical school mealtime. You can use this sample weight information to estimate food weight for the whole program.
- Look at partially eaten edible foods to identify which foods students are not eating.

When should an audit be conducted? It is ideal to conduct an audit using samples of breakfast or lunch waste for a period of one week to account for any day-to-day variability in waste generation, as well as different behavior toward the variety of meals served. The audits generally take place during breakfast or lunch periods so staff can gather information from students about why they are not eating certain foods. If you do not have the resources for a full week audit, adjust to a single-day or half-week audit.

How do I get started? The U.S. EPA and USDA have created a step-by-step food waste audit guide for schools, [Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits](#), that includes planning and conducting the audit and interpreting audit results. These steps are summarized below. Links to other audit guides can be found in [Appendix D](#).



Figure 2-1. Preparing to conduct a food waste audit at Decatur Elementary School in Seattle.

Step 1. Plan the audit

Below are key tasks required to plan the audit. Ensure that you assign each task to one or several team members.

- **Meet with your food waste audit team.** Discuss what a food waste audit entails and why it is important; assign and define roles; and ask for team member support for planning, staffing, training, and recording data (see Table 2-1 on the previous page for an example of a list of food waste audit team members). Make it clear that the main goal of the audit is to help find ways to encourage students to eat their nutritious meals and not throw them away.
- **Coordinate with cafeteria and kitchen staff to conduct the audit.** Communicate with school staff about the benefits of a food waste audit. Ask for their assistance to coordinate activities on the day(s) of the audit. As above, reiterate that the main goal of the audit is to find ways to encourage students to eat their nutritious meals and not throw them away.
- **Identify a date(s) for the audit.** Conducting an audit for a single week will give you the best understanding of food waste generation at a school. However, if you can choose only one day, it should be most representative or typical of school meal period(s) and attendance. Work with key staff (e.g., a school nutrition worker and school administrative staff) to choose the best day(s). For example, avoid conducting your audit on a day when a grade level is on a field trip.

- **Identify audit sorting categories.** Consider focusing on sorting only packaged foods and whole fruits, since those are the types of things that might be shared or donated in your program. However, you could certainly capture other food categories for a more holistic audit covering both edible and inedible (i.e., plate waste) food waste. Make or print signs for the audit.
- **Recruit students to staff audit stations.** Work with the core implementation team to recruit student volunteers who may be affiliated with the school green team, the student council, or a leadership group. Plan for four volunteers to support one audit station for every 100 students eating in the cafeteria at any one time.
- **Train volunteers.** Provide background information to volunteers on their roles and responsibilities and provide an opportunity for them to ask questions. Include information about:
 - » How to complete the Green Lunchrooms Information and Audit Sheets included in [Appendix D](#).
 - » How to conduct interviews using the Student Interview Sheet in [Appendix D](#).
- **Collect supplies needed for the audit.** This includes containers to sort food by type, labels for containers, tables, a scale, audit forms, a camera to document the audit setup and process, pens and pencils, gloves, paper towels, aprons, and trash bags.



Figure 2-2. Food waste audit buckets set up to sort food by category.

Step 2. Conduct the audit

The example audit checklist in Table 2-2 outlines important tasks to conduct before, during, and after an audit. Use this table as a starting point to develop your own checklist.

Food Waste Audit Supplies

- ☑ Two tables per audit station: one for students to drop off their trays and one for the containers.
- ☑ At least two large trash cans on wheels for emptying the containers into after they are weighed.
- ☑ Containers for sorting. For example, five-gallon buckets, bus tubs, or other containers.
- ☑ Small trash bags to line the sorting containers (optional).
- ☑ Scales. Hand-held luggage scales and bathroom scales are commonly used.
- ☑ Weight log sheet, interview sheets, clipboards, and pens.
- ☑ Printed labels taped or stuck to the containers.
- ☑ Cloths or paper towels for spills and cleanup.
- ☑ Gloves and tongs for handling food.
- ☑ Apron to protect clothes.
- ☑ Food scraper or spatula for getting sauces out of packages.



Figure 2-3. Loyal Heights Elementary sorted waste by type of food during their food waste audit.

Table 2-2. Day of the Audit Checklist

Before the audit	During the audit	After the audit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ About 30 to 40 minutes before the meal period begins, coordinate with kitchen and custodial staff to set up the audit tables and sorting bins. ❑ Set up containers to sort food by type and make sure all containers are labeled (e.g., fruit, vegetables, white milk, chocolate milk). Five-gallon buckets work well to collect milk waste. ❑ Announce to all students that you are conducting a food waste audit for school meals. Be sure to specify if the audit is for school breakfast, school lunch, or both. ❑ Restrict student access to trash cans so they can only dispose of their waste at audit stations staffed by volunteers—this will account for all waste. ❑ Weigh an empty container and record its weight on the log sheet. Subtract this weight from the total weight to calculate food waste weight. ❑ Bring student volunteers to the stations before the meal starts and familiarize them with their roles as specified in the Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits. ❑ Prepare student volunteers on how to answer questions about the purpose of the audit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Once a container is full, weigh and record its weight on the audit form, in Appendix D. After recording weights, empty containers into large trash can (preferably on wheels). ❑ Do not let containers holding liquids get too full—they are heavy! Weigh them when they are half full. ❑ Ask student volunteers to interview a sample of students at random as they throw away items from their trays. Specific interview instructions are in the worksheet in Appendix D. ❑ Take photos both during and after the audit! Photos are extremely useful for documenting the process and results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Weigh the remaining containers, being sure to subtract the weight of the containers to calculate just the weight of the food waste. Record weights on your data form. ❑ Dispose of all waste from the audit. ❑ Clean up the audit area. ❑ Thank students and staff!

Step 3. Interpret audit results

Use the audit results to identify the types and estimated total quantities of foods most often discarded during a typical meal period. The information from the audit will help you decide whether a share table would be a good fit for your school. For example:

- If you learn that there is very little food that can be placed on a share table or donated, you may decide you do not need a share table.
- If you learn that you have food items that students could consume or that can be re-served, then you may decide to implement a share table to collect foods for the students. Refer to Table 2-3 in Section 2E to read about eligible foods.
- If you have large quantities of food that can be re-served, or if your school does not wish to implement a share table, you may want to donate this food, as discussed later in the guide.

If food waste audits are performed routinely, you can also use this information to understand the types of food that kids may enjoy less and provide that feedback to the kitchen or food services program to encourage change. The [World Wildlife Federation \(WWF\) Food Waste Warriors Program](#) provides a national database of food waste audit information. Schools can use the database for real-time school audit data interpretation. Consider conducting another food waste audit if you choose to implement a share table or donate food to measure how food waste changes with these activities.

C. Identify Potential Funding Opportunities

Although food share programs can be low-cost to develop and implement, you might need funding if the program requires refrigeration, coolers, tables, or staffing or procedural changes that could increase overall budgets. Sources of local funding may be most accessible to the school district, though there may be regional and national funding that is also available.

Following is a list of organizations and resources to help secure funding. You may also find success when

checking with your local city and county waste, recycling, and sustainability programs.

- [Washington Department of Ecology Waste Reduction and Recycling Education Grants](#). The grants program helps recipients reduce waste, build capacity for recycling education, and support responsible recycling.
- [USDA National School Lunch Program Equipment Assistance Grants for School Food Authorities \(SFAs\)](#). State agencies competitively award equipment assistance grants to eligible SFAs participating in the program. These funds will allow SFAs to purchase equipment to serve healthier meals and improve food safety.
- [Earthgen](#). Earthgen provides guidance and support to school district leaders across the state. Check with Earthgen to learn what funding opportunities they are tracking.
- [Access Washington](#). Access Washington tracks funding opportunities across the state.
- [Washington Department of Agriculture - Food Resiliency Grants](#). The network provides organization for food resiliency grant opportunities in Washington.
- [The Nonprofit Association of Washington](#). Provides information about grant opportunities in Washington.
- [Greater Washington Community Foundation](#). Provides information about grant opportunities in Washington.
- [Washington Grant Watch](#). A searchable database of government and foundation grants.
- [Fuel Up to Play 60](#). This national in-school health and wellness program provides up to \$4,000 per year to qualified kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) schools to jump-start healthy school changes.

D. Determine How to Measure the Success of Your Program

Once you have decided what aspects of the school food share program to implement at your school (i.e., food share table and/or donation), determine how you will track and measure your program's success. Ideas for

methods and metrics to assess program impact include:

- Use results of the food waste audit for your baseline measurement. After implementing your school food share program, you will conduct another audit to assess the change in quantity of wasted food.
- Conduct informal surveys during program implementation to determine if students and staff are aware of the program and its value, and if they understand how to use share tables.
- Additional metrics to measure success include:
 - » Pounds of food collected and diverted from the landfill due to share tables and/or donation. Use the Example Share Table Tracking Sheet in [Appendix C](#) to track foods collected from the share table. Your school could also consider creating a separate tracking sheet where students can indicate what they've picked up from the Share Table to eat or drink.
 - » Number of food items collected and categorized. This information could be useful in setting future lunch menus.
 - » Number of food donation deliveries per week or month and estimated quantity of food donated. This data provides a better understanding for waste diversion.
 - » Cost savings associated with reductions in waste hauling. If your school is sending less food to the landfill, the volume and weight of your waste will drop! This data could be a driver in broader implementation.
 - » Information on changes: scheduling recess before/after lunch, share table use, number of kids in school, number of students served lunch. This data could help tell a story of waste prevention or help better understand changes in consumption.
 - » To evaluate the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from your program, refer to the [EPA Waste Reduction Model \(WARM\)](#).

For additional resources on how to assess your program, visit [EPA's Resources for Assessing Wasted Food](#).

E. Understand Federal, State, and Local Authority

This section provides an overview of the legal framework for school food share and donation and lists foods that are typically eligible or ineligible for share tables and donation.

Step 1. Understand the legal framework

At the federal level, the [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#) encourages donation of food and grocery products to nonprofit organizations for distribution to individuals in need. The law protects donors from civil and criminal liability when food is donated in good faith and provides other donor protections. The [2023 Food Donation Improvement Act](#) amends and updates the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act by providing protections to donors who donate food directly to individuals.

Additionally, the [Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act](#) provides statutory authority for schools and other USDA nutrition programs to address food recovery and food donation policies.

- The statute clarifies that any unconsumed food may be donated to eligible local food banks or charitable organizations.
- An amendment defines eligible local food banks or charitable organizations to mean any food bank or charitable organization that is tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
- Other guidance issued by the federal government includes:
 - » USDA guidance for [share tables](#) and [donation](#), which should be reviewed by schools implementing a program.
 - » USDA share table guidance states that Child Nutrition Program (CNP) operators—the people who oversee a school's meal program—should discuss plans for a share table with their local health department and state agency prior to

implementation to ensure compliance with food safety requirements.

- » USDA guidance allows the use of share tables and re-service of food and beverage items in CNPs, including milk that is unopened and kept at the proper temperature.

Share tables must also comply with applicable state and local health and food safety codes, which also address the proper storage of items to be re-served or donated.

- Washington State has issued an official guidance document on the donation of leftover consumable school food. The current guidance mandates that the receiving organization (i.e. food bank) requires a variance to receive served food. Depending on the local health department jurisdiction, one variance might cover one site or all food bank sites receiving food from a school. A small cost may be involved in this variance (e.g., \$250 per site) or the cost can be waived entirely. The food bank or receiving food distributor is responsible for acquiring this variance; the variance request takes several weeks to be processed and approved.
- For the most recent guidance, visit the [Washington State Department of Health Food Safety Program website](#).
- It is imperative that schools coordinate with their local health authority to ensure that all safety requirements are met. Local county and city health departments take direction from the state health department and may adapt additional policies, rules, and regulations.
- When discussing share table implementation with your local health authority, emphasize that USDA encourages state agencies to support school nutrition program efforts to increase consumption of nutritious food and minimize food waste using share tables.

Be ready to discuss these topics with your local health authority:

- ☑ Has the local health authority developed official guidelines for food share tables?
- ☑ What food safety standards apply for a school food share table?
- ☑ What are the requirements for the storage of perishable foods?
- ☑ What additional sanitary actions must be taken?
- ☑ Has the local health authority developed official guidelines for food donation?
- ☑ If food is donated to an outside organization, what actions does the receiving organization need to take to ensure compliance with state and local regulations?

Find food safety contact information for your local health authority using the [Washington State Department of Health's Local Health Department Food Safety Contacts](#). For more information about legal authority related to school food share and donation, see [Appendix B](#).

