

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
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CT DEEP Materials Management Infrastructure Grant Application

I. Executive Summary

Application Title: Regional Food Waste Collection and Processing Demonstration Project

Lead Applicant: Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG)

Project Partners: Town of Windham, CLiCK, Eastern Connecticut State University, Windham Public Schools

Amount of Funding Requested: \$425,711.00

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Eligibility: The applicant is the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG), a regional council of governments representing 22 municipal jurisdictions in Southeastern Connecticut. In this application, SCCOG is partnering with multiple departments and stakeholders in the Town of Windham to accomplish the proposed food waste diversion deliverables. A portion of the requested grant funds will be directly sub-awarded to the Town of Windham for project-specific activities.

Application Structure: SCCOG presents the MMI application in a cohesive narrative form. To guide evaluators and ensure that all required narrative components have been included, we include the chart below itemizing the page location of all required narrative components. Please reference where it is helpful.

Required Narrative Component	Page Number
1a: Essential elements of the proposed infrastructure	2-4
1b: Components of the waste stream to be diverted	2
1c: Proposed location(s)	2-4, 9, 19
1d: Municipalities served	2-4
1e: Infrastructure outcomes for waste reduction	2-4
2: Need for proposed infrastructure	5-7

3: Site control assurances	16
4: Estimate of types and amounts of waste diverted	12
5-5a: Project feasibility, including community support and partnerships for implementation	4, 15-16
6: Description of proposed facility improvements with site graphic	16, 18
7: Tie-ins between existing and new facilities and operations	8-10
8: Estimated number of residents that can use the infrastructure	10, 12
9: Ameliorating Impacts on EJ Communities	5, 10-12
10: Data gathering to demonstrate project benefit	16-17
11: Impact to current and future operating costs	13
12: Level of funding requested / capital stack details	1
13: Timeline for implementation	20-21

II. Project Description

As is the case across the state of Connecticut, member towns of SCCOG have been experiencing the ongoing challenges of managing the costs and environmental implications posed by municipal solid waste (MSW). SCCOG demonstrated the importance of this issue in its regional planning efforts by forming a solid waste committee in 2023, which is still active. From the committee meetings, the findings from its 2024 regional solid waste report, and ongoing conversations with member municipalities, comes this proposal for a solution to the issue of organic waste within the MSW stream.

The Regional Food Waste Collection and Processing Demonstration Project aims to develop the organics waste collection and processing infrastructure in Southeastern Connecticut (SECT). There are two components to this project: the first is to comprehensively address the issue of food waste in Windham through a three-pronged approach: collection, processing, and distribution. The second component seeks to demonstrate, through Windham’s example, potential food waste collection approaches that can be deployed throughout other towns in Southeastern Connecticut.

Project Component #1: Windham Food Waste Collection

To our knowledge, much of the organic material collection occurring in municipalities relies at some point on utilizing private haulers—either contracting directly with residents or with municipalities. The final destination may be a privately owned and operated compost site within the boundaries of the municipality or may involve miles of transport to a facility such as Quantum Biopower in Southington. While multiple methods of collection, hauling, and processing are necessary to build out the network and infrastructure of food waste collection and processing in the state, we are looking to reduce the amount of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and sustainably integrate both collection and processing within the existing municipal system.

In Windham, this project envisions a process whereby (1) food waste is first collected from a variety of connection points around the Town (2) food waste is processed within the

community in a specialized in-vessel composter to be located at Windham’s existing transfer station (3) finished compost will then be distributed to the community for use in areas such as community, institutional, and personal gardens. As composting will be conducted at the town-owned transfer station, site control is already obtained, thereby eliminating a significant barrier that often comes with new composting programs.

The following provides an outline of the infrastructure we propose using the project framework of collection, processing, and distribution.

Collection: Currently, Windham conducts a voluntary organics collection program at its transfer station in addition to leaf collection. CLiCK, a local Windham-based nonprofit that aims to grow a locally based food system and operates a shared-use commercial kitchen, also hosts a small and limited composting facility and collects food waste at community events. This project will build upon this existing infrastructure by expanding to local schools, increasing capacity to collect food waste at community events, increasing capacity for organics collection at the transfer station, and adding a secondary self-deposit receptacle at a strategic location within the town. Windham has committed to performing the collection and hauling of this separated waste stream through the purchase of a truck with a lift gate. For school implementation, the collection program will start with a pilot program at Windham Middle School—from the start of the school year to the winter break—with the goal of expanding to the other schools in the district thereafter. **To support collection, we are requesting MMI grant funds for the Town of Winham to purchase 40 food waste collection totes that will be deployed at the transfer station and at local schools (see Attachments A & B), and a specialized food waste collection truck to enable municipal self-hauling of food waste from these collection points to the transfer station.**

Processing: The most innovative aspect of this project is the proposed organics processing system in Windham. This proposal seeks funding for the purchase of a 40 ft. aerated in-vessel composting system, particularly the Intermodal Earth Flow from Green Mountain Technologies (GMT). Housed within a shipping container and capable of taking in 1.2 tons per day, this automated mechanical composter allows food waste to be loaded into the machine, processed via an augur, and removed after a certain number of days. Food waste can be added continuously and monitored with limited labor. Any required staff will be trained by the experienced team at GMT as part of the onboarding process. This system is notable for its space efficiency as well as the containment of smells and pests, issues common to other composting setups that can prove challenging in obtaining site approvals and working with neighbors. **To conduct processing, we are requesting MMI grant funds for the Town of Windham to purchase the 40 ft. Intermodal Earth Flow in-vessel composter and associated additions including a hydraulic tote loader, weigh station, oxygen temperature probe, and software with temperature automation. We are also requesting MMI funds to contract for the necessary electrical updates at the transfer station to serve the needs of the composter and the construction of a concrete pad.**

Distribution: In Windham, once the compost has been cured and finished with the addition of carbon inputs such as leaves, which Windham currently collects, compost can be reclaimed by residents and participating schools who wish to use the nutrient-rich product in their garden

soils. **No MMI grants funds are being requested for the distribution component of this project.**

Project Component #2: Regional Demonstration

We anticipate that this approach will serve as a model for other municipalities and communities within the SECT region who are looking to reduce the amount of organic material that ends up in municipal solid waste (MSW) streams and instead turn waste into a reusable community asset. In our ongoing discussions with municipalities within our region, however, we have learned that while many towns are very interested in beginning the process of food waste collection, there are still barriers to fully implementing a comprehensive collection system at this time. By purchasing a self-deposit receptacle that can be loaned to Windham (with the opportunity to own), SCCOG can demonstrate the possibility and efficacy of secondary drop-off locations to other municipalities who want to begin developing their own organics collection systems, but who have concerns about making the startup investment. **To facilitate this portion of collection, we are requesting MMI grants funds to enable SCCOG to purchase a secondary smart food waste drop-off receptacle with monitoring software.**

Community Partnerships

This project is ultimately a partnership between SCCOG, the Town of Windham, and future municipal partners. It has also been critically informed by valuable input from other community stakeholders such as CLiCK and the Institute for Sustainability at Eastern Connecticut State University, both located in Windham. By coordinating stakeholders at the regional, municipal, nonprofit, and institutional levels, this project offers a proposal informed by varying levels of expertise, practice, and perspective for effective planning and implementation. When first querying towns within the SCCOG region to determine interest in this grant opportunity, Windham introduced the idea of locating an in-vessel compost system within their town, an idea suggested to them by CLiCK. SCCOG, Windham staff—including the Department of Public Works and the Department of Economic and Community Development—CLiCK staff, and ECSU's Institute for Sustainability worked together to determine the most thorough and achievable composting program that could be implemented utilizing this grant opportunity. Each entity contributed context and expertise from their unique position: SCCOG was able to provide regional scope and data; CLiCK seeded the idea for in-vessel composting and committed future feedstocks; ECSU anticipates diverting future collection to the new facility as well as providing student support for education and outreach; and Windham has provided crucial information on the operations of the transfer station, current collection capacity, and quote gathering.

