

**Application to the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Utility Services
Solid Waste Management Grant Program**
Submitted by the Windham Solid Waste Management District
August 2021

**INCREASING FOOD SCRAP RECOVERY AND DIVERSION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES:
OVERCOMING BARRIERS AND IMPLEMENTING SOLUTIONS**

1. PROJECT SUMMARY

Project overview & summary of outcomes: The goal of this project is to decrease the generation of solid waste and avoid water and air pollution through the implementation of a multi-faceted promotional campaign, training, and technical assistance to increase diversion of food scraps banned from landfill disposal in Vermont.¹ This will be achieved through the development and dissemination of educational resources and providing training and technical assistance for transfer station attendants, town officials, town committee members, citizen activists, businesses, institutions, schools, and residents.

For more than twenty years, the Windham Solid Waste Management District (“District” or “WSWMD”), a municipal government agency, has earned a reputation around Vermont and the nation as a leader in innovative approaches to managing wastes for its small town and rural member communities. Its expert staff will implement all aspects of the project.

Sixteen rural towns in Windham Solid Waste Management District in Southern Vermont, will be provided with the resources and skills needed to successfully enhance and manage their food scrap diversion programs, develop effective town and District-wide food recovery and diversion messaging, and other measures that result in decreased food scraps generation and best management practices for implementing the food recovery hierarchy. Businesses, institutions, schools, and residents in each town will also be targeted for project participation. This project will build upon a USDA grant received last year to implement consistent messaging for diverting more recyclables from the waste stream and reducing contamination in District towns.

With this project we will produce²:

- **A District-wide composting and compost use assessment** that will provide the District and its member towns with updated information vital to increasing diversion of food scraps.
- **A multimedia food scrap awareness campaign** designed to meet the individual needs of our rural communities, businesses, and schools, including town-specific resources, messaging suggestions and templates about food recovery, feeding food scraps to chickens, and composting.
- **Virtual and onsite, hands-on technical assistance** for the management of food scrap collection and diversion to sixteen (16) participant communities and their residents, businesses, and schools for implementing and/or expanding, and promoting the recovery and diversion of food scraps from landfill disposal.
- **A webinar presenting lessons learned and** models developed through the project for rural, small-town, and Tribal communities throughout the Northeast and the nation.

Project purpose & fulfillment of RUS purposes: The purpose of this project is to increase implementation of best management practices for food scraps diversion in rural communities. This will be achieved through technical assistance, training and educational resources specific to the needs of the participant communities. Decreasing solid waste through increased diversion will result, along with corresponding avoided water and

¹ The State of Vermont implemented a phased-in implementation of banning food scraps/organics, and other designated items - <https://dec.vermont.gov/content/materials-banned-disposal>.

² See the Project Timeline attachment for how the project will flow, project deliverables, and outputs for successful project completion.

air pollution from removing food scraps and other organic wastes (including soiled paper) from disposal. Participant communities will benefit from increased food scrap diversion, greater efficiencies in food scraps collection at town transfer stations, and improved food scrap recovery and composting diversion communication throughout the District and within their rural communities.

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Each year, between 30-40% of food produced in the U.S. is wasted. The USDA and the US EPA established a goal to reduce food scraps by 50% by 2030.³ An estimated 52 million tons of food is annually sent to landfills. Food scraps in the U.S. consumes 21% of landfill volume.⁴ In rural communities, fiscal constraints have limited organics management efforts.⁵ Low population densities impact efficiencies in collection, transportation, and material volumes, significantly increasing costs. While many residents in rural and small towns home compost yard trimmings, concerns about odors and wildlife often prevent home composting of food scraps.

Food scraps represents a missed opportunity to mitigate environmental impacts and resource use, as well as to improve food security in rural communities. A National Resources Defense Council study found that producing food in the United States uses 10% of the total U.S. energy budget and consumes as much as 80% of its freshwater. Yet, 40% of the food purchased goes uneaten.⁶ An estimated 13% of carbon pollution emissions in the U.S. is related to the growing, manufacturing, transporting, and disposal of food.⁷ Meanwhile, watersheds are impacted by excessive nitrogen and phosphorus levels due to nutrient pollution caused by excess fertilizer run-off from farms and other nonpoint sources.⁸ Increasing the focus on food scraps reduction, recovery and diversion through the project will result in considerable environmental and public health benefits in District communities and beyond.