Step 2. Ensure food safety requirements for share tables

USDA's [share table guidance](#) states that, as with all prepared foods and beverages, CNP operators choosing to use share tables must continue to follow the food safety requirements outlined below. Schools participating in school nutrition programs should already meet these requirements.

- [7 CFR 210.13, Facilities Management](#). Schools must ensure health standards are met, solicit and receive food safety inspections, and develop and implement food safety programs.
- [7 CFR 220.7, Requirements for Participation in the School Breakfast Program](#).



- [7 CFR 226.20\(l\), Sanitation](#). These regulations apply to the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Institutions and facilities must ensure that proper sanitation and health standards are met when they store, prepare, and serve food and that those health standards conform with all applicable state and local laws and regulations. Institutions and facilities must ensure that adequate facilities are available to store food or hold meals.
- [7 CFR 225.16\(a\), Meal Service Requirements, Sanitation](#). These regulations pertain to the Summer Food Service Program. CNP operators must ensure that proper sanitation and health standards are met when storing, preparing, and serving food and that those health standards conform with all applicable state and local laws and regulations. Sponsors, who are responsible for administration of the CNP program, must ensure that adequate facilities are available to store food or hold meals. Within two weeks of receiving notification of approval—and before program operation begins—a sponsor must submit to the state agency a copy of their letter advising the appropriate health department of their intention to provide a food service during a specific period at specific sites.
- CNP operators must be aware of all applicable local and state health and food safety codes to ensure their use of share tables does not violate any of those codes. Further, schools must ensure that their policies for saving and sharing food or beverage items are consistent with the local educational agency’s Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code, Section 3-306.14, addresses food safety considerations when re-serving food.
- Note that state and local health and food safety codes may be more restrictive than the USDA Food and Nutrition Service requirements or may place specific limitations on which food or beverage items may be reused. To ensure compliance with food safety requirements, CNP operators should discuss plans for a share table with their local health department and state agency prior to implementation.

Schools should work with their local health department to ensure that all foods shared and donated are handled safely. To facilitate sharing of milk, for example, you must provide a cooler or refrigerator that keeps the milk at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below, and you must track the time and temperature to ensure that milk is never left out for more than four cumulative hours.

Step 3. Establish clear guidelines for foods that may and may not be shared and donated

Table 2-3 summarizes food items that may typically be shared or donated. When creating this list for your own school, ensure it meets the requirements of your school’s food safety plan with a focus on time and temperature, and confirm the list with your local health department. Food shared and donated through your school program should contain ingredient labeling to ensure allergen information is available to those receiving food. Food banks and other charitable food rescue organizations may require this information to be handwritten if commercially packaged food items are not labeled for individual sale.

TIP: In order for a reimbursable meal to qualify the food or food components that are part of a meal must be labeled, listed, or otherwise identified near or at the beginning of the serving line and prior to the point of service. For ideas, see: <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/childnutrition/idreimbursablemeal-ideasandre-sources.pdf>

Table 2-3. Eligible and Ineligible Foods for School Food Share Tables

In general, the following foods are appropriate for sharing and donation:	The following foods may be shared or donated, but additional food safety actions may apply:	Unacceptable foods that should not be shared or donated:
Internal School Donations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ School food sharing tables should be limited to unopened school meal components (no homemade foods) and whole fruits in non-edible peels; limited to service during the current meal period; and offered from a designated collection area posted with safe operating reminders and restrictions for student sharing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Time/temperature control for safety foods, such as dairy products, destined for internal sharing from a school-sponsored sharing table must be commercially packaged and is only allowed with an approved variance from the local health department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Home-prepared food ☒ Any opened/resealed containers ☒ Commercially packaged food items brought from home
Outside Recovery Sites		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Unopened, commercially pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous food such as granola bars, apple slices, crackers, and raising with no fire, water, or other signs of distress. ☑ Whole produce with an intact, non-edible rind or peel such as oranges and bananas. ☑ Foods past the original manufacturer's "Sell by" and "best if used by" date are suitable for donation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Whole produce with an edible peel such as apples, plums, nectarines, and pears with intact, undamaged skin that are properly rinsed by kitchen staff prior to donation unless the local health agency provides a variance for the donation sites with produce washing capabilities to rinse produce onsite. ☑ Unopened dairy products such as string cheese, milk, and yogurt that are stored on ice during the lunch service and able to be refrigerated for donation at 41°F or colder. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Foods past the original manufacturer's "use by" date ☒ Home-prepared food ☒ Any opened/resealed containers ☒ Commercially packaged food items brought from home

Source: *School Food Donation Guidelines*. Washington Department of Health.

<https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/food/food-worker-and-industry/school-food-donations>



If your school is sharing items that require cooling, such as milk, establish strict food safety guidelines to prevent the risk of foodborne illness.

- Check dates on packaged foods and do not intermix returned items for re-use with food that has not yet been prepared or served.
- Decide how many times a food item can be re-used (USDA recommends just once).

How to Make Sense of Date Labels on Food Packaging

The “sell by” and “best if used by” dates are indicators of quality. Foods that are past the original manufacturer’s “sell by” and “best if used by” date are still edible and suitable for donation. Dates on most foods, such as milk, yogurt, and packaged non-potentially hazardous foods, are not “use by” dates, which means the products are suitable for donation past the marked date.

Learn more about [understanding date labels](#) from FDA.

F. Implement a Food Share Table

Once you have identified key staff and volunteers, performed a baseline food waste audit, and discussed food safety with your local health department, follow these steps to set up a food share table.

Step 1. Meet with key school staff and volunteers

Meet with the food share table and donation team to establish roles and responsibilities. These key personnel may include the school administrator, kitchen staff, custodial staff, teachers, and student leaders. This team’s responsibilities include:

- **Coordinate with custodial, cafeteria, and kitchen staff.** Engage with the staff members who will support the program on a daily basis. Ensure they

are aware of the program and discuss the types of support they may be able to provide. For example, if you plan to store items left on share tables, they could help identify storage containers, including any that may hold the contents at the correct temperature, in accordance with local health department guidelines. They could also find a place within the cafeteria to store shelf stable goods for future donation. The team must include staff who understand how to follow federal, state, and local food safety requirements, including storage of re-used items. USDA also states that schools must ensure policies for saving and sharing food or beverage items are consistent with the local education agency’s HACCP plan.

- **Coordinate implementation logistics.** This team needs to understand food safety requirements as well as orchestrate physical collection of food. This means determining where and how food will be collected. This team will also coordinate the donation of this food if the school decides to participate in a donation program.
- **Decide who will supervise the share table.** The share table should always be supervised to ensure compliance with food safety requirements and educate students on what may and may not be placed on the table. Ask supervisors to ensure packaged items are not opened, not punctured, and not otherwise compromised. If cooling bins are used, supervisors must monitor the bin to ensure that time and temperature control requirements are met. Invite students to participate as “share table helpers,” or assistant monitors, teaching them about the importance of food safety and recycling.
- **Ensure the school is aware of the program and its importance.** The school administrator’s main role is to ensure that all staff and students are aware of the program and its purpose, and to facilitate relationships that will make the program successful. They can do this by issuing a policy or guidance statement or otherwise communicating to the community the value of the program.

- **Educate students.** Students should learn about the program from administrators as well as peers. Communicate information via the school green team, student council, school newsletter or paper, common area bulletin boards, and other leading means of communication. Videos created by students have a big impact, especially when shared in class before lunch. Skits or demonstrations during lunchtime are also good for younger students.

Step 2. Set up and monitor share tables

Follow these five steps to set up a share table. Work with your team to assign tasks and determine an appropriate timeline for standing up the program.

A. Identify a collection location. Choose a highly visible location for the share table setup, either in the cafeteria or in other areas where students eat. Many schools use their student councils or green teams to lead the effort and train students to help with collection as the program becomes routine. Successful food collection methods can follow a variety of models, depending on individual school situations. For example:

- During mealtimes, students may place their acceptable, uneaten food items at the ends of their tables for pickup during cleanup.
- At the end of each mealtime, each student may place their food and drinks eligible for donation in a collection bin. The bin should have an ice pack at the bottom to keep items requiring refrigeration cold until they can be moved to the refrigerator.



Figure 2-4. Example share table set up.

B. Determine what supplies you need. You need at least one dedicated space where students can place items to share. You may want to provide a tablecloth as well as signage to help organize items on the table, make it look appealing, and remind students what may and may not be shared. Based on the food waste audit, you will have an idea of the quantity of food items you may collect. Be prepared to store any items left on the table after a meal in a crate, box, on a cart, or other conveyance. Remember, to facilitate sharing of milk, you must provide a cooler or refrigerator that keeps the milk at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below, and you must track the time and temperature to ensure that milk is never left out for more than four cumulative hours.



Share Table Supplies

- ☑ **3–6 sturdy bins** to collect food.

Note: Reserve 1–2 bins for each cleanup line and 2–4 bins to store the food in the refrigerator. The best bins are small enough to be easily lifted when full, have handles, and fit in the refrigerator space of both the school and a potential donation recipient. Consider sturdy plastic storage bins with lids that stack or milk crates that your school may already have.

- ☑ **Ice packs** to be placed in the bottom of the food collection bins. They will keep donated food items requiring refrigeration cold until they can be moved to the refrigerator.
- ☑ **Space in the refrigerator or cooler** at school to hold perishable food until it is picked up for delivery to the recipient (if you are participating in a donation program).
- ☑ **Daily tracking sheet** for dates and temperatures of perishable food (see the Example Share Table Tracking Sheet in [Appendix C](#)).
- ☑ **Clearly marked labels** attached to the bins, stating the contents are for donation (sample labels are available in [Appendix C](#)). Clear signage ensures the separation of food for donation from food that is meant to be served.
- ☑ **Large kid-friendly signs and posters** to hang in and around the cafeteria (sample signs are available in [Appendix C](#)).

C. Communicate and educate students and staff about the share tables.

- Educate students and staff about the share tables, how and when they can be accessed, and their purpose—to feed people as well as reduce waste. Clearly communicate share table policies, especially if students are allowed to take items off the share table or if the share table will only collect food for

donation to an outside organization. An example food share table policy is provided in [Appendix C](#).

- Make an announcement before lunch, hang up signs, and communicate via social media, email, and other channels that target students and staff. See [Appendix C](#) for templates and communication ideas.
- Involve students in developing and implementing communication and education materials and activities, including writing and giving announcements or making signs.

D. Monitor the share tables during mealtimes.

Members of your team will monitor the table to ensure only products allowed under USDA guidelines are shared.

- At the beginning of a share table program, volunteers should also keep a tally of the number and types of items shared and picked up (if this is allowed within your school's program), as well as the items left at the end of the day. This information will help you assess how much food has been diverted from the landfill and how much food may be available for donation or use in other school programs.
- At a minimum, each school should track the types and quantities of food left over after meals to compare against the audit baseline to determine how much food has been diverted from the landfill and how much food could still feed people. Use the Example Share Table Tracking Sheet in [Appendix C](#) to track the amount and type of food placed on the share table, how long it sat on the table before storage, and how and when it is stored and donated.
- The information you collect about the share table program should help support the metrics to measure success. This information will help everyone consider improvements to the share table program over time.

TIP: Offer nutrient-dense foods left on the share table for afternoon snacks in the classroom! Providing afternoon snacks such as string cheese and granola could help improve concentration and energy levels.

Step 3. Store collected foods

Avoid throwing away leftover food! Immediately following a school meal, volunteers and staff should safely store food in accordance with the school food safety plan. Instead, find a place to store collected food items that can be re-served or donated.

- Provide a method for food storage that ensures human health and safety for products that must be kept at temperature (e.g., milk and milk products) in accordance with state or local health department guidelines.
- Show supporting staff and students safe lifting procedures and provide adult assistance if needed.
- Ensure that kitchen and custodial staff are aware of the food storage location and understand that food located there is intended to be saved for donation.
- Determine how you will store collected foods based on how much food is generated on a weekly basis.
- Use the Example Food Collection Labels provided in [Appendix C](#) to clearly mark the bins or crates used to store foods from the share table.
- Ensure that the food has been weighed and the types of food for donation have been recorded so you can communicate this information to the recipient organization.





Figure 2-5. School food share in action. In this example, food is collected in the share bin (left). The bins are clearly marked with food share signage (middle). Student helpers package and store foods appropriately for donation pickup (right).



Figure 2-6. School food share in action. In this example, bins are used to collect and store foods during the week before a volunteer picks up the food and delivers it to the participating recipient (left). Before volunteers take the food for delivery, the bins are weighed and tracked (right).



