

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USDA Composting and Food Waste Reduction Pilot Project

New Haven Office of Climate and Sustainability

May 25, 2023

Funding request: \$334,610.00 for two years

The New Haven Office of Climate and Sustainability will partner with Haven's Harvest, the Center for EcoTechnology, the Town Green District, and local businesses and large multi-family residences to pilot innovative strategies for increasing food rescue and food scrap diversion in the downtown area. As the City pursues models for providing access to food scrap diversion and composting for residences served by City refuse and recycling pickup, it is important to consider that residences and businesses served by private haulers make up nearly two thirds of the City's solid waste tonnage annually. Piloting and demonstrating the value of strategies for increasing food rescue participation and food scrap diversion that meet the needs of these residents and businesses is therefore an important component of the City's efforts to reduce food waste and increase the diversion of organic material toward productive uses. If funded, this proposal would provide support for expanded food rescue activities, provide free technical advice on food rescue, food scrap diversion, and waste reduction to downtown businesses that generate large amounts of food, and pilot new models of food scrap diversion for large multi-family residences.

Grant funds would provide direct support to Haven's Harvest to assist them in growing their food rescue operation and in exploring and adopting innovative models to sustain food rescue operations over the long-term. In partnership with CET and the Town Green District, the grant would also fund outreach to and engagement of local businesses that generate large amounts of food waste, such as restaurants and hotels. These businesses would be given the opportunity to opt into free technical advice from CET on how to reduce food waste, increase food rescue through Haven's Harvest, and implement food scrap diversion. One option for these businesses would be to partner with Brightfeeds, who converts wasted food into animal feed. Brightfeeds plans to provide an in-kind contribution of staff time toward enrolling businesses in their service and will utilize its federal cost share to subsidize the development of a pickup route in New Haven. The City and CET also plan to partner with large residential buildings to pilot a platform to allow residents of larger buildings to opt into food scrap collection, utilizing smart composting bin receptacles than can be unlocked with a key card or smartphone. The aim of this would be to test the model in order to see if it can be deployed in other areas of the City.

Grant funds would also support the City and CET in providing technical support to four New Haven Public Schools to set up school-based composting programs.