For all infrastructure except the smart food waste receptacle, the Town of Windham will serve as the sub-awardee for the purchase and installation of the equipment and materials needed to implement this project. SCCOG, as the lead applicant, will retain funds to purchase the demonstration smart food waste receptacle. SCCOG has also received commitments, as can be referenced in the attached letters of support, from CLiCK and Windham Public Schools to develop opportunities for providing feedstock to the composter either through existing food diversion programs or by starting new collection programs.

III. Project Need

Solid Waste in Southeastern Connecticut

Because Southeastern Connecticut is no exception to the state-wide waste crisis, SCCOG regularly coordinates with municipal officials, staff, and other stakeholders around the region to better understand how we can advance MSW practices and otherwise assist around this critical municipal service. In May 2023, the SCCOG Executive Board recommended the creation of a subcommittee that would seek to gain a better understanding of municipal solid waste operations, capacity, and innovations in the region. Since that time, Chief Elected Officials from SCCOG municipalities continue to meet to share their MSW experiences and concerns, while guests from the waste industry also attend meetings to share their expertise. The initial goals of the subcommittee were to produce a list of recommendations that SCCOG's Legislative Committee could pursue for the 2024 Regular Session of the Connecticut General Assembly, and to prepare an informative regional solid waste report to share with member municipalities, successfully completed in August 2024. In the report, SCCOG staff analyze municipal solid waste data in the region, including disposal tonnage and municipal cost data for the five-year period from 2018-2022. SCCOG staff also conducted a local survey directed at municipal staff and agents who have the most direct role in managing solid waste and solid waste contracts. The following key trends and findings emerge from the data:

1. Regional trends show that MSW costs have been increasing while communities are throwing away less trash.
2. To support municipalities in reducing solid waste costs, we need solutions that continue to reduce tonnage disposed (a variable cost) in ways that can make better use of MSW fixed costs.
3. Tools that increase predictability in MSW costs can help municipalities prepare.
4. Southeastern Connecticut has historically taken a proactive approach to solid waste management and seeks to continue this proactive approach heading into an uncertain future.

The Regional Food Waste Collection and Processing Demonstration Project addresses a critical need for regional self-sufficiency in waste management. Windham currently lacks the infrastructure necessary to fully manage its organic waste on-site, relying instead on external facilities that require significant transportation and resourcing. This dependence not only incurs financial costs but also contributes to vehicle emissions that negatively impact ambient air quality—an issue that disproportionately affects Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. As a municipality ranking #2 on the 2024 CT Distressed Municipalities list and hosting multiple EJ communities, Windham faces challenges in mitigating the disproportionate environmental and economic burdens placed on its residents. Additionally, improper disposal of organic waste in landfills contributes significantly to methane emissions, a potent greenhouse gas that exacerbates climate change impacts and has a direct impact on air quality and public health, especially for EJ communities. Establishing an accessible localized collection and processing system will enable Windham to become self-sufficient in the management of organic waste and

produce valuable compost for local use while reducing the current cumulative MSW disposal environmental impact on communities, particularly those which are low-income, vulnerable, and distressed.

Consistency with State CMMS and WM Hierarchy

SCCOG is aware of the State of Connecticut's most recent Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy (CMMS), which was originally adopted in 2016 with an amendment published by CT DEEP in January of 2023. The 2016 plan established an overarching goal of achieving 60% diversion in MSW by the year 2024 from a FY2005 starting point. The three goals for statewide solid waste management included: (1) improve the performance of municipal recycling programs and reduce waste, including increasing participation and compliance with mandatory recycling provisions; (2) develop and improve recycling and waste conversion technologies; and (3) encourage corporations that design, produce, and market products to share responsibility for stewarding those materials in an environmentally sensitive way. Municipally driven action items within the CMMS plan revolve around achieving full compliance with statutory recycling requirements and engaging in additional discretionary diversion practices. Of note, Objective 1.4, *Accelerate Progress on Organics Reduction and Diversion for Composting, Recycling, and Energy Recovery*, states that "organics management provides the largest opportunity to increase Connecticut's waste diversion," with a goal of diverting 300,000 tons of organic waste annually. It is likely that the state will not meet the goals outlined in the CMMS by the end of 2024; in 2022, only 42% of waste had been diverted instead of the 60% goal. Additionally, in 2022, only 20,999 tons of organic waste had been diverted to anaerobic digestion instead of the original goal of 300,000 tons. The State also has codified a solid waste hierarchy that favors (1) source reduction and reuse; (2) recycling and composting; (3) energy recovery; and (4) treatment and disposal as a last resort. In a more organic-specific context, according to both EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy and the State's statutory waste hierarchy, reducing the volume of surplus food generated is the most optimal solution, followed by food donation, donation of food for animal feed, composting nutrient-rich soil amendment, utilizing anaerobic digestion to convert organics to biogas and other forms of renewable energy. The least preferred solution for disposal of organics is landfilling and incineration at a waste-to-energy (WTE) facility.

The proposed Regional Food Waste Collection and Processing Demonstration Project aims to significantly reduce the volume of food waste entering the traditional MSW stream through source separation and diversion, aligning with the second most favorable management option in the State's waste management hierarchy. Unlike traditional capacity increases in waste management—typically focused on processing larger volumes of sheer garbage without addressing critical mitigation strategies like diversion—this project prioritizes a sustainable, circular solution to expand the amount of food waste that is repurposed rather than discarded, which is supportive of the aforementioned Objective 1.4 in the Connecticut CMMS. Allowing Windham's residents, schools, and community-event goers an accessible way to locally recycle their food waste and have those organics funnel back into the community as nutrient-rich finished compost aligns with both the CSSM and waste management hierarchy.

Meeting Legislative Requirements

The State of Connecticut has a Commercial Organics Recycling Law (CGS 22a-226e) that, from 2022-2024, applies to each commercial food wholesaler or distributor, industrial food manufacturer or processor, supermarket, resort or conference center that generates an average projected volume of 26 tons per year of source separated organic material (SSOM) and are within 20 miles of a SSOM processing facility. These entities must source separate and ensure recycling at any authorized SSOM composting facility that has available capacity and can accept food scrap. The trajectory of this law will become more expansive and reach a larger number of generators within the coming years, which only emphasizes the need for an increase in composting infrastructure. On or before March 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, these generating entities (with the addition of institutions which are defined as hospitality, entertainment, rehabilitation, health care services, public or independent institutions of higher education building or facility, and correctional facilities) will need to submit a report to DEEP that summarizes the entity's amount of eligible food donated, the amount of food scraps recycled, and the organics recycler(s) and associated collector(s) used. Additionally in 2025, the 20-mile radius threshold will be removed, resulting in a larger number of generators subject to the law. On and after July 1, 2026, each public or nonpublic school building or educational facility in which students in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, or any combination thereof, are enrolled that is located within 20 miles from either an authorized SSOM composting facility and that generates an average projected volume of 26 tons per year of SSOM are also subject to the law.

SB 191 - An Act Concerning Food Scrap Diversion from the Solid Waste Stream was introduced during the 2024 Connecticut legislative short session with the goal of strengthening food waste recycling efforts and addressing issues such as bottle bill fraud. The bill sought to repeal DEEP's voluntary pilot program for towns to separate source-separated organic materials and instead require municipalities to establish a program for residential separation of food scraps and food processing residues from other solid waste, as well as require the DEEP Commissioner to amend DEEP's regulations that designate mandated items for recycling to include food scraps. Additionally, the bill proposed to require certain commercial food wholesalers or distributors, industrial food manufacturers, or processors, supermarkets, institutions, resorts, and conference centers to adopt a written food donation program policy. However, despite its comprehensive approach to address localized food scrap diversion, the bill did not get signed into law during the 2024 legislative short session. While municipalities are not currently mandated to implement food scrap recycling programs, the conversation around organics recycling remains active, and it is increasingly viewed as a critical next step in addressing the state's waste management crisis. As such, it is anticipated that food scrap recycling for municipalities will likely become a mandated initiative in the future to reflect the State's commitment to sustainable waste management practices.