School Food Share

Toolkit Highlight:

Coordinating School Food Share with Public Health—Seattle and King County

School Food Share is a simple program that helps schools and food banks work together to collect whole and packaged cafeteria leftovers, then use that food to:

- Feed their own students
- Donate to their local food bank to fight hunger in the community
- Help reduce food waste

Schools interested in participating in school food share activities should connect with their county health departments to discuss requirements (see “Working with Your County Health Department” on page 32.) Although every county health department will have a different process, it can be useful to understand the details of how a particular county works with schools to ensure school food sharing activities safely feed other students and community members while reducing food waste.

In Seattle and King County, a school with staff and students who want to start a school food share table needs to coordinate with Public Health—Seattle & King County (PHSKC). As a first step, that school will need to complete and submit King County Standard Form “Public Health—Seattle & King County Request for School Food Sharing Table” (Appendix F). This request qualifies as the school’s plan. The form asks for information on the person in charge of the school food share table, which school meals will include food sharing, the types of perishable and shelf-stable food and beverages allowed on the table; the process for keeping perishable food and beverages cold; the process for washing fruit with edible skin before giving again; and the names of organizations accepting food donations.

Each school location that wants to participate in school food sharing activities submits a separate one of these forms to PHSKC for review. If there are questions or concerns, PHSKC staff will reach out to the school food share point of contact for clarification to ensure the school is in compliance with the Washington Food Code for donated food (WAC 246-215-09415 (3): 09415, “Food Sources—Donated Foods”) and the county’s requirements.

Schools participating in school food sharing activities aren’t the only ones with requirements to follow. PHSKC also has requirements for any organizations that receive food donations from schools. These are referred to as Donated Food Distributing Organizations or DFDOs. Each DFDO that receives food donations from a school with an approved School Food Sharing Table form/plan needs to complete and submit an annual notification form. When a school chooses to donate, it typically partners with a nearby food bank.

The Bellevue School District worked with PHSKC staff to complete the Request for School Food Sharing Table form, securing permission to donate food to HopeLink Food Bank (see “School Case Study: Bellevue School District” on page [G-1](#)).

G. Donate Food to Outside Organizations

If your school is not able to distribute all food collected on share tables within the school community, consider donating the remaining food to a local food bank, a food rescue organization, or another charitable organization. Donating surplus food helps address the immediate needs in your community. Use information learned in your earlier conversations with the local health authority to guide decisions for food donation to a nonprofit organization.

Your food donation is protected by the federal and state laws listed below and described earlier in this guide:

- The [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#) offers liability protection for organizations donating food in good faith to a nonprofit organization.
- The [2023 Food Donation Improvement Act](#) amends and updates the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act by providing protections to donors who donate food directly to individuals.
- Washington RCW 70A.205.040 Section 103, [Good samaritan food donation act—Definitions—Collecting, distributing, gleaning—Liability](#), provides civil and criminal liability protection for food donation.
- [USDA's 2012 guidance on food donation in CNPs](#) points to best practice resources that schools can use to implement food donation programs.

The following is an overview of how to organize your food donation process. You will need to know what foods are available for donation, what organizations will accept the food, and how the food will be transported.

Step 1. Compile details about food eligible for donation

Gather information about items you expect to donate before coordinating with a food donation recipient to ensure that your donation will be accepted. The foods listed in Table 2-3 are generally acceptable for donation. However, specifics may depend on local health department regulations and the receiving organization. Food available for donation falls into two categories:

- Foods collected from the share table.
- Eligible unserved foods from meal services that would otherwise go to the landfill.

Check with potential recipients to learn specifically what they may need and what they will not accept. Other questions on this topic should be directed to your [local health department](#) or the [Washington State Department of Health \(DOH\) Food Safety Program](#).

Step 2. Identify and contact potential recipients

Good sources of information about potential recipients include:

- [Feeding America](#). This organization provides a national list of food banks, including those in the state of Washington.
- [Washington State Department of Agriculture - Access Food](#). This organization provides a map of local food banks by location. This organization provides a map of local food banks by location.
- **Food gleaners.** Determine if your area has a local food gleaner that can coordinate the logistics of food donation to organizations that need it most.
- **Network.** Talk to parents, teachers, and other community members to learn if they have recommendations about where food is needed. Work with potential recipients to learn what kinds of food they will accept. Many foods that schools donate are in high demand by food banks, including milk, yogurt, cheese, and fresh produce. Use the data from your food waste audit and from your share table tracking to communicate what foods are available for donation.

Discuss the following with potential recipients:

- What they will accept.
- The volume they can accept.
- Their storage and distribution capacity, especially for perishable items.
- How to move the food to their location and with what frequency.

- ☑ Other logistics, including who will provide the food collection bins, a bin/food labeling system, and a bin cleaning and sanitation process.

It may be useful to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the recipient entity to ensure all parties are clear on their roles, responsibilities, and expectations; to document the types of food that are acceptable for donation; and to document processes that will be followed (see [Appendix C](#) for an example MOU).

Step 3. Collect, store, and weigh foods for donation

Refer to Section 2F, Step 3 (pages 20) for information on how to properly store foods for donation.

- Remember, the school can donate foods collected from the share table or unserved foods left over from meals.
- Always store food in accordance with the school food safety plan.
- Use the Example Food Collection Labels provided in [Appendix C](#) to clearly mark foods for donation.

Step 4. Coordinate food pickup or dropoff schedule

Work with the recipient organization to coordinate transfer of food and set expectations about the pickup or dropoff schedule. This may require coordination with school kitchen and/or custodial staff. Parent volunteers and school green teams are also valuable assets for pickup and dropoff coordination. Recruiting parent volunteers early will help boost communication efforts and recognition and might help bring food waste reduction and recovery to events and other school gatherings.

- Record the date as well as types and weight of food that is donated.
- Ensure that all food and transport containers are clearly labeled so that the recipient understands what they are receiving, and to avoid donating items that may still be useable by the cafeteria.
 - » This information is important for tracking donations as well as for future reporting and communication about the donation program.



SECTION 3

Start a Food Share Pilot Program in Your School District



3. START A FOOD SHARE PILOT PROGRAM IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT

If your school district wants to minimize food waste more broadly, consider implementing a pilot initiative to assess the potential impact of a district-wide food share program. A good pilot program allows a school district to assess issues and overcome challenges related to logistics, communication, engagement, and value, and will inform decisions about implementing a program more broadly.

Checklist to Pilot a School Food Share Program at the District Level

Initiate Planning.

Review Table 3-1 for major framework elements to consider when developing a pilot at the school district level.

Identify Schools. Depending on the size of the school district and resource availability, a pilot might include one or many schools that are representative of different school types and demographics. Consider how many schools you can support, as well as the value of including different types of schools.

Review criteria in Table 3-2 for considerations in selecting a school(s).

Keep the following in mind when selecting schools: previous interest in food waste audits and reduction efforts, representation of demographics, and high generation of food waste.

Once you have chosen pilot schools, instruct the schools to use Section 2 above to develop and implement their school food share programs.

Identify and Communicate with Key Contacts.

Identify key school staff for the school district pilot. Review Table 3-3 for the key roles and responsibilities.

Identify key federal, state, and local contacts who can provide technical assistance and guidance.

Provide communications materials to support participating schools.

Provide Support.

Hold a weekly or monthly call with participants.

Facilitate peer support.

Provide ongoing communication resources.

Recognize and Celebrate the Program and People Involved.

Plan regular recognition and celebration (e.g., annually, biannually, quarterly).

Determine basis for recognition (e.g., participation, quantity of food diverted from landfill).

Choose ways to recognize schools and participants such as public recognition, internal communications, certificates, and end-of-year events or parties.

Leverage state and national recognition opportunities. See [Appendix E](#) for a list of opportunities.

Review Data and Adjust the Program

Determine how to collect and verify data.

Review data and discuss pilot program participants how to improve and expand the program.

A. Planning a Pilot for Your Schools

Table 3-1 lists important issues to consider when developing a pilot framework. The remainder of this section presents more detailed recommendations associated with these issues.

B. Identify Pilot School(s)

Depending on the size of the school district and resource availability, a pilot might include one or

multiple schools that are representative of different school types and demographics. Consider how many schools you can support, as well as the value of including different types of schools.

Table 3-2 summarizes possible criteria and considerations for selecting schools. Note that it is important for a participating school to have baseline data on food waste generation in order to assess the program's impact. Information about how to conduct a food waste audit is outlined in Section 2, and audit guides and resources are provided in [Appendix D](#).

Table 3-1. Pilot framework elements and issues to consider

Framework Element	Issues to Consider
Assign a program lead	A pilot run at the district level will succeed only if there is a dedicated leader to enable the program. Identify who will lead district-level decision-making as well as interaction with participating schools.
Assess staff resources	Identify district staff who will manage the pilot. These staff will help identify participating school and staff, facilitate technical training, provide logistical support and communication resources, and (if desired) provide recognition. These staff will also collect pilot data that feed into district measures of success and inform pilot goals.
Determine pilot size	Depending on the amount of support you can provide as well as interest expressed by candidate schools, the pilot could include just one or several schools. Consider the district's time commitment and available resources to support pilot participants and engage accordingly. You need only one school for a pilot!
Select timeline	It may take several weeks to get a program fully established and running smoothly, so it is helpful to run a pilot for at least several months, if not a full school semester. As you work through this guide, determine how much support the district can provide, and the extent to which schools are able to engage, to choose the best timeline for a pilot program. It takes time and effort to develop logistics and communications for a program, so consider running a pilot for at least a half-year to assess program impact.
Set goals	Program goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable (or ambitious but reasonable), relevant, and time-bound. A simple goal might be to run one school through a one-year pilot to identify benefits, challenges, and the value of expanding the pilot in the future.
Identify measures of success and collect data	Identify and implement measures for success and track progress. Measurements can be quantitative (e.g., pounds of food redirected to food banks, number of students engaged or served) and qualitative (e.g., based on staff feedback, observed behavior changes). After completion of the pilot, use recorded measurements to communicate the importance of the program and to adjust the program's strategies and procedures.

Table 3-2. Sample Criteria Form for Selecting School(s) for a Pilot

Criteria	Data to collect	How to assess and use the data
Existing baseline food waste or interest in conducting a food waste audit	[Average pounds food generated weekly, edible/inedible] [Y/N]	Baseline data are essential to assess the program's impact and therefore must be gathered.
School location	[Physical address]	Use this information to help choose a set of schools that are most representative of the schools in your district.
School type	[Elementary, secondary, middle, high school, etc.]	
Number of students	[Count]	
Percentage students in free or reduced lunch program	[Percentage]	
Type of lunch program, including how meals are delivered	[Offer Versus Serve, pre-pack, kitchen/no-kitchen]	Relates to understanding the types of food that may be served as well as how a program may affect food waste reduction.
Physical resource availability: kitchen hours	[Hours of operation]	Provides understanding of how school will manage foods that need to meet time and temperature requirements for donation purposes.
Physical resource availability: refrigerators/coolers	[Count, dimensions]	
Physical resource availability: containers	[Count, dimensions]	
Physical resource availability: space for containers	[Count, dimensions]	
Staff champions to support program: staff names, titles, contact information	[Name, title/role] [Name, title/role] [Name, title/role] [Name, title/role]	There must be staff at the school (in the areas of administration, teachers, facilities staff, kitchen staff) who are willing to support and implement the program.
Green team	[Y/N]	A green team can help to facilitate program implementation.
Student council or leadership team	[Y/N]	A student council can help to facilitate program implementation.

Using the information collected above, choose one or more of the following strategies for selecting pilot schools:

- Select schools that have already conducted or have expressed interest in a school food waste audit. It is essential to have a baseline measurement of food waste generation and management to assess program impact. This may mean only one or several schools will be able to participate initially.
- Select a representative sample. Consider choosing schools that represent the diversity in types of schools (e.g., elementary, secondary, middle, high school) and demographics (e.g., percentage students on free and reduced lunch program) in your district. This will allow you to compare and assess the results of the pilot to determine what does and does not work well across schools.
- Select schools where food waste generation may be high. For example, elementary schools typically generate the most food waste within a school system and could be an effective place to implement a pilot.
- Communicate with schools that meet your selection criteria and invite them to participate in the pilot. Provide them background information on the purpose and value of the pilot. Have a phone call or in-person meeting to provide information about purpose, vision, timeline, responsibilities, expectations, and support the school district will provide and to ensure they have the right key staff to support a pilot.

C. Identify and Communicate with Key Contacts

Pilot participation requires school staff and volunteers to take on work to coordinate the setup of share tables and donation logistics in addition to their existing duties. Therefore, it is helpful to provide these key personnel with training and information that will help them efficiently implement a food share and donation program.

