

# City of Seattle Food Policy & Programs

## Briefing for the Land Use & Sustainability Committee

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Office of Sustainability & Environment

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**Seattle**  
Office of Sustainability  
& Environment

# OSE works to ensure a clean and healthy environment for all Seattle residents.

- We **prioritize those currently and historically harmed by racial, economic, and environmental injustice.**
- We serve as cross-departmental and community **collaborators, innovators, and drivers of cutting-edge policy.**
- We contribute to a Seattle where communities and the environment are **healthy and free of fossil fuel pollution.**

# OSE's Primary Areas of Work

Citywide  
Climate  
Action Plan  
Update

Advancing  
Environmental  
Justice

Reducing Climate  
Pollution

Growing and  
Stewarding  
Seattle's Trees

Increasing Food  
Access and  
Sustainability



# What We'll Cover Today:

- **Seattle's Food Work:**

- How it's structured
- OSE's coordination role
- Results & Impact

- **OSE-led Programs & Policy Work**

**Address Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):**

*Why does the City work on food?*

*Why are multiple departments involved?*

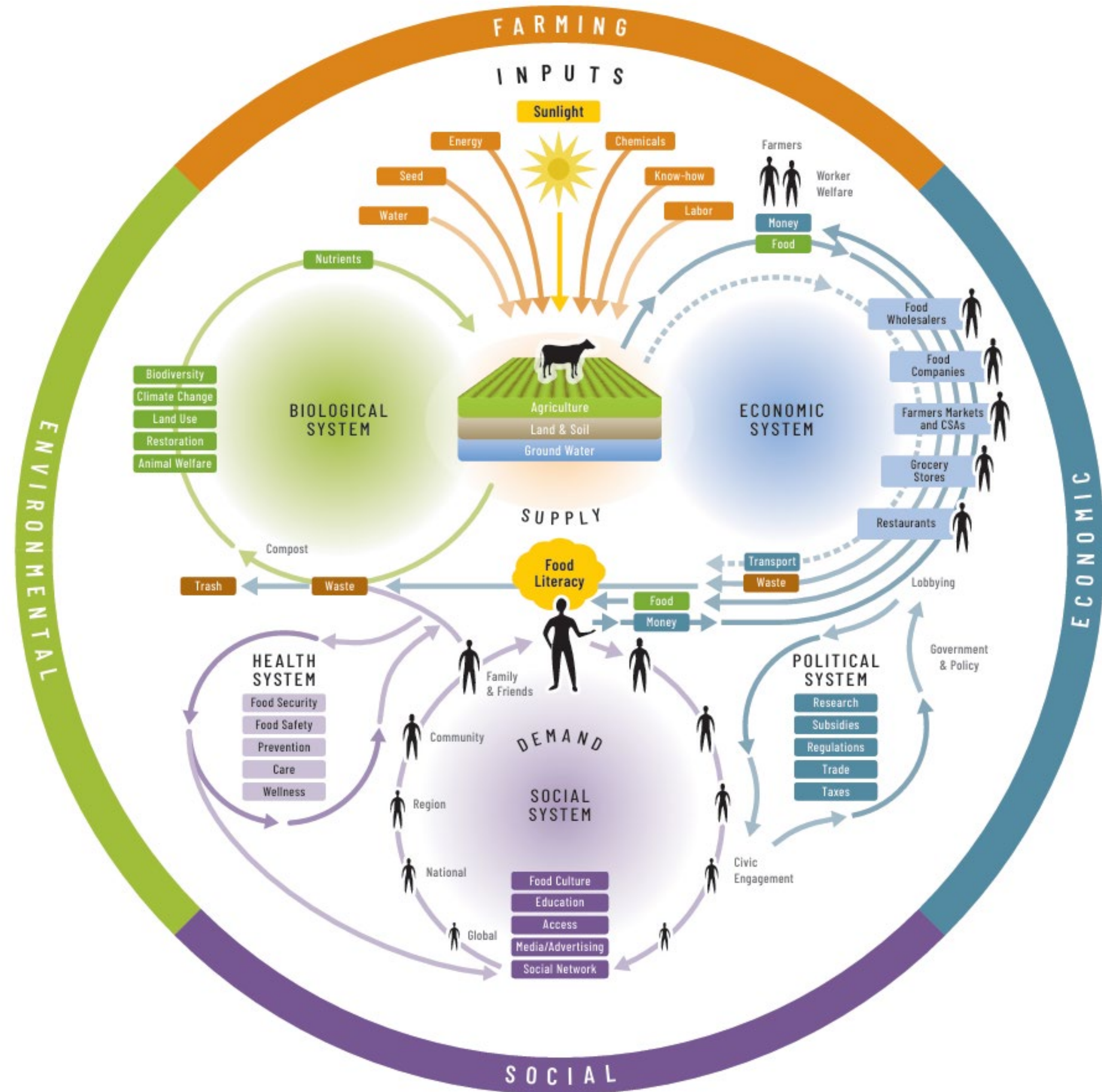
*What role does OSE play?*

*What results are we achieving?*

# Food Touches Everything

The food system is a dynamic network where environmental, economic, social, and political forces continuously shape how food is produced, distributed, and consumed.

Image Source: [Food System Tools - Nourish: Food + Community](#)



# Seattle's Food Work Spans Five Interconnected Areas



## Urban Agriculture

- P-Patch Community Gardens (**DON**)
- Urban Food Systems Programs (**SPR**)

## Food Economy & Labor

- Small Business Development (**OED**)
- Labor Standards (**OLS**)
- Buying With Purpose (**OSE**)

## Planning & Community Development

- Zoning & Land Use (**OPCD**)
- Seattle Comprehensive Plan (**OPCD**)

## Food Security & Access

- Fresh Bucks & Schools (**OSE**)
- Childcare nutrition, Farm to Preschool, summer meals (**HSD**)
- Food Banks & Meals Programs (**HSD**)
- Food Equity Fund (**DON**)

## Food Waste

- Food Waste Prevention (Commercial, Residential) (**SPU**)
- Food Rescue (**SPU**)
- Composting (**SPU**)

*\*See appendix slides for more details*

