

FEEDING THE FUTURE

From Surplus to Support: How OCPS and FoodRecovery.org Rewrote the School Surplus Inventory Story

A White Paper by FoodRecovery.org
2022–2025



I. Executive Summary

What began as a small share-table pickup program at five schools in early 2022 has grown into one of the most active school food recovery partnerships in the southeastern United States. Over four years, Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) in Orange County, Florida, and FoodRecovery.org (formerly MEANS Database) have together redirected more than 400,000 pounds of eligible surplus school food to food-insecure households across the Orlando metro area; food that may otherwise have been discarded due to normal school food service operations.

This white paper documents the arc of that partnership: its origins in a shared belief that recovering school food should be easy; its acceleration through USDA grant funding; the operational and institutional challenges encountered along the way; and the measurable community impact achieved year over year. It is intended as both a record of achievement and a replicable model for other large school districts, food recovery organizations, and funders seeking to address wasted food and food insecurity simultaneously.

400,000+	Pounds of food recovered and donated since 2022 (cumulative to date)
127,453	Pounds donated during school year 2025-2026
300,000+	Estimated meals provided to Orlando-area residents
30–37	OCPS schools participating per year at program maturity
22–36	Nonprofit organizations receiving food annually
4	Years of continuous, uninterrupted partnership (2022–2025)

II. Introduction: The Problem This Partnership Was Built to Solve

School cafeterias across the United States generate substantial volumes of surplus food every day, including uneaten breakfast items, unopened milk cartons, excess produce from summer feeding programs, and prepared meals that exceed student demand. According to the World Wildlife Fund,

“food waste in schools amounts to approximately 530,000 tons per year (excluding milk, which [is] calculated separately).” Meanwhile, this wholesome food is desperately needed in the communities that surround those schools.

Orange County, Florida is one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation. OCPS, ranked the Eighth-largest school district in the United States by enrollment, serves students across a highly diverse county where many families rely on school meals as a critical source of nutrition.

As a participant in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, OCPS Food Nutrition Services provides students with access to breakfast, lunch, supper, snacks and summer meals. These programs are regulated by federal, state and local requirements that establish meal patterns, required food components, age-grade calorie ranges, sodium and added sugar limits, saturated fat restrictions, whole grain requirements, such as the Buy American provision, also guide school food authorities in purchasing domestic agricultural products to the maximum extent practicable.

These requirements are essential to ensuring students receive healthy, compliant meals; however, they also create operational complexity. Schools must plan menus, purchase child nutrition-approved products, and prepare meals that meet strict nutrition and procurement standards, while also ensuring sufficient reimbursable meal components for anticipated student participation. Even with Offer versus Serve, which allows students to decline certain components, schools are still required to offer complete meal components in the correct amounts and combinations. Daily participation can fluctuate due to attendance, menu preferences, weather, testing schedules, field trips, early release days, school events, and other factors; as a result, some level of surplus is an expected operational reality in a large-scale school food service program.

In addition, school cafeterias cannot always freely repurpose, substitute, or hold food items once they have been prepared, served, placed on a shared table, or reached applicable food safety time and temperature limits. Items must also remain aligned with USDA meal pattern requirements, calorie ranges, sodium targets, and other nutrition standards if they are to be served as part of a reimbursable meal. As a result, districts must carefully balance two responsibilities: ensuring every student has consistent access to a complete, compliant meal, and safely managing eligible surplus food when it occurs.

OCPS identified an opportunity to strengthen surplus food management by implementing a consistent, safe, and scalable process to recover eligible surplus food and connect it with vetted community partners. Through this partnership, the district can support food access, reduce avoidable waste, and advance the FNS mission to ensure that every child has access to delicious, nutritious meals that prepare students for academic excellence and inspire healthy eating habits.

FoodRecovery.org was built on the premise that this mismatch—surplus food on one side, unmet need on the other—is a solvable logistics problem. The organization operates a web-based platform that connects food donors with nonprofit recipients and manages the transportation infrastructure in between. By 2021, FoodRecovery.org had active school food recovery programs in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia and was actively seeking school district partners in Florida.

