

Waste prevention project example

Preventing wasted food with tracking software

Throwing away food that could have been eaten is an unnecessary source of waste for your business and it costs you twice by inflating your food expenses and then adding to your waste hauling bill. Fortunately, there are systems that can help you cut your food waste dramatically.



Food waste tracking software can be used to quantify the weight and cost of the food you throw out, identify why it is happening and develop targeted strategies to stop it at the source. Tracking software is a great fit for commercial food production settings such as corporate kitchens, grocery stores, hotels, hospitals, or schools.

Pictured: Taher Inc., a foodservice management group in Plymouth, tested tracking software from Leanpath in 2018. They were able to identify patterns of when food was being wasted, why it was wasted, and then implement strategies to nearly eliminate the waste that negatively impacted their bottom line.

Setting this up at your business

Implementing a food waste tracking system at your business involves a few steps. To start using tracking software, you'll need to:

1. Review food waste tracking software options. Decide on the features and plans you want and purchase the software. Some examples are:
 - a. [Leanpath](#)
 - b. [Winnow](#)
 - c. [Phood](#)
2. Identify a location for the tracking equipment and ensure that there is internet access.
3. Train staff on how to use the tracking system (this training may be offered by the software company).
4. Separate food waste from other materials (trash and recyclables) so you can measure it before disposal. Some systems use intelligent software to identify the food items for you.
5. Periodically review data collected by your tracking system and provide feedback to your staff.
6. Implement changes to prevent wasting food based on what you learn from the tracking system. Changes could include re-training staff on proper food preparation techniques, making changes to how you serve food, or rotating inventory.

Implementing new procedures to measure food waste is the most difficult step, and then once your staff get into new habits, it takes much less effort to maintain a tracking program.

Costs to consider

- Setup, training and subscription fees for tracking equipment and software (est. \$4,000 - \$10,000 for 1 to 3 years based on the system and features selected)
- Supplying Wi-Fi, cellular data service, or installing ethernet to the location the software is housed
- Staff time to learn and use software

Examples of similar projects in the news

- Sodexo steps up fight against food waste: [sodexo.com/en/media/sodexo-against-food-waste.html](https://www.sodexo.com/en/media/sodexo-against-food-waste.html)
- How Winnow is using artificial intelligence to help kitchens end food waste: [foodtank.com/news/2020/04/how-winnow-is-using-artificial-intelligence-to-help-kitchens-end-food-waste/](https://www.foodtank.com/news/2020/04/how-winnow-is-using-artificial-intelligence-to-help-kitchens-end-food-waste/)

Waste prevention grants available

Hennepin County has a grant program to fund projects that prevent waste in the business sector. Areas of focus include replacing disposables with reusables, food waste prevention and innovative projects around research and development (to prevent waste). Learn more and apply at: [hennepin.us/businesswasteprevention](https://www.hennepin.us/businesswasteprevention)

Contact

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