

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on January 19, 2024

M.L. 2020 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2024

Project Title: Diverting Unsold Food From Landfills, Reducing Greenhouse Gases

Project Manager: Lindsey Ochmanek

Affiliation: Second Harvest Heartland

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Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 07c

Appropriation Amount: \$130,000

Amount Spent: \$130,000

Amount Remaining: -

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

During the grant period, we collected over 400,000 pounds of prepared and perishable foods that helped to serve our partners and diverted food waste from landfills. We enrolled 150 new donors to the program and 29 agencies that can receive donations.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

While we were not able to get back to pre-Covid levels of engagement for this program, we found many new partners and expanded our relationships with others. During the grant period, we collected over 400,000 pounds of prepared and perishable foods that helped to serve our partners and diverted food waste from landfills. We enrolled 150 new donors to the program and 29 agencies that can receive donations. St. Paul Public Schools has been one of our most engaged partners, which has led us to connect with and start donation programs with several other school districts. Overall, this project has resulted in less organic material being put into landfills, lower greenhouse gas emissions through this reduction, increased amounts of food going to hungry and food-insecure Minnesotans, and the establishment of a new framework for food rescue partners to continue reductions into the future. We continue to look at new and innovative ways of increasing these donations and how the donations make it to our partners using both

donor volunteers and middle mile volunteers. We remain focused on increasing partners and donations available and ensuring that the capabilities of the Meal Connect platform are widely known.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

We highlighted the work of this project in several ways - web stories featuring donors (D'Amico, VA Medical Center, and St. Paul Public Schools) and agencies (Ascension Place). We also distributed 45 media kits to existing and potential donors that acknowledge ENRTF as we are onboarding new partners.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2020 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: August 28, 2024

ID Number: 2020-014

Staff Lead: Michael Varien

Project Title: Diverting Unsold Food From Landfills, Reducing Greenhouse Gases

Project Budget: \$130,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Lindsey Ochmanek

Organization: Second Harvest Heartland

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Web Address: <https://www.2harvest.org/>

Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: January 19, 2024

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: January 19, 2024

Project Completion: July 31, 2023

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 07c

Appropriation Language: \$130,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Second Harvest Heartland to prevent food from going to landfills and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping businesses donate unsold prepared food to food shelves.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2024

Narrative

Project Summary: We will collect donations of prepared, ready-to-eat foods in the Metro area and send these items to local food pantries and meal programs.

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

Without an outlet to divert unsold food, businesses will likely send unused product to landfills. According to the MPCA's 2013 Statewide Waste Characterization study, food accounts for 17.8% of all waste sent to solid waste facilities in our state. The report notes that the Project Team identified food waste as a top potential diversion opportunity; with 519,400 tons of food waste available for diversion annually.

Our proposed project also addresses air quality and climate change in Minnesota by reducing methane emissions. A September 16, 2015 press release from the U.S. EPA notes, "Food loss and waste is the single largest component of disposed U.S. municipal solid waste, and accounts for a significant portion of U.S. methane emissions, which fuel climate change. This large volume of wasted food is a main contributor to the roughly 18% of total U.S. methane emissions that come from landfills. Landfills are the third largest source of methane in the United States." Analysis from the Boston Consulting Group indicates that our food bank has potential to divert 8 million pounds of prepared, ready-to-eat foods that are available, but not being currently donated, at Minnesota food service businesses each year.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

These unsold foods are available for us to collect at corporate cafeterias, restaurants, hotels, catering companies, "hot food" grocery departments, and other food service businesses. Staff members and/or trained volunteers will visit the businesses to pick up the foods, package them appropriately, and deliver them to food pantries and free meal programs. The agencies that receive these valuable donations all have a Certified Food Manager on staff to ensure food safety.

