

2026 Community Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant Program

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

N.C. Department of Environmental Quality
Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service

The purpose of this grant program is to assist local governments with the implementation, expansion, and improvement of waste reduction and recycling programs in North Carolina. The Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service (DEACS) administers the Community Waste Reduction and Recycling (CWRAR) grant program through the Solid Waste Management Outreach Program.

With the release of this Request for Proposals (RFP), DEACS is seeking proposals that help communities build lasting capacity to divert materials from the waste stream and / or that increase public awareness of waste reduction and recycling. Applicants should carefully read this entire RFP prior to submitting a proposal.

Contact:	Alex Miller 919-707-8190 alex.miller@deq.nc.gov	Grant Funding:	Up to \$50,000 for Priority Projects Up to \$40,000 for Standard Projects
		Cash Match:	20% of grant award

Proposals Due:	February 13, 2026, by 5:00pm	Project Period:	July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027
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What Types of Projects are Eligible?

DEACS seeks viable, well-planned proposals from local governments in North Carolina for projects that will initiate, expand, or improve waste reduction and recycling programs. Grant money may be used to help purchase physical infrastructure or equipment to divert materials from the waste stream, or to purchase, print and distribute educational materials to inform the public about waste reduction and/or recycling programs.

Priority Project Grants – *Eligible for up to \$50,000 in grant funding*

Priority Project Grants support investments in public recycling program areas that have been determined by the state recycling program to be of particular importance to growing and expanding efficient and effective waste reduction and recycling services throughout North Carolina.

2026 CWRAR priorities include projects that:

- Implement new or expand existing curbside recycling programs or transition a curbside recycling program from bin or blue bag collection to a cart-based collection system;
- Implement a new or expand an existing Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) program; or
- Implement a new or expand an existing recycling program targeting lithium-ion batteries, solar panels, or other electronics. See Special Requirements for Electronics Recycling Projects on page 7.

Standard Project Grants – *Eligible for up to \$40,000 of grant funding*

Standard Project Grants include any projects that increase or enhance public waste reduction and recycling but fall outside of the 2026 priorities. Standard Projects may include but are not limited to drop-off recycling infrastructure, vehicles and infrastructure for recycling collection or consolidation, education and outreach initiatives, or construction and demolition recycling.

Note About Food Waste Projects:

Projects related to food waste collection, donation or organics recycling should apply for the Food Waste Reduction Grant Program. The application period for the 2026 Food Waste Reduction Grant closes on October 24, 2025.

Note About Abandoned Manufactured Homes (AMH):

The AMH Grant program expired October 1, 2023, per Session Law 2008-136. AMH-focused proposals are not eligible for funding under the CWRAR program and these proposals will not be considered.

Eligible and Ineligible Expenses

Examples of approved uses of CWRAR grant funds include site development costs, construction of facilities to handle recyclable materials, equipment or vehicle purchases, recycling collection containers, equipment installation costs, and educational materials such as signs, mailers, handouts or brochures.

Grant funds may not be used for employee salaries, land acquisition costs, administrative expenses such as overhead, utility costs, studies or work performed by consultants, contracted collection costs, and / or payment for other contracted recycling services such as payment to a vendor for operating a household hazardous waste collection event.

How Grant Funds Work

All CWRAR grant funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis. Purchases must be made during the grant contract period and requests for reimbursement can be made after the grantee has completed and paid for grant purchases. State and local sales taxes are not reimbursable and should be excluded from grant expenditure totals. DEACS will continue to reimburse grantees until 90% of the award amount has been expended, withholding 10% of funds until receipt of an approved final report.

Available Funding

Priority Project: Applicants may request any amount of grant funding up to a maximum of **\$50,000**.

Standard Project: Applicants may request any amount of grant funding up to a maximum of **\$40,000**.

Cash Match

CWRAR grants require a cash match of at least 20 percent of the requested grant funding. For example, a grantee requesting a \$20,000 grant must match at least \$4,000 with local funds for a total project cost of \$24,000. Distributions from the \$2 per ton Solid Waste Disposal Tax may be used to cover cash match requirements. In-kind contributions will not be accepted in lieu of a cash match.