This white paper tells the story of what happened when those two organizations found each other, and what it has meant for the people of Orange County, Florida.

III. Background: The Organizations & Existing Policy

Orange County Public Schools (OCPS)

Orange County Public Schools is the eighth largest school district in the United States, serving more than 208,000 students across Central Florida. OCPS Food and Nutrition Services is an enterprise operation within the District that prepares and serves approximately 40 million meals annually to students across Orange County Public Schools. OCPS also maintains an Environmental Compliance and Sustainability Office, which supports districtwide goals to reduce waste, increase recycling, and advance sustainability practices across schools. These two internal departments—FNS and Sustainability—became the critical institutional anchors for the food recovery partnership with FoodRecovery.org.

FoodRecovery.org (formerly MEANS Database)

Founded in 2015 in Washington, D.C., FoodRecovery.org (operating as MEANS Database through 2023) was built on a simple premise: it should be easy for those with excess food to share with those in need. The organization operates a national web-based platform that allows food donors—including schools, caterers, restaurants, and grocers—to post surplus donations that are then claimed and picked up by vetted nonprofit or mutual aid organizations. FoodRecovery.org also manages a network of trained drivers who handle food transport on behalf of donors.

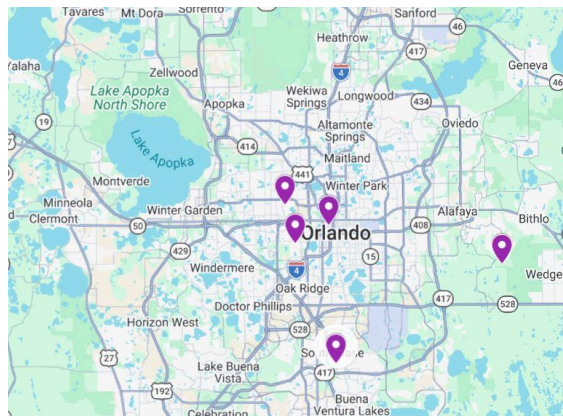
By 2025, FoodRecovery.org had facilitated the recovery of more than 256 million pounds of food nationwide. The OCPS partnership represents one of its most sustained and high-volume school district relationships.

Policy Context

Federal policy under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act and the Food Donation Improvement Act (FDIA) provides the framework to allow safe food donations from businesses to nonprofits for distribution to needy individuals. These federal liability protections for food donors acting in good faith built institutional confidence in the OCPS program. While Florida does not currently provide additional tax incentives for food donations like California or New York, food businesses can still take advantage of federal tax incentives. The USDA and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services provide guidance on food donation to support recovery efforts (Appendix D). [FoodRecovery.org](https://www.foodrecovery.org/) notes that continued policy discussion around food recovery protections and state-level guidance further support schools, nonprofits, and food recovery partners in Florida.

IV. The Partnership: Origins and Structure

The OCPS–FoodRecovery.org partnership began in September 2021, when FoodRecovery.org’s team connected with Karena Bozarth, the Sustainability Manager in OCPS’ Food and Nutrition Services department, thanks to a referral from Florida Impact to End Hunger. The first food donation was recorded on January 10, 2022, when a school posted a share-table pickup. Share Tables help reduce food waste in K–12 schools by allowing students to leave or take unopened food and drinks they do not intend to consume. Others can then enjoy these items during or after meals at no cost. Eligible items remaining from the share table were posted on the FoodRecovery.org platform for a nonprofit to claim. Within months, pickups were happening across five schools, recovering milk, juice, shelf-stable snacks, and occasional prepared or excess bulk food.



The summer of 2022 was a turning point. FoodRecovery.org and OCPS expanded the program from 5 schools to 22 schools to manage surplus from OCPS summer feeding programs, moving up to 2,000 pounds of food at a time. The partnership recovered 24,594 pounds of food over that summer alone, donating to 22 nonprofit organizations across the Orlando area. During the early stages, the program expanded without direct cost to the District. As participation grew, additional funding was needed to support driver coordination, logistics, and platform improvements.