Almost half of Vermonter's trash is recyclable or compostable material like soiled, non-recyclable paper/cardboard, and food scraps.⁹ Landfilling these valuable natural resources not only wastes them, but also releases many more greenhouse gas emissions than food scraps reduction, recovery, and composting. In response to stagnant diversion rates that had hovered around 30-36% for nearly two decades, Vermont made waste reduction, recovery, and diversion a priority to reduce landfill disposal through adoption of the Universal Recycling law (Act 148) in 2012. The law emphasizes the need to provide social, economic, and environmental benefits by decreasing the volume of materials landfilled, and also moving toward using food scraps as a resource to manufacture compost and applying compost as a soil amendment on agricultural lands. The law established phased-in landfill bans on listed recyclables, leaf and yard debris, clean wood, and food scraps (with a full ban starting July 1, 2020).

In WSWMD towns, opportunities, promotion, and resulting waste diversion rates vary widely—current rates range from 27% to 64%. Recycling is fostered throughout District towns, businesses, and schools. However, diverting food scraps presents many more barriers—from confusion over options available for food scrap recovery and composting, to wildlife, odor, cost, and other issues.

This project would avail member towns and communities of materials and expertise to make specific improvements or initiatives that would not otherwise be accessible. This in turn can reduce costs, improve diversion rates, and generate more sustainable programs. Further, having the WSWMD oversee the project implementation allows for visioning, coordination, and implementation of regional solutions that single communities would not be able to do on their own. Lastly, the WSWMD facility, located at the hub of the

³ <https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/faqs.htm>

⁴ <http://www.refed.com/?sort=economic-value-per-ton>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ www.nrdc.org/food/files/wasted-food-ip.pdf

⁷ <http://www.epa.gov/earthday/actonclimate/>

⁸ http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/cwa/305b/upload/2009_01_22_305b_2004report_2004_305Breport.pdf.

⁹ <https://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/solid/universal-recycling>

county, will allow the District to promote opportunities for increased diversion through use of the facility’s many services—for example, support of local, small private haulers for curbside food scrap collection to be composted at the facility and use of its food scrap drop-off for residents, small businesses, and special events.

Like WSWMD member communities, most rural communities simply do not have the funding, staffing, or expertise to fully undertake the training and skills to implement the multi-faceted programing and education to improve food scrap management, and comply with Vermont’s food scraps disposal ban. The project will benefit rural communities around the region and nation by providing a model for the sustainable implementation of food scraps diversion in rural communities.

Project Communities: This project will work with sixteen (16) rural, lower-income communities in Vermont, with populations ranging from 216 to 3,178 (see Table 1). All but two of the communities are under 2,500 in population and all communities but one have median household incomes less than 80% of the State non-metropolitan median household income.¹⁰ Each community has expressed their commitment to the project and their interest in learning how to better promote and manage diversion efforts. See attached letters of support.

Table 1. WSWMD Member Towns included in this Project with Population and Median Household Income		
	Population	MHI
Brookline	529	\$39,125
Dover	1,410	\$43,824
Dummerston	1,915	\$46,121
Guilford	2,121	\$57,674
Halifax	782	\$36,458
Jamaica	1,035	\$34,917
Marlboro	978	\$41,429
Newfane	1,726	\$45,735
Putney	2,702	\$40,346
Readsboro	763	\$35,000
Stratton	216	\$39,688
Townshend	1,149	\$39,286
Vernon	2,206	\$49,688
Wardsboro	900	\$35,000
Westminster	3,178	\$44,263
Wilmington	1,876	\$37,396

¹⁰ Vermont’s non-metropolitan median household income is \$63,011; 80% is \$50,409; <https://www.deptofnumbers.com/income/vermont/>

3. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of this 12-month project are to avoid water and air pollution/greenhouse gas production by decreasing generation and improving management of solid waste in 16 rural WSWMD member towns and town businesses, schools, and residents through education, training, and assistance in implementation of best management practices for food scraps reduction, recovery, and diversion.

