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Development  
*Australia*

## MURRAYLANDS & RIVERLAND

# National Rollout Recommendations Report

Cultivating the capacity of food businesses to  
reduce and transform food waste – Phase 1

August 2024





# Authors



## MURRAYLANDS & RIVERLAND

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## **Disclaimer**

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'In the spirit of reconciliation, RDAMR acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.'

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# Executive Summary

The National Rollout Recommendation report outlines a comprehensive plan to extend the successful pilot project, 'Cultivating the capacity of food businesses to reduce and transform food waste – Phase 1', conducted in South Australia's Murraylands and Riverland region. This project aimed to understand how best to equip regional food businesses to address food waste issues, focusing on economic motivations for engaging in circular economy training and skills development. The body of work undertaken included a Literature Review, comprehensive research (in-person business interviews, transcript analysis, and Research Findings Report), Reference Group, Training Framework, Introductory Training Module 1 (see appendix) and National Recommendations Report.

Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland (RDAMR) has a strategic vision for the Murraylands and Riverland region to be internationally recognised as a world-leading, vibrant circular economy by 2030, supported by the Murraylands and Riverland Circular Economy Opportunities report.<sup>1</sup> The pilot project, executed in collaboration with Honey & Fox, RDMAR and Curtin University highlighted the necessity for collective action and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange over isolated training initiatives. It draws attention to the importance of place-based knowledge, solutions and actions.

This report presents a comprehensive analysis and set of recommendations for advancing the 'Cultivating the Capacity of Food Businesses to Reduce and Transform Food Waste' project, building on the foundational work of Phase 1 conducted in South Australia's Murraylands and Riverland region. The project's goal was to enhance the capabilities of regional food businesses to address food waste issues through circular economy principles, fostering sustainability and economic resilience.

Our research began with a clear hypothesis: to identify the training needs of businesses to independently implement food waste circular economy activities. We anticipated developing a self-guided training program where businesses could work through modules on their own to adopt these practices. However, our findings revealed a different reality, emphasising the importance of a community-driven approach.

Rather than isolated training modules, businesses expressed a need for a collaborative approach and active engagement. The key insight was that training should be more regionally focused, training facilitators who can work closely with local businesses. This approach involves collectively working on an agreed project, fostering peer-to-peer learning and collective action. It motivates businesses to get started and reassures them that they don't have to tackle the challenge alone. This strategy helps prevent the inertia that businesses often face when they don't know where to begin, driving real-world impact and sustainable practices.

This approach can be replicated across any region, building and developing local systems for food waste circularity. Training facilitators within each region will create a network of knowledgeable leaders who can support and inspire their communities. These facilitators will form a Community of Best Practice, sharing insights, strategies, and successes. This network will enhance the effectiveness of local initiatives and contribute to a national movement towards sustainable food waste management. Through this collaborative and scalable model, we aim to drive widespread adoption of circular economy principles, benefiting regional economies and the environment.

To build on the success of Phase 1 and address the identified needs, we propose four potential options, starting with a 'do nothing' scenario. Each option is sequential, building on the former, with significant time and resource savings if approached as one holistic initiative. The options are evaluated against key criteria: comprehensive and actionable initiatives, enhanced training content, broader testing and validation, national impact and scalability, and sustained momentum and engagement.

TABLE 1: Summary of Option Evaluation

Evaluation Criteria	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Comprehensive and actionable initiatives				
Enhanced training content				
Broader testing and validation				
National impact and scalability				
Sustained momentum and engagement				

Each option presents distinct benefits and limitations, reflecting the scope and complexity of the proposed activities. Option 1 recognises that doing nothing would forego significant opportunities to create ground-level business change in food waste management; Option 2 provides a cost-effective way to complete training modules; Option 3 completes training modules and validates findings across multiple regions; and Option 4 offers the most comprehensive and impactful approach by combining all previous options, preparing for a national rollout and commencing national rollout.

### Option 1 Do Nothing

Accept the recommendations report without progressing the significant time and resources invested in the Phase 1 project further.

- **Benefit:** NIL
- **Budget:** NIL
- **Timeframe:** 0 months

### Option 2 Module Development

Complete the six remaining training modules based on the learnings from the Murraylands and Riverland research (Phase 1).

- **Benefit:** Leverages the foundational work from Phase 1 to develop six additional training modules, that are essential for scaling the program nationally. This option solidifies the groundwork for a consistent and effective approach to food waste reduction and transformation.
- **Budget:** \$500,000 – \$550,000
- **Timeframe:** 12 months

### Option 3 Module Development, Regional Expansion and Pilot Activation

**Step 1 Research Extension to Additional Regions:** Building on the initial success in the Murraylands and Riverland region, the research will be expanded to two additional regions.

**Step 2 Completion of the Training Modules:** The remaining six training modules will be developed, informed by the findings from all three regional studies.

**Step 3 Testing and Refinement:** The completed Food Waste Transformers Program will then be tested and refined through a pilot project in the Murraylands and Riverland region. This process will involve close monitoring and feedback from participants to fine-tune the training materials and methods.

**Benefit:** Expanding the research to two additional regions is critical for capturing diverse regional insights and enhancing the training modules' relevance and effectiveness. This option ensures that the program is adaptable to various regional contexts, allowing for more precise tailoring to local needs. Testing and refining the Food Waste Transformers Program through a pilot project will ensure that the training is both practical and applicable to the regional context.

**Budget:** \$1,500,000 - \$2,500,000

**Timeframe:** 24 - 36 months

## Option 4 National Rollout

This option represents a full-scale strategy to ensure that the Food Waste Transformers Program is not only comprehensive and effective but also adaptable and scalable on a national level. This option includes the following steps:

**Step 1: Research Extension to Additional Regions:**

Expand the research to two additional regions.

**Step 2: Completion of the Training Modules:**

The remaining six training modules will be developed, informed by the findings from all three regional studies. This ensures that the content is robust, relevant, and able to address the varied needs of businesses across regional Australia.

**Step 3: Broader Testing and Refinement:**

The completed Food Waste Transformers Program will be tested and refined through pilot projects in the three regions ensuring that the Program is both practical and applicable, while also addressing local nuances, setting the stage for a more inclusive and comprehensive national rollout. The goal is to identify and resolve any issues before a wider rollout, ensuring that the program is both effective and user-friendly.

**Step 4: National Rollout Preparation:**

Following successful testing, the program will be prepared for national rollout. This phase will include the development of a comprehensive rollout strategy, including marketing, and communication plans to engage regional leaders, influencer and businesses across the country.

**Step 5: Commence Food Waste Transformers Program:**

Commence training a national network of facilitators who can deliver the program locally, ensuring that the program is accessible and effective in every region.

**Benefit:** This comprehensive option ensures the Food Waste Transformers Program is fully developed, tested, and refined to meet the needs of businesses across regional Australia. It maximises the program's impact by ensuring that all elements of the Program are scalable and adaptable on a national level. By creating a network of trained facilitators and establishing a detailed rollout strategy, this option lays the groundwork for a transformative shift in how food waste is managed nationwide. It ensures that the program not only reaches a wide audience but is also effective in driving significant, long-term changes in business practices, ultimately leading to a sustainable, circular economy across regional Australia.

