

# Municipal Food Scraps Recycling Initiatives – 2024 – Q&A Document

Updated: 01/29/2025

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An informational webinar on this grant opportunity was held on November 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00AM EST.

View recording:

<https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=5c040f1445313ce9dbffc25e13e279b2>

The Statewide Financial System can be reached through their help desk:

[Helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov](mailto:Helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov) | 518-457-7717

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**Q1: I need clarification for the contract term dates that are noted in this grant opportunity.**

A1: Applications are being accepted between October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025, or until all funding is exhausted (which is more likely to come first). We will be answering questions publicly until January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025, or until the program has concluded.

The anticipated award date listed (March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025) is an estimate for reviewing and awarding all grant applications under this program.

As per the RFA, contract term dates are for up to three years. Contract term START dates may be any time between 2/1/2025 - 1/31/27, with an end date up to three years out from the start date chosen. Therefore, the earliest contract dates available to apply for is a term running from 2/1/25 - 1/31/28.

**Q2: Would this grant cover food scrap collection service? Would this grant cover composting of food scraps?**

A2: Yes, this grant opportunity provides funding for expenses related to food scraps collection and projects related to composting of food scraps. Please refer to Section 9 of the RFA, *Eligible and Ineligible Expenditures*. This section of the RFA lists eligible project types and details about specific costs that are eligible. New hauling contracts for food scraps collection services up to one (1) year in duration (this time may include multiple seasons over the duration of the contract term) are eligible under this grant opportunity.

**Q3: Will decisions be made up until the due date, with awards distributed on a rolling basis or will all awards be distributed in April 2025?**

A3: All projects will be evaluated by DEC for eligibility in the order in which they are received (first-in, first-out). We just learned that we will not be able to review on an ongoing basis through

SFS. The latest the applications will be reviewed is after the applications close on January 31, 2025. If the funds have been exhausted before the January 31<sup>st</sup> deadline, we will close the grant application period early and start the reviews of projects for eligibility in the order in which they are received (first-in, first-out).

**Q4: Are promotional and educational materials related to promotional and educational materials related to establishing a new food scraps recycling program or improving an existing one eligible costs under this grant opportunity?**

A4: Yes, promotional and educational materials related to establishing a new food scraps recycling program or improving an existing one are eligible costs under this grant opportunity.

**Q5: Our food waste management solution is an on-site in-vessel system that reduces food waste by 80-90% in a 24-hour cycle, with the output being pre-compost. It's a great way to reduce commercial food waste at the source and be able to transform it into usable compost. The eligibility section mentions some equipment, doesn't specify in-vessel systems or aerobic biodigester systems so just checking to make sure the grant our system would be eligible. Can you please confirm either way?**

A5: In-vessel systems or aerobic biodigester systems such as your product would be considered an eligible item under this grant opportunity as long as a municipality could show that the output was being further composted.

**Q6: Would a NY State Correctional Facility be eligible for the grant?**

A6: A NY State correctional facility would not be eligible for this grant. Under a grant program, a municipality is defined as:

- County, city, town or village
- Local public authority
- Local public benefit corporation (as established by New York State law)
- School district, supervisory district, and improvement district
- Native American tribe or Nation residing in New York State
  
- Combination of the above

**Q7: What hourly cost should we use to value volunteer time for in-kind match?**

A7: If the work, which must be directly related to the project, the volunteer is performing is applying their professional/field expertise, you may use their position's entry level hourly rate. If their expertise is not relevant and they are assisting, use the state minimum wage which we consider for volunteers.

**Q8: What do you anticipate being the start date of awarded grant contracts? It appears there have been some delays in getting certain state grants to contact in the last year or so, and we wonder whether it will be possible to begin the project before having an executed contract?**

A8: Contract term start dates may be any time between 2/1/2025 - 1/31/27, with an end date up to three years out from the start date chosen. Contract terms can start before a contract is executed. Since this grant is a reimbursement grant, as long as purchases are made within the contract term after you have been awarded a contract, we can reimburse them. No purchases made before your contract start term will be eligible for reimbursement under the grant program.

