



Wasted Food
Solutions
Action Plan
for Rhode Island

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Wasted Food Solutions Action Plan for Rhode Island

Rhode Island Food Policy Council
April 2025

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Executive Summary

The Wasted Food Solutions Action Plan (WFSAP), developed by the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC), addresses critical challenges in Rhode Island's management of wasted food, proposing a sustainable framework that aligns with the state's environmental, economic, and social priorities. Rooted in the principles of the EPA Wasted Food Scale, the WFSAP emphasizes reduction, edible surplus recovery, upcycling, animal feed, local composting and anaerobic digestion as methods to mitigate the social, environmental and economic impacts of wasted food.

Background

Rhode Island faces significant challenges in wasted food management, with approximately 100,000 tons of wasted food sent to the landfill annually. This contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and exacerbates food insecurity, which affects nearly one-third of the state's population. The Central Landfill, Rhode Island's primary waste facility, is projected to reach capacity by 2046, necessitating urgent action.

The 2021 Act on Climate mandates the state to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Tackling wasted food presents an opportunity to align with this goal while addressing critical social issues such as hunger and resource efficiency.

Priority Areas for Intervention

The WFSAP outlines ten priority areas for intervention:

1. **Funding and Incentives:** Establish a "Compost Fund" through surcharges on waste tipping fees, and tax credits for edible surplus food donations. This would help finance infrastructure and education for wasted food reduction and diversion.
2. **New Models for Waste Management:** Promote innovative approaches such as pay-as-you-throw systems, food scrap collection, and adjustments to municipal waste pickup schedules.
3. **Support for Food Recovery Organizations:** Provide subsidies and infrastructure enhancements, including cold storage facilities, to streamline food recovery efforts.
4. **Seafood Waste Processing:** Invest in wastewater treatment and processing equipment to retain seafood processing operations within the state.
5. **Community Composting:** Expand municipal support for community composting sites and enhance public education on composting practices.

6. Access to Land for Composting: Identify and repurpose land for composting facilities to address infrastructure deficits.
7. Enforcement of Wasted Food Diversion Laws: Strengthen regulatory frameworks and provide technical assistance to ensure compliance with wasted food mandates.
8. School Programs: Implement wasted food reduction and diversion programs in all schools, building on the success of initiatives like the RI School Recycling Project.
9. Education on Offer vs. Serve Policies: Train school staff on federal meal guidelines to minimize wasted food and encourage share tables for uneaten, untouched food.
10. Public and Business Education: Raise awareness about wasted food reduction strategies for individuals and businesses, emphasizing cost savings and environmental benefits.

Call to Action

The WFSAP underscores the importance of collaborative efforts among government entities, private sectors, schools, and communities to achieve a resilient food system. By investing in infrastructure, enforcing regulations, and educating stakeholders, Rhode Island can reduce wasted food, lower greenhouse gas emissions, save businesses and households money, increase food and nutrition security, improve soil health, and create a sustainable framework for organics management.

The WFSAP can position Rhode Island as a leader among states in addressing wasted food, demonstrating the economic, environmental, and social benefits of a circular food system.



About the Rhode Island Food Policy Council

The Rhode Island Food Policy Council is an independent 501c3 network-based nonprofit with a mission to build a more equitable, accessible, economically vibrant, and environmentally sustainable food system in Rhode Island.

RIFPC works across the entire food system on policies, programs and research that advance food access and nutrition, support food businesses and economic development, and address the intersection between the food, climate, and environment.

For more information, please visit www.rifoodcouncil.org.

Definitions

You may see the following terms or ones like it within this report. The following is meant to define their usage:

Community Composting

Guided by the [principles of community composting](#)¹, these programs create a community-based system that collects and processes organic waste (i.e. food) to create compost. These are generally: locally based; educate and engage their communities; recover resources; return organic materials to the soil; and are scalable to the community needs.

Food and Nutrition Security/Insecurity

The ability of a citizen to access (or not be able to access) at all times enough food for an active, healthy life, including healthy, safe, affordable foods essential to optimal health and well-being.²

Food Waste

Refers to food not ultimately consumed by humans that is discarded or recycled, such as plate waste (i.e., food that has been served but not eaten), spoiled food, or peels and rinds considered inedible.

Municipal Composting/Wasted Food Programs

Any program or programs coordinated and/or operated by a municipality or municipal entity. This can include a wide variety of programs from educational to a city/town owned-and-operated composting facility. It may include a public private partnership but distinctly includes engagement from the municipality.

Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Cutting carbon emissions to a small amount of residual emissions that can be absorbed and durably stored by nature and other carbon dioxide removal measures, leaving zero in the atmosphere³

Pay As You Throw (PAYT)

Trash services that tie the amount of trash you throw out to the amount you pay. Examples include paying more for larger/more trash cans or bags.

Social Impact Bonds

¹<https://ilsr.org/composting/what-is-community-composting/#:~:text=Community%20engaged%2C%20empowered%2C%20and%20educated,it%20as%20a%20community%20resource>

²<https://www.nifa.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-security/#:~:text=Building%20on%20and%20complementing%20our,optimal%20health%20and%20well%2Dbeing>

³ <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/net-zero-coalition>

Bonds that are “contingent upon the achievement of desired social outcomes”⁴

Surplus Food

“Food surplus occurs when the supply, availability and nutritional requirements of food exceeds the demand for it and can take place at every stage of the supply chain from farms to households. Food surplus leads to either edible food and other products left unsold at supermarkets or restaurants, or piling up in farms and storages, ultimately resulting in food waste and loss.”⁵

Wasted Food

Any food that “was not used for its intended purpose.” The term can be used to refer to both excess food and food waste.⁶ We choose to primarily use this term in the WFSAP versus food waste as “it conveys that a valuable resource is being wasted, whereas “food waste” implies that the food no longer has value and needs to be managed as waste.”

Wasted Food Solutions Action Network (The Network)

A group of community members and experts organized by the RI Food Policy Council to seek solutions and then take proactive steps to increase the sustainability of the management of Rhode Island’s organic waste

Wasted Food Solutions Action Plan (WFSAP)

The networks effort to identify and address the barriers preventing a more sustainable wasted food systems in Rhode Island and the opportunities to address them

⁴<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-impact-bond.asp>

⁵<https://earth.org/what-is-food-surplus/#:~:text=Food%20surplus%20occurs%20when%20the,an%20overweight%20and%20obese%20population>

⁶<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/sustainable-management-food-basics>

Introduction

The Rhode Island Food Policy Council convened the Wasted Food Solutions Action Network (The Network) in March of 2024 to identify and help remove the barriers to a more sustainable organic waste management system in Rhode Island, and to recognize opportunities to help the state implement this system. Since every country, state, and municipality has unique challenges in tackling the massive global problem that is wasted food, this report will be informed by the experiences of global and domestic policies and programs while focusing on the specific nature of Rhode Island’s responsibility.

A sustainable organic waste management system prioritizes wasted food reduction and donation versus disposal and looks to local soil improvement options versus options that are far away or deplete resources. The EPA Wasted Food Scale and other similar science-based illustrations of the preferred method for handling such materials established these principles and guided this report.



The 2021 Act on Climate in Rhode Island compels the state to move towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.⁷ The state's most recent [greenhouse gas \(GhG\) inventory](#)⁸ only attributes 1.1% of emissions to waste and 0.2% to agriculture. We believe that vastly underestimates the true impact⁹. Nationwide, wasted food in landfills is the third leading cause of methane emissions¹⁰, which is a GhG that is 20-80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide¹¹. Additionally, the impact from landfill gas has often been underreported as demonstrated by more recent studies¹².

Rhode Island sends more than 100,000¹³ tons of wasted food and compostable materials to the landfills every year. A significant portion of that would have been edible food but it either didn't meet specifications for sale, didn't have a market, wasn't economically viable, was past its expiration date, or was wasted for a myriad of other reasons. Meanwhile, the Rhode Island Life Index estimates nearly one-third of the state's population faces food insecurity,¹⁴ and the US Department of Agriculture says that safe and wholesome food that is being thrown away could feed those who face food and nutrition insecurity.¹⁵

The state is also limited with only one significant in-state waste management option—the Central Landfill, managed by Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC). The closure date is recalculated regularly, but it is currently estimated that the landfill will reach its capacity by 2046. Consequently, RIRRC keeps increasing restrictions (called a cap) on annual municipal waste allocations and raising prices. The Northeast already has the highest landfill tipping fees¹⁶ in the country, so when Rhode Island's landfill closes, waste disposal options will be limited, and prices will skyrocket.

The scale of the problem calls for an approach that takes advantage of the entire ecosystem of solutions, from micro to macro scale, centralized and decentralized, including reduction, recovery, redistribution, and recycling. The state must stop wasting valuable resources, stop creating excessive methane emissions, and start feeding more hungry people. It can do so by creating a new system that will provide jobs, create high-quality soil amendments to increase soil health, and in the long run save the state money.

