



ISSUE BRIEF

PROMOTING FOOD DONATION:

Using Government Grants and Incentives to Increase Food Donation

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About The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas

The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas is a first-of-its-kind initiative to promote better laws on food donation to help address food loss and food insecurity. This project maps the laws affecting food donation in countries across the globe in order to help practitioners understand national laws relating to food donation, compare laws across countries and regions, analyze legal questions and barriers to donation, and share best practices and recommendations for overcoming these barriers. The project is a collaboration between Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic and The Global FoodBanking Network. To learn about and compare the food donation laws and policies for the countries FLPC has researched to date, visit atlas.foodbanking.org.

About the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic

FLPC serves partner organizations and communities by providing guidance on cutting-edge food system legal and policy issues, while engaging law students in the practice of food law and policy. FLPC focuses on increasing access to healthy foods; supporting sustainable food production and food systems; and reducing waste of healthy, wholesome food. For more information, visit www.chlpi.org/FLPC.



About The Global FoodBanking Network

The Global FoodBanking Network supports community-driven solutions to alleviate hunger in more than 40 countries. While millions struggle to access enough safe and nutritious food, nearly a third of all food produced is lost or wasted. GFN is changing that. GFN believes food banks directed by local leaders are key to achieving Zero Hunger and building resilient food systems. For more information, visit www.foodbanking.org.



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE BRIEF

Excessive food loss and waste (FLW) is a pressing challenge facing global food systems. FLW occurs at every stage of the supply chain and generates significant social, environmental, and economic costs. International estimates predict that more than one-third—or 1.3 billion tons—of food produced is lost or wasted along the supply chain.¹ At the same time, current data indicate that between 720 and 811 million people were hungry in 2020² and that more than 2 billion people were unable to regularly access safe, nutritious food in 2019.³ Thoughtful public policies can help address these troubling trends and augment food system resilience, aiding in food recovery for social benefit and mitigating the environmental cost of excess production and loss.

Food donation offers a solution to these parallel issues. Redirecting safe, surplus food to those who need it most both decreases FLW and increases food security. However, scaling food donation requires aligned incentives that motivate individuals and companies to donate rather than discard surplus food. Across the globe, grants and incentive programs funded at the federal or local level offer donors and recovery organizations valuable support to create new food donation initiatives or expand existing initiatives. This is particularly true in countries where tax incentives do not exist, donors consider any tax incentives that do exist to be insufficient to offset the costs of donation, or a lack of infrastructure limits food recovery efforts. For example, government grants can help food donors and food banks acquire equipment and resources necessary for gleaning, storing, processing, and transporting food for donation.

Supporting the creation and maintenance of this infrastructure also benefits communities in times of disaster, both human-caused and natural, because the systems necessary to obtain and transport emergency food are already in place. While adjustments may be necessary depending on the type of disaster, investments like refrigerated trucks, cold-storage, and established networks of individuals and organizations who can ensure food gets to the places that need it are an asset to governments across the globe in times of disaster.⁴ Adequate disaster resilience requires advanced preparation, particularly regarding infrastructure for food distribution. This is true both in terms of distribution to address food needs of individuals, and the capacity to capture and store surplus food that might be created due to unexpected circumstances—for example, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid business closures led to excess edible food in places where it could not be served (restaurants, food services in institutions), and the need for quick pick-up and storage of that food to help redirect it to those in need or to other outlets where it could be sold.

How Can Grants and Incentives Enhance Disaster Response?

- **Governments can provide funds to food banks for direct food purchases when a disaster strikes. This can help food banks make sure immediate needs are met for those whose lives have been upended.**
- **Governments can provide funds for planning grants that allow local governments and social service organizations to establish protocols and procedures for when a disaster strikes, including table top simulations and walkthrough exercises, to ensure food is distributed to the places it is needed when the disaster occurs.**
- **Governments can provide grants to nonprofit food recovery organizations for infrastructure that can be used in times of disaster, like cold storage and refrigerated trucks, to help get food to those in need at the right moment.**

Government funding can also support new innovations and emerging technologies that will make food donation more efficient and sustainable. In many countries, existing laws and policies do not adequately encourage donors, nor do they enable them to recoup the costs associated with food donation. As a result,

the least costly option in many cases is to discard safe, surplus food. Removing such fiscal barriers and strategically leveraging grants and incentives to motivate potential donors can encourage greater food donation and minimize the myriad costs associated with FLW. Yet few countries have designed, funded, and implemented programs that advance these goals to position donation as an economical alternative to discarding food. Drawing from country-specific findings, this issue brief explores the potential for grants and incentives to increase food donation, support innovative food rescue models, and provide more financial security to farmers and agribusinesses.⁵