**Budget:** \$4 million +

**Timeframe:** 36 - 48 months

The importance of this initiative cannot be overstated. Regional food businesses are at the forefront of balancing waste management with economic sustainability. By embracing circular economy principles through practical training that empowers business owners to innovate and connect within their regional ecosystems, there is immense potential to transform these local food systems. Reducing food waste and converting it into valuable resources improves financial performance and also enhances environmental conservation and community well-being.

This Recommendations Report paves the way for a National Program rollout, ensuring transformative benefits for regional food businesses across Australia.



# Aim

The pilot project, 'Cultivating the capacity of food businesses to reduce and transform food waste – Phase 1', aimed to understand how best to build the capabilities of regional food businesses to recognise and address food waste issues. The project focused on understanding the economic motivations of regional small food businesses to engage in local circular economy training and skills development initiatives by examining several key areas:

**Barriers/Resistance:** Identifying and clarifying the barriers small regional food businesses face in reducing and transforming food waste.

**Motivation/Value Proposition:** Understanding the perspectives of small regional food businesses regarding food waste and what would motivate them to participate in training.

**Messaging:** Gaining insights into how best to start a conversation with and engage small regional food businesses in circular economy strategies.

**Training Resources/Support:** Providing evidence on the training resources and programs needed to support small regional food businesses in implementing food waste reduction and transformation actions.

**Implementation Resources/Support:** Identifying what resources are needed, when and how they should be provided, and the path for successfully implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and improving food waste reduction and transformation actions in businesses.

This pilot project intended to provide evidence and knowledge to support the development and establishment of a national program to be rolled out across regional Australia. By addressing these key areas, the project aimed to create a strong foundation for a comprehensive and effective national strategy for food waste reduction and circular economy practices, ensuring long-term sustainability and economic benefits for small regional food businesses.

# Purpose

This recommendation report provides practical applications of food waste circular economy strategies based on the findings from the pilot project in the Murraylands and Riverland region. By leveraging these insights, the purpose of this report will guide future initiatives that promote sustainability, economic resilience, and community collaboration, laying the groundwork for broader regional and national adoption of circular economy principles.



Cultivating the capacity of food businesses **to reduce and transform food waste**



# Background

The project was undertaken in South Australia's Murraylands and Riverland region, where primary production is the major economic activity, accounting for 34% of the gross regional product and one in five jobs. Through RDAMR, the region already has an established strategic vision to be recognised internationally as a world-leading, vibrant circular economy by 2030, that is supported by a Murraylands and Riverland Circular Economy Opportunities report<sup>2</sup>.

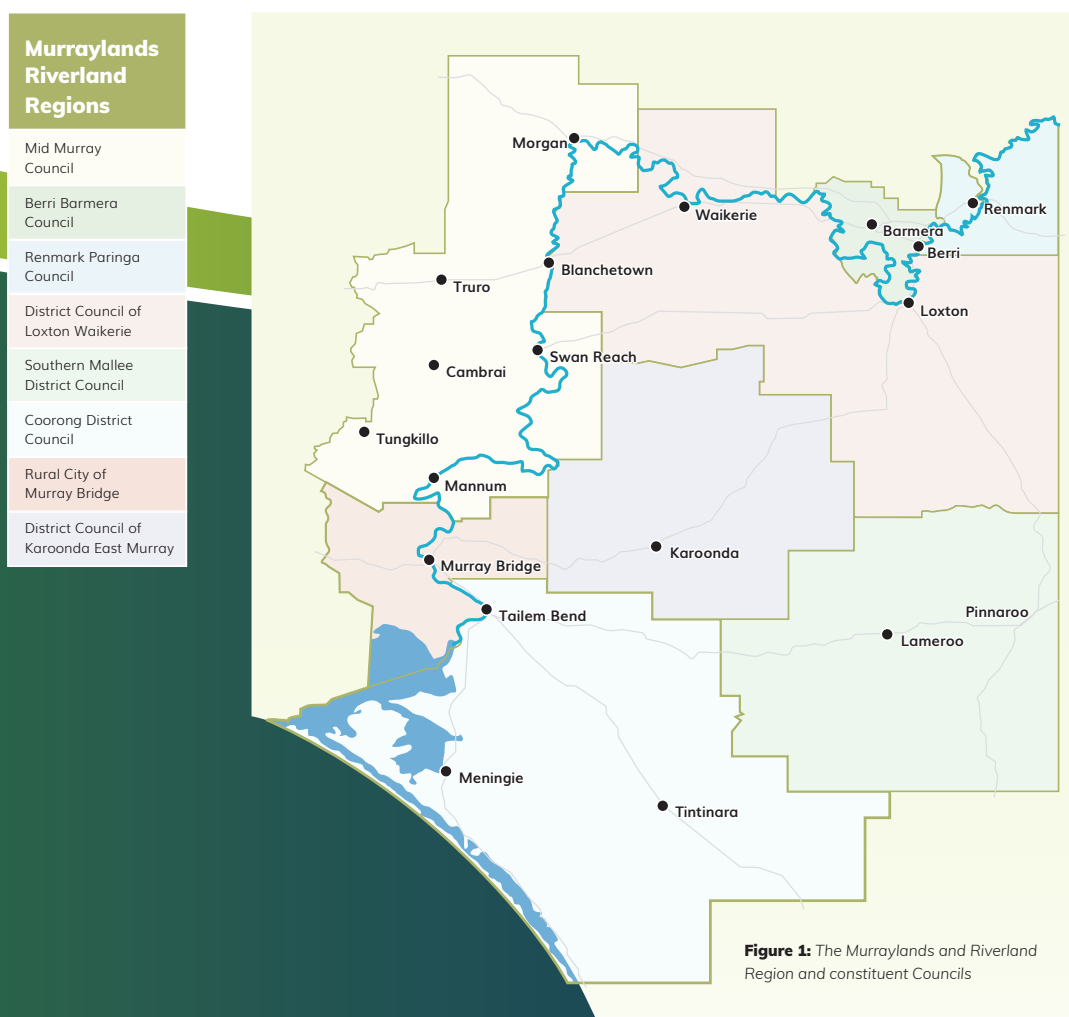
The project partners, including Honey & Fox, RDAMR and Curtin University, have worked closely together to successfully execute every aspect of the pilot project, guaranteeing optimal results.

The initial outcome of the project was to devise training that would help businesses individually tackle food waste. Through a series of in-depth interviews, the expectation was to identify a need for direct training in waste management and circular economy practices.

The insights from these interviews, however, indicated a different need. Businesses were seeking not just training but a united and coordinated effort that encourages business community engagement, shared learning, and collaborative actions. There was a clear opportunity for peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, with collective action

being more effective than individual efforts in driving meaningful change. (Refer to Cultivating the capacity of food businesses to reduce and transform food waste – Phase 1 Research Findings Report, section 3.2.6 .