**Q9: How do we know whether our contract start date will be in 2025, 2026 or 2027, should our application be successful? At what point in the grant application/award process will we be advised?**

A9: Contract term start dates are defined by the applicant. You can choose a start date any time between 2/1/2025- 1/31/2027.

**Q10: Are the in-kind value of staff hours eligible for the 25% match? Page 12 [of the RFA] says that these are ineligible expenditures:**

*Operation, maintenance, and support staff salaries (including driver or operator salaries, staff supervision, grant administration, and secretarial support).*

but then page 13 [of the RFA] says that these are eligible for match:

*In-kind sources that are directly related to the project (e.g., labor, volunteer hours, etc.).  
Note: In-kind sources of match must be work that is directly related to the project*

The project that we [ Village + other communities] are considering is very ambitious and will require hours of staff time of the Village Managers, Village Administrators and DPW Superintendents in drafting RFP's, location decision-making, equipment sourcing, and more. All very directly related to the project. Will this be eligible towards an in-kind match? And is it valued at their hourly rate + fringe?

A10: Staff time of the Village Managers, Village Administrators and DPW Superintendents directly related to the project, that is performed during the grant contract term, would be an eligible form of in-kind match if it does not involve grant administration (i.e. submitting the application) and secretarial support (i.e. submitting reimbursement requests) related tasks. Match would be valued at their hourly rate plus fringe.

**Q11: We are assisting [ a County] with understanding this grant application process for submitting a project for their food waste compost operation. It is unclear whether this grant opportunity is to reimburse funds already spent during the prior year or if the county can submit a project to be completed for a future date (i.e. next year). Can you please provide information on if funds need to be already spent in order to qualify for this grant opportunity?**

A11: This grant is not to reimburse funds that have already been spent. We are not able to reimburse any funds that were spent before the contract term start dates for the eligible projects that are awarded contracts for this grant program. Contract term start dates for projects submitted under this grant opportunity may be any time between 2/1/25-1/31/27, with an end date up to three years from the start date chosen.

**Q12: I am helping [a town] put together an application for DEC's Municipal Food Scraps Recycling Grant and noticed something that seems off within the RFA. The signage**

**section on page 18 mentions a “clean vehicle charging/refueling facility”. I am assuming that this is from an energy grant but I wanted to confirm that there isn’t a vehicle charging requirement.**

A12: That section is included in all RFAs, even if it is not relevant to the grant program. There are no vehicle charging or signage requirements for this grant opportunity.

**Q13: A town is applying to be the awardee, however we [the County] were wondering if we could apply on the Town’s behalf? The County will be a partner and technical advisor for the project but will not be written into the budget.**

A13: In order to apply on behalf of the Town, you would need to apply as the County and submit the bid as the County. If you were awarded a contract, the County would then be able to serve as a fiscal sponsor for the project. This would mean you would sign the contract, submit reimbursements and receive the payments, and manage the town’s progress.

**Q14: I am currently developing a drop-off food scrap recycling pilot program for [a hamlet] and 4 villages with [a not-for-profit organization] and in collaboration with the [Town]. As you know between sales promotion, marketing, technology, administration, data collection, monitoring, carting, processing etc... The start-up and maintenance costs are significant and ongoing. We intend to design a pilot program that is successful and is scalable to include more of the [Town].**

**However, it looks like non-profits cannot be the lead agency applying for the grant awards according to the attached fact sheet.**

A14: Correct, non-profits cannot be the lead applicant, but they can partner with an eligible applicant to apply for the DEC Municipal Funding for Food Scraps Recycling Initiatives. The eligible applicant would have to be the lead on the application. An example of this is the City of Albany previously had this type of agreement with Radix Ecological Sustainability Center on a previous grant we awarded them.

### **Eligible Applicants**

Funding for this grant is available for municipalities. Under this grant program a municipality is defined as a:

- County, city, town or village
- Local public authority
- Local public benefit corporation
- School district, supervisory district, and improvement district
- Native American tribe or Nation residing in NYS

**Q15: Would a pilot program of composting education for residents who don’t know much about composting be an eligible project under this grant opportunity?**

A15: Yes, a composting education program is an eligible project under this grant opportunity. The duration limit of one (1) year on pilot programs in this grant opportunity only applies to food scraps collection pilot projects and/or hauling contracts.