This issue brief was developed as part of The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas project, a partnership between the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic (FLPC) and The Global FoodBanking Network (GFN) that aims to promote strong food donation policies as global solutions to hunger and FLW.⁶ Across key issue areas— including food safety, date labeling, liability protection, taxes, donation requirements or food waste penalties, and government grants and incentives—restrictive or inadequate laws and policies can undermine the efforts of food rescue organizations and create obstacles for businesses and other private-sector actors seeking to donate food. Such laws may also fail to properly incentivize socially beneficial behaviors. The Atlas project analyzes and compares these national laws and offers tailored recommendations to clarify and optimize the policy landscape for food donation.





RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

The recommendations presented in this brief provide a starting point for stakeholders across the globe to strengthen government grant and incentive frameworks related to food donation. Food banks and other organizations whose mission is to reduce food waste and increase food donation (collectively referred to as “food recovery organizations”), donors, and policymakers should consider additional opportunities to advance food donation and reduce food waste. The recommendations are as follows:

To ensure food recovery organizations are able to maximize their capacity to distribute food donations to beneficiaries:

- **Establish a grant fund to allocate funds to food recovery organizations**
 - Provide grants to nonprofit food recovery organizations for general operating support and infrastructure
 - Provide innovation grants to develop new food recovery models
 - Provide education grants to educate the public about ways to reduce food loss and waste and safely donate food

To incentivize food businesses to donate food that is safe for human consumption instead of wasting it:

- **Develop programs to incentivize food donations via public recognition and additional benefits**

BACKGROUND

Attention toward FLW has increased exponentially in the past decade, with the international community committing to halve FLW pursuant to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal 12.3.⁷ FLW occurs at every stage of the food system: during the initial harvest due to fluctuating market prices, high labor costs,⁸ inadequate infrastructure, and demand for flawless produce; by grocery stores and restaurants that overestimate customer demands and misunderstand shelf life and product date labels;⁹ and by consumers that engage in inefficient shopping and cooking practices.¹⁰ These behaviors have significant environmental, economic, and social consequences. Food that is lost or wasted has a massive carbon footprint of 3.3 gigatons, using roughly 28% of agricultural land and accounting for 8%, or 70 billion tons, of total global greenhouse gas emissions.¹¹ This damage is estimated at \$700 billion in environmental costs and more than \$900 billion in social costs.¹² This waste is expensive,¹³ squanders natural resources,¹⁴ causes lasting environmental damage, and presents a missed opportunity to redistribute food to the more than 828 million people experiencing hunger.¹⁵

Food recovery organizations play an integral role in minimizing FLW and increasing the amount of safe, surplus food that gets donated. In 2021, members of The Global FoodBanking Network (GFN) in nearly 50 countries recovered 514,537 metric tons of food and distributed that food to 39 million people.¹⁶ The amount of wholesome food saved by GFN member food banks was enough to fill 172 Olympic-size swimming pools.¹⁷ These efforts collectively mitigated 1.695 billion kilograms of CO₂ equivalent, representing an environmental impact equal to reducing emissions from more than 365,000 passenger vehicles.¹⁸

While FLW results in economic loss, food donation can generate sizeable economic gains. First, donation reduces the economic and environmental costs of producing food that otherwise goes uneaten¹⁹ and curbs methane emissions caused by food decomposing in landfills.²⁰ Second, donation alleviates hunger, reducing health care expenses associated with malnutrition²¹ and increasing productivity, educational fulfillment, and economic potential.²² Third, food rescue operations create job opportunities at food banks and intermediary organizations and stimulate the economy by increasing the spending power of donation recipients as they are able to spend limited funds on other goods and services. Indirect gains, such as reduced hunger costs and more resilient supply chains, that flow to society ultimately help build stronger communities. The spectrum of benefits cannot be realized, however, if food donors lack the means or incentives to donate rather than discard surplus food.