How the Program Works: The Donation Process

The mechanics of the program are intentionally simple. When a cafeteria manager has 40 or more pounds of surplus food, such as leftover produce from a summer feeding program, unopened milk cartons from a share table, or excess breakfast items at the end of a school week, they log into the FoodRecovery.org platform and post the donation in under five minutes. The posting includes the food type, estimated weight, and an available pickup window aligned with the school's schedule.

Only eligible food items handled in accordance with applicable USDA, FDACS, local health, and OCPS food safety procedures are posted for recovery.

Step 1: **Availability**
Step 2: Details
Step 3: Review
Step 4: Post

Post a Donation

Where is the donation located? *

West Creek Elem, 5056 Tacon Dr

[Add a new address](#)

☐ I'm willing to deliver this donation up to: 15 miles

☐ This donation requires a dock height, food-grade vehicle for transportation. ⓘ

Availability

Donations can be claimed anytime after they're posted.

Available from * 05/13/2026 Available to * 05/18/2026

Availability Window * --:--:-- --:--:--

Next

Step 1: **Availability**
Step 2: **Details**
Step 3: Review
Step 4: Post

Post a Donation

Donation Details

Donation Title *

e.g. 10 lbs of apples, 1 case of canned corn

Create a title that best describes what you're donating.

Food Details

What kind of food are you donating? ⓘ

+

Donation Photo optional

Choose File No file chosen

Back Next

[Reset Form](#)

From there, FoodRecovery.org's platform sends out email and text notifications to vetted nonprofits nearby, who can claim the items if they are interested. Once the donation is claimed, the nonprofit can request delivery or pick up the food donation themselves.

Food Recovery org
(781) 676-3267



Maria Rose, someone has just donated 55 house made rolls. Check out app.foodrecovery.org/donations/7065 to claim it.

Food Recovery org • Mar 28, 10:51 AM

The driver arrives at the school kitchen, signs in per OCPS access protocols, loads the food, and transports it directly to the receiving nonprofit. From post to pickup, the entire process is designed to be frictionless for cafeteria staff, who are already managing the demands of a full school day, and for nonprofits who might be short-staff so they can focus on their clients and not take time out of their day picking up food.

Eligible surplus food that may otherwise have required disposal is instead recovered and directed, to a community ministry, or a neighborhood fridge — often within hours of leaving the cafeteria, as seen in the photo below with one of our partners, Fisher of Menistry.



USDA Grant and Formal Structure

In September 2022, OCPS was awarded a two-year, USDA grant for Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) to support implementation with a group of pilot schools and establish formal roles for external partners. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the School Board of Orange County and MEANS Database was executed in August 2023. Under the grant, FoodRecovery.org was responsible for food recovery operations — the diversion of edible surplus to nonprofits — while composting of inedible food scraps was carried out by a separate vendor.

The grant identified 21 pilot schools across five FNS operational areas and established clear roles for each participating stakeholder, including district staff, FNS, and [Foodrecovery.org](https://www.foodrecovery.org).

OCPS' Sustainability Office provided program oversight and grant reporting. FNS staff served as the day-to-day point of contact, while FoodRecovery.org provided the web platform, training, driver scheduling, pickup logistics, and monthly invoicing.

Pilot Schools

The 21 pilot schools spanned the district's geographic and demographic range, including elementary, middle, and high schools across five FNS operational areas. The pilot model established a process for schools to post eligible surplus food donations of 40 pounds or more on the [Foodrecovery.org](https://www.foodrecovery.org) platform, with pickup windows coordinated around each school's bell schedule and cafeteria operations. As with many pilot programs in a large district, implementation varied by school based on staffing, training, scheduling, and operational readiness. During the pilot year, nine of the originally identified schools participated and an additional 20 schools outside the original pilot group also contributed surplus food, demonstrating a broader

district interest and scalability. Several schools developed strong site-level recovery practices and were featured in the [local news](#).