Goal: Increase awareness, working knowledge, and skills of towns, businesses, schools, and residents about food scrap diversion options and management.

Objective 1: Develop and implement a multimedia food scrap awareness campaign and training resources designed to meet the needs of towns, transfer station attendants, businesses, schools, and residents. We will develop multimedia educational resources about food recovery, feeding food scraps to chickens, and composting, designed to foster best management practices for planning, implementing, and promoting enhanced and more cost-effective rural food scraps diversion. These model tools will be developed in accordance with responses from the project assessment, including awareness of diversion options in each community, the status of food scrap diversion, and barriers and issues facing rural communities for increasing waste diversion. Resources will provide concise and consistent messaging targeted for each stakeholder.

Goal: Give stakeholders the tools needed to run their sites or facilities in a manner that reduces waste generation, increases food scraps diversion, protects natural resources, and is cost-effective.

Objective 2: [revised] This goal will be met through tasks in Objective 1 and Objective 3.

Goal: Increase the successfulness and sustainability of local government and community projects to improve food scrap collection and diversion.

Objective 3: Provide virtual and onsite hands-on technical assistance, research, and support for the management of food scrap collection and diversion to sixteen (16) participant communities for implementing and/or expanding, and promoting the recovery and diversion of food scraps from landfill disposal. The technical assistance will be designed to address the specific needs of each stakeholder—towns, residents, businesses, and schools. Technical assistance will include collection and hauling options, composting options, compost use, and troubleshooting.

Goal: Share resources and lessons learned during this project with rural and small town communities outside of the project region.

Objective 4: Develop and present a national capacity building webinar. To promote project replication and greater sustainability for the project, we will develop and deliver a national webinar presenting the project multimedia resources and training tools, lessons learned, and success stories. The webinar will frame the issues about rural needs and program options. The target audience will be rural and small town and tribal officials, citizen advocates, transfer station managers, haulers, and other stakeholders.

Objective 5: Promote project replication. User-friendly and model resources and tools for improving rural, small community reuse and sustainable diversion will result from this project. Through involvement of District towns, the multimedia tools and training resources, and technical assistance models will serve to enhance the sustainability of the town diversion efforts. In addition, the posting of education resources, training and webinar presentations will present a continuing opportunity to showcase our project success and lessons learned for rural Vermont, Northeast, national, and Tribal communities.

4. PROJECT NARRATIVE

By delivering educational resources, trainings and technical assistance support, WSWMD will provide sixteen (16) rural communities in Vermont with the capacity needed to develop, implement, and/or enhance programs promoting food recovery and food scrap diversion, proper management of food scrap collection and composting, resulting in District-wide waste reduction and increased diversion. More effective messaging, planning, and programming will help conserve Vermont's only landfill, prevent water and air pollution through increased diversion of food scraps and other organic materials to composting and use of regionally produced compost for erosion and other environmental benefits. Through training material development, training sessions, and technical assistance, as well as a project webinar, and web posting of resources, the project will present a model for other rural, small and tribal communities in Vermont, the Northeast, and around the nation.

Action through Training and Technical Assistance:

Composting and compost use assessment – We will work with District Board of Supervisors members to develop an assessment designed to provide the District and its member towns with updated information on:

- food scrap haulers servicing the towns;
- the status of food scrap diversion in District towns, as well as targeted businesses and schools;
- barriers and issues faced through current food scrap diversion efforts;
- promotional outreach and educational resources used by towns, businesses, and schools to promote food scrap reduction and diversion; and,
- needs of towns, businesses, and schools to improve diversion efforts.

Outreach resources – We will use the compost assessment and research, to inform development, promotion, and distribution of regional and town-specific resources about food scrap recovery and diversion, using a range of multimedia tools. Written training resources will be designed for posting at transfer stations and recycling centers, as well as on town and hauler websites, use in social media, and as posters and handouts, for residents, businesses, and schools; training videos will be shared via District and town websites, social media, and be distributed to individual businesses and schools.

Project promotion and capacity building – The training resources will be widely disseminated through press releases and announcements throughout the District and state; national distribution will be done through press release distribution to media outlets and listservs, as well as through a webinar presenting project lessons learned and waste reduction models for rural and small-town communities throughout the Northeast and the nation.