**Q16: In question 5, an attachment is required, however, there is nowhere to upload this document.**

A16: Amendment 2 has been generated for DEC's FSR2024 bid event RFA document to clarify how to upload documents for Question #5. The amendment includes the following on page 2 of the RFA:

Amendment 2 provides assistance for uploads on Question # 5. We are unable to change the question format to permit an upload. If you wish to submit a file for Question #5 please email that file, with the subject FSR 2024 to [vanessa.lasher@dec.ny.gov](mailto:vanessa.lasher@dec.ny.gov).

**Q17: How might a school meet the residential food scrap requirement [in Project Type 1]?**

A17: Proposed projects that may consider applying for this grants opportunity with proposed projects that fall under Project Type 2 instead, *New or Expanded Food Scraps Recycling Programs and Facilities*. An eligible project would be a new or expanded food scraps recycling program that is catered to recycling food scraps from the school.

**Q18: We are inquiring about the eligibility of using grant funds for incentive items, specifically loyalty rewards, [as part of a food scraps drop off program]. During [previous programming during the farmer's market season], we provided participants with a \$10 coupon after their fifth food scraps drop-off, which could be redeemed for fresh produce from local farmers. This approach aims to encourage consistent participation, support local agriculture, and make the program more accessible to families.**

**Could you confirm if this type of incentive would qualify as a fundable activity under the grant's guidelines?**

A18: These types of direct financial incentives are not eligible for funding under this opportunity. Items relating to a food scraps drop-off program that are eligible could include outreach materials and supplies for advertising and promoting the drop-off spot, equipment at the drop-off spot and/or the recycling facility, potential hauling pilot of the drop-off materials, etc.

**Q19: Can a project scope be designed to maximize the grant award?**

A19: Yes, projects can receive the maximum grant award amount of \$200,000.00. Grant funds are available for up to 75% of the total eligible project cost. Applicants must provide the remaining 25% in match funds.

**Match calculation: Total Eligible Project Cost x 25% = Required Match**

An applicant could receive the maximum amount of \$200,000.00 in grant funds and match at least 25% (at least \$50,000.00 in this example). The total project cost **can exceed** \$250,000.00; the total grant funds awarded would just be limited to the maximum allowed in this grant program.

**Q20: When filling out the Smart Growth Assessment Form, I'm unsure about how to answer some of the questions. This proposal is being written for constructing a building [that] is crucial to the overall composting site that is being built. When the question says "this project" - should I answer in terms of the entire composting site?**

A20: Applicants should answer questions on the Smart Growth Assessment Form for the entire composting site or broader project, not just the portion of work that would be funded by grant/matching funds through an award under this grant opportunity.

**Q21: In the guidelines, it mentions that points can be awarded if we make our case for alignment with REDC plans for our region (Page 9). Is there a place in the application for doing that, or should we integrate that into other questions?**

A21: For REDC alignment, there is no spot to integrate this into your application, but if you would like to describe it as part of your answer to other questions, feel free to do. This grant is eligibility-based, so there are no additional points available to be given for REDC alignment. Thank you for pointing this out as we will seek to remove this from the RFA in the future, if possible, to avoid any confusion.

**Q22: Can a municipality partner with a nonprofit organization to assist with public education and outreach as part of a Municipal Food Scrap Recycling Grant? If so, can the grant application include a budget allocation to be passed through to the nonprofit for conducting program elements such as school district education, reporting, and resident training?**

A22: Yes, a municipality can partner with a non-profit organization to assist with public education and outreach as part of a project proposal for this grant opportunity. The non-profit organization can be listed as a sub-contractor and would receive funding through the municipal applicant. The municipal applicant would have to pay the sub-contractor directly and then be reimbursed for that cost through this grant. These costs can be listed as Contractual expenses in your application's proposed budget.