Step 1. Identify key school staff

Table 3-3 outlines the types of key staff who are essential for program implementation. It is important to engage and build trust with all staff early in the pilot development process. This establishes an open line of communication that will help the district identify opportunities and challenges. It is especially important to engage early with custodial and cafeteria staff who play a key role in supporting the logistics of a food share program.

Identify the key staff in participating schools and organize a meeting to talk with them about their important roles and responsibilities for the pilot.

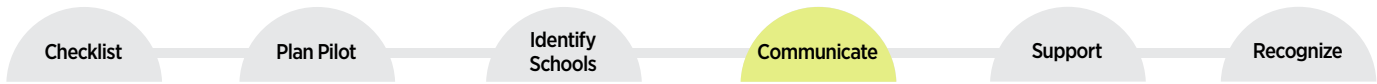


Table 3-3. Key School Staff for Program Pilot

Role	Description
School food share lead(s)	School personnel who take point in organizing and implementing food share tables and donation logistics. They will interact with school district personnel as needed and fully understand district and Washington State Department of Health guidelines.
Nutrition staff representative	This representative can provide guidance about USDA requirements as they relate to school food share and donation. Nutrition staff representatives are involved in all food-related operations in the kitchen and cafeteria. They should be involved from the start of the planning process to help coordinate and streamline efforts. They may not be involved in the day-to-day operations of a share table and donation program, but should be aware of and have input into the program details.
Food waste audit team	<p>If a school has no baseline data for food waste generation, it will need to conduct a food waste audit. Identify three to five people who can support implementation of an audit. These people may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School administrator • Students • Teachers • Parent volunteer and/or green team leader • School nutrition staff representative • Facilities and custodial staff
Food share table and donation team	<p>Identify at least three to four staff who will implement and help educate school personnel and students about the logistics of food share and donation. Staff may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School administrator • Kitchen staff • Facilities and custodial staff • Teachers
Student leaders	Integrate student leaders as possible to help school staff implement the program. In middle and high schools, student leaders could be associated with an existing school green team or could earn credit for helping educate, communicate, and track school food waste reduction for a school semester or school year.



Step 2. Identify key federal, state, and local contacts

It is important to develop relationships with key federal, state, and local partners who can support district-level and individual school food share programs. These

potential partners may also already have communication and technical resources available that you can leverage to support your program and can also provide an understanding of the health and safety requirements for food share and donation.

Table 3-4. Key Federal, State, and Local Contacts

Contact	Support & Resources
EPA Sustainable Management of Food Contacts	Provide support and technical assistance related to food waste prevention and reduction efforts.
Washington State Board of Education	Oversees Washington’s education system, adopts rules and monitors compliance, and monitors performance of Washington schools. The Board can assist in making school food share program compliant with Washington school system’s regulations.
Washington State Department of Health	The Food Safety Program ensures food programs meet state regulations and provides resources to protect the health and safety of those in food service settings. The department can also connect you with your local health department.
Washington State Department of Ecology	Ensures Washington state is meeting statewide food waste reduction goals. Provides resources for food waste prevention, food rescue and donation guidance, and food recovery options.
Local health jurisdictions and tribal directories	Provide guidance related to food safety and handling, which will support both food share tables and donation programs. Local health jurisdictions are also responsible for issuing the Washington State Food Worker Card.
Feeding America	Provides a list of food banks in your area.
Washington State Department of Agriculture - Access Food	Provides assistance finding hunger relief organizations in your area. Those organizations could be potential partners for your school food share program.
Local city or county solid waste and recycling programs	May provide resources and technical assistance in establishing a food share program at your school.
Local food rescue and food pantry programs	These are organizations you can partner with to ensure that food goes to feed people rather than being sent to the landfill.

Working With Your County Health Department

When starting a school food share program, the Washington Department of Health (DoH) guidance states that schools and program coordinators must consult with their local health department. Local health departments oversee food safety and will likely have requirements and regulations for food share programs. Consulting with your health department from the very beginning can ensure that your program is in compliance.

1. **Find your local health department contact.** The Washington DoH has a list of contacts for each county in the state: <https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/food/local-food-safety-contacts>.
2. **Compile your food share information.** Before meeting with your local health department, compile information about your program, including the type of program (donations vs. share table), which foods you would like to share or donate, how you intend to store donated food, and the names and contacts of the individuals handling the food. The Washington DoH has a [list of specific questions](#) you can consider and prepare answers to before consulting with your local health department.
3. **Ask clarifying questions.** Contact your local health department to ask about any county-specific requirements for implementing a food school share program. Health departments may have specific forms or training that need to be completed before a school food share program can begin. Work with your health department contact to make sure they have all the materials they need to approve your program and ensure no steps in the process have been skipped.
4. **Train food share program staff.** Ask your health department contact who should participate in training and obtain a food worker card. If someone other than full-time food handlers/kitchen staff will be overseeing the share program, they may need to receive training and receive a [Washington State Food Worker Card](#). Any regular volunteers should also complete training and receive a food worker card.
5. **Check in with your local health department regularly.** Some health departments require school food share forms or applications to be re-submitted every year

Step 3. Provide communications materials to support participating schools

Clear guidance is critical for running a successful school food share program. Provide key staff with the following types of information to ensure success of your pilot program:

- School district guidance for participating schools. If it exists, provide an overview of the district's policy with respect to school food share and donation programs for your pilot and beyond. Introduce the key program contacts and outline expectations of program participation, including reporting outcomes.
- The U.S. EPA and USDA have created a helpful document called [Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits](#). Links to food waste audit guides are provided in [Appendix D](#).
- How to set up a share table. Beyond the details provided in this guide, there are other resources on share table programs, a selection of which are provided in [Appendix F](#).
- Resources for internal and external communication. These may include template emails for program leaders to circulate to participants, as well as signage to place in classrooms and the cafeteria introducing the program and encouraging and educating the students about how to participate. Example communication materials are provided in [Appendix C](#).

- Other key resources to support school waste reduction. [Appendix F](#) includes information about food share program toolkits, food share program guidance from various jurisdictions, and food waste resource hubs.

D. Provide Technical and Administrative Support

Schools should have access to district support as they implement this new program. The district can provide administrative and technical support in the following ways:

- Hold a weekly or monthly call. Meet with the school contact(s) to address any initial challenges and keep the program going. The frequency of this contact can decrease as the pilot program becomes more established. These calls could cover administrative, technical, and logistical issues, and could also host guests who might be interested to tap into your community, such as contacts from local food banks and other nonprofit organizations that accept school food donation.
- Facilitate peer support. If several schools are participating in a pilot, introduce the contacts to each other and encourage them to communicate about challenges and successes. Peer support could also come from outside the district by introducing participants to staff in other school districts, including districts outside Washington, who can speak about their experience.
- Provide communication resources. This could include helping schools create email communiqués to ensure all staff are aware of the program and how it works or developing signage that educates staff and students about the types of foods that can be shared. Keep in touch with the participating schools to learn what specific resources they might need help creating, and to identify which resources are best developed at the district level to support standardization within the program and across schools.

E. Provide Recognition

Recognizing success rewards participants, encourages schools to join, and helps to validate the food share and donation program. Take the following steps to recognize success in your program.

Step 1. Determine when to convey recognition

A school district could convey recognition on an annual, biannual, or quarterly basis, but this should be aligned in some way with the school calendar year. Whatever the frequency, it is most important that there are enough data to form the basis for recognition.

Step 2. Determine the basis for recognition

Determine what you will measure. For example, you could provide recognition for participation, for percentage-based reduction in food waste, or for pounds donated. Consider if the metric you choose is or can be normalized such that it provides a level playing field (e.g., pounds of food per student donated).

If you are interested in learning how to evaluate the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the school food share program, refer to [EPA's WARM Model](#). The model helps organizations track and voluntarily report greenhouse gas emissions reductions, energy savings, and economic impacts from several different waste management practices. WARM calculates and totals these impacts from baseline and alternative waste management practices—source reduction, recycling, anaerobic digestion, combustion, composting, and landfilling.

Step 3. Select a mechanism for recognition

There are many ways in which a school district could convey recognition. Examples include:

- Provide public recognition. Public recognition ensures that the community is aware of the efforts

and accomplishments of the program. This can take many forms, including:

- » A letter from the school district superintendent to the team implementing the program, recognizing its efforts.
- » Certificates or large posters that can be hung in a school cafeteria recognizing the school's efforts and accomplishments.
- » A notice in internal school communications (such as school newsletters) and in external communications (including local news press releases) that reach parents and other community members.
- Connect to state and national recognition opportunities. [Appendix E](#) lists opportunities for recognition provided by state and national organizations. Coordinate recognition with these organizations or help your school(s) sign up for these opportunities.
- Hold an event. Convening participants for an event is a great way to increase visibility, encourage the exchange of lessons learned, and provide a stage to highlight the significance of participant achievements. Give participants formal recognition at a special ceremony and invite people from across the community or support special events like a zero-waste party at individual schools.

TIP: You can also use data collected from food donation efforts to estimate total greenhouse gas emissions avoided, equivalent number of meals served, dollar value of food recovered, and total pounds collected—metrics that are useful for school- and district-level program reporting.

Step 2. Review data and discuss program changes.

Engage pilot program participants in one or several discussions to review the data collected through the pilot program. Based on the data, as well as pilot program participants' experience, identify the successes and challenges of the pilot. Discuss what the data reveal about the pilot program at different schools or at different grade levels. Collaborate on what changes are needed for the program to improve and expand over time.

F. Review Data and Adjust the Program

Step 1. Determine how you will collect and verify data

Your method of data collection will depend on the number of participating schools and the information you would like to collect. For example, if you are piloting three schools, consider data collection by email. However, if you are piloting 10 schools, consider creating a shared Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for schools to complete. If you want to verify data, consider requesting (for example) verification from the school program lead or a receipt from a food bank for a donation.



SECTION 4

Appendices



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APPENDIX A. POLICY TOOLS FOR REDUCING FOOD WASTE AND PACKAGING AT SCHOOLS

There are a variety of policies that schools can implement to reduce wasted food. Listed below are several that might work at your school.

- **Implement food share tables.** These are tables on which students place approved items for redistribution. Students can take approved food from the share tables. Some schools also collect food from share tables to donate to nonprofit organizations.
- **Donate food that would otherwise be wasted.** Teach students that their unwanted food can be shared with someone in their community. USDA encourages schools to donate leftover food to appropriate nonprofit organizations. This is also supported under Washington state law.
- **Clarify school lunch requirements.** Did you know that students are not required to take milk? The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and at-risk after school meals component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) allow students to decline some of the food offered in a [USDA reimbursable meal](#). The 2015 [Offer Versus Serve \(OVS\) provision](#) of the NSLP and SBP allows students to decline some of the food offered to them. The goals of OVS are to reduce food waste in the school meals program while ensuring students receive nutritious meals they will eat. Under the OVS model, students are required to take three of five components (vegetables, fruits, grains, meats/meat alternatives, and milk). If students have three of the five components, they are not required to take milk. In some schools, staff and students are not aware of this, and educating them about this option could reduce wasted milk. USDA's [OVS manual](#) and [OVS Tip Sheet for School Food Service Managers](#) offer guidance on OVS as it applies to NSLP and SBP menu planning and meal service. USDA provides additional information on OVS for [CACFP](#) and [SFSP](#).
- **Change the way you serve milk.** Serving milk in cartons can lead to waste when students do not consume the whole carton. Furthermore, milk cartons are not recyclable in many areas which results in more waste going to the landfill. Milk dispensers, or “steel cows,” reduce carton and milk waste.
- **Ask students to select their meal choice in the morning.** Students often have several meal options. School nutrition services staff must guess how popular each menu item will be, and then prepare an amount of food based on those guesses. If students place their order in the morning, the kitchen staff can prepare a more accurate amount of food. This reduces waste and improves the student's meal experience. See [Appendix G](#) to learn how the Corvallis School District is reducing waste by taking lunch orders in the morning.
- **Improve meal quality.** Students like to eat meals that are visually appealing and flavorful. A lack of excitement about meals can lead to wasted food. Consider how foods are tested on students before they become part of a standard rotation and accommodate cultural or regional food preferences. Also think about how colors, shapes, textures, and packaging can boost visual impact. [No Kid Hungry's Optimizing Summer and Afterschool Meal Service](#) resource provides tips to optimize the quality and presentation of meals to increase participation and minimize food waste.
- **Schedule recess before lunch (RBL).** The [National Education Association](#) reports some schools say changing the traditional lunchtime schedule can decrease wasted food and improve student behavior. [Action for Healthy Kids](#) also provides helpful ideas, tips, toolkits, and bilingual resources around scheduling to facilitate RBL, including how to build support within your school and how to conduct a trial run of the new schedule.

