



# Regional Food Donation Coordinator - Pilot Final Report

**Reducing food waste and alleviating food insecurity**

**Healthy Cities. Healthy People.**

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## Executive Summary

In September 2022, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) engaged Healthy Cities Illawarra (HCI) to undertake a pilot project to ascertain the value and merit of a Regional Food Donation Coordinator (RFDC). The RFDC's role was defined as strengthening connections and increasing collaboration across the food rescue and relief sector to increase rescued food donations in the Illawarra region.

An important factor in the decision to work with HCI was their governance of well-established community coalition, Food Fairness Illawarra (FFI). Vast networks and on the ground community collaboration in the food security and community nutrition space for more than 10 years made HCI well placed to pilot a coordinated approach to food donations.

The methodology of this pilot project involved 4 stages:

1. Identification of barriers and opportunities within the food and relief sector, from the perspective of food relief agencies, food rescue organisations and food donors.
2. Examination of the barriers and opportunities and interrelated relationships between stakeholders to highlight multiple intersections where the RFDC could effectively provide proactive support, identify strategic opportunities, and foster strategies and activities to drive positive change.
3. Implementation and process evaluation of pilot activities designed to drive positive change.
4. Evaluation of the pilot activities and identification of key tasks for the role of a RFDC.

There are several conclusions that we have drawn from this pilot that demonstrate that a position accountable for a collective, organised operational system is advantageous to a wider ability to collect surplus food and redistribute to those in need in a timely manner. Also, that this can assist in alleviating current supply & logistics issues as well as environmental (e.g. reduced greenhouse gas emissions) and social (e.g. vulnerable people going without food) issues.

Key findings of this pilot RFDC project include:

- The adoption and expansion of RFDC positions throughout NSW could effectively coordinate processes, activities and stakeholder networks to increase food donations to the charity sector and reduce food waste.
- RFDC positions need to be housed within appropriate organisations with a regional remit to be effective.
- RFCC positions need to be adequately resourced for a significant period to result in effective change.

## Definitions:

- **Food donors** – Supermarkets, food businesses (e.g., catering, cafes and restaurants) and individuals who donated surplus edible food to a food rescue or relief organisation.
- **Food rescue** – the collection of edible food that would have otherwise gone to waste.
- **Food rescue organisations** – organisations that collect and distribute rescued food from food donors and either directly deliver it to food relief agencies or store it in warehouses, ready for distribution to agencies for a fee or for free.
- **Food relief agencies** – community organisations that strongly support community members with free or low-cost food by providing food hampers, food pantries, community kitchens, etc., and some are also involved in food rescue.
- **Illawarra Food Relief and Rescue Working Group** – A working group established within Food Fairness Illawarra to foster open communication within the Food Rescue & Relief Sector to share practical knowledge and learnings to ensure a coordinated response.

## Background & Introduction

In September 2022, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) engaged Healthy Cities Illawarra (HCI) to “Formalise what the role of a Regional Food Donation Coordinator (RFDC) could look like, by actively operating within this position and critically reflecting on the impact and effectiveness of the different activities undertaken”. The RFDC’s role was defined as strengthening connections and increasing collaboration across the food rescue and relief sector to increase rescued food donations in the Illawarra region.

The objectives of the pilot were to:

1. Identify barriers faced by the Illawarra food rescue and relief sector.
2. Identify opportunities for the RFDC to provide support and develop a shortlist of RFDC pilot activities based on identified barriers.
3. Implement shortlisted pilot activities.
4. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess effectiveness of pilot activities.
5. Reflect on the pilot outcomes, provide:
  - a. recommendations for refining the role and responsibilities of the RFDC position,
  - b. criteria for organisations expressing interest in an RFDC role,
  - c. suggested KPIs and coordinator activities,
  - d. a toolkit for coordinators to adapt for their region, and
  - e. a summary of the added benefit of the role for the community, food rescue and relief agencies, councils, and state government.

The pilot was delivered from October 2022 to May 2023 by a 0.6 FTE program coordinator (Berbel Franse).

## The Problem: Food Insecurity & Food Waste

In 2021/22, over 2 million Australian households (21%) experienced severe food insecurity, meaning they ran out of food because of financial limitations and, at worst, went entire days without eating.<sup>1</sup> The leading causes for this staggering percentage of food insecurity included increased/high living expenses (64%) and reduced/low income or government benefits (42%), as well as other factors such as a change of household living arrangement (24%) or natural disasters (19%).<sup>1</sup> With the continuing rise in the cost of living (groceries, energy and housing costs) and predicted greater frequency of climate change/natural disaster-related food supply chain disruptions, it is likely that even more people in our community will be pushed into food insecurity in the coming years to come.<sup>2</sup>

Food insecurity affects all aspects of daily life, as food is a fundamental human right and a building block for our lives, health, family connections and social interactions. Not having access to enough food can lead to significant short- and long-term health impacts, including developmental delays in children, poor physical and mental health and social isolation.<sup>3</sup> For the prosperity of our community and an active and healthy lifestyle people must have access to affordable, nutritious and safe food that meets their dietary needs and cultural preferences. Certain communities, such as Indigenous people, unemployed individuals, and single-parent households, are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foodbank, 2022. Foodbank Hunger Report. <https://reports.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Foodbank-Hunger-Report-2022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> IPCC, 2021. Special Report on Climate Change and Land – Chapter 5: Food Security. <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/chapter-5/>

<sup>3</sup> Australian Household Food Security Data Coalition. (2022). Household Food Security Data Consensus Statement. <https://righttofood.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Household-Food-Security-Data-Consensus-Statement2022.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Rosier, K. (2011). *Food insecurity in Australia*. Australian Institute of Family Studies. [https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/ps9\\_0.pdf](https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/ps9_0.pdf)

Meanwhile, in 2020, Australia produced enough food to feed around 75 million people and could have fed our entire population thrice.<sup>5</sup> Despite this success, there is an estimated \$36.6 billion loss to the Australian economy each year due to food waste.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the economic costs, over 7.6 million tonnes of food intended for human consumption is wasted yearly.<sup>6</sup> This significantly impacts the environment by wasting resources such as land, water, energy and fuel to produce and distribute this food. When disposed of in landfill, food waste has further environmental impacts, such as the production of greenhouse gas emissions.

## The Solution / Opportunity

Food rescue poses an excellent opportunity to address food waste and food insecurity.<sup>5</sup> Despite significant efforts by food rescue and relief organisations to divert surplus food from landfill to people in need, the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy for NSW indicates that only 8% of edible surplus food is rescued at the supermarket level. Scaling up food rescue efforts has the potential to support the ambitious target of halving food waste by 2030 and for all Australians to experience the resulting environmental, economic, and social benefits.<sup>7</sup>

The Food Rescue Sector Action Plan 2021-23 by Stop Food Waste Australia lays the groundwork for scaling up food rescue efforts. The plan includes policy changes and industry-led initiatives. It provides guidance on how the sector can move forward to achieve three primary goals: increasing the volume of edible nutritious food recovered, decreasing food waste across the food value chain, and improving the collection and distribution of rescued food to assist food-insecure people in Australia. This will require cross-governmental collaboration and activities such as working with the food rescue and relief organisations to develop their capability and capacity to accept greater volumes and types of donated food. Working collaboratively, we can make significant progress towards reducing food waste and addressing food insecurity.

The synergy between government agencies showcases the potential for collective efforts in addressing complex challenges at the intersection of food waste and food insecurity. A Regional Food Donation Coordinator (RFDC) position has the potential to tap into the work plans, expertise and resources of various government departments, enhancing regional ability to address the complex challenges of food waste and food insecurity. A summary of NSW government bodies invested in this issue is below:

NSW Government agency	Purpose	Relevance strategies and targets
<b>Food waste</b>		
<b>Department of Planning and Environment</b>	<p>Commitment to taking decisive and responsible action on climate change.</p> <p>Commitment to playing its part in making the transition to a circular economy over the next 20 years.</p>	<p><a href="#">NSW Net Zero Plan Stage 1 2020-2030</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Net zero emissions from organic waste by 2030</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030</li> <li>Net zero emission from organics in landfill by 2030</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Australian food & grocery Council, 2020. <https://www.afgc.org.au/news-and-media/2020/06/no-need-to-panic-australia-produces-enough-food-for-75-million>

<sup>6</sup> FIAL, 2021. The National Food Waste Strategy Feasibility Study – Final Report. <https://workdrive.zohopublic.com.au/external/06152b9ff5971843391f39fc4d32a847e56fb907c167a4a645887b0a4bc43000>

<sup>7</sup> Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2021. NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041, [https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/385683/NSW-Waste-and-Sustainable-Materials-Strategy-2041.pdf](https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/385683/NSW-Waste-and-Sustainable-Materials-Strategy-2041.pdf)

<b>Adapt NSW</b>	Taking decisive and responsible action on climate change	<a href="#">NSW Climate Change Adaptation Strategy</a>
<b>Food insecurity</b>		
<b>NSW Reconstruction Authority</b>	Responsible for facilitating disaster prevention, preparedness, recovery, reconstruction, and adaptation to the effects of natural disasters in NSW.	<p><a href="#">The Authority will:</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lead disaster resilience, risk reduction, adaptation and mitigation activities</li> <li>• provide education and infrastructure before disasters to minimise harm</li> </ul>
<b>NSW Health</b>	Investment in health and wellness for the people of NSW. It outlines steps for preventing overweight and obesity and achieving better health outcomes for all and sets the foundation for collaboration between NSW Health, partner organisations and agencies to support keeping people healthy and well over the next decade.	<p><a href="#">NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2022-2032</a></p> <p>Prevention programs and services to support healthy eating and active living. (With a focus on priority populations and cross-sectoral work to reduce structural and social barriers that create inequities in health)</p>
<b>Department of Communities and Justice</b>	Purpose is to help create a safe, just, resilient and inclusive NSW in which everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential.	<p><a href="#">DCJ Strategic Direction 2020-2024</a></p> <p>Divisions:</p> <p>Active and inclusive communities</p> <p>Children and families thrive</p>

## Illawarra Context

The Illawarra region is fortunate to have an active food relief and rescue ‘sector’ that collectively rescue a vast amount of food to feed the increasing number of people in need. This work has an enormous impact and is often accomplished on a shoestring budget, with the support of exceptional volunteers. The sector comprises of multiple food donors (incl. the three major supermarket chains), three national food rescue organisations and over 32 food relief agencies, see Figure 1. Whilst there is a lot of activity, it also reflects many organisations often working separately. There are current opportunities for networking and collaboration, but these are not always prioritised simply due to lack of time and resourcing. For example, in the Illawarra region, there are concerns that distribution of donated food may not always be even due to a lack of common processes which could be leading too ‘double dipping’ for some and less for others.

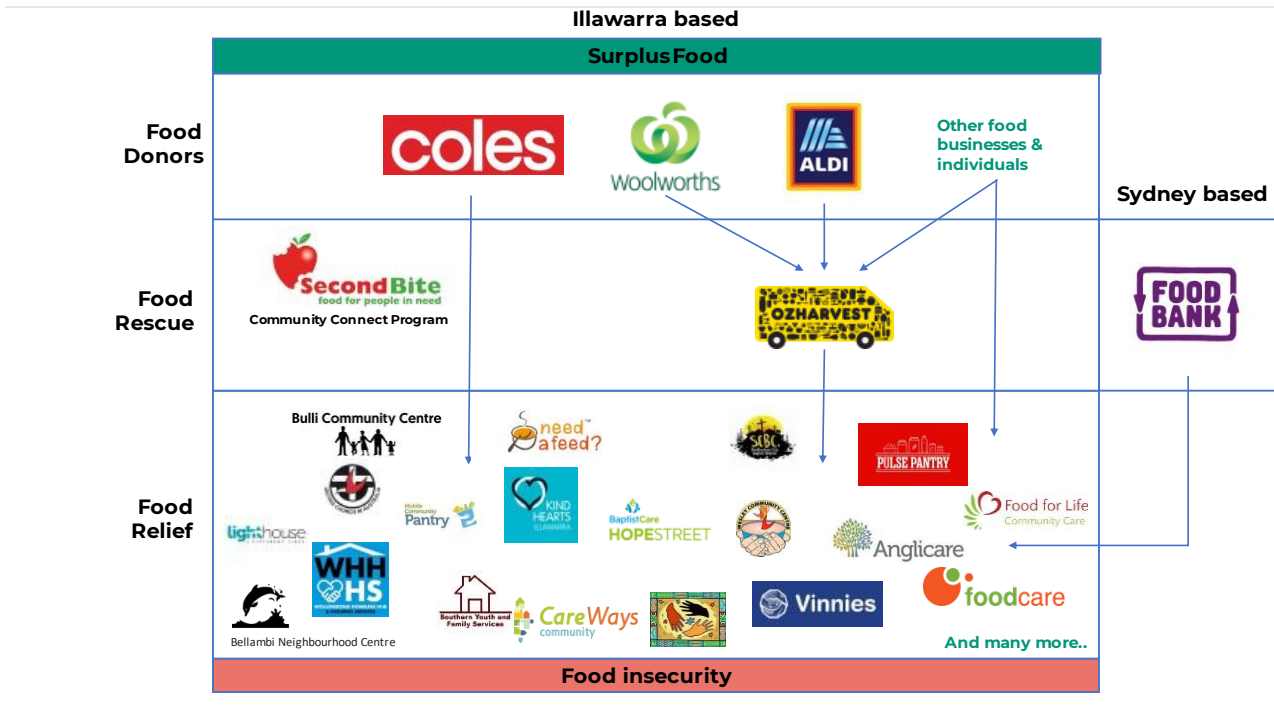


Figure 1: Illawarra Food Rescue and Relief Landscape

## Food rescue in the Illawarra

Food rescue involves collecting surplus food from supermarkets, farmers, and businesses, which would have otherwise gone to waste. This rescued food is then distributed to, or used by, various food relief agencies. OzHarvest plays a significant role in spearheading food rescue efforts in the Illawarra region. They collect surplus food five days a week from all Woolworths and Aldi stores in the area, as well as from other independent donors, to supply rescued food to a total of 44 local food relief agencies and school programs. In addition to OzHarvest, several food relief agencies in the Illawarra directly collect food donations from donors. They participate in programs such as SecondBite's Community Direct Program for Coles supermarket stores or leverage their own established connections with donors. Although Foodbank is not physically located in the Illawarra region, they play a complementary role in the local food rescue efforts by offering access to rescued and bulk-purchased pantry items to local food relief agencies.



