



DATE: May 27, 2020

TO: Waste Management Authority Board

FROM: Cassie Bartholomew, Program Manager

SUBJECT: CalRecycle Food Waste Prevention and Rescue Grant presentation

SUMMARY

In 2017 StopWaste was awarded \$500,000 in grant funding from CalRecycle for the K-12 Schools *Smart Cafeteria Initiative* working with three cooperating grant partners. The two-year term of the grant has ended, and at the May 27 meeting staff will share grant activities, challenges and accomplishments, as well an overview of K-12 school food share and partnerships.

DISCUSSION

CalRecycle's Food Waste Prevention and Rescue Grant Program funds projects that lower greenhouse gas emissions by expanding existing or establishing new food waste prevention and/or rescue projects in California to reduce the amount of food being disposed of in landfills.

StopWaste acted as lead agency on this project, initially partnering with ALL IN Alameda County—now operating under the Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League (DSAL), Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District (LVJUSD), and Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to implement Alameda County's K-12 Schools Smart Cafeteria Initiative.

During the two year grant term (February 1, 2018 – April 1, 2020), staff partnered with LVJUSD and OUSD to set up K-12 school food share and recovery programs to divert nutritious edible food from landfills through food share tables and food donation. DSAL provided refrigerated vans and job training, hiring "Food Recovery Specialists" as drivers to pick up food donations from school sites or district warehouses to be consolidated at the Dig Deep Farms [Food Hub](#) for sorting and storage. Donations are then packed and delivered to organizations addressing food insecurity or residents through affordable housing agencies.

StopWaste provided technical assistance, data collection and evaluation, while engaging K-12 school stakeholders such as kitchen staff, Principals, students and teachers through our "Stop Food Waste School Challenges" to educate schools about preventing wasted food and helping maximize the use of their food share tables to collect unopened, uneaten food for re-serving or donation.

Major Accomplishments during grant term:

- Launched School Food Share Districtwide with all 17 LVJUSD school sites setting up new food share carts (First school district to implement food share districtwide)
- Completed upgrades and improvements to new food share cart setup in OUSD
 - 45 of 82 school sites were equipped with a new food share cart setup
 - Delivery of the remaining new food share carts will be completed once OUSD schools reopen after Shelter in Place is lifted
- Completed a series of educational and training videos on school food share and food donation
- Partnered with Alameda County Department of Environmental Health to develop approved protocols for food share, re-serving and donation
- Trained kitchen staff in both school districts on food share and donation procedures
- Piloted food donation at several schools in both districts with support from DSAL
- Shared lessons learned and best practices with other school districts, nutrition directors, state agencies and food waste reduction networks
- Improved infrastructure required for food share and donation including refrigeration, temperature controlled food storage and transport equipment, food share carts, bins, serving line upgrades and related supplies
- Prevented wasted food and recovered over 115,000 pounds of surplus edible food for donation

While collectively our school district partners prevented wasted food and recovered surplus edible food for donation benefiting 10 different community partners, we ran short of establishing districtwide food donation due to a number of variables that impacted our efforts. We experienced many challenges with CalRecycle's grant administration, including delayed execution of our grant agreement, delays with communication and expenditure approvals, and changes to our grant manager. Our school district partners experienced high staff turnover resulting in six different Nutrition Services Directors over two years. Our primary partner providing food recovery pick-up services experienced staff turn-over early on in the project and the food recovery services were moved over to DSAL delaying food donation pick-ups. Towards the end of our grant term, CalRecycle informed us that they would not approve the purchase of our final refrigeration units (previously approved) for OUSD and one walk-in freezer for LVJUSD because the impact of additional equipment, and the resulting GHG emissions from refrigerant usage would exceed the projected GHG reduction benefits of recovering surplus food for donation. This resulted in \$235,859 of the \$500,000 grant funds remaining unspent.

The project did successfully foster lasting partnerships between both school districts and All In/DSAL, who will continue working together to recover and distribute surplus food during the Covid-19 Shelter in Place order while districts are still feeding families at designated school distribution sites. Our staff is also more informed about food share and donation districtwide with tools, data and best practices to support a replicable Food Waste Reduction model for other Alameda County school districts.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.