

# It's Not Just for Recycling! Creative Uses of SWIFR Grants

Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) grants, also called Recycling Grants, are a new program created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to improve recycling and other post-consumer materials management, implement circular economy strategies, and improve local waste management systems. In the fall of 2023, the EPA announced the first round of SWIFR [grant winners](#).

One thing winning applications had in common was that they were able to provide data about the impact of their project, such as:

- how their grant will benefit a disadvantaged community or be aligned with the Justice40 initiative
- how many jobs would be created as a result of grant funds
- CO2 emissions reduction estimates
- estimated waste diverted from landfills

See below for some creative ways communities will be using these funds.

## #1 Making composting the new normal

[Composting provides many benefits](#), including reducing both landfill waste and the production of greenhouse gases in landfills, but can feel inaccessible for households to do on their own. There is increasing interest in [municipal composting programs](#) that can bridge that gap, often providing curbside pickup similar to the system for trash and recycling.

Many winning SWIFR applications were for creating or expanding composting programs. Cities proposed strategies like expanding composting programs for households in [Stamford, Connecticut](#) and [Bozeman, Montana](#), expanding composting in commercial buildings in [Providence, Rhode Island](#), and creating or expanding composting facilities in [Iowa City, Iowa](#).

## #2 Expanding the local circular economy

A [circular economy](#) encourages re-use and other ways of keeping items in circulation for as long as possible, extending the lifespan of products and diverting them from landfills. Cities like [Austin, Texas](#) and [Seattle, Washington](#) focused on this aspect of waste management in their SWIFR applications. Austin and Seattle both proposed the creation of warehouses for items like salvaged wood, used furniture, and construction materials. Austin will also redistribute gently used furniture to local nonprofits, especially for use by individuals and families transitioning out of homelessness. [Hawai'i County, Hawaii](#) proposed creating a reusable food ware and water bottle facility to reduce single-use food containers, water bottles, and serve ware in the area.

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## #3 Providing education and outreach

Within the SWIFR grant program, there is a funding stream specifically for [education and outreach grants](#) for social media, public service announcements, advertisements, labeling, signage, etc. Education and outreach efforts can provide information about which materials are accepted by recycling and composting programs in order to increase program uptake and reduce contamination rates.

Education and outreach activities can also be incorporated into SWIFR community grants. For example, [Nassau County, Florida](#) included a county-wide public education campaign into their successful grant application.

## #4 Expanding recycling and composting capacity with facilities or transportation improvements

While education and outreach are a critical component of ensuring widespread uptake of recycling and composting programs, their expansion also requires increased capacity for accepting materials. Several SWIFR selectees proposed expanding their ability to accept recycling or compost. For example, a grant for Durham County will be used to expand a drop-off site in [Durham, North Carolina](#).

Some grantees even found ways to both expand capacity and transition to green energy at the same time. [Baltimore, Maryland](#) will be using its grant to create a solar-powered composting facility and [Ontario, California](#) will be using theirs to purchase new electric-powered recycling trucks.

## #5 Upgrading recycling programs

Many communities have experienced [recycling challenges](#) in recent years, with some losing their ability to provide curbside recycling or process recycling locally. Several SWIFR grants will establish or expand curbside recycling, particularly in rural or disadvantaged areas, such as those for [Boonslick, Missouri](#), [Front Royal, Virginia](#), and [New Orleans, Louisiana](#).

Other grantees will upgrade their recycling systems by purchasing a baler to manage plastic bags like in [Ocean County, New Jersey](#) or establishing and improving single stream recycling like in [Greenfield, Massachusetts](#) and [Lucas County/Toledo, Ohio](#).

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**NOFO application deadline:  
2024 NOFO not yet released**