- **Schedule longer lunch periods.** While there are no national standards for length of school lunch periods, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends](#) that schools provide students with a minimum of 20 minutes of seated time to eat. Seated time does not include time standing in line or cleaning up after lunch. Unfortunately, many schools provide 20 minutes for the whole lunch period, which means some students have fewer than 20 minutes of seated time to eat. Benefits of providing more time for lunch include:
 - » Increased consumption of food and key nutrients.
 - » Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, lunch entrée, and milk.
 - » Decreased plate waste.

Schools and school districts can also implement solutions to reduce packaging and other waste, including making substitutions. For example, use:

- **Condiment dispensers** instead of packets.
- **Napkin dispensers** instead of packaged silverware and napkins.
- **Washable and compartmentalized trays** instead of disposable trays.
- **Washable silverware** instead of disposable utensils.
 - » **Washable dishware** instead of disposable dishware.
 - » **Washable packaging** for a waste-free lunch.

Spotlight on Seattle Public Schools Food Service and Student Nutrition Policy

In July 2017, Seattle Public Schools adopted Policy No. 6705 to improve food service and student nutrition. The School Board recognized that school meal programs help students develop healthy eating habits, close opportunity gaps, fight child hunger, and provide necessary social interaction. As such, the policy requires mealtimes be long enough for students to eat and socialize. All Seattle Public Schools must provide a minimum of 10 minutes for breakfast and 20 minutes for lunch, with additional time as needed for standing in line. Additionally, school lunch leaders and food service staff are required to place a high priority on reducing cafeteria lines to no more than five minutes for students.

Source: [Seattle Public Schools School Board, Food Service and Student Nutrition, Policy No. 6705, July 5, 2017.](#)

APPENDIX B. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AUTHORITY RELATED TO FOOD SHARE AND DONATION

This appendix provides an overview of the federal, state, and local laws and guidelines that support food waste reduction and food sharing and donation for Washington schools. The overarching purpose of these laws and guidelines is to both facilitate food donations and promote public health and safety.

B1. Federal Enabling Legislation and Guidance

Federal legislation provides the foundation for schools to pursue food share programs **by providing liability protection to donors**. Additionally, USDA provides guidance on the use of food share tables and food donation in school nutrition programs. Washington schools planning to develop and implement school food share programs should be aware of the following federal legislation and guidance:

- **Food donation liability protection.** The [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#) encourages the donation of food and grocery products to nonprofit organizations and provides liability protection to food donors if they have not acted with negligence or intentional misconduct. The [2023 Food Donation Improvement Act](#) amends and updates the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act by providing protections to donors who donate food directly to individuals.
- **School food share table guidance.** [USDA's 2016 guidance on the share tables in CNPs](#) describes the opportunities presented by share tables, extends the use of share tables to the at-risk after-school component of the CACFP, and gives an overview of the food safety requirements CNP operators must follow to include share tables in their meal service. CNP operators include school food authorities, local

Are Other States Implementing School Food Share and Donation Programs?

Washington state and California have both adopted state-level guidance to enable school food share and donation. Review this guidance to understand food safety considerations and questions to ask your local health department.

- The Washington State Department of Health published [School Food Donation Guidelines](#) to provide food safety guidance for school programs wishing to recover and provide food to food-insecure students or food distributing organizations.
- In 2018, California enacted Senate Bill 557, which required the California Department of Education, Nutrition Services Division, to [publish guidance](#) on using share tables and donating leftover foods in CNPs in schools.

Learn more about how school districts are implementing school food share tables and donation in [Appendix F](#).

educational agencies, CACFP institutions, and SFSP sponsors.

- **School food donation guidance.** [USDA's 2012 guidance on food donation in CNPs](#) describes an amendment to the National School Lunch Act and the authority of the Food and Nutrition Service to create a food recovery and donation policy in schools participating in the CNP, NSLP, SBP, CACFP, and SFSP.

- **Food safety considerations.** FDA Food Code Section 3-306.14 addresses returned food and re-service of food specifications, specifically allowing re-service of unopened, packaged foods.
- **CNP operator safety requirements.** CNP operators using share tables must follow the safety requirements related to facilities management, participation, and sanitation outlined in 7 CFR 210.13, 220.7, 226.20(I), and 225.16(a). CNPs must also ensure that practices for saving and sharing food or beverage items are consistent with their local educational agencies' HACCPs.

B2. State Enabling Legislation and Authority

The state of Washington provides liability protection to donors through Washington RCW 70A.205.040 Section 103, "Good samaritan food donation act—Definitions—Collecting, distributing, gleaning—Liability." "A person or gleaner is not subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product that the person or gleaner donates in good faith to a nonprofit organization for ultimate distribution to needy individuals, except that this subsection does not apply to an injury to or death of an ultimate user or recipient of the food or grocery product that results from an act or omission of the donor constituting gross negligence or intentional misconduct. Source:

<https://lawfilesexet.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1799-S2.SL.pdf>

The following school food donation guidelines have been established by the Washington State Department of Health. View the complete text on their [website](#).

On November 18, 2011, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act 2012 amended the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act which provided statutory authority for schools and other USDA nutrition programs to have food recovery and donation policies. The statute clarifies that any unconsumed food may be donated to eligible local food banks or charitable organizations. The amendment defines eligible local food banks or charitable organizations to mean any food bank or charitable organization that is tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the *Internal Revenue Code* of 1986.

Guidance. Individual school or district nutrition programs planning to salvage food for donation must consult with their local health department before beginning a recovery program. The operating requirements and expectations will vary depending on the foods donated and the facilities available. At a minimum, programs should consider and be prepared to explain the following when pursuing food donation.

- Which donated food distributing organizations will receive the donations? Written agreements outlining delivery days, transportation plans, temperature monitoring, source tracking, and other logistics information help ensure wholesome food and traceable delivery.
- Will potentially hazardous foods be donated? Commercially-packaged, shelf-stable snack foods do not need special approval for donation; however, donation of potentially hazardous foods will require restrictions or additional procedures such as temperature monitoring to ensure the distributing organization may accept the food.
- Will home-prepared food be donated? Only commercially-packaged, shelf-stable products should be accepted from the public for donation.
- Will previously-served foods be donated? Distributing organizations are not allowed to receive previously served foods, even intact food items such as whole fruits or packaged dairy products, without additional safety precautions and written approval from the health department.
- How will food planned for donation be collected and identified? Food for donation may not be reintroduced to the food supply for the school. Participants must have a plan for safe food separation, identification, and storage.
- Will the school participate in an internal, organized food sharing program for students such as Backpack Brigade? Food safety standards such as temperature requirements and safety of sources extend to meals that go home with the students.
- Who will be responsible for coordinating the donation program? Safe donation will require a coordinated, planned effort. Ensure representatives from the school and the distributing location work together to provide safe recovery, transportation, and service of the food.

Donation of School Meals to Outside Recovery Sites.

- Previously served food includes all food that has been in the hands of a consumer such as food selected by students from a salad bar or cafeteria line. Previously served food for recovery and donation should be limited to the following, unless otherwise limited by the local health department:
- Unopened, commercially pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous food such as granola bars, apple slices, crackers, and raisins with no fire, water, or other signs of distress.
- Whole produce with an intact, non-edible rind or peel such as oranges and bananas.
- Whole produce with an edible peel such as apples, plums, nectarines, and pears with intact, undamaged skin that are properly rinsed by kitchen staff prior to donation unless the local health agency provides a variance for the donation sites with produce washing capabilities to rinse produce onsite.
- Unopened dairy products such as string cheese, milk, and yogurt that are stored on ice during the lunch service and able to be refrigerated for donation at 41°F or colder.

Considerations for Internal School Donations.

- Backpack Brigades and other food donations for school children to take home should be limited to school meal components or commercially-packaged snack foods (no homemade foods). Backpack items with potentially hazardous food ingredients must be kept refrigerated.
- School sharing tables should be limited to unopened school meal components (no homemade foods) and whole fruits in non-edible peels; limited to service during the current meal period; and offered from a designated collection area posted with safe operating reminders and restrictions for student sharing.
- Potentially hazardous foods destined for internal sharing from a school-sponsored sharing table must be commercially-packaged and is only allowed with an approved variance from the local health department.

Additional Notes for Safe Food Donation.

- Food past the original manufacturer’s “sell by” and “best if used by” date are suitable for donation, but not foods past a “use by” date.

- Dates on most foods, such as milk, yogurt, and packaged non-potentially hazardous foods, are not “use by” dates and are suitable for donation past the marked date.
- Food establishments wanting to donate food should ensure contamination-free procedures, strict employee hygiene practices, and proper temperature maintenance procedures are written and followed.
- It is recommended that an agreement be developed between the participating organizations to indicate selected foods for donation, contamination prevention measures, temperature control methods, transport and delivery procedures, and source records.

B3. Local Authority

There are several important places to look for information about local laws and guidelines associated with school food share and donation.

Local public health departments. Each county follows state rules and regulations for donation and reservice of cafeteria food and may provide their own guidance. This entity will provide information related to food safety and handling for both food share tables and food donation. You must understand how to safely store and handle foods that will be shared or donated, so seek out this important resource. The local health department can provide guidance on storage for perishable foods. Use the [Washington local food safety contact list](#) to find more information for your county.

Seattle King County Public Health utilizes a DFDO Annual Notification Form, which encourages the redistribution of food. Food distribution organizations must notify the regulatory authority if receiving donations from schools. Contact [SKCPH](#) for more information.

School districts. Each of Washington’s public school districts may have its own policy related to school food share, donation, and food waste reduction. If your school district does not currently have a policy, consider talking with the school board about passing a resolution to formalize a program. While such policies are not required to run a food share and donation program, they can pave the way for more streamlined program development. Determine the best approach for your school district and explore policy options, if necessary.

The structure and function of school systems may vary depending on the number of schools within the district. In general, key stakeholders in a Washington public school include:

- **School board/committee.** Each school district has an elected school board that helps set the vision and goals for the district and may adopt policies to achieve its goals. In some districts, student representatives may sit on the school board. Additionally, the board hires and evaluates the superintendent.
- **School district superintendent.** The chief executive in the district, hired and held accountable by the school board/committee. The superintendent supervises principals and other administrators and manages the day-to-day educational, logistical, and financial operation of the school system.
- **District nutrition services director/organization.** Oversees all aspects of food service in schools within the school district, administering the lunch program in compliance with federal, state, and local policies. The nutrition services director oversees purchasing and the kitchen staff who prepare food served in the school cafeteria.
- **School.** There are many key stakeholders at the school level who must be engaged to start a school food share and donation program. These include the principal, kitchen managers and staff, the custodial department, and other key leaders, who might include student and staff members of a school green team.

APPENDIX C. COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

This appendix includes the following resources:

- C1. Draft Agenda for School Site Selection Call
- C2. Example Discussion Prompts for School Administrators, Staff, and Students Participating in the Food Share Program
- C3. Sample Memorandum of Understanding Between School/School District and Recipient Organization
- C4. Sample Food Donation and Share Table Policy
- C5. Sample Email Text Communicating Food Share Program to School Staff
- C6. Sample Email Text Communicating Food Share Program to Parents
- C7. Cafeteria Student and Staff Instructions
- C8. Kitchen Manager Checklist for Starting a Food Share and Donation Program
- C9. Checklist for Call with Donation Organization
- C10. Cafeteria Posters and Signage
- C11. School Food Share Tracking Sheet

C1. Draft Agenda for School Site Selection Call

The purpose of this agenda is to support a school district-led call with potential school food share pilot participants. Use this agenda as a starting point to begin communicating about the who, what, where, when, and why of the program.

Hold the meeting in person or virtually and allow time for people to ask questions. Be sure to provide a central point of contact to streamline communication.

Example Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Why are we doing this? Background, purpose, and value of pilot initiatives
3. What is a school food share table, how does it work?
4. Roles, responsibilities, and expectations for a successful pilot
5. Anticipated timeline
6. Resources the school district or other partner agencies will provide
7. Questions

C2. Discussion Prompts for School Administrators, Staff, and Students Participating in the Food Share Program

Engaging and building trust with key school staff and volunteers early in the development of the food share program is important. This establishes an open line of communication that will help to identify opportunities and challenges that can be addressed in real time. It is especially important to engage early with facilities, custodial, kitchen, and other staff in the cafeteria who will support the logistics of a food share program. One way to engage key school staff and volunteers is through facilitated team discussions. This will help everyone understand the purpose and process of the food share program and the importance of their role. These discussions will also help empower key school staff and volunteers to answer questions that other staff, students, or community members may ask them during program implementation.