This recommendation report therefore provides practical applications of food waste circular economy strategies based on the findings from the pilot project in the Murraylands and Riverland region. By leveraging these insights, the report aims to guide future initiatives that promote sustainability, economic resilience, and community collaboration, laying the groundwork for broader regional and national adoption of circular economy principles.





strategic vision to be recognised internationally as a **world-leading, vibrant circular economy** by 2030

# Research Findings

Initially, our goal was straightforward: to develop targeted training to encourage and support individual businesses in implementing food waste strategies. However, our interviews revealed a deeper need for collaborative frameworks and business community engagement rather than isolated training initiatives. Businesses expressed a desire for **peer-to-peer knowledge exchange** and **collective action** to address food waste challenges.

Our in-depth research identified **seven predominant challenges faced by businesses** in the Murraylands and Riverland region:

## Finding 1: Lack of Collaborative Frameworks

In the Murraylands and Riverland region, individual business efforts often fall short due to fragmented strategies. In the absence of collective action, whether through cooperative buying, shared processing facilities, or community-based circular economies, there's a strong belief that working together can lead to more significant opportunities, better waste management, and a more resilient agricultural sector.

*"How do businesses know who to connect with? You got to have somewhere, coordination or a central spot where they can say, there is waste coming out of my business, are there any businesses that could use it? So, opportunities for people to connect who have a waste product, that they can talk to other people, I suppose is the most sensible thing."*

BUSINESS INTERVIEWEE



## Finding 2: Insufficient Education on Waste Reduction Benefits

There is a knowledge gap regarding the financial gains of minimising waste. Without understanding the economic advantages, businesses are less motivated to adopt sustainable practices.

*"I guess it's more a values-based thing than anything; it's not a training thing. The way to bring in the mainstream though is talk about how it is affecting their bottom line. If they get told you can convert so much more of your waste and make money out of it, they will get onboard."*

BUSINESS INTERVIEWEE



## Finding 3: Financial and Bureaucratic Barriers to Innovation

Many businesses face challenges in obtaining financial support for necessary technological advancements and infrastructure improvements. These hurdles often stem from stringent bureaucratic processes and a mismatch between government support mechanisms and the practical needs of small-scale producers.

*"We have tried to do grant applications but it takes so much time and we have not got the time to work on the business because we are too busy working in the business. My god, you look at the application process and it's too much."*

BUSINESS INTERVIEWEE



## Finding 4: Market Pressures and Consumer Perceptions

Businesses struggle to adapt to market changes and consumer expectations, particularly the challenge of countering the preference for aesthetically perfect produce.

*"Consumers want a plastic bit of fruit which is ridiculous but I'm not sure that the consumer even gets a choice. It's driven by the supermarkets – they will buy a piece of fruit that they know lasts longer and that is pretty much a perfect orange."*

BUSINESS INTERVIEWEE



...a disconnect between the technical jargon of circular economy and the everyday language used by these businesses. It highlights the need for bridging this gap to enhance understanding and communication of circular practices in the business community.

### Finding 5: Economic and Environmental Balance

Balancing economic survival with environmental stewardship is a common struggle. For many businesses, the difficulty lies in finding a middle ground where economic goals do not come at the expense of the environment. It's about making strategic decisions that support a company's financial bottom line while also enhancing its green credentials.

*"Waste could be a massive cost and, if you don't manage it, and not converting that into a profit, then you're paying for it; you have to pay to get rid of it. It's a hidden cost that people don't always factor in."* BUSINESS INTERVIEWEE



### Finding 6: Perceived Misaligned Government Policies

Current government policies do not adequately reflect the operational realities of small agricultural businesses, hindering their potential for innovation and growth.

*"So we made a business decision due to the biosecurity issues, not to expand, as moving fruit was too hard and cost prohibited."*

BUSINESS INTERVIEWEE



### Finding 7: Beyond the Jargon

Although the businesses interviewed were actively engaged in practices aligned with the principles of food waste circular economy and sustainability, they rarely used specific terms like 'circular economy' or 'circularity.' Instead, they tended to use words such as "sustainable" and "waste" during conversations (see Figure 1 below). This finding suggests a disconnect between the technical jargon of circular economy and the everyday language used by these businesses. It highlights the need for bridging this gap to enhance understanding and communication of circular practices in the business community.

FIGURE 1 Common terminology used by business participants  
Source: Fox & Honey



As a result of the findings, the typical training approach needed to change. Instead of developing training modules to train businesses, we focused on creating a training program to train facilitators within the region. These facilitators will run training programs using a project-based approach, where groups of businesses work together on identified projects in the region. By equipping regional leaders, influencers, and innovators with the necessary tools and knowledge, we aim to empower communities toward sustainable practices as food waste changemakers. This collective effort against food waste aims to inspire a wide-ranging shift toward sustainability in regional locations, fostering an environment where pilot programs can succeed and sustainable practices can flourish.

The framework identifies seven clear training modules:

### Food Waste Transformers Program Training Framework

Source: Fox & Honey



Based on the insights garnered from this research, a pathway to developing a financially sustainable, continuous research and training framework that delivers locally-led food waste valorisation outcomes is clear. Additional training modules that support businesses and local food ecosystems through phase changes are required; involvement of businesses in food systems from across at least three diverse regional settings will validate initial findings and allow necessary evolution in training modules to ensure their transferability; and preparing the nation for a national rollout utilising existing networks (such as Regional Development Australia) to support training program inception and transition to a financially sustainable research, training and local food ecosystem transformation program.

The next section presents a detailed examination of four identified options resulting from this research, starting with a 'do nothing' option, through to executing a successful national rollout. Each option has been carefully evaluated for its potential to address key challenges and leverage opportunities.





## Option 1: Do Nothing

Acquit the project and not progress the significant time and resources invested in the Phase 1 project and the local food waste systems change potential identified in this report.

### Positive Outcomes

**Simplicity:** Acquitting this project and accepting the recommendations report without progressing further is simple and does not expend further resources on this initiative.

### Potential Challenges

**Opportunity Cost:** By not progressing with the insights obtained through this research, the voices of local food producers will not have been heard, the significant time and resources invested in the Phase 1 project will not be progressed, and the momentum for potentially significant policy and program change will be lost across Australia. Any food waste outcomes will be limited and from small food producers only.

## Option 1: Summary

Option 1 is a legitimate course of action, however, is not recommended.

As is the case with many good research projects, the initial hypothesis was proven to be incorrect, and the findings of the research present a transformative opportunity. Researchers proposed that a particular type of 'upskilling' training was needed, only to find that a 'collective action' and 'empowering' approach to training is required. There is an opportunity to make the most of these insights, and the motivation of participants, by progressing this initial research into action-based learning as soon as possible.

## Option 2: Module Development

Based on the training framework and first module developed as part of the 'Cultivating the capacity of food businesses to reduce and transform food waste – Phase 1' project, complete developing content and resources for six additional training modules based on research and learnings from the Murraylands and Riverland region.

### Planned Outcomes

**Enhanced Regional Expertise:** Developing six additional training modules based on research and learnings from the Murraylands and Riverland region will deepen our understanding of local challenges and solutions. This expertise can be shared with businesses across the region and Australia, fostering a stronger sense of community engagement and knowledge-sharing.

**Tailored Solutions:** By focusing on region-specific research and learnings, the training modules can offer tailored solutions that address unique challenges faced by food businesses in the Murraylands and Riverland region. This targeted approach enhances the relevance and applicability of the training content for the Murraylands and Riverland.