V. Challenges

No partnership of this scale and complexity operates without friction. The OCPS–FoodRecovery.org collaboration encountered meaningful challenges in each of its four years—challenges that are worth documenting honestly, both as institutional learning and as guidance for other districts considering similar programs. Implementing a food recovery program across a large public school district requires coordination, flexibility, and continuous improvement. The OCPS– [FoodRecovery.org](#) partnership encountered operational challenges related to compliance, training, schedule, staffing transitions, and long term funding. These challenges helped shape a more durable and replicable model for school food recovery.

Institutional and Regulatory Compliance

Working within a large public school district requires navigating layers of procurement, liability, and safety compliance. FoodRecovery.org drivers accessing school kitchens were required to obtain OCPS Jessica Lunsford Act background screening and vendor badges—a necessary but time-consuming process, particularly as driver assignments changed over time. District safety and security protocols required sign-in and escorted access for visitors or personnel awaiting completed credentials. Managing these requirements across dozens of school sites demanded ongoing coordination. FNS Sustainability, and [FoodRecovery.org](#) coordinated to ensure recovery practices aligned with applicable food safety procedures, including local health requirements and food hygiene standards.

Logistical Complexity and Schedule Variability

School food recovery opportunities vary based on operational conditions. Donation volume fluctuates with the school calendar, menu changes, manager reassignment, and unexpected events. FoodRecovery.org drivers were required to remain flexible around bell schedules, early dismissal windows, and OCPS breaks and holidays. This requires ongoing coordination around schedule changes, cancellations, and time-sensitive recovery opportunities. Building reliable pickup rhythms across 30+ schools required persistent communication and goodwill on both sides.

Staff Turnover and Training

Staff transitions are normal part of a large district operation and require ongoing training and onboarding. When an FNS manager who had been trained on the FoodRecovery.org platform switched work locations or retired, their replacement often needed to be onboarded from scratch. In the early years, this resulted in gaps in participation by otherwise active schools. FoodRecovery.org responded by developing training materials and, beginning in 2025, offering

virtual training sessions twice per year, requiring each school to have a minimum of two staff members trained to avoid gaps in coverage.

Technology Adoption

Not all cafeteria managers were immediately comfortable with the web-based posting system. As one early participant reflected: “While I was reluctant at first to try something new, I said let me give it a try. I soon found out how easy and quickly it was to use MEANS Database and input the information. It took less than 5 minutes.” Overcoming initial reluctance required hands-on support, and FoodRecovery.org made platform updates throughout the partnership—including improved reporting, notification options, and user interface improvements—at OCPS’ request.

As with any new operational system introduced across multiple schools sites, successful implementation required clear training, consistent communication, and ongoing support. Cafeteria managers were learning a new web-based posting process while continuing to manage daily meal service, food safety requirements, staffing needs, and school schedules. To support adoption, [FoodRecovery.org](https://www.foodrecovery.org) and OCPS provided guidance to help managers understand when and how to post eligible surplus food items, and [FoodRecovery.org](https://www.foodrecovery.org) continued to refine the platform throughout the partnership.

Platform improvements included enhanced reporting, expanded notification options, and user interface updates designed to make the donation process faster and easier for school-based staff. The goal was to keep the process simple, efficient, and minimally disrupted to cafeteria operations, allowing eligible surplus food to be posted in just a few minutes.

One early participating cafeteria manager noted that although the platform was new at first, the posting process quickly became simple and efficient, taking less than five minutes to complete.

Securing Ongoing Funding

The USDA pilot grant provided critical initial funding, but it had a defined end date. As the grant concluded in spring 2025, securing continued funding for driver coordination and operational support became the partnership’s most pressing challenge. In 2025, FoodRecovery.org submitted an application to become an official vendor with OCPS. OCPS and FoodRecovery.org worked through the District’s vendor approval, procurement, and agreement processes to support continuity of services. A new agreement was executed in fall 2025, allowing the program to continue without interruption, demonstrating OCPS’ continued commitment to reducing avoidable food waste and supporting community food access. It was described by FoodRecovery.org as “a huge win for our partnership.”

VI. Successes and Impact

Year-over-year, the OCPS–FoodRecovery.org partnership has delivered a consistent and growing impact. The numbers tell an important part of the story.

