



Grantee Highlight: Innovation Grant

Food Waste Social Enterprise Pilot

**Center for Food Equity for Economic Development,
The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport
Bridgeport, CT**

Organization Overview

The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport Council (CCGB) is a social services agency dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty and meeting the needs of people at risk. CCGB has served the Bridgeport area for over 75 years. CCGB's FEED (Food Equity and Economic Development) Center leverages food to improve the physical and financial health of area residents with the goal of building community wealth by focusing on food-based living wage employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. A priority of the work of the CCGB is to get food to folks whether through food banks, food pantries or direct donations and provide economic opportunity in the food system.

FEED Center's focus on food waste and food sovereignty as connected concerns stemmed from the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic's conference, *Reduce and Recover: Save Food for People*. With the understanding that diverting food waste to feed people is the 2nd highest priority on the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy pyramid, FEED Center recognized that recovered food could also be used as a pathway out of poverty and in 2016 began using recovered food in cooking classes where low income residents learned culinary skills for employment.



Roschelle Barrett and Anthony Anania stand with their culinary creations made from recovered food.



Nora's Potato Empanadas, product from FEED Center.

How has RecycleCT helped?

FEED Center wanted to expand their work through a pilot social enterprise program developed to use recovered produce in a product line. A weekly donation of 400 pounds of produce from the Milford ShopRite to FEED Center allowed for product development and donation to food pantries. The products coming from diversion of food waste was a tangible way to meet the goals of the mission and was an opportunity to highlight food waste.

During the pilot year, FEED Center learned they had to change a few of their goals; they could not receive donated meat, and the product-audience of congregation members did not facilitate enough revenue to make the venture sustainable for the program. They developed products and became a vendor at the Larchmont Farmers Market in New York; the pivot proved successful and FEED consistently sold out at farmers markets. This shift allowed program growth and additional funding sources to be secured.

Over 6,000 pounds of food were recovered in the pilot year, and sales of the finished products generated nearly \$4000, a portion of these funds will be used for seed money for CCGB culinary graduates to develop their products and businesses. Two food businesses have been created from this pilot and two more culinary graduates are involved in the food business immersion program.

Food waste is a valuable resource; by making it available to communities to use as they see fit is an environmental and social justice goal for FEED. Michelle McCabe, Director of FEED Center shared that “it’s really demoralizing when you can’t control your own food supply” which highlights the importance of food sovereignty in the fight against poverty.

This project is about valuing resources and making sure everything gets used. Connecting food waste and food sovereignty is showing the value of treating people and food resources with respect. Expanding entrepreneurial opportunities for the people served by FEED helps them transition out of poverty, we are investing in the people of CT in a way that is unique.

-Michelle McCabe



Roschelle Barrett and Chef Aditi Goswami prepare donated food together.

Future Plans

FEED Center will be occupying a new, 3500 square foot commercial kitchen in Summer 2020 which will double their production capacity. This facility will house the culinary training program and social enterprise program in the same space, as well as providing a new space to rent for area food entrepreneurs. “Ultimately the goal is to convert as much food waste as possible to living wage opportunities,” explained McCabe when speaking of the future for the project. CCGB plans to continue to invest in the growth of this project.



Grantee Highlight: Innovation Grant

Community Composting

**New Haven Land Trust
(Renamed, Gather New Haven)**
New Haven, CT

Organization Overview

As Connecticut's first urban land trust to preserve open land in New Haven, the New Haven Land Trust, (now Gather New Haven) focuses on land conservation, community gardening and environmental education. With over 50 community gardens, and 6 nature preserves, the New Haven Land Trust (NHLT) impacts the community, environment, and foodshed of New Haven. Their mission seeks to engage people in stewardship and cultivation of the land for a healthier community and healthier environment.

NHLT employs New Haven high school youth in a program called "Growing Entrepreneurs" where students learn tangible life and professional skills while earning income and developing their own business ventures related to carpentry, the environment, gardens or agriculture.



Bradley Fleming, former Garden Manager for the NHLT, checking one the aerated static compost bins.



High School students from New Haven, participating in the NHLT Growing Entrepreneurs program, helping build the aerated static compost bin system.

How has RecycleCT helped?

NHLT oversees 50+ community gardens, which includes a constant need of compost, which entailed paying a source outside the City to have it brought it at a cost of more than \$2,000 annually. At the same time, the community space to compost and recognized without citywide food scrap collection, there was plenty of food waste scraps and other resources to develop an on-site community composting project. This project linked the need for compost with the Growing Entrepreneurs students to create a closed-loop system of food scrap waste with amending community gardens with nutrient rich compost.

NHLT built a four-bin aerated static pile community composting system, which uses solar energy to provide its forced air at one of their community garden sites. Creating the system also reduces CO₂ by not shipping in compost. The intention is that students will collect food scraps by bicycle as the program grows.