Virtual and onsite, hands-on technical assistance to sixteen (16) participant communities for implementing and/or expanding, and promoting the recovery and diversion of food scraps from landfill disposal. Visits and virtual resources will review food scrap diversion options, including District and town food scrap drop-off locations, private hauler options, issues and troubleshooting; informative and simple messaging to promote participation and reduce confusion; food recovery; and, compost use.

Applicant Experience

WSWMD will provide at least 75 percent of the project staffing, and provide full project oversight, fiscal management, administration and support services, and deliver all aspects of the proposal in accordance with the provisions of 7 CFR Part 1775. An outside consultant (former District employee) will assist with up to 25 percent of the grant funded project work (budgeted at 21% of personnel, see Box A-1 on the attached budget). Over the past twenty years, WSWMD has earned a reputation as a leader in innovative rural solid waste management projects. WSWMD's staff is expert at working with rural communities to plan and

implement projects, research and develop training tools and publications, and provide training and technical assistance. It also maintains a website and social media presence. Grants implemented successfully by WSWMD, include: *USDA Grant 2012-13 - Connecticut River Valley Solid Waste Management Project*; *Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation Organics Infrastructure Grant*; *VT ANR School Grant*; *VT ANR Business Outreach for Recycling and Organics Diversion Grant*; *VT ANR Composting Supplies Grant*; and, *USDA Grant 2020-21 - Blueprint for Regional Training and Assistance for Increasing Waste Diversion in Rural Communities*. The lead staff person for this project has successfully implemented several USDA- and EPA-funded waste management and training projects through his work with solid waste districts in Vermont.

Financial Information

WSWMD is a municipal government agency and has an independent financial audit performed each year. The fiscal year 2020 year-end *Financial Statements and Independent Auditor's Reports* is attached which verifies the strong financial position of WSWMD. WSWMD uses an accrual basis for its financial management.

We are requesting \$68,000. The full project cost will be \$78,392, representing a 13% match from WSWMD. WSWMD's match will be provided from its operating budget; which is primarily funded by Member Town Assessments, District service charges, tip fees, compost sales, and revenue from a 25-acre solar array on our closed landfill. Some matching will also be provided by town officials in the target towns.

5. WORK PLAN

Service Delivery & Project Personnel: Existing WSWMD staff will implement the project, provide oversight, fiscal management, administration, web services, and support services, along with consulting support from a part-time staff person (not more than 25% of project grant funding). District member town project partners and will be consulted and provide in-kind support time for developing project educational resources, training, and technical assistance.

- John Fay, Programs Manager, will be the project lead, responsible for implementation of all substantive aspects of the project including communication with project partners, technical assistance, trainings, research and development of town-specific educational materials.
- Robert Spencer, Executive Director, will provide project oversight and coordinate the overall project implementation and fiscal management.
- Vicki Hayes, Office Manager/Bookkeeper, will support grant administrative and financial management. And Administrative Assistant, Anita Grant, will provide support.
- Athena Lee Bradley, former District full-time staff and organics management specialist, will provide part-time consulting services.

Objectives and Tasks

Objective 1: Multimedia food scrap awareness campaign and training resources – We will develop targeted outreach and training tools designed to meet the needs of our towns, businesses, schools, and residents. Promotion and resources will include information about food scrap diversion options, food recovery, feeding food scraps to chickens, food scrap collection options and systems, onsite composting, and compost use. Resources will include information for transfer station attendants, town officials, WSWMD Board of Supervisors, residents, schools, and businesses. Resources will be designed for posting at transfer stations, recycling centers, schools, businesses, and hauler websites; use in social media; and dissemination as posters and handouts for worksites, schools, and residents. Website templates promoting specific town food scrap diversion options will also be developed.