Government grants and incentives are one category of laws and policies that are broadly applicable and can be tailored to produce specific solutions that encourage food donation and reduce FLW and hunger. National, state, and local governments can develop grant programs to fund innovative solutions and offset the costs of creating infrastructure to implement other policies, such as a food waste deterrence policy like an organic waste ban (that prohibits or limits the types and amounts of foods that can be disposed of in landfills, redirecting food that is safe for human consumption to alternatives like food donation) or food donation requirement (that requires certain businesses to donate rather than dispose of all surplus edible food).²³ Incentives can also be used to recognize and elevate actors who donate a certain amount of food or go above and beyond to create innovative solutions to food waste. In addition, incentive programs can provide food donors and recovery organizations with economic benefits such as receiving priority in permitting, licensing, or government contracting decisions.

Grants and incentives have the added benefit of allowing local organizations and communities to factor in supply chain variations and the specific needs of the populations they serve. For instance, a government could provide grants for cold chain transportation to distribute food in remote areas. During consultations with food donors and food rescue organizations in countries participating in the Atlas project, increasing and expanding grant and incentive programs for actors engaging in food recovery and removing barriers to donating were overwhelmingly cited as top policy priorities.²⁴

This issue brief provides governments and other policymakers with strategies to create and implement grants and incentives to improve food donation and reduce FLW. Drawing from country-specific research and stakeholder accounts, it identifies how a lack of incentivization can undermine the potential to increase food donation. It offers best practices for designing grants and incentives that support greater food donation as a solution to reduce FLW and hunger. Constructing incentives consistent with these recommendations will support increased food donation and help countries build mutually beneficial partnerships between actors in the food supply chain and food recovery organizations.

OVERVIEW OF GRANTS AND INCENTIVES IN RESEARCHED COUNTRIES

Country	Grants	Other Incentives	Tax Incentives	Atlas Ranking
Argentina	YES	NO	YES	LIMITED POLICY
Australia	YES	NO	YES	LIMITED POLICY
Brazil	YES	YES	YES	LIMITED POLICY
Canada	YES	NO	YES	STRONG POLICY
Chile	NO	NO	YES	NO POLICY
China	NO	NO	YES	NO POLICY
Colombia	NO	NO	YES	MODERATE POLICY
Costa Rica	NO	NO	YES	NO POLICY
Dominican Republic	NO	NO	YES	NO POLICY
Ecuador	NO	YES	NO	NO POLICY
Ghana	NO	NO	YES	NO POLICY
Guatemala	NO	NO	YES	NO POLICY
India	NO	NO	NO	NO POLICY
Indonesia	NO	NO	NO	NO POLICY
Kenya	NO	NO	NO	NO POLICY
Mexico	NO	NO	YES	NO POLICY
Nigeria	NO	NO	NO	NO POLICY
Paraguay	NO	NO	YES	NO POLICY
Peru	NO	NO	YES	MODERATE POLICY

Country	Grants	Other Incentives	Tax Incentives	Atlas Ranking
Singapore	YES	NO	NO	NO POLICY
South Africa	NO	NO	YES	NO POLICY
United Kingdom	YES	YES	NO	STRONG POLICY
United States	YES	YES	YES	STRONG POLICY
Vietnam	NO	NO	NO	NO POLICY

Although different than a government grant or incentive, another mechanism to raise funds to increase capacity and infrastructure may be through participating in carbon markets. Some food banks, such as the Mexican Foodbanking Network, that rescue food and prevent it from entering the landfill, where it emits methane gas, have been able to market carbon credits for their work.²⁵

KEY ISSUES

Because food donation typically costs money, including storage and transportation costs, grant and incentive programs funded at the national or local level offer an important resource for food donation initiatives. Especially in countries where tax incentives may be insufficient to offset the costs of donation or where a lack of infrastructure limits food recovery efforts, donors and recovery organizations stand to benefit from government grants that support donation efforts. Transportation and storage costs are often cited as the main expenses that manufacturers, retailers, and restaurants need to overcome to donate food.²⁶ Even where these costs are addressed, such as through tax deductions or credits, a lack of incentives can make businesses less likely to donate due to the upfront investment and need to train individuals to handle and distribute food. Government incentives can help to offset these financial constraints and make donation a more attractive, affordable option. For example, government grants can help food donors and food banks acquire equipment and resources necessary for gleaning, storing, processing, and transporting food for donation. Government funding can also support new innovations and emerging technologies that will make food donation more efficient and sustainable.

Government grants and incentives are not a one-size-fits-all solution for food donation initiatives. Due to the complexity of supply chains and the intricacies of local communities, creating a country or state-wide law or policy to provide incentives to food donors and food recovery organizations may be infeasible. Geographic, social, cultural, and economic diversity differ across states and localities, meaning the problems faced in one community may be vastly different compared to another. For this reason, grant and incentive programs that allow for flexibility at the local level are of paramount importance.