High school students from New Haven schools, participate in the Growing Entrepreneurs programs helped build the bin, gaining carpentry and customer service skills in addition to learning the science of composting. Fourteen students from the program learned how to process food scraps and other raw

materials in this unique system, maintaining the system, and benefits of finished compost. In addition, NHLT held four community composting workshops, each with over 20 people in attendance to learn more about how this compost systems operates.

Since the project began, over 3,000 pounds of food scraps have been collected from the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen (DESK) and provided by community gardeners which resulted in about 9.5 cubic yards of finished compost.

In addition to working with community gardeners and students, the Community Compost project expanded or deepened connections with other New Haven organizations; Peels and Wheels for their technical training; Common Ground High School who also recently developed an aerated static pile system to share new ideas and work on problem-solving; Haven's Harvest who recovers edible food for people, but also has food that cannot be eaten and the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen, who feeds community members and has food scraps from their kitchen.



Finished four-bin aerated static compost bin system

It's exciting that DESK are feeding people and then we're picking up their food scraps and then we're making compost, which is then going back to community gardens, which are growing food to feed people in New Haven.

-Esther Rose-Wilen

The community gardens are places of environmental and social justice, where people are organizing in their neighborhoods, said Esther Rose-Wilen, NHLT Garden Education Coordinator. "They're growing food...for themselves, their neighbors, their families, for donating, whatever it might be, and, [...] connecting with each other and learning together at the same time."

The community composting project has provided a closed-loop food system in the New Haven community. Through community composting the Growing Entrepreneurs students are learning skills that have practical and professional application. They are learning everything from community engagement to budgeting. This project expanded the community impact of the organization and of their gardens.

Future Plans

Receiving the funding support from RecycleCT allowed NHLT to build capacity and leverage other funding streams for additional projects. NHLT hopes to increase the amount of food scraps they are collecting through increasing the number of food scrap pick up sites for the Growing Entrepreneurs, which will be collected by bicycles. NHLT are working to secure funding to pay for a compost sifter and a bobcat to help sort and move the compost they produce, currently this work is being done by hand. The community composting system has afforded many opportunities for the organization and the community at large, the continuous opportunities for education and business ventures will only strengthen these connections and their impact on food waste recovery in New Haven.



Grantee Highlight: School Grant

Banning Expanded Polystyrene

Charter Oak International Academy
West Hartford, CT

Organization Overview

Charter Oak International Academy is an international baccalaureate elementary magnet school in West Hartford. Their mission is “to inspire and prepare all students to realize their potential and enhance our global community.” This school is actively focused on environmentalism, is a green LEAF school and considers themselves to have a culture of sustainability.



Charter Oak students using their new reusable trays.

How has RecycleCT helped?

Purchasing reusable lunch trays for the cafeteria lined up with the school’s goal to reduce waste by 50%. Previously, the school was serving meals on expanded polystyrene (commonly known as Styrofoam™) trays which created a large volume of waste. Kim Hughes, an environmental educator and longtime school volunteer and parent shared that “we realized pretty early on that focusing on the waste was the best way to get the attention of students and our community.” The school had recently shifted from plastic utensils to reusable and washable flatware to reduce waste in the cafeteria. The expanded polystyrene trays were consistently overflowing out of waste bins making it the school’s new focus for waste reduction.



Charter Oak students participating in a waste sort.

While the intention was to help reduce waste, the switch to reusable trays has changed student behavior. Students are now more accurately disposing of waste and recyclables in the proper bins (the school has a recycling and food waste collection system) and reducing the number of times the custodial staff has to remove trash from four to six times per day to just once a day.

This project strengthened relationships and led to having support for a grow lab in the school’s cafeteria and led to a more sustainable-focused school community. Being the first school to do this work has led them to be looked to for help at schools that want to do similar sustainable measures, Hughes shared, “I really want to make sure it’s clear how far reaching and how important this information is; [...] to have [this] knowledgeable resource that is Charter Oak”

Waste is an issue of environmental justice for everyone in the school community; it's a topic that everyone can see. Charter Oak's success with the reusable trays has caught the attention of other schools in West Hartford and Kim is supporting the efforts to attain grant funding to transition four additional schools to these trays.

At the elementary education level we see more clearly now than ever, how important it is to connect this to children's lives because they are the future and instilling these values at a young age will allow for a cleaner environment.

-Kim Hughes



Charter Oak students sharing results of their waste audit and sustainability efforts to the West Hartford Board of Education, including news of receiving RecycleCT Innovation Grant.

Future Plans

This project was a catalyst for waste audits and continued work around sustainability and waste for the school community. This project is ongoing but it's not expected to change much, it's a one-time funded project. There may be a need for replacement trays in the future but that should be far down the line.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

At the end of June 2018, all RecycleCT Foundation funds were held by Bank of America through its Donor Advised Funds or by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). As part of its work to become more independent, the Foundation distributed an RFP seeking fiscal management support. In October 2018, the Northeast Recycling Council (NERC) was awarded a two-year contract to provide fiscal management support, including the establishment of bank accounts outside of DEEP. While some funds being held by DEEP are still encumbered through a contract with Decker/Makiaris for the What's IN, What's OUT campaign, all other funds are now held independently and managed by the Foundation Board.