Task 1A. Establish Project Advisory Teams to assist in determining needs and goals for the project. WSWMD will work with its Board of Supervisors (comprised of representatives from each participant community), town officials, transfer/recycling station employees, town conservation or environmental committees, local haulers, business representatives, and school officials to establish ongoing communications with project participants and ensure that the project is as successful as possible. There will be at least two conference calls and/or in-person meetings with project partners, and regular email and telephone communication throughout the project with town, business, and school representatives. The Project Advisory Teams (PATs) will:

- Provide input into the development and dissemination of the Food Scrap Composting Assessment (Task 1B), as well as helping to ensure completion and accuracy of the assessment on behalf of their towns, businesses, and schools.
- Discuss town-specific needs and goals for educational, promotional, and training resources. (1C)
- Provide input into goals and agendas for the training sessions and webinar. (Objective 2 & 4)
- Work with WSWMD to actively promote town transfer station attendant, resident, business, and school viewing of remote/virtual resources and training participation.
- Assist in logistics development for onsite trainings. (Objective 2)
- Participate in onsite technical assistance and ensuring participation of appropriate town employees and citizen volunteers, schools, and businesses. (Objective 3)
- Promote the availability of the project resources, posting project resources on town websites, and assisting in distribution of town-specific resources. (Objective 5)
- Participate in the project evaluation. (Objective 5)

Outcomes/Measures:

- Established of Project Advisory Teams (16)
- Hold at least one conference call with each Team, and supplemental calls, emails, and onsite meetings during technical site visits; meeting notes (16+)

Task 1B: District composting and compost use assessment. With assistance of the PATs, we will develop an assessment that will serve to inform the project resources and training tools by providing updated information on:

- a) food scrap haulers servicing the towns;
- b) the status of food scrap diversion in District towns, targeted businesses and schools;
- c) barriers and issues faced through current food scrap diversion efforts;
- d) existing promotional outreach and educational resources used by towns, businesses, and schools to promote food scrap reduction and diversion; and,
- e) needs of towns, businesses, and schools to improve diversion efforts.

Outcomes/Measures:

- Completed and disseminated the assessment to stakeholders in the 16 participant towns. (Dissemination will occur through Survey Monkey and written/or phone assessments where necessary with a goal of receiving a minimum of 40 responses).
- Compilation of assessment responses and analysis to inform project resource and training development.

Task 1C: Development of a multimedia food scrap awareness campaign and training resources— Utilizing input from the PATs (Task 1A), assessment results (Task 1B), and research into available existing resources from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Composting Association of Vermont, other Solid Waste Districts, and other rural communities, we will identify and provide best management practices on planning, implementing, and promoting rural food recovery options and food scraps diversion. Gathering and applying best management practices, resources, and tools specific to the unique challenges of rural communities is essential to successfully promoting and expanding food recovery and

food scrap diversion. This task focuses on compiling Districtwide assessment results, existing practices, researching effective tactics, and engaging project participants in exploring ways to improve food scrap diversion practices.

As with other Solid Waste Management Entities in Vermont, WSWMD is required by state law (Act 148) to adopt a State-approved Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP). The SWIP must contain action steps for public education and outreach regarding waste diversion (including food scrap diversion), promotion and proper collection of designated Extended Producer Responsibility items, household hazardous waste, tires, and other hard-to-recycle items. The District also assists its member towns in complying with the SWIP mandate by providing technical assistance and support to schools and businesses.

Through the project, WSWMD proposes to go beyond the SWIP requirements to provide additional resources, training, and technical assistance. Working with Project Advisory Teams and using assessment results, resources for project towns will be compiled to include:

- a) consistent, regional food scraps diversion messaging tips, with clear and town-specific options for food scraps reduction and local food recovery options;
- b) food scrap drop-off availability at the District's Transfer Station; BMPs for operating cost-effective town food scraps collection and tools to increase participation;
- c) promotion of private haulers providing curbside collection of food scraps;
- d) concise messaging on what's acceptable in specific diversion programs (at drop-offs, curbside collection, and, onsite at home, businesses, and schools);
- e) employee and school staff/student training resources;
- f) BMPs for safe, onsite composting at homes, schools, and businesses; and,
- g) an examination of local markets for compost.

Educational resources will also include messaging tips on the importance of food scrap diversion and benefits for our communities and the environment and Vermont's food scraps disposal ban.

