



Ambassador Toolkit

What's inside?

- Goals & Objectives
- Hoops to Jump Through
- Knowing Your Audience
- Incentives
- Developing Partnerships
- Ways to Measure Success
- Helpful Resources



SC DEPARTMENT of
**ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES**

des.sc.gov/dwfsc



dontwastefoodsc@des.sc.gov



[@dontwastefoodsc](https://www.instagram.com/dontwastefoodsc)

Toolkit Purpose & Background

The United States wastes more food than any other country. Each year up to 40% of the food supply is thrown away – an annual loss of \$218 billion. All this while more than 47 million Americans are food insecure. In South Carolina, nearly 700,000 tons of food waste were created in fiscal year 2023 while at the same time 1 in 8 South Carolinians struggle with hunger including 1 in 6 children. On average, American families each throw away 21% of food they buy, costing as much as \$1,800 per year. Overall, 71% of the food tossed at home could have been consumed. At home, lots of South Carolinians are food insecure, including 141,110 children.

Don't Waste Food SC (DWFSC) is a collaborative outreach campaign designed to empower all South Carolinians to prevent food waste. It was created by the S.C. Department of Environmental Services's (SCDES) Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling (Office), and founding partners included the S.C. Department of Commerce and the S.C. Department of Agriculture. The Office serves as campaign lead, develops materials, and operates as home base for the campaign. However, DWFSC itself is now a living, breathing part of the community, and therefore belongs to each of you. The idea is that you will take responsibility for reducing food waste in your home and help spread knowledge to your friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers.

This toolkit was created to inform and give educational materials to our ambassadors. Don't Waste Food SC brings together ambassadors from the public and private sectors to share knowledge, coordinate resources, and work together to reduce wasted food in South Carolina. With the use of this toolkit, you will be able to educate and promote food prevention practices within your homes and communities.



Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives are essential components in planning a campaign, as they provide a clear direction and measurable outcomes. Goals are broad, overarching statements that define the overall purpose of the campaign, such as increasing awareness or promoting new habits. Objectives, on the other hand, are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound targets that break down the goal into actionable steps. For example, an objective might be to gain 1,000 social media followers in three months.

By establishing both goals and objectives, ambassadors can create a focused strategy, allocate resources efficiently, track progress, and adjust as needed to ensure the campaign's success.

Hoops to Jump Through

Promoting DWFSC can come with several challenges and barriers. One significant issue is changing deeply ingrained habits, as many people are not aware of the full environmental or economic impact of food waste. There's also the challenge of overcoming the convenience factor, as it may seem easier for people to discard food rather than find ways to repurpose or donate it. Additionally, misinformation about food expiration dates and unclear labeling can contribute to unnecessary waste.

Another barrier is reaching diverse audiences, as different groups have unique perceptions, behaviors, and access to resources, making it hard to create a one-size-fits-all message. Moreover, some businesses may be reluctant to participate due to concerns over cost or logistical complexities in redistributing surplus food.

Overcoming these challenges requires not only raising awareness but also providing actionable solutions and incentives that make reducing food waste easier and more appealing to individuals and organizations alike. With the use of this toolkit and resources, we hope to alleviate the challenges presented.

Who is listening?

Promoting a "Don't Waste Food" campaign to a specific audience is crucial because different groups have varying levels of awareness, behavior patterns, and potential for change. The best audience for this campaign is likely to be environmentally conscious individuals, families, and young adults who are more open to sustainable practices. Millennials and Gen Z, for example, are highly engaged in issues like climate change and are more likely to embrace initiatives that reduce waste. Additionally, targeting households with young children or individuals who are already focused on healthy eating can be effective, as they may be more motivated to reduce waste through portion control, meal planning, and reusing leftovers.

By focusing on these audiences, the campaign can create a lasting impact and foster positive behavioral changes, helping to reduce food waste in a meaningful way. Tailoring the message to resonate with their values and lifestyle is key to promoting lasting change.



Incentives = Involvement

1. FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

- **Save Money** – Wasting food is essentially wasting money. By reducing food waste, you can save money on groceries and going out to eat.
- **Tax Benefits** – In some areas, donating excess food to shelters or food banks can qualify for tax deductions.
- **Lower Waste Disposal Costs** – Reducing food waste can cut down on trash collection fees and landfill costs.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL INCENTIVES

- **Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions** – Food waste in landfills produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Cutting food waste reduces your carbon footprint.
- **Conserve Resources** – Growing, processing, and transporting food consumes water, energy, and labor. Reducing waste saves these resources.
- **Protect Biodiversity** – Less waste means less pressure on land and ecosystems used for agriculture.

3. SOCIAL INCENTIVES

- **Help Fight Hunger** – Donating surplus food to shelters and food banks can help feed people in need.
- **Community Engagement** – Participating in food recovery programs or food-sharing initiatives strengthens local communities.
- **Ethical Responsibility** – Avoiding waste reflects social responsibility and respect for food producers.

