

WELCOME TO FOOD STEWARDSHIP!



Thank you for your interest in becoming a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Food Steward. Your leadership among the faith-based community will help protect the environment through reducing food waste, while fulfilling your organization's mission to support families and individuals in your community.

The word "stewardship" refers to an acceptance of personal responsibility for actions to improve environmental quality and conservation efforts. As an EPA Food Steward, you play a critical role at the local level in furthering the agency's mission of protecting human health and the environment.



Food waste (e.g., excess food, leftovers or food scraps) is a growing issue in our modern society. In 2017 alone, the United States generated almost 41 million tons of food waste, with more food placed into landfills and combusted for energy recovery than any other single material in our everyday trash.¹

Wasted food also wastes resources used to produce that food, such as water, energy, labor, pesticides, fertilizers and land. In addition to the environmental benefits of keeping food out of landfills, we can support Americans that lack consistent access to enough food. In 2018, 37.2 million people lived in food-insecure households.² Much of the food sent to landfills is safe, wholesome food that could have been donated to feed these people.

As an EPA Food Steward, you can share the importance of this initiative and lead your faith-based and community organization in reducing the amount of food wasted, donating excess food, and/or composting food scraps. Again, thank you for your interest in such an important program. We look forward to working with you!

Andrew Wheeler
Administrator

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/food-material-specific-data>

² <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx>

GUIDE TO FOOD STEWARDSHIP

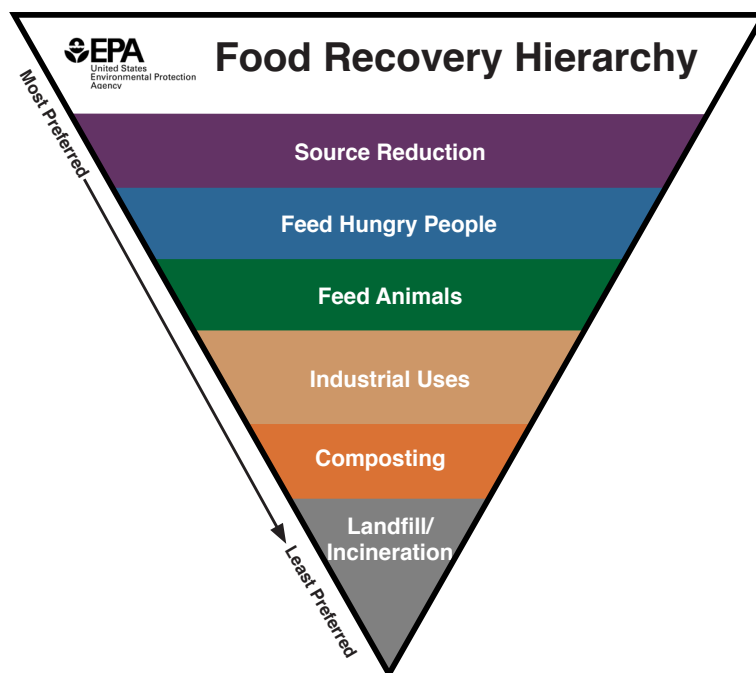


EPA is proud to offer resources to help you, your family and your faith organization reduce food waste. In this packet, you will find:

1. The basics of why food stewardship matters.
2. A starter guide on launching an EPA Food Stewards team.
3. Tips to reduce food waste at home.
4. Tips to reduce food waste at your house of worship.
5. Information on donating excess food to people in need.
6. An introduction to composting.
7. Opportunities to expand your Food Stewards effort.
8. A list of resources on reducing food waste to support your stewardship efforts.

We hope you use these materials to raise awareness, educate members of your organization, and inspire change in reducing food waste, both at home and in your broader community. Together we can work to sustain ourselves, our communities, and our world.

Please email epafoodsteward@epa.gov to tell us about your success stories!



<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-recovery-hierarchy>



www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-stewards



WHY FOOD STEWARDSHIP MATTERS

Most people don't realize how much food they throw away daily — from uneaten leftovers to spoiled produce. Once in landfills, food breaks down to produce methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. Food stewards help feed people, not landfills.