**OzHarvest**

A national food rescue organisation that aims to recover excess fresh food from donors and transport it directly to food relief agencies at no cost. OzHarvest has been operating in the Illawarra region since 2013, but in 2020 they expanded their operations by establishing a small warehouse and deploying two full-time vans to collect surplus food. They now rescue food from all Woolworths and Aldi supermarket stores and other donors and deliver to food relief agencies and school programs that feed people in need. OzHarvest's unwavering commitment to reducing food waste and food insecurity has significant impacts in the Illawarra.



**SecondBite - Community Connect Program**

A national food rescue organisation that collaborates with various food producers and retailers, including a national partnership with Coles. Its main objective is to recover excess fresh and nutritious food and provide it to local food relief agencies without charge. Established in 2016, SecondBite runs its Community Connect program in the Illawarra, facilitating direct food collection by local food relief agencies from donors like Coles.



**Foodbank - Sydney Based**

Australia's largest food redistribution organisation, Foodbank, plays a vital role in serving as the primary pantry for the charity sector. They offer various rescued and purchased food and groceries, with a focus on pantry items such as sauces and breakfast cereals. Orders can be placed online, typically in bulk quantities, with rescued items offered free of charge and purchased items requiring a small cost recovery fee. Foodbank operates out of a distribution centre in Sydney, and customers can either pick up their orders or have them freighted to the Illawarra for a transportation fee.



## Food relief in the Illawarra

In the Illawarra, over 32 food relief agencies work to address the diverse needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. These organisations serve a wide range of people, ranging from families struggling to make ends meet, to individuals experiencing homelessness or other forms of disadvantage. Food relief is often used as a soft entry point for these organisations to establish trust with individuals and families and provide a platform for additional community development services such as counselling, financial and legal assistance, and other social services. The [Low Cost & Free Meals Directory](#) provides an overview of all the agencies in the region, the type of assistance offered, operating hours and contact details.



## Food Fairness Illawarra Activities & Resources

Food Fairness Illawarra (FFI) is a community coalition established in 2005 to work towards food security for all in the Illawarra region. Working closely with local councils, the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, the University of Wollongong, Healthy Cities Illawarra, community groups, charities, businesses, and individuals, FFI uses a collective impact approach to support food rescue and relief efforts since 2005. FFI is funded via Healthy Cities Illawarra through the NSW Ministry of Health's NGO Program. This allows for a 0.4 FTE program coordinator role.

FFI has achieved several collaborative outcomes including launching the Illawarra's first Low Cost & Free Meals Directory in 2006 in partnership with Wollongong City Council and hosting a "Stop Good Food Going to Waste" morning tea in 2014. This led to the establishment of the FFI Food Rescue and Relief Working Group. Thanks to the collective work of the working group, FFI has secured multiple grants, including the 2019 EPA Food Donation Education grant project, which resulted in the development of the web-based [Guide to Donating Food](#). This guide provides a practical framework for engaging additional food donors and highlights the benefits of food donations for the community and the environment.

## The Regional Food Donation Coordinator – Pilot

Funded by the EPA, the opportunities and benefits of a Regional Food Donation Coordinator were piloted by HCI/FFI from October 2022 to May 2023. The pilot aimed to:

- Explore what a Regional Food Donation Coordinator role could ‘look like’,
- Develop a tool kit to assist other coordinators implementing a RFDC in their area; and,
- Develop a report to share learnings.

Berbel Franse was appointed as the Project Manager for the pilot, leveraging her knowledge and networks in the food relief and rescue sector, as the coordinator of FFI. Throughout the seven-month duration of the pilot, Berbel’s time was 0.6 FTE on the RFDC project, while the FFI component of her role was reduced to 0.2 FTE. The pilot commenced in Oct 2022 with stakeholder engagement until February 2023 to build relationships and identify sector barriers and opportunities. The next step was to identify and prioritise actions to undertake for the RFDC pilot. From March to June 2023, the pilot focused on delivering as many activities as possible within the given timeframe, including drafting the tool kit resources and final reporting.

All activities detailed in this report were carried out as part of the pilot. An important caveat to consider is the existing knowledge, networks, and resources of FFI as a starting point from which to leverage. It is likely that future or potential RFDC roles in regions throughout NSW where such networks etc are less recognised may require more time to become established. Regardless, the strategies, processes and resources developed in this pilot could still apply.

### Stage 1: Identifying Barriers

In the first stage of the pilot project, structured in-depth interviews and a regional networking event were employed to identify the barriers faced by the Illawarra region's food rescue and relief sector.

#### Interviews

Twenty-one structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with key food rescue and relief sector stakeholders. These interviews included seventeen perspectives from food relief agencies, three from food rescue organisations, and one from a donor (Aldi). Coles and Woolworths were not engaged at this stage, as their relationships are managed at a national level by Second Bite and OzHarvest. The interviews utilised a structured interview guide (See [Appendix 1](#)) to gain insights into the sector, understand its operations, and explore opportunities for the RFDC to enhance capacity, strengthen connections, and increase donations. Most interviews with food relief agencies took place on-site to observe day-to-day operations and gain a contextual understanding. Additionally, one interview was conducted while accompanying an OzHarvest driver, providing first-hand experience of the food collection process and insights into the quality and quantity of rescued food. This immersive approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of challenges and opportunities, fostering a deeper appreciation of the sector's realities.

#### Regional Networking Event

A successful regional Food Rescue & Relief Networking event was organised on 1st March 2023 at The Foundry in Port Kembla. The event brought together 29 stakeholders, including representatives from food rescue agencies, food relief agencies, the NSW Environment Protection Authority, the Department of Communities and Justice, Healthy Cities Illawarra, and the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District. The networking event allowed stakeholders to celebrate their ongoing achievements, to connect, and to share knowledge. Interactive brainstorming activities focused on identifying barriers and opportunities within the food rescue and relief space. This exercise allowed for the validation of findings from the interviews and

facilitated collaborative discussions on improving the Illawarra region's food rescue and relief landscape. The event was crucial in bringing together stakeholders to foster collaboration, building momentum for the pilot and supporting collective efforts in the food rescue and relief sector.



## Barriers

The insights gathered from the interviews, site visits, OzHarvest collection experience and the regional networking event, highlighted the barriers faced by the Illawarra region's food rescue and relief sector:

### 1. Food relief agencies:

- **Short-term and limited operational funding:** Many food relief agencies operate on minimal budgets, requiring them to be highly resourceful to deliver their service, including staff allocation, venue hire, transport, training and development and additional operational supplies.
- **Lack of reserves to replace or expand equipment:** The lack of funding to replace or expand equipment to support their operations to meet the growing demand for their services.
- **High volunteer dependence:** Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting food relief efforts. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a considerable decline in volunteer participation across the sector. This in addition to an aging volunteer force is putting extra pressure on the remaining volunteers and supporting staff.
- **Inadequate staffing:** Many food relief agencies face challenges with insufficient staffing due to limited and short-term nature of funding. They often have less than one FTE staff member dedicated to food relief efforts or are entirely volunteer run. Escalating demand for food relief and a decline in the volunteer force further exacerbates this situation. As a result, the remaining staff and volunteers are burdened with increasingly unsustainable workloads, leading to stress, burnout, loss of volunteers, and limited time for proactive planning. These impacts have a detrimental effect on the overall effectiveness of food relief efforts.
- **Increasing demand for food relief:** Many agencies have experienced a surge in demand and, as a result, some have had to turn people away due to insufficient food supplies.
- **Limited capacity to collect food donations:** Challenges such as rising petrol costs, limited volunteers, lack of dedicated transport and limited storage capacity hinder food relief agencies' ability to collect (additional) rescued food donations. Accessing Foodbank supplies can also pose logistical challenges.

- **Challenges of rescued food:** Rescued food often varies in quality and requires significant time and resources to sort before it can be distributed. Additionally, some rescued food options may result in a surplus of certain types of food, e.g. bread and a limited supply of other essential commodities, like dairy and protein. These challenges deter some agencies from utilising the rescued food options available to them.
- **Competition over food supply and funding:** Food rescue agencies often face competition for the available food supply and limited funding resources. This competition can present challenges in working together and ensuring an equitable distribution of rescued food and securing the necessary financial support to sustain their operations.
- **Limited capacity (but desire) to network:** Limited funding, staff shortages, and reliance on volunteers often restrict food relief agencies' capacity to participate in networking opportunities and collaborations. This limitation hampers their ability to connect with other organisations, hindering resource-sharing and collaborative efforts to divert food wastage and address the underlying causes of food insecurity.
- **Client lack of awareness about service delivery:** This lack of understanding prevents individuals and families in need from accessing the support they require. It also contributes to the duplication of services and heightens the risks of overlapping efforts, uneven distribution of resources, and gaps in coverage. People may miss out on crucial assistance without a clear understanding of the available food relief options. In contrast, others may unknowingly seek help from multiple agencies, straining resources and causing inefficiencies.

## 2. Food rescue organisations:

- **Capacity of OzHarvest:** Despite a second OzHarvest truck being active in the Illawarra since 2020 the demand for OzHarvest's service continues to grow resulting in a waiting list of agencies seeking their support.
- **Bread surplus exceeds OzHarvest truck capacity:** Although there is often a high volume of surplus bread at supermarkets, due to the limited capacity of OzHarvest vans, OzHarvest prioritise collecting and delivering fruits and vegetables rather than bread. As a result, some food relief agencies are experiencing an unmet need for bread.
- **Lack of transport capacity for SecondBite food:** SecondBite's Community Connect program requires agencies to collect food from Coles stores. However, many agencies lack the resources and people power to perform these collections, resulting in unused collection slots. Additionally, comparing collections between SecondBite vans in Sydney and agencies participating in the Community Connect Program in the Illawarra revealed that the SecondBite van collects nearly double the amount of donations from similar-sized stores on average. This disparity underscores the impact of inconsistent collections by multiple agencies and limited donor engagement on the quantity of food donations.
- **Competition with farmers for surplus food:** Food rescue organisations sometimes face competition with farmers (who collect for farm animals) for the availability of surplus food, including vegetables, fruit and bakery items. This competition has an impact on quantity of food donations accessible to rescue organisations.
- **Lack of local knowledge, connection, and visibility of untapped donors:** The absence of awareness about potential food donors who haven't yet linked up with food rescue agencies hinders efficient outreach efforts and can lead to missed opportunities for food rescue and redistribution.
- **Funding constraints:** This particularly relates to the increasing cost of petrol.

### 3. Food donors:

- **Lack of clear processes and signage:** Some donors/staff encounter challenges identifying and separating suitable surplus food for donation due to the absence of clear processes and signage. This hinders the sorting and storing of food donations, particularly perishable items, resulting in increased waste and compromised quality of donated food.
- **Lack of communication:** Inadequate communication channels between food donors and collecting organisations lead to miscommunications and difficulties in aligning collection schedules, hindering a smooth and mutually satisfactory donation process.
- **Staff perception, understanding and culture:** Some donors/staff have misconceptions regarding the destination of donated food and reasons for donating food, which hinder the development of a proactive food donation culture within the organisation.
- **Irregular collections and limited availability on weekends:** Irregularities, particularly missed collections, disrupt the donor's daily routine and constrain the storage capacity. This disruption has a negative impact on the food donation culture among staff and donors, diminishing their inclination towards positive donation efforts and partnerships.
- **Staff shortages and casual workforce:** Regular staff changes were disruptive to the capacity, understanding and workflow of donations, resulting in a lower quantity and quality donations.

The nature and number of barriers faced by the food rescue and relief sector results in a complex and interdependent environment. However, this also highlights the importance of the need for a RFDC to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the sector's intricacies. Such knowledge is essential to allow a RFDC to play a pivotal role in overcoming these challenges and optimising the impact of food relief efforts. By being well-versed in the multifaceted nature of the sector, a RFDC can better navigate the obstacles, identify strategic opportunities, and foster collaborations to drive positive change.

## Stage 2: Identifying Opportunities and Pilot Activities

In the second stage of the pilot, the focus was on linking barriers faced by stakeholders in the food rescue and relief sector with potential opportunities and actions. Additionally, an assessment of existing resources and activities was conducted, along with identifying priority action areas for the RFDC. The outcome of this stage was the development of a shortlist of activities for the RFDC to undertake during the pilot.

### Barriers and Opportunity Assessment

The Barriers and Opportunity Assessment conducted a comprehensive analysis of the key barriers within the food rescue and relief sector. By leveraging insights gathered from interviews, site visits, OzHarvest collection experience and the network event, the assessment sought to resolve these barriers with opportunities and potential actionable steps. Each opportunity and action were carefully evaluated and scored by the RFDC based on their expected impact on food donations and their complexity. This process provided a comprehensive understanding of the areas with the highest potential for improvement to achieve within the pilot timeframe. Ultimately, the assessment resulted in the identification of a shortlist of high-impact and feasible actions that the RFDC could implement and was communicated with the FR&R Working Group.