The Regional Food Waste Collection and Processing Demonstration Project directly supports both the existing and potential forthcoming mandates for food scrap recycling by building the infrastructure necessary to enhance capacity for compliance with anticipated requirements. The project focuses on establishing collection points at schools, transfer stations, at a drop-off point near population centers, and at community events provides a scalable, adaptable, and

replicable model for food scrap collection in other towns, while initially allowing Windham to pilot and refine their program. The project also makes compliance with current and anticipated mandates more feasible with a cost-effective localized approach to processing food scraps, ultimately reducing dependency on long hauling, which in turn will reduce VMT and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

IV. Project Integration with Current Operations

Integration with Regional Solid Waste Systems

In the process of developing the Regional Solid Waste Report, the number one take-away for SCCOG staff is the highly localized approach to solid waste management; each community has their own specific approach to MSW, and there are several points in solid waste handling where processes can diverge. For the purposes of MSW, there are 23 local government jurisdictions in the SCCOG region that set procedures and policies and carry out solid waste management. Just over half (16) of local waste entities are members of the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority (SCRRA), with certain solid waste disposal benefits accruing from this partnership, particularly in hazardous waste recovery, but also, increasingly, in food waste diversion. Municipalities with access to SCRRA have a reliable source of solid waste expertise and can collaboratively plan for evolving waste management best practices. SCRRA is currently developing a large-scale composting facility and in anticipation of its operation, some SCRRA members have started to roll out limited local food waste separation collection streams. SCCOG staff members conducted site visits to observe the transfer station-based food waste collection systems in the SCRRA towns of Preston, Ledyard, and Stonington.

As described above, SCCOG has taken on a larger technical assistance role in the realm of solid waste management at the request of member municipalities. With regional municipal solid waste frameworks bifurcated into “SCRRA” and “non-SCRRA” towns, SCCOG sees a particular need to provide technical assistance to non-SCRRA jurisdictions. Windham falls into this non-SCRRA category. Though SCRRA has indicated that the planned composting facility will be open to receiving food waste from SCRRA and non-SCRRA jurisdictions, the sheer distance between some outlying municipalities and the SCRRA composting facility creates a disincentive and an increased cost for hauling food waste from Windham to the Preston SCRRA facility once it is operational and establishes the need for a local solution.

Integration with Existing MSW Collection and Hauling Logistics

Anticipating that it will not have practical access to SCRRA’s composting facility, Windham is seeking to integrate food waste diversion into its existing municipal waste disposal operations. At present, Windham’s MSW collection system consists of two key components. First, the Town contracts with a private hauler to execute its townwide MSW and recycling curbside collection programs. Collection takes place Monday through Friday, depending on household location. Household food waste currently ends up in the curbside collection waste stream, intermixed with all other household waste. Additionally, the Town operates the Windham Transfer Station and Recycling Center, located at 8 Industrial Park Drive in North Windham. Open Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 7:30 am to 2:30 pm, the transfer station is a collection point for bulky

waste and specialty items, such as yard waste and household hazardous waste. The transfer station also accepts household waste and recycling drop-offs. Recycling is collected free of charge. Household waste is collected at a fee of \$2 per garbage bag. There is a voluntary organics collection program, including a voluntary food waste collection program. Food waste collected at the transfer station is hauled offsite by a contracted hauler to Quantum Biopower in Southington, a distance of more than 50 miles from Windham. There is no general annual fee for transfer station access. Leaves and organics are collected free of charge. There are unit-based fees for the disposal of specific items, such as wooden furniture, tires, and similar.

The proposed project has been selected for its ability to separate and remove food waste from Windham's household and institutional waste streams while also seamlessly integrating with current local MSW operations. The transfer station is located on a town-owned, 14.7-acre lot, with current excess physical space and capacity to add the proposed Intermodal Earth Flow in-vessel composter. As shown on the current as-built plan of the transfer station facility in Attachment A, the in-vessel composter will likely be located in the center of the facility, directly across from the existing row of bins. Residents with vehicles will continue to access the transfer station during its regular hours of operation, with the ability to offload food waste into food waste collection totes. In addition to resident drop-off, the in-vessel composter will be the disposal point for separated food waste generated by Windham Public Schools, which will be provided with bins to begin source-separating food scraps in lunchroom food preparation. The Windham Middle School will be the first to receive these bins and establish procedures for food waste collection. Once the procedure is set (estimated to take 3-4 months of experience at the Middle School), bins will be deployed in the remainder of Windham public schools. Once the new in-vessel composter is operational, Town staff, utilizing the proposed specialized collection truck that we are requesting as part of this application, will self-haul food waste from the schools to the in-vessel composter at the transfer station for disposal. The Town can also utilize existing leaf collection—which is stored on site—and wood chips—stored less than a mile away from the transfer station—as necessary carbon inputs in the composting process.

In addition to expanding food waste disposal and collection at the transfer station, the proposed project includes one secondary food waste drop off point outside of the transfer station.¹ The inclusion of a secondary drop-off location is an essential project component. While the transfer station serves Windham residents well, its limited hours can present a barrier to access. Households starting to separate and collect food waste may be discouraged if opportunities for disposal are limited and food waste must be kept at home for extended periods of time, prompting concerns over odor or general portability as food decays. The transfer station's location in North Windham also presents a potential barrier in that it is located off of Route 6, a major thoroughfare geared toward automobile access. Households that do not own a car or with limited automobile access may not be able to readily access the transfer station. The secondary access point overcomes these barriers by providing an on-demand disposal point that will be conveniently located in a frequently visited area of

¹ We assume that this is equivalent to a "satellite drop site for recyclables" as outlined in the General Permit for a Municipal Transfer Station guidance document.

Willimantic, in proximity to Windham's EJ communities. The Town has some degree of uncertainty over how the establishment of this access point will fit into current operations. Consequently, SCCOG and the Town are partnering in sharing the liability for this secondary smart food waste access point. SCCOG will purchase and retain ownership of a protective covering system to be installed in the secondary access point (MetroStor or similar). Windham will conduct a trial period with this receptacle and SCCOG will assist in the operation of the infrastructure, helping to set up station monitoring software and trouble-shoot technical issues that arise. The Town will commit to self-collecting and hauling the food waste from this collection point as part of its routes for collecting school-generated food waste and will comply with the requirements for a food waste satellite drop site for recyclables in terms of maximum capacity and at least twice-weekly site monitoring. SCCOG and Windham will track the usage of the collection point. SCCOG, using its own non-grant funding, will solicit the participation of five volunteers who plan to use the collection point, and will check in with these volunteers at least once monthly during the pilot period to gauge user experience and issues with the collection point. At the end of the one-year trial period, SCCOG will write a report on the outcome of the pilot year in terms of food waste diverted, user experience, and integration with municipal MSW operations. The intention would be for SCCOG to pass ownership of this infrastructure to the Town of Windham should the pilot be successful and the Town wish to continue its operation. If the Town was not able to integrate the secondary collection point with its operations in such a way that the benefits outweigh the costs, SCCOG will assume possession of the smart station infrastructure and relocate it to another SCCOG community interested in pursuing this type of collection point. This partnership structure creates a team approach to understanding the barriers and benefits to a secondary collection point that both the Town and COG can learn from during the trial period. Drawing on examples in transportation planning that utilize temporary demonstration projects to prove the efficacy of permanent solutions, this approach allows for a demonstration period that all parties hope will translate into a long-term component of food waste diversion.

V. Project Benefit and Environmental Justice Factors

Community Characteristics

The proposed infrastructure and collection network will most directly benefit the residents of the Town of Windham, Connecticut, but will also indirectly benefit the Southeastern Connecticut region at-large by piloting a novel approach to food waste collection that can be an example to other towns considering food waste management options. Windham's 27.9 square-mile area contains outlying agricultural zones, village neighborhoods in South Windham and North Windham, and the historic industrial urban center of Willimantic. Per the 2020 Census, Windham has a population of 24,425, with a population density of 903 people per square mile, among the highest for communities in the region. The neighborhood of Willimantic contains the majority of Windham's population, with about 18,149 residents. Notably, Willimantic's population density is almost four times larger than the town-wide figure, at 3,347 people per square mile. There are 8,924 households in Windham and 9,663 housing units. Household characteristics in Windham differ substantially from the region as a whole. Regionwide, 35% of

housing units are renter-occupied (2023 ACS 1-Year Estimate). In Windham, however, renters occupy over 60% of housing units. This is a reversal of regional and statewide trends, where around the same proportion of housing units – 65% – are owner-occupied. As renters, many Windham residents have less control over utility systems and the household trash collection infrastructure that landlords establish and maintain.

