

“From Food Waste to Opportunity” Program

Equity Consultant

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS



The Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC) is a statewide network established in 2011 with a mission to promote a more equitable, accessible, economically vibrant and environmentally sustainable food system. We cultivate partnerships, develop and implement high-impact projects, and advocate for good food policy. We center equity in our work, which touches all parts of the food chain – production, harvesting, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management. We operate with a volunteer board, a professional staff, and hundreds of members and partners from across the Ocean State. More information about RIFPC can be found at www.rifoodcouncil.org.

The Rhode Island Food Policy Council invites proposals for **Equity Consulting** for the **“From Food Waste to Opportunity: A Path toward Climate, Environmental, & Economic Justice in Rhode Island”** project. The successful applicant(s) will be experienced in building relationships with marginalized communities and facilitating their engagement in complex, collaborative, community-based, multi-year projects. Equity consultants who have provided services to climate justice and/or food systems focused projects are preferred.

This project represents a generational investment in food waste reduction infrastructure, organizational capacity, environmental justice, and community building in Rhode Island. As much as 40% of unused food is sent to landfills, and about 8% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are attributed to food waste. In Rhode Island (RI), vegetative food waste is the top material in the state’s waste stream. At the same time, RI’s Central Landfill in Johnston is anticipated to be full by 2043; expansion or construction of a new landfill is problematic and unlikely. Therefore, significant solid waste reduction through food waste diversion is crucial to extend the landfill’s life and avoid more problematic options, like sending waste out of state, which would add to GHG emissions and impact additional vulnerable communities.

This project serves a community comprising two disadvantaged zones in the state of Rhode Island. Each is composed of contiguous census tracts on the EPA’s Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. Zone A spans 64 qualifying census tracts and includes overburdened and underserved communities in Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls. Zone B covers 14 census tracts within the cities of Newport and Middletown, both on Aquidneck Island. Although Zones A and B are disadvantaged, they also have unique strengths. Each community has a network of residents, schools, businesses, nonprofits, and institutions that are eager to help implement meaningful strategies to reduce wasted food and leverage the excess for opportunity. This blend of expertise, experience, need, and drive make these communities ideal sites for this project.

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Over the course of this project, the Rhode Island Food Policy Council will lead 9 municipal and nonprofit partners and additional subcontractors in achieving measurable outputs and outcomes (short, medium, and long term) in the areas of workforce development, community leadership development, creation of high-quality jobs, increased community engagement in environmental- and climate-related issues, increased food waste composting and excess food donation rates and resulting decreases in methane output. The project will also help establish stronger, more climate resilient local farming, landscaping, and gardening practices and provide equitable access to EPA resources for low-income communities.

Goals of the EPA **From Food Waste to Opportunity** project include:

- identification and training of more than 200 community members to lead resident and business engagement, provide behavior change education, and participate in communal food recovery efforts,
- nearly 350 community businesses, schools, and other organizations engaged in food waste reduction efforts,
- over 20,000 residents engaged and more than 15,000 composting, and
- nearly 40 new jobs created/maintained and another 30 jobs created to construct nearly 40 new composting facilities and food waste collection sites.

The above activities will lead to an estimated 2,477 tons surplus food recovered and donated, 8,708 tons food scraps composted (a total of 11,185 tons total of food waste diverted the landfill), 26 schools and community gardens receiving free finished compost, and 4,354 tons of finished compost produced. The climate impacts of this work are estimated at 15,265 Metric Tons of CO₂ Equivalent reduced, 12,896.5g particulate matter reduced, and 569 million gallons water conserved.

Competitive applicants will be grounded in professional integrity, strong partnerships, continuous learning, and meaningful results. Expertise in supporting community members in aspects of collaborative program development, implementation, and evaluation are a must, as is consistent, open communication with project leaders and partners. They will be well-versed in avoiding pitfalls of collaborative work including those commonly presented by misaligned priorities, poor communication, unequal power dynamics, and a lack of accountability.

The successful applicant(s) will work with staff to ensure they are consistently using an equity lens in all program activities. This project will require support for design and implementation of a wide range of activities including community advisory boards (Opportunity Rising Boards, or ORBS), community-based educational programs, community workshops and structured meetings, and capacity-building engagements. The contractor(s) will also support

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RIFPC in its role as a lead organizer for the annual RI Compost Conference, in order to gain feedback and direct conversations on driving equity with experts in the field.

The process will engage a wide range of stakeholders with diverse life experiences and learning styles from Federal agency staff to community-based organization leaders to residents of 'environmental justice' communities. Thoughtful, understanding support for equitable involvement of all staff, core project partners, stipended community members, volunteers, and residents will be expected. A successful scope of work will demonstrate how they will work with these stakeholders, programs and opportunities as well as meet the key responsibilities listed below.

The consultant(s) will work closely with the staff team and subawardees, and subcontractors under the supervision of the Food, Climate, Environment Program Director with dotted line relationship with the Executive Director.

Key Responsibilities

- Core Team Engagement: Assist in the design and when beneficial, facilitation of monthly Core Team meetings, providing expertise and guidance on equity-related matters
- Equity Integration: Work closely with the Core Team, RIFPC staff, subawardees, and other consultants to integrate equity considerations into all aspects of the project's design and implementation
- Community Collaboration & Trust Building: Collaborate with community organizations (including ethnic-based community organizations) and schools in the target areas to build trust and foster inclusive participation. Build and maintain relationships with marginalized communities within RI's food system
- Interest-Holder Engagement: Work to ensure equitable engagement and thought partnership of partners from historically and currently oppressed communities
- Capacity Building: Build capacity within the project team to address equity challenges and integrate equitable practices into all aspects of the project. Provide training and resources to enhance the team's understanding and application of equity principles
- Implementation Guidance: Provide expert guidance on policy and practice structures needed to promote equity within all project activities, ensuring that all activities and outcomes align with the project's equity goals

Qualifications

- Demonstrated experience in equity, diversity, and inclusion work, particularly within the food systems, education, or community engagement sectors

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- Proven ability to build and maintain relationships with diverse communities, particularly those that have been historically and currently oppressed
- Strong facilitation skills and the ability to lead discussions and training on equity-related topics
- Excellent communication skills and the ability to work collaboratively with a diverse team
- Ability to manage time effectively and work independently
- Must be available for occasional (e.g., monthly) meetings in Rhode Island
- Must provide own computer/email/phone

Application Package Contents

- Cover Letter: Detailing your experience, qualifications, and interest in the position
- Proposed Scope of Work
- Resume/CV: Highlighting relevant experience and skills
- References: Contact information for at least two professional references

The maximum total budget is \$150,000 over 3 years. More than one proposal may be selected.

Applications may be submitted via email to info@rifoodcouncil.org until February 17, 2025. Please put “Equity Consultant Proposal” in the subject line.