Local solutions can be targeted to address the particular needs of a given community by taking into consideration the specific challenges that prevent safe, surplus food from being donated. By providing funds to local actors in the food system who are familiar with specific local needs, including local infrastructure demands, the government can help create resilient, locally led food systems capable of getting food to those who need it most. This may be particularly true in rural communities, some of which may produce an excess of some types of food, such as grains or fresh produce, or have an abundance of food during certain seasons, but still need assistance obtaining other foods and providing staple food items year round. By supporting these

locally led systems, the government enhances a community's ability to respond to hunger, particularly when a disaster strikes.

While government grant and incentive programs are an important resource for food recovery initiatives, there are also challenges to developing and maintaining these programs. Unlike some laws and policies, grants typically require the government to spend money. Aside from an upfront investment, however, grants and incentives do not require the government to solve problems within the food donation landscape or to provide ongoing funding for agencies that can provide assistance, outside of a comparatively smaller budget for agency staff necessary to run a grant program. Rather, grants provide resources to those who are already doing the work and providing FLW solutions.

While finding government funds for a grant program may be a challenge, and demand for the funds may be greater than the pool of funds available, grants do provide time-bound, targeted solutions. Because governments are restricted by a budget, grants can be targeted towards small or large projects with a specific impact, depending on the desired goals. One way to enhance grant programs is through public-private partnerships, which tie in private funding to complement or jumpstart funding from the public sector.

In addition to grants, governments can also leverage incentive programs as a cost-effective method of encouraging entities to donate food. For example, a government incentive program could publicly recognize food donors that donate a specific amount of food, thereby generating positive public relations for the donor, or give priority within government contracting decisions to entities that donate a certain amount.

Grant and incentive programs also require administrative capacity and expertise, albeit significantly less than if the government were going to initiate and run a food distribution program on its own. Government actors must develop a process to select who or what entities will receive grants and incentives. One way to address this challenge is for the government body tasked with administering the grant or incentive program to designate an agency, department, or a panel of experts with local or topic-specific knowledge to decide on award recipients. This group could be responsible for establishing clear, objective criteria for administering grants and awarding incentives based on input provided by representatives from impacted communities and subject-matter experts.

International Efforts and Funding

There are also international organizations providing grants to food recovery organizations. At the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, more commonly known as COP28, countries and foundations committed more than \$519 million in funds to building sustainable food systems, reducing food loss and waste, and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).²⁷ At the time of this writing, how the funds were to be allocated was not yet public.

One of the private foundations that made a commitment at COP28, the Bezos Earth Fund, has allocated USD \$1 billion to tackling the food system's impact on climate and nature.²⁸ So far, the fund has allocated USD \$80.4 million to projects focused on changing agricultural processes and research into natural carbon sequestration.²⁹

InterAmerican Development Bank

Food recovery organizations may also benefit from regional grants. In North and South America, the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) provides grants for food insecurity and recovery efforts to governments.³⁰ For example, the IDB allocated \$50 million to Haiti for food recovery.³¹ However, the IDB has been criticized for not focusing enough on food loss and waste.³²

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Grants and incentives are critical to successfully redirect food safe for human consumption to communities in need. To ensure food recovery is fully funded and supported, countries should create a competitive grant fund and set up incentives to encourage food donations.

For example, as part of **Canada's** Food Policy, the federal government created the Local Food Infrastructure Fund, a multi-year initiative with \$62.9 million CAD.³³ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the department responsible for the federal regulation of agriculture, launched the initiative with two funding streams. Through the first stream, "Infrastructure and Equipment Improvement Projects," the department aimed to help small organizations improve infrastructure and purchase equipment that would increase access to healthy foods in the community.³⁴ The department designed the second stream, "Projects to Strengthen Local Food Systems," for larger community, private, and academic organizations with a mission to reduce food insecurity in a sustainable manner.³⁵

In the **United States**, the 2018 Farm Bill³⁶ provided \$4 million dollars annually from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to be allocated among states to operate Farm to Food Bank projects. These projects increase the amount of fresh produce in food banks by supporting payments made to farmers for the labor involved in harvesting and preparing their surplus food for donation.³⁷