To calculate the cash match, multiply 0.2 by the grant request amount (not the total project cost). *Example:* $\$20,000 \text{ grant request amount} \times 0.2 = \$4,000 \text{ required cash match}$

Contract Period:

Successful grant applicants will be required to enter into a grant contract with the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ). The resultant grant contract period is generally one year and intended to align with the local government fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027. Grantees must expend funds within the year-long contract period unless the grant contract end date is extended by written agreement between the applicant and NCDEQ. Extensions are possible but not guaranteed. All purchases must be made within the grant contract period. Any purchases made prior to the start of the grant contract or after the end date of the grant contract will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Who is Eligible?

Local governments, defined as counties, municipalities, councils of governments and solid waste authorities in North Carolina, are eligible to apply for funding from the CWRAR grant program.

Former CWRAR grantees are eligible to apply. Applicants with an open 2025 CWRAR grant contract must have invoiced for 90% of eligible grant funds by the proposal due date (February 13, 2026). Proposals will not be accepted from applicants with an open CWRAR grant from cycles prior to 2025. Applicants with open grants from other programs (e.g., Food Waste Reduction) are eligible to apply if open grants are in good standing and expected to be completed on time.

Federal and state agencies, universities and colleges, and non-profit organizations *are not eligible for funding* through this grant program. Public schools are not eligible for funding through this grant program; however, local governments may apply for funding to support public school recycling projects - see Special Requirements section below.

Conditions of Submittals

- Only one proposal per eligible entity will be accepted. Grant proposals may combine funding requests for multiple types of projects into one proposal. The available funding limits still apply.
- Joint projects are encouraged in which two or more local governments partner on a project and contribute funding. Any local government participating in a joint project proposal may not submit additional proposals.
- Proposals will not be accepted from local governments that have not submitted the required Solid Waste and Materials Management Annual Report for the most recent fiscal year.

How to Submit Proposals:

One electronic copy of the proposal must be submitted by email to alex.miller@deq.nc.gov. Receipt of all acceptable proposals will be acknowledged by email. *If you do not receive a confirmation email, contact Alex Miller at 919-707-8190 as soon as possible.* It is the responsibility of anyone submitting a proposal to contact DEACS if they do not receive a confirmation email. No arrangements will be made for lost proposals after the due date.

Please submit electronic versions of proposals as Microsoft Word (preferred) or Adobe (PDF) files. If submittal of an electronic version of a grant proposal presents a hardship, please contact Alex Miller to discuss submittal options.

Proposal Due Date:

Proposals must be received by DEACS by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 13, 2026. Any proposals received after the deadline will not be considered. Local governments requiring board approval to apply for grant funds should plan to procure that approval before the submittal deadline.

Word of Advice for Grant Writing:

Available funding is limited, and it is anticipated that the 2026 CWRAR grant round will be competitive. For this reason, it is important that projects seeking grant funding be well thought out and well planned, and that applicants provide all information as outlined in the Required Proposal Format section. Proposals that seek grant funds for the replacement of existing equipment will be scored substantially lower than projects that implement new recycling services or projects that expand existing recycling services.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Alex Miller at (919) 707-8190 or alex.miller@deq.nc.gov to discuss potential grant projects prior to submitting a proposal.

Required Proposal Format:

The following outline indicates what applicants *must* include in their proposal for it to be considered complete. Proposals that fail to provide all the required information or that fail to follow this format may not compete well and may not be considered for funding.

- Project Title
- Applicant Contact Information: to include:
 - ✓ Name and title of main contact
 - ✓ Organization
 - ✓ Address
 - ✓ Phone number
 - ✓ Email address
- Date of Proposal Submittal
- General Requirements: see General Requirements section below for more information
 - ✓ Written statement certifying that Solid Waste Disposal Tax Proceeds are used only for solid waste management purposes and a description of how proceeds are used.
 - ✓ Written statement indicating that the applicant has recycling services for cans, bottles and paper available at key government buildings and a list of the materials collected.
 - ✓ Written statement indicating that the applicant has established a program for the collection and recycling of fluorescent lights and mercury containing thermostats from public buildings owned by the applicant.
- Project Description: Provide responses to each of the following prompts below. Applicants are encouraged to provide a clear project description and consider the award criteria as they describe the project elements. (*Relevant award criteria listed below; see page 8 for award criteria description and point values*)
 1. Describe the proposed project and identify specifically what items (and how many) you intend to purchase with grant funds. If the project will implement a new recycling program or improve an existing recycling program, provide a list of the recyclable materials that will be accepted and indicate where will they be taken for processing or marketing.
(*Plannings; Priority Project*)
 2. What is the anticipated service life for the items or materials to be purchased with grant funds? Estimate how long the project will continue to serve the community and how you will financially and operationally sustain the project after the grant ends.
(*Planning; Efficiency/Cost Effectiveness*)
 3. How does the proposed project address a specific recycling need for the community? Will the grant project create a new service, enhance or expand an existing service, or support an existing recycling service without expanding that service?
(*Demonstration of Need*)
 4. How many households or businesses will be impacted by or have access to the recycling services associated with the proposed project?
(*Demonstration of Need; Efficiency/Cost Effectiveness*)
 5. Estimate the number of tons of waste expected to be reduced annually as a result of the proposed project. Explain how you came up with the estimate.
(*Waste Reduction Impact*)
 6. Describe any partnerships associated with the proposed project. Please include documentation of support from any partner entities.
(*Joint Effort*)