Our multimedia resources will include downloadable and printable tip sheets, signage, posters, and training briefs for towns, transfer stations, businesses, and schools. Training videos on selected topics will also be developed. Educational/training resources will be posted on the WSWMD website. Announcements about the availability of the resources will be promoted through its webpages, blog and Facebook page; announcements will be sent to at least four listservs¹¹ and press releases sent to local, regional, and national news media. Ultimately, the primary goal is for the project towns and haulers to post the documents on their own websites or to link to them on the District website and promote the resources through their social media outlets. Businesses and schools will be asked to place signage at collection locations and post or disseminate other training resources as appropriate.

The project budget includes funding to provide printed copies of the documents to the participant towns, sample signage/posters for businesses, and signage/posters and stickers for schools. Towns and transfer station employees will be encouraged to distribute the handouts and post posters at transfer stations, town halls, libraries, and other locally appropriate locations. As part of its technical assistance component for the project, District staff will also assist in dissemination of handouts and posters. All training materials will be updated for project sustainability, as necessary, to ensure messaging consistency after to conclusion of the project. In addition, towns and regional solid waste management entities will be familiarized with and encouraged to use existing WSWMD school, special event, and business waste diversion resources, Vermont-specific resources, EPA's Food Too Good to Waste Toolkit, USDA/EPA Food Recovery Challenge resources, and other Food Recovery Hierarchy resources.

¹¹ Vermont Recycling Coordinators Listserv, Connecticut Recyclers, Massachusetts Recyclers, Maine Resource Recycling Association, and personal email contacts.

Outcomes/Measures:

- Analysis of assessment result compilation and research on rural food scrap best management practices to inform resource topics and format.
- Town-specific training and assistance resources for town use (minimum 2 document templates, with modifications for each town diversion option specifics).
- To include: District Transfer options, local curbside hauler services, town drop-off program (if available), and, onsite composting.
- Town-specific educational handouts for residents developed (minimum of 3 documents).
- Training/educational handouts for businesses developed (minimum of 2 training document templates that can be modified to suit individual programs; 2 posters; 1 sign).
- Training/educational handouts for schools developed (minimum of 2 training document templates that can be modified to suit individual programs; 2 posters; 1 sign; 1 sticker).
- Training videos on specified topics (a minimum of five, 5-to-15-minute videos to be created; see Task 2A below for potential topics).
- Completed resources will be downloadable and posted on WSWMD website and social media; videos posted on the District's YouTube Channel.
- Resources will be promoted via the District's website, Facebook, and other media available.
- Resources will be promoted via direct outreach to at least forty-two (42) businesses, four (4) schools, and sixteen (16) of the member town offices.
- Announcement about availability of documents distributed to at least four Vermont, regional, and national, regional, and state-specific listservs, and press releases to local, state, and national press outlets (minimum of 4 announcements).
- Project towns to post the documents on their own websites and social media or to link to them on the District website (up to 16 towns); promotion to business associations and school districts.

Objective 2. Trainings – [This objective is removed for the final grant application. In order to meet the proposed lower grant funding, the tasks in this objective have been reduced in scope and folded in with other objectives in the proposal.]

Revisions to Objective 2:

- ***Former Task 2A: Remote training via downloadable written resources and videos***
This task was to do remote training and promotion of the materials generated in Objective 1. This is now included as a smaller scope, in the budget and outcomes/measures of Objective 1.
- ***Former Task 2B: Small group training sessions***
This task was to provide in-person workshops for transfer station attendants as well as residents, creating more opportunities to reach the same goals of the outreach campaign (Objective 1) and the technical assistance (Objective 3). We will now provide this training during the technical assistance tasks.
- ***Former Task 3B: Develop and use compost demonstration sites***
This task was to create compost demonstration sites like the one at our facility in two other towns across the District. We propose instead to continue use of the facility demonstration area as well as our mobile compost workshop materials. The direct costs that were proposed for this task will now be used instead on video production in Objective 1.

Objective 3: Technical assistance resulting in increased food scraps diversion – We will provide virtual and onsite, hands-on technical assistance to sixteen (16) participant communities for implementing and/or expanding, and promoting the recovery and diversion of food scraps from landfill disposal. The technical assistance will be designed to address the specific needs of each stakeholder—towns, residents, businesses, and schools. Onsite technical assistance will be provided in conjunction with onsite trainings. Technical assistance will include collection and hauling options/BMPs, food scrap diversion options, compost use, and more.