**Q23: How do I find the Request for Applications (RFA) on the SFS Webpage?**

A23: To access the grant opportunity's webpage, use the following steps:

- Visit the [SFS Vendor Portal](#) and do not log into your SFS account. The steps below do not work if you are logged in.
- Click 'Search for Grant Opportunities'
- Search By 'Event ID': FSR2024
- Click 'Search'
- Click ' Municipal Food Scraps Recycling Grants - 2024 '
- To view the Request for Applications (RFA), click 'View Grant Opportunity' in the upper left-hand corner.

**Q24: Can a municipality partner with a not-for-profit organization to complete project tasks by paying them to complete tasks? How exactly is this done in reality? What is the process?**

A24: The municipality must pay the not-for-profit organization first, and then the municipality would be reimbursed by DEC. This is a reimbursement-based grant, so municipality must submit a reimbursement request showing proof of payment from municipality to the not-for-profit in order to be reimbursed.

**Q25: Is this a reimbursement grant? After applying, if you are chosen as a grant recipient, is the [lead applicant] required to spend the money first and then submit for reimbursement?**

A25; Yes, this is a reimbursement-based grant. The grantee/recipient would need to spend the funds first and send in documentation showing proof of payment (e.g., receipts, paid invoices, etc.) to receive reimbursement from DEC.

**Q26: In a project where a lead applicant is partnering with not-for-profits or other vendors and sub-contractors, who would send what to whom for reimbursement?**

A26: The lead applicant responsible for reporting to DEC and submitting reimbursement requests. The lead applicant may set up additional reporting requirements with its subcontractor(s). DEC would not be involved in that process beyond what may be spelled out in the contract. Reports and reimbursement requests should be submitted to DEC on a regular basis; this reporting schedule is outlined in the final contracts and further communications from DEC later in the award process.

**Q27: Can multiple municipalities band together for one proposal?**

A27: Yes, multiple municipalities can apply together under one application, however, one municipality will need to be listed as the lead municipality. The lead municipality will be responsible for reporting to DEC and submitting reimbursement requests. Other municipalities and additional partners would be paid directly by the lead applicant and the lead applicant would be reimbursed by DEC.

**Q28: Are state universities eligible applicants?**

A28: No, state universities are not eligible applicants for this grant opportunity.

**Q29: We are looking to purchase and install new permanent equipment for food scrap collection for residents. Would all of the work done by staff be eligible, or would parts be ineligible (transportation via bike, oversight of the food scrap collection equipment and composting)?**

A29: Staff/salary costs related to transportation of food scraps via bike would be ineligible as they are operational costs that fall under "driver or operator salaries" listed as ineligible in the RFA. Staff costs related to compost site operations are also ineligible. These costs would be eligible to count as in-kind match. Staff costs related to education or program management would be eligible, as would staff costs related to technical assistance and outreach to engage with residents.

**Q30: For the MFSR Grant in the budget section, in Salaries, for each individual line item of salary expenses, what does "% of Effort funded" mean? % of the overall project cost? or of something else?**

A30: The "% effort funded" area is asking applicants to input the percentage of the individual's salary that will be funded using grant funds from this award throughout the project's duration.

**Q31: I am reaching out to check on funding availability for the Municipal Food Scraps Recycling Grants- 2024. Are you able to confirm the amount of funds/number of expected grant awards remaining?**

A31: We are not able to confirm when we anticipate the funding will be exhausted as it depends on the number of eligible applications and when we receive them. All projects will be evaluated by DEC for eligibility in the order in which they are received (first-in, first-out), so the sooner applicants are able to get their application submitted, the higher the likelihood of receiving an award.

**Q32: Please confirm that grants will be reviewed and awarded after January 31, 2025.**

A32: Yes, we will be reviewing applications when the application period closes on January 31, 2025.

**Q33: Are the wages and fringe benefits for the Town transfer station staff eligible expenses under Salaries and Fringe Benefits (for grant funds? for match funds?)?**

A33: Transfer station staff wages and fringe benefits are ineligible for reimbursement as eligible costs under this grant opportunity, but they would be considered eligible to serve as in-kind match. Wages and fringe benefits for municipal staff as they relate to education and outreach to engage with residents/composting program participants, program management, or technical assistance would be considered eligible costs for reimbursement as well as eligible as in-kind match.