**Increased Accessibility:** Making these training modules available online enhances accessibility for a wider audience beyond local businesses, allowing more stakeholders to benefit from the research and training resources. This broader reach can lead to a greater impact in reducing and transforming food waste across regional Australia.

**Capacity Building:** Continued development of training modules demonstrates a commitment to capacity building within the food industry. Businesses can benefit from ongoing education and resources, empowering them to implement effective food waste reduction strategies and ensuring profit and sustainability in the future.

### Potential Challenges

**Limited Generalisation:** Focusing solely on research and learnings from specific regions may limit the applicability of the training modules to businesses outside these areas. The content may not adequately address broader challenges faced by businesses in diverse contexts.

**Resource Constraints:** Developing additional training modules requires dedicated resources, including time, funding, and expertise. There may be challenges in sustaining this effort without ongoing support and commitment to a national rollout.

**Lack of Diversity in Perspectives:** Relying primarily on Murraylands and Riverland regional research could result in a narrower range of perspectives and solutions when applied nationally. The absence of input from place-based external experts or different regions may limit innovation and creativity in addressing food waste challenges nationally.

**Potential for Overlooking Emerging Trends:** Focusing exclusively on past research and learnings may overlook emerging trends or new insights in food waste reduction. Due to the swift evolution in this field, some elements of the training content will require creative solutions to external resources to remain relevant and effective over time.

**Limited National Rollout Impact:** The focus on research and learnings from specific regions may limit the effectiveness of a national rollout initiative. Other regions and businesses across the country may struggle to see the relevance of the training modules to their specific situations. While certain core aspects of the training may be transferrable, localised content is critical for broad uptake and applicability across diverse regions. This reinforces the importance of a community-driven approach with peer-to-peer learning and collective action.

## Option 2: Summary

**Option 2** proposes to build on the foundational work from Phase 1 by developing six additional training modules grounded in the specific research and learnings from the Murraylands and Riverland region. The suite of seven modules is to be made available online through suitable platforms and organisations. This enhances accessibility and allows a broader audience beyond the local businesses to benefit from the insights and strategies shared. This approach promises several positive outcomes, such as deepening regional expertise, offering tailored solutions to local challenges, increasing accessibility for a wider audience, and demonstrating a commitment to capacity building within the food industry.

However, this option also presents challenges. The focus on specific regions may limit the general applicability of the training content, potentially overlooking the broader and diverse challenges faced by businesses in other regions. Developing these modules will require resources. Implementation of training module rollout to regions will require a sustained effort, and without ongoing funding this could be challenging. Additionally, relying primarily on Murraylands and Riverland research might result in a narrower range of perspectives and solutions, potentially stifling innovation. There is also a risk of the training content becoming outdated if it doesn't incorporate emerging trends and new insights regularly.

Lastly, while the core aspects of the training may be transferrable, the localised focus could limit the effectiveness of a national rollout, as businesses in other regions may not find the content entirely relevant to their specific contexts.



*This approach promises several positive outcomes, such as deepening regional expertise, offering tailored solutions to local challenges, increasing accessibility for a wider audience, and demonstrating a commitment to capacity building...*

## Option 3: Module Development, Regional Expansion and Pilot Activation

**Step 1 Research Extension to Additional Regions:** Building on the initial success in the Murraylands and Riverland region, the research will be expanded to two additional regions.

**Step 2 Completion of the Training Modules:** The remaining six training modules will be developed, informed by the findings from all three regional studies.

**Step 3 Testing and Refinement:** The completed Food Waste Transformers Program will then be tested and refined through a pilot project in the Murraylands and Riverland region. This process will involve close monitoring and feedback from participants to fine-tune the training materials and methods.

### Planned Outcomes

**Broader Validation and Applicability:** Repeating Phase 1 in a different regional location will help verify and further develop the findings from the Murraylands and Riverland region. This additional research can provide comparative data, reinforce the validity of the initial findings, and adapt the training to be effective across diverse regional contexts. It will also identify any region-specific nuances and further refine the training modules to cater to a broader range of challenges and solutions faced by businesses in various regions.

**Enhanced Regional Expertise:** Developing six additional training modules based on research and learnings from the Murraylands and Riverland region will deepen our understanding of local challenges and solutions and will be tested across two additional regions to validate the transferability of this regional experience. This expertise can be shared with businesses across the region and Australia, fostering a stronger sense of community engagement and cross-regional knowledge-sharing.

**Tailored Solutions:** By founding training module development on region-specific research and learnings, and then testing these modules across two additional regions, the modules are likely to offer tailored and transferrable solutions. Addressing unique challenges faced by food businesses across three Australian food-producing and manufacturing regions. For example, a broader range of case studies can be developed to address different opportunities and barriers. This targeted

approach enhances the relevance and transferability of the training content.

**Actionable Initiatives with Tangible Measures:** Expanding the Phase 1 project into a Phase 2 project that tests and calibrates the training modules for a national rollout will focus on actionable initiatives to ensure that theoretical insights are transformed into practical solutions. Including realising place-based cooperative opportunities with existing on-ground networks and programs. This approach provides food businesses with living examples and concrete measures to reduce and transform food waste, fostering real-world impact on individual businesses, regions and Australia.

**Increased Accessibility:** Making these training modules available online enhances accessibility for a wider audience beyond local businesses, allowing more stakeholders to benefit from the research and training resources. This online accessibility, along with facilitated sessions (that would ultimately be funded through training revenue), can lead to a greater impact in reducing and transforming food waste across regional Australia.

**Capacity Building:** The development of training modules based on local feedback demonstrates a commitment to capacity building within the food industry. Businesses can benefit from ongoing education and resources that they have helped shape, building trust in them paying to participate in ongoing food waste improvements, providing a vehicle that empowers them to implement effective food waste reduction strategies, and ensuring profit and sustainability for their businesses and the training program into the future. A Community of Practice (CoP) is formed.

## Option 3: Summary

### Potential Challenges

**Limited Generalisation:** Focusing solely on research and learnings from specific regions may limit the applicability of the training modules to businesses outside these areas. The content may not adequately address broader challenges faced by businesses in diverse contexts.

**Resource Constraints:** Developing additional training modules and conducting new research requires dedicated resources, including time, funding, and expertise. Without a focus on rollout, the ability to generate funds from training to support ongoing research and development will not be possible, leaving challenges in sustaining this effort to the ongoing support and commitment of governments and regional food businesses.

**Lack of Diversity in Perspectives:** Relying primarily on a limited number of regions for research could result in a narrower range of perspectives and solutions when applied nationally. The absence of input from place-based external experts or different regions may limit innovation and creativity in addressing food waste challenges.

**Potential for Overlooking Emerging Trends:** Focusing exclusively on past research and learnings may overlook emerging trends or new insights in food waste reduction. Due to the swift evolution in this field, some elements of the training content will require creative solutions to external resources to remain relevant and effective over time.

