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Ireland – Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection and FoodCloud Hubs

National Food Distribution

WHY?

In Ireland, as in other EU Member States, there is an increasing amount of food being wasted and ending up in landfills, while at the same time a significant proportion of the population struggles to put food on the table every day. As a result, the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, the Irish Managing Authority, sought to tailor their FEAD services to support vulnerable families through the provision of food assistance, while simultaneously addressing the issue of food waste.

WHAT?

FoodCloud Hubs has developed a unique solution to tackling food waste, by **connecting businesses with large volumes of surplus food to charities** that distribute food aid in communities across Ireland. FoodCloud Hubs is the main partner organisation that provides food assistance under the FEAD programme in Ireland, particularly because it has a physical presence across different parts of Ireland. It is responsible for the procurement and storage of FEAD food products, and also for coordinating the collection of products from other local partner organisations (community-based charities) from the hubs in Dublin, Cork and Galway.

130 charities across Ireland distribute FEAD-funded food to their end recipients. These charities operate in a range of areas, including homeless services, family resource centres, food banks, youth programmes and senior citizens' associations. Distribution commenced in July 2016 and in 2016, approximately 112,000 food parcels and 266,000 meals were distributed, reaching around 55,000 individuals.

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The chef calls it 'happy food' because the kitchen not only provides a place for people to eat a good meal, it also provides a place where people can interact and make new friends. It is good for their confidence, self-esteem and mental health, especially for single men.”

Michelle, St Clare's Hospitality Kitchen

WHO?

The Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection manage FEAD in Ireland and are always looking to approve new local partner organisations to distribute food to those in need in their communities.

FoodCloud Hubs has a team of 14 full-time staff (partially funded through a Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection programme to reach out to specific disadvantaged groups or individuals particularly removed from the labour market). The team also includes 7 part-time staff that were sourced through a community work placement scheme for the long-term unemployed, and 10 volunteers.

HOW?

Following consultation with a range of charities in Ireland, the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection selected 23 food products for distribution. These foods are non-perishable, and easy to transport and store. Notably, the products selected allow recipients to prepare a **complete meal for one person** or family and/or to prepare food despite only having basic cooking utensils.

The food products are procured directly by FoodCloud Hubs following a tender process structured to maximise value for money for the programme. The contracts with suppliers allow flexibility in ordering so that FoodCloud Hubs can adapt to charities' needs as they change over the course of the year. Food is redistributed to charities throughout Ireland, while also providing access to a variety of quality surplus products, resulting in considerable savings on food costs for the charities involved. Donating businesses benefit through **reduced waste disposal costs** and by making a meaningful and practical contribution to society.

The charities select products that they require from the product list and confirm how often they want to collect the food. They can tailor their collections on a monthly or quarterly basis and take advantage of food that has been gathered as part of FoodCloud Hub's food surplus intervention.

The charities either include the products within food parcels or use them in meals prepared as part of their service. The content and frequency of the food parcels and meals are tailored to the needs of the end recipient by each individual charity. The overall reduction in partner organisations' food bills have enabled them to redirect their funding into other support areas.

New products are due to be introduced from 2018 following a consultation process with the project's charity partners.

For further information about the project or to apply to become a local partner organisation, please contact **Ronan Harney** of the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection via:

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