

## Food Waste Prevention and Diversion: Research and Capacity Building Fund

### ISSUE

Environment Canada is accepting applications under the Food Waste Prevention and Diversion: Research and Capacity Building Fund until October 30, 2023. The Administration is requesting City Council Approval to submit applications under this program.

### RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Administration be directed to submit two applications for grant funding under Environment Canada's Food Waste Prevention and Diversion: Research and Capacity Building Fund;
2. That if approved, the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the Agreement(s) from Environment Canada under the Corporate Seal; and
3. That if required, the Senior Financial Business Partner be granted delegated authority to sign and submit progress reports and financial claims to the program.

### BACKGROUND

On September 29, 2023, Environment Canada opened the application window for the Food Waste Prevention and Diversion: Research and Capacity Building Fund. Projects under the Fund are eligible for funding up to \$150,000, with a minimum ask of \$75,000 and no matching funding is required by the City. The objective of the program is to reduce and divert food and other organic waste from landfills in order to reduce landfill methane emissions. Environment and Climate Change Canada estimate that food and other organic products represent 30% of waste sent to landfills every year and produce large amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas much stronger than carbon dioxide.

The funding from the Research and Capacity Building Fund will support two primary areas of focus:

- Research activities, such as demonstration projects, pilots, and other research projects that will help inform program specifications and policy development that optimize food waste prevention and diversion; and
- Capacity building activities, such as the development of guidance resources and toolkits, and knowledge sharing initiatives that connect experts across sectors and disciplines to facilitate information exchange and skills development.

Projects may span one or two years but must be completed no later than March 31, 2026.

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The Administration would like to submit the following projects:

1. Second Chance Food: reducing and repurposing surplus food in Saskatoon.

This project builds off the previously completed Research Junction project, [Promising Practices in Food Reclamation in Saskatoon](#), that was shared during the February 7, 2022 Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services meeting as information. The Research Junction report recommendations and next steps included to:

Further develop and seek funding with community partners to:

- a. Address the barriers identified in this study by organizations accepting food donations to further their capacity to accept recovered food.
- b. Pilot a food recovery social enterprise that will improve local capacity to recover more edible food from the waste stream while creating employment opportunities.

The goal of the project is to reduce the environmental impact of surplus edible food before it enters the waste stream. In Saskatoon, there are an estimated 13,000 tonnes of edible food waste generated by the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) sector that could be reclaimed, of which approximately 2,000 tonnes per year is ending up in the City's landfill and the remainder to private landfills. If all edible food waste was reclaimed, it would increase the City's waste diversion rate by 1.5% and save the City \$122,000-\$155,000 of landfill airspace value per year. Additionally, there would be a greenhouse gas emission reduction of approximately 15,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year, equivalent to 1% of the waste-related emission reduction target outlined in the Low Emissions Community Plan.

While the ICI organics diversion regulation and support program encourages the donation of surplus edible food before it enters the waste stream, the Research Junction project found a significant gap in local capacity to handle all available food despite demonstrated demand in our community. This project partners with University of Saskatchewan researchers, Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership, Saskatchewan Health Authority, and the Saskatoon Foodbank and Learning Centre. The project would include a combination of City staff time and work carried out by partners, and the deliverables are proposed to include:

- A flow analysis to understand edible surplus food that becomes waste from food producers, processors, and retailers.
- A gap analysis of current charity and donations patterns;
- A business case to determine the feasibility of expanding the rescue of surplus edible food before it becomes waste, with an assessment of the viability of a social enterprise approach to address the current gaps;
- A small-scale pilot program to support event or catering to design menus to proactively reduce food waste and be best positioned to donate of surplus food;
- Feasibility study and potential pilot of a food-waste Community Benefit Agreement for a City procurement; and

- A pilot program to divert surplus food waste from one large event centre.

In addition to the environmental benefits, there will also be social and economic benefits including: more surplus edible food donations to charitable organizations, reduced disposal costs for participating businesses and organizations, as well as socio-economic benefits for participants in the social enterprise.

## 2. Public Space and Event Organics Reduction and Diversion

This project proposes to conduct a feasibility study and pilot project for organics diversion in public spaces and for events. In 2024 and 2025 the City plans to address public space and event waste reduction and diversion, an action outlined in the Solid Waste Reduction and Diversion Plan. Currently the City lacks a coordinated approach for waste collections across public spaces and provides only garbage collection to events. This includes outdoor and indoor public spaces, which are not covered by the City's Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional organics diversion regulation.

The project proposes to complete a feasibility study in 2024 including:

- An inventory of current public space and event waste initiatives and infrastructure;
- Best practices from other jurisdictions;
- A characterization of public space and event waste; and
- Engagement with stakeholders.

In 2025, the project proposes to pilot public space and event waste reduction and diversion programs, such as pairing recycling and garbage collection with the currently provided service of garbage collection. The funding application will focus on organics reduction and diversion. Reduction and diversion of additional materials, including recycling, are proposed to be funded through P.10090: Public Space & Event Waste Reduction.

Diversion potential and GHG reductions from this project have not been estimated due to insufficient data on waste generation and characterization for public spaces and events. While not expected to be significant, providing waste reduction and diversion in these areas is a key component of reinforcing behaviour change by providing consistent waste reduction and diversion opportunities to residents where they live, work and play.

City Council approval is required to give the Mayor and City Clerk the ability to execute the Agreement on behalf of the City. Additionally, more Federal funding programs are requiring a resolution of City Council to give Administration the ability to submit claims and project status reports on the program. Administration is also requesting approval that the Senior Financial Business Partner be granted delegated authority to sign and submit any progress reports and financial claims related to the project to meet all the administrative requirements of the funding program.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Food Waste Prevention and Diversion: Research and Capacity Fund will grant the City up to \$150,000 for activities to reduce/divert food and other organic waste from the landfill. No matching funds are required by the City under the program.

P.10090: Public Space & Event Waste Reduction is proposed to be funded \$75,000 in 2024 and \$300,000 in 2025 by the Waste Minimization Reserve, pending approval during the 2024-2025 Business Plan and Budget Deliberations at the end of November 2023. If the application is successful, \$150,000 could be returned to the Waste Minimization Reserve.

**OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no privacy, legal, social or environmental implications identified.

**NEXT STEPS**

If approved for funding, Administration will report back to create a Capital Project as well as request a post budget adjustment to allocate the Environment Canada grant to the project.

**REPORT APPROVAL**

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