While this report focuses primarily on solutions and actions to avoid wasted food and find better homes for food scraps, it is also important to understand the benefits go far beyond waste management and

⁷<https://climatechange.ri.gov/act-climate>

⁸<https://dem.ri.gov/environmental-protection-bureau/air-resources/rhode-island-greenhouse-gas-inventory>

⁹<https://rifoodcouncil.org/data-dashboard/food-and-climate>

¹⁰<https://refed.org/food-waste/climate-and-resources>

¹¹<https://www.epa.gov/gmi/importance-methane>

¹²<https://fortune.com/2024/03/30/landfill-methane-emissions-40-higher-than-reported-study>

¹³<https://www.rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2017-02/Waste%20Characterization%20Study%202015.pdf>

¹⁴<https://rilifeindex.org>

¹⁵<https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/why>

¹⁶<https://www.biocycle.net/landfill-tipping-fee-analysis/#:~:text=The%20most%20expensive%20state%20to,ranked%20last%20at%20143%2C666%20tpd>

climate mitigation. Compost can be used to increase the soil organic matter in our growing fields, making them more resilient, productive, and able to grow more food and food that is more nutritious. It helps our soils retain moisture and withstand extreme drought and rainfall events. It can be used in transportation projects to avoid erosion, prevent flooding, and mitigate the damage from stormwater runoff. Sustainable wasted food management also has been shown to create more jobs per ton than alternative options.¹⁷ The benefits are wide.

With this in mind, The Network identified 10 key priority opportunities for the state, municipalities, private funders, schools, institutions and individuals to take action, which are outlined in this report.

Plan Development Process

The Wasted Food Solutions Action Network, the engine of this proposed sustainable organic waste management plan, was established at the 2024 Annual Rhode Island Compost Conference, a gathering of more than 100 food systems stakeholders that included panels on topics ranging from municipal programs and community composting to food loss reduction and donation programs. Attendees were asked to join The Network and take part in its efforts to create a more sustainable organics waste management system. The call for input also was dispatched to the wider Rhode Island food policy community, at statewide events like the League of Cities and Towns annual conference and on social media.

The RIFPC Food, Climate, and Environment Program also convened a board of advisors to help navigate the process. They are a diverse group of professionals with expertise across the wasted food spectrum, including technical assistance programs, compost and wasted food industry stakeholders, food recovery/redistribution experts, regulators, and advocates.

Armed with the Advisory Board's input, RIFPC developed a survey for Network participants to complete. It was organized by focus areas that RIFPC and the Advisory Board identified as critical, and aimed to understand the barriers, opportunities and examples of success to establish a sustainable organics waste management system in the state. The survey was an important step to create an equitable and time-flexible opportunity for Network participants to share their opinions and expertise, as not everyone, including those with lived experience and expertise, has the flexible schedule and time to participate in the daytime meetings planned by The Network.

The areas of focus included:

- Food recovery/redistribution
- Wasted food in schools
- Community oriented/small scale composting
- Large scale wasted food diversion

¹⁷<https://ilsr.org/articles/composting-sense-tables>

- Municipal programs
- Wasted food generators
- Seafood/shellfish waste

Using the survey results as a basis for discussion, RIFPC gathered Network participants into structured focus groups to discuss the top barriers and opportunities for developing a sustainable organics waste management system. Many of the solutions proposed spanned across each of the identified focus areas, which is ideal when creating a circular and sustainable food system, as it prevents siloed solutions.

The ten opportunities identified in the report were then drawn from the top opportunities and challenges identified by the survey and discussed across the seven focus group meetings with the Network. Some of these opportunities, such as funding and incentives, were identified by multiple focus groups and are applicable across multiple areas of focus, and therefore were combined when possible to avoid duplication. Others, such as seafood-specific research and funding opportunities, were specific to only one focus area.

Acknowledgements

This report was made possible with support from 11th Hour Racing's grant program. Based in Newport, Rhode Island, 11th Hour's vision for the future includes cleaner, healthier waterways through strong local stewardship and collective action around the world. This includes championing the connection between wasted food solutions and the ocean. This report is based on critical input from many stakeholders across the state of Rhode Island. See a list of participants in Appendix I. This report was primarily written by Rhode Island Food Policy Council Food, Climate, and Environment Program Director Isaac Bearg with research support from intern Meilyn Farina. Editing support was provided by Annie Sherman.

The advisory board for this report included:

Alyson Brunelli, *RI Department of Environmental Management*

Jim Corwin, *RI School Recycling Project*

Tess Feigenbaum, *Epic Renewal*

Greg Gerritt, *Prosperity RI*

Ella Kilpatrick Kotner, *Groundwork RI/Harvest Cycle*

Fred Mattera and Shaye Rooney, *Commercial Fisheries Center*

Jayne Merner, *Earth Care Farm*

Dana Siles, *Surplus Food Recovery Expert*

State of the State (Wasted Food in Rhode Island)

Since the 2015 announcement that the Central Landfill in Johnston will reach max capacity by 2040¹⁸ (it has since been updated to 2046), Rhode Island has made substantial strides in its management of surplus and wasted food. The Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation calculated that 70,000¹⁹ tons of wasted food is sent to the Central Landfill each year. This makes organic material one of the largest components of the solid waste entering our landfill each year.

Not only does food loss contribute to hunger and food insecurity, but it also results in increased methane emissions and costs for Rhode Island's municipalities. The lack of sustainable waste management in the state warrants urgent attention to divert food from landfills and create resilient infrastructure.

Rhode Island's state legislature recognized and attempted to address wasted food with a Wasted Food Ban. R.I. Gen. Law 23-18.9-17²⁰, which was passed on January 16, 2016, states:

- Institutions such as food wholesalers and supermarkets that produce more than 104 tons/year of organic waste must ensure it is recycled in a composting or anaerobic digestion facility.
- Educational entities that produce greater than 30 tons/year of organic waste must do the same.
- These entities must send their waste to a facility no more than 15 miles away from their location.

Since its implementation, Rhode Islanders have reduced the amount of wasted food sent to the landfill. Rhode Island went from composting less than 400 tons of food in 2014 to more than 5,000 tons in 2018²¹. However, the Wasted Food Ban should be strengthened, as its exclusions exempt many entities and academic institutions from the requirements to divert their organic solids, and resources should be allocated for enforcement.

In addition to the Wasted Food Ban, Rhode Island has targeted schools as vital partners to educate the next generation of engaged citizens to reduce wasted food. For example, Governor Dan McKee launched a "Get the Foam Out" initiative in January 2024 to divert organic waste and single-use Styrofoam meal trays from the landfill. As part of the initiative, the Rhode Island

¹⁸https://planning.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur826/files/documents/LU/2015/SolidWaste2038_Approved_05142015_Final.pdf

¹⁹<https://rirc.org/reducing-reusing/buy-use-less/preventing-food-waste>

²⁰<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/title23/23-18.9/23-18.9-17.HTM>

²¹<https://www.clf.org/blog/rhode-island-is-sending-valuable-food-waste-to-a-landfill/#:~:text=This%20ban%20prohibits%20certain%20businesses,almost%204%2C000%20tons%20in%202018>

Department of Education (RIDE) will award 101 schools with a total of \$2.7 million in grants to install new washing facilities, purchase reusable service ware, award compost hauling agreements, and provide other infrastructure enhancements. Currently, Rhode Island schools use 11.5 million single-use Styrofoam trays per year, but these awards are estimated to eliminate 5 million trays and prevent 2 million pounds of wasted food per year.²²

Gov. McKee and the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) have demonstrated great interest in enhancing Rhode Island's food system, as seen by Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI²³) funding provided in 2023. The \$1.5 million in grants will help local businesses and farmers produce, transport, manufacture, and store their food; and will reinforce supply chain infrastructure to help individuals and families access locally sourced produce to decrease food insecurity impacting 29% of Rhode Island residents²⁴.

While encouraging nonprofits, businesses and community organizations to invest in food-system infrastructure, the Rhode Island government should be more supportive of composting initiatives. For example, the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) – which was established in 1974 to provide solid waste management facilities and services for municipalities, institutions, and people in the state – exclusively composts leaf and yard waste, excluding food scraps. In fact, they are contractually prohibited from diverting or composting food scraps from the landfill. While residents may purchase compost bins from RIRRC and utilize online tools and educational programs to prevent wasted food, the RIRRC program does not actively compost or otherwise divert wasted food, and wasted food does not factor into its yearly municipal reports on waste management in Rhode Island. This is a critical oversight in the state's management of wasted food and the detrimental environmental and health impacts caused by wasted food decomposing in the Central Landfill.

Overall, the state's outreach programs leave much room for future growth for diversion of organic and non-organic materials. The 2015 Rhode Island Solid Waste Characterization Study²⁵ found that 31% of Municipal and Commercial Solid waste products in the Central Landfill are compostable. Additionally, the RIRRC's 2023 Annual Report, which uses data from Rhode Island cities and towns to measure recycling and waste diversion success, highlights that only 15 of the state's 39 municipalities met or exceeded the 25% recycling rate as mandated by a 2012 state law (R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-18.9-1). Providence is the worst performing municipality, with a

²²<https://ride.ri.gov/child-nutrition/get-foam-out>

²³<https://dem.ri.gov/press-releases/gov-mckee-dem-announce-over-15m-grants-build-resilience-across-rhode-islands-food>

²⁴<https://rifooodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-RICFB-StatusReport-FINAL-digital.pdf>

²⁵<https://www.rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2017-02/Waste%20Characterization%20Study%202015.pdf>

Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF) recycling rate of 2.9% and a waste diversion rate of 8.3%.²⁶ At large, Rhode Island’s recycling rate is 29.6%, which is less than the national average of 32%.²⁷ As the state works in 2025-2026 to renew their Solid Waste Management Plan they must prioritize diverting wasted food and recyclable materials while learning lessons regarding participation and contamination from existing recycling programs.

Community-oriented organizations and educational institutions in Rhode Island also have dedicated efforts to wasted food solutions. The RI School Recycling Project (RISRP) conducts assessments on wasted food in rural, urban, and suburban schools in Rhode Island, and it implements educational programs through its initiatives such as “Get Food Smart, RI.” As a result, RISRP has increased school recycling rates from 18% in 2001 to 68% in 2007²⁸, demonstrating it is possible to implement programs to reduce, recover, and recycle wasted food in schools. Its coaching and training of student-led “green teams,” along with its Food Waste Reduction Toolkit, have proven effective in teaching children how to repurpose edible surplus and participate in food scraps composting programs, reducing wasted food proactively and efficiently.