<b>Impact</b> Potential impact on additional rescued food donations and the diversion of edible food from landfill within the pilot timeframe	<b>Complexity</b> Complexity of the potential action to address the barrier.	<b>Feasibility</b> Feasibility of the potential activity to bear results within the Pilot period and or lasting results.
1 = Minor - increase in kgs	1 = Challenging – likely to take more than 12 months	Score 1-2 = Not suitable
2 = Moderate – increase in kgs	2 = Medium – able to progress within the pilot period	Score 3-4 = To be considered
3 = Significant – increase in kgs	3 = Easy – quick wins	Score 5-6 = Recommended

Food relief agencies - Inhouse capacity							
Barriers / Challenges	Opportunities	Potential actions	Impact	Complexity	Feasibility	Action Area	Owner
Operating on limited funding and often not specifically funded for food relief activities	Increase organisational funding (could possibly sit under the advocacy banner with DCJ or Councils)	Support funding applications incl. combined application through letters of support, highlighting funding opportunities & providing relevant stats when available)	2 = Moderate	1 = Challenging	3 = TBC	Funding	Agencies
Limited staff or entirely volunteer run	Additional staff to support food relief activities		2 = Moderate	1 = Challenging	3 = TBC	Funding	Agencies
High dependence on volunteers and always looking for more	Support volunteer retention and volunteer promotions, possibly a regional campaign.	Volunteer management and retention training, combined with volunteer opportunities promotional campaign.	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Volunteers	Agencies (can be supported by RFDC)
Aging volunteer force	Proactive retention and recruitment of a new generation of volunteers	Volunteer opportunities promotion campaign	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Volunteers	Agencies (can be supported by RFDC)
Limited focus on efficiency, processes, and procedures due to being volunteer run, having grown over time and not kept up, or, just doing it for the love/passion	Introduce standard processes and procedures that support efficiencies and automation	Identify opportunities for automation	1 = Minor	1 = Challenging	2 = Not suitable	Resilience	Agencies
Limited transport capacity or budget to collect food from Food Bank	Food For Life & Shellharbour Community Church frequent Foodbank weekly and could collaborate with other agencies to supply pantry items	Facilitate collaboration between agencies to embark on shared food collection opportunities from Foodbank	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Collaboration	Agencies (can be supported by RFDC)
Limited capacity but desire to network and connect with other agencies	Establish an understanding of the FR&R Working group to be more accessible & collaborative	Make the FR&R Working group more accessible, with a shared purpose and additional opportunities for collaboration	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Collaboration	Agencies and RFDC
Paying market rent for Council owned venue (1 instance)	Seek Council support and investment in food relief activities	Collaborate with Council for peppercorn leases for agencies that use council buildings for their food relief activities	1 = Minor	1 = Challenging	2 = Not suitable	Advocacy	Agencies
Increasing Petrol cost	Load optimisation where possible	Look for opportunities to embark on shared food collection opportunities and donor deliveries.	1 = Minor	2 = Medium	3 = TBC	Collaboration/ resilience	Agencies
Limited storage capacity within council venues and lack of support to increase (multiple instances)	Seek Council support and investment in food relief activities.	Collaborate with Council to explore opportunities for additional storage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply for infrastructure funding to supply needed infrastructure to community orgs (could benefit from a shared application)</li> </ul>	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Advocacy/ funding	Agencies



Food relief agencies - Food							
Barriers / Challenges	Opportunities	Potential actions	Impact	Complexity	Feasibility	Action Area	Owner
Poor quality of rescued food (particularly Second Bite/Coles and Aldi supply)	Better engagement of supermarket staff in combination with supporting procedures and processes to ensure the quality of donated food	In collaboration with food rescue partners and collecting charities, educate supermarket management and staff on better procedures and processes for food donation storage and sorting	<b>3 = Significant – High increase in kgs</b>	<b>2 = Medium</b>	<b>5 = Recommended</b>	Advocacy/ collaboration/ donations	Donor/food rescue partner
Sorting of rescued food takes time & resourcing (this has steered multiple agencies away from using food rescue)	Improve quality of food donated. Increase number of volunteers to support sorting	See above action. Support volunteer recruitment	<b>2 = Moderate</b>	<b>2 = Medium</b>	<b>4 = TBC</b>	Volunteers	Donor/food rescue partner
Surplus food at agency level, e.g., too many apples	Create a communication channel between food relief & rescue agencies to empower them to share leftover resources	Set up a two-way distribution list	<b>2 = Moderate</b>	<b>3 = Easy – quick wins</b>	<b>5 = Recommended</b>	Collaboration	Agencies with support from RFDC
Competition with farmers for surplus food	Educate supermarket management & farmers on the hierarchy of food donations	Include food donation hierarchy incl. number and types of people in need in the education element for food donors	<b>2 = Moderate</b>	<b>2 = Medium</b>	<b>4 = TBC</b>	Donations/ advocacy	Food rescue agencies
A significant portion of rescued food is not fit for human consumption and is disposed of (ending up in landfill after being rescued).	Find alternative solutions for non-edible food in the food rescue space. Link to action above re quality of donated food	Establish a network of farmers interested in collecting food scraps from supermarkets and charities. Collaborate with councils to supply agencies with FOGO bins	<b>2 = Moderate</b>	<b>2 = Medium</b>	<b>4 = TBC</b>	Advocacy/ collaboration/ donations	Agencies (transfer from donors)
A limited supply of rescued bread due to it being a bulk item and OzHarvest van capacity (fresh produce has a higher priority).	Additional capacity OzHarvest Agencies to connect with local bakeries to increase their bread supply	Work with OzHarvest for additional capacity in the region Support agencies to increase their volunteer capacity to pick up bread from local bakeries regularly.	<b>2 = Moderate</b>	<b>2 = Medium</b>	<b>4 = TBC</b>	Donations	Agencies
A limited supply of rescued milk and meat or proteins	Increase the supply of rescued milk, meat/protein & bread	Active recruitment of additional donors (e.g. local Milk distributor, meat wholesaler & butchers) and connect with OzHarvest (due to refrigerated vehicle required)	<b>2 = Moderate</b>	<b>2 = Medium</b>	<b>4 = TBC</b>	Donations	Food Rescue partner
Need for additional rescued food	Increase local food donations	Additional donor outreach	<b>2 = Moderate</b>	<b>2 = Medium</b>	<b>4 = TBC</b>	Donations	Food Rescue partner
Limited understanding of the available food rescue avenues (particularly for newcomers into the space)	Create visibility on the available food rescue avenues and steps to take when reaching out to potential donors	Develop a guide to rescued food in the Illawarra (incl. OzHarvest, SecondBite, Foodbank and process map on reaching out to new potential donors (incl. courtesy of other collecting agencies)	<b>2 = Moderate</b>	<b>3 = Easy – quick wins</b>	<b>5 = Recommended</b>	Overview	RFDC

Lack of visibility regarding which potential donors have not yet been linked up with an agency	Create an overview of who picks up where	Create a list of the existing collaborations	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Overview	RFDC
Competition over food supply and funding	A better understanding of each other's work and overview of which donors are already committed.  Shared funding applications	See action above.  Quarterly FR&R working group meeting to highlight each other's work and collaborate for funding applications	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Overview / Collaboration	RFDC

Food relief agencies - Community Access							
Barriers / Challenges	Opportunities	Potential actions	Impact	Complexity	Feasibility	Action Area	Owner
Lack of awareness about food relief agencies for recipients	More widely reaching promotion of the Low Cost & Free Meals Directory to inform the community of available services.	Promotion campaign for the Low Cost & Free meals Directory	1 = Minor	3 = Easy – quick wins	4 = TBC	Overview	RFDC
Lack of food relief after hours and on weekends (none of the agencies operates on the weekend)	Extend food relief with after hours and weekend provision across the region (requires funding)	Support funding applications to achieve this	1 = Minor	1 = Challenging	2 = Not suitable	Funding	Agencies

Food rescue organisation							
Barriers / Challenges	Opportunities	Potential actions	Impact	Complexity	Feasibility	Action Area	Owner
Much suitable food is disposed of due to surplus food not being sorted and stored correctly at the backend of the supermarket	Better engagement of supermarket staff with supporting procedures and processes to ensure the quality of donated foods.	In collaboration with food rescue partners and collecting charities, educate supermarket management and staff on better procedures and processes for food donation storage and sorting.  In combination with a top-down approach at supermarket level to introduce better procedures and processes for food donation storage and sorting (by food rescue or social responsibility department donor)	3 = Significant – High increase in kgs	2 = Medium	5 = Recommended	Advocacy/ collaboration/ donations	Donor/food rescue partner
Lack of logistics, refrigeration, storage infrastructure and coordination (Second Bite & Foodbank)	Funding for regional logistics, refrigeration, storage infrastructure and coordination	Collaborative grant application	3 = Significant – High increase in kgs	1 = Challenging	4 = TBC	Funding/ collaboration	Food rescue partner

Not all Coles stores are collected from on a daily basis. This irregularity negatively impacts the quality and quantity donated on the days a charity collects.	A regular and consistent pickup schedule at SecondBite stores	Work with SecondBite to engage additional charities to collect from SecondBite stores.	3 = Significant – High increase in kgs	2 = Medium	5 = Recommended	Donations/ collaboration	Donor/food rescue partner
A significant difference between Coles stores picked up by SecondBite Van's in Sydney vs Community Connect Program pickup - suggests at least 100 tonnes a year available for collection	On-the-ground engagement with the Coles stores and empowerment of the charities by equipping them with insights into the scale of potential donations and standardised procedures	See the first action in this section.  Development and distribution of a SOP for Second Bite Community Connect program food collections that highlights the supermarket processes that should be in place and the role and responsibilities of the charity	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = Addressed by SB Donor engagement	Donations	Food rescue partner
Bread supply not meeting demand due to the limited capacity of the OzHarvest van (fresh produce and protein is prioritised).	Agencies to connect with supermarkets and bakeries to increase their bread supply outside of OzHarvest arrangements	Support agencies to increase their volunteer capacity to collect additional bread from supermarkets or bakeries on a regular basis	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Donations	Agencies
Increasing petrol costs	Load optimisation where possible	Look for opportunities to embark on shared food collection opportunities	1 - Minor	2 = Medium	3 = TBC	Collaboration	Food rescue partner
Sometimes farmer takes all the bread before the charity picks up because the farmer connection preceded the charity connection	Educate supermarket management & farmers on the hierarchy of food donations	Include food donation hierarchy in the education element for food donors	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Donations/ advocacy	Food rescue partner/ can be supported by RFDC

Additional donors							
Barriers / Challenges	Opportunities	Potential actions	Impact	Complexity	Feasibility	Action Area	Owner
Lack of on-the-ground presence (OzHarvest & SecondBite) to actively engage additional donors	Potential donors include IGA's & independent groceries, butchers, meat wholesalers, milk suppliers	On the ground donor engagement	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Donations	Food rescue partner/ could be supported by RFDC

Donor							
Barriers / Challenges	Opportunities	Potential actions	Impact	Complexity	Feasibility	Action Area	Owner
Staff shortages & casual workforce	Easy to follow procedures and processes at the supermarket back end (incl. visual reminders and cues)	Implementation or improvement of easy to follow signage, procedures and processes for food donation storage and sorting by food rescue or social responsibility department donor)	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC	Donations	Donor/food rescue partner

Food rescue performance up to individual store management	Top-down approach: Introduction of linking food donation performance to KPIs/bonus	This will likely evolve with the reporting mandate	2 = Moderate	1 = Challenging	2 = Not suitable	Donations	Donors
Lack of food rescue on weekends and over the Christmas period (processes neglected and take time to be reinstated)	Weekend and Christmas roster for food rescue	Engage agencies to establish a weekend and Christmas collection roster for those charities that are operating and can collect	2 = Moderate	2 = Medium	4 = TBC (suitable if the position is permanently installed)	Donations	Food rescue partners usually collect/RFDC

The Barriers and Opportunity Assessment identified numerous opportunities and potential actions across six action areas: collaboration, overview, advocacy, donations, funding, volunteers, and resilience. Based on the combined impact and complexity scoring, four actions were deemed "not suitable" for the pilot. In contrast, twenty-five actions were identified as "to be considered," and five actions were "recommended" within the short timeframe of the pilot. The total thirty activities to be considered or recommended emphasise the significant potential if the RFDC position were permanently established within the region. To further narrow down the focus areas for the pilot, stakeholder input using the Net Promoter Score (NPS) was utilised in the subsequent assessment.

## Action Areas and Existing Resources Assessment

The Action Area and Existing Resources Assessment utilised Net Promoter Scoring (NPS) that was captured during the stakeholder interviews to select actions for the pilot to prioritise. The scoring process was sense checked during stakeholder engagement at a networking forum and resulted in eight possible action areas (below).

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a customer ranked metric used to measure the overall satisfaction of stakeholders with a resource or experience. The NPS is calculated by asking stakeholders to rate their likelihood of recommending the offering on a scale from 0 to 10. Promoters (score 9-10) are enthusiasts who will keep using the offering and refer others. Passives (score 7-8) are satisfied but not enthusiastic, and Detractors (score 0-6) are dissatisfied and may discourage others from using the offering. The NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters. The NPS can range from -100 (if all stakeholders are detractors) to 100 (if all stakeholders are promoters).

### 1. Possible action areas

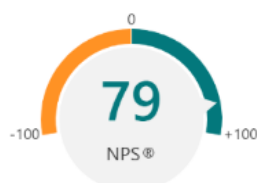
The following action areas were identified as potential areas of responsibility for the RFDC:



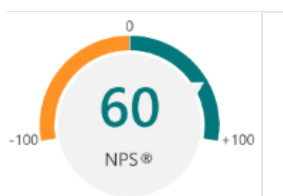
- **Collaboration** - To foster open communication and share knowledge and resources across the Illawarra food rescue and relief sector.



- **Overview** - To provide an overview of the complex food rescue and relief landscape.



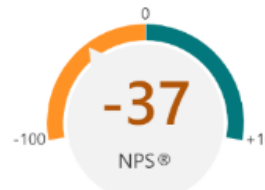
- **Advocacy** - To give a united voice to the FR&R sector, which will be achieved by collaborating with government and peak bodies.



- **Donations** - To increase the quantity and quality of food donations through on-the-ground donor engagement and education.



- **Funding** - To building the capacity of agencies to gain ongoing funding and support to continue their service.



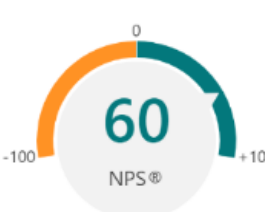
- **Volunteers** - To support volunteer recruitment and management.
- **Resilience** - To identify and problem-solve issues in the local food rescue and relief system.
- **Training** - Support shared training opportunities e.g., Food handling, Food safety Supervisor, First Aid.

The project manager discussed the eight possible action areas with the EPA project officer to determine what might be feasible to action given the timeframe of the pilot. Based on this consultation, the following four areas were identified as the most beneficial action areas to prioritise for the RFDC pilot in the Illawarra:

1. Collaboration
2. Overview
3. Advocacy
4. Donations

## 2. Existing FFI resources

The Existing Resources Assessment used the same NPS and stakeholder sense checking approach to determine the satisfaction of the following existing FFI resources:



- **Low Cost & Free Meals Directory** - [link](#)  
A resource that provides an overview of the agencies operating in the area and their coverage, developed to help those in need find local food services that provide low-cost and free meals. Considered a valuable resource, which aligns with the Overview action area.
- **Illawarra's Guide to Donating Food** - [link](#)  
Developed to highlight the pathways to donate food in the Illawarra, including why, what and how. It guides potential donors to connect with OzHarvest or one of the relief agencies for pick up or delivery. Perceived by stakeholders as a beneficial resource with room for improvement.



