

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

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is pleased to announce that two organizations have been selected to receive a total of \$219,200 in grants through the Zero Waste Recycling Funding (ZWRF) program for 2026: Loaves and Fishes Community Food Bank (\$119,200) and Light House Sustainability Society (\$100,000). Both grantees will use the funds to divert key materials from entering the region's waste stream, creating valuable resources for local communities, businesses, and non-profit organizations.

The ZWRF program provides grants to non-profit organizations to increase waste diversion according to Zero Waste principles and support the development of a circular economy through initiative such as:

- Acting as research and recycling hubs 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.

Proposals were evaluated on several criteria, including anticipated waste diversion amount, material processing and market development, scalability, financial sustainability, community and regional benefits, establishment of partnerships and submission quality.

Projects targeting items managed through an extended producer responsibility program were not eligible for funding. Similarly, proposed education programs for improving waste source separation practices at businesses, organizations and multi-family buildings were not considered for funding as the RDN is implementing an educational coaching program to support its Mandatory Waste Source Separation bylaw.

The program received two eligible proposals requesting a total of \$219,200. The amount awarded to a recipient is based on their project's assessed viability and effectiveness, availability of grant funds and the impact of partial grant award to the project's outcomes.

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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## Quote

“With the RDN’s Zero Waste Recycling Funding program, we can support organizations whose innovative efforts are reducing waste and building a sustainable circular economy. Their work is bringing positive impacts not just for the environment, but also for our communities. By addressing current challenges, these projects are paving the way for a more sustainable future.” Stuart McLean, RDN Chair

## Funding Recipients


Loaves and Fishes Community Food Bank will use grant funding to complete the purchase and installation of the pallet racking system in their new food recovery and distribution facility. The system will significantly increase the storage capacity and throughput of recovered food, reduce food spoilage through greater operational efficiency, improve safety for staff and volunteers and enable higher volumes of diversion. Loaves and Fishes recovered 2,308 tonnes of food in 2025 and estimate recovering 2,649 tonnes of food in 2026, an annual increase of nearly 15 per cent.

Light House Sustainability Society will continue to advance their Building Material Exchange (BMEx), a multi-faceted program that is creating a circular economy for excess and salvaged building materials generated by the construction, renovation, and demolition (CRD) sector. Launched in 2024, BMEx uses a variety of approaches, such as the online BMEx Marketplace and the onsite Material Efficiency Assessment service, to connect companies that generate CRD waste materials with companies and non-profits that can use them. Light House partnered with Habitat for Humanity Mid-Vancouver Island in 2025, co-developing the expansion of the Nanaimo ReStore and a pilot program to pick up surplus materials from local construction projects. In 2026, Light House and Habitat for Humanity will launch a collection bin program built on the success of the pilot program, update the BMEx Marketplace to improve ease of use and expand the Material Efficiency Assessment program across Vancouver Island. Light House will also host and attend several events as they continue efforts to engage with industries that deal with building materials.

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