**Limited National Rollout Impact:** The focus on research and learnings from specific regions may limit the effectiveness of a national rollout initiative. Other regions and businesses across the country may struggle to see the relevance of the training modules to their specific situations. While certain core aspects of the training may be transferrable, localised content is critical for broad uptake, revenue generation from training, and applicability across diverse regions. This reinforces the importance of a community-driven approach with peer-to-peer learning and collective action.

**Option 3** proposes to build on the foundational work from Phase 1 by developing six additional training modules grounded in the specific research and learnings from the Murraylands and Riverland region and repeating the Phase 1 project in two different regional locations. Making the seven modules available online through suitable platforms and organisations, along with facilitated sessions, will enhance accessibility, allowing a broader audience beyond the local businesses to benefit from the insights and strategies shared.

This approach promises several positive outcomes, such as deepening regional expertise, offering tailored solutions to local challenges, increasing accessibility for a wider audience, and demonstrating a commitment to capacity building within the food industry. Repeating Phase 1 in two additional regions will provide broader validation and applicability, ensuring the findings are robust and adaptable to various contexts.

Advancing the Phase 1 project into Phase 2 in the Murraylands and Riverland region will refine and test the training modules for national implementation, with a focus on translating theoretical insights into practical, actionable solutions.

However, this option also presents challenges. The focus on specific regions may limit the general applicability of the training content, potentially overlooking the broader and diverse challenges faced by businesses in other areas. Without a focus on rollout, the ability to generate funds from training to support ongoing research and development will not be possible, leaving challenges in sustaining this effort to the ongoing support and commitment of governments and other institutions. Additionally, relying primarily on local research might result in a narrower range of perspectives and solutions, potentially stifling innovation. There is also a risk of the training content becoming outdated if it doesn't incorporate emerging trends and new insights regularly.

Lastly, while the core aspects of the training may be transferrable, the localised focus could limit the effectiveness of a national rollout, as businesses in other regions may not find the content entirely relevant to their specific contexts. This reinforces the importance of a community-driven approach with peer-to-peer learning and collective action.

## Option 4: National Rollout

This option represents a full-scale strategy to ensure that the Food Waste Transformers Program is not only comprehensive and effective but also adaptable and scalable on a national level.

This option includes the following steps:

**Step 1: Research Extension to Additional Regions:** Expand the research to two additional regions.

**Step 2: Completion of the Training Modules:** The remaining six training modules will be developed, informed by the findings from all three regional studies. This ensures that the content is robust, relevant, and able to address the varied needs of businesses across regional Australia.

**Step 3: Broader Testing and Refinement:** The completed Food Waste Transformers Program will be tested and refined through pilot projects in the three regions ensuring that the Program is both practical and applicable, while also addressing local nuances, setting the stage for a more inclusive and comprehensive national rollout. The goal is to identify and resolve any issues before a wider rollout, ensuring that the program is both effective and user-friendly.

**Step 4: National Rollout Preparation:** Following successful testing, the program will be prepared for national rollout. This phase will include the development of a comprehensive rollout strategy, including marketing and communication plans to engage regional leaders, influencers and businesses across the country.

**Step 5: Commence Food Waste Transformers Program:** Commence training a national network of facilitators who can deliver the program locally, ensuring that the program is accessible and effective in every region.

### Planned Outcomes and Opportunities

#### Actionable Initiatives with Tangible Measures:

Expanding the Phase 1 project into a Phase 2 project that tests and calibrates the training modules for a national rollout will focus on actionable initiatives to ensure that theoretical insights are transformed into practical solutions. This will help realise place-based cooperative opportunities through existing on-ground networks and programs. This approach provides food businesses with living examples and concrete measures to reduce and transform food waste, fostering real-world impact on individual businesses, regions and Australia.

**Enhanced Training Content:** Continuing to produce six additional training modules based on the established training framework, and incorporating learnings from the Murraylands and Riverland region as participants progress on their food waste journey, as well as new insights from other regions, ensures that the training content is comprehensive and contextually relevant. This diversity strengthens the modules, making them applicable to a broader range of businesses across regional Australia.

**Broader Testing and Validation:** By including two additional regions in the research and analysis, the project can test and validate strategies in varied contexts. This approach enhances the robustness and reliability of the training content, ensuring it is effective nationwide. The inclusion of regions from other states helps address diverse geographical and operational challenges faced by regional businesses in different parts of the country.

### **National Economic Impact and Scalability:**

The combined focus on actionable initiatives and further developing training modules supports a strategic national rollout. Leveraging initial findings and successful practices from the Murraylands and Riverland region, as well as new regions, allows for scalable solutions that can be adopted across regional Australia, driving significant national impact in food waste reduction. This will support new jobs, the profitability of current businesses, new businesses, regional career opportunities, carbon emission savings and broad circular economy uplift.

**Increased Accessibility:** Making the training courses available online via appropriate platforms and organisations, along with on ground facilitation and coordination (increasingly funded through training revenue over time) ensures broad accessibility. Businesses and industry groups nationwide can easily access these resources, facilitating widespread knowledge dissemination and, with on-ground coordination support, adoption and evolution of localised best practices.

**Sustained Momentum and Engagement:** Building on the momentum from the Murraylands and Riverland, and expanding to new regions, maintains high levels of engagement. This sustained effort can drive broader behavioural changes and the adoption of food waste circular economy principles, fostering a culture of sustainability within the food industry. Our approach involves collectively working on an agreed project, and fostering peer-to-peer learning and collective action. It motivates businesses to get started and reassures them that they don't have to tackle the challenge alone. This strategy helps prevent the inertia that businesses often face when they don't know where to begin, driving real-world impact and sustainable practices.

This approach can be replicated across any region, building and developing local systems for food waste circularity. By training facilitators within each region, we create a network of knowledgeable leaders who can support and inspire their communities. These facilitators will form a Community of Practice (CoP), sharing insights, strategies, and successes. This network will not only enhance the effectiveness of local initiatives but also contribute to a national movement towards sustainable food waste management.

## Potential Challenges

**Resource Requirements:** Expanding the project scope to include additional regions, Murraylands and Riverland implementation, action research, and developing six new training modules will require substantial resourcing, including funding, time, and expertise. The focus on rollout will track the ability to generate funds from training to support ongoing research and development. Ensuring adequate resource allocation and management is essential to the project's success.

**Coordination Complexity:** Coordinating research, training development, and implementation across multiple regions can be complex. Effective project management and clear communication strategies are necessary to address potential coordination challenges and ensure consistency.

**Potential Delays:** The expanded scope and additional research requirements may lead to potential delays in project timelines. Managing these delays effectively is crucial to keep the project on track and meet rollout targets.



## Option 4: Summary

**Option 4** proposes a strategic expansion of the existing project into a Phase 2 initiative that emphasises actionable measures, the development of additional training modules and commences national rollout. This option leverages the research and insights gained from the Murraylands and Riverland region, while also incorporating new perspectives from two additional regions to ensure the training content is robust and applicable nationwide. By focusing on practical solutions, and providing access to local coordinators, this approach aims to transform theoretical insights into real-world impacts, providing businesses with concrete strategies to reduce and transform food waste.