- Special Requirements: Proposals for recycling education, school recycling, electronics recycling or away-from-home recycling must include additional information as stipulated in the Special Requirements section below.
- Project Timeline: A simple bulleted list showing approximate dates for major project milestones. Timeline must begin on or after July 1, 2026, and project must be complete by June 30, 2027. Please follow the example below:
 - ✓ November 1, 2026: Carts and educational materials purchased and commercial recycling program launched (*adjust based on proposed project*)
 - ✓ May 31, 2027: Submit all invoices and draft Final Report to DEACS (*required*)
 - ✓ June 30, 2027: Submit Final Report to DEACS (*required*)
- Project Budget: Please submit a table following the example below. Table should include an itemized list of intended expenditures and estimated costs. Total row should reflect the total project cost with breakdown of grant funds requested from the state and amount of matching funds to be provided by the applicant. Applicant Cash Match must be at least 20% of State Grant Award.

Project Elements	Estimated Cost			
Recycling Carts for Commercial Recycling Program	\$ 10,500			
Labels for Carts and Signs for Recycling Sites	\$ 900			
Program Brochures (Printing)	\$ 600			
	Total Cost		State Grant Award	Applicant Cash Match
Total Project Budget	\$ 12,000		\$ 10,000	\$ 2,000

* State and local sales taxes are not reimbursable expenditures and should not be included as part of grant budgets.

General Requirements – *for all applicants*

- Solid Waste Disposal Tax proceeds: Solid Waste Disposal Tax proceeds are distributed to eligible local governments on a quarterly basis by the Department of Revenue. According to G.S. § 105-187.63, these funds must be used by a city or county solely for solid waste management programs and services. CWRAR grant applicants must certify in writing that all disposal tax proceeds are used only for the purpose of providing solid waste and recycling services. In addition to this written certification, applicants should describe how disposal tax funds are utilized and whether proceeds will be used to supply matching funds.
- Public Building Recycling Services: CWRAR grants will not be awarded to applicants that do not have recycling services for cans, bottles, and paper available at their government buildings. As part of the grant proposal, all applicants must indicate that employees in the key government buildings operated by the applicant have reasonable access to recycling services and are able and encouraged to recycle materials generated in the course of government business. Please include a list of the materials collected for recycling at these facilities.
- Mercury Product Recycling: G.S. § 130A-310.60 requires that any public agency using state funds for the construction or operation of public buildings shall establish a program for the collection and recycling of all spent fluorescent lights and thermostats that contain mercury generated in public buildings. As part of the grant proposal, all applicants must indicate that they have a program in place for the collection of fluorescent lights and mercury thermostats from their public buildings. If the applicant does not have a program in place for the collection of these materials, then as a precondition of any grant award the applicant must initiate such services.

Special Requirements – *only for applicants seeking funding for recycling education, school recycling, electronics recycling, or away-from-home recycling projects*

