



King County

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News Release

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Cutting commercial food waste is goal of new King County grant program

SUMMARY

The King County Solid Waste Division has awarded grants to two businesses and one city that are trying new ways of reducing food waste.

STORY

Each year, an estimated 85,000 tons of food waste is disposed by restaurants, grocery stores and other commercial enterprises in King County. The King County Solid Waste Division is partnering with three organizations to explore innovative ways of reducing food waste, and diverting it from the landfill.

King County has provided four, \$30,000 grants for pilot projects that could result in new approaches to reducing food waste from commercial sources throughout the county.

“Partnering with businesses to develop new ways of cutting food waste means reducing harmful greenhouse gases, conserving resources and saving room in the landfill to help keep disposal rates as low as possible,” said King County project manager Kris Beatty.

Grant-funded projects range from assessing the feasibility for a high-tech process that converts food scraps into liquid fertilizer, to assisting restaurants, farmers markets and other generators in establishing food waste recycling programs and use waste-reduction best practices.

“Commercially generated food waste makes up about 10 percent of municipal solid waste disposed each year, so it’s important to advance food waste prevention and recycling by businesses, schools and other generators of that material,” said King County Solid Waste Division Director Pat McLaughlin.

Waste reduction is a key goal of the 2017 King County Strategic Climate Action Plan, as well as the Solid Waste Division's goal of "zero waste of resources" by 2030.

A second round of commercial food waste grants could be offered early next year, pending funding.

The King County Solid Waste Division grants are funding these [projects](#):

Anaerobic Digester Digestate Field Testing

Grant recipient: Impact Bioenergy

Grant period: June 2016 – July 2018

This project will demonstrate how organics generated by small businesses can be diverted from the waste system and converted into both renewable energy and a liquid soil amendment for use on farmland.

Specifically, the project will document the commercial value of anaerobically digested food waste and how it can be used beneficially within a community, avoiding trucking, export from the county, and the associated greenhouse gas emissions and loss of soil carbon.

Commercial food waste will be collected from Seattle Tilth operations, Taylor Farms in Kent, Schilling Cider in Auburn, and the Auburn Food Bank. Liquid soil amendment will be used at Seattle Tilth's Green River Farm.

Project tracking will include conclusions about increases in jobs, retaining money in King County by building a circular economy, and reducing truck use, traffic congestion, and diesel emissions.

Commercial Food Waste Outreach Project

Grant recipient: City of Auburn

Grant period: August 2016 – July 2018

This project seeks to increase food waste diversion from mid-sized to large food-generating businesses in Auburn, and to send food that is still wholesome to organizations that will distribute it to low-income residents, or to local composting facilities if it is no longer fit for consumption.

The city will encourage businesses to enhance their existing food-waste prevention, including donation or composting programs, or start a new program by offering education and training. Businesses contacted will include the Auburn School District's kitchens, plus restaurants, food manufacturers and distributors, grocery stores and non-profit food donation locations in the city.

Increasing Food Waste Diversion in Diverse Communities

Grant Recipient: Cedar Grove Composting, Inc.
Grant period: June 2016 – July 2018

This project will increase diversion of commercial food waste from landfill disposal by focusing on restaurants and farmer's markets in economically and culturally diverse cities in suburban King County.

Partnerships will be formed with 10 restaurants, with a preference for those whose owners are people of color, foreign born and/or whose primary language is not English, to conduct restaurant waste audits and implement customized food waste recycling programs. The goal is to divert of a minimum of 70 percent of the waste stream for selected restaurants.

The project will also work with the Burien Farmer's Market and Renton Farmer's Market to provide signage to market vendors and training on best practices for farmer's market vendor composting. This element will help establish a diversion infrastructure that puts each market vendor in the best position to maximize food waste diversion.

Vashon Island Distributed Bioenergy Feasibility and Possible Demonstration

Grant recipient: Impact Bioenergy
Grant period: June 2016 – July 2018

This project will include creating and using a software tool to help divert edible and inedible food waste from disposal; conducting a feedstock assessment; and conducting a study to establish the feasibility of a community-scale digester for processing food waste generated on Vashon Island. Zero Waste Vashon, a local community group is an integral partner.

The project provides a mechanism for Vashon Island to develop Community Supported Biocycling® — a locally based economic model of production and distribution that is designed to close the loop on the Community Supported Agriculture movement by integrating co-products and services into the hyperlocal food system, such as low-carbon fuel vehicle sharing, and a liquid organic fertilizer co-product of the food waste anaerobic digestion process.

A demonstration of the actual community-scale digester may be possible if additional funds are secured from other funding sources.

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