Additionally, the RIFPC recently commissioned a [Municipal Composting Readiness Report](#) to better comprehend municipalities’ capacity for undertaking efforts to reduce wasted food²⁹. Through this report process, the RIFPC interviewed leadership from a dozen cities and towns to gain an understanding of their current goals and programs, their perceived barriers to implementing composting programs, and to identify the communities most ready to move forward. As part of the report, RIFPC concluded that municipalities are understaffed and need models to demonstrate their options. They also need educational support, template programs, and technical assistance to prioritize these wasted food goals.

Within higher education institutions, the University of Rhode Island (URI), Rhode Island College, Brown University, Johnson & Wales University and Bryant University are leaders in wasted food reduction initiatives. For example, Brown University’s Office of Sustainability and Resiliency is committed to diverting 50% of the University’s waste by 2030 through edible surplus donations, education, and composting; and it has diverted more than 600 tons of wasted food from landfills through back-of-house composting.³⁰ Additionally URI has partnered with The

²⁶<https://rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2023%20Municipal%20Summary%20Detailed%20with%20Charts%2020240401.pdf>

²⁷<https://www.rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2023%20Municipal%20Summary%20Detailed%20with%20Charts%2020240401.pdf>

²⁸<https://rirecyclingclub.org/about>

²⁹https://rifoodcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Rhode-Island-Municipal-Composting-Readiness-Report-RI-Food-Policy-Council.pdf?fbclid=IwY2xjawGHPdpleHRuA2FlbQlxMAABHR-L0g5I8iK2r08RtQTpMRN1hBUtc1Q2qzRYy-9SzjZbStpgb_a9fhX3GA_aem_a-CT9QtsPvxy6qdQZxBFVQ

³⁰<https://sustainability.brown.edu/operations/waste-diversion>

Elisha Project, a food-resource recovery organization, to pick up excess food twice a week³¹, and is actively working towards composting food scraps from both the kitchen and cafeteria. University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension offers a program to engage community members as changemakers in this space, providing a six-week course in food waste prevention and diversion methods and then connecting graduates to jobs and volunteer opportunities that advance community-scale wasted food solutions.

Although a host of nonprofit organizations, educational entities, community and for-profit groups have proven productive in the mitigation of wasted food in the state of Rhode Island, *municipalities and the state government must strengthen their role in waste diversion.*

Undoubtedly, a resilient food system necessitates the collaboration and cooperation between multiple stakeholders, from residents to local businesses to universities. In extending the life of the Central Landfill, Rhode Island has the unique opportunity to be a wasted food pioneer.

³¹<https://web.uri.edu/dining/composting>

Funding

Opportunity 1: Funding and Incentives

Any discussion of our Wasted Food Solutions would be remiss if it did not address funding. For years, Rhode Island, like all other states, has funded landfills and recycling, and therefore has collection infrastructure in place. The state has not funded the infrastructure necessary to support wasted food diversion and composting, so these programs do not exist at the scale needed to meet the challenge. Consequently, the State needs to provide funding that would: support educational programs for wasted food reduction; leverage existing services that provide the technology and manpower necessary for efficient and effective surplus food recovery/donation; and build the infrastructure to support wasted food diversion and composting.

One way to address this is by adding a surcharge on solid waste. The Institute for Local Self Reliance (ILSR) champions this approach nationally, serving as a model for Rhode Island's approach.³²

The RIFPC's members championed legislation in 2024 that would set a price of \$2 per ton on all trash going to the landfills/transfer stations, which would go into a dedicated "Compost Fund" to support organic waste education programs and infrastructure. As proposed the legislation would split the funds equally between noncompetitive grants going to municipalities and competitive grants going to a wider group of nonprofit and for-profit entities. While all funds must go to reducing and diverting wasted food, it is not overly prescriptive, allowing for the best solutions to emerge.

Looking at other states, in December of 2023, CalRecycle announced a [\\$130M+ investment](#)³³ in organics recycling infrastructure. Rhode Island has about 1/39 of the population of California, which would imply Rhode Island should consider investing around \$3M. RIFPC has estimated that the surcharge would generate around \$1M per year, and though this may sound insufficient, it would be a much needed first step. When Massachusetts invested \$7.3M, funded

³²<https://ilsr.org/articles/waste-surcharges/>

³³<https://calrecycle.ca.gov/2023/12/19/press-release-23-10/>

through a similar waste fee program, the successful [results](#)³⁴ saw 380,000 tons of wasted food diverted and 25.7% decrease in GhG emissions per year, which established the Bay State as a benchmark for wasted food leadership. Other states, including New York, have also invested significantly in wasted food diversion programs through grants, loans, and technical assistance. Rhode Island must do the same.

Opportunity seven below highlights how the state must implement existing and potential new laws, like this \$2 surcharge. These should be conducted simultaneously, because as necessary as funding is, the State must also provide the resources necessary to carry out implementation. This includes writing regulations, administering funding opportunities, and tracking tonnage.

Funding, however, is the number one opportunity for many reasons. Municipal leaders currently have a natural disincentive to take action because Rhode Island’s municipal solid waste tipping fees are among the lowest rates in the Northeast. They also don’t have easily available sources of funding available to start a new program. Businesses, meanwhile, are afraid of liability for donations or can be reluctant to start new composting programs without proper technical assistance to train staff. NY, MA, CA, and other states have service providers available to businesses to assist with technical assistance, as well as grant programs to help businesses with transition costs.

A clear funding mechanism tied to actions that will reduce and divert wasted food will help build the infrastructure necessary to help level the playing field with traditional waste management. It will also provide an incentive to households and businesses who may want to divert wasted food but don’t have the necessary education or resources to do so on their own.

Another policy RIFPC championed in 2024 is the Surplus Food Donation Tax Credit, designed to give businesses a tax credit for food donations. While this can be administered in many ways, giving businesses a financial incentive, along with education and technical assistance, will encourage them to make fiscally responsible decisions for their business while helping to



RECOMMENDATION

The state legislature should pass a funding mechanism like the previously proposed “Compost Fund” and Surplus Food Donations Tax Credit. DEM should move quickly to hire an internal or external manager for the fund, write any necessary rules for tracking waste, and administer the grants.

³⁴<https://www.mass.gov/news/new-research-highlights-massachusetts-as-national-leader-in-food-waste-reduction#:~:text=BOSTON%20%E2%80%94%20new%20peer%2Dreviewed,as%20a%20benchmark%20for%20success>

provide supplemental food resources for those in need of assistance. The proposed tax credit was capped at \$5,000, meaning the tax credit may not cover the entire value of every possible donation the largest businesses could make. However, by putting a tax credit system in place and encouraging businesses to get started, they will see how easy it is to donate surplus food while being rewarded for their effort.

When looking at the cost of tipping fees in the region and understanding the lack of available space for expansion of landfilling in the future, it becomes obvious that Rhode Island will feel the true cost of waste eventually.

The question is, does the state of Rhode Island want to gradually take on that cost on its own terms, or be forced to do so later on?

Opportunity 2: New Models for Municipal Solid Waste

A related funding opportunity is to re-envision our relationship with and model for waste pickup, food scrap recycling, and composting. Most single-family homes in Rhode Island are used to their traditional curbside biweekly or weekly trash and recycling pickup. Few households currently receive food scrap pickup. Yet, we know food scraps are the smelliest, wettest and heaviest portion of our trash, and attract pests and rodents. They also can contaminate our recycling streams, making it more expensive to recycle. This provides an opportunity.

Looking for inspiration nationally and globally points us to more effective models with promises of more efficient wasted food management. In Austria, the trash pickup is less frequent, and the food scraps pickups are more frequent. By reducing the frequency of trash pickups, the State, its municipalities and residents can reduce overall costs of trash service and reallocate those funds into food scrap collection programs.

Elsewhere, including in some Rhode Island towns, Pay As You Throw (PAYT) programs attempt to shift the costs for waste disposal to those generating the most. They also can provide an incentive to reduce household waste. These programs may look different in different communities, for example some ask customers to pay a higher fee for a larger garbage can versus a smaller one, while others charge a fee per bag.

Under the current landfill cap system, cities pay a lower rate for most of their Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), but once they've reached their cap set by RIRRC, they are charged a much higher rate for additional tonnage. This is a de facto PAYT system. However, the increased rate is paid by the town and not by any individual citizen so the individual citizens have little control over or transparency on how much they pay. Without a direct PAYT mechanism, this is an ineffective incentive for individuals/households to decrease their waste.

A common objection is that it's politically unpalatable to "reduce" services. However, by adjusting services to provide fewer trash pickups and adding food scrap collection, municipalities would be providing the same service and perhaps in some cases additional pickups, but those trash picks are reorganized to better suit residents' actual needs. The state can complement these efforts and further encourage such actions by implementing a Bottle Bill and/or Extended Producer Responsibility bills, which will further reduce "trash" and decrease service demands.

Municipalities largely control the waste contracts in Rhode Island, as is common elsewhere. Therefore, cities and towns have the most at stake but can also take the lead. Providence recently requested proposals for its solid waste and recycling contract to include organics services. This is a step in the right direction, but RIFPC encourages the capital city to continue thinking bigger and bolder about the system it ultimately wants.



RECOMMENDATION

Municipalities should reevaluate and renegotiate their waste service contracts and models.