Special Requirements for Recycling Education/Outreach Projects

1. Provide a list of the recyclable materials accepted by the program and indicate how the materials are to be collected (single stream, dual stream, source separated). If the grant proposal is for regional outreach materials, all local governments or entities participating must agree on a common list of materials for recycling and provide that common accepted list with the grant proposal.
2. If the grant proposal is for regional outreach materials, a letter of agreement and support must be provided by each participating local government or entity. Each participating entity should establish and provide a designated recycling contact for project coordination.
3. If the grant involves adding recyclable materials to the accepted list, confirm that the item(s) have been approved by your material recovery facility and are reflected in your recycling contract, if applicable.
4. Identify the primary message of the outreach effort.
5. Indicate whether you will be using your own design or if you will be using DEACS customizable design services. <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/environmental-assistance-and-customer-service/recycling/general-recycling-information/customized-outreach-materials>
6. Supply mock-ups or example graphics for the educational materials proposed in the grant. Are your materials dependent on words or images?
7. Acknowledge that you will adhere to the following if the grant is awarded:
 - Discuss the material design with your assigned DEACS grant manager as soon as possible to ensure clear communication about the project content and timing.
 - Documents must be submitted for review prior to printing or execution. Reviews may take up to two weeks, so plan accordingly and submit well in advance of printing. It is often helpful to submit an initial draft for early feedback.
 - Post your community's accepted recyclables list online.
 - Program changes can affect the grant and messaging. Inform DEACS immediately if program changes occur to determine if a contract amendment is needed.

Special Requirements for Public School Recycling Projects

1. Describe the existing school recycling program (if any) that is available in the school system associated with the grant project.
2. List all the public agencies and/or departments that collaborate to assist with or operate the school recycling program and list the role of each entity.
3. A designated recycling contact should be established for each school facility participating in the recycling program. Examples of designated contacts might include school facility manager, head custodian, the faculty coordinator or leader of a group or club, the principal, or school administrator. Please provide a list of schools to be served by this project and the name and title of a designated recycling contact for each.
4. Indicate the locations where recycling containers are or will be placed at the school facilities (e.g., classrooms, cafeterias, hallways, athletic fields, administrative offices, library, copy rooms, etc.).
5. Indicate who will be responsible for emptying the recycling containers (e.g., custodian / cleaning staff, teachers, students, student groups, etc.).
6. Provide a plan for promoting recycling within the schools impacted by the grant project as well as a plan for educating staff and students about the program.

Special Requirements for Electronics Recycling Projects

Any community seeking grant funds to support an electronics recycling program must use an R2 or e-Stewards certified recycler and make themselves eligible to receive funds distributed from the state's Electronics Management Program. More information available at:

<https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/waste-management/solid-waste-section/special-wastes-and-alternative-handling/electronics-management/electronics-information-nc-local-governments>.

Applicants should indicate if they are already eligible and have received Electronics Management Fund distributions in the past.

- If so, explain how those funds have been used and how the community intends to use the funds that will be distributed in February 2026 and February 2027.
- If not, explain how the community will make themselves eligible to receive funds and how they intend to use funds that will be distributed in February 2026 (if applicable) and February 2027.

Note: municipal applicants may decide whether or not to request Electronics Management Funds directly or allow the county to receive funds. If the county will be receiving funds, please explain the electronics recycling partnership with the county government.

Special Requirements for Away-From-Home Recycling Projects:

Grant funds for away-from-home recycling projects can only be used for recycling related purchases and cannot be used to pay for the purchase of away-from-home receptacles for the collection of waste (garbage). If a proposal includes the purchase of away-from-home receptacles that collect BOTH waste and recyclables, grant funding may be applied only to the recycling portion and the grantee will be responsible for covering the full cost of the waste portion. For example, if a community purchases a combo waste / recycling station that has one slot for garbage and one for recyclables and the receptacle costs \$1,200, only the recycling portion (\$600) may be included as an eligible grant expenditure. Grant funds would cover \$500 and the grantee would cover \$100 to meet the 20% match. If seeking funding for an away-from-home recycling project, please indicate whether any of the containers will be used to collect waste (garbage) that will be disposed in a landfill.

Applicants for away-from-home related grant projects are strongly encouraged to specify which particular recycling receptacles are being considered for purchase as a part of their proposal.

How are Proposals Evaluated?

A selection committee will use the pre-established Award Criteria identified below to rank proposals and make award decisions. The review process is expected to be completed, and preliminary award announcements should be made by April 2026.

Award Criteria:

Applicants are encouraged to consider the following Award Criteria as they develop their grant proposals. For Standard Projects, a maximum score of 90 is possible.

