

To: CAO for the Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2019-03-12

From: Jamie Benton – Environmental Services Coordinator

File No: 5368-28

Subject: Fraser Valley Food Recovery project with FoodMesh

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board direct staff to continue the Fraser Valley Food Recovery pilot project with FoodMesh for \$10,000 per year for both 2019 and 2020.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Environmental Stewardship
Support Healthy & Sustainable Community
Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy

PRIORITIES

Priority #1 Waste Mangement

BACKGROUND

In December 2017 the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) entered into a contract with FoodMesh Exchange to create the Fraser Valley Food Recovery pilot project to help divert waste within the region. FoodMesh is designed to optimise how food moves by matching nutritious unsold food with secondary markets and by match-making users with each other, using computer programming that predicts purchasing behaviour. In so doing, FoodMesh helps food manufacturers, grocery chains, farmers, liquidators, and charities save money by reducing food waste and making more food available to feed people.

DISCUSSION

In February 2018, FoodMesh and the FVRD began a 14 month food recovery pilot project that included the following goals:

1. To recruit 50+ Fraser Valley businesses and charities actively on the FoodMesh Network
2. To recover \$400,000 in food on the network (16 x Return on Investment)
3. To divert 70,000 kg's of organics from landfill to higher uses

The initial phase included community engagement and onboarding/training, which was then followed by platform customization for the FVRD. Through the community engagement and industry working groups FoodMesh reached out to a number of businesses in the food sector, as well as charities and farmers and were able to recruit many of them to participate in the FoodMesh program. This began the active exchanging of surplus food, which was either sold between users at a reduced rate or donated. The main issue to overcome remained the collection or delivery of the food.

FoodMesh was successful in signing Save On Foods to participate in the FoodMesh program. Save On Foods suggested using their Chilliwack stores for a three month pilot. Prior to this, only bread waste and a few other items were being picked up by charities. Save On Foods worked to streamline logistics by having only one charity involved with pickups. The Salvation Army's Chilliwack food bank was selected by Save On Foods as they have the required cold storage and space. FoodMesh worked with the partners to create a platform to record all metrics, such as type, quantity and distribution of all food. This helped to provide a chain of custody. The Program has radically increased the amount of food available at the food bank, and is accessed by any charity signed up as a member of the FoodMesh program.

By late January 2019, FoodMesh had nearly met all goals in Table 1 in half the time expected. Based on the success of the project and the coordination between businesses, government and the not-for-profit sector, the project has been nominated for a Recycling Council of British Columbia award.

Table 1. Fraser Valley Food Recovery Metrics

	Target	Result
FVRD Users	50	61
Weight Diverted	70,000 KG	99,173 KG
Meals Created	116,667	165,288 Meals
Value	\$400,000	\$397,780

Due to the success of the pilot project, the proposal is to extend the project for 2019 and 2020 at a value of \$10k each year. The platform has already been established therefore the funds will be used for community engagement and expanding the project wider within the FVRD.

COST

If approved, \$10,000 for 2019 and \$10,000 for 2020 will be used over two financial years. FoodMesh would utilize these funds to expand the project wider within the region, to increase user training opportunities, to make enhancements to the FoodMesh app, and increase community engagement. These funds will be allocated from the existing Solid Waste budget to extend the pilot project. Staff are also seeking additional grant funding to potentially expand the scope of the proposed project.

CONCLUSION

The Fraser Valley Food Recovery project with FoodMesh has met its deliverables in 12 months. The project has over 60 users who have helped divert 100,000 kgs of food. The Food Recovery Project has diverted food that previously was going for disposal, provided food for those that most need it, and helped to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Based on the success of the pilot project, Save On Foods has rolled it out to 100 of its 170 stores across BC and is aiming to replicate across Western Canada.

COMMENTS BY:

Barclay Pitkethly, Director of Regional Programs

Reviewed and supported.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

Reviewed and supported.

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer

Not available for comment.