Windham also has a substantial minority population. According to the 2020 Decennial Census, Windham is around 56% “White” – a noticeable difference from the region’s figure of 73.8% (2023 ACS 1-Year Estimate). The rest of Windham’s racial makeup is dominated by “Some other race,” “Two or More Races,” and “Black and African American” at 20%, 14%, and 5% respectively. Windham has an expansive “Hispanic or Latino” population, making up about 42% of the town’s residents (2020 Decennial Census)—a figure that dwarfs the regional share of Hispanic residents of about 15% (2023 ACS 1-year Estimate).

The median household income in Windham is \$49,528, falling severely behind the state’s figure of \$83,771 (ACS 2021 ACS 5-year Estimate). This aligns with Windham's status as a Distressed Community, traits of which include “high unemployment and poverty, aging housing stock and low or declining rates of growth in job creation, population, and per capita income.” Additionally, these economic conditions have compounded the town’s struggle with environmental justice. Windham contains 12 EJ Block Groups, most of which are located in and around the neighborhood of Willimantic. At the federal level, Windham meets the criteria for a Disadvantaged Community under the EPA Justice40 program. Data presented in EPA EJ Screen Community Reports show that the residents of these block groups suffer disproportionately from adverse health effects when compared statewide (as well as nationwide). Alarming, Windham has several block groups that rank in the mid-to-high 90% range for low life expectancy, heart disease, asthma, and persons with disabilities (see below). These on-the-ground factors position Windham as a good candidate to receive assistance from state and federal programs that encourage growth, innovation, and environmentally positive outcomes.

WINDHAM, CONNECTICUT EJScreen Block Groups - Health Data (State Percentile)					
BLOCK GROUP #	Low-Life Expectancy	Heart Disease	Asthma	Cancer	Persons with Disabilities
91808003003	81	18	97	2	72
91808003001	N/A	18	97	2	72
91808003002	81	18	97	2	72
91808005011	N/A	94	74	69	78
91808005012	81	94	74	69	78
91808005013	81	94	74	69	78
91808005021	81	94	74	69	77
91808005022	81	94	74	69	77
91808005023	81	94	74	69	77
91808006001	96	18	86	2	95
91808006002	96	18	86	2	95
91808006003	96	18	86	2	95
AVERAGE	85.5	56	82.75	35.5	80.5

To meet the needs of students in this area, there are a total of eight schools in the Windham Public Schools system: four elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, one alternative high school, and one STEM Magnet K-8 school. The combined enrollment for all these schools was 3,209 students as of January 2024. Starting in Willimantic, Windham Middle School will lead the way with a food waste pilot program in the lunchrooms. The program will

entail multiple bins being provided to the middle school for the collection of food waste generated in food preparation. After this procedure is set (around 3-4 months), the goal is to expand this program to all Windham public schools. Because the schools are Town-owned property, the approval process is streamlined and therefore primed for specialized containers and organics diversion programs. Eastern Connecticut State University is a notable institution in Windham that also has potential to and interest in integrating into the organics collection network in the future. A goal of this integration process is to have ECSU provide educational training to students for the purpose of improving food waste disposal and composting efforts.

Windham is a diverse and populous mid-sized community. The town, with its high number of schools and relative density, can greatly benefit from the proposed food waste collection program. By providing several kinds of opportunities for food waste collection at the transfer station, at a secondary smart collection location, and in public schools, residents of varying housing tenure, levels of income, and car access can opt in to a food waste collection method that fits their needs. Cited on Town property, the proposed collection points enable those renting to dispose of their food waste without requiring local waste collection changes from their landlords. Also, the opt-in nature of this program avoids placing unnecessary financial stress on those residents of Windham who are economically strained and may not have the resources to sort and discard their food waste. Lastly, Windham residents' disproportionately high experience of health issues highlights the need for environmental investments, such as the proposed in-vessel composter, to help reverse course on decades-old air quality problems exacerbated by the emissions accompanying long-hauling MSW disposal pathways.

Anticipated Volumes and Residents Served

Current food waste collection in Windham consists of a voluntary drop-off at the transfer station, —there is not yet a data collection process in place for this collection point—a commercial kitchen scrap collection at CLiCK which diverts 2,100 lbs of food scraps in a 26-week period, and food waste diversion efforts at large community events. By expanding food collection and processing within proximity to its service area, CLiCK anticipates a significant increase in the amount of food waste it will be able to divert.

This project anticipates program implementation in the schools as a significant driver of food waste diversion. Public school students produce about 36.5 lbs of food waste per student per year.² Given enrollment numbers within Windham Public Schools, the school system therefore has the potential to divert around 117,128 lbs of food waste per year. Pairing additional bins at the transfer station with educational outreach driven by Windham, CLiCK, and ECSU will also expand the collection footprint and increase volumes diverted from the MSW stream among community households. Locating a secure smart composter receptacle point at a high traffic area in town will also result in increased volumes collected. One tool SCCOG has at its disposal to determine the best location for such infrastructure is the *placer.ai* software which allows users to see traffic patterns and traffic volume. While the Winham Senior Center is currently the leading and most likely location for the smart compost station, SCCOG staff will assist the

² National Farm to School Network, 2018: *Plastic Waste Warriors: How Schools are Reducing Food Waste*.

Town in making the final determination with tools that help inform where they will be the most frequently utilized. Increasing capacity at the transfer station and adding a secondary collection site will not reach all residents of Windham. But by providing more options, more people will have the chance to participate, which may increase evidence supporting future investment for even further diversion. If proven effective as a demonstration, this project has the potential to have a far-reaching impact by inspiring similar actions in other municipalities throughout the region and the state.

Impacts to Current and Future Operating Costs

Overall, the removal of food waste from the waste stream, on-site disposal at the transfer station, and the resultant reduction in weight and volume of general household MSW will translate into reduced disposal costs for the Town of Windham. Transfer station staff will facilitate the aggregation of waste from the publicly accessible food waste collection totes to the in-vessel composter. The project budget includes training for current DPW staff to learn how to operate the in-vessel composter. The Town does not anticipate the need to hire additional DPW or transfer station staff to successfully run the in-vessel system, or to self-haul food waste from the schools and the secondary collection point to the transfer station. Staffing costs are therefore unaffected. The in-vessel system will require regular maintenance. Maintenance costs will be factored into the department's annual budget and the Town's capital improvement planning program. Future operating costs tied to the secondary collection point are an uncertainty in this project. However, the partnership approach and demonstration project (i.e. potentially temporary) nature of the project will allow the Town the opportunity to understand operating costs without committing to perpetual costs related to high service and maintenance requirements. This experimental period will provide the town with significant information—are users able to use the MetroStor technology sufficiently such that drop-offs are made when waste levels are minimal, preventing abandonment of waste outside of the bin if it is at capacity? Is there excessive vandalism? Does the drop-off point cause too much traffic and congestion? These are all questions that will be explored during the pilot period, with their full implications for operation costs factored into the Town's ultimate decision to make the drop-off permanent or return the infrastructure to SCCOG for deployment in a different location and municipal context. There will be ongoing costs to residents who opt in to the food waste drop-off program in purchasing compatible food waste disposal bags. In future, the Town can explore ways to offset these costs to increase participation, perhaps through waste-related streams such as using nip bottle proceeds.

Budget Detail

The following budget matrix presents the costs per item and total amount requested in MMI funds for the infrastructure needed to fulfill this project. A total of **\$421,515** will be sub-awarded to the Town of Windham for the purchase of most of the equipment and contractual needs for this project. **\$4,196** will be used directly by SCCOG for the purchase of the smart food waste receptacle and its associated software and training fee. While the MMI grant is limited in its scope to just infrastructure needs, this project represents a considerable amount of in-kind expenditure in the form of staff time. All parties have contributed staff time to the preparation of this application; SCCOG will dedicate additional staff time to program evaluation and

ensuring the smart receptacles are established and monitored; the Town of Windham will dedicate staff time toward establishing and operating the composter and conducting hauling; and CLiCK, ECSU and Windham Public Schools will also contribute ongoing staff time to coordinating education, event collection, and programmatic elements that work for their unique contexts. This allocation of resources demonstrates a commitment on the part of this project's stakeholders to seeing this project through to completion and success.

