

# “From Food Waste to Opportunity” Program Evaluator 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](http://www.rifoodcouncil.org).

The Rhode Island Food Policy Council invites proposals for an external **program evaluator** for the **“From Food Waste to Opportunity: A Path toward Climate, Environmental, & Economic Justice in Rhode Island”** project. The successful applicant will be experienced in high-quality, customized program evaluation and research and grounded in equitable evaluation practices. Evaluators who have provided services to Federal agencies and have some familiarity with Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) development are preferred.

The successful applicant will be grounded in professional integrity, strong partnerships, continuous learning, and meaningful results. Technical expertise in program evaluation, program quality, and performance measurement are a must, as is consistent, open communication with staff, including the Executive Director and the Food, Climate, and Environment Program Director and other staff members. The successful applicant will work with staff to ensure their effective input and participation in evaluation activities. This program evaluation will require design and implementation of a wide range of evaluation training and facilitation activities, including workshops, structured meeting facilitation, webinars, focus groups, and other capacity-building engagements. The process will engage a wide range of stakeholders with diverse life experiences and learning styles. User-friendly reporting rooted in practical, actionable strategies that can be interpreted clearly by audiences ranging from Federal agency staff to community members will be expected.

The **“From Food Waste to Opportunity: A Path toward Climate, Environmental, & Economic Justice in Rhode Island”** 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.

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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.

Over the course of this project, the Rhode Island Food Policy Council will lead 9 partners 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 CO<sub>2</sub> Equivalent reduced, 12,896.5g particulate matter reduced, and 569 million gallons water conserved.

The evaluator is expected to participate in training all partners in use of best practices for tracking and reporting on outputs. This will include consistent use of sign-up sheets at events and community meetings collecting data such as event location, participant name and age,

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and reason for attending. It will include information about food donated, including donating entity, amount donated, and referral information (e.g., to partners who are responsible for educating and recruiting residents, schools, businesses, etc.).

Applicants should clearly outline how they will connect key stakeholders throughout each initiative, design research-based strategies and programs, measure processes using surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups, performance, and outcomes, and improve program and organizational effectiveness. Information about how the applicant proposes to integrate best practices for equitable evaluation is expected. Applications should include a detailed description of proposed grant evaluation activities and budget by year and a table of evaluation activities by quarter, preferably in a GANTT Chart format. If the applicant has previous experience evaluating projects run by network-based food systems organizations, they should share this information.

The maximum total budget for this 3-year evaluation is \$265,000 over three years.

Applications may be submitted via email to [info@rifoodcouncil.org](mailto:info@rifoodcouncil.org) until February 17, 2025.

*NOTE: A separate RFP will be issued to develop a customized, shared “compost data management” platform and provide training for use to ensure consistent collection of key metrics at compost collection and processing sites. This will include data such as collection unit (e.g., bucket, toter), pounds collected, type of customer (e.g., residential, school, business), and pick-up location.*