In our program, we will train and supervise volunteers to collect and deliver the prepared food donations utilizing an app available on their cell phones—MealConnect. MealConnect is an innovative online platform that gives caterers, special event centers, restaurants, corporate cafeterias and other commercial food preparers a convenient, free and safe way to reduce waste and connect surplus meals with food insecure neighbors. The app was developed by Feeding America, the national network of food banks to which Second Harvest Heartland belongs, to bring efficiency to the donation process. Just last year, Meal Connect helped SHH rescue over 309,000 lbs of prepared food.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

The goal of our project is to improve air quality and reduce climate change impacts through the diversion of 160,000 additional pounds of food from food service partners in the Twin Cities metro area each year, for a total of 320,000 additional lbs over the two-year grant period.

This would translate to less organic material being put into landfills, lower greenhouse gas emissions through this reduction, increased amounts of food going to hungry and food-insecure Minnesotans, and the establishment of a new framework for food rescue partners to continue reductions into the future.

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): Metro

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): Metro, Central, SW,

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Engage food pantries and meal programs to successfully accept donations

Activity Budget: \$65,000

Activity Description:

Utilize the time and resources of the Food Service Sourcing Representative to engage food pantries and meal programs to successfully accept donations of prepared foods throughout the duration of this grant period.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Identify a large pool of potential food pantries and meal programs for potential program participation.	September 30, 2022
Select and train 12 food pantries and/or meal programs to participate	December 31, 2022
Provide monitoring for program compliance and technical assistance/support to participating food shelves/meal programs	June 30, 2023

Activity 2: Engage food service businesses to successfully donate prepared foods

Activity Budget: \$65,000

Activity Description:

Utilize the time and resources of the Food Service Sourcing Representative to engage corporate cafeterias, restaurants, hotels, catering companies, “hot food” grocery departments, and other food service businesses to successfully donate prepared foods.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Identify a large pool of food-serving businesses for potential program participation.	September 30, 2022
Select and train 20 businesses to use MealConnect and prepare food for donation	December 31, 2022
Provide monitoring for compliance and technical assistance/support to ensure food safety and successful implementation	June 30, 2023

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

Second Harvest Heartland shares results and findings with the public through electronic and print newsletters, an annual report, our website, and various social media accounts including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Our website receives more than 30,000 web sessions per month on average and we have more than 33,000 social media followers. In addition, our affiliation with Feeding America, a network of 200 food banks across the country, provides us with an opportunity to learn and share promising practices. Our leadership team members connect with a peer group of food banks within the network and with the greater network, which provides frequent opportunities for information sharing throughout the year. Staff members working on our various program teams are currently engaged in Feeding America-sponsored learning and sharing cohorts related to innovative food recovery strategies, child hunger and SNAP assistance. Our staff members also attend conferences held by Feeding America, Share Our Strength and other partners, allowing for additional dissemination and gathering of information and best practices.

Second Harvest Heartland holds regular gatherings to bring together partner agencies to network, learn about the latest trends and practices in the emergency food system, and to discuss future opportunities and initiatives. For example, in September 2019 we facilitated 4 regional learning conferences across our service area for representatives from more than 150 food pantries, meal programs and other stakeholders in hunger relief. We also regularly hold smaller-scale meetings and training sessions with agency partners throughout the year. By sharing our findings, we hope to gain additional partners and promote effective practice in improving food security for all people.

Results specific to the work achieved by this grant will also be shared to audiences that will benefit via:

- Share program results at agency partner gatherings
- Share program results at Feeding America conferences
- Create a results flyer to distribute to store partners
- Create a results flyer to distribute to agency partners
- Share results with MN Food Bank cluster partners – five additional food banks in MN.