Cost Category	Item	Project Component	Unit Price	Units	Total
Equipment	Intermodal Earth Flow 40ft. in-vessel composter + estimated freight	Transfer station compost unit	\$184,950.00	1	\$184,950.00
Equipment	Hydraulic tote loader	Transfer station compost unit	\$14,950.00	1	\$14,950.00
Equipment	Weigh station	Transfer station compost unit	\$4,950.00	1	\$4,950.00
Equipment	Oxygen temperature probe	Transfer station compost unit	\$1,515.00	1	\$1,515.00
Equipment	WebMACS interface & temperature automation	Transfer station compost unit	\$12,450.00	1	\$12,450.00
Contractual	In-vessel composter commissioning and training (includes travel)	Transfer station compost unit	\$7,000.00	1	\$7,000.00
Equipment	Tipper carts	Transfer station and public school food waste collection points	\$117.50	40	\$4,700.00
Equipment	Smart food waste receptacle	Smart Compost Station food waste collection point	\$3,908.00	1	\$3,908.00
Equipment	Smart food waste receptacle software/training fee	Smart Compost Station food waste collection point	\$288.00	1	\$288.00
Equipment	Collection truck with lift gate	Food waste hauling - all collection points to transfer station	\$125,000.00	1	\$125,000.00
Contractual	Permitting support	Transfer station compost unit	\$1,000.00	1	\$1,000.00
Contractual	Electrical	Transfer station compost unit	\$40,000.00	1	\$40,000.00

Construction	Concrete pad	Transfer station compost unit	\$25,000.00	1	\$25,000.00
				TOTAL :	\$425,711.00

VII. Project Implementation

This section details the anticipated roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders, the status of and plan for site implementation, and a timeline for expected activities and benchmarks.

Project Partner Roles & Responsibilities

Just as this application was the culmination of a collaborative effort to determine the needs and solutions of organics collection and processing in Windham and SECT, so too will the implementation require participation from a variety of entities.

SCCOG: As the applicant, SCCOG will continue to take the lead in coordinating all entities for project preparation, implementation, and evaluation. This may include participating in permitting discussions and acquisition, communicating with vendors, ensuring data-collection systems are established, and collaborating with ECSU and Windham Public Schools on an educational component for students and households. SCCOG will also continue to communicate with other towns in SECT who are interested in locating collection receptacles within their municipalities. SCCOG will have ownership over the smart food waste receptacle and will work with Windham on integrating this equipment into their diversion process.

Windham: The Town of Windham will work to prepare all elements of the transfer station to ensure the site is ready to receive and install the in-vessel composter. This includes coordinating with an electrician and a contractor for the installation of a concrete pad. Windham will also coordinate closely with CLiCK and Windham Public Schools on establishing a system for collection of organic materials generated from those organizations' sites. The Town will also establish data gathering processes to determine volumes of waste diverted.

Windham Public Schools: Beginning with Windham Middle School, the public school system in Windham will work with the Town, CLiCK, and ECSU to develop a food waste diversion program in the lunchroom that includes both educational components and everyday practice, with the hope that these methods will extend to individual households. Schools will also conduct field trips to the in-vessel composting system at the transfer station to see live and in-person the process of turning food waste into nutrient rich compost.

CLiCK: As an organization that promotes and fosters equitable and healthy food systems, CLiCK operates a composting program focused on scraps from their on-site commercial kitchens as well as food waste from large community events. CLiCK has committed to providing weekly feedstock to the new in-vessel composter, offering guidance on collection systems, including those at town events, and providing educational support for onboarding the schools as well as residents who opt-in to the collection program.

Eastern Connecticut State University: ECSU's Institute for Sustainability will engage students within its sphere of influence to host zero-waste events that divert food waste to the Windham composter, leverage student participation to conduct educational outreach campaigns, and serve as an ongoing stakeholder in engaging local businesses to divert food waste. The Institute will supply interns to ensure data collection, reporting, and integration with the Town's Committee on Energy and Sustainability. These interns may be able to additionally support operations at the site if volume exceeds DPW capacity. The Institute has also committed to identifying other sources of funding to help resource a residential composting kickoff program whereby residents would have access to free countertop compost buckets that can be filled and taken to the transfer station. Such efforts have been implemented in other towns with success.

Site Plan and Preparation

This project enjoys a particular startup advantage because it does not require any additional land acquisition and is located on a parcel where the Town already maintains site control. The in-vessel composter will be located at the Town's transfer station, additional totes will be located at the schools, and the secondary demonstration drop-off location will be sited at a Town-owned property.

Site preparation for the in-vessel composter requires deciding on the appropriate location at the existing transfer station (see Attachment A); determining any needed changes to the transportation path to/from the composter within the facility; installing a concrete pad for offloading compost; determining the water hookup location; and contracting with a local electrician for electrical hookup. Any additional site design requirements can be completed in-house via Windham's engineer.

For permitting, Windham already holds a General Permit for the operation of the existing transfer station. According to DEEP's Pathways for Food Waste permit structure, we anticipate setting up a pre-application meeting with a DEEP representative to determine the specific requirements for our context. Based on the existing table, we plan to provide an update on facility design and management, the specifics of which are to be determined in the pre-application meeting. SCCOG has already initiated communication with DEEP to set up this meeting. While the transfer station is not located within an EJ Block group, because it is in a distressed municipality, we plan to publicly provide information on the new activity being performed at the transfer station.

Program Evaluation

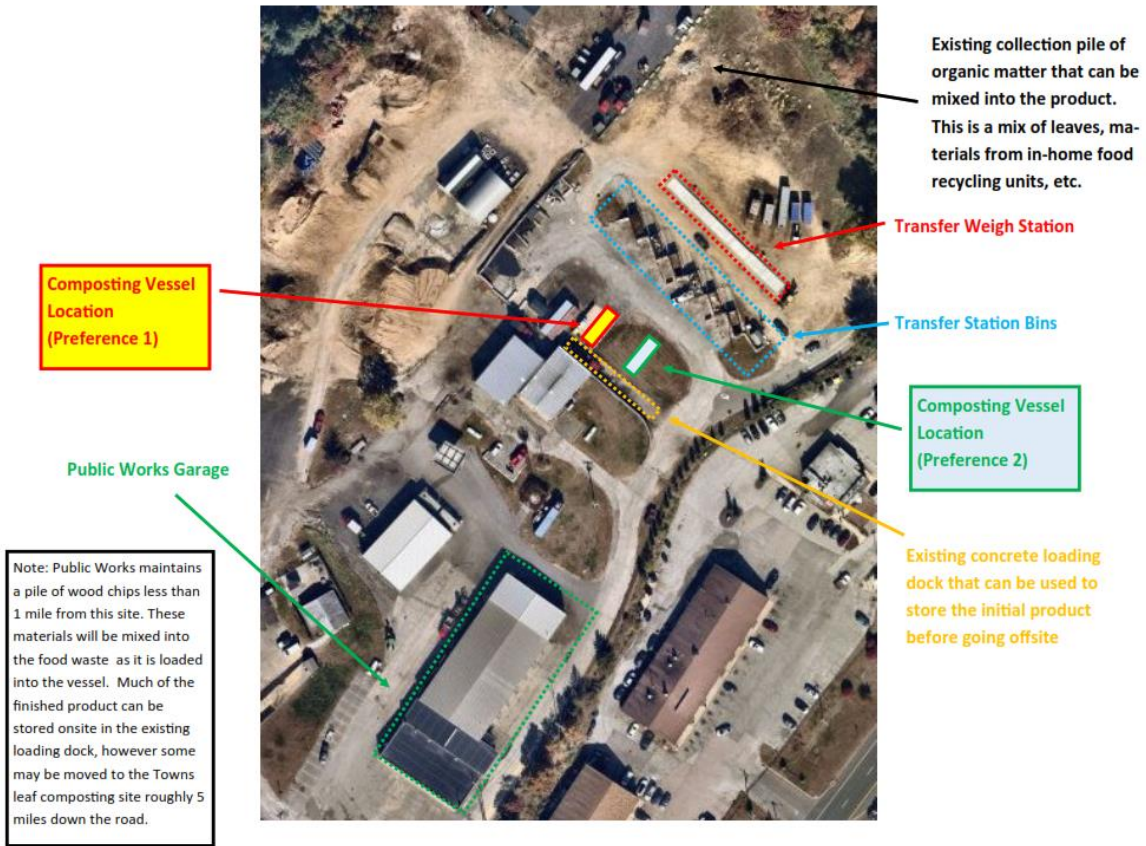
To evaluate the efficacy of the program once implemented, the project partners will focus on strategic data gathering oriented towards volume of waste collected at all types of sites where collection and processing occurs. Current data collection pertaining to organics at Windham's transfer station is limited to leaf collection. While Windham does host food scraps bins at its transfer station, this material is collected by a private hauler and the Town does not independently collect information on the volumes deposited. This proposal provides a great opportunity to develop data collection methods to better determine the rate of food waste diversion and to adjust approaches accordingly.

