

## **SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS MANAGEMENT ROUND 2 (SMMR2) GRANT PROGRAM**

### **FINAL COMPREHENSIVE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – 6/20/25**

**Q. Are school districts eligible to apply as part of a municipality? Or are they distinct and not eligible?**

A. Yes, school districts are eligible as part of a municipality.

**Q. If a former SMM grantee's pilot ended, but they're looking to implement a permanent and mandatory source separated program, are they eligible?**

A. Yes, they are eligible, provided that the grant proposal is dedicated to establishing a permanent program. A municipality that completed an original SMM grant pilot and would like to have another pilot would not be eligible.

**Q. So no applications allowed for school/university food waste programs? These are not yet mandated but will be.**

A. Universities are not eligible, but school districts can apply. Universities are already subject to the Commercial Organics Recycling Law and have access to free technical assistance through DEEP.

**Q. Is staffing an allowable expense?**

A. Direct administrative costs such as staffing are not eligible for funding under the SMMR2 grant program.

**Q. Is education and outreach an allowable expense?**

A. Education and outreach that is an essential component for implementing a new permanent program or initiative would be an eligible expense, and also similar efforts for other waste management programs and services above and beyond existing legal requirements for waste and recycling collection and disposal. However, education and outreach of a more general nature centered around compliance with existing law would not be eligible.

**Q. How could unit-based pricing be implemented for a municipality where the garbage hauling is done by private companies?**

A. There are numerous examples in Massachusetts of UBP systems that exist within the private hauling landscape. Applicants are encouraged to research and investigate how individual municipalities in other states such as Massachusetts have achieved success with UBP under a variety of community characteristics.

**Q. Will DEEP provide a rubric to determine the per capita tonnage? For example, our transfer station receives MSW from both residential and ICI generators. Back in 2017, we estimated per capita tonnage as required by the 2017 CMMS letter. However, with grant funding on the line, perhaps a rubric would allow all applicants to compute in a similar manner.**

A. Municipalities can calculate solid waste tonnage per capita by separating out residential waste tonnage from industrial/commercial/institutional (ICI) tonnage for the most current year available

and then dividing by the municipality's total population figure from the 2020 Decennial Census. Sustainable CT has also developed a methodology for per capita generation that would be an acceptable form of calculation for a SMMR2 application.

**Q. Category 2 - does this include all recyclable materials (other than food waste)?**

A. Yes, proposals regarding all other recyclable materials would fall under Category 2.

**Q. Does all funding need to go directly to program costs, or is it appropriate to request a percentage for administration (staff hours)? If not, can in-kind staff hours count as match/leverage for grant scoring?**

A. While direct administration costs are not eligible for grant funding, in-kind staff hours and services could be counted as a match for purposes of grant evaluation and scoring.

**Q. Is there a formal application or do applicants submit their own narrative (so long as they answer all required elements)?**

A. There is no formal application with specific boxes/sections to fill in. Proposals should consist of a straight narrative with supporting documentation that addresses all the RFA requirements.

**Q. Is the highest score you can get without UBP 85 out of 100?**

A. No, an applicant could still achieve a score of up to 100 without the inclusion of a UBP program component. With the inclusion of a UBP component, an applicant could potentially achieve a maximum score of 115 under Category 1.

**Q. Are local curbside compost companies that divert organic waste from restaurants and homeowners allowed to apply? All trash pickup is private in our area.**

A. Private companies are not eligible to apply for SMMR2 grant funds. This grant program is only for public entities, such as municipalities and regional quasi-governmental organizations.

**Q. What was the success rate of small towns who initiated UBP in the first round of SMM grant funding?**

A. DEEP is currently reviewing a draft final evaluation report for the original SMM program. In smaller towns or towns with transfer stations, it has been easier to set up and operate transfer station-based UBP programs than trying to implement curbside collection UBP programs, but UBP can be effective in either structure. Also, a thorough presentation on the SMM program was recently made at a Sustainable CT coffee hour and can be viewed [here](#).

**Q. Could this program fund the implementation of a Regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program, or is the priority food diversion?**

A. The Category 1 priority is centered around food scraps recycling or diversion, and food recovery/donation. A proposed program such as this could be fundable through Category 2.

**Q. Could Category 2 be used for bottle bill-related technology?**

A. Applications for bottle bill-related programs, initiatives, or equipment would not be eligible for funding under the SMMR2 grant program.