The impact of the partnership is particularly significant given the scale and complexity of OCPS operations. The program was implemented within federally regulated school meal environments, across multiple school sites, with daily participation fluctuations, strict food safety requirements, and site-specific schedules. Despite those complexities, the partnership continued without interruptions and produced year-over-year growth in recovered food, nonprofit participation, and community impact.

Year-by-Year Growth

Year	Lbs. Recovered	Schools Participating	Nonprofits Served	Notable Milestone
2022	43,888	37	36	First year; USDA grant submitted
2023	80,522	32	22	Doubled donations from 2022; USDA grant awarded
2024	106,227	30	30	200,000 lb. cumulative milestone hit; 24% increase
2025	135,249	31	32	USDA pilot complete; new agreement signed; 27% increase
Total	365,886*	—	—	*Cumulative per EOY reports; 400K+ includes 2022 summer + YTD

Beyond raw poundage, the partnership has generated broad community impact:

- Estimated 300,000+ meals provided to Orange County residents over the four-year period
- Carbon savings: In 2025 alone, food donations offset an estimated 133,721 metric tons of CO₂e, equivalent to 340 million miles driven
- Fair Market Value: The 2025 food donations alone were valued at \$266,440
- Nonprofit ecosystem growth: Receiving organizations have included Orlando Union Rescue Mission, United Against Poverty, ICNA Relief Lake Cares, Samaritan Resource Center, She-Lion Foundation, and more than two dozen others
- Consistency of nonprofit relationships: Several organizations have received OCPS food donations every year since 2022

Notable Program Innovations

Several creative solutions stand out as hallmarks of the partnership's adaptability:

- **Winter Break collections:** For three consecutive years, FoodRecovery.org coordinated district-wide collection of surplus food before winter break, with United Against Poverty as the primary recipient. In 2025, this effort yielded 11,122 pounds of perishable food that may otherwise have required disposal due to the winter break. This required a refrigerated trailer in multiple areas throughout the county for donation drop-offs, followed by a consolidation of items and organization onto pallets so United Against Poverty could collect them.
- **Hurricane supply kit recovery:** One school donated surplus hurricane supply kits, which were received by Young's Legacy and Mentors for Fatherless Children & Abused Families.
- **Fairness Algorithm:** In 2025, FoodRecovery.org implemented its Fairness Algorithm in Orlando, to help expand access for smaller and newer nonprofits—including four organizations that had never received a donation before—gained access to OCPS food donations via prioritized notifications.
- **National visibility:** Karena Bozarth and Emily Grant co-presented the partnership at the Pre-School Nutrition Association Conference (2024) and the Food Recovery Forum during Food Waste Prevention Week (2025), reaching hundreds of FNS professionals nationally.

Voices from the Community

"We make sack lunches every Wednesday. We do anywhere from 300–400. When we give the milk with the sack lunches, the unhoused community absolutely loves it."

— Deniece Anderson, Maranatha Cafe

"The donation from FoodRecovery.org really helped our organization serve the community and meet them where they are. Every Friday, families from underserved communities look forward to a box of food."

— Amanda Chidzikwe, She-Lion Foundation

"Donating wholesome food for human consumption is important to me. It diverts food waste from landfills and puts food on the table for families in need. Working with MEANS Database makes the process of food donation quick and easy."

— Jeanneth Moreira, Former FNS Manager, Carver Middle School

VII. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Four years of continuous operation have generated hard-won institutional knowledge about what supports successful school food recovery and what barriers districts should plan for. The following

recommendations are offered for school districts, food recovery organizations, and funders considering similar programs.

