



Municipality Planning Guide: Food Waste Management in your Community



In a recent survey of New York State municipalities performed by the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I), only 8% of participants rated their community's involvement in food waste to be high and 65% felt that more could be done in their community to address food waste. To assist businesses and municipalities in creating more sustainable food systems, NYSP2I is developing tools and resources (along with providing direct technical assistance) focused on food waste reduction and management. Those resources are housed on our website (<http://bit.ly/NYSP2IFood>).

For municipalities specifically, the first step when tackling the challenge of food waste is establishing a plan for your community to follow. This plan will assist your development and execution, whatever your end goal - from establishing drop off locations, to composting, to educating residents on reducing wasted food at home.

This guide is largely based off of two key resources:

1. [EPA's Food: Too Good to Waste](#) (FTGTW) - an implementation guide designed for community organizations, local governments, and households to reduce wasteful household food management practices. EPA piloted the FTGTW strategies and tools with a number of communities and refined them based on feedback from the pilots.
2. [Community Based Social Marketing](#) (CBSM) - a marketing guide based on the social dimensions of human behavior. CBSM uses the power of social groups to encourage changes in behavior toward a common goal.



Step 1: Organizing Your Food Waste Management Plan

Organizing Community Leadership

Organizing community leaders and identifying available support are important first steps that will assist in providing clear direction and expectations. The process of defining your direction, gaining leadership buy-in and determining resource allocation may take several months.

- Establish your objectives with food waste - define what you are trying to accomplish, what success should look like, why you are interested in food waste, etc. Although these initial plans may change over time, it is important to document your starting point. As decisions are being made, reflect back on these objectives to assess if you are still moving in the right direction.
- Make a list of the essential leaders from key stakeholder groups – local government offices, industry partners, and community organizations.
- Before reaching out to community leaders, consider how your objectives relate to larger community and stakeholder missions – sustainable food systems, solid waste management targets, or reducing carbon footprint, for example.
- Discuss with community leaders about the overlap in objectives and their thoughts/concerns related to food waste:
 - How do their current initiatives or goals relate to your food waste plan?
 - Do they have any feedback or concerns about direction? What do they see as the short and long term goals for this program?
 - What type of support can they provide to assist in the success of the program, given the overlap in goals?

Community Support

- At this stage, gauge the community's interest in possible goals, understanding their perceived benefits (e.g. save money on monthly grocery bill) and barriers (e.g. changes to routine, convenient access to drop off locations, etc.) to participation. This is a great opportunity to listen to and document feedback from community members, gain support, and identify potential pilot participants.
- Establish a community based Food Waste Team that meets regularly to guide the effort - a collective of stakeholders will disperse the workload, increase the sense of shared ownership, and reduce the likelihood of losing momentum.
- Suggestions for key stakeholders include neighborhood associations, civic or community groups, nonprofits, restaurants, grocers, businesses, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture businesses, municipal waste management companies, schools and universities.
- Reach out to individuals within the community. Personal contact is key! The likelihood that people change behavior is much greater when personal contact is made.





Step 2: Defining Your Plan and Establishing Objectives

Once you identify your Food Waste Team and high level scope of work (i.e. available resources and stakeholder interest), focus on establishing targeted and actionable objectives. Often times, programs such as these start with a pilot or small scale trial to work out the kinks without incurring significant costs. The timeline for this type of planning may be a year or less. Long term goals should be set from the beginning and revisited throughout the process. This guide is written to include a pilot in your plan, but this may not always be required. If a pilot is deemed unnecessary, treat this step as your program design.

Designing the Pilot

- Build the pilot with an end goal in mind - Determine what it is you want to achieve from trying the process out, e.g. participation rates, food waste diversion potential, knowledge gaps, process inefficiencies, etc., and focus on those aspects.
- Ask specific questions:
 - Who is your target population? Consider the demographics of the area and the resources you have available when choosing the reach of your pilot. You want it to be large enough to draw conclusions to scale up from.
 - What resources are already available? Consider staff, volunteers, time dedicated to the project, and the budget.
 - Are there any potential partners and/or sources of funding to assist in the pilot?
 - What time of year and for how long should the pilot run?
- Clearly outline roles, responsibilities, and a timeline for the pilot. Later on, when multiple aspects of the program are in process, it will be critical to have these details defined.
- Document how you plan to measure success and gather feedback from participants. Metrics should be collected so there's a point to measure improvement from over time.
- The better the pilot design and planning are the easier execution will be, however it is important to be dynamic and prepared to make changes in real time.





Step 3: Implementing the Plan

Executing the Pilot

- Educate residents on why this pilot and project are important to the community (social, environmental, and economic).
- Be visible to the community during this process – face time is key. It shows commitment and a willingness to listen.
- Clearly communicate and recommunicate roles, responsibilities, and the timeline for the pilot.
- Refine pilot attributes, with your Food Waste Team and other key stakeholders periodically throughout the pilot. Changes may include key messaging, drop off locations and times, and others, all of which are based on your observations and the community's feedback via surveys, meetings, tabling at events, etc.

Evaluating, Modifying and Scaling Up

- Take time to celebrate the completion of your pilot. Use this as an opportunity to thank participants, receive any final feedback, publicize results, and reinforce your commitment to the program's success.
- Work with your Team and other relevant stakeholders to evaluate the successes and failures (yes, failures - failures can be okay, as long as they are acknowledged and addressed) of the pilot and decide how to scale up using the documented feedback and measured results from the pilot.
- At this point, it is important to revisit the long-term objectives that you initially defined. It may be helpful to consider how wasted food prevention complements and can be integrated into existing programs.
- Scaling up also usually requires a broad-based media approach alongside outreach activities to raise the visibility of the wasted food issue at the community level.



CONTACT: food.p2i@rit.edu | 585-475-2512
<http://bit.ly/NYSP2IFood>

Funding provided by the Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and NYS Department of Economic Development. © 2018 Rochester Institute of Technology. Any opinions, results, findings, and/or interpretations of data contained herein are the responsibility of Rochester Institute of Technology and its NYS Pollution Prevention Institute and do not represent the opinions, interpretation or policy of the State.