Benefits of Reducing Wasted Food



Provides nutritious food to those who might not have reliable access to food.



Saves money through smart planning and reducing over-purchasing.



Reduces methane emissions from landfills and conserves water and energy resources.



Reduces pollution involved in manufacturing and transporting food.

Ways to Help Reduce Food Waste at Home

- 1 Check your refrigerator first.
- 2 Make your list before you go shopping and try not to overbuy.
- 3 Use edible parts of food that you may not commonly eat (e.g., use vegetable and meat scraps to make soup stock).
- 4 Store fruits and vegetables properly so they stay fresh longer.
- 5 Freeze, preserve, or can surplus fruits and vegetables.
- 6 Compost food scraps.
- 7 Donate nutritious and safe food when appropriate.
- 8 Raise awareness of and educate others on how they can reduce food waste.



HOW TO: LAUNCH A FOOD STEWARDS TEAM

1

Form a Small Group

- ☐ Introduce the problem of food waste at a kick-off meeting. Look at this packet together. Encourage conversation about the different ways in which food waste affects families, your community, and the world.
- ☐ Make a list of reasons why we throw away food. What patterns do you see? What are the challenges?
 - at home
 - as a faith organization
- ☐ Which activities are group members already doing to reduce food waste? Which strategies seem most achievable?
- ☐ To get started, participants may want to choose a few basic strategies to try first. It can help to start small, with one or two new changes each week at home or at an upcoming event at your house of worship.

2

Next Steps

- ☐ At the next meeting, ask participants how their awareness around food may have shifted since the kick-off meeting of the group.
- ☐ Encourage participants to share their success stories, questions, ideas, tips, recipes and news about food waste.
- ☐ If your house of worship hosts events, discuss how much food waste is created.
- ☐ Choose a group project. For example, your group could:
 - Connect with local food rescue organizations to ask about donating.
 - Donate leftover food from your house of worship's events.
 - Contact local grocers, restaurants, or other event venues to learn about their food waste management.
 - Start composting at your facility.

3

More Ideas

- ☐ Utilize your communication tools like newsletters, bulletins, and social media to educate your organization and community about food waste.
- ☐ If an event is being planned at your house of worship and food will be served, look for ways to make the event more sustainable by reducing overall waste. For example, consider using more reusable or certified compostable instead of single use.
- ☐ Meet to learn about related topics each month. Here's a sample schedule:
 - **JANUARY:** Shopping Strategies
 - **FEBRUARY:** Meal Planning
 - **MARCH:** Fridge Organizing
 - **APRIL:** Storage
 - **MAY:** Composting
 - **JUNE:** Freezing
 - **JULY:** Repurposing Food
 - **AUGUST:** Sharing Recipes
 - **SEPTEMBER:** Understanding Food Date Labels
 - **OCTOBER:** Local Food Rescue Organizations
 - **NOVEMBER:** Donation
 - **DECEMBER:** Annual Review

Not sure whom to invite to your kick-off meeting? If your faith organization has a social action or green committee, start there.



FOOD STEWARDSHIP: AT HOME



Food stewards can help others shop smarter and waste less.

THRIFTINESS TIPS

Be mindful of ingredients and leftovers you need to use up. You'll waste less and may even find a new favorite recipe.

- Casseroles, frittatas, soups, and smoothies are great ways to use leftovers and odds and ends. Look for recipes to use your leftover ingredients.
- Make a list each week of what needs to be used up and plan upcoming meals around it.
- Are you likely to have leftovers from any of your meals? Plan an "eat the leftovers" night each week.
- Learn about food date labels (such as best if used by, best before, sell by, use by, and best by) and what they really mean.

SHOPPING TIPS

By simply making a list with weekly meals in mind, you can save money and time. If you buy no more than what you expect to use, you will be more likely to keep it fresh and use it all.

- Make your shopping list based on how many meals you'll eat at home and the timing of your next shopping trip. Will you eat out this week? Be realistic.
- Planning an event? Serve just enough or encourage guests to take home leftovers.
- Include quantities on your shopping list to avoid overbuying. For fresh items, note how many meals you'll make with each one. For example, salad greens could be used for two lunches.
- Check (or "Shop") your fridge and pantry first to avoid buying food you already have.
- Keep a running list of meals that your household already enjoys. That way you can easily choose a meal to prepare.