The benefits of this option are multifaceted. It ensures the training content is comprehensive and contextually relevant, enhances the robustness and reliability of the strategies through broader testing and validation, and supports a scalable national rollout. Making the seven training modules widely accessible online with local food ecosystem coordination support, further amplifies their impact. This will facilitate knowledge dissemination and adoption, and evolution of best practices across regional Australia. Additionally, sustaining momentum and engagement from Phase 1 into Phase 2 can drive significant behavioural changes within the food industry, fostering a culture of sustainability.

However, this ambitious expansion also presents challenges. The scope of the project requires adequate resources, effective coordination across multiple regions, and meticulous management to avoid potential delays. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensure the project's success and the timely delivery of its goals.

In summary, Option 4 offers a comprehensive and impactful approach to advancing the project, balancing local relevance with national scalability. While resource and coordination challenges exist, the potential for significant long-term benefits in food waste reduction and sustainability **makes this option a compelling recommendation.**



*Option 4 offers a comprehensive and impactful approach to advancing the project, balancing local relevance with national scalability.*

# Option Analysis

Evaluating each option against key criteria—(i) comprehensive and actionable initiatives, (ii) enhanced training content, (iii) broader testing and validation, (iv) national impact and scalability, and (v) sustained momentum and engagement—is crucial for determining the most effective approach to advancing the project. The key criteria for evaluating each option has been derived from the positive opportunities identified in the summary themes of each option. These criteria ensure that each potential option not only builds on existing research but also drives practical, scalable solutions with wide-reaching benefits. This analysis provides insights into the strengths and challenges of each option, helping stakeholders understand the potential for long-term sustainability and impact in food waste reduction across Australia.

Evaluation Criteria	*Option 1	*Option 2	*Option 3	*Option 4
Comprehensive and actionable initiatives			■	■
Enhanced training content		■	■	■
Broader testing and validation			■	■
National impact and scalability			■	■
Sustained momentum and engagement			■	■

- \*1. Do Nothing
- \*2. Module Development
- \*3. Module Development, Regional Expansion and Pilot
- \*4. National Rollout

## Comprehensive and Actionable Initiatives

Option	Comment
<b>Option 1</b> Do Nothing	No test of, or progress on, initial project findings.
<b>Option 2</b> Module Development	Develops the complete Food Waste Transformers Program (six additional modules with resources).
<b>Option 3</b> Module Development, Regional Expansion and Pilot Activation	Develops the complete Food Waste Transformers Program (six additional modules with resources) and repeats research in another two regions ensuring comprehensive and actionable outcomes. Deliver Phase 2 pilot in Murraylands and Riverland.
<b>Option 4</b> National Rollout	Includes all previous options. The completed Food Waste Transformers Program will be tested and refined through pilot projects in the three regions. Commences national rollout.

## Enhanced Training Content

Option	Comment
<b>Option 1</b> Do Nothing	Does not provide the opportunity to develop the Food Waste Transformers Program beyond Module 1.
<b>Option 2</b> Module Development	Enhances training content through the development of the complete Food Waste Transformers Program. With no additional regional insights, training module content will have limited effectiveness.
<b>Option 3</b> Module Development, Regional Expansion and Pilot Activation	Develops the complete Food Waste Transformers Program (7 modules), refining them with insights from multiple regions, ensuring high quality and relevant training content. Training program piloted in Murraylands and Riverland.
<b>Option 4</b> National Rollout	Produce the complete Food Waste Transformers Program (7 modules), refining them with insights from multiple regions, ensuring high quality and relevant training content, with national rollout providing an opportunity to accelerate constant improvement cycles. Will assist in overcoming the initial inertia associated with learning new topics.

## Broader Testing and Validation

Option	Comment
<b>Option 1</b> Do Nothing	No further validation beyond the Murraylands and Riverland region.
<b>Option 2</b> Module Development	No further validation beyond the Murraylands and Riverland region.
<b>Option 3</b> Module Development, Regional Expansion and Pilot Activation	Validates findings across two other regions, enhancing the robustness of the research and the training content. Food Waste Transformers Program tested in Murraylands and Riverland region.
<b>Option 4</b> National Rollout	Includes broader testing and validation across multiple regions ensuring robustness and reliability of research which then informs the ongoing improvement of the Food Waste Transformers Program.

## National Impact and Scalability

Option	Comment
<b>Option 1</b> Do Nothing	Impact is region-specific and will not address national scalability. Benefits to business in the Murraylands and Riverland will be limited, as it will be difficult to overcome the inertia that is already evident (see research findings).
<b>Option 2</b> Module Development	Potential for national impact by fully developing the Food Waste Transformers Program (seven modules in total). Relies on 'Other' training providers or regional organisations to take the risk (fund) the delivery of the program in isolation without the vitally important benefit of a Community of Practice for ongoing support and success.
<b>Option 3</b> Module Development, Regional Expansion and Pilot Activation	Increases potential for national impact by fully developing the Food Waste Transformers Program (seven modules in total) and further validation of the research.
<b>Option 4</b> National Rollout	Strong potential for national impact and scalability. A comprehensive, multifaceted approach, with all strategic activities robust and validated to support national impact and scalability. National Rollout will support new jobs, the profitability of current businesses, the start-up of new businesses, regional career opportunities, carbon emission savings, and broad circular economy uplift.

## Sustained Momentum and Engagement

Option	Comment
<b>Option 1</b> Do Nothing	Limited continued engagement within the initial region. Lacks broader momentum.
<b>Option 2</b> Module Development	Sustains engagement in the Murraylands and Riverland through ongoing development of training content and resources.
<b>Option 3</b> Module Development, Regional Expansion and Pilot Activation	Sustains engagement through ongoing development of training content and resources and by incorporating two new regions.
<b>Option 4</b> National Rollout	Sustains high levels of engagement by continuously expanding and refining the program, fostering a national food waste culture.

# Timeframe and Estimated Budget Requirements

These estimates provide a framework for resource allocation, help set realistic expectations, and ensure that the various project options can achieve their objectives within the stipulated period. Below is a detailed analysis of the timeframes and estimated budget requirements for each option.

## Option 1

Do Nothing

**Timeframe** 0 months

**Estimated Budget** \$0

**Option 1** is a legitimate course of action and not recommended.

The Phase 1 project investment of \$140,000 (not including \$262,500 of in-kind support from participants), has identified a clear direction to progress toward a transformation of small business food waste practices. Doing nothing beyond Phase 1 would lay waste to a sound investment for End Food Waste Australia and partners and miss a significant opportunity to create change at a national scale across Australian small businesses.

## Option 2

Module Development

**Timeframe** 12 months

**Estimated Budget**  
\$500,000 - \$550,000

**Option 2** builds on the foundational work from Phase 1 by developing six additional training modules. The timeframe includes module development, regional research setup, data collection, and analysis. The budget estimate covers the development of new training content, research personnel, data collection, travel, and the costs associated with making the training modules available online.

This option ensures comprehensive and actionable outcomes by enhancing training content. The higher budget is justified by the extensive development of new training modules, which will significantly contribute to the capability building of regional food businesses.