**Q. If questions will be answered on June 20th, and the grant is due on June 27th, that only gives one week to write the grant based on the responses. Could you please clarify if you will respond to any questions earlier - especially foundational questions like "is such-and-such eligible" or "is this concept appropriate?"**

A. We will post answers to submitted questions generally weekly on a rolling basis so that potential applicants will receive answers in a timely fashion.

**Q. Will the DEEP relationship with CET provide any assistance with this round 2 of SMM grant applications?**

A. Technical assistance for SMMR2 grant applications will not be part of CET's scope of work.

**Q. If DEEP cannot fund a full request, will you award partial funding if the budget is clearly broken down?**

A. Yes, partial awards are possible based upon a sufficiently itemized proposed budget.

**Q. What is the expected implementation timeframe. With notice in summertime, towns would have to add other funding into their 2026-27 budget for a July 1, 2026 implementation.**

A. The execution of assistance agreements with awarded grantees is expected to be completed by early 2026, which should permit grantees ample time to make any necessary adjustments to their proposed 2026-27 municipal general fund budgets.

**Q. Assuming there is no match requirement, correct?**

A. There is no match requirement. However, scoring for proposals under the financial feasibility criteria will be enhanced if they include a match. Matches may consist, in part or entirely, of in-kind staff time and/or services.

**Q. What is DEEP using to determine a town's population? Decennial? DPH?**

A. DEEP will be utilizing the 2020 Decennial Census total population figure when establishing the municipality size cohorts under Category 1 in the SMMR2 Grant program.

**Q. Will the grant application require the Town to have approved UBP at time of application submission? We know this takes time to move a proposal through the Town Council for approval. Or can the application reference working with respective Town entities on the approval process?**

A. Prior approval of UBP by a municipality is not required at the time of application submission. However, applications would benefit by demonstrating a level of public support commensurate with the level of grant funding requested.

**Q. We have been told that public schools are mandated to comply with food scrap diversion by mid-2026. Is that true? If yes, I gather you will not fund projects that work toward that compliance. Correct?**

A. While it is true that K-12 schools will be subject to the Commercial Organics Recycling Law effective July 1, 2026, applications for projects that address food scrap recycling or diversion at schools would be eligible for funding through the SMMR2 Grant program.

**Q. I have a qualifying question about the town size determination. If we were to apply as a Council of Governments with municipalities in each range, would we be competing in a larger pool? Are there any benefits to applying regionally if the individual municipalities might fit into differing size determinations?**

A. Regional Councils of Governments that apply under Category 1 will automatically fall into the “Large” size cohort as they all have total populations in excess of 60,000. While DEEP cannot specify the potential benefits and drawbacks of applying under the two different categories and/or as a region versus as individual municipalities, applicants should carefully consider the characteristics of their respective applications and in what ways these characteristics would make them most competitive.

**Q. Am I correct that this grant is trying to build out infrastructure and not geared towards helping municipalities develop collection routes? I'm curious what angle is most suited for this grant. Bins for residents? Totes for schools and transfer stations? A collection truck? Or all on the compost infrastructure side? Collection routes from municipal schools and residents in the area?**

A. While municipal/regional infrastructure is certainly eligible under SMMR2, it is not the sole focus of the SMMR2 grant program. The other items listed, including creating a municipal program of collection routes as part of a permanent food scraps collection initiative, would be eligible. Also, just a reminder that only public entities such as municipalities and regional quasi-governmental organizations/authorities are eligible to apply.

**Q. I get the feeling Unit Based Pricing is just another term for Pay as you Throw. Assuming that's the case, does that mean you want composting to be pay as you throw too? Not a flat subscription rate?**

A. You are correct that Unit Based Pricing is synonymous with Pay As You Throw. Ideally, food scraps would be handled on a UBP basis, but there are a number of program forms that could be workable.

**Q. We have two potential ideas for regional applications. However, we wanted to check with DEEP to see if these concepts would a) be eligible under the grant parameters and b) represent competitive proposals that align with funding priorities - Discounted Backyard Compost Bins, and Funding for Potential Regional Waste Authority Startup Costs.**

A. While we can't give specific guidance as to how competitive proposed grant concepts would be, we can say that we believe both of these concepts would be eligible for SMMR2 funding.

