

INTRODUCTION

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is pleased to continue the Zero Waste Recycling Funding program in 2026.

This program provides funds to local non-profit organizations (NPOs) to create self-sustaining programs that divert waste away from landfills and contribute to a circular economy. The program is intended to stimulate innovation and develop markets and processes for end-of-life materials that will help the RDN to meet its waste diversion goal of 90 per cent.

NPOs that operate within the RDN are eligible to apply for funding through this program. A total of \$300,000 is available through the Zero Waste Recycling Funding program in 2026.

This Zero Waste Recycling Funding Application Guide is to assist in the preparation of applications.

BACKGROUND

In 2020, the RDN released its approved Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). This Plan is made up of programs and initiatives designed to improve how waste materials are recycled, composted, and reused in our region. It provides a ten-year vision to divert 90 percent of our waste from landfill. The RDN recognizes that a strong local waste industry is key to sustainable waste diversion practices and the development of a circular economy. However, while there is no shortage of innovative waste diversion ideas, there are barriers to making these ideas a reality, such as incomplete market knowledge, poor infrastructure and lack of access to funds.

The RDN's Zero Waste Recycling (ZWR) program was created to foster ingenuity and growth in the waste industry by reducing the financial risks that come with exploring new ideas. It provides initial funding to non-profit organizations to undertake projects to divert materials destined for the landfill and turn them into valuable commodities. The goal is for each project to become financially self-sustaining.

Project objectives may include:

- Develop markets for diverted materials or products made of diverted materials.
- Develop or utilize processes or technology to enhance recyclability.
- Create or improve access to recycling services.
- Develop skills and knowledge that promote the Zero Waste Hierarchy of highest and best uses.

ZW Hierarchy of Highest & Best Uses



- Reduce, reuse & return
- End subsidies for wasting
- Product & packaging redesign
- Clean production & takebacks
- Reuse, repair, remanufacture
- Recycle, compost & digest
- Regulate (bans, biological energy recover, landfills with re-processing)
- Not ok: incineration, bioreactor landfills

Figure 1. Zero Waste Hierarchy of highest and best uses.

The vision of this program is to fund organizations in a wide variety of innovative initiatives that increase waste diversion through the development of a circular economy through both recycling and actions further up the zero-waste hierarchy of highest best use, including but not limited to:

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

FUNDING AVAILABLE

The RDN will make a total of \$300,000 available to be split amongst successful applicants in 2026. Applicants are encouraged to identify future funding needs in their applications.

The RDN will evaluate applications to determine the value of each grant award based on the criteria listed on page 3 of this guide; successful applicants may not be awarded their full requested amounts. These evaluations will be presented to the RDN Board of Directors for review and approval.

Approved funds must be used exclusively for the items outlined in the application per terms provided by the RDN. Funding must be utilized within the calendar year, from date of approval to December 31, 2026.

The RDN may modify or cancel the grant program at any time.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Organizations

Only non-profit organizations that operate within the RDN are eligible for grants. The RDN is prohibited from assisting for-profit businesses. Please see Appendix 1 for required documentation.

Eligible Projects

Projects must increase waste diversion in the RDN through the development of a circular economy according to the zero-waste hierarchy of highest and best uses. Project outcomes must not compete with or favour an existing, viable business or industry in any way.

Eligible projects cannot include waste reduction for products that have an existing stewardship program, or products that are included in the [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) program.

Please note that, with the launch of Mandatory Waste Source Separation, the RDN is implementing a coaching program to educate multi-family residences, organizations and businesses on proper material diversion. Applications proposing similar educational initiatives will not be considered for funding.

DEADLINES

Application submission: Submissions are due by January 12, 2026, at 3 p.m. Late applications may not be accepted.

Spending cutoff: Successful applicants must fully utilize funds within the 2026 calendar year. Spending extensions may be granted if extenuating circumstances prevent full usage of grant funds.

PROPOSAL

A proposal outline is provided in Appendix 1 to assist applicants in preparing submissions.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The RDN will evaluate the proposals to determine the most advantageous outcomes to the RDN SWMP's diversion goals.