4. PERSONAL AND BEHAVIORAL INCENTIVES

- **Healthier Eating Habits** – Planning meals carefully and using leftovers encourages balanced and mindful eating.
- **Encourages Creativity** – Finding ways to use leftovers and food scraps can spark creativity in the kitchen.
- **Sense of Accomplishment** – Successfully reducing waste gives a sense of achievement and control.

5. BUSINESS AND POLICY INCENTIVES

- **Business Cost Savings** – Restaurants and food businesses can reduce costs and increase efficiency by managing inventory better.
- **Reputation and Customer Trust** – Businesses that adopt sustainable practices often build stronger customer loyalty.
- **Government Grants and Programs** – Some governments offer grants or support for food waste reduction initiatives.

Partner Up!

Partners can play a crucial role in helping our campaign grow by expanding its reach, increasing credibility, providing resources, and enhancing overall impact. Strategic partnerships leverage the strengths and networks of different organizations or individuals, making the campaign more effective and sustainable. Successful partnerships work when they are mutually beneficial — each partner gains value from the collaboration while helping the campaign meet its goals. Clear communication, aligned objectives, and shared commitment are essential for long-term impact.

As we partner with ambassadors, we expect our ambassadors to partner with others in their communities to expand our reach. Partnering with others in your community can significantly strengthen a campaign or initiative by combining resources, expanding reach, and building credibility. Successful partnerships are based on clear communication, shared goals, and mutual benefit. Here's a step-by-step approach to forming effective community partnerships:

1. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Start by considering who in your community shares similar values or goals:

- **Local Businesses** – Grocery stores, restaurants, coffee shops, and markets.
- **Nonprofits and Community Organizations** – Food banks, shelters, environmental and advocacy groups.
- **Schools and Universities** – Student groups, faculty members, and campus organizations.
- **Religious and Cultural Groups** – Churches, mosques, temples, and community centers.
- **Local Government and Agencies** – City councils, waste management, and environmental departments.
- **Influential Individuals** – Community leaders, activists, and local influencers. (**Example:** For a food waste campaign, a local grocery store could promote the initiative by offering discounts for reducing food waste, while a school could provide volunteers for outreach events.)

2. RESEARCH AND ALIGN GOALS

Before approaching a potential partner, understand their:

- **Mission and Values** — Ensure they align with your campaign's purpose.
- **Audience** — Consider whether their audience overlaps with or complements yours.
- **Resources** — Identify what they could contribute (e.g., funding, staff, space).
- **Challenges** — Look for ways your campaign could help them solve a problem or meet a goal. (**Example:** A local farm may want to reduce food waste. Partnering with them for a “farm-to-table” educational event could serve both your interests.)

Continued on the back

Partner Up! (continued)

3. REACH OUT EFFECTIVELY

When you contact potential partners:

- **Be Clear and Direct** – Explain your campaign’s purpose and how the partnership benefits them.
- **Highlight Mutual Benefit** – Emphasize how the partnership will create value for both sides.
- **Keep It Simple** – Start with small, manageable asks to build trust.
- **Use Personal Connections** – If possible, have a mutual contact introduce you.
- **Be Professional and Respectful** – A thoughtful, well-prepared pitch increases the chance of a positive response. **(Example:** “We’re organizing a community food waste reduction campaign. Your restaurant’s focus on sustainable sourcing would be a perfect fit — could we partner on an event to educate the community about reducing waste?”)

4. DEFINE ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Once the partner agrees to collaborate, establish clear guidelines:

- **Goals** – What are you both trying to accomplish?
- **Roles** – Who is responsible for what?
- **Resources** – What will each party contribute (money, space, materials, promotion)?

DWFSC Resources

- DWFSC Guide
- DWFSC Guide for Schools
- DWFSC Simple Presentation
- Eat Me First Downloadable
- Everyday Resources and Food Safety Presentation
- Fresh Produce Storage
- Food Label Fact Sheet
- Food Waste Diary
- Guide for Composting at Home
- Icebreaker Game
- Life of a Strawberry
- “Savoring The Seasons” Activity
- Shopping List
- Weekly Meal Calendar

To view these resources online, scan this QR code.



Measuring Progress

To plan an evaluation strategy for a food waste campaign, start by defining clear and measurable goals, such as reducing household food waste by a specific percentage or increasing awareness about food waste reduction practices. Identify key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with these goals, such as the amount of food waste diverted from landfills, social media engagement rates, survey responses on behavior change, and participation in food waste reduction programs. Next, determine the data collection methods, such as pre- and post-campaign surveys, waste audits, social media analytics, and community feedback.

Establish a timeline for evaluation, setting checkpoints throughout the campaign to track progress and make adjustments if needed. Analyze the data to identify trends, successes, and areas for improvement, comparing results against initial benchmarks. Finally, compile the findings into a report, highlighting what worked, what didn’t, and actionable insights for future campaigns to improve effectiveness and long-term impact.



Email dontwastefoodsc@des.sc.gov if you have any questions.



SC DEPARTMENT of
**ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES**

Published by SCDES’s Office of
Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling

Printed on RECYCLED Paper
OR-2751 4/25