

Grocery Store Surplus Food Management FAQs & Strategies:

Food Donation

The Illinois Grocery Store Surplus Food Management Project is designed to support grocery stores to better manage surplus food through food waste prevention, surplus food donation and food scrap composting. Bright Beat and Seven Generations Ahead provided professional support to a local grocery store/chain by analyzing current food waste generation and recommending best practices to reduce waste, implement donation, increase diversion and gain recognition.

- 1. WHY: Why should we manage surplus food through food donation instead of sending it to the landfill?**
It's good for our neighbors in need. U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates 40 million Americans are food insecure, and 72% of food banks do not feel able to adequately meet the needs of their communities.
It's good for the air. When food is landfilled it decomposes without air which creates methane, a greenhouse gas that is more than 20x times stronger than carbon dioxide.
It's good for the economy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture approximates that 31% of the available food supply at retail and customer levels goes uneaten, or an estimated value of \$161 billion in losses.
- 2. WHAT: What surplus food can and cannot be donated? In general...**
Donated foods typically include fresh produce, canned food, shelf stable packaged goods, and excess prepared food. It must be food that was never served, but was checked to ensure adequate condition to meet food safety standards.
- 3. HOW: How must we change operations to better manage surplus food?**
 - **Legal considerations:** Many businesses have misconceptions about donation liability. Under the Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, donors are protected from civil and criminal liability.
 - **Building relationships:** Grocery stores can partner with nearby non-profits and food banks. Network organizations, like Feeding America, can provide transportation and safe storage when transporting donations from stores to food banks.
 - **Management:** Assigning someone to oversee the collection and distribution of food intended for donation can simplify and streamline the process. For example, each Trader Joe's store has a Donation Coordinator, who manages the donation program.
 - **Identifying infrastructure:** If space is available, creating a designated area where donated food can be set aside will facilitate collection and storage until pick-up.
 - **Cost savings:** Tax savings and reduced material in waste dumpsters can be financially beneficial.
- 4. WHERE: Where are we expected to house food for donation?**
Set aside a small space where food intended for donation can be collected. Using shelves and repurposing boxes can maximize space and efficiency.
- 5. WHO: Who will pick up and distribute food for donation and/or haul and process the food scraps?**
Many organizations and food banks will pick up food for donation such as Feeding America, Fight2Feed and the Great Chicago Food Depository. **Alternatively, a reverse logistics approach could mean sending surplus food for donation back to the distribution center for centralized pick-up. This reduces individual store pick-ups and works well for some chains.**
- 6. COST: How much will it cost to participate in food donation and/or commercial compost program?**
Donation is not an expensive endeavor. Most non-profit organizations will provide free pick-up services.

For more how-to tips, case studies and sources, visit illinoiscomposts.org -> Resources



Food:Land:Opportunity
Localizing the Chicago Foodshed