For organic waste coming into the transfer station, Windham currently has a scale that will enable staff to see the total volume of organic waste that is being transported at any given time. However, with the purchase of an additional weigh station through the in-vessel equipment package, staff will be able to weigh each toter individually before it is put into the composter, providing a more in-depth and accurate view of how much food waste is being collected from each source and thus how much is being diverted from the standard MSW stream. The secondary drop-off receptacle can also be monitored daily for its fullness levels and hours of use, enabling evaluators to see what common times are for deposit. In total, this data will inform future decisions regarding collection, outreach campaigns, or parallel inducement programs. Composting staff will integrate this data gathering and logging process into their weekly systems. The Institute for Sustainability is also willing to provide interns to assist in the data collection process. By taking a pilot approach starting at Windham Middle School, we can also take time to evaluate the efficacy of the program in a school setting and determine challenges and needed adjustments. Once the program has been vetted for a few months, it can be expanded to other schools within the district.

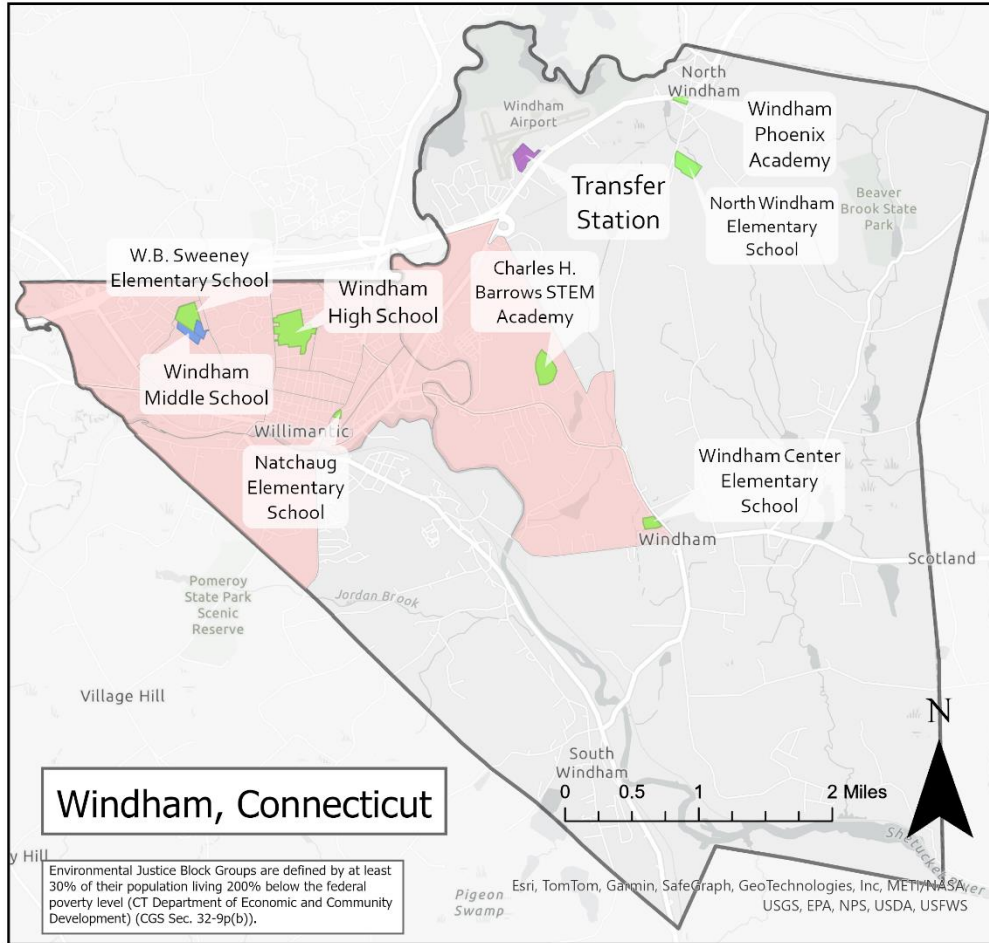
As demonstrated in the Implementation Timeline (Attachment C), SCCOG and project partners will work diligently in a collaborative manner to ensure the efficient completion of the proposed project. The Regional Food Waste Collection and Processing Demonstration Project offers a practical, forward-thinking solution to managing food waste within the Southeastern Connecticut region. Windham's proximity to existing and planned composting infrastructure, along with the town's diverse community demographics and need for self-sufficiency make it an ideal place to pilot this initiative. Additionally, the project's accessibility to Windham's extensive network of students, residents, and large population of renters practically guarantees an increase in food waste diversion without adding any undue financial burden to community members. In addition to expanded food waste diversion, this project will result in visible co-benefits for the community, such as reductions in noise pollution, truck traffic, and greenhouse gas emissions from current hauling practices. The ultimate integration of food waste collection, advanced on-site composting technology, and community-focused participation and distribution will result in this project reducing waste, creating nutrient-rich compost, and serving as a model for other towns in the state. We thoroughly believe this proposal is a strategic and impactful use of state funding that not only addresses immediate needs to mitigate the solid waste crisis but also paves the way for long-term environmental and public health benefits. Thank you for your consideration.

Attachment A. Transfer Station As-Built Site Plan Indicating Intended In-Vessel Composter Location

Town of Windham Food Waste Composting and Regional Collection Network Conceptual Site Plan (Windham DPW—8 Industrial Drive, North Windham)



Attachment B. Key Composting Locations



Proposed Locations of Food Waste Collection Bins

- Pilot Program Participant
- Windham Middle School
 - Other Windham Public Schools
 - Transfer Station
- Environmental Justice Block Groups**
- Windham EJ Block Groups 2023

Windham in relation to Major Organics Waste Processing Centers in CT



Attachment C. Program Implementation Table

Tasks	Responsible Party	Timeline													
		Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Initiate permit pre-application meeting with DEEP representative	SCCOG Windham														
Receive notice of award determination	DEEP														
Finalize transfer station site plan requirements	Windham SCCOG														
Obtain permits for electrical and concrete work at transfer station	Windham														
Determine location for secondary drop-off	SCCOG Windham														
Coordinate with GMT to determine final specifics for in-vessel purchase	Windham SCCOG														
Coordinate with Windham Middle School for program implementation/evaluation plan	Windham Windham Public Schools														
Purchase all required equipment	SCCOG Windham														
Coordinate with relevant stakeholders on educational outreach campaign/materials	SCCOG Windham Windham Public Schools CLICK ECSU														

Equipment installation at transfer station; smart receptacle installation	GMT Windham SCCOG														
Roll out program at Windham Middle School	Windham Windham Middle School														
Program evaluation	All parties														
Expand collection to other schools	Windham Windham Public Schools														

TOWN OF WINDHAM

979 Main Street
Windham, CT 06226-0220
860-465-3004



December 2, 2024

State of Connecticut
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
ATTN: Katie Dykes
79 Elm Street
Hartford CT 06103-5127

RE: DEEP Materials Management Infrastructure Grant Application - Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments and Town of Windham

Dear Ms. Dykes:


As Mayor of the Town of Windham, I am proud to offer my full support for the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments and the Town of Windham's application for the DEEP Materials Management Infrastructure Grant. This funding will be used to acquire essential equipment and infrastructure to advance sustainable waste management practices, particularly in the collection and processing of compostable materials.