At the sub-national level in the United States, the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) serves as a good example of a state-initiated partnership.³⁸ The program, established in 1995, ensures access to food through a public-private partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) and four regional food banks.³⁹ The government provides funding to a private, non-profit food distribution network made up of four regional food banks.⁴⁰ The funding enables the food banks to purchase a consistent supply of healthy food and distribute the food to a statewide network of over 894 emergency food providers.⁴¹ In 2021, total funding provided by MDAR for food purchasing was \$30,000,000.⁴² Of the 143 million pounds of food distributed by the food banks in 2021, 35 million pounds was purchased through MEFAP.⁴³

In the **United Kingdom**, Innovate UK is a UK Research Institute (U.K.RI) program that provides grant funding for technology and innovative solutions in many different sectors. The Innovate UK Council is comprised of members with expertise in business, investment, technology, and economics in addition to having diverse backgrounds.⁴⁴ Innovate UK has made awards to several innovative food-related initiatives in the past.⁴⁵ For example, BakePlan, a technology company focused on cloud-based retail production and management systems, received £43,600 in funding. The funding was awarded to BakePlan to support the development of an AI system that specializes in demand-forecasting software that advises supermarket bakers and other in-store food production staff on the right products to make at the best times of the day.⁴⁶ The goal of the software is to improve product availability, freshness, and sales in an effort to reduce food waste in the retail industry.⁴⁷

1. CREATE A GRANT FUND FOR NONPROFIT FOOD RECOVERY ORGANIZATIONS AND DONORS

Grant programs are commonly used to provide capital to organizations involved in food rescue efforts that do not have access through other means. Grants can be awarded across the non-profit sector as well as to actors in the private sector who want to enhance their charitable activities. Because infrastructure-related costs (e.g., processing, storage, transportation) are cited as one of the main barriers to food donation, awards to private sector actors should target entities that may not have access to capital, such as small- and medium-sized businesses. In general, a grant application should require prospective grantees to submit applications outlining their requested budget, plans for using any provided support, as well as detailed data about how

the proposed initiative will reduce FLW. Related, entities that receive support should be required to report on how funds were used as well as the impact the additional funding had on reducing food loss and waste and hunger. Government grant funds and the application process can be managed by an administrative agency with demonstrated administrative and subject-matter competency, as these agencies are often more politically insulated than other parts of the government and possess more technical expertise.

Depending on the purpose of the grant funds, grants can be distributed through a competitive grant process where those involved in food recovery efforts, including public, private, and nonprofit entities, apply for funds and compete against other organizations, or through a formula (sometimes called a block grant) that spreads available funding out across a country to state and local levels of government according to specific criteria.

In a competitive process, grant applications can be reviewed by a specific agency with the capacity and expertise necessary to determine which applications should be funded or if public input is important, individuals selected from the public with expertise in food recovery efforts can score applications according to set criteria. A competitive process, as opposed to a formula or block grant, allows the agency to allocate funds to organizations that best align with the goals of the grant fund, such as those who serve the most people in need, those who can recover the most food, or those who can reach otherwise marginalized groups in need. **Canada's** Local Food Infrastructure Fund, mentioned above, is an example of a competitive grant program with a limited pool of funds that applicants apply for.

When funds are distributed according to a formula, that formula can be developed to ensure the funds achieve their intended purpose, such as distributing funds according to population or levels of food insecurity. The TEFAP program in the **United States**, mentioned above, is an example of a block grant program where funds are distributed to states throughout the country based on a formula.

The Food Waste Prevention and Diversion: Research and Capacity Building Fund of **Canada** is one example of a grant fund managed by an administrative agency.⁴⁸ Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), the governmental department responsible for coordinating environmental policies and programs in the country, evaluates grant proposals that target research and capacity building opportunities for reducing and/or diverting food and other organic waste from landfills.⁴⁹ ECCC's evaluation of grant applications includes review of a proposal's relevance, feasibility, uptake by and collaboration with other stakeholders, budget, and capacity of the applicant to complete the project.⁵⁰

1A. PROVIDE GRANTS TO NONPROFIT FOOD RECOVERY ORGANIZATIONS FOR GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Nonprofit food recovery organizations rely primarily on food and monetary donations to alleviate hunger. Many charge beneficiaries nothing, or only a nominal amount to offset expenses, so they survive entirely on altruistic support from the public and the government to cover their operating expenses. These operating expenses can include staffing costs, refrigerated and non-refrigerated storage space, transportation, insurance, and outreach to reach those in need. A grant fund for general operating support can help nonprofit food recovery organizations defray these costs.