- Quarterly Food Rescue and Relief Working Group**

These stakeholder meetings foster open communication within the Illawarra food rescue and relief sector, aiming to share practical knowledge and learnings and ensure a coordinated sector. The NPS reflects the opportunity for improvement in terms of regular attendance of these meetings.



- Volunteer Opportunities – Directory - [link](#)**

Was developed to highlight all agencies with volunteer opportunities in the food space, including food relief and rescue opportunities. While many agencies recognised the directory as a beneficial resource, its impact on attracting additional volunteers could be enhanced.



- Food Rescue and Relief Newsletter**

Was introduced during COVID-19 to provide regular communications in the food rescue and relief landscape during a very volatile time. It has not been used much since, which likely impacted the NPS.

The scoring of **existing resources** highlighted the current benefit of each of the resources. A limitation of using this scoring method is that it does not reflect the potential or the opportunities for improvement. See [Appendix 2](#) for a summary of the identified improvement opportunities by the interviewed stakeholders. The following three existing FFI resources were identified as most beneficial to the stakeholders in the Illawarra area and were included as the RFDC pilot activities:

1. Low Cost & Free Meals Directory
2. Illawarra’s Guide to Food Donations
3. Quarterly FR&R Working Group

By cross-checking the ranked action areas and resources with the outcomes of the networking event (i.e. Barrier and Opportunities table in previous section of this report), it was possible to refine further and prioritise the efforts of the RFDC for the seven-month Illawarra pilot in the following order:

1. **Collaboration:** To foster open communication and share knowledge and resources across the Illawarra food rescue and relief sector by hosting the Quarterly FR&R Working Group meetings.
2. **Overview:** To provide an overview of the complex food rescue and relief landscape supported by the [Low Cost & Free Meals Directory](#) and [Guide to Donating Food](#) (incl. Organisations accepting food donations - directory)
3. **Donations:** To increase the quantity and quality of food donations through on-the-ground donor engagement and education, supported by the [Guide to donating Food](#) (incl. Organisations accepting food donations - directory).
4. **Advocacy:** To give a united voice to the FR&R sector, which will be achieved by collaborating with government and peak bodies. The aim is to promote policy and capacity building to assist the food rescue and relief sector and raise awareness about food insecurity and food waste. The Quarterly FR&R Working Group meeting, shared agenda, and action plan will direct this advocacy effort.

## Shortlist of Pilot Activities

The insights gained from both assessments were utilised to identify the most viable and impactful activities to undertake within the short timeframe of the pilot. These activities were organised across the identified activity areas, with aligning objectives and KPI's.

Objective	Activity	KPI's
<b>1. Collaboration</b>		
<b>1. Increase communication and collaboration amongst the food rescue and relief sector stakeholders</b>	1.1 Create a two-way communication channel to foster direct communication between all food relief and rescue stakeholders	1.1.1. Increase agency-to-agency communications (incl. shared resources), measured by the interactions via distribution list and outcomes of FR&R WG meetings.
	1.2 Increase attendance at the quarterly FR&R working group meetings.	1.2.1 Increase in attendance (>7 participants)
	1.3 Develop a shared food rescue and relief agenda and action plan to guide FR&R working group meetings the collective action in this space	1.3.1 Development of shared agenda and FR&R action plan, incl uptake by stakeholders
<b>2. Overview</b>		
<b>2. Increase awareness of the available food rescue avenues</b>	2.1 Develop a practical "Guide to rescued food" in the Illawarra"	2.1.1 Development of the guide completed.
	2.2 Distribution of the guide to all agencies in the Illawarra	2.2.1 Promotion of the guide and uptake by agencies (measured by # downloads)
	2.3 Update Guide to food donations and low cost & Free Meals directory to ensure up-to-date information and all weblink work.	2.3.1 Up-to-date Guide to food donations and Low Cost & Free Meals Directory.
<b>3. Donations</b>		
<b>3. Increase quality and quantity of surplus food donations from 2/10 Coles stores</b>	3.1 In collaboration with SB, engage with 2 Coles stores management to train staff, review and highlight procedures and processes (incl. implementing visual reminders and cues where possible)	3.1.1 Increase KGs rescued food donations by 37% (in line with OzHarvest Pilot Study) at the store level
		3.1.2 Increase the quality of rescued food donations (based on feedback from the collecting agency)
	3.2 (Bonus) Link Coles stores with additional agencies to collect on days that currently are not allocated (incl. Sat & Sun – particularly for small stores)	3.2.1 (Bonus) One additional collection from Coles stores
		3.2.2 (Bonus) check-in purchased food vs donated food
3.3 (Bonus) Establish additional collaborations that increase the usage of food rescue donations	3.3.1 One additional collaboration established during the pilot	
<b>4. Advocacy</b>		
<b>4. To give a united voice to the FR&amp;R sector through the</b>	4.0 Final Report	4.0.1 Completion
	4.1 RFDC job description	4.1.1 Inclusion
	4.2 Key criteria for organisations expressing interest in the RFDC role	4.2.1 Inclusion



<b>development of this final report, including outcomes of the pilot and recommendations on how others could implement the RFDC role (Milestone 3)</b>	4.3 Suggested KPIs and activities for the RFDC program	4.3.1 Inclusion
	4.4 A draft 'Toolkit' for the establishment and delivery of a RFDC program	4.4.1 Completion
	4.5 Summary of the added benefit the RFDC role could offer to the community, food rescue and relief agencies, councils, and state government.	4.5.1 Inclusion

## Stage 3 and 4: Implementation and Evaluation of the Pilot Activities

During the third and fourth stages of the pilot project, the focus was on implementing and evaluating the proposed activities. The implementation period spanned from March 2023 to May 2023, during which the RFDC worked closely with the NSW EPA and other relevant stakeholders in the food rescue and relief sector to deliver the proposed actions.

To ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement, monthly catch-up meetings were conducted with the NSW EPA. These meetings served as a platform to discuss progress, address any challenges or concerns, and foster feedback loops for ongoing refinement of the pilot activities. A monitoring and evaluation framework (below) was established to guide these meetings and assess the outcomes of the implemented activities. This framework facilitated the measurement of progress against predetermined targets and enabled the ongoing evaluation of the pilot's progress.

As the pilot project had a relatively short timeframe, it is acknowledged that the full impact of the activities might not be realised before its completion. Nonetheless, the structured approach to monitoring and evaluation ensured that the RFDC and its partners could make informed decisions and necessary adjustments to maximize the impact of their efforts within the given timeframe.

### Collaboration

Collaboration was considered the most important action area amongst the food rescue and relief sector stakeholders. Recognising that through fostering open communication and sharing experiences, knowledge, data, and insights, organisations can learn from each other and ensure the implementation of best practices. Additionally, collaboration allows for the pooling of resources, expertise, and networks, leading to a more efficient and effective response. Through effective communication and collaboration, stakeholders can also identify gaps and areas where additional support is required, promoting coordination and synergy among different organisations. This, in turn, reduces duplication of efforts and ensures efficient resource allocation, ultimately strengthening the collective impact of the sector in addressing these critical issues.

#### **1. Increase communication and collaboration amongst the food rescue and relief sector stakeholders.**

##### **1.1 Create a two-way communication channel to foster direct communication between all food relief and rescue stakeholders.**

To facilitate effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders, it was essential to establish a suitable medium for hosting a two-way communication channel, such as a closed Facebook, WhatsApp or email group. This process involved conducting a stakeholder survey to determine the preferred method of communication. Out of the 12 respondents, the majority expressed a preference for an email-based solution. By leveraging previous experience with an email solution for another community group, it was decided to create a Microsoft Group email address ([foodrescue-discuss@healthyillawarra.org.au](mailto:foodrescue-discuss@healthyillawarra.org.au)). This email solution entails that anyone who joins the group would receive and be able to respond to messages directed to this email address. The email network ultimately aims to facilitate the sharing of information and resources within the food rescue and relief sector and encompasses various topics such as the exchange of surplus food donations, spare resources, upcoming opportunities, providing information, and addressing specific resource needs. Guidelines on how to effectively utilize this two-way email network were developed, to ensure respectful and effective operation. An invitation to join the email network was sent out on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April with a copy of the guidelines (see [Appendix 3](#)).

Evaluating the performance of the two-way communication channel is limited due to its relatively short time frame (four weeks) in operation. Since its launch, the platform has accumulated 19 members, including two of the National food rescue organisations, fourteen food relief agencies and three

representatives of government agencies. All who actively engaged in the joining process. Within the first month, by May 30<sup>th</sup>, the platform had been utilised on three occasions:

1. By the RFDC - Information emailed out about upcoming funding opportunity.
2. By food relief agency - Request for additional food pantry resources, due to running out and lack of funding to stock up before the end of the month. This request was responded to by a OzHarvest driver, who had sufficient pantry stock to supply the agency with additional supplies.
3. By the RFDC on behalf of a farmer - Offer from a local grower to provide their surplus mandarins (25kg). Three agencies responded to the offer and were supplied with several bags each.

While three engagements are not enough to draw definitive conclusions on effectiveness, they do highlight the potential of the platform to share resources, communicate and foster collaboration.

### 1.2 Increase attendance at the quarterly FR&R working group meetings.

These stakeholder meetings serve as a platform for fostering open communication and collaboration within the Illawarra food rescue and relief sector. The working group serves as an online and face-to-face means for stakeholders to come together to exchange practical knowledge and insights on a quarterly basis. Currently, the working group comprises 68 members who represent various organisations, including food relief agencies, food rescue organisations, local councils, government bodies, and other relevant stakeholders. However, the interviews conducted revealed that although stakeholders were aware of these meetings, their regular attendance was hindered by factors such as competing priorities and limited capacity, which supports the observed average attendance of seven participants at the meetings.

Reflecting on the most recent FR&R working group meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> May via Zoom, it was encouraging to see an increased level of participation. Out of the 68 invited, 20 participants RSVPed with 12 attending, representing a 71% increase in attendance compared to previous meetings. This notable improvement can be attributed to the efforts made in focusing collaboration and building relationships among stakeholders, particularly through the networking event held on 1<sup>st</sup> March. The meeting itself was marked by a more engaging and interactive atmosphere, indicating a growing familiarity and rapport among the attendees. Even after the formal part of the meeting concluded, participants continued to connect with each other and engage in discussions for up to 20 minutes, underscoring their enthusiasm and interest in the topics discussed. Detailed minutes of the meeting can be found in [Appendix 4](#). Looking ahead, the FR&R working group has scheduled its next meeting for 9<sup>th</sup> August, with plans to conduct three virtual meetings and one face-to-face meeting throughout the year to ensure continued collaboration and progress.

### 1.3 Develop a shared food rescue and relief agenda and action plan to guide FR&R working group meetings the collective action in this space.

To guide the collective impact of the FR&R working group, the insights from the interviews and the networking event guided the development process of a shared agenda and action plan. Inspiration for the structure, formulation and presentation was drawn from various successful collective action plans. These plans served as valuable references in shaping the process. Examples include the collaborative approach taken in "Building a Stronger and Safer Mangerton Social Housing Estate," led by the Department of Communities and Justice, as well as the community collaboration efforts to "End Street Sleeping in Illawarra", led by Wollongong Homeless Hub. Additionally, a shared measurement framework for Moreland Community Food Enterprises and Organisations, driven by the Open Food Network, provided valuable insights. During the drafting of the action plan, realistic consideration was given to the capacity of the FFI coordinator and other stakeholders to undertake mutually reinforcing activities once the additional resources of the pilot project concluded. By aligning the plan structure with the existing

capacity and circumstances of the stakeholders, it ensured to be an actionable framework for driving collective impact within the FR&R working group.

The FR&R Working Group meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May served as a valuable opportunity to review and validate the draft plan, including the shared goal statement and the supportive action plan. Despite the limitations posed by the online meeting format, the timing of the meeting was advantageous, benefiting from the momentum and enthusiasm generated by the recent networking event. The shared goal statement, "Increasing food security through collective food waste diversion," serves as the foundation for the action plan, which is driven by the following key objectives:

- 1. Creating a stronger and more efficient Food Rescue & Relief Network in the Illawarra:** This objective focuses on enhancing communication and collaboration among stakeholders, fostering a more cohesive and effective network.
- 2. Creating community awareness of the existing services in the Illawarra:** This objective aims to increase public knowledge and understanding of the available food rescue and relief services, ensuring that those in need are aware of the support they can access.
- 3. Increasing the quantity and quality of food donations:** This objective focuses on strategies to encourage and facilitate greater donations of surplus food, with a specific emphasis on improving the quality and nutritional value of donated food items.

The shared action plan, including specific strategies, actions, assigned responsibilities and measurements, can be found in [Appendix 5](#). This plan will provide a roadmap for the FR&R Working Group to work towards.

Due to the limited duration of the RFDC pilot, it is not possible to assess the overall effectiveness of the shared agenda and action plan. However, the participation of those who attended the meeting provides a positive indication of the initial reception and engagement with the proposed plan. The presence of an increased number of stakeholders at the meeting demonstrates their willingness to contribute and collaborate towards the shared goals and objectives actively.

## Overview

Providing an overview of the complex food rescue and relief landscape is another critical action area. It not only helps people in need easily access the necessary services but also identifies gaps, promotes coordination and collaboration, reduces duplication of efforts, and ensures efficient resource allocation. Moreover, it raises awareness about the issue of food insecurity and the opportunities for supporting efforts through volunteering or donating.

### 2.1 Develop a practical "Guide to food rescue and relief - in the Illawarra".

To provide a comprehensive overview of the region's food rescue and relief landscape in the Illawarra, the "Guide to Food Rescue & Relief – in the Illawarra" was developed. The creation of the guide was influenced by valuable insights gathered from the interviews, OzHarvest van excursion and networking event. Additionally, inspiration was drawn from reputable resources such as the [NEWaste Food donation Tool Kit](#) and the [CRJO Food Donation Toolkit](#). The primary aim of the guide is to provide stakeholders with an overview of the food rescue and relief landscape, as well as the avenues for collaboration. It also offers practical tools, strategies, and considerations for increasing food donations, ensuring food safety, and establishing additional food relief programs. The guide caters for existing and new food relief agencies, food rescue organisation, volunteers, and anyone interested in the food rescue and relief space in the Illawarra.

