

Closing the Loop

Help local businesses design food waste solutions

A circular economy works like nature—everything has value and everything gets used. It is restorative and regenerative. To help envision our future circular economy, check out this great 4-minute video, [Rethinking progress](#).⁹¹

From waste to resources



Waste management



Circular Economy

Production



Consumption



From Trash to Treasure

Time: 1-3 days

Your challenge is to find a company, institution or organization that handles or deals with food. For a university, this might be the cafeteria or for a hospital it might be the food services department. Your position as a business analyst is to carry out a SWOT analysis to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats around their food use. It is best to conduct this activity with a group or organization that is open to sharing information or an organization where you have already developed a relationship.



Making it Happen:

- Identify the food company, institution or organization that may have food-related by-products going to waste. See the Environmental Protection Agency's [Excess Food Opportunities Map](#)⁹² for inspiration.
- Meet or speak with a company representative and ask them to identify their waste. How much do they have? What is currently done with it? At what cost? What else could be done with it?
- Record your findings in the SWOT analysis template provided.
- Research ways to use the by-product. Explore the guide from Activity #10 to get started. What kind of space, skills or equipment are needed to take advantage of their by-product?
- Find information about other companies that might want the by-products.
- Present your findings back to the institution along with the SWOT table and a list of recommended solutions.
- Present your findings to your group or class. Explain how the goals of a circular economy can be achieved through your solutions.

SWOT means Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A SWOT analysis is a tool used by businesses to understand and improve their operations.



Strengths

(positive factors that are internal to the organization)



Example: Staff are very knowledgeable about food and food issues

Weaknesses

(negative factors that are internal to the organization)



Example: Staff members are busy and do not have much time

Opportunities

(positive factors that are external to the organization)



Example: Co-op programs with universities/ colleges offer subsidized student wages to focus on food waste reduction

Threats

(negative factors that are external to the organization)



Example: Waste management regulations and associated costs have made greener alternatives unattractive

Want to do More?

- Feature a Food Hero: Conduct an interview with someone who currently makes something out of another food producer's by-product (for example, crackers made using pulp waste from the juicing industry). How did your food hero contribute to a circular economy? Is their approach based on traditional practices or a high-tech solution? Were they inspired by social or environmental concerns, or purely economical ones?
- Write a blog or showcase this Closed-loop Food Hero on your *Food Matters Action Kit* profile page.
- Recognize their innovation by hosting a first annual Closed-loop Food Hero awards ceremony. Find sponsors to donate a gift for your hero.



Want to learn more about food in the circular economy? Check out these great resources:

- [The Los Angeles Area Food Recovery Guide—Reducing Food Waste: Recovering Untapped Resources in our Food System](#)⁹³
- [Canada's National Zero Waste Council's Food Loss and Waste Reduction Strategy](#)⁹⁴

⁹¹Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2011). Re-thinking Progress: The Circular Economy. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCRKvDyyHmI>>

⁹²United States Environmental Protection Agency (2018). Excess Food Opportunities Map <<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/excess-food-opportunities-map>>

⁹³Los Angeles Food Policy Council (2017). Reducing Food Waste: Recovering Untapped Resources In Our Food System <<https://bit.ly/2GA7JnI>>

⁹⁴National Zero Waste Council (2017). National Food Waste Reduction Strategy. <<http://www.nzwc.ca/focus/food/national-food-waste-strategy/Documents/NZWCFoodWasteStrategy-CallforCollaboration.pdf>>