The requested grant will help fund the purchase of equipment necessary for collection, processing, and storing compostable materials, and the final product, all in the Town of Windham. These investments are crucial to improving our community's capacity to efficiently handle waste while reducing environmental impact. We believe this initiative will become a model of food diversion, and waste reduction in the region, and beyond.

The Town of Windham has long been committed to sustainability and environmental stewardship. The implementation of these improvements will allow us to enhance our waste management capabilities, support regional recycling efforts, and provide a valuable resource for local residents and businesses. The Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, alongside Windham, is leading this initiative to ensure that we are better equipped to handle the growing demand for environmentally responsible waste management solutions.

Once again, I fully support the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments and the Town of Windham's application for the DEEP Materials Management Infrastructure Grant. We are confident that this investment will play a vital role in improving waste management practices in our region. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarification.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. DeVivo, Mayor
Town of Windham



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE SUSAN M. JOHNSON
FORTY-NINTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING ROOM 4029
HOME: 860-423-2085
CAPITOL: 860-240-8585
TOLL FREE: 800-842-8267
FAX: 860-240-0206
E-MAIL: Susan.Johnson@cga.ct.gov

DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
HOUSING COMMITTEE

December 3, 2024

Commissioner Katie Dykes
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford CT 06103-5127

RE: DEEP MMI Grant Application - Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments and Town of Windham

Dear Commissioner Dykes:

I am writing to express my strong support for the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) and the Town of Windham's application for the DEEP Materials Management Infrastructure Grant. As State Representative for Windham, I have witnessed firsthand the Town's dedication to environmental sustainability, and I am confident that this grant will play a pivotal role in furthering our local and regional sustainability efforts.

Windham is the most economically distressed town in Connecticut, because 40% of Windham's property value is tax exempt in accordance with state law. Windham faces unique challenges in managing resources, particularly in waste diversion and environmental stewardship. The proposed infrastructure improvements, including the acquisition of composting equipment, collection containers, and necessary upgrades to Windham's transfer station, are critical to advancing the town's efforts to reduce waste and improve the environmental footprint. These investments will help Windham divert organic waste from landfills, lower waste disposal costs, and provide a sustainable model that can be shared with neighboring municipalities.

In addition to the direct benefits to Windham, this project will have a far-reaching positive impact on southeastern Connecticut. Windham serves as a regional hub for essential services, and the improved waste management infrastructure will allow the town to allocate resources more effectively to meet the needs of its residents. This initiative aligns with broader regional sustainability goals and will serve as an example for other communities in the region, showcasing the positive impacts of investing in responsible materials management.

I believe that the DEEP Materials Management Infrastructure Grant represents a critical opportunity for Windham to strengthen its waste management systems, reduce long-term costs, and demonstrate leadership in sustainability. The Town of Windham, together with SCCOG, is committed to achieving a greener, more resilient future, and I strongly support this application.

Thank you for considering this important initiative. If you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Susan" and last name "Johnson" clearly distinguishable.

Representative Susan Johnson
49th Assembly District

Tracy A. Youngberg, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools
tYoungberg@windham.k12.ct.us

355 High Street, Unit B
Willimantic, CT 06226
Phone: (860) 465-2310
Fax: (860) 465-2311



windhamps.org

Ms. Lynne Ide
Chair of the Board of Education

Mr. Brendan O'Neill
Vice Chair of the Board of Education

Ms. Iida Ray
Secretary of the Board of Education

December 2, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I write on behalf of Windham Public Schools in support of SCCOG/Town of Windham's application for the Materials Management Infrastructure Grant Program aimed at funding an innovative organic waste management project in Windham.

The Town of Windham has consistently demonstrated a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship and is home to several partner organizations working in this space. The proposed project promises to deliver significant benefits at both the municipal and regional levels by providing a local option for organic waste processing. The commitment of the Town's Department of Public Works to on-going operations and to deliver organic waste from the public schools makes it feasible for the schools to participate.

Windham Public School District anticipates beginning with a Windham Middle School and collaborating with the Institute for Sustainability at Eastern Connecticut State University and community partner, CLiCK, to develop organic waste diversion procedures in the lunchroom and student engagement programs to support awareness that can also influence their household engagement. There is strong support from the Town's Advisory Committee on Energy and Sustainability for this school-based program. We anticipate the organic waste diversion programs to quickly expand from the Windham Middle School as the procedures are refined over the course of a year.

Schools will play a pivotal role in increasing awareness of food waste issues related to poverty and climate change. By diverting lunchroom waste to this local compost facility, students will learn about sustainable practices and the importance of waste reduction. The Earth Flow™ composting system can become an educational field trip site much like the Windham Water Works. This educational component will foster a culture of environmental responsibility among young people, ensuring long-term community engagement and support for organic waste management initiatives.

The innovative approach of the SCCOG/Town of Windham proposal funding the Earth Flow™ composting system will serve as a model that can be replicated across other regions in CT, thereby amplifying its impact.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the proposal. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information.

Sincerely,

Tracy A. Youngberg, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



December 2, 2024

To Whom It Concerns:

I write on behalf of the Institute for Sustainability at Eastern Connecticut State University in support of SCCOG's application on behalf of the Town of Windham for the Materials Management Infrastructure Grant Program. This proposal is aimed at funding an essential and innovative organic waste management project in Windham, CT that will serve as the focal point for engaging residents and organizations to adopt sustainable organic waste management in Eastern Connecticut.

The Town of Windham has a long history of commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. Willimantic and the surrounding communities are home to several partner organizations working on sustainability and environmental education including sustainable, local food systems aimed at reducing food waste. The proposed project promises to deliver significant benefits at both the municipal and regional levels by providing a local option for organic waste processing that reduces hauling and processing costs. To my mind, the commitment and enthusiasm of the Town's Department of Public Works leadership is the key to the project's long-term success.

The Institute for Sustainability is committed to supporting the development organic waste diversion procedures in public school lunchrooms and student engagement programs to support student awareness of the effect of food waste on communities and contributions to climate change. Together with other community partners and the Town's Advisory Committee for Energy and Sustainability we are excited to build out this school-based program starting with a pilot program in the Middle School and expanding quickly from there as the procedures are refined.

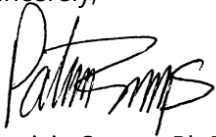
Schools will play a pivotal role in increasing awareness of food waste issues related to poverty and climate change. We know that engaging students with these issues and habits can also influence their household engagement. By diverting lunchroom waste to this proposed local compost facility, students will learn about sustainable practices and the importance of waste reduction. The Earth Flow™ composting system can become an educational field trip site much like the Windham Water Works. This educational component will foster a culture of environmental responsibility among young people, ensuring long-term community engagement and support for organic waste management initiatives. The Institute will coordinate with the Town to outreach to neighboring communities and school districts.

The Institute for Sustainability is committed to engaging college students at Eastern Connecticut State University in diverse ways to contribute to the success of this program. We see an opportunity for student-driven zero-waste events on campus to contribute organic waste to the new facility and we are committed to engaging the important stakeholders that could drive a university-level diversion commitment in the future. The Institute for Sustainability can also serve as a convening organization to engage local businesses in developing plans to increase organic waste diversion across sectors.

The innovative approach of the SCCOG proposal funding for the Earth Flow™ composting system will position the Town of Windham to serve as a model that can be replicated across other regions in Connecticut, thereby amplifying its impact.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the proposal. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Szczys', written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Patricia Szczys, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Institute for Sustainability
Eastern Connecticut State University
83 Windham Street
Willimantic, CT 06226
860-465-4324
szczysp@easternct.edu

November 25, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:



I am writing in support of CLiCK's partnership with the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments proposed compost infrastructure activity in the Town of Windham submitted for the Materials Management Infrastructure Grant.

