

# SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN PROGRAM



## CASE STUDY

## Foodlink Builds a Healthier Community While Improving Sustainability

Foodlink is a regional food hub as well as a Feeding America food bank serving Allegany, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties. Foodlink works with area food retailers, manufacturers, and wholesalers to acquire, sort, store, and redistribute food to member programs, namely soup kitchens, shelters, and emergency pantries.

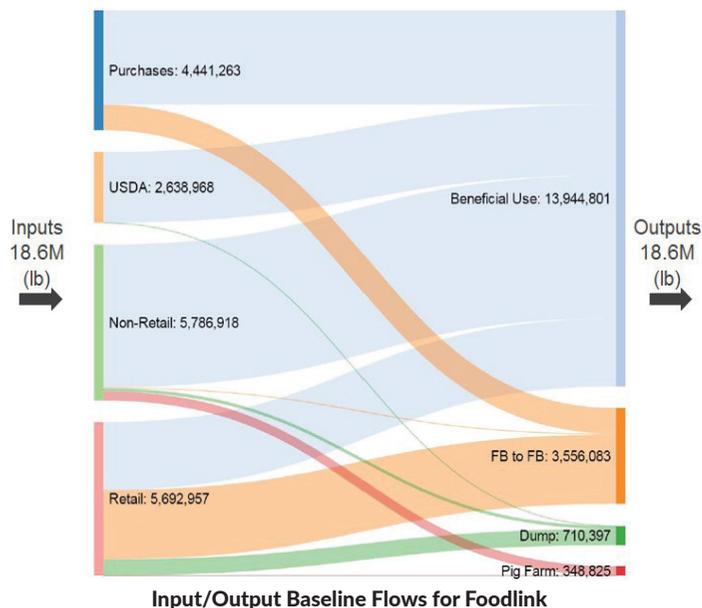
In 2015, Foodlink distributed nearly 19 million pounds of food – including 4.6 million pounds of produce, offered more than 200 nutrition education courses, and created new access points for healthy foods in underserved communities.

### Challenge

As a non-profit entity, Foodlink receives donations from numerous sources. Some of the donations are deemed unusable due to low nutrient value or damage, resulting in sending waste to a landfill or other disposition. Managing waste not only creates a burden on the community and the environment, it also creates a cost burden for Foodlink, which distracts from their mission to feed people. As a result, Foodlink requested assistance from the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I) in addressing their waste management challenges.

### Solution

NYSP2I worked with Foodlink to increase beneficial items received, decrease non-beneficial items received, as well as to find opportunities for discarded and unwanted food items. NYSP2I performed benchmarking of other similar facilities (food banks), observed material handling practices, and researched alternative end-of-life pathways. The outcome of this project aimed to increase efficiency, reduce waste, improve logistics and reduce the associated cost burden for Foodlink.



### CHALLENGE

- Some donations received by Foodlink are deemed unusable due to low nutrient value or damage resulting in either diversion to an alternative food pathway, or dispositioning as waste-to-landfill

### SOLUTION

- NYSP2I worked with Foodlink to increase beneficial items received, decrease non-beneficial items received, as well as to find opportunities for discarded and unwanted food items
- NYSP2I performed benchmarking of other similar facilities (food banks), performed an onsite assessment to observe material handling practices, and researched alternative end-of-life pathways

### RESULTS

- Source reduction techniques identified by NYSP2I include the consideration of a healthy food policy, strategic sourcing, and improved inventory management
- Waste reduction and diversion pathways examined included pulping and extraction, animal feedstock, anaerobic digestion, depacking and composting.
- A “Guidance Document for Establishing a Sustainability Action Plan” was developed for Foodlink
- A timeline for the Sustainability Action Plan was developed for the next 2-5 years with the end goal of successful implementation



## Results

NYSP2I identified source reduction and landfill diversion improvement opportunities. Source reduction techniques identified included the consideration of a healthy food policy, strategic sourcing, and improved inventory management. Waste reduction and diversion pathways examined included pulping and extraction, animal feedstock, anaerobic digestion, unpacking and composting.

The result of the work performed by NYSP2I and Foodlink is a "Guidance Document for Establishing a Sustainability Action Plan." The guidance document details current input and output material flows, including both beneficial and non-beneficial flows, results of benchmarking efforts, and suggestions for implementing improvement opportunities including a cost benefit analysis for alternative end-of-life pathways.

A timeline for the Sustainability Action Plan was developed for the next 2-5 years with the end goal of successful implementation. These opportunities and outlined steps reduce the receipt of non-beneficial items, increase the receipt and distribution of beneficial items, and reduce the waste and associated cost burden to Foodlink.

## TESTIMONIAL

"As the regional food bank in the Finger Lakes area, Foodlink receives and distributes more than 20 million pounds of food per year. Not all of this food, however, is fit for consumption. NYSP2I helped us understand the many different opportunities to recycle and repurpose our food waste. This collaboration between Foodlink and the NYSP2I will help us continue to achieve our vision of a healthy, hunger-free community."

– Mitch Gruber  
Director of Programs & Innovation  
Foodlink

## NYSP2I PARTNERS

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 Rensselaer



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The State University of New York

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New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership

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For more information please contact us:

111 Lomb Memorial Drive, Bldg. 78  
Rochester, NY 14623

Tel: 585-475-2512  
Web: [nysp2i.rit.edu](http://nysp2i.rit.edu)  
E-mail: [nysp2i@rit.edu](mailto:nysp2i@rit.edu)



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