Below are some possible discussion questions that key school staff and volunteers should address. The facilitator for these discussions should have accurate answers ready to share or know who on the team can provide those answers. These prompts will help to spark conversation and direct early engagement from everyone involved in the food share program.

- What are the food safety and health guidelines that the food share program must adhere to?
- Who is responsible for overseeing the food share program?
- What are the key roles and responsibilities for staff and volunteers in making the food share program a success?
- What is the necessary training for staff and volunteers participating in the food share program? What types of training materials and resources are available?
- What are the primary benefits of the food share program to the students, school district, and the community?

C3. Sample Memorandum of Understanding Between School/School District and Recipient Organization

Adapt the example language below to create a memorandum of understanding with a food donation recipient organization.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This memorandum of understanding (MOU) is intended to clarify the roles, responsibilities, and expectations between the [Donor] and [Recipient] related to food donation.

Background

The [Donor] School is piloting/implementing a program to donate unopened food to [Recipient]. We expect to be able to donate approximately ___ pounds of edible food (primarily milk, yogurt, string cheese, muffins, bananas, and other fruit) each month.

Purpose

This MOU will:

- Serve as a model of an innovative and progressive full circle educational program of food production and conservation.
- Facilitate provision of healthy, wholesome food to [Recipient].
- Save the school system money on food waste disposal costs.

The above goals will be accomplished by undertaking the following activities:

[Recipient] will:

- Provide a representative (staff and/or volunteer) to meet with the school liaison to provide information about the program.
- Provide a volunteer to pick up the school food ___ times per week following an agreed-upon schedule.
- Provide pre-sterilized bins to transport the food from school to the food bank.
- Weigh and record all food received from each school upon arrival at the food bank and provide a copy of this data monthly to [Donor].
- Provide ongoing assistance, support, and consulting to participating schools.

[Donor] will:

- Provide a point of contact to work with [Recipient].
- Support and proactively encourage participation with lunchroom supervisors and students.
- Provide cooler/refrigerator space to store food for donation until [Recipient] can pick it up per the agreed-upon schedule.
- Agree to post flyers/posters in the lunchroom that are provided to educate students on the program.

Important regulatory information

Several federal laws encourage food donation in the United States by providing liability protection to donors or tax incentives.

- The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act was created to encourage the donation of food and grocery products to qualified nonprofit organizations and provides liability protection to food donors. Under this act, if the donor has not acted with negligence or intentional misconduct, the organization is not liable for damage incurred as the result of illness.
- The U.S. Federal Food Donation Act of 2008 specifies procurement contract language encouraging federal agencies and contractors of federal agencies to donate excess wholesome food to eligible non-profit organizations to feed food-insecure people in the United States.

Duration

This MOU is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from the [Donor] and [Recipient]. This MOU shall become effective upon signature by the authorized officials from both parties and will remain in effect until modified or terminated by any one of the parties by mutual consent.

Authorized representative

[Donor]

Date: _____

Authorized representative

[Recipient]

Date: _____

C4. Sample Food Donation and Share Table Policy

These samples were developed by Beaverton School District in the state of Oregon. The content has been streamlined over time with input from stakeholders, staff, and volunteers. This content can be utilized as a template for Washington state schools.

BEAVERTON SCHOOL DISTRICT NUTRITION SERVICES

Food Donation Program Policy and Procedures

The Beaverton School District Nutrition Services Department food donation program seeks to contribute to the goal of reducing hunger and waste in the Portland Metro Region by coordinating food donation pickups each week. Donations are delivered to agencies including The Sunshine Pantry, The Rock Creek Church Pantry, Westside Food Brigade, Good Neighbor Shelter, St. Johns Food Share, Community Action Shelter, and Urban Gleaners.

Policy

All Beaverton cafeterias donate to food rescue agencies weekly. Leftover prepared breakfast and lunch entrees and components will be cooled and packaged for donation; volunteers will be scheduled to pick up and deliver to pantries via an assigned volunteer coordinator.

Procedures

All foods designated for donation will be recorded, prepared, and packaged for volunteer pickup using the following guidelines.

1. Record *all donated* foods on production record in PrimeroEdge by entering “FD” in the comments cell for each entrée type donated. If you are donating items that are not prepared such as a la carte or discontinued products, enter these items in PrimeroEdge as a withdrawal; refer to Tab #9a and select reason “Food Donation.”
2. List items that will be donated on the food donation slip. This will be sent to the pantry with donated food and initialed by volunteer.
3. Donation suggestions:
 - » Cooked entrees or components of hot entrees and side dishes refer to cooling processes
 - » Salad bar items that remained in cold storage at 41° or less
 - » Cold entrees e.g., deli sandwiches and salads that remained at 41° or less
 - » Produce, dairy items, or a la carte that will expire—enter these items in PrimeroEdge as a withdrawal; refer to Tab #9a and select reason “food donation”
 - » Expired a la carte items such as chips, snacks, and packaged or wrapped cookies
4. Cool all hot foods thoroughly before packaging for donation; follow the Standard Operating Procedure #16, “Cooling Potentially Hazardous Foods,” in the HACCP booklet for guidelines. *DO NOT DONATE HOT FOOD.*
5. Foods must be wrapped in plastic (use plastic wrap or plastic bags) or foil. Place the wrapped food in clean cardboard boxes. Use plastic containers for semi-liquid items, e.g., pasta with meat sauce.
6. When freezing donations in plastic containers, food must first be thoroughly cooled following the cooling guidelines. Date and label the container using a permanent marker.

7. Hot or cold sandwiches (burgers, chicken sandwiches, etc., or any deli sandwiches) may be frozen and held for donation pickup. Cool sandwiches and save up to 3 days after service day for donation or freeze.
8. Leftovers that are components of entrees such as rice, mashed potatoes, or protein items may be kept in a cooler up to 4 days after the service day. These items may also be frozen for donation.
9. Salad bar backup items from cold storage may be donated if not used—this includes potentially hazardous foods that have remained at 41° or lower.
10. Salad bar items off the salad bar that are not potentially hazardous can be donated to the “Waste Not Food Taxi”—these items include carrots, fresh broccoli, celery, peppers, and onions.
11. Label and date donation boxes with “Food Donation” so there is no mistake about which food is saved for donation. Include a donation slip noting what foods are in donation boxes and send with donated foods.
12. Store the boxes close together in a refrigerator or freezer. Place a “Food Donation” sign on the refrigerator door where the food is stored.
13. A spreadsheet will be sent to leads each school year showing scheduled volunteers. Leads can email the volunteer coordinator with pickup issues or needs by contacting: [volunteer coordinator contact information].

BEAVERTON SCHOOL DISTRICT NUTRITION SERVICES

Sharing Tables

Policy

The purpose of having “Sharing” or “No Thank You” tables is to reduce food waste; students may place unwanted foods in a designated area to share. Students who are still hungry can help themselves to food set on the table during specific meal service periods.

Procedures

1. Site leads will notify administration of this nutrition services policy.
2. Nutrition services staff are responsible for overseeing and ensuring that food safety guidelines are followed.
3. Sharing tables are best located near tray drop areas and close to garbage cans where students can clearly see signs.
4. Foods collected that will be returned to service will not be withdrawn in PrimeroEdge.
5. Best practices include the following:
 - a. Designate a specific location for the sharing table
 - b. The designated return bin must be a pan with ice sheets or a sharing refrigerator
 - c. Provide signage at the sharing table
 - d. Allow students to visit the sharing table during their immediate meal period
 - e. At the end of meal service, items will be checked for quality and tampering and may be returned for service; whole fruit must be washed thoroughly
 - f. Potentially hazardous foods (PHFs) at or below 41° (milk, yogurt, cheese) and shelf-stable items must be wiped off with a sanitized towel and returned to service
6. Food safety: Foods and beverages that can be shared fall into two separate categories, PHFs and non-PHFs. Foods that do not meet the criteria below are not safe to be shared.
 - a. Non-PHFs that do not require monitoring, refrigeration, or other handling before they are served again include:
 - i. Whole pieces of fruit.
 - ii. Unopened packages of food or beverages that are shelf-stable, e.g., packages of apple-sauce cups, hummus cups.
 - iii. Packaged apple slices, baby carrots, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. These items must be refrigerated after meal service (for sites with sharing refrigerators) or discarded after meal service has ended that day.
 - iv. Shelf-stable items such as hummus cups and applesauce cups placed on sharing tables may be wiped off with a sanitized towel and returned for service.
 - v. Whole fruit will be checked for quality and tampering then washed and returned for service.
 - b. PHFs that require refrigeration or other handling while being offered during meal service are listed below. To meet Washington County health regulations governing food safety, these items must be handled appropriately.
 - i. Unopened packages of food or beverages that require storage at or below 41° (e.g., cartons of milk or yogurt, packages of cheese) must be tossed at the end of meal service if over 41°.
 - ii. Heated unopened packaged/sealed entrées (e.g., burritos) must be discarded after each meal service.
 - c. Sites with sharing table refrigerators.
 - i. If packaged items are to be offered on subsequent days, they must be held at 41° or below. Items such as packaged apple slices, baby carrots, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that don't already have “use by dates” must be labeled with the original date of service and disposed of within 3 days of the service date.

Note: All items from sharing tables are available for the duration of meal service for students only; items left after service will go back to kitchen inventory and must not be taken from the cafeteria.

C5. Sample Email Text Communicating Food Share Program to School Staff

From: School Principal

To: All School Staff

Subject: New School Food Share Program

Hello Teachers and Staff,

Next week, our school will begin a new district-approved, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency–encouraged school food share program in the cafeteria. The goal of the program is to minimize wasted food. We want to encourage students to save unopened and whole fruit they do not care to eat rather than throwing it away. This food will be collected and sent to our local food bank for immediate distribution to people in our community. Each day, students will be invited to donate any unwanted, unopened, packaged food (muffins, yogurt, string cheese, unopened milk, etc.) from their school meals for redistribution as an alternative to putting it in the trash or compost bin. Note that items from lunches brought from home are not eligible for donation.

There is no action required on your part, but your support for the program is much appreciated.

Thank you!

C6. Sample Email Text Communicating Food Share Program to Parents

From: School Principal

To: Student Parents

Subject: Announcing School Food Share Program

Hello Parents,

The *[Name]* School District is launching a school food share program this week. This program is intended to recover whole, edible food from school cafeterias to distribute to local food banks.

Each day, students will be invited to donate any unopened, packaged food from their meals (muffins, yogurt, string cheese, unopened milk, etc.) that they do not care to eat. This food will be collected and sent to our local food bank for immediate distribution to people in our community. We always encourage kids to eat as much as they would like, and then donate anything that is left over and unopened. Note that items from lunches brought from home are not eligible for donation.

We are excited to participate in this program, which helps teach our students about the importance of not wasting food and helping feed others in our community.

If you have any questions about this program, would like to volunteer with the program, or do not want your children to participate, please reply to me directly.

Thank you,

[Principal Name]

C7. Cafeteria Student and Staff Instructions

At the beginning of school or before a meal, the principal or lunch supervisor can make this announcement:

Hi everyone! Today, *[School Name]* is starting the school food share program. We will collect whole, unopened food you do not want or cannot eat. It is important for your success at school to eat as much of your lunch as possible, but we will donate unopened extras.

The way you can help is simple. If there are foods you do not want to eat, place them on the share table. Other students are welcome to pick up these foods to add to their lunches. At the end of lunch, student volunteers will collect all leftover food and put it in the refrigerator for the food bank to pick up. There are a few rules to follow, so please pay attention!

The food you can put on the share table includes unopened milk, unopened packaged food, and whole fruits. Examples of good things to donate include unopened applesauce, yogurt, muffins, apples, bananas, and granola bars. Please do not donate food that you bring from home.

After lunch, we will put the food into the refrigerator and give it to *[Food Recipient]*. They share it with individuals and families in our community. Thanks for your help. REMEMBER, eat your food first. We only want to donate food you cannot eat. We will remind you again right before lunch is over. Thank you for your help!

C8. Kitchen Manager Checklist for Starting a Food Share and Donation Program

Kitchen managers should use this checklist as a starting point for tracking key items needed for a food share and donation program. Small grants or resources from local government solid waste and recycling programs may be available to offset startup costs.

