



Food: Too Good to Waste Pilot Descriptions and Findings

King County, Washington

Objectives: Reducing wasted food is a priority for King County in its effort to achieve Zero Waste and climate action goals, since food accounts for 14% of the County's consumption-based Greenhouse Gas emissions. The specific aim of the King County pilot was to test the effectiveness of the pilot messaging and tools in reducing food waste and to gauge the impact of a Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) campaign based on these results.

Target Population and Sample Size: The target audience for the King County implementation was families with small children. The pilot was introduced to 110 families with a child enrolled in the 4th grade at the public elementary school in Fall City, a peri-urban town with a population of approximately 2,000.

Targeted Behaviors: During the pilot, all five waste prevention behaviors were introduced to the families.

Tools Used in Pilot: This pilot used both the Shopping List Template and the Fruit and Storage Guide tools. They also structured the pilot around a modified Challenge as described below under the subheading "Implementation Choices". In addition, King County developed several other tools including: a Top Five Ways to Waste Less Food information sheet; Packing a Waste Free Lunch tip sheet; a blog to keep families informed and motivated; a Food: Too Good to Waste daily tip PowerPoint presentation by the teacher; and a Learn More resource list.

Community Partners: King County partnered with a local elementary school through their Green Schools Program. They were assisted by the marketing firm of Colehour and Cohen who have special expertise in CBSM campaigns in developing and implementing their pilot.

Length of Pilot: The participant engagement period lasted approximately two months, including time to recruit and assess and acknowledge the families' participation. The length of the Challenge was five weeks. As King County developed their materials in parallel with the Forum, the overall length of their pilot was eight months.

Implementation Choices: The invitation to participate in the Food: Too Good to Waste Challenge was sent via email to the families of the 4th grade children. A King County representative then visited the classroom to explain to the students why wasted food is bad for the environment and household economics and distributed the measurement tools (bag and weekly worksheets). The teachers incorporated new messages into curricula each week with daily tips/facts. The first week waste collection served to establish a baseline for the volume of food going to waste. Both preventable and non-edible food waste items were collected in the same measurement bag to simplify the process. At the start of the second week of the pilot, all five pilot strategies were introduced. Thereafter, tools were introduced one at a time at one week intervals. Students were also presented a daily food waste reduction tip. All families who completed the challenge were given recognition certificates and entered in a drawing for grocery store gift cards.

Observations: The tools were well received and gave King County confidence in the overall messaging. Students and parents were especially influenced and surprised by how much food (and money) could be saved as a result of simple strategies. As a result of this finding, the county will emphasize potential savings in their broad-scale campaign. On average families that participated all five weeks reduced their food waste by 28%. However, a “challenge” where people have to measure waste and report is great for raising awareness but is onerous. Incentives may help to reduce this barrier to participation. In King County teachers assigned homework and the county offered a prize for participation, but still many families did not follow through. During the pilot, King County didn’t have a lot of local resources to give people, so in the full-scale campaign they are putting emphasis on improving the website for King County and including more info about why it’s important.

Honolulu, Hawaii

Objectives: The City and County of Honolulu (CCH) are interested in food waste management solutions that would both lower the costs of landfilling as well as offset the cost of importing food to the island. The Honolulu pilot sought to test CBSM food waste reduction strategies and tools including a [cookbook](#) with local chef-contributed recipes and food waste prevention tips. It also aimed to see if there was a connection between preventable food waste and the number of meals outside the home.

Target Population and Sample Size: Out of approximately 210 emails sent, 17 households were recruited to participate in a four week challenge. The principal audience was young adults although two households were in their fifties and two households had children. The average age of participants was 34.

Targeted Behaviors: All five behaviors were tested but the “Buy What You Need” strategy was combined with the “Make a Shopping List with Meals in Mind” strategy and relabeled “Smart Shopping”. In addition, households were encouraged to test recipes for using up leftover ingredients.

Tools Used in Pilot: The Workshop Presentation was used to introduce the Food: Too Good to Waste Challenge to the household participants. Behavior support tools included: a food storage guide developed by Eureka Recycling; a menu planner used in the Australian campaign; an “Eat Me First” prompt; and a [cookbook](#) containing recipes for using up leftover ingredients developed by local chefs.

Community Partners: Alexander Lavers researched, directed and managed the pilot in fulfillment of a Master degree in Environmental Sciences from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Length of Pilot: The total elapsed time of the pilot was four months. Recruitment took approximately three weeks, while the length of the Challenge was four weeks. Adapting, preparing and purchasing materials for the challenge took three weeks as did the data analysis. In addition, the project organizer spent several months coordinating the cookbook’s development with the contributing restaurants, the graphic designer, and the county.

Implementation Choices: Recruitment was made by email using personal contacts in two social networks, the Recycling Branch of the Refuse Division of CCH and a Honolulu running club. Challenge participants were asked to measure preventable and non-edible food waste for two weeks after which they measured both types of waste for an additional two weeks while trying food waste reduction strategies. Non-pilot study cookbook recipients will receive an option to fill out a survey on their experience with the cookbook/toolkit; in return for their responses they will receive a coupon to a restaurant featured in the cookbook.

Observations: Participation and retention was facilitated by early and frequent engagement. Pilot participants saw a 19.6% reduction in preventable food waste in weeks using food waste prevention strategies compared to baseline weeks. Households that did not see a reduction in food waste had irregular events that affected their success. There was significant variability in the food waste collection data possibly related to age. Older participants started with less food waste. Households with members aged 28 to 34 achieved the largest reduction but started with more waste.