To ensure the guide's accuracy and relevance, a draft copy was shared with all stakeholders on 1<sup>st</sup> May, allowing them to provide valuable feedback and suggestions. The guide was also discussed in detail during the FR&R meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> May. In addition to stakeholders expressing their appreciation and

excitement about the guide, nine stakeholders provided constructive feedback. This included the addition of a thank you note template provided by one of the local food relief agencies, correction of the introduction and photos used for two of the food rescue organisations, correction and addition of several relief agencies logos and multiple suggestions on wording.

## 2.2 Distribution of the guide to all agencies in the Illawarra

The final guide was uploaded to the FFI website, and a [link](#) to the guide was emailed to all (68) stakeholders on the FR&R working group distribution list on 18<sup>th</sup> May. The initial 41 downloads of the guide since this date is highly encouraging regarding the usage of the guide.

2.3 Update low cost & Free Meals directory. The pre-existing Low Cost & Free Meals (LCFM) Directory, available in both [web-based](#) and [printable](#) format, serves as an valuable tool for individuals seeking support, as well as for volunteers and donors who wish to contribute to the food rescue and relief efforts. With 920 downloads over the 2022-23 financial year, the directory is commonly used by the community.

As part of the Pilot this directory has undergone a thorough update to ensure its currency. This included updating the service delivery times, details on volunteer opportunities and food donation specifics, tailored to each agency's requirements. This information was acquired through a specific LCFM directory update survey that was supported by follow-up phone calls, for those who had not responded.

To maximise the benefit of the updated LCFM directory and enhance its reach, the RFDC engaged with two of the local councils and the local Health District to organise a regional print run of the directory. This collaboration looked to provide food relief agencies and other community services with sufficient hard copies of the LCFM directory to distribute to individuals in need, particularly those who may have limited access to online resources or face other barriers to technology.

While the RFDC had dedicated its efforts to update the LCFM directory, one of the Council's offered their Graphic Design and printing services, while the other Council and Local Health District offered to actively support the distribution of the directory through their extensive networks. In addition, all partners committed to linking to the directory on their websites to further increase its visibility and accessibility. The collaborative effort to deliver the regional print run exemplifies how the RFDC can foster additional collaborations and pool collective resources and expertise to achieve a greater and more streamlined impact. The regional print run is expected to be realised by the end of August 2023.

## Donations

This specific action area directly addresses the recognised shortfall in food donations experienced by food relief agencies and aims to increase the quality and quantity of food donations. It is evident that there is an opportunity to secure over 100 tonnes of additional donations annually, with a primary focus on bolstering SecondBite's Community Connect donations. According to the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041, 8% of the available food from supermarkets is being donated. This confirms the significant opportunity for additional food donations. Additionally, a pilot program conducted by OzHarvest demonstrated that implementing active on-the-ground food donor engagement and education initiatives can result in a remarkable 37% increase in food donation kg's<sup>8</sup>.

### 3. Increase the quantity and quality of food donations

#### 3.1 Engage with 2 Coles stores management to train staff, review and highlight procedures and processes

In collaboration with SecondBite's State Operations Manager for New South Wales / ACT, a strategic decision was made to focus on two of the lowest donating Coles stores in the region for the RFDC pilot. Throughout this collaborative process, valuable resources and insights were shared on effective

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<sup>8</sup> Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2021. NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041, [https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/385683/NSW-Waste-and-Sustainable-Materials-Strategy-2041.pdf](https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/385683/NSW-Waste-and-Sustainable-Materials-Strategy-2041.pdf)

donor engagement practices. Additionally, a Donor Engagement 101 session was provided by OzHarvest's Food Rescue Engagement Lead, deepening the understanding of best practices and emphasising the importance of involving the area manager before reaching out to store managers. This strategic approach ensured alignment within the larger operational structure of Coles Supermarket chain, increasing the likelihood of successful engagement with store managers. The expertise and guidance provided by SecondBite and OzHarvest played a crucial role in shaping the donor engagement strategy and enhanced the overall approach. To streamline and facilitate the engagement process, an engagement guideline (see [Appendix 6](#)) was created, which contains key information, guidelines, and resources.

During the initial conversation with the Coles Regional Manager of the South Coast Illawarra, it was recognised that food rescue initiatives played a vital role in the stores' sustainability efforts. However, several challenges needed to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives. These challenges included irregular collections, no-shows, selectiveness in accepting donations, and a rigid relationship between collecting volunteers and Coles staff. The conversation also emphasised the value of Coles' Monthly sustainability report, which provides a comprehensive overview of each store's sustainability performance in the region. The report includes crucial data such as the current diversion rate, diversion targets, savings potential, green bin segment, donation segment, number of SecondBite meals, and the frequency of SecondBite showing up with no donations available. These insights from the report enabled a thorough assessment of each store's sustainability practices, which identified areas for improvement and optimization.

The sustainability report highlighted the two Coles stores that presented a greater opportunity for substantial gains in food rescue. An appointment was scheduled to meet with the store managers of the two identified stores. During the meeting, both store managers exhibited a high level of receptiveness and a willingness to collaborate. The following action items for improvement were identified for each store:

Identified barrier	Agreed action	Owner
<b>Store 1:</b>		
Lack of signage or visual cues to support the sorting, storage donation process	Install available signage (incl. signage provided during the visit)	Store Manager
Lack of sorting and storage process for pantry goods and protein	Implement a structured process for pantry goods and protein items	Store Manager
Limited collection days	Reach out to network to find an additional charity to collect on the in between days	RFDC
Limited staff knowledge about SecondBite or the impact of the collecting agency	Work with the charity to develop and provide an info/thank you note	RFDC
Lack of open communication with collecting charity	Re-visit the store with the charity and introduce weekly catch ups	RFDC
Lack of a farmer to collect inedible food	Link store with a farmer	RFDC
<b>Store 2:</b>		

Lack of signage or visual cues to support the sorting, storage donation process	Order and install available signage (incl. the signage provided during the visit)	Store Manager
Lack of sorting and storage process for dairy items	Implement a process for dairy items	Store Manager
Farmer collecting SecondBite items before the charity arrives	Start separating SecondBite items from the items intended for the farmer and informing this new process	Store Manager
Lack of open communication with collecting charity	Start checking in with the collecting volunteers on a weekly basis	Store Manager
Limited staff knowledge about SecondBite or the impact of the collecting agency	Work with the charity to develop and provide an info/ thank you note	RFDC

Due to the limited timeframe of the pilot, only one follow-up interaction was completed with each of the stores.

- **Coles store 1:**

After the initial in-store introduction, Store 1 was revisited two weeks later, with their existing charity partner. This follow-up interaction had several valuable outcomes:

- The charity had the opportunity to meet the store manager and assistant manager for the first time, strengthening the working relationship.
- During the visit, specific details regarding the optimal collection time and the new process for handling pantry goods and protein were clarified for smoother operations.
- The charity provided thank you flyers and posters to be displayed in the store's lunchroom, reinforcing the partnership, and raising awareness among store employees.
- Store one was successfully connected with a farmer, a new connection through the charity, which reinforced the mutually beneficial partnership.
- Weekly phone catchups were agreed upon to facilitate ongoing communication and address any issues or concerns.
- The agreed signage was successfully installed, improving visibility, and promoting the food rescue initiative within the store.
- Unfortunately, despite RFDC reaching out to their local network to find an additional food rescue partner, no agencies had capacity to handle additional collections although they could have used the food. This reinforces the capacity constraints existing within the charitable sector.

- **Coles store 2:**

During a phone conversation, it was determined that a catch-up with Store 2 would be more appropriate in one month's time, allowing them to focus on implementing the agreed-upon actions before further engagement. Unfortunately, however, despite numerous attempts, a follow up with Store 2 did not eventuate.

It is important to recognise that the time constraints of the pilot program limited in the number of follow-up interactions with the donors, as well as hindered the ability to measure the impact of the engagement. The positive progress made that were achieved during the initial visit to store one, included the establishment of important connections, a clarification of processes, and the successful installation of signage, signify progress and provide a foundation for further collaboration and improvement. In

addition, the experience and insights gained from the donor engagement provide valuable lessons that informed the development of the Donor Engagement and Education Guidelines (see [Appendix 6](#)).

### 3.2 (Bonus) Link Coles stores with additional agencies to collect on days that currently are not allocated.

Two separate actions were undertaken to fill available collections slots:

1. As part of the donor engagement with Store 1, the RFDC reached out to three closely located agencies see if they had capacity to add collections on Tuesday, Thursday and potentially the weekend. While one of the agencies, expressed curiosity without follow through, the other two agencies indicated that they did not have the people power or transport to commit to the collections. Even though these agencies had indicated during the interviews to have a need for the additional food donations. This reinforced the transport capacity barrier for SecondBite Community Connect food.
2. One of the most northern located Coles stores did not have an allocated charity at all. Due to the fair distance of this store for most of the agencies, this was considered a hard ask. After receiving the approval from SecondBite, the RFDC contacted to OzHarvest to ask if they would be able to collect from this Coles store as it lies on their existing route. While this option was considered between the food rescue organisations, this solution has not yet eventuated.

### 3.3 (Bonus) Establish additional collaborations to increase the usage of rescued food donations.

Throughout the pilot, several collaborations were fostered, which demonstrated the importance of partnerships to address food waste and food insecurity:

- **OzHarvest and SecondBite Collaboration:**

Following their initial meeting at the networking event in March 2023, OzHarvest Food Rescue Engagement Lead and SecondBite State Operations Manager for New South Wales / ACT have actively engaged in a number of discussions to explore opportunities for collaboration in the Illawarra. In addition to the potential collection from the most northern Coles store, they also explored the potential of utilising the OzHarvest warehouse for additional SecondBite pantry food deliveries. While the progress of this opportunity to leverage the resources and distribution capacity is awaiting the approval of the warehouse owner, it nevertheless highlights the willingness to work together to overcome challenges and create a more sustainable outcome. Building on their discussions in the Illawarra region however, OzHarvest and SecondBite have extended their collaboration in the Sydney area. A notable outcome of this collaboration is SecondBite's recent engagement with the Flemington Markets, a significant source of surplus food. Through their partnership with OzHarvest, SecondBite has gained access to an extensive network of agencies and a robust distribution capacity, enabling the efficient and effective distribution of surplus food from the markets to individuals and communities in need. This collective impact re-instates the importance of networking opportunities to foster additional collaborations across the food rescue and relief sector.

- **New partnership between Warrawong Resident Forum and Mission Australia**

As a result of meeting and conversing at the RFDC networking event at Pt Kembla, Mission Australia has started to support the Warrawong Resident Forum by transporting food from the Warrawong Community Centre to the Bundaleer Community Centre every Tuesday, as part of the food hub program.

These collaborations not only support increases utilisation of rescued food donations, but also foster innovation and mutual support within the sector. By working together, these organisations are able to have a greater impact in addressing food waste and supporting vulnerable communities that they could by themselves.



## Monitoring and Evaluation Summary

The Monitoring and Evaluation Summary reveals that the below framework provides an effective means of tracking progress against predetermined targets and conducting ongoing evaluations of the pilot’s effectiveness. While acknowledging the limited duration of the pilot project, it is important to note that the full impact of the activities may continue to unfold even after its completion. The summary highlights the substantial progress made throughout the pilot project, with several areas demonstrating the potential for lasting impact even after its completion. The achievements and outcomes of the pilot project reflect the dedication and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders involved. By leveraging the momentum and learnings gained during the pilot, there is a strong foundation for continued progress and positive change within the food rescue and relief sector.

### 1. Collaboration

Objective: Increase communication and collaboration amongst the FR&R sector stakeholders

Activity	KPI's	Progress	Status
<b>1.1 Create a two-way communication channel to foster direct communication between all food relief and rescue stakeholders (medium to be decided)</b>	1.1.1. Increase agency-to-agency communications (incl. shared resources), measured by the interactions via distribution list and outcomes of FR&R WG meetings.	- Email network established, - 18 active members - Contributed to three agency-to-agency interaction outside of the FR&R WG meeting	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>1.2 Increase attendance at the FR&amp;R working group meetings</b>	1.2.1 Increase in attendance (>7 participants)	FR&R WG meeting was attended by 12 participants, who all actively participated in the meeting. This comes to a 71% increase in attendance, with continued progress expected	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>1.3 Develop a shared food rescue and relief agenda and action plan to guide FR&amp;R working group meetings the collective action in this space</b>	1.3.1 Development of shared agenda and FR&R action plan, incl uptake by stakeholders	- Development of the shared goal and FR&R action plan completed during the FR&R WG meeting with active participation of those who attended - shared with all 68 recipients of the minutes, as well as published on the FF website.	<b>Achieved</b>

### 2. Overview

Objective: Increase awareness of the available food rescue avenues

Activity	KPI's	Progress	Status
<b>2.1 Develop a “Guide to rescued food” in the Illawarra</b>	2.1.1 Development of the guide completed.	Guide of Food Rescue & Relief developed, providing a comprehensive overview of the FR&R landscape, the collaboration opportunities and practical tools to	<b>Achieved</b>

		increase rescued food donations.	
<b>2.2 Distribution of the guide to all agencies in the Illawarra</b>	2.2.1 Promotion of the guide and uptake by agencies (measured by # downloads)	Received by 68 email recipients on the FR&R WG minutes + published on the FFI website on May 18 2023 (downloaded 41 times).	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>2.3 Update Guide to food donations and low cost &amp; Free Meals directory to ensure up-to-date information and all weblink work.</b>	2.3.1 Up-to-date Guide to food donations and Low Cost & Free Meals Directory.	Update completed and complemented with a regional print run in collaboration with local councils and Local Health District	<b>Achieved</b>

### 3. Donations

Objective: Increase quality and quantity of surplus food donations from 2/10 Coles stores