# We Focus on Equity Impacts and Systems Change

- **Disparities and inequities** persist in the food system, especially across neighborhoods, income levels, and cultural communities.
- Strengthening food security and access **prevents hunger, improves health, and reduces inequities.**
- City's investments focus where inequities are most persistent and **impact residents' daily lives.**
- We apply a whole-systems lens to create **co-benefits across the food system** and meet immediate needs while driving long-term change.



# Seattle's Food Action Plan



- A vision and roadmap for an **equitable, sustainable,** and **resilient** local food system.
- Guides programs, policies, and actions of multiple City departments.

## Four Goals:

Increase Community Food Security

Prevent Food Waste and Climate Pollution

Support Locally Grown & Traditional Foods

Advance an Equitable Local Economy

## Eight Strategic Priorities:



1. Community Food Security



2. Land Use & Access



3. Education and Training



4. Economy & Labor



5. Local Supply Chains



6. Food Waste



7. Environment and Climate



8. Food Action Plan Stewardship

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# OSE's Role in the City's Food Work

## Food Action Plan

### ➔ OSE Leads Cross-Department Coordination

- Align **Food Action Plan** and **Sweetened Beverage Tax** priorities across departments
- Facilitate an Interdepartmental Team and workgroups
- Collect data and track progress and outcomes
- Lead reporting, communications, and cross-sector stakeholder engagement

### ➔ OSE Leads Major Programs:

- Fresh Bucks
- Healthy Food in Schools
- Buying With Purpose Initiative

### Other Departments also Lead Programs

- **Neighborhoods** (P-Patch, Food Equity Fund)
- **Economic Development** (small businesses supports)
- **Human Services** (child nutrition, food banks, meal programs)
- **Labor Standards** (Seattle Labor Standards)
- **Planning & Community Development** (land use, neighborhood planning)
- **Seattle Public Utilities** (food waste prevention)

# Coordination in Practice

## Summer Meals

- **SPR** – Provides locations
- **HSD** – Administers the meal program and leads outreach
- **OSE** – Supports procurement of local and fresh food

## Food Equity Fund

- **OSE** – Supported original design of RFP and supporting policy (with SBT Community Advisory Board)
- **DON** – Leads annual RFP, grantmaking, and contracting

