



University of California, Merced
5200 N. Lake Road
Merced, CA 95343

April 21st, 2021

RE: People's Fridge AASHE Innovation Credit

Dear AASHE Committee,

I am writing this letter to affirm The University of California, Merced's (UC Merced) People's Fridge program. The People's Fridge is an innovative program that simultaneously reduces food insecurity and food waste in Merced County. It is a community fridge where anyone can take free produce from an outdoor, easily accessible fridge and anyone can leave free surplus produce to donate to those in need. The People's Fridge is a community driven form of mutual aid which aims to help all.

The People's Fridge complies with the criteria within the innovation credit because the program provides an innovative way to accomplish reducing food waste and food insecurity, while improving campus and community sustainability. For example, the People's Fridge is an additional resource for food for our food insecure UC Merced students. It also provides an outlet for those with surplus to give back not just with food and funds, but also through volunteering their time. The program is also innovative because there are few if any, community fridges in the nation partnered with a university and furthermore, there is a lack of research on community fridges in the literature and the People's Fridge has decided to fill that gap by implementing a research study on the effectiveness and efficacy of the fridge. This contributes to the field and the food system academically and will help others in starting up their own fridges. The fridge is also innovative in the extent of data collection; most community fridges do not collect any data.

Program Highlights:

1. The People's Fridge is an innovative program within California and the Central Valley.
2. The People's Fridge is an ongoing program.
3. The People's Fridge was implemented and officially launched September 27th, 2020 in Merced County.
4. This program has not been widely adopted and as such, it is innovative.
5. This program is a partnership between UC Merced and Community Initiatives for Collective Impact.

For more information, please visit <https://sustainability.ucmerced.edu/initiatives/food/peoples-fridge>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin Meyer". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light yellow rectangular background.

Erin Meyer
Sustainable Food Programs Coordinator
5200 North Lake Road
Merced, CA 95343