Technical assistance will be guided by the project assessment, discussions with the PATs, and by engaging with area businesses and schools to address existing practices, barriers, and issues. Assistance provided will be based upon the approach best suited to meet their needs. District staff will be available for ongoing support to project participants via email and phone. Seven of the 16 District member project towns do not have transfer stations or curbside collection; two towns have only limited recycling centers. Technical assistance for transfer station attendants and town officials will occur in the nine towns with transfer stations. Hands-on, onsite technical assistance will also be provided to businesses, schools, and residents.

Technical assistance in project town transfer stations will focus on expanding and enhancing food scrap diversion to better serve the public, providing effective promotion and outreach to inform residents, and clear and concise messaging to reduce confusion on available food scrap diversion options. Program specific information, including “what’s acceptable and what’s not” will be included. Technical assistance guidance will be discussed with the Project Advisory Teams in order to determine the best way to promote the project to meet town specific diversion efforts and the needs of their residents, and the most suitable to ensure long-term sustainability of the Town diversion efforts.

Task 3A: Onsite technical assistance at transfer stations. WSWMD will conduct a minimum of two, on-site technical assistance visits in the nine towns with a transfer station. Additional remote assistance, and onsite as technical assistance will be provided to all 16 member towns through working with town officials, District Solid Waste Advisory Board Members, citizen advisory members/activists, and haulers, to advise on existing town diversion efforts, improving food scrap diversion messaging and training resource promotion, BMPs for food scraps diversion, food recovery options, and other town needs.

The technical assistance site visits will provide a better context for the needs of each town and their waste diversion efforts. This will also help to inform the adoption of best management practices within the community. Technical assistance will also be provided to assist residents in advancing their “food scraps diversion knowledge” as well as to benefit haulers providing services in District towns. Regional diversion opportunities through the District Transfer Station, identifying stakeholders and key players, such as farmers and community groups interested in food scrap diversion; providing onsite trainings for residents in food scraps diversion and backyard composting will be conducted.

Task 3B: Onsite technical assistance for communities. Similarly, technical assistance for businesses and schools will include best management practices for their specific diversion efforts—whether it is hauling provided by a local hauler, diversion to area farms, composting onsite, or other options.

Assistance will include:

- a) starting food scrap diversion following the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing health and safety concerns;
- b) collection techniques to overcome barriers, including odors, wildlife intrusion;
- c) tips for gaining staff and customer training and participation;
- d) finding an appropriate hauler or drop-off opportunity; and,
- e) addressing specific issues of concern for food scraps generating businesses in rural/small town tourist areas (temporary occupancy, second home owners, out-of-state visitors not familiar with food scrap separation for composting).

Sustainability will also be nurtured through the District's compilation of town-specific resources and multimedia tools. An evaluation by each participant community will be conducted near the end of the project to assess the success of the project, including program implementation and status, as well as additional needs/goals for the towns. Once the messaging resources and tools are developed and promoted and training/technical assistance provided to District communities, sustainability can be incorporated into ongoing District staff duties.

Outcomes/Measures:

- Ongoing support via email and phone, with records kept of frequency, entity seeking assistance, and type of assistance requested/provided.
- Site visits/technical assistance (2 TA visits at 9 towns with transfer stations; 18 TA visits)
- Visit notes, assistance provided and requested and additional recommendations for sustainability for each community (16) written and provided.
- Provided technical assistance for businesses and schools (32 business site visits/10 school site visits).

Objective 4: National capacity building webinar – To promote project replication and greater sustainability for the project, we will develop and deliver a national webinar presenting the multimedia resources and training tools, lessons learned, and success stories. The target audience will be rural and small town and tribal officials, citizen advocates, transfer station managers, haulers, and other stakeholders.

Task 4: Develop and deliver a national webinar. The webinar will frame the issues about rural food scraps diversion needs and program options. presenting our food recovery and waste diversion models, educational/training resources developed, training and technical assistance provided. As interest in food scraps diversion grows around the country, this webinar will help to provide insight into how alternatives can be pursued to increase cost-effective food scraps diversion in small, rural and Tribal communities. Our goal will be to have at least 25 rural, small and/or tribal communities participate in the webinar. The webinar will be approximately an hour and a half long and will be recorded. The recordings and PowerPoint presentations will be posted on the WSWMD website.

