

FEED MKE Pilot Project Summary

In Milwaukee, 15% of material going to landfills is edible food, according to a 2021 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Waste Characterization Study. The large volume of food waste contributes significantly to Milwaukee's total greenhouse gas emissions. According to a 2022 Feed America Report, there are 147,430 individuals in Milwaukee County who were food insecure—15.4% of the population. Milwaukee County has the second highest rate of food insecurity in Wisconsin, just behind Menominee County at 17.2%. The state-wide rate is 10% and the national rate is 12.5%.

The City of Milwaukee Environmental Collaboration Office (ECO) is applying to the USDA Composting and Food Waste Reduction opportunity to coordinate and expand several initiatives among public, private, and governmental entities to address the interconnected issues of food insecurity, waste reduction, landfill diversion, and climate change. The *Milwaukee Climate and Equity Plan* features “10 Big Ideas” to strategically reduce the city's carbon footprint, one of which is Waste Reduction and Sustainable Consumption. This idea focuses on feeding hungry people by redistributing edible, gleaned leftovers that would otherwise be thrown away. The key outcomes of this strategy are that residents are fed, inedible food waste is composted, less methane-causing food waste ends up in landfills, and employment opportunities are created for BIPOC residents living in food-insecure communities. The FEED MKE Coalition is a partner of ECO and will help with the implementation of initiatives and activities in the *Climate and Equity Plan*. FEED MKE is a conceptual public-private partnership whose primary mission is to reduce food waste sent to landfills and feed hungry residents. The coalition focuses on three program areas: Education/Outreach, Operations, and Policy/Advocacy.

FEED MKE Pilot Project overarching goals include: 1) To reduce food waste at the beginning, middle, and end of the food preparation and consumption cycle, 2) Collect, glean, and prepare edible food material for redistributed consumption to hungry people, and 3) Increase participation in composting on an individual, neighborhood, and city-wide basis.

FEED MKE Pilot Project objectives are: 1) By end of Year 2, divert approximately 60,000 pounds (30 tons) of organic waste from landfill through composting at 3-5 community-based organizations, 2) By end of Year 2, divert approximately 200,000 pounds (100 tons) of organic waste from landfill through composting at 8 drop-off composting sites available to the community, and 3) By end of Year 2, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 260 metric tons of carbon dioxide.

The FEED MKE Pilot Project will address the problem of food waste and increase composting capacity with the following approaches: 1) Conduct outreach and education initiatives to inform the public about how food waste impacts climate change, 2) Provide funding through mini-grants to support capacity-building for community-based organizations and community composting sites, 3) Foster relationship-building between gleaners and food pantries, food kitchens, emergency food banks, restaurants, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood associations, and 4) Issue a Food Saver Challenge through the Mayor's Office to incentivize private sector food waste reduction practices. With grant funding, ECO will hire a full-time Project Coordinator to coordinate the FEED MKE Coalition, build community relationships, create outreach and education materials, and support project evaluation.