



# Coborn's Inc.



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## Organization Background

Coborn's is a Midwest grocery chain centered in St. Cloud, MN. The company owns 77 grocery stores located throughout the entire Midwest but is largely based in Minnesota as 36 of their stores reside in the state. Most grocery stores owned by Coborn's are in rural parts of Minnesota, outside the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Coborn's also owns many gas stations, convenience stores and liquor stores under other brand names, all of which provide a wide variety of goods and services to their customers.



*"I was able to gain project management skills, confidence in my abilities, and knowledge that will benefit the remainder of my collegiate career. I am grateful for the opportunity to gain relevant work experience and apply classroom techniques to the industry. I will cherish the numerous values I received with this project as I continue on my journey!" ~ MF*

## Project Background

In efforts to become more sustainable, Coborn's established a corporate goal for 2023 to reduce the tonnage of waste being sent to the landfill by 10% by store. Six stores in the St. Cloud area were selected for a study of waste generation, management, and diversion. Based on observations made at these locations, recommendations were made for process changes at these six stores. Coborn's intends to use these recommendations to meet their waste reduction goal throughout the organization.

## Incentives To Change

On an annual basis, Coborn's produces around 6,000 measurable tons of waste which gets sent directly to the landfill, thus spending over \$160,000 on trash removal services. Additionally, \$112,000 is being spent annually to remove and dispose of organic waste. Coborn's embarked on this project to reduce the volume and cost of waste being disposed in landfills; determine outlets for reuse, recycling, or diversion of trash and organic waste; and standardize waste handling and diversion practices throughout the company.

## SOLUTIONS

*The reductions and savings below have been calculated only for six focus stores. Additional savings and opportunities may be achieved through implementation of these practices throughout the rest of the Coborn's locations.*

### Divert Produce Waste to Donations & Organic Waste

Waste generated from the produce department consists of product typically regarded as bad such as product with scratches, ends cut off, or deformities, as well as overripe, molding, or mushy produce. Most of the waste abides by the donation guidelines set by Coborn's and Second Harvest Heartland, who receives donatable produce from Coborn's. Donatable produce can also be sent to local food shelves for donations. Produce that is ineligible to be donated can instead be sent to organic waste for hog feed.

*"Thank you MnTAP for teaming up on addressing waste stream improvements for our company. This effort is only the beginning of changes our company is taking to become good stewards of our resources and land."*

*~Scott Brooks, Sr. Project Manager, Coborn's, Inc.*

# Solutions

## Divert Bakery Waste to Donations

Food from the bakery is often not saleable if the packaging has been damaged or if it is at or beyond its stated expiration date. This waste produced from the bakery could be donated to local food shelves if the waste aligns by the guidelines of the receiving organization. Additionally, more food would be made available to those experiencing food insecurity.

## Divert Deli and Meat Waste to Organic Waste

Deli and meat waste consist of scraps from saleable products, products with compromised packaging, and products at or past expiration dates. All food waste produced from the deli and meat departments can be donated to hog feed, provided that the receiving farm sterilizes the waste according to state and federal guidance.

## Divert Dry Grocery Waste to Reclamation Services

Dry grocery products with slightly damaged packaging are less likely to be purchased by consumers and often end up as waste. Coborn's partners with a reclamation service that takes damaged dry grocery waste and redistributes the products to other sources. Using this service at all six stores would ensure that all dry grocery products that are not otherwise saleable can be redistributed for consumption rather than waste.

## Recycle Plastic Wrap/Film and Cardboard/Paper

Plastic wrap and film, as well as bales of cardboard and paper, can be transported to Coborn's logistics and recycling center where the products are sold and sent to recycling vendors. Ensuring that these products are recycled in all stores would also generate income from recycling these products.

## Diversion Techniques

Improved signage throughout the store, along with methodical receptacle placement, will provide an easier process for the correct waste handling processes. Training, informative reminders, and standard operating procedure guidelines will allow for a clearer understanding of how to properly dispose of different waste.



Recommendation	Annual Reduction	Annual Savings	Status
Divert Produce Waste to Donation or Organic Waste	87,600 lbs of waste 56 MTCO <sub>2</sub> E	\$2,700	Implementing
Divert Bakery Waste to Donations	34,000 lbs of waste 36 MTCO <sub>2</sub> E	\$670	Implementing
Divert Deli and Meat Waste to Organic Waste	35,600 lbs of waste 85 MTCO <sub>2</sub> E	\$1,400	Implementing
Divert Dry Grocery Waste to Reclamation Services	8,700 lbs of waste 10 MTCO <sub>2</sub> E	\$700 + vendor credit	Implementing
Recycle Plastic Wrap/Film and Cardboard/Paper	83,400 lbs of waste 98 MTCO <sub>2</sub> E	\$6,600 + recycling income	Implementing
Implement in-store recycling for glass, aluminum cans, #1/2/5 plastics	24,100 lbs of waste 32 MTCO <sub>2</sub> E	\$1,900	Recommended

MnTAP Advisor: Kevin Philpy, Senior Engineer