FOOD STEWARDSHIP: AT HOME



PREPARATION TIPS

Prepare perishable foods soon after shopping. It will be easier to put together meals later in the week, saving time, effort, and money.

- When you get home from the store, take the time to chop, dice, slice, and place your fresh food items in clear storage containers for snacks and easy cooking.
- Befriend your freezer. Freeze food such as bread, sliced fruit, or meat that you know you won't be able to eat in time.
- Cut your time in the kitchen by preparing and freezing meals ahead of time.
- Prepare and cook perishable items, and then freeze them for use throughout the month. (For example, bake and freeze chicken breasts or cook and freeze taco meat.)

STORAGE TIPS

It is easy to overbuy or forget about fresh fruits and vegetables. Store fruits and vegetables properly for maximum freshness; they'll taste better and last longer, helping you to eat more of them.

- Use online storage guides to help your food stay fresh longer.
- Many fruits give off natural gases as they ripen, making other nearby produce spoil faster. Store bananas, apples, and tomatoes by themselves outside the fridge. Inside the fridge, place fruits and vegetables in different bins. Wait to wash berries until just before eating to prevent mold.
- If you like your fruit at room temperature, take what you'll eat for the day out of the fridge in the morning.
- Have produce that's past its prime? It is often still perfectly good for eating. Think soups, sauces, pies, smoothies, or freeze them for later use.



FOOD STEWARDSHIP: AT YOUR HOUSE OF WORSHIP



Food stewards can help their faith organizations improve their food management through smart planning, preparation, and storage strategies.

REDUCE YOUR FOOD WASTE IN THE KITCHEN

- Reduce over-purchasing of food - create guidelines or implement a system in which you only purchase ingredients when you need them.
- Reduce prep waste and improperly cooked food - look at production and handling practices and consider strategies for reducing prep waste.
- Consider secondary uses for excess food – after an event, leftovers can be stored and used for another smaller meeting or gathering.
- Ensure proper food storage techniques in order to reduce spoilage (i.e., check temperature and humidity levels in your refrigerator) and organize refrigerated food to easily track inventory levels and ensure that older products are used up before new ones are purchased.

BUY SMARTER, WASTE LESS FOR YOUR EVENTS

- Before planning a meal or event, take an inventory of what food supplies you already have. Include any donated food that you might be able to obtain from local grocers or restaurants.
- Create a template or spreadsheet that can be used for event planning. This template should include a realistic estimate of the number of people that will attend and the amount of food each person will eat.
- Create a shopping list of what you need before shopping for food.
- Create a plan for leftovers:
 - Have supplies for people to take extra food home.
 - Coordinate with a local food rescue organization to donate prepared, but not served, extra food.



FOOD STEWARDSHIP: THROUGH DONATIONS



Food stewards can improve food distribution networks by connecting food to those in need.

Feeding the hungry is an important component of food stewardship and often a major activity of many faith organizations.

Donating excess food from your events can be a lasting way to both protect the environment and be a good neighbor.

Did you know?

Donors are protected from liability under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act. Under this Act, as long as the donor has not acted with gross negligence or intentional misconduct, the donor is not liable for damage incurred as the result of illness.

Learn about safe and responsible food donation:

<https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/donating>

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

- Create or expand a relationship with local food rescue organizations to coordinate the donation of food after events. Remember to ask in advance about their donation policies.
- Learn about food date labeling.
- Enlist groups that meet within your facility and community to assist in collection or distribution of donated food.
- Use leftover food to feed hungry members of your congregation or for later events held at your facility.



FOOD STEWARDSHIP: THROUGH COMPOSTING



Food stewards can keep waste out of landfills by composting.

Food waste and yard waste currently make up nearly 30% of our municipal solid waste. Food stewards can reduce that percentage by composting and using the finished compost in home gardening, sharing it with neighbors, or starting a community garden at a house of worship.

WHAT IS COMPOST?