**Q. Could DEEP professionals guide our proposal development? We'd value advice on structuring a successful application for an ASP operation at our Transfer Station.**

A. As the state agency responsible for reviewing applications and awarding funding, DEEP staff cannot provide assistance or application specific guidance to potential applicants.

**Q. Is rent/lease of equipment eligible or only purchase?**

A. The rental or leasing of equipment needed to start up a permanent program or permanent infrastructure, but that would then no longer be needed afterwards, would be an eligible expense. However, the on-going rental/lease of equipment in lieu of purchasing the equipment would not be considered eligible.

**Q. What is allowable under operational expenses?**

A. Operational expenses will only be funded to the extent that they are necessary for the start-up and implementation of permanent waste diversion and reduction programs and initiatives. On-going operational costs for permanent programs with an indefinite timeframe are not eligible for funding.

**Q. Can a municipality apply for two projects simultaneously (e.g., composting infrastructure for organics recycling AND transitioning curbside trash pick-up to UBP)? Would those both fall under one category, or could one application span both categories?**

A. An eligible applicant can submit one application that contains components that span both RFA categories as a unified project.

**Q. What education programs would DEEP fund for our diverse population? As Connecticut's most diverse suburb with significant multifamily housing, we need tailored and tailorable approaches.**

A. Education and outreach that is necessary for implementing a new permanent program or initiative would be an eligible expense. It would also be eligible for similar efforts around other waste management programs and services above and beyond existing legal requirements for waste and recycling collection and disposal. However, education and outreach of a more general nature centered around compliance with existing law would not be eligible.

**Q. Would our container-based Unit Based Pricing approach qualify? We're looking at progressively smaller totes adjusted to household size rather than bag-based programs.**

A. Container-based UBP approaches would be eligible for SMMR2 grant funding.

**Q. Can the formula take account of regional benefits? Our Transfer Station's Aerobic Static Pile operation would serve beyond just our municipality's MSW.**

A. Regional benefits are only eligible for consideration if other municipalities are committed to sending organic waste to the proposed facility in your municipality.

**Q. How can we meet the grant's diversion quotient requirements? Currently, we could divert about 30 tons of food waste from our schools, but this creates a small quotient when divided by our number of residents.**

A. The amount of waste diverted relative to the municipal population is an important metric. Prospective applicants should continue a variety of waste streams to increase their tonnage.

**Q. Is a feasibility study for a regional anaerobic digester eligible under this R2 that includes start-up and phased implementation for multiple communities and educational institution(s) in the region?**

A. If the feasibility study transitions into the start-up and implementation of a permanent regional anaerobic digester as a unified project, the study would be considered eligible. However, just a standalone feasibility study that does not automatically lead to permanent infrastructure or the implementation of a permanent program would not be considered eligible.

**Q. I work for a public school food service department and was hoping funds would be available for us to implement composting in our school sites. I am unsure on #4 in implementation and reporting requirements considering we have not yet done our waste audits. In order to receive funding would this need to be done prior to applying for the grant?**

A. Waste audits would not necessarily be needed to be completed prior to the submission of an SMMR2 application by an eligible applicant.

**Q. I gather that no expenses incurred before the Assistance Agreement is executed would be reimbursable. Correct?**

A. Correct, any expenses incurred before the full execution of the Assistance Agreement would NOT be eligible for reimbursement.

**Q. Would expenses incurred after Assistance Agreement is executed in early 2026 and before July 1, 2026 be eligible under the grant, even if the schools have the project funded in their budget than ends June 30, 2026?**

A. Yes, expenses incurred after the Assistance Agreement is executed and before July 1, 2026 would be eligible under the grant, even if the schools have a project funded in their budget which ends June 30, 2026.

**Q. In general, I see in one of your answers that the timing of the Assistance Agreements is more in step with projects to be implemented during FY27. That effectively precludes schools working to comply with CORL by 7/1/26.**

A. As far as using funds to assist with preparations for the law change on 7/1/26, if the project were a quick duration one, a substantial amount of the grant funds could be utilized by school prior to 7/1/26, so it definitely wouldn't rule out such projects.

**Q. Does DEEP anticipate an additional round of SMM funding in 2026/2027?**

A. DEEP does not currently have funding to support an additional round of SMM funding in 2026-27, but will announce any additional funding opportunities as soon as they become available.

**Q. What is the duration of the grant period? Do grant funds need to be expended within a certain timeframe?**

A. While there is no definitive cut-off date for expenditure of SMMR2 grant funds, DEEP does not envision this grant program as being a long-term program. Therefore, grant applications that present a more aggressive project schedule and deployment of funds will likely be scored more favorably.