All waste service contracts should align efforts to reduce waste on an individual and community basis with reduced costs. In other words, as residents reduce total trash disposal, fees should go down. This includes PAYT programs.

Opportunity 3: Subsidies for Food Recovery Organizations for Food Donation from Food Generators

Underpinning the purpose of the entire food system is the concept of increasing food and nutrition security for all Rhode Islanders. It is a system malfunction when perfectly edible food ends up in a landfill, when it should be feeding hungry people. Food recovery organizations exist to fix this issue by connecting surplus food from “food generators” such as farms, retail, foodservice and manufacturing, to boots-on-the-ground initiatives that redistribute it to those in need of food assistance. Food recovery organizations are currently funded primarily through grants and donations, with a small percentage of their revenue from fees charged to the surplus food generator/donor. In order to be financially sustainable, this model must change.

The State has demonstrated it understands the importance of ensuring its most vulnerable residents have shelter and enough nutritious food to eat through programs like the Rhode to End Hunger³⁵. Food rescue organizations play a crucial role in achieving this goal by saving and redistributing surplus food—keeping it out of landfills and reducing the resources needed for food production. Therefore, Rhode Island should compensate its food rescue organizations for their essential services, particularly transportation costs.

Direct payments or state subsidies, as well as social impact bonds, could fund such programs. Direct payments would be more appropriate, but in the current fiscal climate may be impossible at the state level which makes alternatives such as social impact bonds worth considering. The Network understands that social impact bonds are difficult and have been studied for a variety of applications in Rhode Island. A clean stream of revenue or cost reduction must be identified, and it must be large enough in size to justify the issuance of such a bond.

Regarding the streams of revenue: an unavoidable barrier to food rescue is the uncertain nature of its generation. While there are some consistent food donors or gleaners that reliably give or salvage perishable and uneaten but still edible food, the amount of excess food a producer might generate in any given day is often unpredictable. This means that while the state cannot replace its food support spending with rescued food, it can leverage valuable resources to supplement it, ultimately reducing food costs for both the state and the

³⁵<https://health.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur1006/files/publications/brochures/RhodeToEndHungerDonateSurplusFood.pdf>

organizations it supports. While it may be difficult to determine the exact savings the state would gain by funding these programs, that does not mean their value cannot be measured. The state can assign value either through tonnage of food rescued/not tipped in a landfill and/or for the value of donated food.

Regarding the size of the potential bond: ReFed estimates approximately 64 thousand tons worth of surplus food ended up in the Landfill from Rhode Island in 2023.³⁶ Feeding America, which sets the industry standard for valuing food donations, currently sets the price per pound of donated food at \$1.97³⁷, indicating the potential for donation is around \$250 million.

The Network assumes a portion of the “Compost Fund” discussed above would go to projects that would increase edible food rescue activities. However, it’s unlikely that funding would be sufficient to spur the necessary infrastructure/programs for both wasted food reduction and composting, which necessitates a separate funding source.

An additional complementary solution would be increased cold storage. Allowing larger organizations, such as Farm Fresh RI (including Hope’s Harvest) and FeedRI, to make fewer, larger trips to community-based organizations alongside the available platforms to streamline food donation through robust technology and infrastructure could reduce their operational costs and allow the state to increase purchasing from local farmers. As opposed to the funding of larger food rescue programs that is needed and recommended in this section, using the funding provided by “Compost Fund” or the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) grant could increase community-based cold storage.



RECOMMENDATION

The legislature should create a commission to study social impact bonds for funding food rescue programs.

They should work alongside the LASA Committee to ensure the program supports expanding cold storage for community-based food organizations with any necessary legislative changes.

³⁶https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break_by=destination&indicator=tons-surplus&state=RI&view=detail&year=2023

³⁷https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/Feeding%20America_24%20FS_Final.pdf

Opportunity 4: Funding for Shellfish Processing Equipment & Wastewater Treatment

Rhode Island is proud to call itself the Ocean State, and has many fantastic initiatives to support the blue economy. However, the state must manage its seafood waste to ensure the continued growth of the industry. Unfortunately, seafood processing facilities have already moved out of state in part because Rhode Island cannot adequately treat the facilities' wastewater. In fact, a significant portion of the seafood caught in Rhode Island is processed as far as China³⁸ only to be brought back to Rhode Island for sale and consumption. While many issues contribute to this outcome, wastewater is a prevalent one.

Some processors who remain in the state have dealt with wastewater by hauling it away in tanker trucks for treatment, which is a massively inefficient, environmentally unsustainable, and expensive option. The town of Narragansett and RI Department of Environmental Management applied for and were awarded funding by the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) to commission a study to investigate the feasibility of expanding the wastewater processing capacity at the Scarborough Wastewater Treatment plant in Narragansett. As part of the grant application, seafood industry experts estimated expansion will increase processing volumes by up to 20 million pounds per year, creating up to \$70 million in additional revenue for processors alone, highlighting the urgency of this issue.

At the same time, a high percentage of organic shellfish waste in Rhode Island ends up in the landfill, when it could be turned into valuable products such as calcium carbonate or compost. The absence of seafood processing capacity and lack of utilization of shellfish waste largely occurs because of insufficient funding for wastewater pretreatment and shellfish processing equipment.

To address this barrier, the state must first complete the currently ongoing study of the Scarborough Wastewater Treatment Plant, then secure funding, including an EDA grant and other sources, and complete the build-out.

It's possible the study finds the Scarborough site is not optimal for expansion, in which case the state must look to develop other cost-effective opportunities to increase the capacity of

³⁸https://www.thewesterlysun.com/news/westerly/most-of-r-i-s-calamari-catch-is-processed-in-china-a-local-group-is/article_45520d74-bc9d-11ea-b155-1776a23c4ffe.htm

wastewater treatment. Having this resource would provide jobs and economic opportunities, and would reduce the environmental impact of current, unsustainable practices.

When considering shell waste, an important distinction is that shells are not homogeneous in their uses and processing needs. Oysters are easier to process into compost, are used to rebuild reefs³⁹, and other sustainable projects⁴⁰, for example, while mussel shells are difficult to process because they are expensive to clean for processing and can break down into shards during the composting process.

Potential solutions include drying the shells or running them through grinders/shredders prior to processing, but further research is needed. The state has attempted to provide an opportunity through the Partnership for Research Excellence in Sustainable Seafood (PRESS) grant, but bringing together industry and research partners has proved challenging. The size of the grant may also be hindering efforts – fewer larger projects might help advance the research. Additionally, universities and nonprofit partners (like the RIFPC), can support potential industry research partners' applications.



RECOMMENDATION

The state should complete the EDA-funded study; pursue sources of funding; work with existing wastewater infrastructure providers to expand and utilize existing capacity; expand utilization of the PRESS grant; and work with universities and private partners to conduct research on shell waste processing.

³⁹<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/gulf-coast-oyster-shell-recycling-key-sustainable-seafood-and-coastal-protection#:~:text=They%20use%20recycled%20oyster%20shells,storms%20and%20sea%2Dlevel%20rise>

⁴⁰<https://storytelling.11thhourracing.org/stories/operation-restoration-film-massachusetts-oyster-project>

Program Support/Policy

Opportunity 5: Increased Municipal Support for Community Composting Programs

Wasted food from residential sources is the largest category of wasted food in many cities, and as opposed to commercial waste, municipalities play a large role in guiding and or managing this waste (largely through private contracts). Per the guidance of The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Wasted Food Scale and the Institute for Local Self Reliance Hierarchy to Reduce Food Waste, the most sustainable and beneficial solutions for composting are local. These solutions lead to job creation, local soil improvement, education and social inclusion, food production, and other economic and environmental impacts. In order to achieve more sustainable food diversion and composting at the scale necessary for tangible change, municipalities must increase engagement.

A common misconception for municipalities is that these options must be big and/or expensive. While large facilities and programs have a role to play, in reality, municipalities can also operate and or encourage small-scale, distributed, diversified, and affordable options. Composting programs guided by the Principles of Community Composting engage communities and educate residents, recover resources in closed loop systems, and are diverse and community scaled. All solutions and scales must be incorporated to meet our diversion goals, and emerging data⁴¹ shows the importance and cost effectiveness of community composting.

Unfortunately, many communities aren't sure where to start. Several municipalities already have composting options available to their residents, including drop-off programs, private curbside pickup services, or subsidized backyard composting bins. Municipalities can start by supporting these options in a way that generally involves little to no cost to the community, including organizing that information and making it available through town websites and townwide communications.

Next, municipalities can increase their educational efforts in conjunction with community partners to raise awareness of the issue and potential solutions, by leveraging existing opportunities in schools, libraries, town-led events, and beyond. Backyard composting is one inexpensive option for many local residents with a small amount of training. Factors including lack of space and time limit many from backyard composting, but municipalities can reduce the barriers for those who do have the space. Wasted food reduction is another low-cost solution,

⁴¹<https://ilsr.org/articles/c4c-kourtnei-brown>

where education is the primary barrier. It is possible for all Rhode Islanders to start reducing wasted food and this effort directly saves money when consumers are more mindful of eating leftovers and planning their purchases and meals appropriately.

Municipalities should also work to deploy several different tactics to provide their community opportunities to increase composting, including partnerships with private and nonprofit groups. Community composting examples such as Harvest Cycle's Ring Street Garden or the Barrington Farm School succeed in Rhode Island, while serving as critical community engagement and education points. Meanwhile, Epic Renewal processes food scraps in a dense urban environment with neighbors on every side. In other states, composting projects have been successful on 3/4 of an acre of land underneath New York's Queensboro Bridge (right next to a hotel), on multiple community sites set up by Compost Crew in Maryland, and through the efforts of the California Alliance for Community Composting Collective in California. These examples show that composting can be done on small footprints, and the projects serve as considerate, mindful, and engaged neighbors in their community.