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

Expansion of our prepared food collection and distribution program has been included in our annual program plans for fiscal year 2020, and will be included in plans for 2021, 2022, and 2023. The strategy was identified as priority for our organization after evaluation from the Boston Consulting Group, and has also been identified as having significant potential for expansion by the Feeding America network of food banks. Regarding future funding, the program will be supported through a combination of public and private grants, major gifts, contributions from individuals, cause marketing campaigns, special fundraising events and earned revenue.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
Personnel										
Food Service Sourcing Representative		Engage, train, and provide support to food shelves/meal programs and food service businesses participating in Second Harvest Heartland's prepared Food Rescue program.			26%	2		\$130,000	-	-
							Sub Total	\$130,000	\$130,000	-
Contracts and Services										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Capital Expenditures										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel In Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel Outside Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Printing and Publication										

							Sub Total	-	-	-
Other Expenses										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
							Grand Total	\$130,000	\$130,000	-

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
State						
			State Sub Total	-	-	-
Non-State						
			Non State Sub Total	-	-	-
			Funds Total	-	-	-

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [07f02c24-af1.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

This infographic provides a one-page overview of SHH's proposed plan, including the opportunity, the plan, and the impact.

Reducing greenhouse gasses by:

Gaining donations of prepared foods from restaurants, hotels, catering companies & related businesses

To prevent food from being disposed in landfills

And help feed hungry Minnesotans

The opportunity:

Each year, food businesses in Minnesota prepare millions of pounds of food to sell to hungry customers. These businesses include restauran...

Financial Capacity

File: [1200eecf-b7d.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
SHH Board Resolution	2f40bd2f-f7c.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
SHH 2020 Work Plan - Previously Submitted	3549eb03-043.docx
Background check certification form	14bd5ecf-f8e.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

There has been a title change for the position doing the work supported by this grant. In the original proposal, the position was called the Emerging Food Streams Developer. The position title has since changed to Food Service Sourcing Representative.

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?

N/A

Do you agree travel expenses must follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

N/A

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Work Plan Amendments

Amendment ID	Request Type	Changes made on the following pages	Explanation & justification for Amendment Request (word limit 75)	Date Submitted	Approved	Date of LCCMR Action
1	Project Manager	Previous Manager: Julie Vanhove (jvanhove@2harvest.org) New Manager: Lindsey Ochmanek (lochmanek@2harvest.org)	Change in personnel	March 1, 2023	Yes	March 1, 2023

Status Update Reporting

Final Status Update September 14, 2023

Date Submitted: November 21, 2023

Date Approved: November 30, 2023

Overall Update

For this last period of the grant, from March 2023 to July 2023 We collected 40,017 pounds of Prepared / Perishable foods through MealConnect for a total of 406,728 pounds of Prepared / Perishable foods collected during the grant period. 20 new Prepared / Perishable donors were enrolled in MealConnect and 4 new agencies added to "Real Time" acceptance of Prepared / Perishable foods through the platform. While we did not get back to pandemic levels of donations we did make great progress in enrolling new sources of food and continuing to divert food waste from landfills.

Activity 1

This activity was previously marked complete.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 2

This activity was previously marked complete.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

We have reached out to other partner food banks and began a discussion of best practices using MealConnect to continue this work beyond our immediate area. A flyer will be created to highlight donors and agencies to be distributed throughout the donor and agency community and we will continue distribution of MealConnect media kits to potential donors. Our donor appreciation moved from June to October this year so we will be celebrating one of our most active Prepared food Donors, Minneapolis VA Medical Center, in an upcoming web story.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update April 1, 2023

Date Submitted: April 20, 2023

Date Approved: May 9, 2023

Overall Update

We have continued to increase our collections for donations of prepared, ready-to-eat foods in the Metro area and have connected these items to local food pantries and meal programs. We continue to face challenges in getting our levels back above pre-COVID levels, but we have seen success in adding both donors and agency recipients. Our period totals, Oct. 2022 - Mar. 2023 are 141,711 pounds of prepared food donated, which was down about 30% to the prior period. We are working with donors that declined in pounds during this period to review expectations and encourage additional engagement.

Activity 1

Through interdepartmental cooperation, we have increased the number of meal programs and kitchens accepting these donations. We currently have 25 agencies that are able to receive prepared food donations. We are currently working with our Agency Relations team to identify more agencies that these are appropriate for. We continue to select and train agencies and meal programs in the use of MealConnect. Using MealConnect we continue to monitor prepared food donation from offer to acceptance and receipt at the agency level. Food Service Sourcing Representative is available for support and can troubleshoot any issues that participating agencies have with the donation process.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 2

On the donor side we have enrolled nearly 130 new donors, program to date, an overall 13% increase.

