

ReFED: Rethinking Food Waste Through Economics and Data

Grant Type: **Dollar support**

Dollar Amount: **\$100,000**

Foundation Name: **Fink Family Foundation**

What was your objective with the grant or initiative?

It all started when a Fink Family Foundation trustee observed other farmers leaving food in the fields and observed town grocers to whom the family farm delivered throwing out beautiful produce. The farm began recovering the food for pigs, chickens, and composting, and it gleaned food from other farms for distribution to local food pantries. At the same time, the foundation began engaging in small funding to start “gleaning” programs and start up nongovernmental organizations that were trying new app-based food-recovery systems to increase efficiency.

With this grant, the foundation sought to raise awareness of the issue of food waste as a solvable problem that cuts across silos in traditional grantmaking. The foundation also sought to present actionable solutions to galvanize capital across the spectrum from grants, to program related investments, to market rate investments.

What were the results of this grant or initiative?

The foundation seed-funded the project and raised an additional \$700,000 from 11 other funders from various types of foundations that brought different perspectives. Simultaneously, the foundation built an advisory committee comprising more than 30 leaders in business, investments, philanthropy, and government who contributed to the success of a report that was launched on March 9, 2016, at an event in Stanford, CA. That report (available at www.refed.com) generated widespread press and interest for follow-up presentations, webinars, and education for the general public and policymakers. Throughout 2015, a large foundation (The Rockefeller Foundation) was in the learning process with the Fink Family Foundation and now is committing millions of

dollars to the issue of food waste. More than 2,000 copies of the report have been downloaded from the website, and the foundation is in phase 2 in 2016, working on further education and work streams based on the solutions highlighted in the report.

Why would you say this grant or initiative had outsized impact?

More than 15 cofunders directly fund the ReFED. An issue once not acknowledged as an “issue” now is front and center for many philanthropic organizations. The Rockefeller Foundation and others have taken the Fink Family Foundation’s initial small seed funding and scaled this to a large multiple in just one year. The Fink Family Foundation and ReFED will be working with Foundation Center to see how the ReFED can aggregate dollars and create a more concentrated focus area. The Fink Family Foundation trustee and the ReFED team have provided data and testimony to national legislators of the two major political parties who want to learn more about addressing food access, job creation, methane emissions, and healthy soils.

The ReFED report has become an amazing tool for philanthropists, investors, educators, industry workers, and pioneers in the food waste space to use so they may tackle the issue at scale with the insights and solutions presented.



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