In particular, food recovery organizations may struggle with the need for more storage capacity to accommodate an increase in food donations. An influx of food donations could occur as a result of a variety of events, including in response to a natural or man-made disaster, implementation of an organic waste ban, or a bumper crop of produce, among other situations. Food recovery organizations may have limited employees and volunteers, which can make it challenging to absorb a major increase in donations. Additionally, food recovery organizations may face challenges coordinating pick up of more donations with limited equipment. To ensure that the country has sufficient food recovery infrastructure, it should use grants to support nonprofit food recovery organizations.

There may be other times that food recovery organizations experience unexpected, increased demand for food donations. For example, natural disasters, man-made disasters, or even worldwide pandemics can result in massive supply chain disruptions that leave many without access to food. Grants can help food recovery organizations create the infrastructure that allows them to quickly respond if a disaster occurs.

For example, in the **United States**, in response to COVID-19, the government provided direct funding support to food banks through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP),⁵¹ approving US\$450 million in TEFAP funds.⁵² Because the program existed prior to the pandemic and the infrastructure to support it was already in place, the government was able to work with food recovery organizations to quickly distribute the funding to organizations working to reduce hunger. In **Canada** food banks received an additional \$100 million in funding through the Emergency Food Security Fund to provide food to communities in need during the pandemic.⁵³ In the **United Kingdom**, FareShare purchased food with government funds and redistributed it to local government food hubs.⁵⁴ In **South Africa** the government provided a truck to FoodForward SA to help rescue farm surpluses and reach communities in need.⁵⁵

Similar to the example in South Africa, where government funding was used to expand the reach of an existing food bank network, grant programs can also be leveraged to support food recovery and distribution efforts in rural and remote areas which are often limited by financial constraints and transportation challenges.⁵⁶ Similarly, grants can also be tailored to support small food recovery organizations with fewer resources, such as by providing funding for the purchase of equipment and other infrastructure.

As discussed above, **Canada** is a good example of providing infrastructure grant assistance. The Local Food Infrastructure Fund is a multi-year initiative with a funding commitment of \$62.9 million CAD.⁵⁷ It has two funding streams: 1) the Infrastructure and Equipment Improvement Projects which is designed to help small organizations strengthen food systems, and 2) Projects to Strengthen Local Food Systems designed to reduce food insecurity in a sustainable manner. The fund has provided grants for food recovery organizations to purchase refrigerated trucks for food storage, build cold rooms, and set up commercial-type kitchens.⁵⁸

Operating and infrastructure grants can meaningfully impact the number of beneficiaries food recovery organizations can serve, especially in times of increased demand. While operating grants support day-to-day operations, infrastructure grants can serve as lasting investments in reducing FLW and reducing hunger.

1B. PROVIDE INNOVATION GRANTS TO DEVELOP NEW FOOD RECOVERY MODELS

Innovation grants can be designed to support developing new food recovery models and technology. Grants can target each step throughout the supply chain or advance new approaches that reduce costs or increase the amount of food recovered. Innovation grants may also target a specific challenge (e.g., gleaning, harvesting, transport). For example, in the **United States**, the **Massachusetts** Department of Agricultural Resources launched the “Food Ventures Grant Program.”⁵⁹ Through the program, the Department seeks to fund food ventures that improve food processing infrastructure, distribution systems, and retail outlet strategies.⁶⁰

Another opportunity for innovation grants is encouraging creative uses of technology to connect food donors with beneficiaries via apps or other modes of communication. In the **United Kingdom**, U.K.RI is a major source of grant funding for food-related initiatives. U.K.RI, a non-departmental public body, is funded primarily through the Science Budget for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).⁶¹ Through Innovate UK, a U.K.RI program, U.K.RI provides grant funding for technology and innovative solutions in many different sectors, including several food system initiatives. BakePlan received £43,600 in funding to develop an AI system that specializes in demand-forecasting software that advises supermarket bakers and other in-store food production staff on the right products to make at the best times of the day.⁶²

Similarly to Innovate UK, England's Resource Action Fund, announced by the Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in 2019, established an £18 million fund towards projects focused on "diverting, reducing, and better managing waste" in England.⁶³ The fund is aimed at resource efficiency projects in England that improve areas of food, plastic, textiles, recycling infrastructure, and litter by providing both small and large grants in order to achieve this goal.⁶⁴