WSWMD will create and present a PowerPoint presentation, as well as facilitate the webinar. Guest speakers, from project towns, will be invited to participate. The presentations will serve to frame the issues about rural food scraps diversion needs and program options, food scraps diversion messaging, opportunities for regional diversion options, collaboration, planning strategies, costs and benefits. The webinar will be free and promoted nationally to rural, small, and tribal communities.

Post-webinar surveys will be conducted of webinar participants. The survey will assess the success of the webinars in providing participants with the tools they need to strategize and implement waste diversion and proper waste management practices. A press release and announcement will be written and distributed to promote the webinar through press, listservs, social media, and through individual emails.

Outcomes/Measures:

- PowerPoint presentation; posted on WSWMD website (1)
- Webinar recording; posted on WSWMD website (1)
- Written and distributed press releases & announcements; promotion through listservs (6)
- Completed webinar
- Created post-webinar survey instruments & distributed participants
- Data collected on webinar registrations & participation
- Compiled and analyzed survey results and developed report

Objective 5: Promote project replication – User-friendly and model multimedia resources and tools for improving rural, small community food recovery and food scraps diversion will result from this project. Through involvement of all District towns, except one, the project resources, training material, and technical assistance models will serve to enhance the sustainability of the town diversion efforts. In addition, the posting of education resources, training and webinar presentations will present a continuing opportunity for state, Northeast, and national models for rural communities.

Task 5A: Training. Project training resources will be posted on the WSWMD and promoted to project participants. The training sessions will be open to all District member communities, and others who may wish to attend.

Task 5B: Webinar. The webinar will serve to promote the availability of project resources which will be easily transferable for use by other rural and tribal communities outside of the District. The webinar recording and presentation will be posted on the WSWMD website; some project resources will also be posted during the webinar for download and links to additional project resources and videos will be distributed to participants. The announcement for the webinar and follow-up survey evaluation will also note the posting of resources on the District website.

Task 5C: Use of WSWMD website, social media, press releases, listserv announcements, and individual emails. Publicity will include state and national listservs, press releases, individual contacts, as well as website and social media postings. Specifically, the outreach will include:

- Announcements on state and national listservs.
- Press releases to recycling magazines, regional and local news media and newsletters.
- Newsletter articles or announcements sent recycling organizations around the country.
- State and rural assistance agencies and organizations, and Indian Tribal associations.
- Individual emails sent to the WSWMD contact lists.
- Project Advisory Team members will be asked to post and distribute project resources.

Outcomes/Measures:

- Used training sessions, technical assistance and webinar to promote project resources.
- Used WSWMD and project partner websites and social media to promote project resources.
- Wrote and distributed announcements and press releases (1 for posting of project written resources; 1 for posting of each training video; 1 for the webinar).
- PowerPoint presentation developed and promoted (1 for the webinar).

Objective 6: Provide grant administration and contract compliance – WSWMD will provide project administration, oversight, and fiscal management to ensure that the scope of work, including outcomes and federal contract and reporting requirements, are successfully performed. This will include quarterly reports, financial forms, a final report, and financial oversight and administration.

Task 6A: Quarterly reports.

WSWMD will prepare and submit quarterly reports that document project activities, outcomes, and progress and also submit two required financial reports/forms each quarter.

Outcome/Measure:

- Wrote and submitted quarterly reports (3).
- Submitted quarterly financial forms (3).

Task 6B: Final report.

A final report will be written that summarizes the efforts made during this project, reports on the impact of the project in each community, includes hyperlinks to all posted resources, and reports on the results of the evaluations. A final financial report will also be submitted.

Outcome/Measure:

- Wrote and submitted final report.
- Submitted final financial report.

Task 6C: Project oversight and fiscal management.

WSWMD will ensure that the project goals, objectives, and tasks are completed in a timely and effective manner, and that the project stays within budget. It will complete and submit quarterly financial forms and the final financial form.

Outcomes/Measures:

- Completed all tasks.
- Tracked expenditures/stayed within budget.
- Completed/submitted quarterly/final financial forms.