To reach the capacity needed in Rhode Island, with a variety of models that take advantage of the benefits of composting at all scales, the state and its municipalities will need to be creative and vigilant in finding suitable sites for composting. There is more detail on this in opportunity 6 below to help municipalities help composters by identifying potential sites for composting, whether it's a community garden, an abandoned lot, a portion of a park, an existing leaf or yard waste facility or elsewhere. Municipalities can also help implement accessible, low-cost or free food scrap drop-off programs by hosting drop-off sites at community centers, libraries, parks, and other community gathering spaces. Providence, for example, has a network of drop-off sites throughout the city. While these are largely operated by private and/or nonprofit organizations, the city hosts some drop-off sites on city land and promotes all of them through its website.

Recommendations presented in the Opportunity 2 section, which discussed looking at new models for waste, also support local diversion. Implementing a local PAYT opportunity, for example, is an incentive to start backyard composting or drop off household food scraps.

Municipalities also need to support community composting efforts financially. For example, certain grant opportunities are also only available to municipalities, such as the USDA Compost and Food Waste Reduction grant, and the RIFPC can provide technical assistance to communities who want to apply. Municipalities can help grow community composting by being mindful of these options and work towards multi-level solutions. Federal grant evaluators have tended to favorably consider thoughtful approaches that combine some elements of processing at multiple levels, pickup, drop-off etc. Providence successfully applied and won a USDA grant using this approach.

Entering agreements to share equipment is another way municipalities can get engaged. The RI Infrastructure Bank might assist with these efforts, too. A small compost site may not be able to afford a wheel loader/skidsteer, or may only need a screener⁴² periodically, making it an impractical investment. However, if a town purchases the necessary equipment to be shared among composters and communities, the investment is more feasible.

Connecticut provides a good example, as the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority owns and operates a grinder, which it drives to each of its 12 member towns to grind brush, trees, and woody material. RIRRC already owns substantial machinery, including compost turners, and could rent existing or additional equipment to municipalities and composters throughout the state.

There are many ways that municipalities can get engaged, and the RIFPC and The Network realize that municipalities will need assistance to do so. The Network took the initial steps through the Municipal Composting Readiness Report, partnering on a webinar with the League of Cities and Towns and aggregating service provider lists. Increased assistance for municipalities will be crucial and forthcoming from the RIFPC and Network moving forward.

⁴²<https://www.biocycle.net/a-compost-screening-primer>



RECOMMENDATION

RIFPC should work with its partners and The Network to provide a template for municipal action with multiple levels of opportunities, high-level cost information and resources as well as technical assistance and educational resources. The municipalities should work to identify available properties, implement pilot plans, and apply for funding alongside nonprofit and private service providers. The state and municipalities should work together to share resources to improve efficiency of existing and future compost efforts.

Opportunity 6: Increase Access to Land for Composting and a Regional Approach to Infrastructure

Currently in Rhode Island, there is only one large scale food scrap composting facility and one anaerobic digester (AD). As discussed in Opportunity 5 above, there are many examples of successful distributed composting infrastructure, however, there is drastically insufficient overall capacity to meet the growing demand. This has resulted in some food scrap haulers relying on a network of farms with limited capacity whose core business is not composting, or distant facilities in Massachusetts. While these alternatives can be cost competitive and are far better than the alternative of sending it to the landfill – from a financial and environmental sustainability perspective are not ideal long term for Rhode Island.

The state's largest food scraps compost facility, Earth Care Farm, can handle approximately 7,500 tons annually, while food scrap recycling needs in Rhode Island are between 70-100k tons. The anaerobic digester in Johnston has considerable capacity, but the solid digestate⁴³ and liquid residual material must be managed. The solid portion is a relatively small fraction that can be further improved into a compost but not without appropriate facilities. The Network understands that the liquid which contains many of the nutrients is also not utilized and instead treated. This makes relying on AD alone a poor solution – as indicated by the EPA Wasted Food Scale. Generally speaking, depending on one large centralized facility is not ideal for many reasons, including the impact of hauling food scraps to the facility and then distributing the finished product back to its end users. It also makes the organic waste management system vulnerable to any disruption that impedes the facility's ability to operate short or long-term.

As discussed in Opportunity 5, finding the proper sites, whether large or small, is crucial to increase land access. This will be difficult in the country's smallest state with some of the highest cost of land. Therefore, the state must be creative and proactive in increasing compost processing capacity, including but not limited to state and municipal lands. Some places municipalities and the state might start to look for partnerships and opportunities include at Department of Public Works (DPW) lots, transfer stations, unused lots and abandoned buildings, underneath bridges, closed landfills, brownfields, corners of farm lands, and existing leaf and yard waste facilities.

⁴³<https://www.epa.gov/anaerobic-digestion/basic-information-about-anaerobic-digestion>

Composters of all scales have demonstrated they are good neighbors, should be welcomed into a community, and will retain the highest level of standards. Earth Care Farm serves not just as a processing site, but as a valued member of its community, regularly welcomes neighbors to the farm for education, and maintains the highest quality product standards.

To assist with expansion, the state and nonprofit partners must create and maintain a statewide assessment of all lands and potential uses, including public and private lands. Composting has competition, however. The state has prioritized affordable housing, and citizens voted overwhelmingly in favor of protecting open spaces and remediating brownfields. The state also encourages more locally grown food and increased solar energy production. With so many important uses competing for land it is important we have a better understanding of our current uses. RIFPC’s research has not identified this land database, so it is important that if the state has one, that it be publicized and if not, it creates and maintains it.

Another problem nationwide and in Rhode Island is often that land that would otherwise be suitable for composting is not zoned properly. Frequently questions arise in municipalities about whether composting should be commercial, industrial or agricultural. National Resources Defense Council⁴⁴ and the US Composting Council⁴⁵ have both released model zoning ordinances to support municipalities in writing regulations that will encourage composting while protecting communities.

Municipalities also struggle with the administrations and staff being tasked with decision making on compost siting being inexperienced in this particular subject matter. This is largely due to a lack of facilities in operation and therefore limited demonstration and education opportunities. With the state having one fully permitted food scrap composting site, expecting every municipality to have a trained expert or board of experts on wasted food composting would be unrealistic. Yet, it is a problem. Often, and this is hardly unique to Rhode Island, such decisions must be made by volunteer boards, committees, (planning, solid waste, etc) or staff.

⁴⁴<https://www.nrdc.org/resources/model-municipal-zoning-ordinance-community-composting-and-without-commentaries>

⁴⁵ <https://www.compostingcouncil.org/page/Model-Zoning-Template-and-Guidelines>



RECOMMENDATION

The DOA should create a statewide detailed and updated database of land utilization. Municipalities should update zoning codes based on national zoning models and identify potential sites within their communities.

DEM should provide assistance to developers and municipalities in evaluating and siting facilities. The legislature should clarify that the existing wasted food mandates are triggered by out of state facilities.

As an example of this problem in 2022, a well-financed proposed facility in NJ brought in some of the foremost experts on compost engineering who have successfully built facilities across the country to develop a medium-scale site. However, unfortunately, a small group of misinformed residents stymied these proactive plans in front of a volunteer solid waste advisory board, which never moved forward with the program. This example is hardly unique to New Jersey. Getting the right information and evaluation of potential projects is an important first step towards siting facilities responsibly.

DEM and RIFPC must assist municipal decision makers by providing guidance and resources when evaluating land, potential nuisance and environmental health-related concerns. Municipalities must collaborate with partners to get accurate information to properly evaluate proposed sites so they address the states infrastructure needs in a way that works for their community.

The state also should look at waste from a regional perspective. There is at least one, if not more, new facility being constructed just across the border in CT. From an environmental perspective, it is more detrimental to haul waste longer distances.

It is not automatically more preferable just because one facility happens to be within the state and another is not. Therefore, the state should ensure its current waste diversion mandates are triggered by facilities that are just across the border. In the current regulation, if a food generator would be required to divert its scraps, but there is no facility within the state-mandated 15 miles, it is currently exempt from diverting wasted food. The law could be updated and/or DEM could clarify through regulations that the 15 miles applies to facilities outside the state that are willing to accept food scraps for approved uses (such as composting). The state could also remove or increase the mileage required for an exemption to, for example, 25 or 30 miles.

Opportunity 7: Implementation and Enforcement of Legal Requirements for Businesses to Donate, Divert, and Recycle Surplus & Wasted Food

In passing the wasted food diversion mandate (R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-18.9-17), the state has recognized the importance of reducing wasted food. However, the most successful wasted food programs in the country do not “hope” people will do the right thing, but rather, they require them to do so, provide support, and enforce the law to do so. Unfortunately, Rhode Island’s wasted food mandates are not supported by funding, technical support, regulation, or enforcement.

While residential households in aggregate are the largest drivers of wasted food⁴⁶, any one home pales in comparison to the amount of food that businesses and institutions could reduce, rescue, and compost. This is why Rhode Island is among many states, including NY, NJ, and MA, that focused their laws on requiring businesses to divert wasted food to more sustainable end uses.

Funding is essential. Without it, we simply do not have the capacity to successfully implement the laws, but this section will assume we provide the necessary funding. The question then becomes: what is needed to enforce the existing mandates that are already in place?

