

Food Waste Disposal Tips

An increase in the amount of produce your program distributes is likely to also generate additional waste. Unfortunately, this could contribute to a higher garbage bill and possibly an increase in volunteer or staff resources. Below are some possible ways to deal with extra food waste.

Important tips –

- Use your existing brain trust. Talk to board members, volunteers and staff. You may find someone very interested in championing the recycling of food waste and/or related projects.
- Network, network, network. Make sure your board, volunteers and staff are aware of what your needs are and encourage them to network with their friends, family and colleagues help you find willing local farmers, gardeners or recycling gurus.
- It's great PR. Many people consider throwing away food a terrible waste. Your food recycling program can be a great source of good publicity as well as a way to tap into new volunteers and funding sources.

New Programs and Potential Grants or Other Support

There is a great deal more interest in reducing the amount of organics going into landfills. The Pollution Control Agency and county governments have been investing in programs to help businesses and nonprofits redirect organic waste. Please reach out to your Specialist for more information or check in with your city and county governments.

Here are some organizations we are aware of:

- [Minnesota Waste Wise](#)
- [Environmental Protection Agency WasteWise](#)
- Be sure to check in with your city and county government

Animal farmer donation

Many of our agencies partner with an area pig farmer to take on extra food waste. It's possible you may have to pay the farmer to pick up the waste, or s/he may pay you for supplementing the pigs' diets. Or it could be a wash both ways. Other animals that might be interested in your waste could be chickens or goats (but please check with their farmer first!).

How do I find interested farmers?

Hopefully, you'll be lucky enough to have easily identifiable farmers in your area that you can reach out to. If that proves to be difficult, talk to staff at feed or farm supply stores around you to see if they can provide contact information. If they have a bulletin board, ask if you can post something. If your community has a farmers market, make the rounds and talk to vendors. Craig's List and other free online services are also a possible way to reach out. Livestock producers must get permits in order to accept food by-products for livestock feed. [Click here for more information.](#) You can also find a list of farmers holding these permits [by clicking here.](#)

You can also try these organizations.

[Minnesota Sustainable Farming Association](#)
[Minnesota Farm Bureau](#) & [Wisconsin Farm Bureau](#)
[Minnesota Farmers' Market Association](#) & [Wisconsin Farmers' Market Association](#)
[Minnesota Pork Producers Association](#) & [Wisconsin Pork Producers Association](#)
[Minnesota Chicken and Egg Association](#) & [Wisconsin Poultry and Egg](#)
[Minnesota Dairy Goats Association](#) & [Wisconsin Dairy Goats Association](#)

Hobby farmers

Don't just focus efforts on big farmers. You may find some small hobby farmers who would be just as interested in supplementing their furry or feathered friends' diets with your throw away food.

Composting

Recycling food waste in any way, shape or form is likely to cause an increase in need of volunteer time due to sorting, packaging removal, bagging, etc. However, this might also be an opportunity to recruit volunteers that have a specific interest in recycling, producing less waste or gardening. It might be a great way to engage a youth group or tap into a new partnership. For example, a community gardening association may also provide the volunteer support around composting.

Compost yourself

This will likely involve some sort of investment into composting equipment, storage and distribution. Composting equipment can speed up the composting process and perhaps eventually provide a source of income for your program.

Information about composting:

[Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#)

[Minnesota Composting Council](#)

[Wisconsin DNR - Recycling & Composting](#)

[Composting Information - EPA](#)

Check with your county or city- they may have discounts or other support for composting

Composting elsewhere

Cities and counties often have composting facilities. Check with your local municipalities to see what they offer and to find out requirements. Also, check with your garbage collection service, some do offer composting services.

- [Minnesota Extension](#) and [Wisconsin Extension](#) Don't forget to connect with your regional office directly.
- Fleet Farm, Runnings, other farm supply stores
- Gardening stores
- Greenhouses
- [Northern Gardener Magazine](#)
- [Minnesota Garden Clubs](#)
- [Wisconsin Garden Club](#)
- Community education – check with your local community ed departments or instructors

Community gardens/gardeners

Identify and reach out to any community gardens in your area. They may be very interested in this as a composting opportunity. Be ready to discuss what you would like out of partnership. Enlist any food shelf volunteers already involved with or interested in the community gardening association to be a point person for you. Don't to forget to check with churches and schools they may already have a garden program.

No community garden in your community?

Well, consider starting one. This would involve more work, but the right partners just might fill in all or most of the resources needed. Contact area churches, schools or the city and discuss ways to partner on starting a community garden. Many people are very interested in healthier eating and local sources for food. What a perfect partnership for your program! (SHH has some resources around starting a community garden, so ask your Account Specialist for more information or go to [Community Garden Resources](#).