

## **RDN Approves Zero Waste Recycling Funding for Innovative Local Projects**

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is pleased to announce that four local organizations have been selected to receive a total of \$300,000 in grants through the Zero Waste Recycling Funding (ZWRF) program for 2025: Habitat for Humanity (\$55,000), Lighthouse (\$137,000), Loaves & Fishes (\$101,000) and the Synergy Foundation (\$7,000). Grantees will use the funds to divert waste in the region through various activities, including repurposing waste products, creating resources local businesses can use to become more sustainable and connecting organizations to share and develop zero-waste ideas for even greater impact.

“We are excited to see continued innovation by local organizations in reducing waste and supporting a sustainable circular economy. Both the environment and our communities are benefiting from their efforts, and we are pleased to be able to support them through the RDN’s Zero Waste Recycling Funding program,” said Vanessa Craig, RDN Chair. “These projects will help create a more sustainable future by addressing these challenges today.”

The ZWRF program provides grants to organizations that demonstrate innovative initiatives that increase waste diversion through the development of a circular economy and through actions of the zero-waste hierarchy of highest and best use, including but not limited to:

- Acting as a research and recycling hub for hard-to-recycle items,
- Operating programs that include the reduction and redesign of materials,
- Reusing, repairing, and reprocessing of materials, and
- Investigating barriers to recycling.

Projects were evaluated using several criteria, including maximizing waste diversion, encouraging innovation to develop markets and processes, and potential as a catalyst for a future sustainable program without ongoing funding. As the program was oversubscribed with requests totaling \$751,659, the proposals were ranked on a comparative basis, and eligible funds were then distributed amongst the highest-ranked successful proposals in the order of their ranking until the funds were drawn down.

The Zero Waste Recycling Funding program is an initiative of the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and supports the RDN’s zero waste goals. This grant cycle is the final year of the three-year grant program. To learn more about the funding program, visit [rdn.bc.ca/zero-waste-funding](https://rdn.bc.ca/zero-waste-funding). To read the SWMP, visit [rdn.bc.ca/solid-waste-management-plan](https://rdn.bc.ca/solid-waste-management-plan). For tools and resources to help reduce waste in our community, visit [rdn.bc.ca/rethink](https://rdn.bc.ca/rethink).

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## Funding Recipients

Habitat for Humanity will use its funding to continue to divert solid waste from landfills through innovative programs, including the Book Recycling Program and the ReFresh and ReStore stores. The Book Recycling Program aims to turn 25,000 books destined for the landfill into book logs that can be sold at campsites or for burning in woodstoves. Work with the book program includes improving production consistency through research and development of a mechanized press. The funds generated through the two stores and the book logs support the construction of affordable housing units for those in need.

Funds for Lighthouse: Building Materials Exchange (BMEx) will support a project to address the significant challenge of construction, renovation and demolition (CRD) waste in Canada, particularly in the RDN. This includes establishing a physical hub with Habitat for Humanity to receive and sell salvaged material and launching an online material exchange hub. The grant will help them connect companies across sectors within the RDN that use or can potentially use CRD materials. The project aligns with the Circular Cities & Regions Initiative, aiming for circular innovation in the built environment, and has led to a Nanaimo Roadmap with specific goals.


Loaves & Fishes will use their funding to purchase pallet racking for food storage for their new 25,000 square foot warehouse. Their main objective with this project is to increase the amount of eligible food going to people in need and to divert food that can't be eaten to farms for livestock feed or sent for composting. Loaves & Fishes is targeting a 10 per cent annual increase in food recovery and distribution over the next five years in response to a 27 per cent increase in individuals accessing 16 free food markets, 11 of which are in the RDN in 2023. The organization has successfully diverted over 21 million pounds of food from landfills since 2012, helping to reduce CO2 emissions.

The Synergy Foundation will use the funds to create a comprehensive engagement program to assist small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and waste haulers in the RDN with compliance to the new Mandatory Waste Source Separation (MWSS) bylaw. Specifically, the funding will be used to interview waste haulers and develop resources, such as communication kits and signage, to address challenges identified through the information collected. Recognizing that many SMEs face challenges, including limited resources, high staff turnover and confusion regarding bylaw requirements, the project will address the complexities waste haulers encounter, including diverse waste streams and the need for effective client communication and training.

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