

# GROCERY STORES: LAUNCH TIPS TO REDUCE WASTED FOOD

## Illinois Food Scrap Coalition E.A.T.S. Checklist

Engage...Ask...Tee it up...Shoot for the stars

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### Engage Owners, Managers and Staff

- Secure Buy-In from the Top** - Talk with owner or highest possible decision-maker early in the process.
  - Appoint Food Waste Reduction Champions** - Identify and involve key employees that believe in the cause to help ensure the longevity and success of your program.
  - Engage Employees** - Make sure that employees are informed of the new program and clearly understand your goals.
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### Ask Questions (Do Research)

- Complete [Self Assessment Form-Grocery Store Surplus Food Management](#)** - This will help you determine how much food is being wasted and where the most food waste is coming from.
  - Do a Facility Walk-Through** - Involve key staff members in walking through the store to identify specific opportunities for reducing wasted food, donating, and recycling food scraps.
  - Identify Partners** - Determine the partners you will need to involve, such as your waste hauler, compost collection service, and local donation agency.
  - Evaluate Costs and Benefits** - Determine the costs - depending on how you manage - wasted food, and the benefits of reduction.
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### Tee It Up (Prepare for Launch)

#### PREVENT AND REDUCE WASTED FOOD

- Monitor Perishable Inventories** - Keep an accurate count of perishable inventories and budgets to assist staff in submitting proper orders.
- Adjust Purchasing** - Adjust purchasing in order to better prevent/minimize product surpluses.
- Refrigerate/Freeze Immediately** - Stock produce and other perishable items immediately upon receipt and store in the cooler or freezer areas.
- Limit Display Quantities** - Limit the amount of produce that is displayed at a given time. Keeping produce under refrigeration for as long as possible helps improve its quality and shelf life.
- Stay Cool at Night** - Return produce to cooler areas at store closing and restock in the morning.
- Rework Produce Packages** - Remove bad units from packages such as apples, blueberries, strawberries, grape tomatoes, onions, oranges, grapes, and potatoes in order to save the whole package. Replace bad units with fresh units in order to maintain the correct weight of the package.
- Freeze Meat and Seafood** - Freeze meat and seafood that is about to reach its "Use By/Freeze By" date and save for donation.



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## DONATE FOOD

- ❑ **Identify Local Donation Partners.**
- ❑ **Determine What Products Can Be Donated** - Confirm what your donation partner will accept and what you have the capacity to store. This may include bakery items, produce, meat, dairy, dry goods.
- ❑ **Establish Donation Schedule** - Establish schedule of pick-up times, days and frequency that work for store and donation agencies.
- ❑ **Designate Storage Areas** - Locate and clearly label areas within the dry, cooler, and freezer spaces where donated items can be stored until pick up dates.
- ❑ **Establish Food Donation Procedure** - Provide staff with a protocol for food donation, explaining:
  - ❑ **What** - The types of products that can be donated.
  - ❑ **When** - The significance of "Best By", "Best If Used By", and "Sell By" labels on products, and how to use these as a guide for when products should be removed from store shelves and pulled for donation.
  - ❑ **How** - How to appropriately handle and store product to be donated.
- ❑ **Track Donations** - Work with your donation partner and internal or corporate teams to establish metrics and a process for tracking donated food.

## RECYCLE FOOD SCRAPS

- ❑ **Set Up Compost Containers** - Place internal compost containers in convenient collection areas inside the store. Have hauler place external well-marked compost containers in designated and waste collection area outside.
  - ❑ **Cluster Containers** - Whenever possible, position waste/recycling/compost collection containers together in "stations" to ensure proper items are placed in the correct bins. If you have multiple stations, set them all up in the same order. The arrangement displayed is in order of priority with compost first, recycle second, and landfill last in line! You will have more success if the compost bin is always paired with recycling and landfill bins. Any lone container is likely to be treated as a general trash can!
- ❑ **Create Visual and Color-Coded Signage** - Include actual photos of the recyclable, compostable, and landfill items generated at your business. Have signs in multiple languages. The color coding below is the most common and recommended for all signage.
- ❑ **Place Signs at Eye Level** - Make sure signs are placed at eye-level directly above the containers to which they apply.



## STAFF TRAINING

- ❑ **Connect Staff to the “Why”** - Communicate the business benefits of waste reduction, environmental benefits of composting, and the community impact of donation; engage their hearts and minds.
- ❑ **Provide Clear Education** - Go through protocol for food donation, explaining to staff what/when/how foods can be donated or composted and where these materials will be stored. Monitor activity to support and solidify desired behaviors, and identify and correct common mistakes.
- ❑ **Designate Team Leaders** - Designate a team leader for each department, or each shift, to guide and remind staff of the proper way to manage.
- ❑ **Set Goals** - Establish metrics and goals that properly target overall reduction of waste, and eliminating any food sent to landfill. Share results with staff, including what percentages of the wasted food were donated vs. composted. Celebrate with staff when goals are reached.

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## Shoot for the Stars (Next Steps)

- ❑ **Decrease trash service** - Any manner of reduction in wasted food will mean less stuff is going in your trash dumpster. Assess periodically, and decrease the size and/or pickup frequency to **save \$\$\$!**
- ❑ **Monitor Contamination** - Have your Food Waste Reduction Champions periodically check the compost containers for items that shouldn't be there (e.g. plastic wrap, latex gloves, aluminum foil).
- ❑ **Expand and Improve the Program** - Continually gather feedback from employees on the clarity and ease of the program - how the signs and containers are set up in the store, how smooth the food donation and composting is going. They are on the front lines, your most frequent users.
- ❑ **Advertise your efforts!** - Post signage announcing your food waste reduction program. Customers will be impressed by your green efforts. A recent survey showed 71% of Americans consider the environment when they shop. Help them choose your store!
- ❑ **Get recognized.** Consider pursuing these certifications and awards.
  - Join the We Compost program
  - Take the EPA's Food Recovery Challenge
  - Pursue Green Business Certification
- ❑ **Close the loop!** Purchase finished compost to use on your landscape and planters or give some finished compost to your employees as a thank you.

*For more how-to tips and case studies, visit [wastedfoodaction.org](http://wastedfoodaction.org) -> Food Retail Toolkit*

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