Activity	KPI's	Progress	Status
<b>3.1 In collaboration with SecondBite, engage with 2 Coles stores management to train staff, review and highlight procedures and processes (incl. implementing visual reminders and ques where possible)</b>	3.1.1 Increase KGs rescued food donations by 37% (in line with OzHarvest Pilot Study) at the store level	- Developed donor engagement guidelines in collaboration with SecondBite & OzHarvest - Engaged with the Regional Manager of the South Coast/Illawarra - Identified opportunities for improvement with two Coles Store Mangers	<b>Partly Achieved</b> Due to the time constraints, a thorough evaluation of the donor engagement activities and their outcomes was not possible.
	3.1.2 Increase the quality of rescued food donations (based on feedback from the collecting agency)		
<b>3.2 (Bonus) Link Coles stores with additional agencies to collect on days that currently are not allocated (incl. Sat &amp; Sun – particularly for small stores)</b>	3.2.1 (Bonus) Additional # collections from Coles stores	- Together with OzHarvest and SecondBite, explored the potential of OzHarvest collecting from a Coles store that was yet to linked to a collecting agency - Reached out through the local network to find an additional charity, none of agencies had capacity to handle additional collection	<b>Not achieved</b>
	3.2.2. (Bonus) check-in purchased food vs donated food	- One Illawarra food pantry could have a reduction in purchased items since starting with OzHarvest deliveries	<b>Not achieved</b>
<b>3.3 (Bonus) Establish additional collaborations that increase the usage of food rescue donations</b>	3.3.1 One additional collaboration established during the pilot	Three additional collaborations achieved: - OzHarvest & SecondBite Sydney Distribution	<b>Achieved</b>

Activity	KPI's	Progress	Status
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One food pantry started receiving OzHarvest deliveries</li> <li>- Mission Australia &amp; Warrawong Resident forum</li> </ul>	

#### 4. Advocacy

Objective: Development of final report, including outcomes of the pilot and suggestions on how others could implement the RFDC role (Milestone 3)

Activity	KPI's	Progress	Status
<b>4.0 Final Report</b>	4.0.1 Completion		<b>Achieved</b>
<b>4.1 RFDC job description</b>	4.1.1 Inclusion	Included in Appendix 8 and in toolkit	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>4.2 Key criteria for organisations expressing interest in the RFDC role</b>	4.2.1 Inclusion	Included in "discussion"	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>4.3 Suggested KPIs and activities for the RFDC program</b>	4.3.1 Inclusion	Included in toolkit	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>4.4 A draft 'Toolkit' for the establishment and delivery of a RFDC program</b>	4.4.1 Completion	Toolkit developed	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>4.6 Summary of the added benefit the RFDC role could offer to the community, food rescue and relief agencies, councils, and state government.</b>	4.5.1 Inclusion	Included in "discussion"	<b>Achieved</b>

## Stage 5: The Regional Food Donations Coordinator Position

In the fifth stage of the pilot project, the focus was to reflect on the outcomes and benefits of the RFDC in order to refine the role and responsibilities of the position. To bolster this process, three other regional food donation approaches in NSW were examined for insights and collated together with a collective impact lens. This review informed the suggested criteria for organisations hosting a RFDC.

### Benefits of the RFDC Position

The RFDC pilot was delivered as an extension FFI coordinator role and leveraged existing networks, communication channels and resources. It is important to note that the benefits discussed below are a result of the added resourcing capacity that the Pilot enabling FFI to dedicate support to regional food rescue and relief sector. It is however not possible to look at the benefits of the RFDC in isolation of the existing predecessors. Throughout the pilot project the following benefits of the RFDC were identified:

#### Overarching benefits:

- **Fostering collective impact:** The RFDC played a crucial role in bringing stakeholders together to foster open communication, share practical knowledge and learnings, set a common agenda, and develop a plan of action with mutually reinforcing activities. This enabled the RFDC to foster greater collaboration and coordination among the stakeholders, eliminating duplication of efforts, pooling resources, and more united advocacy.
- **Providing a systems perspective:** By understanding the interconnectedness of stakeholders, processes, and challenges within the system, the RFDC was able to identify opportunities for streamlining operations and improving efficiency and driving impactful change. This systems-perspective enabled the RFDC to connect the dots, where other stakeholders were unaware of the opportunities.
- **Enhanced advocacy and united voice:** The RFDC was able to amplify and unify the voice of the collective food relief and rescue sector. An example of this is the dissemination of the re-cap report of the Networking event, which communicated the barriers and opportunities for collaboration within the region all 68 stakeholders on the FR&R working group. This document was found to be shared across multiple departments within one of the councils. This not only increased the awareness of the sector's challenges, but also resulted in added interest and involvement of this council in the FR&R working group meetings and FFI coordination. This approach increases the sector's ability to bring about policy and systemic changes.

“Having a food donation coordinator would mean community workers would have a central point of contact to organise emergency food options in a short timeframe. It would also allow us to work better together to service our communities.” Hayley Williams, Community Hub Team Leader CareWays

“Food insecurity is such a large issue within our community it needs a coordinated approach to prevent any resources being wasted.” Megan Arthur, Wollongong Homeless Hub

#### Specific benefits for local food relief agencies:

- **Improved communication and collaboration:** The RFDC fostered additional communication and networking among local food relief agencies, through the networking event and the increased attendance at the FR&R Working Group meeting. By facilitating the sharing of information, resources, and best practices, the RFDC created collaborative environments where agencies were able to work together to address food insecurity in the community. This included opportunities for pooling transport and storage infrastructure to maximize efficiency despite limited agency capacities.

- **Increased awareness and visibility:** The RFDC contributed to raising awareness and visibility of the food relief and rescue sector. Initiatives such as updating the Low Cost & Free Meals Directory and developing the Guide to Food Rescue & Relief provide comprehensive and accessible information. By ensuring that the sector's efforts and available resources are widely known and utilised, the RFDC enhances the overall impact of the sector's work – more food waste rescued and more people fed.

“Food waste and food insecurity continue to rise, the work and support you're providing is working towards addressing both areas of global concern. Food security initiatives across our region need a central point to drive a collaborative model moving forward.” Ash Castro, Manager Warrawong Resident Forum

“Like all good projects you need a Captain, to steer the project and ensure progress is made, more is accomplished working together than individually doing the same as each other.” Dianne Frohmuller, Manager Port Kembla Community Services

#### **Specific benefits for national food rescue organisations:**

- **Increased connection and visibility:** The networking event and increased attendance at the FR&R Working Group meetings facilitated by the RFDC, supports open communication and networking opportunities between food relief agencies and food rescue organisations. Leading to heightened awareness of regional activities and needs. They also create more avenues for collaboration with local stakeholders, strengthening partnerships and enhancing overall visibility.
- **Local knowledge and connections:** By leveraging their local network, the RFDC can identify new donors for food rescue and assist in finding suitable warehouse locations, harnessing their knowledge and connections to optimise operations. The RFDC is also an additional link between national food rescue organisations and local stakeholders, such as food relief agencies, councils, donors, and other charitable organisations.
- **On-the-ground presence:** Recognising the significance of in-person interactions in improving the quality and quantity of food donations, the RFDC can provide valuable support for donor engagement and outreach activities (particularly when located within the region) and/or coordinate the support through donor engagement officers funded through food donation education grants. Regular face-to-face education sessions with relief agencies and store staff help maintain a strong presence and cultivate meaningful relationships. By bridging the gap between food donors and recipient organisations, the RFDC streamlines operations and enhances the success rate of food rescue efforts.

**Improved collaborations:** A central point of contact and overarching perspective provided by the RFDC allowed for an enhanced collaboration between OzHarvest and SecondBite. In trying to solve a specific local issue, the positive links, networks and problem solving fostered by the RFDC successfully leveraged the strengths and resources of each organisation, they have amplified their collective efforts in addressing food waste and food insecurity locally.

“It's wonderful to have an open forum to speak about the challenges, trends and wins we are all having.” by Olivia Penner-Dilworth, Food Rescue Engagement Coordinator OzHarvest

“You really have championed a model that could be replicated in other regional areas to make food waste diversion more of a streamlined and collaborative process.” Olivia Penner-Dilworth, Food Rescue Engagement Coordinator OzHarvest

“A local coordinator for food rescue in the Illawarra would have a transformative impact on SecondBite's operations and reach.” Andrew Willcox, State Operations Manager - New South Wales / ACT

### Specific benefits for Food Donors

- **On-the-ground presence:** The RFDC offers valuable support to food donors to meet their social impact/sustainability targets by providing on-site assistance and guidance. The RFDC can educate donors and their staff on the donation process, including sorting and storage procedures, ensuring that donations meet the necessary requirements. The RFDC can also support the relationship between the donor and the collecting agency by facilitating coordination and communication.
- **Local knowledge and connections:** The RFDC can play an active role in connecting food donors with agencies, for example linking the local grower with surplus mandarins with three agencies. Additionally, the RFDC can establish connections between food donors and local farmers by facilitating the separation of inedible and edible food waste and collection of inedible food that can be repurposed for animal feed or composting.

### Specific benefits for Local Councils and other government agencies:

- **Efficient Information Provision:** The RFDC can act as a central point of contact for information related to food rescue and relief activities in the region. They can gather and disseminate important updates, guidelines, and best practices to local councils and other government agencies, ensuring consistent and efficient communication. This streamlined flow of information, and a dedicated 'go-to' person to consult with can allow councils and other organisations to make informed decisions which have a greater impact in the food rescue and relief sector. The added benefit to efficient communication systems by the RFDC is that it supports the operational work of councils and other organisations to 'get on with the work' efficiently whilst someone else (the RFDC) is supporting at a logistics and strategic level.
- **Support Strategic Priorities:** The RFDC can serve as a valuable partner to local councils and other government agencies, contributing to their strategic priorities, such as:
  - Improving public health outcomes, in line with the NSW Healthy Eating and Living Active strategy
  - Strengthening Resilience, in line with NSW Reconstruction Authority's commitment to disaster prevention, preparedness, recovery, reconstruction, and adaptation to the effects of natural disasters in NSW
  - Reducing food waste in landfill, in line with NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041, and Stop Food Waste Australia's Food Rescue Sector Action Plan 2021-23
  - Stronger and more inclusive communities, in line with the strategic focus of the Department of Communities and Justice.
- **Data and Insights:** The RFDC can provide valuable data and insights to local councils and government agencies regarding food access, food waste, and related regional issues. This information can inform policymaking, resource allocation, and the development of targeted initiatives to address food insecurity and food waste at a systemic level.

## Summary of three regional food donation approaches:

The following three initiatives were identified based on their work within the food rescue and relief space, with a focus on collaboration and increasing food donations to feed more people in need. The initiatives were examined through desktop research supported by unstructured conversations with a representative.

- **North East Waste (NEWaste):** is a collaborative group of seven councils located on the North Coast of New South Wales, committed to finding cost-effective waste management solutions and promoting sustainable practices. In 2018, the NSW EPA Food Donation Education stream provided funding for NEWaste's feasibility study on regional food hubs to identify opportunities and barriers to successful collaboration amongst donors and food relief agencies. This led to a follow-up grant for the implementation of the Food Donation Program phase 2 in 2020/21, which aimed to build the capacity of food relief agencies, improve access to fresh and frozen produce, and promote networking and collaboration amongst agencies and donors. NEWaste created valuable resources such as a [Food Donation Tool Kit](#), food relief agency database, regular newsletters, and templates to support food rescue and relief efforts in the region. While the resources developed remain available on designated section on the NEWaste website, due to the lack of ongoing funding these are no longer actively promoted or updated.
- **City of Sydney – Food Operations Working Group:** In March 2020, the City of Sydney established a Food Operations Working Group as part of their Covid-19 Emergency Response. The Working Group brought together over 60 not-for-profit agencies and businesses to collectively provide food support for at-risk individuals and families across the local area experiencing food insecurity. This crisis response was council-funded and adopted a collective impact model, leveraging resources and expertise between those involved to achieve the best possible outcomes for those in need. The Working Group ceased its operation with the wrap up of the Covid-19 Emergency Response. The City is however exploring options to relaunch this collective work as part of their ongoing resilience and emergency preparedness planning, and response.
- **Canberra Region Joint Organisation:** The Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CRJO) brings together ten councils in South-East NSW and associate members to collaborate on regional projects and priorities that benefit communities. In 2018, the NSW EPA Food Donation Education stream provided funding for CRJO's Empower the Food Donation Network in Canberra Region project. This initiative took an empowering, locally driven approach to increase food donation in regional communities, partnering with community groups and supermarkets. The project established a Regional Food Donation Network, created a practical Food Donation Toolkit and successfully formed 32 partnerships with 28 stores, diverting an additional 23,100 kg from landfill. Despite the positive outcomes, this collaborative work (incl. the network) ceased in 2022 due to a lack of ongoing funding.

## Proposed RFDC Role and Responsibilities

The following is an outline of the potential role and responsibilities of a RFDC. This summary considers the four action areas identified in this pilot, together with activities undertaken by NEWaste, City of Sydney and CRJO, collated together with a collective impact lens. Collective Impact is a commonly used approach to address complex social issues in collaboration with multiple stakeholders. Collective impact initiatives are distinct from other forms of collaboration in their cross-sector composition and implementation of the five collective impact conditions: common agenda, shared measurements, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and backbone support. The RFDC could benefit the Food Rescue & Relief Sector, by requiring a skill set with strong leadership, effective communication, exceptional organisational abilities, and a comprehensive understanding of the collective impact approach within their community. These qualities are considered essential for the RFDC to effectively lead and support the region, facilitating meaningful and sustainable outcomes. The role and responsibilities of the RFDC will likely vary depending on the scope and needs of the region they service.