- Crates and ice packs for collecting recovered items and storing them prior to pickup
- Signage for collection containers
- Posters for cafeteria
- Sufficient storage in refrigerators
- Tracking logs for stored food
- Explicit protocol for people handling perishable items (make sure perishable items do not stay out for more than one hour unless held on ice)
- Agreed upon storage areas from which donation recipients pick up donated items (both refrigerated and non-refrigerated)

C9. Checklist for Call with Donation Organization

Use the measurement data collected during the food waste audit to answer the following questions that food rescue organizations are likely to ask when you call. You may also want to ask them questions about what food they accept, and how it should be packaged, as noted below.

Questions the food rescue organization may ask:

- What food items does the school have to donate?
- What is the total number of items or the estimated total weight by item type?
- Are the food items packaged? Are the ingredients labeled on these items?
- What is the shelf life of the food items available for donation?
- Do food items have a “best if used by” or “sell by” date?
- Do the food items for donation require repack and date labeling to be donated? For example, unserved hot bar items could be donated if they were portioned out into to-go containers for pickup.
- If items do require re-packing, does the school have the space, staff, and resources to do this?
- What is the volume and frequency with which you have these items for donation? Are items generated on a weekly, monthly, or annual basis?
- How often do these food items need to be picked up?
- Does the school have a way to maintain time and temperature requirements for foods that need to be kept hot/cold?
- What is your storage capacity to hold food items until there are enough to warrant pickup by a food rescue agency?

Questions to ask the food rescue organization:

- What food items are accepted by the organization?
- If commercially packaged items are not labeled individually, what is the best method for providing ingredient and allergen information?

C10. Cafeteria Posters and Signage

This section provides examples of posters and signage that are freely available and can be downloaded for use in your own school.

USDA Reducing Food Waste Infographic

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

R E D U C I N G
F O O D
W A S T E

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO TODAY

USDA's Economic Research Service estimates
31% of the overall food supply at the retail and consumer level **went uneaten** in the U.S. in 2010.

Research shows **PLATE WASTE NOW** = **PLATE WASTE BEFORE** updated nutrition standards.

Scheduling recess before lunch can **reduce plate waste by AS MUCH AS 30%**.

Extending lunch periods from **20 TO 30** minutes reduced plate waste by nearly one-third.

BEST PRACTICES ACCORDING TO SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE DIRECTORS
Involve students in menu planning and conducting taste tests, implement Offer versus Serve at all grade levels, provide more menu choices, serve foods with familiar flavors, serve ready-to-eat fruit, and invite school staff and teachers to eat meals with students.

SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE STEPPING UP TO THE CHALLENGE WITH INNOVATIVE NEW STRATEGIES, SUCH AS:

- Allowing students to keep a lunch or breakfast food item for consumption later in the school day
- Using techniques listed on the [USDA's Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits](#) to help reduce food waste
- Setting up a table for kids to place items they are not going to consume (packaged or pre-portioned items)
- Letting kids self-serve
- Composting food waste for school gardens
- Collaborating with local farmers on composting or food-scrap projects
- Collecting excess wholesome food after mealtimes to donate to charitable organizations

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). Reducing Food Waste: What Schools Can Do Today. Available at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reducing-food-waste-infographic.pdf>

Food Share Table Sign from StopWaste (Alameda County, California)



Source: StopWaste. (n.d.) Food Share: Uneaten, Unopened Items Only. Available at <http://www.stopwaste.org/resource/food-share-table-sign?page=search>



Customize your own share table sign with these templates! Editable versions of these signs are available on [LINK TBD] and allow you to customize your sign with foods actually served in your school.



Customize your own share table poster with this template!

Example Food Collection Labels

School Food Share Items
School: _____
Pickup Day(s) and Time: _____
For additional pickups or questions, contact:
Food Bank Name: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
Please keep perishable foods at proper temperature.

Customize your own food collection labels with these templates!

C11. Example Share Table Tracking Sheet

Date: _____

School Name: _____

Lunch Period: _____

Name of table supervisor: _____

Instructions: This form should be used to track the products returned to the share table and stored by your school for re-service at another meal or donation. Note: USDA recommends that foods are re-used within schools just once.

It is important to track the following dates and times by adding accurate dates and times and signing your initials next to the entry.

- Date & Time Received:** when foods are received on the share table.
- Date & Time Packed & Stored:** when foods are returned to the kitchen for use in a future food service or are packed for donation pickup.
- Date & Time Re-used or Picked-up:** When foods are re-served for another meal or snack or are picked up for donation.

Product Name	Quantity (count or weight)	Does product need to be kept at temperature? (Y/N)	If kept at time and temperature, indicate time held at what temp.	Date & Time Received	Staff Initials	Date & Time Packed & Stored	Staff Initials	Date & Time Re-used or Picked-up	Staff Initials

Food safety reminders:

- USDA guidance suggests that schools ***maintain proper temperature and temperature logs*** (for 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below) by storing food components in a temperature-controlled storage bin, such as an ice tub or cooler.
 - Perishable foods such as milk, bagged carrots or apples, yogurt, and string cheese ***must be kept cool.***
 - Ensure that milk is never left out for more than four cumulative hours.
- Foods with an edible peel should be rewashed before reservice or donation.
- Make sure you note expiration dates on packaged foods.
- When storing share table and donation items, do not intermix these items with cafeteria items that have not yet been prepared and served.

For additional pickups or questions, contact:

Food Bank Name: _____ Email: _____
 Phone: _____

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APPENDIX D. EXAMPLE FOOD WASTE AUDIT AND DIVERSION GUIDES

D1. Food Waste Audit and Diversion Guides


The table below provides examples of food waste audit and diversion guides you can dig into to learn more about how to measure and reduce food waste.

Resource Name	Organization	Brief Description
A Guide to Conducting and Analyzing a Food Waste Assessment	U.S. EPA	This guide explains how to conduct a food waste assessment and discusses how to use the baseline audit measurement to set goals and track progress.
A Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits: A Resource for Schools	U.S. EPA, USDA, University of Arkansas	This guide provides information on why and how to do a food waste audit, what to do with the data collected, and offers food waste prevention ideas.
K-12 Food Waste Diversion Guide	RecyclingWorksMA	This guide provides a basic framework to manage the food waste diversion process at a school and identify strategies for dealing with food that is collected. The diversion guide also helps a school determine additional food waste management options including on-site composting, commercial hauling, or partnering with local farmers.
Food Waste Warrior Toolkit	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	This toolkit includes a one-page outline of how to conduct an informal food waste audit to show students exactly how much food is wasted at school and at home. The resource is targeted at students in grades 3-5.

D2. Example Food Waste Audit Worksheets

Instructions for Interviewers and Sorters

Interviewers	
1.	<p>Interview the student. Interviewers will have a clipboard, pencil, and interview sheet. When students walk to the disposal station with their trays, the interviewer says:</p> <p><i>“Hello, we are taking a survey, and we would like to ask for your input. I’m going to ask you about the food left on your tray and write down what you thought about it.”</i></p> <p>Look at their tray and mark down which food items the student left unfinished, including drinks.</p>
2.	<p>Record uneaten food. Look at the student’s tray and record which item the student did not eat. Mark each unfinished food item down on the log sheet, one item per line. For each item, ask the student “Can you tell us why you didn’t finish your [name of food]?” and write down what they say. Only give one reason per item—his or her main reason. Try to get an answer that can help staff fix the problem. Answers like “didn’t like it” or “tasted gross” are not helpful answers. Instead, ask a more specific question like “What about the taste didn’t you like?”</p>
3.	<p>Thank the student. Ask them to leave their tray on the table. If there are many students lining up for interviews, be brief with each student to get a response from as many students as possible. Lunch dismissal should not be delayed by this process, so adjust the number of students interviewed to keep the line moving.</p>
4.	<p>Bonus! If time is available, ask the student if they have any ideas about how to reduce wasted food and write their suggestions down on the log sheet.</p>

Interview examples	
	<p>Interviewer: Why didn’t you finish your chicken? Student: I didn’t like it. Interviewer: What about it didn’t you like? Student: It was kind of cold. <i>Write down “cold” for “chicken.”</i></p> <p>Interviewer: Why didn’t you finish your carrots? Student: I knew I wasn’t going to like it. Interviewer: What about them don’t you like? Student: Really, it was my only choice. <i>Write down “no other choice” for “carrots”</i></p>

Sorters	
1.	<p>Ensure student has spoken to interviewer before they give you their tray. Ideally, interviewers should talk to students first. If a student tries to hand a tray directly to the food sorter, ask them to take it to one of the interviewer volunteers first unless there is a long line forming and dismissal will be affected.</p>
2.	<p>Sort all items on the lunch tray. Sort items by category. If the item doesn’t fit into an existing category, speak with the food waste audit leader. You will most likely have an “other” category into which miscellaneous items fit.</p>

Student Interview Sheet

Lunch Period	
Type of food	Reason for throwing it away

Green Lunchrooms Information and Audit Sheets

Collect information to answer the questions on this page prior to the audit.

General information	
How many students are enrolled at your school?	
How many lunches does your school serve per day?	
Is lunch offer versus serve?	
How many breakfasts does your school serve per day?	
Is breakfast offer versus serve?	
Does your school offer snacks in the classroom?	
How many signs on food waste and/or nutrition are hanging in the cafeteria?	
How much does your school currently pay for garbage service?	

Sustainability checklist - Does your school:	Yes	No
Use washable plates		
Use washable trays		
Use reusable silverware		
Use washable cups for water		
Use washable cups for milk		
Have a milk dispenser		
Offer straws		
Have a share table		
Have recycling available in the cafeteria that is well-managed (not contaminated)		
Have monitors helping with the sort/separation of items at the disposal line		
Dump milk in a bucket to keep liquids out of the garbage		
Collect food scraps for compost. If yes, does your school collect all food, or only fruits and vegetables?		
Use condiment dispensers instead of packets		

Serve salad in plastic, disposable clamshells		
Serve fruit or other item in disposable plastic cups		
Serve food items in paper boats		

Record data from the audit in the table below. Major category names are reflected in bold, and subcategories in italics. The summed value of all subcategories should equal the value reflected in each major category. Edit the table to tailor the subcategories relevant to your school.

Cafeteria		
Category	Weight in pounds	Volume in gallons
Food eligible for share table/donation		
<i>Unopened milk</i>		
<i>Unopened packaged foods</i>		
<i>Whole fruit</i>		
Inedible unfinished food from trays/plates		
<i>Fruits and vegetables</i>		
<i>Packaged foods</i>		
<i>Milk</i>		
Stop here if you are conducting a food waste audit only ----- Continue if you are doing a trash audit in addition to a food waste audit		
Cafeteria recycling		
<i>Aluminum cans</i>		
<i>Plastic bottles</i>		
<i>Paper goods</i>		
Other trash		
<i>Milk cartons</i>		
<i>Plastic utensils</i>		
<i>Disposable trays</i>		
<i>Cold lunch trash</i>		
Some schools include kitchen waste in their audits. Complete the below if you plan to do so.		
Un-served food from kitchen		
Kitchen recycling		

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APPENDIX E. RECOGNITION OPPORTUNITIES

Following is a list of recognition opportunities for reducing wasted food which come from the federal government and other public and private sector organizations.

E1. Fuel Up to Play 60

Organization: Partnership of the National Football League (NFL) and National Dairy Council (NDC)

Overview: [Fuel Up to Play 60](#) (FUTP 60) is a leading national in-school health and wellness program launched by the NFL and NDC, founded by America's dairy farmers in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). FUTP 60 empowers students and educators to work together to build healthier schools and create healthy, high achieving students. The program offers a variety of opportunities for adults, students, and schools, from in-school wellness initiatives to funding and recognition opportunities. Since launching in 2009, more than 73,000 schools have enrolled in the program.

How to Participate: Students, educators, parents, and the community can get their school involved by enrolling in the program to access customizable program components including a [Fuel Up to Play 60 Playbook](#), tools and resources, in-school materials, personalized educator and student dashboards, and opportunities for rewards. Use the Playbook to strategize ways to make students eat healthy, waste less, and get active. Teachers or school administrators can sign up to be a Program Advisor which allows schools to apply for FUTP 60 funds, become a Touchdown School, and become eligible for contests with NFL-themed prizes. The Playbook provides additional resources and quick-start guides to get started.

Recognition Opportunities: Share student stories, videos, and pictures on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram tagging FUTP 60 (Facebook: @FuelUpToPlay60 | Twitter and Instagram: @FUTP60) and using #FuelGreatness! Members can submit their stories on the FUTP 60 website for a chance to be featured.

