

# Research and Analysis: Enforcing RI's Compost Laws

## 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 seeks a contractor to **conduct research and analysis regarding implementation of existing Rhode Island state laws related to the management of food waste**. The objective is to provide a data-based estimate of the cost of properly enforcing existing Rhode Island state laws related to the management of food waste.

### Background

The central landfill in Johnston, Rhode Island is projected to reach full capacity in 10-15 years. The quasi-public entity that operates it, Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation, told planners in 2018 to start looking for trash disposal alternatives by 2022. The trash being dumped into the landfill includes about 100,000 tons of food waste per year, making food waste one of the top materials being deposited in Rhode Island's waste stream. Unfortunately, when organic waste like food waste is deposited in a landfill and starts decomposing, it releases methane – a greenhouse gas which is much more dangerous than carbon dioxide for the climate, because it is much more efficient than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the Earth's atmosphere.

Concurrently, there is a strong and growing need for high quality compost that can improve soil fertility among RI's farmers, gardeners, home builders, and state infrastructure agencies. This small state boasts 57,000 acres of farmland and over 1,000 farms, which were estimated by the University of Rhode Island to result in \$297 million in agricultural sales (2012 estimate adjusted for inflation to 2020 dollars).

To address this issue the state legislature has passed laws such as R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-18.9-17 and R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-111-2 which aim to require large food waste generators to divert their food waste and require schools to conduct waste audits. These laws are largely unenforced due to state budget constraints. This project seeks to understand this situation as a critical step in finding pathways to remediate it.

### Activities/Outputs

A report including but not limited to the following:

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- Summaries of existing laws included in the analysis
- Analysis of the activities associated with enforcing the laws
- Estimated costs associated with the identified activities
- Identification of barriers to enforcement (e.g. the full-time employee cap at RIDEM) and potential solutions for overcoming them
- Identification and costs of complimentary programs (e.g. technical assistance programs) used/needed to support enforcement of the laws
- Identification of potential public and private funding sources
- Summary comments

The consultant will meet regularly with the RIFPC Food, Climate, and Environment Program Director. Virtual and in-person meetings with representatives from RI Department of Environmental Management, RI Department of Education, and the RI Legislature as well as with NY Department of Environmental Conservation and MA Department of Environmental Protection as well as important stakeholders like the RI School Recycling Project, Center for Ecotechnology, RI Wasted Food Solutions Action Network members and other stakeholders identified will be required. The consultant will be expected to identify key takeaways, emerging questions, and high-level recommendations for review by RIFPC in an iterative manner throughout the project term.

The maximum total budget for this research and analysis is \$10,000-12,000 over 5 months (March-July).

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