## Option 3

Module Development,  
Regional Expansion and  
Pilot Activation

**Timeframe** 24 - 36 months

**Estimated Budget**  
\$1,500,000 - \$2,500,000

**Stepwise: add Regional  
Expansion after Option 2**

**Timeframe**  
(in addition to Option 3) 12 months

**Estimated Budget**  
(in addition to Option 3) \$450,000+

**Option 3** can be arrived at in two ways – it could be funded in full or arrived at in a stepwise manner by adding a 'regional expansion' and 'Phase 2 pilot' to a completed Option 2. Taking a stepwise approach would add time and budget (see 'Stepwise: add Regional Expansion after Option 2' in table left).

Option 3 builds on the Phase 1 project by developing six additional training modules and testing across two new regions. In addition, a Phase 2 pilot project is delivered in the Murraylands and Riverland focused on actionable initiatives and refinement of training modules. Ideally, the expansion would occur as the additional modules were being developed to improve validation of the modules (to revisit an expansion after the development of additional modules would add around 12 months and around \$450,000 to the budget). The timeframes provided above include module development, regional research setup, data collection, analysis, expansion into two new regions, and delivering training in Murraylands and Riverland. The budget estimate covers the development of new training content, additional research personnel, data collection, travel across three regions, online training platform, pilot Food Waste Transformers Program delivery, actionable project and refinement.

This option ensures comprehensive and actionable outcomes by enhancing training content that is validated across three regions and delivered in one. The higher budget is justified by the extensive development of new training modules and additional travel and verification, which will significantly contribute to the capacity building of regional food businesses.

## Option 4 National Rollout

**Timeframe** 36 - 48 months

**Estimated Budget**  
\$4,000,000 +

### Stepwise: add National Rollout after Option 3

**Timeframe**  
(in addition to Option 4) 18 months

**Estimated Budget**  
(in addition to Option 4)  
\$1,500,000 +

### Stepwise: add Regional Expansion and National Rollout after Option 2 and National Rollout after Option 3

**Timeframe**  
(in addition to Option 4) 3+ years

**Estimated Budget**  
(in addition to Option 4)  
\$2,500,000 +

**Option 4** can be arrived at in three ways:

1. Funded in full
2. Via a stepwise approach by adding a 'national rollout' to a completed Option 3.
3. Via a stepwise approach by adding a 'regional expansion' and then 'national rollout' to a completed Option 2 and then Option 3, respectively.

Taking a stepwise approach would add increasing time and budget (see 'Stepwise' options to the left).

Option 4 combines all previous options, ensuring the most comprehensive and actionable initiatives. The timeframe includes developing six additional training modules, repeating the research in two new regions, refining the training modules based on these learnings (including place-based coordination and action-based research), and preparing for a national rollout. The budget estimate covers the extensive development of training content, broad regional research, implementation costs, dissemination activities, project management and project impact.

This option offers the most extensive scope and the greatest potential for national impact. The higher budget is justified by the need for thorough research, broad regional engagement, comprehensive training module development, and preparation for a national rollout. This investment ensures that the project can achieve its long-term sustainability and impact goals, driving significant food waste reduction across Australia.

The impact of Option 4 will be measured against the following criteria:

**Adoption of Circularity Principles:** Measure the adoption of circular economy principles amongst businesses as a direct result of the training provided. This will involve surveys and follow-up assessments to track how businesses implement circular practices in their operations.

**Reduction in Food Waste:** Evaluate the reduction in food waste as a result of the training. This will be measured by comparing baseline waste levels before the training with post-training waste levels, using data collected from participating businesses.

By including these measurable objectives, Option 4 aims to develop comprehensive training modules and expand research, as well as focusing on the tangible outcomes of reducing food waste and adopting sustainable practices. This holistic approach ensures that the project educates and also drives real-world impact in line with the needs of regional businesses.

Each option presents different timeframes and budget requirements, reflecting the scope and complexity of the proposed activities. Option 1 is the least cost, lowest outcome option, having developed only one of seven potential modules and relying solely on one region for validation. Option 2 completes the training package of seven modules based on validation from one region. Option 3 expands the scope by developing new training modules and repeating the research in two other regions, providing comprehensive outcomes. Option 4, the most ambitious and cost-effective, integrates all aspects, ensuring extensive development, validation, and national scalability.

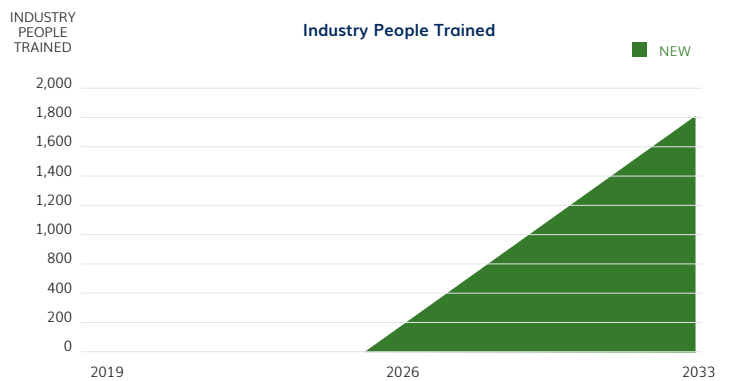
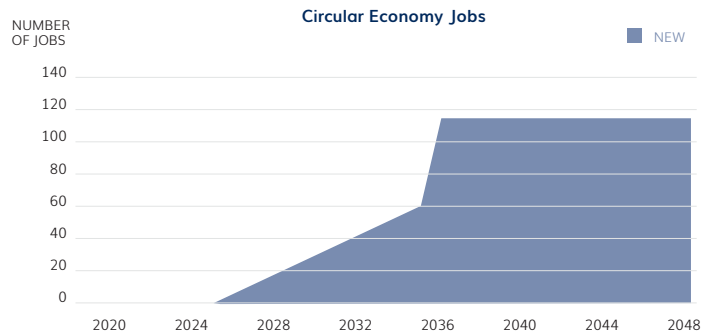
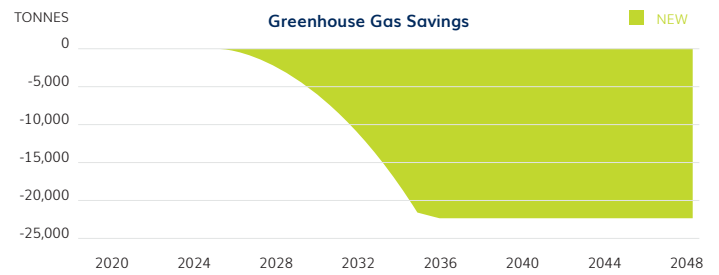
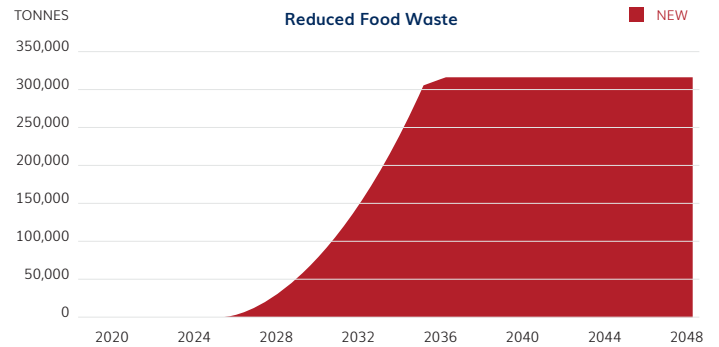
# Impact

Using the End Food Waste (EFW) CRC Project Impact Assessment Tool, the long-term impact of implementing Option 3 and Option 4 has been estimated.