First, DEM must play a role, as its counterparts do in every state. DEM has a full time employee cap that could make hiring staff difficult, even if funding were available. The legislature could choose to raise that cap, even by one, for this purpose. Alternatively, a nonprofit could be funded, either through the “Compost Fund” or other sources, to be housed within or to work alongside DEM to provide additional administrative capacity. We have seen this model for other positions hosted by DEM. But there must be dedicated technology infrastructure and staff to efficiently regulate, track, coordinate and enforce the existing law.

Technical assistance is also a big piece of the puzzle. With funding from MassDEP and NY DEC, organizations like CET administer technical assistance programs (RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts and Rethink Food Waste NY) to support businesses that are subject to wasted food laws. The goal of any diversion program is participation and compliance, not enforcement (i.e. fines). To reach this goal, states initially make technical assistance available to businesses.

⁴⁶<https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/food-waste-city-level-report.pdf>

Next, if the state finds the business is not or might not be in compliance, the state provides letters of warning with additional technical assistance. Only then if ignored and/or not complied with will states look to enforce through fines. Rhode Island can learn from these successes.

To successfully achieve this, the legislature must also ensure that DEM has the sufficient resources and clear authority to create and enforce regulations and enact penalties. DEM can customize tracking and enforcement, which looks different around the northeast. For example, Massachusetts tracks wasted food at landfills and then works backwards to identify the source. NY identifies which businesses should be responsible for complying with the law and then ensures they're doing so. The Rhode Island legislature need not prescribe how DEM tracks compliance or what the penalties should be (though they may be inclined to weigh in on the penalties), but it must clarify that DEM does indeed have this authority.

The Rhode Island Hospitality Association can also play a key role helping member businesses comply with the regulations that affect the industry.

While not directly related to the enforcement or implementation of existing laws, it can also be noted that the solutions proposed in the opportunities prior will also help bring down the cost to service a business. By (among other things) increasing the infrastructure and reducing route density through increased adoption, prices will decrease across all sectors of wasted food reduction and diversion. This should help businesses comply with the existing laws.



RECOMMENDATION

RIFPC should research the costs to implement existing laws. The Legislature should clarify DEM's role under existing laws, and ensure funding and staffing is available for enforcement. DEM should work to ensure the proper regulations are in place to track compliance, provide technical assistance, and enforcement.

Schools

Opportunity 8: Ensure Wasted Food Programs in Every School

One area of promise in Rhode Island is its school programs. Rhode Island School Recycling Project (RISRP) is a leader in this area and reports that by diverting all organic waste from participating schools, its program has reduced waste going to the landfill by as much as 70%. The program's long-term focus is to work with students and lunchroom staff to reduce wasted food by 50% by 2030 in line with EPA and USDA goals. Several schools have already reduced wasted food per student by more than 40% from the 2019 baseline, while donating surplus through strategically placed shared refrigerators. Working in schools is an opportunity to educate and feed students, divert potentially large amounts of surplus food, and save money. Unfortunately, this program, or programs like it, are not in every public, charter, and private school - they should be.

RISRP and others are quickly moving to expand programming throughout the state, have raised funds, and are training staff to meet increasing demands for these services. However, some school administrators, teachers, staff and service providers have been weary of the additional impacts on their time, budget, and responsibility such a program might entail. Providing this support for these programs long term is crucial so schools are not overburdened and know they have partners in this work. The schools will find that by diverting waste (70%!) they can rework their existing waste contracts (similar to Opportunity 3) and save money.

As with other solutions, increased funding, technical assistance, and enforcement will go a long way to increasing school programs. But long-term change also should include requiring schools to provide simple reports to the state - something as simple as sharing their wasted food haulers name to be tracked by the Department of Education (RIDE) on a publicly available listing would be helpful. Enforcing the mandate for RIRRC to provide wasted food audits would help schools understand their waste better and better data does lead to better solutions. However, generally speaking, most schools waste at similar levels and should not hesitate to act while waiting on such audits. The state should also require RIDE-preferred food service providers to provide reports that are complying with wasted food mandates in order to maintain that status. This could be achieved through gleaning data and metrics from the

applicable food recovery organization. Finally, legislators can also strengthen existing laws by removing exemptions for distance and tonnage from the law's requirements for schools' wasted food disposal.

Rhode Island students are passionate about eliminating wasted food in schools as shown by the compost rangers RISRP recruits or the Youth Composting Campaign Initiative that was founded by high schoolers in the state. We must support them.



RECOMMENDATION

Private funders and the state should continue to fund successful school programs. RIDE and nonprofit partners (like RIFPC) should share the success stories. School administrators and food service providers should seek to learn from their peers. RIDE should require reporting on compliance with school mandates and ensure those food service providers receiving preferred status are in compliance.

Opportunity 9: Education on “Offer Versus Serve” and Share Tables in Every School

Not every solution is entirely within the state’s control. Federal funding for school meals does come with requirements that certain items must be offered, including a minimum of fruits and vegetables. To ensure funding, schools and service providers often serve items that the students do not want and do not eat, and as a result, these foods are thrown away, untouched. There are many ways, however, to address this issue.

First, we can offer those options in ways children find more enticing. This can mean offering more culturally relevant foods, but also offering the same food in ways that are more appealing. For example, a study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* found that elementary school students are more likely to eat a sliced apple versus a whole apple.⁴⁷

Next, RIDE, alongside non-profit partners, can educate staff and food service providers on the difference between being required to offer an item versus being required to serve an item to be eligible for federal meal reimbursements. As the [USDA explains](#), lunch providers must offer five items but only need to serve three for a meal to be eligible for federal reimbursement programs. By educating lunch staff on this distinction, school districts can serve food that students actually want and will eat and won’t serve so much that students throw it away. This will save districts money and reduce their total waste generated. Engagement from the RI Department of Education (RIDE) will ensure this training is in place and maintained across the state.

Finally, we can ensure that items that are perfectly edible and untouched go to a Share Table rather than a compost pile, much less a landfill. A Share Table, in short, is “a designated place in a school lunchroom where students can place unopened food and drinks that they do not consume.”⁴⁸ Despite efforts to offer children the foods they want, they still may decide not to consume it. They might choose a milk carton and then not drink it, resulting in a full, unopened milk or whole apple or banana in the trash. Instead of placing it in the trash, a Share Table offers the opportunity for that food to be distributed another time, often as a snack or as a donation to a local food pantry/kitchen.

⁴⁷<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8701969>

⁴⁸<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1352>

To assist in ensuring schools meet food safety regulations the RI Department of Health can be consulted for best practices.

Schools across the state present an incredible opportunity to implement sustainable wasted food allocation or disposal processes, including a Share Table, and training on food service protocol, to significantly reduce wasted food.



RECOMMENDATION

RIDE should require mandatory training on the distinction between “offer versus serve” for school food service providers. Schools should work with food service providers and RIDE to offer healthy foods in the most appealing forms and implement share tables in every school.

Public Education

Opportunity 10: Education for Individuals, Leaders, Businesses, and Beyond

No one wants to spend more money on food than necessary, especially coming off a period of high inflation, or see perfectly good food go to waste. But it happens every day. Part of the reason individuals and families waste food is because of ignorance, so one integral step Rhode Islanders can take to address this is through education.

Few people weigh how much food they waste or consider the amount of money they spend on items that will eventually spoil. Yet, awareness can make a significant impact on budgets and waste, especially if people reduce food bills by up to 30% through relatively simple practices.

Similarly, businesses can also realize cost savings and environmental benefits. For example, Blount Fine Foods, a large, packaged food producer, found that its number one wasted food-fighting tool is tracking. If you can measure it, you can address it. On the other hand, though the student environmental club at URI has been very effective in reducing campus wasted food, club members were unaware if dining services had software to track this. Businesses, individuals, and leaders need to know the depth of the problem, as well as its impact on the bottom line and on the environment.

Residents and businesses also need to know their options and opportunities and unlearn the stigmas and habits surrounding sustainable food management choices. The first priority is reduction, which relies heavily on mindfulness: for example, planning meals, buying only what you plan to eat, and eating the quickest-spoiling foods first. To help residents and businesses implement these practices, education on wasted food reduction, cooking using the ingredients on hand and even canning is critical. The state and nonprofit organizations must work together to engage communities and show individuals and families how to reduce wasted food at all levels. RIRRC offers courses for communities and leaders to share with residents.

The RISRP offers education as part of its program, and RIFPC also hired a dedicated educator in 2025 to help with these efforts. These educational resources are available, so everyone around the state must support and highlight these efforts within communities.

Backyard composting of various materials is also possible, as Providence Gardenworks is showing through a USDA grant through the City of Providence. They are signing people up, providing the proper equipment, supplies and training to help residents become successful composters. Through that same grant, Zero Waste Providence is showing residents how easy it can be to take their food scraps to a drop-off site, and Harvest Cycle is expanding its drop-off locations. With the right education and opportunity, people can and will compost at home or participate in diversion programs.

On the business side, software and services can be a big help. For example, software like LeanPath can help track waste, and Foodrecovery.org and Rescuing Leftover Cuisine exist to connect restaurants, universities, event organizers and more with nonprofits and food pantries that are ready to accept surplus food.

Further education is also needed for composting acceptance. Some municipal leaders in Rhode Island and constituents have expressed worry that if there is a food scrap collection or composting site nearby, it will attract rats. While a poorly run compost site or food scrap collection can attract vectors (such as rats) or odors, a well-run site will take that smelly, nutritious (for rats) material out of the waste stream and help eliminate the rodent problem. Further education and demonstration is required to address this false perception.