Learn more: Visit the FUTP 60 webpage to [get involved](#).

E2. Waste Not Washington School Awards

Organization: State of Washington Department of Ecology

Overview: The Waste Not Washington Awards celebrate Washington schools for their environmental efforts and help fund waste reduction projects.

How to Participate: Apply for one of three categories of award: Sustainable School Award, Seed Award, or Creative Curriculum Award, on the [program's website](#).

Recognition Opportunities: Awards are distributed annually and are up to \$5,000 per award.

Learn more: Visit the [Waste Not](#) webpage for more information.

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APPENDIX F. KEY RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SCHOOL FOOD WASTE REDUCTION

This appendix includes the following sections: (F1) Share Program Toolkits, (F2) Share Program Guidance from Other Jurisdictions, (F3) Food Waste Resource Hubs, and (F4) Additional Resources.

F1. Food Share Program Toolkits

Resource name	Organization	Brief Description
Public Health Seattle and King County Request for School Food Sharing Table	Public Health Seattle & King County	This two-page document is a fillable form that King County/Seattle schools can utilize to sign up for a School Food Share table.
Wasting Less Food in K-12 School Settings: Best Practices for Success	Natural Resources Defense Council	This four-page resource highlights how to prevent food waste, ensure that surplus food reaches people in need, and how to recycle food scraps. It provides specific tips for reducing food waste generated in kitchens and cafeterias and provides targeted strategies for preventing recoverable food from going to the landfill.
Food Waste Warrior Toolkit	World Wildlife Fund	This toolkit provides lessons, activities, and resources to educate students about how food and food waste impacts the planet. It also includes information about how to conduct a food waste audit. <i>Note: WWF continually updates the website as new materials are developed.</i>
Enabling Share Tables in the National School Lunch Program: Legal Review and Best Management Practices	U.S. EPA, USDA, University of Arkansas	This one-page guide summarizes the three ways in which USDA encourages redistribution of recoverable food and identifies best management practices. It also provides information about food safety, source reduction, redistribution, and donation information.
Sharing the Table: A Roadmap to Reducing and Recovering Surplus Food in Schools	U.S. Green Building Council Center for Green Schools	This resource provides a roadmap to help the reader create and implement a food waste reduction and recovery program.
Zero Waste Cafeteria series	U.S. Green Building Council Center for Green Schools	This three-part webinar series covers the benefits, challenges, and logistics associated with zero waste cafeterias. It includes an overview of how to implement a robust school food re-use and reduction program, the importance of culture shift when working toward a zero-waste cafeteria, and the critical role that measurement plays in achieving zero waste goals.

Resource name	Organization	Brief Description
Food Matters Action Kit	Commission for Environmental Cooperation	This toolkit is loaded with informative resources and hands-on, creative activities to inspire kids of all ages to prevent food waste at home, at school and in the community.

F2. Share Program Guidance from Other Jurisdictions

Resource name	Organization	Brief Description
Share Tables & Food Donation in Schools: Best Practices for Los Angeles County	Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (California)	This guide addresses basic questions about share tables and donation as they relate to county educational agencies in California. It also provides step-by-step information and best practices for schools starting a share table and donation program.
Oregon School Food Share Program Guide	U.S. EPA	U.S. EPA and a coalition of partner organizations in Oregon developed this resource to recover and redirect edible food from schools to local food banks. This program outlines the steps for food share and donation program development and implementation and is a useful reference for schools in any state.
Food Share Table and Donation Guides for Schools	StopWaste (Alameda County, California)	The Food Share Table Guide provides step-by-step instructions to set up a food share table where students put unwanted, sealed or uneaten foods for other students and for donation. The Food Donation Guide provides an overview to set up a donation program for edible surplus foods. The donation guide includes legal protections, program models and food safety considerations.
Food Sharing Tables – Guidance for Schools	Vermont Department of Health	This factsheet includes checklists and best practices that may help schools start a food share table program.

Resource name	Organization	Brief Description
Food Waste Reduction in School Meals	Iowa Department of Education	This toolkit was developed to pilot school food waste audits and assessments in Iowa schools. The Sharing Table Fact Sheet provides an overview of best practices, procedures, and food safety for schools implementing share tables.

F3. Food Waste Resources

Resource name	Organization	Brief Description
Further with Food: Center for Food Loss and Waste Solutions	Further with Food	This information clearinghouse provides access to collected resources focused on reducing food loss and waste in the United States. This resource is used by businesses, government entities, investors, nonprofit organizations, academics, and individuals to find and share information about proven solutions and innovative new approaches to reduce the volume of surplus food generated, feed food-insecure people, and divert wasted food to the highest beneficial use. <i>Note: As of September 2020, the Further with Food landing page is no longer actively updated, though it still houses useful resources.</i>
Food Loss and Waste	USDA	Leverage this site for strategies, additional resources, and curriculum to help reduce food waste in schools. Key resources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Food Loss and Waste—Schools • Selected New and Ongoing Food Loss and Waste Reduction Activities
Winning on Reducing Food Waste	U.S. EPA, U.S. FDA, USDA	This site presents an interagency strategy developed by EPA, FDA, and USDA that prioritizes action areas to reduce food loss and waste. Additional resources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FDA Food Loss and Waste • FDA Food Waste Animations

Resource name	Organization	Brief Description
ReFED Resources	ReFED	<p>ReFED is a multi-stakeholder nonprofit powered by an influential network of the nation’s leading business, nonprofit, foundation, and government leaders committed to reducing U.S. food waste. ReFED takes a data-driven approach to move the food system and identified 27 of the best opportunities outlined in the <i>Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste</i>, a first-of-its-kind economic analysis, making it easier for stakeholders across the food supply chain to meet the national 50% reduction goal by 2030. Key resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Analysis of Food Waste Solutions • Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste • Guidelines to Help Food Service Businesses Include Food Waste Reduction in their COVID-19 Operating Plans
Food Matters Action Kit	Commission for Environmental Cooperation	<p>This kit is loaded with informative resources and hands-on, creative activities to inspire youth of all ages to prevent food waste at home, at school, and in their communities. The Action Kit contains two sets of activities, each addressing food waste from farm to fork. The Kids’ Action Kit is designed for ages five to 13, and the Youth Action Kit for ages 14 to 25.</p>

F4. Additional Resources

Resource name	Organization	Brief Description
Excess Food Opportunities Map	U.S. EPA	<p>This interactive map supports nationwide diversion of excess food from landfills. It identifies and displays facility-specific information about potential generators and recipients of excess food in the industrial, commercial, and institutional sectors and provides estimates of excess food by generator type.</p>
Food Safety Regulations and Guidance for Food Donations	Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic	<p>This study was undertaken to identify and analyze state-level legislation, regulations, and guidance around food safety for restaurant and retail food donations. The survey was conducted by the Food Safety for Donations Working Group, an informal coalition working to promote a better understanding of safe food donation practices to support more recovery of safe, edible food.</p>
Developing A+ Marketing Materials Presentation	School Nutrition Association (SNA)	<p>This presentation from the 2019 SNA Annual National Conference provides tips on how to use Adobe Photoshop and Microsoft Publisher to make your school marketing materials stand out. The presentation also provides information on how to work with graphic designers, printing services, and school staff to distribute your materials.</p>

APPENDIX G. CASE STUDY OF SCHOOL FOOD SHARE PROGRAMS IN WASHINGTON SCHOOLS



School Food Share

School Case Study:

Bellevue School District

Bellevue School District Fast Facts:

- Located in Bellevue, Washington.
- 18,409 students, 15 elementary schools, five middle schools, and four high schools.
- Strong district support for the School Food Share program.
- First school to participate: Puesta del Sol, a Spanish-immersion elementary school.
- 12,099 pounds collected and distributed to Hopelink Food Bank in the 2017–18 school year.
- 23,632 pounds collected in the 2018–19 school year, when participating schools doubled.
- As of spring 2023, the Bellevue School District has four schools with county-approved school food share programs and two more schools completing the approval process.



The Bellevue School District's School Food Share Story

School Food Share was created when a parent—who also happened to work with EPA Region 10—wanted to find a way to reduce food waste at the elementary school her daughter attended, Puesta del Sol. She coordinated with the school district and other interested stakeholders; together, they found that many schools were willing to collect and store food after lunch period, and Hopelink Food Bank was willing to complete and submit the necessary forms to Public Health—Seattle & King County (PHSKC). After communicating with the food bank and the county health department, the Bellevue School District determined the following foods would be acceptable for donation as part of the School Food Share program:

- Unopened, commercially pre-packaged, non-pre-heated food, such as granola bars, apple slices, crackers, and raisins.



Three days-worth of food from two Bellevue schools.

- Whole fruits and vegetables with intact, non-edible rinds or peels, such as oranges and bananas.
- Whole produce with edible peels, such as apples, plums, and pears with intact, undamaged skin.
- Unopened, pre-packaged dairy products such as string cheese, milk, and yogurt maintained and delivered at 41°F or colder.

Transportation from the schools to the food bank proved to be the biggest challenge for implementing School Food Share. Finding regular, consistent transportation for the food from each school to the food bank was initially difficult. Though some food banks can collect food from schools, Hopelink Food Bank could only accept delivered items. The Bellevue School District first tried to arrange for volunteers to transport food through informal arrangements. It then established a volunteer coordinator position to ensure sufficient, consistent transportation coverage to move available food from school buildings to the Hopelink Food Bank. Volunteers typically offer support one day per week for an hour. The school district recruits volunteers through a variety of outreach methods, including the school principal’s newsletter, the parent teacher student association, parent newsletters, word of mouth, the school’s sustainability-focused club called the Green Team, and the students themselves. The volunteer coordinator position is essential to ensure efficiency, continuity, and communication within the program.

To hear news coverage on School Food Share, visit www.kuow.org and search for “Bellevue School Donates.”

Challenges, Solutions, and Lessons Learned

PHSKC requires each individual school building interested in establishing a school food share program within a school district to complete and submit a copy of the “Request for School Food Sharing Table” form. Completing these forms took time for the Bellevue School District. District administration required also clear documentation from School Food Share administrators absolving the district of any liability.

To comply with PHSKC school food share regulations, the Bellevue School District had to arrange for separate refrigerators to store donated food. To purchase the refrigerators, the district used its energy fund—money recouped from its buildings’ solar production—and its budget for energy savings and sustainability. The district was also required (by PHSKC guidelines) to keep a temperature log for each refrigerator unit.

The Bellevue School District’s Food Bank Partner: Hopelink

Hopelink Food Bank provides a network of social services including housing, transportation, family development, financial assistance, employment programs, adult education, financial literacy training, and five food banks, helping more than 63,000 people per year.

Hopelink coordinates with PHSKC to complete the required annual notification form for Donated Food Distributing Organizations, allowing it to receive school food share donations from participating schools in the Bellevue School District.



Milk cartons are kept refrigerated before transport.

School Food Share’s volunteer coordinator emphasizes that efforts like this take a village, yet start with one person, one idea, and a first step.

As well, PHSKC required the School Food Share volunteer coordinator to obtain a Washington State Food Worker Card before training those handling the school food share table donations for Hopelink Food Bank. Help from food service assistants or similar on-site lunchtime staff is vital for compliance with refrigeration regulations and daily storage in a school food share–designated refrigerator. Voluntary help from school building janitorial staff was most welcome but not required.

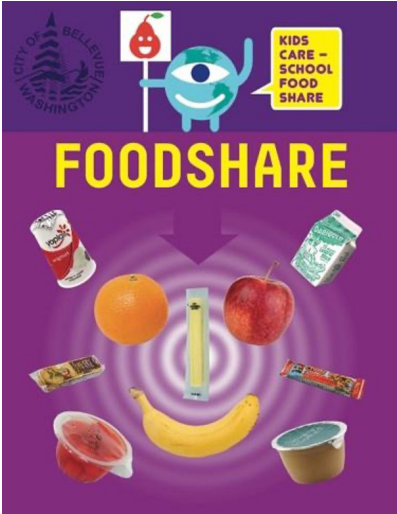
The biggest lesson learned from School Food Share is that a program of its kind rolls out most smoothly with advance planning. For example, it’s important to be ready to introduce and explain the program with clear written and visual communications—memos, posters, signage, and guidelines. It is also crucial to plan out the program’s operations (for example, management of collection bins, share tables, and coolers for milk transport) in advance.”



Pledge-signing helps kids buy in to the school food share program and builds school culture.



Clear waste disposal station setup is essential for efficient flow and compliance.



Engaging, explicit signage also plays an important role.