<b>Overview:</b> Increase awareness of the available food rescue avenues	
<b>Responsibilities / Key Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Measurements</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish and update a comprehensive database of food rescue and relief sector stakeholders, including their contact information, services offered, and relevant connections.</li> <li>2. Create a community-focused directory of food relief agencies in the region to connect individuals in need with available services.</li> <li>3. Conduct thorough assessments of the region's food rescue and relief landscape, identifying needs, gaps, barriers, opportunities, and existing partnerships.</li> <li>4. Generate an overview of the complex food rescue and relief landscape to enhance stakeholders' understanding of its intricacies, interconnectedness and pathways.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A comprehensive database of food rescue and relief sector stakeholders, including # of stakeholders included.</li> <li>2. Issuing of a community-focused directory of food relief agencies in the region (every 6 months)</li> <li>3. A comprehensive overview of the needs, gaps, barriers, opportunities, and existing partnerships.</li> <li>4. Development of a "Guide to food Rescue, Relief and Donating for [insert region], including # reach distribution</li> </ol>

<b>Collaboration:</b> Increase communication and collaboration amongst the food rescue and relief sector	
<b>Responsibilities / Key Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Measurements</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Foster and maintain strong relationships with diverse stakeholders, including food rescue organisations, food relief agencies, donors, local councils, and government agencies.</li> <li>2. Coordinate and facilitate regular meetings, forums, and working groups to encourage collaboration, open communication, and knowledge sharing.</li> <li>3. Lead the co-design and implementation of a regional action plan to streamline and optimise regional food rescue and relief efforts.</li> <li>4. Facilitate communication and coordination among stakeholders.</li> <li>5. Foster productive collaborations among organisations and highlight opportunities for improvement.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. # stakeholders included in regular comms re the FR&amp;R sector work, incl # new relationships fostered</li> <li>2. # meetings, # Forums, # working groups facilitated, including # participants</li> <li>3. Development of regional action plan, including # stakeholders participated</li> <li>4. Establishment of the two-way communication channel, incl # participants and # uses</li> <li>5. # additional collaborations achieved, # potential collaborations explores and # opportunities highlighted</li> </ol>



<b>Donations:</b> Increase quality and quantity of surplus food donations	
<b>Responsibilities / Key Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Measurements</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and engaged potential food donors, including food businesses, farmers, and supermarkets to secure additional donations of surplus food.</li> <li>2. Develop and implement outreach and education activities with existing food donors to increase the quantity and quality of donated food.</li> <li>3. Develop and implement strategies to increase the quantity and diversity of food donations.</li> <li>4. Explore innovative approaches, such as gleaning programs, to maximise food supply and minimise food waste.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. # donor outreach and education activities undertaken, including details</li> <li>2. # donor outreach and education activities undertaken, including details</li> <li>3. # strategies identified and implements, including outcome</li> <li>4. # innovative approaches identified and implemented, including outcome</li> </ol>

<b>Advocacy:</b> Provide a united voice to the food rescue and relief sector	
<b>Responsibilities / Key Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Measurements</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaborate with local Councils and other government agencies and policymakers to inform policies and strategies related to food security, food waste, food safety and resilience.</li> <li>2. Raise public awareness about food insecurity through campaigns and media engagement.</li> <li>3. Educate stakeholders and the general public about the benefits of food donation, including environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and community building.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. # advocacy opportunities, including detail</li> <li>2. # reach education campaigns and # media engagement</li> <li>3. # presentation at community events, #reach promotion campaigns and distribution "Guide to food Rescue, Relief and Donations"</li> </ol>

For further details regarding the RFDC role, please refer to [Appendix 8](#), which contains a Job Description Template.

## Implementation of the RFDC

When reflecting on the FFI Coordinator's existing role and the pilot project's outcomes, the importance of the established trusted network, working group, and information provision structures becomes apparent. These structures, developed over the years, played a vital role in delivering the pilot within the short timeframe. to deepen the work and play a more proactive and pivotal role in supporting the sector’s collective efforts. It is important to recognise that regions starting without established networks like FFI, would require at least) the first year to focus on building the necessary networks, establishing relationships, and laying the foundation for effective coordination and collaboration within the sector.

Regarding financial implications, the estimated allocation for the RFDC role in the community sector ranges from approximately \$80,000 to \$90,000 per year, including salary on costs. In the public service, the allocation could range from \$100,000 to \$120,000 per year. Using the assumption of a 2020 Social Return on Investment analysis<sup>9</sup> of \$5 gained per 0.75 kg rescue meal, suggests 12 to 18,000 kg of additional rescued food per year would be necessary to have a net return. Considering the identified untapped edible food

<sup>9</sup> Internal EPA analysis, not published

waste going to landfill and the potential for donor engagement and education, the RFDC position could be justified in terms of its social return on investment.

Fostering collective impact is a long-term proposition. Therefore, continuity of funding for the RFDC role is essential to cultivate solid and trusted connections and partnerships, ensuring the full realisation of the benefits provided by established food donation and rescue networks and fostering lasting positive change.

## Key Considerations for Organisations Hosting the RFDC

Based on the Illawarra pilot project and what enabled success, the following criteria should be considered for the hosting of the RFDC position:

- **Regional Presence:** The significant benefits derived from a regional presence and local knowledge emphasise the importance of proximity and reasonable travel distances within the region. Ideally, the RFDC should be strategically located to ensure that any part of the region can be reached within a 1-hour travel distance on either side of the boundary. This proximity enables the RFDC to effectively engage with stakeholders, gain a deep understanding of local dynamics, and address region-specific challenges and opportunities.
- **Established Reputation and Organisational Governance Structure:** The hosting organisation should have a reputable standing in the community and a well-established governance structure. An added advantage would be a trusted and established reputation with established networks and contacts. They should have the capacity and resources to support the RFDC position effectively. This includes providing the required infrastructure, office space, technology, and administrative support to enable the coordinator to carry out their responsibilities in coordinating food rescue and relief efforts.
- **Alignment with the Mission:** The hosting organisation should ideally align with the goals and objectives of the Food Rescue & Relief Sector. Commitment to addressing food waste, reducing food insecurity, and promoting sustainable food systems to ensure viability of the position within the organisation.
- **Collaboration and Partnership Mindset:** The hosting organisation should have a track record of successful collaborations and partnerships. They should actively engage with diverse stakeholders, including non-profit organisations, government agencies, and businesses. A willingness to work collaboratively and foster a partnership mindset is vital for driving collective impact and achieving meaningful outcomes that can be sustained long term.
- **Community-based versus government-based:** Both community-based and government-based hosting have their merits and can contribute to the success of the RFDC in different ways. Community-based hosting allows the RFDC to work directly with local stakeholders at a community level, fostering intimate relationships and collaborations. This proximity enables the RFDC to deeply understand the local context, needs, and challenges. Additionally, community-based hosting offers flexibility, allowing the RFDC to adapt and respond quickly to changing conditions and emerging issues within the sector. On the other hand, government-based hosting provides the RFDC with access to government resources, support, and networks. Hosted by a government agency i.e. a local council or regional agency, it can facilitate advocacy for policy changes, collaboration with different government departments, and influence decision-making processes. The connections established through government-based hosting can open doors to broader opportunities and initiatives with the potential for systemic impact. However, it is essential to acknowledge that government-based hosting may involve bureaucratic processes and structures, limiting the RFDC's ability to connect intimately with local stakeholders and respond quickly to sector needs. A collaborative approach, as showcased through the Pilot, which leverages the strengths of both community-based hosting in close collaboration with several government agencies, can be the most effective solution. This

approach combines local knowledge, community engagement, and grassroots initiatives with broader support and resources from government agencies.

Considering these factors will help determine the most suitable hosting arrangement for the RFDC for a specific region ensuring its effectiveness in supporting food rescue and relief efforts in that region.

## Conclusion & Findings

The outcomes achieved during this 7-month pilot project demonstrates the potential effectiveness of a RFDC position to enhance capacity, foster connections, and promote collaboration for improved outcomes in the food rescue and relief sector. These achievements could be replicated in other regions of NSW where similar hosting organisations are already established.

Working through the identification of barriers and opportunities (Stage 2) produced a significantly large number of tasks to be addressed and actioned. A dedicated resource at a regional level would allow for a position to be responsible for these, monitor progress and ensure that duplication of effort, time and resources from multiple stakeholders is avoided, and that a systematic approach is adopted. While there may be some initial resistance from more established food rescue operations due to perceptions that they may be disadvantaged (as was the case in this pilot), partnership activities and open, transparent communication can soon transform this perception resulting in better recognition of the increased benefits of shared resources, collaboration and the additional support that a RFDC can provide.

The overarching benefits that the RFDC bring to the existing efforts of the FR&R sector are:

- Fostering collective impact
- Providing a systems perspective
- Enhancing advocacy and united voice

Furthermore, the role can provide an unbiased regional strategic oversight if it sits outside of a food rescue or relief organisation, as it is not bound by a single organisation's policies and procedures. The autonomy and independence the RFDC can allow for an approach to any business as a potential food donor and is not limited/bound to a single supermarket brand or corporate relationship. Logic follows that this benefit very practically extends itself to enhanced logistical coordination across different rescue organisations and opportunities to collect/distribute more food and mediating challenges of the food relief sector inadequate supply of food and equally inadequate capacity to collect.

The pilot highlighted that having a central point of contact with strategic oversight, (a RFDC), provides necessary resourcing to be able to identify opportunities for streamlining operations, pooling resources and improving efficiency. For example, a common experience is that donated food can become outdated quite quickly; the regional and collaborative approach that a RFDC can facilitate, allows the ability to leverage and enhance the dedicated, although sometimes fragmented, efforts of the region's existing food rescue and relief sector, as well as quickly update and inform a broader audience such as local government, businesses and charities.

There is also the possibility of further exploring an overarching operational role as a single point of contact for businesses, rather than managing the requests and logistics from multiple charities at different times. This approach would also have support from under-resourced charities.

One limitation of the pilot was the relatively short timeframe available to fully monitor and assess the level and impact of any increased food rescue and decreased food insecurity. An estimate of an additional six months (approximately) may have allowed more use of the systems and processes and enough data collection to be able to infer this. This was due in part, to the need to first understand and design the RFDC role before the delivery of stakeholder consultation and pilot activities. This has resulted in a role for the RFDC which is 'adaptable'. However, given the recommendation that the role could be housed in any number of organisations, either government or non-government, this flexibility provides greater scope for the role to be tailored to both community need and relevant organisational governance requirements.

The experiences of the pilot project described herein lend themselves to three main recommendations:

1. To expand the RFDC position to other regions, having the position hosted by an organisation with regional capacity and presence is crucial. This hosting organisation can be either a community-based or government-based entity, depending on the region's specific context and existing networks. It is essential to ensure that the RFDC role builds upon the existing efforts and strengths within the region. A collaborative approach, as showcased through the Pilot, which leveraged the strengths of both community-based and government-based entities may be the most effective solution. This approach combines local knowledge, community engagement, and grassroots initiatives with the broader support and resources offered by government entities, maximising the impact of the RFDC role.
2. To ensure the RFDC can effectively develop the foundational components necessary for collective impact in the regional full-time position is needed. The financial implications of this are approximately \$80,000 to \$90,000 per year in the community sector, including salary on costs. In the public service, the allocation would range from \$100,000 to \$120,000 per year. A conservative Social Return on Investment is that 0.75 kg rescue meal generates \$5 in social return. To justify the RFDC position, an additional 12 to 18,000 kg of rescued food per year would be necessary. Given the amount of edible food landfilled each year and the potential for improved donor engagement and education, the financial impact of the RFDC position is justified.
3. It is critical that the RFDC position has ongoing funding to ensuring sustained and positive change in the Food Rescue & Relief Sector. The experiences of the three other identified regional collective impact approaches in Stage 5 serve as stark reminders of the consequences when dedicated or ongoing funding is lacking. To safeguard the progress made by a RFDC in streamlining the region's collective impact, long-term funding commitment is required. This timeframe allows for the establishment of solid foundations, the cultivation of strong relationships, and the implementation of effective strategies that can drive long-term transformation within the sector.

There is an ongoing and growing need for food relief and significant potential to increase food donations if barriers can be overcome, and opportunities harnessed. The regional presence of the RFDC, allows for on-the-ground donor engagement and education to increase the quality and quantity of donated food. This, combined with knowledge sharing, and resource optimisation of community charities, the RFDC position enhances the sector's ability to address both the environmental impact and social implications of food rescue and relief efforts.

## Appendix 1: Interview Guide – food rescue & relief stakeholders

The Regional Food Donation Coordinator (RFDC) Pilot is a project by Healthy Cities Illawarra in collaboration with the NSW EPA to increase rescued food donations across our region. In line with this project, this interview is designed to understand better the food relief and rescue sector in the Illawarra, as well as gauge how a RFDC could build the capacity, strengthen connections, and increase donations across the sector.

Thanks in advance for your time!

### Organisation Details:

- 1. Organisation:**
- 2. Full Name:**
- 3. Role:**
- 4. Generic email address:**
- 5. What service/activity does your organisation undertake in the food relief/rescue space? (Multiple can apply)**
  - Emergency relief (one-off support)
  - Food parcels/hampers (regular)
  - Community breakfast program
  - Community lunch (incl. mobile)
  - Community dinner (incl. mobile)
  - Food vouchers
  - Low-cost community shop (incl. mobile)
  - School-based food relief (breakfast, lunch & snacks)
  - Other ...
- 6. Are you interested to be listed in the “Low Cost & Free Meals Directory”?**
  - Yes, please confirm: [activity + day + times + address]
  - No
- 7. Does your organisation provide other services/activities alongside food relief? (Multiple can apply)**
  - No
  - Provision of a safe community space
  - Information
  - Referral & assessment into other services
  - Advocacy
  - Chaplaincy
  - Personal Care services (e.g. laundry, showers)
  - Counselling
  - Skills based / development programs
  - Social activities (e.g. craft club)
  - Age care/home support services/transport (incl. meals on wheels)
  - Other...
- 8. How is your organisation funded to provide food relief? And does it cover all your expenses? (e.g. core / longstanding funding, government funding (local, state or federal), one-off grants, donations, faith-based contributions)**

9. How many staff (# + Hours) are involved in weekly food relief activities?
10. How many volunteers (# + hours) are involved in your food relief activities each week?
11. How many people do you feed on average per week (per activity)?  
Activity 1 #/week, accounting for # meals
12. Do you ever turn people away? If so, why, and how many each week?
13. Do you mostly focus on particular demographics for our food relief service? (Multiple can apply)
  - Male
  - Female
  - Single parents
  - Families
  - Young adults aged 18-24
  - unemployed/looking for work
  - Homeless
  - Fulltime students (+18)
  - Retired / aged pension
  - Disability pension/carer
  - Cultural and Linguistically Diverse community
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

## Food Sourcing

The following few questions will focus on food sourcing.

14. What is the food source used in your food relief activities? (in approx. percentage)
  - .. % Rescued (incl. foodbank, OzHarvest & SecondBite)
  - .. % donated (incl. food drives)
  - .. % purchased (from, e.g. supermarkets, local grocery stores, or Yume?)
15. Focusing on the just rescued food segment?
  - ..% through OzHarvest?
  - ..% through FoodBank?
  - ..% through the Second bite
  - ..% through one of our staff or volunteers
  - ..% Delivered by the donor or donor's contact
  - Other
16. Are there any items you purchase that could be rescued instead? (e.g., protein, allergy-based foods, culturally appropriate foods)
17. Would additional food donations enable you to feed more people / plate more meals? Is that within current activities or by introducing new food support activities?
18. Have you undertaken any activities in the last 12 months to increase food donations? (e.g., reached out to local grocery shops or bakeries, online campaign)

**19. Are any other barriers stopping you from feeding more people? (e.g., storage facilities, staff, volunteers, cooking facilities, funding, space limitations, vehicles etc.)**

**20. What works well? What tools, resources etc., enable you to work efficiently? E.g., using crates could be standardised forms or documents when handling food.**

#### Regional Food Donation Coordinator

As mentioned in the introduction, we are exploring the potential of a Regional Food Donation Coordinator to increase capacity, strengthen connections and increase donations across the food relief and rescue sector. Food Fairness Illawarra already undertakes several activities that could be part of this role.