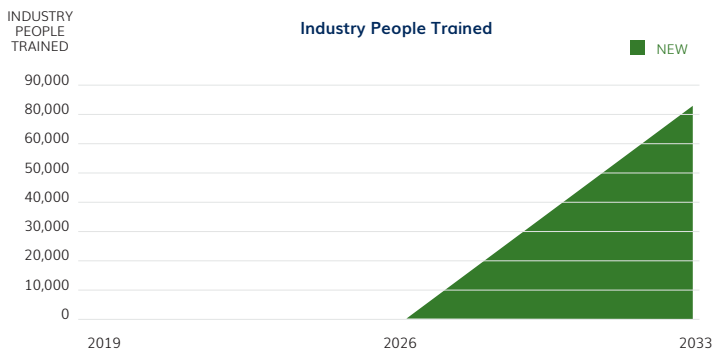
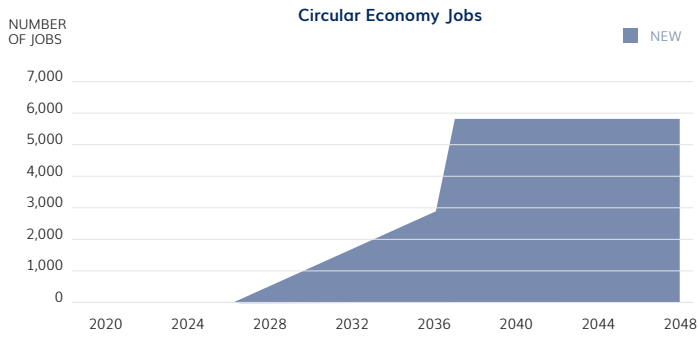
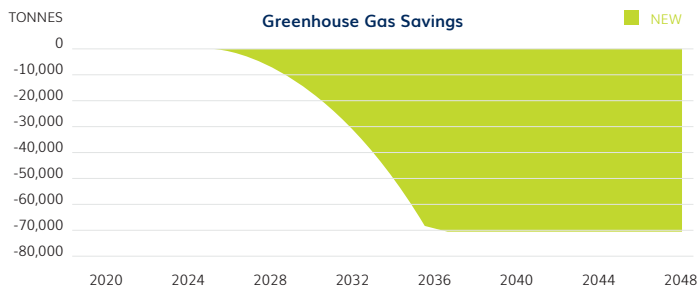
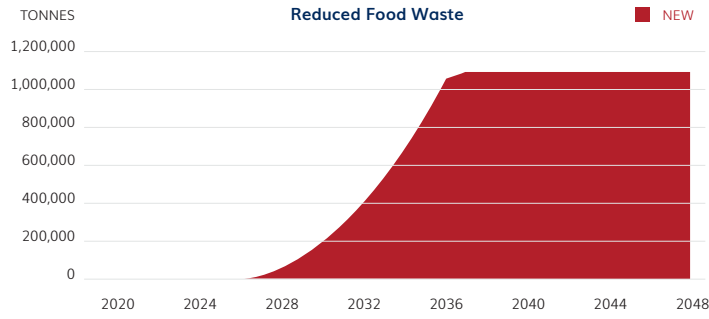
The EFW CRC Impact Model incorporates quantitative estimates from research conducted during the Phase 1 project to forecast the overall success of the initiative.

For more detailed information on Impact Assessment modelling see the appendix.

## Option 3 - Module Development, Regional Expansion and Pilot Activation Results:



## Option 4 - National Rollout Results:



# Conclusion

With 98% of Australian businesses being small and with 31% of them located in regional Australia, small businesses are the backbone of regional communities. They provide essential employment opportunities, support local economies and contribute to the social fabric of their regional communities.

The 'Cultivating the Capacity of Food Businesses to Reduce and Transform Food Waste – Phase 1' initiative has uncovered unexpected findings from grounded research that have the potential to significantly enhance the sustainability and economic stability of small regional food businesses across Australia.

Our research began with a clear hypothesis: to identify the training needs of businesses to independently implement food waste circular economy activities. We anticipated developing a self-guided training program where businesses could work through modules on their own to adopt these practices. However, our findings revealed a different reality, emphasising the importance of a community-driven approach.

Rather than isolated training modules, businesses expressed a need for a collaborative approach and active engagement. The key insight was that training should be more regionally focused, training facilitators who can then work closely with local businesses. This approach involves collectively working on an agreed project, fostering peer-to-peer learning and collective action. It motivates businesses to get started and reassures them that they don't have to tackle the challenge alone. This strategy helps prevent the inertia that businesses often face when they don't know where to begin, driving real-world impact and sustainable practices.

This approach can be replicated across any region, building and developing local systems for food waste circularity. By training facilitators within each region, we create a network of knowledgeable leaders who can support and inspire their communities. These facilitators will form a Community of Practice (CoP), sharing insights, strategies, and successes. This network will enhance the effectiveness of local initiatives and also contribute to a national movement towards sustainable food waste management. Through this collaborative and scalable model, we aim to drive widespread adoption of circular economy principles, benefiting regional economies and the environment.

This report presents four options, with three clear pathways to build on the important work initiated in the Murraylands and Riverland region.

The importance of this initiative cannot be overstated. Regional food businesses are at the forefront of balancing waste management with economic sustainability. By embracing circular economy principles through practical training that empowers business owners to innovate and connect within their regional ecosystems, there is immense potential to transform these local food systems. Reducing food waste and converting it into valuable resources improves financial performance and also enhances environmental conservation and community well-being.

Option 4 offers the most comprehensive pathway to achieving these goals. It combines localised validation in new regions, the development of targeted training modules, and a strategic national rollout. This approach ensures transformative benefits for regional food businesses across Australia, fostering a culture of sustainability, innovation, and collaboration on a national scale.

*“If the government wants to hit their target, then putting their money into getting this food waste reduced and the carbon emissions that go with that, they could solve the problem very quickly. Farmers actually have the answers.”* BUSINESS INTERVIEWEE

# Appendices

- Murraylands and Riverland Circular Economy Opportunities report  
<https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Circular-Economy-Opportunities-report.pdf>
- Literature Review  
<https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Literature-Review.pdf>
- Research Results  
<https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Research-Results-Report.pdf>
- Training Framework  
<https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Training-Framework.pdf>
- Reference Group Report  
<https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Reference-Group-Report.pdf>
- Introductory Training Module 1  
[https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Introductory-Training-Module\\_1.pdf](https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Introductory-Training-Module_1.pdf)
- FFW CRC Project Impact Assessment Tool – Option 3 results  
[https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Option-3-Impact-Model\\_July-2024-1.pdf](https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Option-3-Impact-Model_July-2024-1.pdf)
- FFW CRC Project Impact Assessment Tool – Option 4 results  
[https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Option-4-National-Rollout-Impact-Model\\_July-2024-1.pdf](https://rdamr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Option-4-National-Rollout-Impact-Model_July-2024-1.pdf)