

Dane County: Launches \$10,000 Organics Management Grant this Earth Month

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This Earth Month, Dane County is launching a new grant that seeks to provide funding for community composting projects that help reduce the amount of organics (food scraps, yard waste) being sent to landfills, County Executive Joe Parisi announced today. All Dane County businesses, institutions, municipalities, Native American tribal governments and organizations, community groups, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply to this 2022 Organics Management Grant.

“Organics, such as food waste, comprise about one-third of the materials being sent to the Dane County landfill,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “When food waste can be composted instead of landfilled, valuable nutrients can be recovered and applied to Dane County gardens and farmlands to increase soil health. This grant will help pave the way for more community composting in Dane County.”

The grant will cover up to 75% of the expenses associated with proposed projects, and recipients will also be eligible for technical assistance from the Dane County Department of Waste & Renewables team, if needed. While the grant is intended to help fund projects that reduce or eliminate the amount of organic materials, such as food scraps and yard waste from the landfill, projects that support food waste reduction or creative reuse will also be considered under this grant.

“We plan to distribute \$10,000 in grant funds this year,” said Dane County Supervisor Melissa Ratcliff, the primary sponsor of the grant. “Our goal is to help

communities across Dane County manage organic waste locally instead of sending it to landfills.”

Beyond providing funding to support and accelerate the diversion of organics like food waste from the landfill, Dane County is also planning on constructing a composting facility at its proposed [Sustainability Campus](#). The goal of the Campus is to divert waste from the landfill and create local circular economies for different waste streams. This will be accomplished by attracting reuse, repair, and recycling businesses; new waste management technologies; and research. The intent is to design the site for safe public access, education, and recreation where visitors can examine their relationship with waste and the Dane County community can move towards a future where waste is not a liability, but a resource and an opportunity.

“Implementation of a successful food waste composting program at the Sustainability Campus will be a significant advancement in Dane County’s food waste management system,” said Waste & Renewables Director John Welch. “Plus, establishing a compost facility at the Campus will also aid in securing and quantifying a steady stream of feedstock of organic material, making it the first step towards designing and building a digester facility. In fact, a composting program for food waste can be achieved with relatively small capital investment and far less risk than digestion while achieving many of the same environmental benefits.”

While construction of the compost facility is not anticipated to start until 2026, County efforts like the 2022 Organics Management Grant seek to more immediately bolster and support community-led efforts to divert organics from the landfill.

“Community gardens, school groups, religious institutions, neighborhood associations are all encouraged to apply,” said Waste & Renewables Deputy Director Roxanne Wienkes. “The more ways we can responsibly manage our materials in our local community, the lower the carbon footprint of transporting the materials further away. Plus, composting has the added benefit of creating a rich soil amendment that can be applied to the gardens right in your neighborhood, which can then be used to grow more food; it doesn’t get any more circular than that!”

To apply for and learn more about the 2022 Organics Management Grant, interested applicants can visit <https://landfill.countyofdane.com/resources/compost>