## 2020-2021 COVID Response

- **HSD** – Co-led the Emergency Feed Task Force (EFTF), supported food banks and meals programs
- **OSE** – Co-led the EFTF, launch and managed an emergency grocery program, supported school-based food assistance



# 2024 Impacts Across the Food System

**3,421,518** Meals from schools, food banks, and meal programs

**\$5,931,487** Cash food assistance reached more than **23,000** households

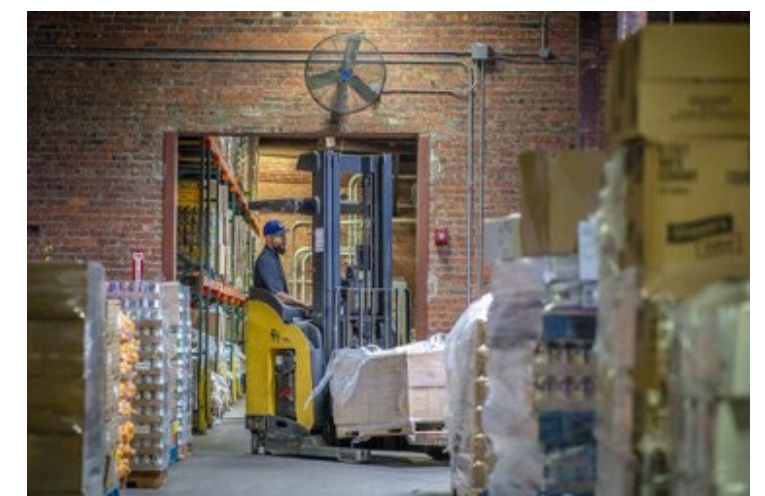
**\$906,498** Spent on **local (WA-grown) foods** (20% of food spend analyzed)

**33** Acres of public land stewarded by community gardeners, who donating 42,000 of harvested food

**180** Small food businesses and entrepreneurs took advantage of City-funded assistance.

**\$680,000** In wages restored to 512 food workers by the City's enforcement of Seattle Labor Standards.

**30%** Decrease in unsold food for Pacific Coast Food Waste Collaborative retailers, compared to 2019 when data was first collected



[Seattle releases first Food Action Plan progress report and new interactive map - Greenspace](#)

# OSE-led Programs

Fresh Bucks | Healthy Food in Schools | Buying With Purpose

[Food Policy & Programs - Environment | seattle.gov](https://seattle.gov/food-policy)



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# Fresh Bucks

A healthy food program that helps Seattle neighbors afford fruits and vegetables.



- Serves **17,000+** households
  - **75%** are from communities most impacted by food insecurity\*
  - **56%** prefer a language other than English
- Increases food security and fruit and vegetable consumption ([\*University of Washington FRESH study\*](#))
- On track to deliver **\$10.6M** in benefits, generating **\$16.4M** in local economic impact in 2026

(\*Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish; Black/African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and immigrant/refugee communities)

# Healthy Food in Schools

Expands healthy school food through the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program and supports Seattle Public Schools to purchase fresh, local, culturally relevant foods.



- Provides free fruit and vegetable snacks to **5,500** students at **29** schools (over **300,000** produce snacks each year)
- Directs **61%** of spending to local, sustainable farms and **54%** to 20+ BIPOC-owned farms
- Supports culinary trainings for Seattle Public Schools kitchen staff, student workshops, and teacher trainings

# Buying With Purpose

Supports City staff and food program partners in purchasing food that aligns with **six Core Values**



- City food programs on track to purchase **over \$1 million** in foods from **145** local farmers and producers in 2026
- Major institutions (**Seattle Public Schools, University of Washington**) are partnering to *buy with purpose*, signaling a growing regional movement.

# OSE Leads on a Range of Food Policy Issues

- **Sweetened Beverage Tax** advisory work
- **Food Action Plan** coordination
- Strategic responses to emergent issues
  - **COVID** emergency food assistance
  - **SNAP** disruptions
  - **Restrictive covenants** on grocery sites
  - **Food-climate** intersections
  - **State and federal** food policy
  - New citywide food investments

[Food Policy & Programs - Environment | seattle.gov](https://seattle.gov/food-policy-programs-environment)

Business Insider

Seattle will give \$800 grocery store vouchers to over 6,000 families affected by the coronavirus lockdown

Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan announced a program that will provide \$5 million worth of grocery vouchers to families impacted by coronavirus...