What Made This Partnership Work

- Internal champions at both organizations: Karena Bozarth on the OCPS side and Emily Grant at FoodRecovery.org maintained consistent communication and accountability across staff transitions, school-year rhythms, and grant cycles.
- A clear MOU with defined roles: The USDA-funded agreement specified exactly what each participating organization was responsible for, reducing ambiguity and building trust. The subsequent signed agreement in 2025 provided continued clarity for program operations.
- Technology that lowered the barrier to participation: The FoodRecovery.org platform reduced the administrative burden on cafeteria managers by allowing donations to be posted quickly and consistently. A donation could be posted in under five minutes and equally claimed in minutes.
- Flexibility as a core operating principle: Both organizations consistently adapted to last-minute schedule changes, manager transitions, and unexpected donation volumes. Flexibility was essential to sustaining the program through normal school-year changes, staffing transitions, and variable donation volumes.
- Regular documentation and reporting: Annual end-of-year reports created accountability, generated shareable data for grant applications, and maintained institutional memory.

Recommendations for Other Districts

- Start small, plan to scale: The OCPS program began with five schools and grew organically. Attempting to launch a 30-school program simultaneously would have been overwhelming.
- Identify your FNS champion early: A designated district point of contact helps coordinate operations, support school-based staff, resolve questions, and maintain continuity across the school year.
- School Districts and School Food Authorities should consult with their local health department on food recovery guidelines in accordance with their food safety regulations.
- Build a team of district and school-based stakeholders that are equally invested in District policy, food service operations, procurement and student well-being.
- Budget for driver coordination: Food recovery does not happen without reliable transportation. Grant budgets should explicitly include driver fees, badging costs, and logistics support.
- Invest in paid, credentialed drivers rather than volunteers: This is one of the most important operational lessons from the OCPS program. School districts require all personnel accessing campus, including food pickup drivers, to complete background screening under Florida's Jessica Lunsford Act and obtain a vendor badge before entering kitchen areas. This process takes time and coordination, and it must be renewed. Volunteer drivers, however well-intentioned, introduce unreliability into a system that depends on consistent, timely pickups. A missed pickup can result in a lost recovery opportunity. FoodRecovery.org's use of a small, stable cohort of paid drivers was a significant factor in building trust and maintaining program consistency year over year.

- Expect and plan for staff turnover: Cafeteria managers change frequently. Training materials and onboarding processes must be systematized, not dependent on individual relationships.
 - Pursue federal funding: The USDA Composting and Food Waste Reduction grant was a critical enabler. Other districts should monitor USDA grant opportunities and engage food recovery partners in grant applications. Local, private funding is another option to pursue.
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VIII. Conclusion

The OCPS–FoodRecovery.org partnership is proof that when the right institutions commit to solving a solvable problem, the results compound year over year. What started with a single school, share-table pickup in January 2022 has become a deeply embedded, replicable model that now recovers hundreds of thousands of pounds of food annually and directs it to the families and communities that need it most.

While the program has grown substantially, opportunities remain to expand food recovery as staffing, funding, training, and operational capacity allow. The need in Orange County and across Florida is greater than ever. The infrastructure built over these four years with the platform, the driver network, the nonprofit relationships, and the institutional knowledge is the foundation for something much larger.

For other districts wondering whether this is possible: it is. The model exists. The lessons are documented. The invitation is open.

Appendix

Appendix A: Four-Year Impact Summary

The following table summarizes cumulative program outcomes across all four years of the OCPS–FoodRecovery.org partnership. All figures are drawn from annual end-of-year reports produced jointly by OCPS and FoodRecovery.org.

Year-by-Year Totals

- 2022: 43,888 lbs recovered | 37 schools | 36 nonprofits served
- 2023: 80,522 lbs recovered | 32 schools | 22 nonprofits served
- 2024: 106,227 lbs recovered | 30 schools | 30 nonprofits served
- 2025: 135,249 lbs recovered | 31 schools | 32 nonprofits served

Top Food Categories (consistent across all years)

- Dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt) — most donated category every year
- Juice and fruit (fruit cups, applesauce, shelf-stable fruits)
- Produce (fresh vegetables and fruit, particularly during summer programs)
- Breakfast and snack items (granola bars, crackers, cereal bars)

Appendix B: Sample Partnership Framework

The following summarizes the key structural elements of the OCPS–FoodRecovery.org partnership agreement in plain language. Districts considering a similar program may use this as a starting-point framework when engaging a food recovery partner.