Canada provides another example of effective government grants and incentives. In its Food Policy for Canada, the federal government announced a \$26.3 million fund for innovative food waste reduction proposals.⁶⁵ The Agriculture and Agri-Food Department created a Food Waste Reduction Challenge that included four streams of applicant types: (A) business models that prevent food waste; (B) business models that divert food waste, food by-products and/or surplus food; (C) technologies that extend the life of food, and; (D) technologies that transform food waste.⁶⁶ Awards range from \$100,000 for challenge semi-finalists to \$1.5 million for two grand prize recipients.⁶⁷ The Challenge, which kicked off in November 2020, will conclude by announcing the grand prize winners in late 2024.⁶⁸

1C. PROVIDE EDUCATION GRANTS TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT WAYS TO REDUCE FOOD LOSS AND WASTE AND SAFELY DONATE FOOD

Education grants can make large gains in reducing food loss and waste. Consumer education around date labels, for example, is estimated to have a massive impact on reducing FLW and is considered to be extremely cost effective.⁶⁹ Moreover, funding trainings for food system workers, managers, and business owners, all along the supply chain, can make it easier for businesses to support food donation, without having to bear additional training costs.

New South Wales, Australia's Department of Planning, Industry, and Environment awards Food Donation Education grants to support projects that increase the efficiency and capacity of food relief organizations to manage surplus food.⁷⁰ Many of these projects focus on educational activities, stakeholder engagement campaigns, and community outreach campaigns to promote food donation within the state.⁷¹ For example, the Canberra Region Joint Organization (CRJO) was awarded a Food Donation Education grant totaling AUD\$100,000 to undertake regional food donation engagement and education activities, as well as work with Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council and Bega Valley Shire Council to share resources and learn from their experience of delivering food donation education projects in the region.⁷² In 2023, as part of their education activities, CJRO released a Food Donation Toolkit for food businesses and food relief agencies which includes application forms for connecting with local supermarkets, food safety information, and legal guidelines for food donation.⁷³

As mentioned above, **U.K.RI** provides another example of a grant program geared towards educating food system actors and consumers. In 2020, U.K.RI announced a £5 million investment to train the next generation of United Kingdom food system leaders.⁷⁴ As part of the investment, the Partnership for a Sustainable Food Future Centre for Doctoral Training, led by the University of Greenwich, convened food system actors from local and national government, business and civil society, and researchers from seven leading United Kingdom universities.⁷⁵ The £5 million investment was matched by £2 million in additional funding to support a total of 62 studentships, which include a placement in a food system stakeholder organization and the completion of research projects within the natural and social sciences.⁷⁶ As of December 2023, the United Kingdom Food Systems Centre for Doctoral Training (UKFS-CDT) had 25 studentships available for graduates to receive interdisciplinary training from partners at seven different universities throughout the country, in addition to over 50 food systems partners from business, government, and civil society.⁷⁷ Grant programs like these, that reduce barriers for individuals interested in working to improve food systems, have tremendous potential because along with building a future generation of food system leaders, they create the space and opportunity for important conversations about ways to reduce hunger alongside food loss and waste.

Government grant programs can also be directed toward consumer education campaigns. Efforts to increase consumer understanding of date labels, for example, could have a powerful effect, leading to reduced food waste and increased food donation. A strategy that may prove effective is the partnership of governments and private food system actors to issue widespread, unified outreach and education on date labeling. Governments could provide funding to private actors to spearhead efforts to develop guidance related to date labeling and work together to implement and disseminate the guidance to food systems actors and consumers. The **United Kingdom** serves as a model for these efforts. Defra⁷⁸, the United Kingdom Food Standards Agency (FSA)⁷⁹, and Zero Waste Scotland⁸⁰ offer clarifying guidance on the United Kingdom's date labeling scheme to increase public awareness. Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has received funding from the United Kingdom for its consumer awareness campaigns that help consumers clearly differentiate between the United Kingdom's quality-based and safety-based date labels, including the "Love Food Hate Waste" and "Look, Smell, Taste, Don't Waste" campaigns.⁸¹ Since implementing guidance and public awareness campaigns, the United Kingdom has seen a reduction in food waste in recent years.⁸²

2. DEVELOP PROGRAMS TO INCENTIVIZE FOOD DONATIONS VIA RECOGNITION AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

While tax incentives can also encourage organizations throughout the food supply chain to donate food, this issue brief focuses on non-tax incentives. For more information about tax incentives and how they can be used to increase food donation, please see *The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas Issue Brief on Promoting Food Donation: Tax Law and Policy* at <https://atlas.foodbanking.org>.⁸³

Not all efforts to reduce food loss and waste require government funding. Governments should also consider taking advantage of no-cost or low-cost methods of incentivizing food donations and reducing food waste. For example, businesses are very cognizant of their public reputations and how that can affect their profit margins. Many see recognition and publicity of their philanthropy as integral to their business strategy. Thus, governments should set up recognition programs with clear, objective requirements for food systems actors to be recognized as community champions who donate food or create other innovative ways to reduce FLW. A government could create a tiered system to recognize donors of different amounts, perhaps with bronze, silver, and gold tiers.