Businesses, meanwhile, are worried about potential liability from donating food. but there are many protections that legislation provides them. The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act⁴⁹ protects individuals and businesses that donate food to nonprofits from liability. The amended Food Donation Act of 2021⁵⁰ expanded these protections, and the The Rhode Island Food Donation Act⁵¹ also offers expanded protections for past-date foods. Food recovery best practices support, federal enhanced tax incentives and RIFPC's goal to introduce state tax benefits will also encourage more businesses to change their current practices.

⁴⁹<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-104publ210/pdf/PLAW-104publ210.pdf>

⁵⁰<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6251/text>

⁵¹<https://webserver.rilegislatore.gov/Statutes/TITLE21/21-34.1/21-34.1-3.htm#:~:text=%C2%A7%2021%2D34.1%2D3.,Rhode%20Island%20food%20donation%20act>



RECOMMENDATION

Private Funders and RIRRC should support efforts to promote wasted food reduction education. The RIDOH should update and renew efforts to educate consumers and businesses about wasted food donation. The RIFPC should reach out to municipalities to provide educational courses, and DEM should support technical assistance and education.

Finally, food generators need the RI Department of Health's (RIDOH) support and encouragement to donate surplus food. While third party technical assistance can go a long way, having health inspectors and the department not only advising folks on food safety practices and telling folks how to donate but also encouraging it is extremely effective. In the past, RIDOH has worked with partners on the Rhode To End Hunger initiative, and the time is here to reignite these efforts. RIDOH staff has indicated they would be excited to do so if provided the funding.

In closing, the State of Rhode Island has much work to do to improve its wasted food infrastructure. But there is so much potential, and many organizations, wasted food and sustainability experts, and nonprofits are willing to collaborate to save money, save food, and enhance food and nutrition security.

Summary of Recommendations

1. **Funding and Incentives:** The state legislature should pass a funding mechanism like the previously proposed “Compost Fund”. DEM should move quickly to hire an internal or external manager for the fund, write any necessary rules for tracking waste, and administering the grants.
2. **New Models for Waste:** Municipalities should reevaluate and renegotiate waste service contracts and models. All waste service contracts should align efforts to reduce waste on an individual and community basis with reduced costs. This includes PAYT programs.
3. **Subsidies for Food Recovery Organizations:** The legislature should create a commission to study social impact bonds for funding food rescue programs. It should work alongside the LASA Committee to ensure the program expands cold storage for community-based food organizations with any necessary legislative changes.
4. **Funding for Shellfish and Seafood Wastewater Treatment:** The state should complete the EDA-funded wastewater treatment study; pursue sources of funding; work with existing wastewater infrastructure providers to expand and utilize existing capacity; expand utilization of the PRESS grant; and work with universities and private partners to conduct research on shell waste processing.
5. **Increased Municipal Support for Community Composting:** The RIFPC should work with its partners and The Network to provide a template for action, technical assistance, and educational resources to all municipalities. Municipalities should work to identify available compost sites, implement pilot plans, and apply for funding alongside nonprofit and private service providers. The state and municipalities should work together to share resources to improve efficiency of existing and future compost efforts.
6. **Increased Access to Land and Regional Approach to Infrastructure:** The DOA should create a statewide detailed and updated database of land utilization. Municipalities should update zoning codes based on national zoning models and identify potential sites within their communities. DEM should provide assistance to developers and municipalities in evaluating and siting facilities. The legislature should clarify in the legislation that the existing wasted food mandates can be triggered by out-of-state facilities.

7. **Enforcement of Existing Wasted Food Legislation:** RIFPC should research the costs to implement existing laws. The legislature should clarify DEM’s role under existing laws, and ensure funding and staffing is available for enforcement. DEM should work to ensure the proper regulations are in place to track compliance and provide technical assistance and enforcement.
8. **Ensure Wasted Food Programs in Every School:** Private funders and the state should continue to fund successful school programs. RIDE and nonprofit partners (like RIFPC) should share the success stories. School administrators and food service providers should seek to learn from peers. RIDE should require reporting on compliance with school mandates and ensure those food service providers receiving preferred status are in compliance.
9. **Education on Offer vs. Serve and Share Tables:** RIDE should require mandatory training on the distinction between “offer versus serve” for school food service providers. Schools should work with food service providers and RIDE to offer healthy foods in the most appealing forms and implement share tables in every school.
10. **Education for individuals, leaders and businesses:** Private Funders and RIRRC should support efforts to promote wasted food reduction education. RIDOH should update and renew efforts to educate consumers and businesses about wasted food donation. The RIFPC should reach out to municipalities to provide educational courses, and DEM should support technical assistance and education.

Conclusion

The **Wasted Food Solutions Action Plan (WFSAP)** outlines a comprehensive strategy to reduce wasted food in **Rhode Island**, addressing both environmental and social challenges. With more than **100,000 tons of wasted food and compostable materials annually**, contributing to **greenhouse gas emissions** and **food insecurity**, immediate action is necessary to transition towards a **sustainable, circular food system**.

The **10 priority areas** identified in this plan provide a roadmap for **policy changes, funding mechanisms, infrastructure investments, and educational initiatives** to mitigate wasted food.

Key recommendations include:

- **Creating a “Compost Fund”** to support food waste reduction and diversion efforts.
- **Enhancing food recovery systems** through increased funding and cold storage infrastructure.
- **Expanding composting** by securing land access and municipal support.
- **Improving regulatory enforcement** to ensure businesses comply with food waste mandates.
- **Implementing educational initiatives** for schools, businesses, and the public to encourage waste reduction.

To succeed, **government agencies, private businesses, schools, and communities** must work together to implement these solutions. Rhode Island has a **unique opportunity to lead** in wasted food reduction, demonstrating the **economic, environmental, and social benefits** of a well-managed food system.

By investing in **sustainable food management**, Rhode Island can:

- ✓ Lower greenhouse gas emissions
- ✓ Enhance food security
- ✓ Improve soil health through composting
- ✓ Reduce waste management costs
- ✓ Support local food systems and businesses

The WFSAP provides a **clear path forward**—now it is up to **leaders, stakeholders, and residents** to take action and build a **resilient, waste-free future** for Rhode Island.

Appendix I: Plan Participants

Wasted Food Solutions Action Network Participants to Date:

Al Ranaldi, *East Greenwich Planning Director*
Alison Ring, *New Shoreham Town Planner*
Amanda Anglemyer, *Revive the Roots/Nuts & Bolts Nursery*
Anthony Vaccaro, *East Greenwich Director of Public Works*
Azure Cygler, *CRC/RI Sea Grant/URI*
Bonnie Blair, *South Kingstown Trash and Recycling Coordinator*
Breanne Penkala, *Farm Fresh RI, Hope's Harvest*
Brendalee Viveiros, *RI Department of Health*
Brian Monteverd, *Independent analyst*
Brian Woodhead, *Portsmouth Director of Public Works*
Caitlin Mandel, *RI Dept. of Education/RI Farm to School Network*
Carla Doughty, *Zero Waste Providence*
Catherine Feeney, *RI Department of Health*
Chandelle Wilson, *Southside Community Land Trust*
Charlotte Roberts, *Providence College*
Chelsea Burke, *East Greenwich*
Chris Lee, *Sea Fresh USA*
Chris Parella, *Bristol Director of Public Works*
Connie McGreavy, *Conserve by Design*
Conor Miller, *Black Earth Compost*
Dana Siles, *Surplus Food Recovery Expert*
Daniel Costa, *Department of Environmental Management*
David McLaughlin, *Department of Environmental Management*
Diane Lynch, *RI Food Policy Council Board of Directors*
Diane Williamson, *Bristol Director of Community Development*
Ed Tanner, *Bristol Zoning Enforcement Officer*
Edward Crowley, *Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center*
Ella Kilpatrick Kotner, *Groundwork RI/Harvest Cycle*
Elsa Schloemer, *East Bay Community Action Program*
Eva Agudelo, *Full Bloom Fundraising*
Eva Touhey, *WasteNaut Consulting*
Gabriel Betty, *Department of Environmental Management, Fish & Wildlife*

Gail Mesiner, *RI School Recycling Project*
Gene Allen, *Smithfield Public Works Director*
Greg Gerritt, *ProsperityForRI.com*
Greg McCarron, *SCS Engineering*
Hannah Reali, *Ocean Hour Farm*
Jami Star, *graduate of URI course in food recovery*
Jamie Haines, *Sustainability Consultant*
Jared Rhodes, *Rhode Island Resource Recovery*
Jason Kashdan, *Independent food policy advocate and dietician*
Jayne Merner, *Earth Care Farm*
Jessica Patroliia, *RI Department of Education*
Jim Corwin, *RI School Recycling Project*
John Fischer, *Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection*
Judy Macedo, *East Bay Community Action Program*
Karen Griffith, *Bristol and Warren Health Equity Zone*
Kate Masury, *Eating with the EcoSystem*
Katie Blais, *Mount Hope Farm*
Kaylyn Keane, *Keane's Wood-Fired Catering*
Kendra Gay, *RI School Recycling Project*
Kevin Proft, *Providence Deputy Director of Sustainability*
Laura Ostrander, *Rhode Island School of Design*
Lavinia Gadsden, *Little Compton*
Leo Pollock, *ReMix Organics Co.*
Liz Kerrigan, *Woonsocket Director of Parks and Recreation*
Melissa Chaput, *Smithfield Recycling Coordinator*
Mike Shea, *New Shoreham Director of Public Works*
Nick DiVito, *Center for EcoTechnology*
Nicole VanWort, *RI Community Food Bank*
Patrick Baur, *University of Rhode Island*
Paul Rodrigues, *Portsmouth Town Council*
Pete Waz, *American Mussel Harvesters*
Renee Chicoine, *RI School Recycling Project*
Richard Bourbonnais, *South Kingstown Public Works Director*
Robert Lee, *Rescuing Leftover Cuisine*
Rose Forrest, *Sodexo*
Rosie Warburton, *Black Earth Compost*