School District Responsibilities

- Designate an internal point of contact (Food and Nutrition Services) to coordinate day-to-day operations
- Provide training and support for cafeteria staff on share table procedures and food safety protocols
- Benchmark program participation
- Facilitate background screening and campus badging for recovery partner drivers per applicable state law
- Review and approve monthly invoices; provide grant reporting as required
- Maintain flexibility around school schedules, breaks, and donation variability

Food Recovery Partner Responsibilities

- Provide and maintain an app or platform for donation posting, tracking, and reporting
- Manage a network of trained, background-screened drivers who hold valid campus access credentials; or solidify a strong volunteer-driver system and network
- Coordinate donor-to-recipient matching and same-day pickup logistics
- Submit itemized monthly invoices and produce annual impact reports
- Support staff onboarding and provide platform training as needed

Cost Structure (USDA CWFR Grant Model, Per year)

- Develop a one-time start of fee
- Determine per-pick up service fee
- Determine logistics, reporting, technology/IT support and/or administrative fee (determined based on current IT costs and partial salary for operations personnel)

Note: Costs were initially funded through the USDA Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) Pilot Grant. Districts pursuing similar programs should explore USDA grant opportunities to offset platform and logistics costs.

Appendix C: Resources for Districts

Federal Policy

- Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (42 U.S.C. § 1791) provides federal liability protection for food donors and nonprofit organizations acting in good faith when donating apparently wholesome food

- Food Donation Improvement Act (FDIA), signed into law January 2023 (H.R. 6251 / S. 3281, 117th Congress) expands the Emerson Act's liability protections in two key ways: (1) qualified direct donors such as schools, restaurants, caterers, and grocers may now donate food directly to individuals or groups other than nonprofits with full liability protection; and (2) nonprofit organizations may charge a small reduced price to cover handling and distribution costs without losing protection. Particularly relevant for school food recovery programs, as it explicitly names school food authorities as qualified direct donors. Schools enrolled in USDA CNP NSLP, BSP meals programs are permitted to donate federally funded meals to non-profit/501c3 organizations. USDA Memo: SP 11-2012, CACFP 05-2012, SFS 07-2012.
- USDA FNS Guidance on School Meal Food Donation:
<https://www.usda.gov/about-food/food-safety/food-loss-and-waste/schools>
- USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUIAP) Grant Programs:
www.usda.gov/urban

Florida-Specific

- Jessica Lunsford Act (Florida Statutes § 1012.465) governs background screening requirements for non-instructional personnel and vendors accessing school grounds; applicable to all food recovery drivers operating on school campuses
- Florida Food Recovery Coalition (FFRC) is a statewide coalition of 100+ member organizations supporting food recovery policy and practice across Florida;
www.floridafoodrecovery.org
- Florida Impact to End Hunger is a statewide resource for food security programs and policy; www.fieh.org
- Florida Policy Institute provides updates on state-specific policy including food-security related updates; <https://www.floridapolicy.org/>
- Florida Food Policy Council focuses on food access, climate justice, land stewardship, and policy advocacy; <https://www.floridafpc.org/>
- Florida Department of Health, Chapter 64E-11 (Food Hygiene)

Appendix D: Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources: FoodRecovery.org Annual Reports

FoodRecovery.org. (2022). *OCPS food recovery yearly report: 2022*. FoodRecovery.org (formerly MEANS Database).

The inaugural annual report for the OCPS partnership. Provides baseline data including 43,888 pounds recovered, 37 participating schools, 36 nonprofit recipients, and top donor schools. Also documents the 2022 summer program, which recovered 24,594 pounds from 20 schools and introduced the partnership's capacity to manage high-volume summer feeding program surplus. Includes partner feedback and next-steps framing. Primary source for all 2022 program statistics cited in this white paper.

FoodRecovery.org. (2023). *OCPS food recovery yearly report: 2023*. FoodRecovery.org (formerly MEANS Database).