**Q. I see in the FAQ from 5/9 that 'Direct administrative costs such as staffing are not eligible for funding' under this program. Would COG staff time to conduct research and produce part of a regional roadmap report be an eligible expense? The other portion of the report that COG staff do not do in-house would theoretically be contracted out. This is in relation to the text in the RFA that says 'Awards may also be used to fund technical assistance to regional waste authorities, COGs, and individual municipalities to produce targeted assessments and road maps for action in the development of waste reduction/diversion programs on a regional scale.'**

A. COG staff time for completing such research and drafting documents would not be an eligible expense under the SMMR2 grant program. However, completion of such studies and technical assistance in developing regional “roadmap” reports by outside vendors would be an eligible expense.

**Q. Does CT DEEP have any existing partnerships or projects with the Regional Education Service Centers in relation to this grant/work program area that applicants should be aware of, in order to reduce duplicative efforts that the State may already be undertaking?**

A. To the best of our knowledge, DEEP does not have any partnerships with RESCs that would be related to this grant program.

**Q. We are looking to write a vendor into our grant application as a subawardee, rather than going through a procurement process after the award is received. This complies with our agency financial policy. Does CT DEEP have any requirements surrounding this?**

A. DEEP is not able to accept an application that has a particular vendor designated as a subawardee. Regardless of whether an eligible applicant’s particular financial and procurement policies allow for sole sourcing, DEEP grant monies should always be utilized through a competitive procurement process.

**Q. Would other state funds count as match (i.e. in-kind time funded by the Regional Services Grant)?**

A. DEEP generally doesn’t accept match funds through another state grant, so the in-kind time funded by the Regional Services Grant could not be applied to the SMMR2 grant application.

**Q: Can you answer this question: Our municipality is already under water in terms of composting costs for the last 3 years, we have been doing a transfer station food scrap**

**diversion project. In our budget plan for the grant, can we ask for reimbursement for those costs along with the costs if we decide to do an expansion of drop-off sites?**

A. DEEP cannot fund reimbursement for expenses that were incurred prior to the execution of a grant assistance agreement, so those prior costs would not be eligible. However, the costs associated with an expansion of the drop-off sites would most likely be an eligible grant expense.

**Q. Due to the fact that the 2022 Partnership for Strong communities does not give the same metrics for housing units, we are only going to do the calculation for 2023-2024. Is that acceptable? We are asking our Town Planner if he has some of that data. Do you need us to submit the Sustainable CT worksheet to see the numbers?**

A. Supplying the 2023-24 figures would be acceptable. If you have a filled out copy of the SustainableCT worksheet, it would be helpful to submit as part of the SMMR2 application package.

**Q. What is the time frame for yearly costs going forward? We will still have composting costs for the transfer station program going forward. Can we project out transfer station costs plus the expansion costs for 3 years going forward plus the startup costs for the expansion?**

A. While there is no definitive cut-off date for expenditure of SMMR2 grant funds, DEEP does not envision this grant program as being a long-term program. Therefore, grant applications that present a more aggressive project schedule and deployment of funds will likely be scored more favorably. Projecting out transfer station costs plus the expansion costs for 3 years going forward plus the startup costs for the expansion would be an appropriate methodology for quantifying expenses that you would want to have paid for by the SMMR2 grant if awarded.

**Q. Would hauling/processing costs for food waste be eligible operational expense under SMMR2 Category 1? Intent is to either cost share (similar to RPIP) or only fund for limited period of time until towns/region can process food waste itself through ASP, composting, AD, or other means and self-sustain.**

A. Provided that the funding of hauling and sorting costs would be temporary in nature with an explicit plan and commitment to transition to permanent non-grant funded status, these costs would most likely be eligible expenses under the SMMR2 grant program via Category 1. However, processing costs would not be eligible expenses under the grant as grantees would be expected to pay the food waste processing costs out of the savings from reduced waste being tipped at the waste disposal facility.

**Q. If a company or firm is already under contract to perform work for DEEP, would they be ineligible to perform work for a SMMR2 applicant under this grant program if that applicant's application were awarded SMMR2 funding?**

A. No, a company or firm that is already under contract to perform work for DEEP could also perform work for a successful SMMR2 applicant, provided that such services were procured through a competitive bidding process.