From October of 2022 to March 30 2023 we have added 30 new donors. While we continue to to increase donors, we are focusing on those contributing significant pounds, like D'Amico Catering, Saint Paul Public Schools, Lifetime Fitness and the Minnesota Veterans Administration Medical Center. It will take many more donations offered to continue to grow this food donation stream. We have continued to engage our Middle Mile Food Rescue Volunteer to help with outreach and recruitment of new donors so we can continue to build our donor base beyond the goal.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

We distributed 45 media kits to existing and potential donors that acknowledge ENRTF. Additional blog posts and social media highlights are planned for the remaining grant period.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update October 1, 2022

Date Submitted: October 4, 2022

Date Approved: October 28, 2022

Overall Update

We continue to add new donors to the program and are working with potential meal program partners to sign up to regularly receive donations. Despite increasing donors, we are below our collected pounds goal. Our goal was set based on outcomes that happened prior to COVID. Getting some of those partners back has proven more challenging than we expected. We have collected 225,000 pounds to date, an amount on par with pre-COVID. Our goal was 160,000 incremental during this grant period.

Activity 1

We are partnering closely with our Agency Relations team to enroll more agencies to receive prepared food. We identified and trained several since the last update. Our Food Service Representative is available for support and does troubleshooting of any issues that participating agencies have with the process or individual donations.

Activity 2

We enrolled 25 new donors this last period to use MealConnect to donate prepared food. We have exceeded our goal for the grant period with 55 new partners set up to give food donations. While we have achieved the goal in number of donors, we are finding that the size of individual donations is not very large. So, it will take many more donations offered to continue to grow this food donation stream. We have started engaging our Middle Mile Food Rescue Volunteer to help with outreach and recruitment of new donors so we can continue to build our donor base beyond the goal.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

We spotlighted D'Amico Catering-- a key donor for prepared foods--in June in a SHH blog series highlighting donors.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update April 1, 2022

Date Submitted: April 1, 2022

Date Approved: April 4, 2022

Overall Update

We are actively signing up new donors and increasing the number of partners who can receive and distribute prepared foods to those who are food insecure, therefore reducing food waste. Pounds is the measurement used. We are currently behind our pounds goal of 160K incremental pounds, despite increasing donors. Mix of donations may play a factor. But, we do believe that we have bigger potential for new donors and meal program partners.

Activity 1

We have identified many potential meal program agencies that may be new participants receiving prepared food donations through our MealConnect platform. We are

- Continuing outreach to agencies that had stopped receiving donations due to Covid restrictions
- Identified and trained 14 agencies to accept these prepared food donations through the MealConnect portal, with 7 currently in communication to possibly participate.
- Using MealConnect we can monitor prepared food donation from offer to acceptance and receipt at the agency level. Food Service Sourcing Representative is available for support and can troubleshoot any issues that participating agencies have with the donation process.

Activity 2

- Selected and enrolled more than 30 businesses to participate and use MealConnect to donate prepared food donations for meal program agencies.
- Re-connect with donors who had stopped donations during peak Covid times; St. Paul Public schools brought back nearly 60 donor locations.
- Ongoing outreach to potential donors, i.e., hospital nutrition services, sports and entertainment facilities, catering companies and event venues.
- Food Service Sourcing Representative provides ongoing support and training to MealConnect donors as well as volunteer food rescue delivery drivers ensuring food safety of prepared food donations.

Dissemination

We have identified several agencies that are actively receiving MealConnect prepared food donations and will be spotlighting them in our Second Harvest Heartland blog that will include an ENRTF acknowledgement. The first post is scheduled for April 18th, will spotlight Ascension Place supportive housing in North Minneapolis.