**Existing resources:** Illawarra's Guide to Food Donations

- [Landing page \(why & how\)](#)
- [Organisations accepting food donations - Directory](#)
- [Low cost & Free meals - Directory](#)
- [Food donation Volunteer Opportunities - Directory](#)

**21. Could you please rate the benefit of the following activities currently undertaken by Food Fairness Illawarra? (Beneficial - no use at all - N/A)**

- Inclusion and regular update of the Low Cost & Free Meals - Directory (web & print version)
- Hosting and upkeep of the Illawarra's guide to Food Donations (how to get donating in our region)
- Inclusion and regular updates of the Fair Food Volunteer Opportunities – Directory
- Hosting quarterly Food Rescue and Relief Working group meetings to foster open communication within the Food Relief & Rescue Sector, to share practical knowledge and learnings and ensure a coordinated response.
- Establishment of the Food Rescue and Relief email distribution list (mainly used during Covid-19)
- Extensive network and knowledge of activities happening in our region

**22. We have thought of several activities that a Regional Food Donation Coordinator could undertake. Could you please rank the top 3 –5 benefits of these activities?**

- **Overview** - Identity who does what
- **Collaboration** - Networking, working groups and communication
- **Donations** - Help to get more donations
- **Volunteers** – Help with volunteer recruitment
- **Advocacy** – Offer a collective voice to the food relief sector
- **Funding** – Support funding applications (where possible)
- **Training** – Support shared training opportunities (needs-based)
- **Resilience** – Identify and problem-solve issues in the local food relief system

**23. What other activities could a Regional Food Donation Coordinator undertake to support your organisation in increasing rescued food donations?**

**24. What other activities could a Regional Food Donation Coordinator undertake to strengthen connections and increase donations across the food donation sector? (Give us as much possible detail as to what this look like)**

- a. And what connections would you like to strengthen?



b. What additional collaborations would be of benefit?

**25. Are there any other comments that you would like to add?**

**Thanks again for your time, insight and knowledge!**

## Appendix 2: Existing resource – opportunities for improvement

### Low cost & Free meals Directory - [link](#)

A resource that provides an overview of the agencies operating in the area and coverage, developed to help those in need find local food services that provide low-cost and free meals.

#### Opportunities for improvement:

- Listed by LGA (instead of alphabetical)
- Better design to allow for printing and folding.
- Councils & partners to link to web-based resources
- Tap into the WHH app with locations.
- List to convert to map with all agencies (additional grant funding)

### Illawarra's Guide to Donating Food - [link](#)

Developed to highlight the pathway to donate food in the Illawarra, including why, what and how. Guiding potential donors to connect with OzHarvest or one of the relief agencies for pick up or delivery. Perceived by stakeholders as a beneficial resource with room for improvement.

#### Opportunities for improvement:

- Increase promotion,
- Additional on-the-ground donor engagement required that links to the guide,
- Encourage food relief agencies to update their food donation requirement (incl. collection capacity),
- Add "use by" and "best before" explanation,
- Add additional resources to support businesses in reducing their food waste, including:
  - a. [Your Business is Food Toolkit](#)
  - b. [Food Services Magazine article – plate waste reduction tips](#)
  - c. [Food Services Magazine article – Festive season food waste reduction tips](#)
  - d. [Case Study – Hilton Sydney](#)
  - e. [Your Business is Food](#)

### Quarterly Food Rescue and Relief Working Group

These stakeholder meetings foster open communication within the Illawarra food rescue and relief sector, aiming to share practical knowledge and learnings and ensure a coordinated sector. The NPS of 55 reflects that not all agencies have attended these meetings regularly.

#### Opportunities for improvement:

- Find a time that works for most agencies,
- Introducing a hybrid meeting for added flexibility,
- Development of a shared agenda and action plan to direct and measure collaboration efforts.

## Volunteer Opportunities – Directory - [link](#)

It was developed to highlight all agencies with volunteer opportunities in the food space, including food relief and rescue opportunities. While many agencies recognised the directory as a beneficial resource, the impact on additional volunteers gained through this pathway could have been improved.

### **Opportunities for improvement:**

- Would benefit from a relief-specific landing space,
- Additional promotion campaign.

## Food Rescue and Relief Newsletter

It was introduced during covid to provide regular communications in the food rescue & Relief space during a very volatile time. It has not been used much since, which likely impacted the NPS.

### **Opportunities for improvement:**

- Issue more regularly,
- Enabling two-way communication between the stakeholders.

## Appendix 3: Minutes

### FFI Food Rescue & Relief Working Group



To ensure a coordinated response, foster open communication within the Food Rescue & Relief Sector to share practical knowledge and learnings.

Date: 10/05/2023

Please note that the list of attendees' full names have been redacted here.

Item	Discussion points & outstanding actions	New actions
<b>Welcome</b>	<b>Aim:</b> Foster open communication within the Food Relief & Rescue Sector, and share practical knowledge and learnings to ensure a coordinated response within our region + Establish a shared action plan	
<b>Apologies</b>	As above	
<b>Around the table</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who are you and your organisation?</li> <li>What do you or your organisation do within the food relief and rescue space?</li> <li>Are there any challenges or opportunities you would like to share that we might be able to help with?</li> <li><b>Rosi (ISLHD)</b> Health Promotion Officer. Dedicated to the work of FFI and actively participating in this working group as an integral part of the Healthy Eating Active Living Strategy. With a focus on promoting community health, here to offer support and contribute from a health perspective to the group's collective efforts.</li> <li><b>Berbel (HCI)</b> With mixed emotions, I share the news that I will be starting a 4-month secondment with the City of Sydney. In this role, I will be responsible for developing and coordinating networks, initiatives, and programs that align with the City's vision for sustainable and resilient communities, including sustainable food systems. This opportunity is a significant development for me, and I am eagerly looking forward to the lessons I will learn and the knowledge I will bring back to our collaborative space. However, with a heavy heart, I leave behind the incredible momentum we have built in our collective efforts. It saddens me to step away at this crucial time. Nonetheless, I am confident in the capable hands of Maree, who will take over the coordination of FFI during my absence. Maree's competence is unquestionable, and she will oversee the running of the Quarterly meetings while supporting the communications and collaborations within this space.</li> </ul>	

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### FFI Food Rescue & Relief Working Group



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maree (HCI &amp; Hidden Harvest)</b> Looking forward to working in this space, bringing a wealth of passion and seven years of experience working in the food space. They are excited to contribute their knowledge and skills to this vital work and committed to working together to create meaningful change.</li> <li><b>Kelly (St Vincent De Paul)</b> Coordinator of the Vinnies Van and excited to share that they are about to start an additional service in the Mangerton estate with their outreach team. Will keep Maree up to date for any required changes to the Low Cost &amp; Free Meals Directory.</li> <li><b>Nina (Anglicare)</b> Senior caseworker, attending this meeting on behalf of Erica, excited to connect with everyone and learn more about what everyone is doing in this space.</li> <li><b>Hayley (Careways)</b> Community Hub Team leader, the longstanding breakfast program will be transitioning to food hampers in response to the identified community need. Will be looking to call on the additional avenues for rescued food to support this new direction.</li> <li><b>Soutara (UOW Pulse PAntry)</b> PULSE Coordinator. Excited to share that we have recently started with OzHarvest deliveries, significantly increasing fresh food to students in need.</li> <li><b>Carly (Wollongong City Council)</b> Part of the Community Wellbeing team, here to keep up to date with what is happening in the food rescue and relief space. Excited to be doing a much needed regional print run of the Low Cost &amp; Free Meals Directory together with SCC, HCI &amp; ISLHD.</li> <li><b>Lauren (Shellharbour City Council)</b> Strategic planning. Currently working on a Health and well-being plan, with healthy / access food being one of the focus areas.</li> <li><b>Diane (Westley Community Care).</b> Joining the meeting for the first time on behalf of Geoffrey, who will finish up with Westley Community Care at the end of June. Here to connect with everyone and learn more about what everyone is doing in this space.</li> </ul>	
<b>Low Cost &amp; Free Meals Directory - <a href="#">link</a></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WCC, SCC, HCI &amp; ISLHD are working together on a regional print run of the LCFM directory to ensure that all agencies and community organisations have sufficient copies to distribute to individuals in need. Expected to be finalised by June/July.</li> <li>Reminder that today is the last day to inform Berbel of any changes for the Final version of the LCFM directory.</li> </ul>	<b>All agencies</b> are to inform of any changes to the LCFM directory.
<b>EPA Regional Food Donation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Regional Food Donation Coordinator pilot has almost come to an end. This has been an incredible opportunity for our region to pilot the Regional Food Donation Coordinator position funded by the NSW Environmental Protection Authority as the first region in NSW.</li> </ul>	

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## FFI Food Rescue & Relief Working Group



<p><b>Coordinator - pilot update</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This work would not have been possible without everyone's support, insights and contribution. THANK YOU ALL, it has been such a pleasure working with you!</li> <li>The things we have achieved in the concise timeframe of the pilot include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed our <a href="#">Guide to Food Rescue &amp; Relief</a>, providing a comprehensive overview of the region's food rescue and relief landscape. In addition, it highlights opportunities for collaboration and offers practical tools and strategies to increase food donations, food safety and things to consider when establishing a food relief program.</li> <li>Established the <a href="#">Food Rescue &amp; Relief Email Network</a>, a two-way email network created to foster increased communication and collaboration among all stakeholders in the food rescue and relief sector of the Illawarra. The distribution list aims to share information and resources that can contribute to the sector's collective efforts, including surplus food donations, spare resources, upcoming opportunities, and more. If you haven't yet, please email <a href="mailto:mail@foodfairnessillawarra.org.au">mail@foodfairnessillawarra.org.au</a></li> <li>Developed our own <a href="#">Shared Action Plan</a> To guide our collective work of the FR&amp;R working group.</li> <li>Engaged with two Coles Stores to explore opportunities to increase the quality and quantity of their donations. While this engagement resulted in several positive interactions and commitments from the Store level, it is too early to see this impact on the donations - keeping our fingers crossed.</li> <li>Numerous additional collaborations have been established since our Networking event, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OzHarvest &amp; Secondbite, exploring the potential of sharing the OzHarvest warehouse to bring additional food into Illawarra.</li> <li>Pulse Pantry, now receiving OzHarvest deliveries.</li> <li>New partnership between Warrawong resident forum, Mission Australia &amp; Secondbite</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Even in a concise time frame, the pilot has highlighted the power of coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders. By aligning our efforts, sharing resources, and streamlining processes, we can maximise the impact of our collective work.</li> <li><b>Note:</b> although the pilot has come to an end, the FR&amp;R working group will continue to run every quarter, as well as the above resources will continue to guide the collective work of the group.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Other Business, funding &amp; other opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Transport can help NGOs transport disadvantaged communities, free of charge, with a driver, Mon- Fri, 9 – 5 pm. <a href="#">Community Transport - subsidised bus hire for community groups</a></li> </ul>	

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## FFI Food Rescue & Relief Working Group



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Outside the meeting) Would anyone know of an available and affordable warehouse space? 50-100 sqm, with two parking spots, please email <a href="mailto:mail@foodfairnessillawarra.org.au">mail@foodfairnessillawarra.org.au</a></li> <li>Valuable resources for grant applications: <a href="#">Foodbank Hunger Report 2022</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Funding opportunities?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Applied:</b> Citibank Foundation to extend the RFDC and establish a shared hub.</li> <li><b>Open:</b> MB Foundation is open until 16<sup>th</sup> June – <a href="#">link</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Events?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Story Slam – overcoming challenges by sharing real-life stories - <a href="#">link</a></li> <li>Secondbite Charity Networking event – in August</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Next Meeting</b></p>	<p>Quarterly, Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August – 1-2 pm</p>	<p><b>Maree</b> to schedule and invite</p>

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## Appendix 4: Shared Action Plan

### Food Rescue & Relief Collective Action Plan



**Shared Goal: Feeding People Fighting Food Waste** - Food security by collective food waste diversion

Objectives	Strategies / Action	Responsibility / Role
To create a stronger and more efficient Food Rescue & Relief Network in the Illawarra	Host quarterly <a href="#">FR&amp;R working group meetings</a> .	FFI Coordinator and Chair
	Actively participate in the quarterly <a href="#">FR&amp;R working group meetings</a> .	Food Rescue Organisations Food Relief Agencies Other interested stakeholders
	Actively share resources, information, and request for support via the <a href="#">Food Rescue &amp; Relief Email Network</a> in between meetings	FFI Coordinator Food Rescue Organisations Food Relief Agencies Other interested stakeholders
To create community awareness of the existing services in the Illawarra	Actively update the web-based <a href="#">Low Cost &amp; Free Meals Directory</a> to ensure accurate and up-to-date information by using the <a href="#">Step-by-step guide</a>	Food Rescue Organisations Food Relief Agencies
	Yearly run a regional print run of the <a href="#">Low Cost &amp; Free Meals Directory</a> (timing to be reviewed)	Councils & ISLHD & DCJ
	Promote and share the <a href="#">Low Cost &amp; Free Meals Directory</a> incl. website, newsletters, social media	FFI Coordinator Councils & ISLHD & DCJ Food Rescue Organisations Food Relief Agencies Other interested stakeholders
To increase the quantity and quality of food donations	Active donor engagement and outreach (where capacity allows). See the <a href="#">Guide to Food Rescue &amp; Relief</a> for some helpful templates.	Food Rescue Organisations Food Relief Agencies Other interested stakeholders
	Utilise, share and promote the <a href="#">Guide to Donating Food</a> incl. website, newsletters, social media	FFI Coordinator Councils & ISLHD & DCJ Food Rescue Organisations Food Relief Agencies Other interested stakeholders

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