Compost is created by:

- combining organic wastes, such as wasted food, yard trimmings, and manures, in the right ratios into piles, rows, or vessels;
- adding bulking agents (such as wood chips, dry leaves, landscape waste, shredded paper/cardboard) as necessary to accelerate the breakdown of organic materials; and
- allowing the finished material to fully stabilize and mature through a curing process.

BENEFITS OF COMPOSTING

Composting has multiple benefits, such as:

- reducing yard and food waste,
- improving the quality of soil,
- reducing stormwater runoff and soil erosion, and
- reducing methane emissions from landfills.

GETTING STARTED

- Learn about best practices, successful efforts, and tips for replication for backyard and on-site composting. If done correctly, it won't smell or attract animals.
- Look for local composting opportunities with your municipality/county or a local company. Learn about compost-based stormwater best management practices.
- Consider creating and maintaining an indoor vermiculture ("worm") bin.



FOOD STEWARDSHIP: TAKE THE CHALLENGE



Ready to take food stewardship to the next level?

CHALLENGE YOUR TEAM

- The **Food: Too Good to Waste** campaign challenges individuals and families to reduce food waste in their homes. Food steward teams can lead their local community members in taking the challenge. Find the Implementation Guide and Toolkit at: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-too-good-waste-implementation-guide-and-toolkit>.
- Larger organizations might consider joining the **EPA Food Recovery Challenge**. Congregations can join as participants or endorsers and get recognized for their efforts to reduce food waste. Organizations pledge to implement strategies to reduce food waste in their operations and then report results to compete for annual recognition. Learn more at: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-recovery-challenge-frc>.
- Be a **community leader, educator and convener**. Reach out to your local grocers, restaurants, venues and/or schools to ask about their food waste management, discuss reducing food waste and opportunities to coordinate efforts. Host workshops for community members to share the knowledge and skills your stewardship team has learned and practiced.

Students can make a difference too!

Learn ways to reduce food waste in schools:

<https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/schools>

Read about award winning student projects on food waste:

<https://www.epa.gov/education/presidents-environmental-youth-award-peya-winners>



RESOURCES FOR FOOD STEWARDS



SMART SHOPPING, SMART STORAGE, SMART PREPARATION

- **Food: Too Good to Waste (FTGTW)** consists of an implementation guide and toolkit that aim to reduce wasteful individual or household food management practices: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-too-good-waste-implementation-guide-and-toolkit>.
- The toolkit includes the following resources:
 - The **Get Smart: Take the Challenge** tool consists of instructions and worksheets for households to collect and measure how much food they waste over the course of a two- to six-week challenge.
 - The **Smart Shopping: Shop With Meals in Mind** tool provides an easy-to-use template for making shopping lists that prevent food from being wasted. It is designed to encourage meal planning.
 - The **Smart Storage: Fruit and Vegetable Storage Tips** tool is a visual prompt to remind participants how to keep produce fresh.
 - The **Smart Prep: Prep Now, Eat Later** tool provides consumers helpful tips on preparing perishable foods soon after shopping.
 - A poster that can be used at tabling events to highlight the impacts of reducing wasted food.
 - A presentation that implementing organizations can use to give background on why food waste is an important issue to tackle, as well as information on how to reduce wasted food at home using the FTGTW toolkit materials.
- **Save the Food.** A national media campaign aimed at consumers, featuring tips and interactive tools to help households and organizations with menu planning, storage, and recipes: <https://savethefood.com/>
- **Share Our Strength's Cooking Matters** is a national nutrition program where participants learn how to eat healthy, cook and grocery shop on a limited budget: <https://cookingmatters.org/>
- **FoodKeeper App** was designed to help individuals understand food and beverage storage: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>
- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** shares information on date labels. You'll learn how to know if your food is still good to eat while also reducing waste in your home: <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/confused-date-labels-packaged-foods>