CLiCK is a community organization committed to advancing social justice by promoting food security, supporting small and local businesses, fostering equitable and healthy food systems, and implementing food waste reduction and composting programs.

Our mission is to provide sustainable solutions for our kitchen members and the broader Willimantic community. Since 2021, CLiCK has operated a composting program that collects and processes food scraps from our commercial kitchens on-site. Additionally, CLiCK manages the Waste Not Program, a waste diversion initiative that redirects food scraps from large community events such as Willimantic's Third Thursday Street Fest and the Thread City Hop Fest, a beer festival that draws over 1,000 attendees.

Since hiring a Food Waste Reduction Coordinator in June, CLiCK has successfully diverted over 2,300 pounds of food waste. With organic material management infrastructure in Windham, CLiCK could significantly expand these efforts, providing feedstock for the program while continuing to offer expertise and resources to support the Town of Windham in implementing a comprehensive composting program.

Our goal is to contribute to the creation of a self-sustaining local waste system that prioritizes those most affected by the inequities in the current mainstream system. Through this initiative, we aim to address critical issues including food systems reform, climate change mitigation, and public health, while building resilience within our community. This project represents a vital opportunity to establish sustainable composting infrastructure in Southeastern CT, addressing a significant regional need.

Through this partnership, CLiCK will provide essential support to the Town of Windham in the following areas:

- Supplying weekly feedstock for the Earth Flow Intermodal In-Vessel Equipment.
- Offering expertise and guidance in designing and implementing an organics collection and composting program.
- Offering expertise in Event Waste Reduction Coordination for various town events.
- Developing educational materials and providing support to onboard public schools, municipal departments, community organizations, and eventually residents to the organics collection program.

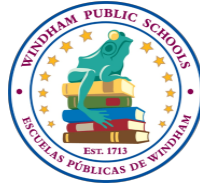
CLiCK is confident that this partnership will yield substantial environmental and community benefits. We are committed to collaborating with the Town of Windham to achieve our shared vision of a sustainable, healthy, and equitable community.

Sincerely,
Annie Geitner
Food Waste Reduction Coordinator
CLiCK Inc.

Tracy A. Youngberg, EdD.

Superintendent of Schools
tYoungberg@windham.k12.ct.us

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Willimantic, CT 06226
Phone: (860) 465-2310
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Mr. Carlos de la Barrera

*Executive Principal of Windham
Middle School*

123 Quarry Street
Willimantic, CT 06226
Phone: (860) 465-2350
Fax: (860) 465-2353
cdeLabarrera@windham.k12.ct.us

Ms. Tracy Goodell-Pelletier
Assistant Principal

Mr. Robert Raines
Assistant Principal

Ms. Joanne Haddad
Assistant Principal

To Whom It May Concern:

I write on behalf of Windham Public Schools in support of SCCOG/Town of Windham's application for the Materials Management Infrastructure Grant Program aimed at funding an innovative organic waste management project in Windham.

The Town of Windham has consistently demonstrated a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship and is home to several partner organizations working in this space. The proposed project promises to deliver significant benefits at both the municipal and regional levels by providing a local option for organic waste processing. The commitment of the Town's Department of Public Works to on-going operations and to deliver organic waste from the public schools makes it feasible for the schools to participate.

Windham Public School District anticipates beginning with Windham Middle School and collaborating with the Institute for Sustainability at Eastern Connecticut State University and community partner, CLiCK, to develop organic waste diversion procedures in the lunchroom and student engagement programs to support awareness that can also influence their household engagement. There is strong support from the Town's Advisory Committee on Energy and Sustainability for this school-based program. We anticipate the organic waste diversion programs to quickly expand from Windham Middle School as the procedures are refined over the course of a year.

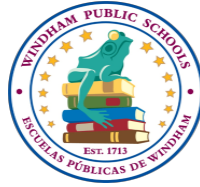
Schools will play a pivotal role in increasing awareness of food waste issues related to poverty and climate change. By diverting lunchroom waste to this local compost facility, students will learn about sustainable practices and the importance of waste reduction. The Earth Flow™ composting system can become an educational field trip site much like the Windham Water Works. This educational component will foster a culture of environmental responsibility among young people, ensuring long-term community engagement and support for organic waste management initiatives.

The innovative approach of the SCCOG/Town of Windham proposal funding the Earth Flow™ composting system will serve as a model that can be replicated across other regions in CT, thereby amplifying its impact.

Tracy A. Youngberg, EdD.

Superintendent of Schools
tYoungberg@windham.k12.ct.us

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Mr. Carlos de la Barrera

*Executive Principal of Windham
Middle School*

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cdeLabarrera@windham.k12.ct.us

Ms. Tracy Goodell-Pelletier
Assistant Principal

Mr. Robert Raines
Assistant Principal

Ms. Joanne Haddad
Assistant Principal

Thank you for your time and consideration of the proposal. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Carlos de la Barrera'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Carlos de la Barrera
Principal, Windham Middle School
Windham Public School



November 25, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

The Willimantic Food Co-op fully supports the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments proposed grant activities in the Town of Windham. We believe that this collaboration has the potential to significantly expand and enhance waste diversion efforts in the community of Windham and the Southeastern Connecticut region.

As a member-owned cooperative rooted in community and circular economic values, we prioritize sustainable waste diversion practices. We recognize that the SCCROGS Town of Windham program will play a pivotal role in promoting responsible waste management practices across the region. By combining our strengths, we can create a powerful synergy to drive meaningful environmental progress.

To support this initiative, Willimantic Food Co-op commits to providing critical resources and expertise in the following ways:

- **Operational Support:** Our experienced team will collaborate with Windham's organic collection program, providing operational assistance to ensure efficient and seamless waste management processes.
- **Community Outreach:** Partnering with Town of Windham, CLiCK Inc, and Eastern Connecticut State University's Institute for Sustainability we will actively engage in educational outreach initiatives. Through workshops, events, and communications, we will continue to inform our network about the benefits of composting and responsible waste disposal practices.
- **Drop-Off Location:** We will plan a dedicated space within the Co-op for our community members to drop off organic scraps and compostable materials, ensuring convenient access for waste diversion.

Willimantic Food Co-op is confident that this partnership will yield significant environmental and community benefits. We are committed to working closely with the Town of Windham and other stakeholders to achieve our shared vision of a cleaner, more sustainable future for our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Smith', is written over the 'Sincerely,' text.

Patricia Smith
General Manager
Willimantic Food Co-op

TOWN OF WINDHAM

979 Main Street
Windham, CT 06226-0220
860-465-3004



November 26, 2024

State of Connecticut
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
ATTN: Katie Dykes
79 Elm Street
Hartford CT 06103-5127

RE: Letter of Support - DEEP Materials Management Infrastructure Grant Application submitted by the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments and Town of Windham

Dear Ms. Dykes:

I am writing to offer my enthusiastic support for the Town of Windham and SCCOG's joint application for the DEEP Materials Management Infrastructure Grant. As Chair of both the Town Council and the Sustainability Commission, I am proud to support this critical project, which aligns closely with Windham's long-standing commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility.

The requested grant funding will enable Windham to acquire and implement essential infrastructure that will enhance our waste diversion and composting efforts. Specifically, we plan to invest in advanced composting technology, including a self-contained composting vessel, upgraded collection containers, and infrastructure improvements to our transfer station. This equipment will greatly increase our capacity to manage organic waste efficiently, reduce landfill usage, and create valuable compost that can benefit local businesses and residents alike.

Additionally, Windham is proud to have achieved bronze certification from Sustainable CT, a testament to our ongoing efforts in environmental stewardship and sustainability. The improvements made possible through this grant will directly support our goal of achieving gold certification. By expanding our composting and materials management infrastructure, we will be able to strengthen our waste diversion practices and enhance our overall sustainability efforts, bringing us closer to the highest level of certification.

I fully support this application and believe that this project will significantly advance Windham's sustainability efforts, reduce waste management costs, and serve as a model of responsible waste diversion for the region. I am confident that this investment will lead to both immediate and long-term benefits for our community and the broader area.

Thank you for considering this important request. Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dawn Niles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke.

Dawn Niles
Chair, Town Council
Chair, Sustainability Commission