Mar 17, 2020



KIRO 7 News Seattle

Study: Sugary drink tax appears to be equitable public policy

A University of Washington study about taxing sweetened drinks shows that a tax might be effective when it comes to addressing...

Jul 19, 2022



Washington Examiner

[Seattle bans grocery no-compete clauses to combat food and medicine deserts](#)

(The Center Square) – The Seattle City Council on Tuesday unanimously approved an emergency ordinance that bans anti-competitive covenants...

Oct 29, 2025

# In Closing

- **Food is a shared citywide priority** delivered across multiple departments, and the Food Action Plan is our guide.
- **Cross-department collaboration** allows us to address multiple outcomes together.
- **OSE serves two major functions:** we manage major food security and food access programs and lead citywide strategy, policy, funding, and reporting on the City's food work.



# Thank you! Questions?

# Appendix Slides



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## *Why does the City work on food?*

**Food is essential infrastructure** that affects health, affordability, economic opportunity, climate resilience, and community wellbeing.

## *Why are multiple departments involved?*

Food issues intersect with many City responsibilities. Different departments contribute specialized expertise.

## *What role does OSE play?*

OSE serves as the coordinating backbone for Seattle's Food Action Plan by aligning efforts across departments, tracking outcomes and reporting progress, convening partners and stakeholders, and responding to state and federal policy issues. OSE also leads key initiatives including Fresh Bucks, Healthy Food in Schools, and Buying With Purpose.

## *What results are we achieving?*

In 2024, City investments:

- Supported **3.4 million** meals
- Reached **23,000+** households with cash food assistance
- Generated **\$10M+** in local economic activity
- Supported **hundreds** of local farmers, food businesses, and workers
- Reduced food waste and climate impacts
- See our [latest progress report](#) for more information

## *Where can I learn more?*

- [Food Action Plan - Environment | seattle.gov](#)
- [Food Program Resource Guide - Environment | seattle.gov](#)

# Departments that Lead City Food Work

Office or Department	Expertise	Food-Related Programs, Services, or Policies
Economic Development ( <b>OED</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small business development</li> <li>• Commercial affordability</li> <li>• Food business supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small business programs</li> <li>• Permit Farmer's Markets</li> <li>• Grocery stabilization (<b>New in 2026</b>)</li> </ul>
Humans Services ( <b>HSD</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social services</li> <li>• Hunger relief</li> <li>• Federally funded programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food banks &amp; meal programs</li> <li>• Senior food and nutrition programs</li> <li>• Emergency feeding</li> </ul>
Neighborhoods ( <b>DON</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grantmaking</li> <li>• Community gardens</li> <li>• Culturally responsive programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Equity Fund</li> <li>• P-Patch Community Gardens</li> <li>• Urban Farming PB project (<b>New in 2026</b>)</li> </ul>
Labor Standards ( <b>OLS</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor standards</li> <li>• Worker and business outreach and education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor Standards investigations to enforce Seattle's Labor Standards Ordinances</li> </ul>
Planning & Community Development ( <b>OPCD</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land use and zoning</li> <li>• Neighborhood planning</li> <li>• Equitable development and monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grocery Access SLI (OPCD-009S-A) (<b>New in 2026</b>)</li> <li>• Equitable Development Initiative</li> <li>• Comprehensive Plan</li> </ul>
Sustainability & Environment ( <b>OSE</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable food systems</li> <li>• Program and policy innovation and development</li> <li>• Cross-department facilitation</li> <li>• State and federal food policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Action Plan and Sweetened Beverage Tax alignment</li> <li>• Fresh Bucks</li> <li>• School Food</li> <li>• Buying With Purpose</li> <li>• Food x Climate planning (<b>New in 2026</b>)</li> </ul>
Seattle Public Utilities ( <b>SPU</b> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste prevention and recycling</li> <li>• Organics management</li> <li>• Composting systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial Food Waste Prevention</li> <li>• Residential Food Waste Prevention</li> <li>• Food Rescue</li> <li>• Composting</li> </ul>