A proposed bill in the **United States**, the Reduce Food Loss and Waste Act, if passed, would require the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a certification for businesses that take certain steps to reduce food loss and waste and increase the amount of food they donate.⁸⁴ While the text of the proposed bill gives discretion to the Secretary of Agriculture to establish specific criteria to achieve the certification, governments considering similar proposals should ensure criteria for the certification includes standards relative to the size of each business rather than total amount of food recovered to ensure that small- and medium-sized businesses are able to participate.

Additionally, governments can use other creative incentives. For example, businesses who qualify for a certain type of recognition could also be made eligible for additional points in government contracting. Governments often procure food for a variety programs, including government-run or government-sponsored nutrition programs and for institutions like the military or hospitals. Food companies often compete for these contracts and the government could choose to prioritize or provide additional points in the contracting process for companies that donate a certain amount of food.

One example of a nonmonetary incentives program is found in **Ecuador**. In 2022, Ecuador adopted a law that bans the waste of food safe for human consumption.⁸⁵ Once the law is implemented, donors who comply with

the law and donate food would be granted access to a centralized marketing campaign recognizing them as donors, access to exclusive fairs to promote their products, and training programs on sustainable agriculture, healthy eating, and improving agricultural supply chain activities (e.g., production, distribution).⁸⁶ Even those who provide infrastructure or logistical assistance (i.e., facilitators) would be eligible for incentives as well.⁸⁷

Some states in **Mexico** also provide for recognition programs. In 2022, Nuevo León amended its state food donation law to mandate that the Nuevo León state government, through the Secretary of Equality and Inclusion, provide public recognition to outstanding donors who contribute to food banks.⁸⁸ San Luis Potosi, another state in **Mexico**, also mandates recognition through the state agency for the Comprehensive Development of the Family (*el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia*) (“DIF”) in their Social Assistance Law (*Ley de Asistencia Social*), passed in 2016.⁸⁹ The law requires that the DIF promote the public recognition of donors, especially those that have distinguished themselves by contributing to particularly vulnerable populations.⁹⁰ In many Mexican states, the DIF or its equivalent is in charge of administering social programs throughout the localities. The DIF publishes press releases celebrating donors and describing who their donations benefit.⁹¹ San Luis Potosi’s recognition program also highlights the food recovery organization that receives the donation, providing both food banks and donors with visibility that increases their reach and impact.⁹² Finally, the recognition increases awareness about food donation and the way that donations are used, which can serve to prevent safe, surplus food from being wasted and ensure that food insecure populations receive the support they need.⁹³

CONCLUSION

Grants and incentives are a powerful policy instrument that governments can leverage to increase food donation and reduce FLW. From ensuring communities are equipped with the infrastructure necessary to feed individuals in the face of disaster to using technology in innovative ways to reduce hunger and food loss and waste, these tools can be tailored to meet the specific needs of countries across the globe. However, government grants and incentives come with the responsibility of ensuring taxpayer funds are used wisely and for their intended purpose. Monitoring and reporting, and if warranted, enforcement, are critical to ensuring successful government grants and incentives programs.

Grants and incentives can offset the costs of making donations by helping food donors and food banks acquire equipment and resources necessary for gleaning, storing, processing, and transporting food for donation and ensure that donation is an economically competitive alternative to discarding suitable food. Furthermore, grants and incentives can promote innovative food recovery models and reinforce other policy goals such as creating education campaigns to explain the meaning of date labels to consumers so they do not waste food that is still safe to eat. Similarly, public recognition programs for those who are making progress towards reducing hunger and food loss and waste can also enhance donations and encourage innovative practices. While this issue brief highlights issues and best practices, it is not exhaustive. Policymakers should examine their respective national and local grant and incentive programs to identify new opportunities to use grants and incentives to build on existing efforts to reduce hunger and food loss and waste. For more resources and other country-and issue-specific resources, please visit the Atlas project (<https://atlas.foodbanking.org/>).

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FOOD DONATION
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