# *Thank you for your commitment to green initiatives at the University of Illinois. One of the ongoing requirements listed in the terms of the funding agreement for your project is the submission of semesterly reports with key information about your project. In addition to this form, please provide additional financial documentation and/or progress photos if available.*

# *Please be as accurate as possible in describing the project (including possible setbacks or challenges in meeting the initial goals of the project). Not fully meeting your project's goals will not disqualify you from making future funding requests as long as your reports are as complete and accurate as possible. If you have any questions, please contact the Student Sustainability Committee, at* *sustainability-committee@illinois.edu**.*

**Project Name:** Project for Less

**Date of Report Submission:** 12/18/2020

**Project Purpose:**

The key objective for our food recovery operation is to reduce food waste and bolster food redistribution efforts in the campus and surrounding community. In parallel with these goals we intend to spread awareness about local resources for food insecure individuals and work with local community organizers to ensure that pre-consumer food waste is redistributed to the individuals most at need.

**Detailed Accounting of Expenditures to Date:**

No expenditures to date.

**Project Progress to Date:**

Due to the COVID pandemic, the typical food packaging operations were ceased for the majority of the semester. However, one packing session was completed on October 28th in which 60 boxes, or around 120 meals were packed at LAR Dining Hall and then delivered to Wesley food pantry. Although this packing session only occurred once due to COVID restrictions, we were able to navigate the volunteer training process and the safety precautions required for work in the dining hall. This will expedite our communications with dining and our preparation for next semester in order to maximize our impact in the coming months.

Because of our limited ability to package food, we focused our work on supporting project partners and spreading awareness about the issues at hand. We met with Wesley Food Pantry over Zoom to learn more about how we could better focus our efforts to support them. They informed us of their new food distribution efforts in light of Covid-19 and the ways in which we can bolster their initiatives. To promote these initiatives, we utilized our new social media presence. We built and grew Project4Less social media presence on Instagram and Facebook to share news that combats the stigma surrounding student food insecurity, expose the occurrence of food waste during this pandemic, and spread awareness and resources that we had access to.

Additionally, we build communications with new partners. We spoke with Last Call, an organization which connects students with discounted surplus food at restaurants via app, to learn about their potential connection with our campus. We met with Professor Brenna Ellison to understand the role of education in food waste prevention and the long-term impacts of organizations such as Last Call. We connected with Eat4Health, another UIUC student organization, to begin creating lesson plans to teach young students about food waste and insecurity which will ultimately be incorporated into their curriculum. Lastly, we met with a student community organizer who works with local pop-up pantries to better understand how we can collaborate with these pantries during the Spring semester and until the dining halls resume normal operations.

**Student Involvement and Outreach to Date:**

So far, our students have been spearheading new initiatives to confront food insecurity and food waste in our community. In addition to the current four leaders on our board of directors, who continue to create new partnerships, research existing initiatives, and collaborate with other organizations, we have gained three new leaders to our organization this semester, all of whom are highly motivated and tackling new areas of action. Our new social media manager has begun sharing weekly posts on Facebook and Instagram, and has built our Instagram account to 127 followers after only one semester. The posts are focused on sharing information about food waste and food insecurity, decreasing the stigma surrounding food insecurity, and connecting individuals with local food resources. Another student has also joined our organization to lead outreach and collaboration on composting initiatives on campus. Our new education outreach manager is leading collaborations with Eat4Health, a UIUC student organization, in order to create lesson plans centering on food waste and food insecurity education. This outreach to Eat4Health is especially exciting because it allows us to collaborate with another student organization on campus to focus on our education efforts. Lastly, we worked with 2 student volunteers on October 28th to package 60 boxes of food from LAR Dining Hall for Wesley Food Pantry.

**Marketing and Promotion Efforts to Date:**

This semester, Project for Less worked to establish a social media presence on Instagram and Facebook. Using these platforms, weekly posts were released on topics ranging from food waste to food insecurity at local and international levels. A priority was increasing awareness regarding local resources for food insecure students and community members, we partnered with Wesley food pantry and helped raise the profile of their Thursday food pantry in addition to the food pantry through the university. After only one semester, we have raised 127 Instagram followers and made 8 informational posts.

**Additional Comments:**

We have recently been in close contact with a local leader who is involved with pop-up food pantries. Looking forward, we are excited to start collaborating with them in the Spring semester. One of the major roadblocks in our past efforts to redistribute food waste was a lack of storage space for surplus food waste in local food pantries, and thus this development is very promising toward larger scale efforts that can expand our reach in a very productive manner. While we have yet to spend any of our funds because of University Dining shutdowns, we believe that next semester we can utilize some or our funding to expand our reach to pop-up pantries or similar entities.