RESOURCES FOR FOOD STEWARDS

DONATING EXCESS FOOD

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's **Excess Food Opportunities Map** displays the locations of food banks, among other potential recipients of excess food:
<https://www.epa.gov/foodmap>
- The **U.S. Department of Agriculture** provides information on donating wholesome food, relevant legal protections and tax deductions, as well as locating places to donate:
<https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/donating>
- The **U.S. Department of Agriculture** provides a one-stop-shop of federal programs that can be used by communities, organizations and individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide is a first-of-its-kind resource for rural leaders looking for federal funding and partnership opportunities to help address this pandemic: https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA_COVID-19_Fed_Rural_Resource_Guide.pdf
- **Feeding America** maintains a map of member food banks:
<https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank>
- **Food Pantries** allows you to search food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters:
<http://www.findafoodpantry.org/>
- **Ample Harvest** connects backyard/community gardeners to local food pantries:
<https://ampleharvest.org/>
- **Homeless Shelter Directory** allows you to search homeless shelters and services by city:
<https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/>
- **Food Rescue Locator** is a directory of organizations across the U.S. that rescue, glean, transport, prepare, and distribute food to the needy in their communities:
<https://foodrescuelocator.com/>
- **Food Recovery Network** is a student-led organization and national network of college students, food businesses, and non-profits who combat wasted food and hunger by donating surplus food through its chapters to food-insecure communities:
<https://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org/>
- **Rock and Wrap It Up** partners with music, sports and TV/film production organizations, as well as hospitals, hotels, and schools to donate food that is prepared, but not served or sold, to those in need: <https://www.rockandwrapitup.org/>



RESOURCES FOR FOOD STEWARDS



COMPOSTING

- The **U.S. EPA's Sustainable Management of Food** webpage on composting includes the basics of composting, getting started, success stories, and best management practices: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/reducing-impact-wasted-food-feeding-soil-and-composting>
- **BioCycle** is a magazine and organization that focuses on the advancement of composting and compost utilization, organics recycling, anaerobic digestion and renewable energy: <https://www.biocycle.net/>
- **FindAComposter.com**® provides a publicly searchable database of composting sites. Find access to organics collection and composting infrastructure in the United States and Canada: <http://www.findacomposter.com/>
- The **Institute for Local Self-Reliance** offers various resources on composting, including guides (on community composting best practices), articles, presentations, podcasts, and recorded webinars: <https://ilsr.org/composting/>
- **Composting: Recycling Naturally - Simple Steps for Starting at Home** provides tips on how to get started, composting options, which type bin to choose, and step-by-step instructions. (Provided by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control): <https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/OR-1705.pdf>
- The **U.S. Land Grant Extension System** provides non-formal education and learning activities to people throughout the country — to farmers and other residents of rural communities as well as to people living in urban areas: <https://nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory>

EVENT PLANNING

- The **Guest-Imator** is an interactive calculator that estimates how much food you need to plan for your dinner party: <https://savethefood.com/guestimator>



RESOURCES FOR FOOD STEWARDS



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can clergy support food stewards?

- **Ample Harvest's FoodWasteWeekend** website provides sample sermons, resources, and calls to action for congregations around reducing food waste. <https://foodwasteweekend.org/>

How are other faith-based organizations involved in the effort to prevent and divert food waste?

- **Hazon's Seal of Sustainability** (<https://hazon.org/seal/about/>) is a program that provides guidance and support to advance sustainability related education, action, and advocacy in your institution, organization, and community. It provides audit guides focusing on food, facilities, and ecosystems (indoor and outdoor). Hazon also developed a Food Audit Toolkit with tips and practices on how to prevent and divert food waste from landfills (http://hazon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Hazon-Food-Guide_Final.pdf)
- **USDA's Centers of Community Prosperity** represent the partnerships between USDA and USDA stakeholders including USDA agencies, cooperative extension, other federal departments, and private sector partners, such as, nongovernmental and philanthropic organizations, community development financial institutions, and others. Centers of Community Prosperity work to foster hope and opportunity, wealth creation, and asset building by convening state, federal and tribal partners, land-grant universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges, historically black colleges and universities, national development organizations, nonprofit organizations, faith leaders, veterans, and other strategic partners, to focus on the White House Rural Prosperity Taskforce recommendations, as well as the executive orders regarding the Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives, as well as the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council: <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/centers-of-community-prosperity>