

Reducing Household Food Waste: A Municipal Regional Toolkit

Executive Summary

Food waste costs Canadians an astonishing \$31 billion each year, with consumers wasting almost half of this production value. Concern for this is quickly gaining momentum with municipalities, institutions, community organizations and other sectors across the food system. Reducing food waste in households and communities not only opens up avenues for economic benefits, but it also has positive environmental and social outcomes. This toolkit introduces household food waste at the regional scale, presenting the key steps to initiating food waste reduction and diversion programs and campaigns. With each step, corresponding examples of food waste initiatives showcase leading programs and projects to inspire future initiatives.

Key Findings:

- **Currently, few food waste initiatives have been evaluated.** More waste audits, behavioural surveys and social marketing research are needed in order to understand consumer behaviour and to begin to standardise procedures across the province. Exemplary initiatives from Ontario and the rest of Canada are highlighted in this toolkit.
- **Reducing food before it reaches the point of diversion is ideal.** Teaching consumers how to plan and buy only what is necessary reduces consumer costs and municipal waste transportation costs, limits resources wasted during production, and reduces GHG emissions produced by waste removal trucks and landfill decomposition.
- **The largest barrier to reducing food waste remains the lack of knowledge** about why individuals waste food, and lack of **awareness** on the consumer side about how much food is wasted. Crossing the threshold into the home and engaging with household practices to promote reduction is a better tactic than engaging only with end-of-pipe diversion solutions.
- **The best programs use a mix of education campaigns and policy to create change.** Initiators should work with consultants to develop effective social marketing strategies that appeal to target audiences.
- **Successful programs have welcomed collaboration** and partnership with community organizations and with other groups across food sectors.
- **A value-added approach to food encourages reduction** through the purchase of local, sustainable foods and the associated story of the food coming from “farm to table”.
- **Promoting circular-economy initiatives** encourages reuse and diversion through resource recovery and minimal waste generation at end of life, “closing the loop” on food waste.