**Q34: Is the purchase of bulk materials for processing food scraps an eligible expense?**

A34: No, the purchase of bulk materials for processing food scraps is not an eligible expense for reimbursement. You may include this cost as a cash match as part of the broader project, but this cost is not eligible as a form of in-kind match.

**Q35: Would this opportunity cover the expense to hire an Engineer to develop a site plan and site designs to upgrade an existing yard-waste composting facility to accept SSO?**

**We would not be ready to implement the designs but we would use the designs in a future grant application.**



A35: These engineering expenses would only be considered eligible costs under this grant opportunity if the project included the implementation of the site design/plan, and the upgrades were made to the existing composting facility during the contract term.

**Q36: When does the program have to start and finish. For example, if the carting contract starts in June of 2024 and ends June of 2025, how does the reimbursement work?**

A36: All project tasks must be completed and invoiced within a three-year contract period/term. Costs outside of the contract period/term are ineligible. Contract term START dates may be any time between 2/1/2025 - 1/31/27, with an end date up to three years out from the start date chosen. Therefore, the earliest contract term available is a contract term running from 2/1/25 - 1/31/28; costs incurred before that contract term start date are not eligible for reimbursement.

**Q37: We have an existing hauling service at a school that is currently open only to students at the school. Would the expansion of this service to include faculty and staff be eligible?**

A37: No, this proposal as described currently would not be considered an eligible cost under this grant opportunity. An expansion of an existing hauling service would need to be expanded to a new location or, if the service were to stay limited to the current location, be open to a broader client pool outside of the school environment, such as establishing a drop-off spot at this school to open the opportunity to other residents.

Since this currently doesn't count as an expansion and the hauling service already exists and is not a pilot project, we would not be able to consider it an eligible cost under this grant opportunity. However, the additional costs for supplies and other eligible costs to support the expansion from just students to teachers/faculty would count as eligible costs under this grant opportunity.

**Q38: Our Town would like to apply for this grant in partnership with a local nonprofit farm, which has been running a successful small-scale food scraps collection program. The farm uses scraps dropped off by residents to produce compost that is then used at the farm for growing fruits and vegetables.**

The Town is planning to scale up the program and this effort requires the purchase of equipment that will be used on the farm. Would this equipment be eligible if it were to be Town-owned but on loan to the farm?

A38: Yes, this equipment would be eligible under this grant opportunity if it were to be Town-owned but on loan to the farm.

**Q39: I have a question as to whether we would [be] eligible for this grant given that the program we would be looking to be reimbursed for has already been budgeted for. We are aware that some grants prohibit applications if the project already has secured funding.**

A39: Yes, this is a reimbursement-based grant, and the grantee would need to provide a 25% match. Match can be from local and/or in-kind contributions. Local sources of match can include funding from other non-state and/or non-federal grant sources or from project partners. In-kind contributions are non-cash donations provided by non-state and/or non-federal third parties which can include equipment, supplies, services, and other expendable property. You can find this information in the RFA, specifically under Sections 5 and 9.

You could use this secured funding for your 25% match if it is not from other state or federal grant sources. You can provide your match with eligible funding sources as listed above and in the RFA.

**Q40: We're looking to increase residential composting by offering subsidized/free compost bins to our residents. We're interested in learning if the purchase and distribution of compost bins would be eligible for funding through the DEC Municipal Funding for Food Scraps Recycling Initiatives.**

A40: Yes, the purchase and distribution of compost bins would be eligible for reimbursement under this grant opportunity. Compost bins or residential kitchen caddies are eligible if distributed to residents for free or sold to residents by the municipality for equal or less than the purchase price.

**Q41: I'm a board member of a school district in New York State. I just learned of this grant opportunity and don't think that we'll be able to get an application together and submitted by 1/31. Will this grant be offered again?**

A41: Yes, we will very likely have iterations of this grant opportunity available in the coming years as we have regular funding allocated in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) for municipal food scraps recycling grants. The desired scope of the projects and eligible costs may change slightly each year, but school districts will remain eligible applicants.