Sam Burgess, *Bootstrap Compost*
Samantha Salvatore, *Center for EcoTechnology*
Sammie Paul, *FoodRecovery.org*
Sara Churgin, *Eastern RI Conservation District*
Sara Wuerstle, *Ocean Hour Farm*
Scott Bromberg, *RI Food Dealers Association*
Shannon Hickey, *Hope's Harvest/Farm Fresh RI*
Stephanie Pike, *Farm Fresh RI*
Stewart Martin, *Providence Garden Works*
Tess Feigenbaum, *Epic Renewal*
Thomas Deller, *Johnston Town Planner*
Thomas Rourke, *Warwick Sanitation Supervisor*
Tiara Mack, *Rhode Island State Senate*
Tony Morettini, *Bristol School Committee*
Tony Teixeira, *Little Compton Town Administrator*
Tyson Edmonds, *The Prout School*
Vanessa Venturini, *URI Cooperative Extension*
Veronicka Vega, *Woonsocket Federal Grants Coordinator*
Warren Heyman, *RI School Recycling Project*
Will Cronin, *Middletown Recycling Coordinator*

Appendix II: Costing the Plan

							Cost Savings from a:		
Municipality	total MSW (tons)	Current landfill disposal cost	tons compostable material (33% of total MSW)	\$2/ton surcharge revenue	savings from reducing 5% of compostables	7% of compostable MSW (Tons)	7% reduction in compostables	10% reduction of compostables	15% reduction of compostables
Municipality	total MSW (tons)	Current landfill disposal cost	tons compostable material (33% of total MSW)	\$2/ton surcharge revenue	savings from reducing 5% of compostables	7% of compostable MSW (Tons)	7% reduction in compostables	10% reduction of compostables	15% reduction of compostables
Barrington	5,824.00	\$370,140.50	1,921.92	\$11,648.00	\$11,051.04	134.53	\$230.00	\$22,102.08	\$33,153.12
Bristol	6,364.00	\$336,755.50	2,100.12	\$12,728.00	\$12,075.69	147.01	\$8,599.99	-\$29,395.65	-\$29,395.65
Burrillville	5,007.00	\$292,909.50	1,652.31	\$10,014.00	\$4,833.01	115.66	\$6,766.21	\$9,666.01	\$14,499.02
Central Falls	6,107.00	\$357,259.50	2,015.31	\$12,214.00	\$5,894.78	141.07	\$8,252.69	\$11,789.56	\$17,684.35
Charlestown	726.00	\$42,471.00	239.58	\$1,452.00	\$700.77	16.77	\$981.08	\$1,401.54	\$2,102.31
Coventry	11,121.00	\$655,776.50	3,669.93	\$22,242.00	\$21,102.10	256.90	\$20,226.36	\$42,204.20	\$15,932.55
Cranston	25,937.00	\$1,539,971.00	8,559.21	\$51,874.00	\$47,692.19	599.14	\$57,706.46	\$72,727.88	\$97,763.57
Cumberland	11,427.00	\$681,192.00	3,770.91	\$22,854.00	\$23,742.41	263.96	\$15,441.88	\$34,772.32	\$45,802.24
East Greenwich	4,260.00	\$240,452.50	1,405.80	\$8,520.00	\$8,083.35	98.41	-\$3,000.75	-\$533.57	\$3,578.40
East Providence	14,477.00	\$845,209.50	4,777.41	\$28,954.00	\$12,278.92	334.42	\$17,868.49	\$12,278.92	\$40,226.77
Exeter	1,340.00	\$78,390.00	442.20	\$2,680.00	\$1,293.44	30.95	\$1,810.81	\$2,554.82	\$3,880.31
Foster	1,870.00	\$137,249.50	617.10	\$3,740.00	\$3,548.33	43.20	\$4,967.66	\$7,096.65	\$10,644.98
Glocester	2,842.00	\$166,257.00	937.86	\$5,684.00	\$2,743.24	65.65	\$3,840.54	\$5,486.48	\$8,229.72
Hopkinton	Included in Westerly					0.00			
Jamestown	2,141.00	\$142,537.50	706.53	\$4,282.00	\$4,062.55	49.46	\$5,687.57	\$8,125.10	\$12,187.64
Johnston	17,544.00	\$1,503,297.00	5,789.52	\$35,088.00	\$33,289.74	405.27	\$46,605.64	\$66,579.48	\$99,869.22
Lincoln	7,443.00	\$464,061.00	2,456.19	\$14,886.00	\$14,123.09	171.93	\$19,772.33	\$28,246.19	\$42,369.28
Little Compton	1,594.00	\$109,069.00	526.02	\$3,188.00	\$3,024.62	36.82	\$4,234.46	\$6,049.23	\$9,073.85
Middletown	2,722.00	\$159,237.00	898.26	\$5,444.00	\$2,627.41	62.88	\$5,254.82	\$7,882.23	\$11,823.23
Narragansett	5,411.00	\$316,543.50	1,785.63	\$10,822.00	\$23,472.47	124.99	\$25,561.65	\$23,472.47	\$23,472.47
New Shoreham	175.00	-\$23,380.00	57.75	\$350.00	\$332.06	4.04	\$464.89	\$664.13	\$996.19
Newport	5,753.00	\$336,550.50	1,898.49	\$11,506.00	\$5,553.08	132.89	\$7,774.32	\$11,106.17	\$16,659.25
North Kingstown	5,746.00	\$336,141.00	1,896.18	\$11,492.00	\$5,546.33	132.73	\$7,764.86	\$11,092.65	\$16,638.98
North Providence	10,863.00	\$656,051.50	3,584.79	\$21,726.00	\$20,612.54	250.94	\$35,245.72	\$41,225.09	\$75,071.53
North Smithfield	3,757.00	\$219,784.50	1,239.81	\$7,514.00	\$3,626.44	86.79	\$5,077.02	\$7,252.89	\$10,879.33
Pawtucket	26,575.00	\$1,742,217.50	8,769.75	\$53,150.00	\$50,426.06	613.88	\$70,596.49	\$100,852.13	\$151,278.19
Portsmouth	1,360.00	\$79,560.00	448.80	\$2,720.00	\$1,312.74	31.42	\$1,837.84	\$2,625.48	\$3,938.22
Providence	73,647.00	\$5,148,674.00	24,303.51	\$147,294.00	\$139,745.18	1,701.25	\$195,643.26	\$279,490.37	\$419,235.55
Richmond	1,482.00	\$86,697.00	489.06	\$2,964.00	\$1,430.50	34.23	\$2,002.70	\$2,861.00	\$4,291.50
Scituate	3,941.00	\$272,245.50	1,300.53	\$7,882.00	\$7,478.05	91.04	\$10,469.27	\$14,956.10	\$22,434.14
Smithfield	5,836.00	\$341,406.00	1,925.88	\$11,672.00	\$5,633.20	134.81	\$7,886.48	\$11,266.40	\$16,899.60
South Kingstown	5,632.00	\$329,472.00	1,858.56	\$11,264.00	\$5,436.29	130.10	\$7,610.80	\$10,872.58	\$16,308.86
Tiverton (estimate)	3,414.00	\$103,895.00	1,126.62	\$6,828.00	\$6,478.07	78.86	\$9,069.29	\$12,956.13	\$19,434.20
Warren	3,759.00	\$236,964.50	1,240.47	\$7,518.00	\$7,132.70	86.83	\$9,985.78	\$14,265.41	\$21,398.11
Warwick	26,768.00	\$1,632,880.50	8,833.44	\$53,536.00	\$50,792.28	618.34	\$103,125.44	\$101,584.56	\$152,376.84
West Greenwich	1,186.00	\$69,381.00	391.38	\$2,372.00	\$1,144.79	27.40	\$1,602.70	\$2,289.57	\$3,434.36
West Warwick	10,083.00	\$619,913.50	3,327.39	\$20,166.00	\$19,132.49	232.92	\$43,683.66	\$39,790.62	\$57,397.48
Westerly	9,628.00	\$672,904.50	3,177.24	\$19,256.00	\$18,269.13	222.41	\$25,576.78	\$36,538.26	\$54,807.39
Woonsocket	9,610.00	\$562,185.00	3,171.30	\$19,220.00	\$9,276.05	221.99	\$12,986.47	\$18,552.11	\$27,828.16
STATEWIDE MUNICIPAL TOTAL	343,372.00	\$21,862,322.50	113,312.76	\$686,744.00	\$594,997.12	7,931.89	\$807,635.20	\$1,050,152.19	\$1,550,264.22

Potential Savings:

While the WFSAP will not provide costs for every project, The Network and RIFPC Compost Workgroup did significant work in understanding the potential for savings from diverting wasted food from the landfill. The chart below based on RIRRC data⁵² demonstrates where each municipality stands in terms of total municipal waste generated, and what the potential savings would be if it achieved even modest rates of diversion such as 5-7%.

With a 7% reduction or less in the state's compostable materials, the state would save more than the amount municipalities would pay with a \$2 surcharge as recommended by the "Compost Fund" legislation. This annual savings is through MSW tipping fees alone. Meanwhile, the infrastructure funded by those savings is additive; backyard compost bins, drop off stations, food scrap buckets or trucks in the first year would still be in use the next year allowing the savings to continue to grow.

⁵²<https://rirrc.org/sites/default/files/2023%20Municipal%20Summary%20Detailed%20with%20Charts%2020240401.pdf>