1. **Demonstration of Need (0-20 points):** Does the proposed project address a specific equipment, educational, or infrastructure need for the community?
2. **Planning (0-20 points): Did** the Project Description include all necessary elements as outlined in the Required Proposal Format? Is the proposal well thought out, well researched and backed by valid facts and assumptions? Is the project consistent with recycling industry best management practices?
3. **Waste Reduction Impact (0-25 points):** Will the project contribute substantially toward reduction of the local waste stream, or will it substantially increase tonnage recovered through recycling services? Will the project improve the material quality in the recycling stream by reducing contaminants?
4. **Efficiency / Cost-effectiveness (0-20 points):** Will the project improve the efficiency or cost-effectiveness of the local waste reduction program? Does the project increase the efficiency or effectiveness of an existing recycling service? Does the project reduce the operating cost of a current recycling service, or does it adopt practices proven to be cost effective in other communities? Does the project make investments that will continue to serve the community for years to come?
5. **Joint Effort (0 or 5 points):** One-party proposals will receive zero (0) points; multi-party proposals (involving cash match from all participants) will receive five (5) points.
6. **Priority Project (0-10 points):** Is the project seeking funding for a Priority Project Grant? To what extent does the project support investments in one of the Priority Project Grant categories?

If a Proposal is Selected for Funding

DEACS anticipates that applicants selected to receive grant funding will be notified by the end of April 2026. Upon consideration of the proposals received, DEACS reserves the right to award grant amounts that are lower than the amount requested by an applicant.

DEACS will notify the applicant with a formal offer by e-mail. The applicant must accept or decline the offer. The following will occur once the offer of grant funding is accepted:

- DEACS may work with applicants to revise initially submitted proposals before entering into a grant contract. Any changes to initial proposals must be approved by DEACS and the applicant and the resultant Final CWRAR Proposal will become an attachment to the grant contract.
- Successful applicants will be required to:
 - Provide their federal tax ID number.
 - Register with the state's e-procurement system using the same address provided in the applicant's proposal. To register in the state's e-procurement system or confirm/update your existing registration, please visit the following link: <http://eprocurement.nc.gov/>.
 - Submit a Conflict of Interest Policy using the template available at the following link or submitting a copy of your organization's existing policy:
<https://www.deq.nc.gov/divisions/environmental-assistance-and-customer-service/recycling/programs-offered/grants-local-governments>.
 - Submit a No Overdue Taxes Certification with notarized signature using the form available at: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/divisions/environmental-assistance-and-customer-service/recycling/programs-offered/grants-local-governments>.

- All applicants selected for funding will undergo a compliance review to ensure that they do not have an outstanding Notice of Violation (NOV) related to North Carolina solid waste statutes and rules. Any outstanding NOV's must be corrected to the satisfaction of the N.C. Division of Waste Management (DWM) prior to any grant being awarded. Applicants with outstanding NOV's are responsible for providing DEACS with information from DWM indicating that the community is in compliance and that the NOV's have been corrected before a grant contract can be initiated.
- DEACS will submit a request through the NCDEQ contract processing system for a grant contract. Grantees must act to execute the resultant grant contract without excessive delay.

Other General Terms and Conditions:

All grantees are subject to the following terms and conditions. Most of these terms and conditions will be outlined in the grant contract.

- **Publications:** all documents and publications associated with a grant contract should be printed on recycled paper containing at least 30 percent post-consumer content.
- **Quarterly Check-ins:** your assigned DEACS grant manager will schedule quarterly check-ins with grantees for project updates and technical assistance.
- **Final reports:** a draft final report is required to be submitted to DEACS at least 30 days prior to the contract end date and a final report is required to be submitted by the contract end date. Final reports and drafts should be submitted electronically. Final report guidelines are available at: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/divisions/environmental-assistance-and-customer-service/recycling/programs-offered/grants-local-governments>.
- **Reimbursement:** distribution of DEACS grant funds is on a reimbursement basis. Reimbursement requests must be submitted on letterhead, must include copies of invoices, and must include proof that the grantee has made payment. Proof of payment may include copies of canceled checks or other financial reports showing that funds were spent. State and local sales taxes are not reimbursable, may not be counted towards expenditure requirements, and should be excluded from reimbursement requests. The amount of actual grant payments may be prorated for projects and / or project elements that come in under budget. Purchases made before a grant contract is signed by both NCDEQ and the grant recipient will not be reimbursed.
- **Final 10 Percent of Funds:** DEACS will continue to reimburse grantees until 90 percent of the grant award amount has been expended, withholding 10 percent of grant funds until receipt of an approved final report. The final report must be received and approved prior to the end date of the contract.
- **Extensions / Amendments:** no-cost time extensions are possible but not guaranteed for grant contracts. Grantees seeking no-cost time extensions should submit a request for a time extension at least sixty (60) days prior to the contract end date.