The second annual report, covering the first semester of the USDA CFWR pilot program. Documents 80,522 pounds recovered (double the prior year), 32 participating schools, and 22 nonprofit recipients. Highlights include USDA grant award, a Food Waste Prevention Week presentation attended by 100+ guests, and a year-end bulk collection of 4,000+ pounds for United Against Poverty. Estimated CO₂ offset of 203,829 pounds. Primary source for all 2023 program statistics cited in this white paper.

FoodRecovery.org. (2024). OCPS food recovery yearly report: 2024. FoodRecovery.org.

The milestone year report, documenting 106,227 pounds recovered – a 24% increase – across 30 schools and 30 nonprofits. Records the 200,000-pound cumulative milestone, the rebranding from MEANS Database to FoodRecovery.org, the Pre-School Nutrition Association Conference presentation, and a winter break collection of 8,138 pounds for United Against Poverty. CO₂ offset is estimated at 68.37 metric tons. News 13 media coverage noted. Primary source for all 2024 program statistics cited in this white paper.

FoodRecovery.org. (2025). OCPS food recovery yearly report: 2025. FoodRecovery.org.

The most recent annual report, marking FoodRecovery.org's 10th anniversary. Documents 135,249 pounds recovered – a 27% increase – across 31 schools and 32 nonprofits, with a cumulative total of 362,431 pounds since 2021. Covers completion of the USDA pilot program, signing of a new OCPS vendor agreement, launch of the Fairness Algorithm, first virtual FNS staff training, and a year-end collection of 11,122 pounds for United Against Poverty. Fair market value of donations estimated at \$266,440; CO₂ offset at 133,721 metric tons. Primary source for all 2025 program statistics cited in this white paper.

Federal Legislation and Policy

Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1791 (1996).

The foundational federal statute provides civil and criminal liability protection for food donors who donate apparently wholesome food in good faith to nonprofit organizations. Cited in this white paper as a key enabler of institutional confidence in the OCPS food recovery program. Relevant to any school district evaluating the legal landscape for food donation.

Food Donation Improvement Act, H.R. 6251/S. 3281, 117th Cong. (2023).

Signed into law by President Biden in January 2023, this act expands the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act's liability protections to cover qualified direct donors – explicitly including school food authorities – who donate food directly to individuals or organizations other than nonprofits. Also extends protections to nonprofits that charge a small reduced price to cover handling costs. Directly relevant to OCPS as a school food authority operating a food recovery program.

Organizational and Government Sources

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. (n.d.). Food recovery program.

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Food-Nutrition/Nutrition-Programs/Food-Recovery-Program>

The Florida FDACS Food Recovery Program page provides state-level guidance on food safety requirements, best practices for food donation, and relevant Florida statutes governing food recovery. Referenced in this white paper in the policy context and resources sections as a key state-level resource for Florida districts considering food recovery programs.

Orange County Public Schools. (n.d.). Schools. <https://www.ocps.net/schools-home>

The official OCPS schools directory. The eighth-largest school district in the United States, OCPS serves approximately 209,000 students across 214 schools in Orange County, Florida.

Referenced in this white paper for district enrollment figures and school counts used in the organizational background section.

World Wildlife Fund. (2019). *Food waste warriors: A deep dive into food waste in US schools.*
<https://www.worldwildlife.org/news/stories/food-waste-warriors/>

A landmark 2019 study analyzing post-service food waste in 46 schools across eight states. Found that each student wastes an average of 39.2 pounds of food per year, estimating national K-12 school food waste at approximately 530,000 tons annually (excluding milk) — costing up to \$1.7 billion per school year. Referenced in this white paper's introduction to establish the national scale of the school food waste problem that the OCPS-FoodRecovery.org partnership was designed to address.

ReFED. (n.d.). *Policy finder: Florida.* <https://policyfinder.refed.org/florida>

ReFED's Policy Finder is a continuously updated database of food donation laws, tax incentives, liability protections, and policy guidance at the federal and state level. The Florida-specific page provides current information on food donation protections and incentives applicable to OCPS and other Florida school districts and food recovery organizations. A valuable resource for practitioners seeking up-to-date policy guidance beyond what static legislative citations can provide.

Contact

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