Selection will be based on the RDN's sole discretion in evaluating:

- The anticipated volume of waste diversion.
- The potential to achieve increased convenience and participation in waste diversion.
- The potential to stimulate markets or practices or remove barriers to achieving the highest and best uses as seen in Figure 1.
- The program sustainability, i.e., the sustainability of the program without external funding in the future.
- The scalability potential of the program's range, scope, and capacity for diversion.
- Innovation.
- The quality of the proposal and the applicant's experience and qualifications.

- Available funding, other sources of revenue or funding, proponents' contributions and in-kind contributions (e.g. volunteer hours).

The RDN will rank the proposals on a comparative basis, evaluating proposals by comparing one applicant's proposal to another applicant's proposal.

GRANT AWARD

- Evaluated proposals will be presented to the RDN Board for review and consideration.
- The proposals will be ranked, and the eligible funds will be distributed amongst the highest ranked successful proposals in the order of their ranking until the funds are drawn down.
- Successful submissions will be made public upon Board approval.

DELIVERABLES

Grant recipients will be required to submit two reports to the RDN:

1. A Progress Report that highlights the progress or results of programs or initiatives associated with this funding. The report should be submitted by July 20, 2026, and should include, at a minimum:
 - Title and structure of the program(s)
 - Program directors and participants
 - Budget of allocated funds
 - Program/initiative progress
2. A Summary Report will be submitted by January 31, 2027, that includes:
 - The cumulative results and successes of the program or initiative and next steps, including total tonnes diverted.
 - Identify challenges in carrying out this project
 - What opportunity has the ZWRF provided
 - Identify future funding needs for this project or other projects within your organization

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The RDN is bound by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (British Columbia) and all documents submitted to the RDN will be subject to the provisions of this legislation.

SUBMISSIONS AND CONTACT PERSON

Questions and submissions are to be directed to zerowaste@rdn.bc.ca

Please allow 5-6 weeks for processing.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Information regarding our SWMP can be found at rdn.bc.ca/solid-waste-management-plan.

DISCLAIMER

This program is a grant program only and no contract shall be formed between the RDN and an applicant upon submission of an application or between the RDN and a successful applicant after a grant has been awarded.

Award of funding will be at the discretion of the Board of the Regional District of Nanaimo and such discretion will not be fettered by this application process. The RDN reserves the right to only partially proceed with this funding program or to abandon the program. All information submitted through this application process is subject to the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act.

APPENDIX 1

PROPOSAL OUTLINE

Your proposal does not need to follow this format but should, at a minimum, cover the following topics.

1. PROJECT NAME

2. APPLICANT OR COMPANY

Describe the experience and qualifications of the applicant (e.g., resume, organization profile, organization chart, experience).

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Describe your project in detail:

- What do you plan to do?
- What “gaps” will this project fill?
- How will you ensure its success?
- What kind of market research have you done that supports the success of your project?

Describe how the project is consistent with the objectives of the funding and how you plan to meet those objectives:

- What outcomes are expected? (Amount of waste diversion, convenience, behaviour change, etc.)
- How does the project lead to the highest and best use?
- How does the project contribute to the circular economy?
- What are the innovations?

4. PROJECT EXECUTION

Roles and Responsibilities: Including all staff, volunteers, directors, partners, and contractors.

Timeline: Describe the project timeline and key milestones.

5. BUDGET

Describe the budget for the project including other sources of revenue or funding. Describe in-kind contributions. Please include any disbursements of markups.

6. RESULT OF PARTIAL FUNDING

Describe how the expected outcomes would be impacted if only partial funding is awarded.

7. PAYMENT OF FUNDING

Please describe your desired payment schedule (e.g., key milestones, project completion). Successful applicants' dispersal preferences will be considered.

8. PARTNERSHIPS

- Describe the partnerships that will be involved in this project and what kind of group they are (business, non-profit society etc.).
- Describe the role of the partner(s).
- Please provide any partnership agreements.

9. SUBCONTRACTORS

Describe the involvement of any subcontractors and how procurement will be carried out. For-profit business subcontractors may be ineligible for consideration, per the Community Charter.

10. NON-PROFIT SOCIETY DOCUMENTATION

Please include the following documents that are available to you through your account on <https://www.bcregistry.ca/societies/>

- Statement of Directors and Registered Office (most recent copy)
- Annual Filing Report, 2025 (or most recent copy)

11. MAILING ADDRESS AND CONTACT PERSON