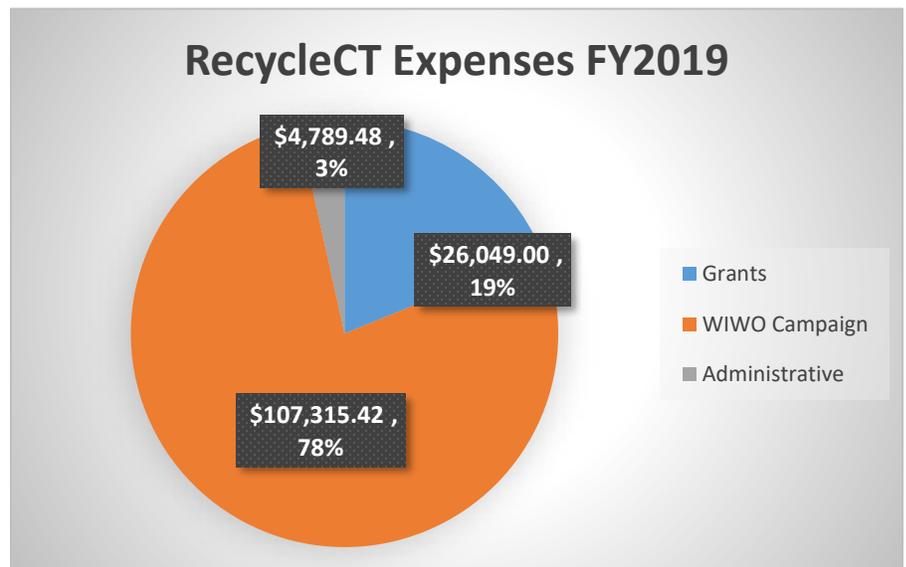
| Revenue/Income | FY 2019 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| DEEP SEP | \$400,000 |
| EPA Grant (EdAdvance) | \$2,500 |
| Interest | \$116.64 |
| Total Revenue/Income | \$402,616.64 |

| Expenses | FY 2019 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| WIWO Campaign | \$107,315.42 |
| Innovation Grant (partly in FY 2019)* | \$18,250 |
| School Grant | \$7,799.00 |
| Admin: NERC, Fees, Acctg | \$4,789.48 |
| Total Expenses | \$138,153.90 |
| NET | \$264,462.74 |

NERC also ensures the RecycleCT Foundation is up to date on filings, taxes and helps with distribution of checks when grant funds are awarded, and works with accountants providing an annual audit.

Robert J. Klee, former Commissioner of DEEP and former RecycleCT Foundation Board Chair, successfully secured \$400,000 in supplement environmental program funds to support the Foundation with the goal of becoming more financially sustainable. In addition, RecycleCT was a partner in an EPA Environmental Grant with Ed Advance to support Green LEAF Schools with professional development and matching grant funds.

Phase II of the What's IN, What's OUT paid media portion of the campaign was also completed in the third quarter of this fiscal year. In addition, some funds earmarked for the Innovation Grant were paid out at the end of FY2018 and the beginning of FY2019 and while only the funds paid are reported here, all grants are for that grant cycle are listed under FY2019 Grantees.



RecycleCT 2018-2019 Grantees

2019 School Grants

Oak Grove Montessori School

Mansfield, CT

Grant Amount: \$1,315

Waste reduction; reuse

Wilcox Technical High School

Meriden, CT

Grant Amount: \$500

Repurposing; reuse

Manchester Public Schools

Manchester, CT

Grant Amount: \$1,500

Education, eco-teams

South Elementary School

New Canaan, CT

Grant Amount: \$1,494

Cafeteria collection

Environmental Sciences Magnet School at Mary Hooker

Hartford, CT

Grant Amount: \$1,490

Cafeteria collection

Charter Oak International Academy

West Hartford, CT

Grant Amount: \$1,500

Reuse

2018-2019 Innovation Grants

New Britain Roots

New Britain, CT

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Farmers market food waste collection program

New Haven Land Trust

New Haven, CT

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Community composting pilot project at community garden

iQuilt Partnership Inc.

Hartford, CT

Grant Amount: \$4,000

Create BMP for Event Recycling with City of Hartford; upcycling banner pilot from events

Center for EcoTechnology (CET)

Florence, MA

Grant Amount: \$5,000

Urban food waste reduction technical assistance for CT businesses



The Children's Museum

West Hartford, CT

Grant Amount: \$5,000

Home composting education program

City of New Haven

New Haven, CT

Grant Amount: \$7,000

Sustainable Materials Management "Bee" competition

Town of Darien

Darien, CT

Grant Amount: \$8,460

Launch food scraps collection program at town transfer station



Fairgate Farm at Charter Oak Communities

Stamford, CT

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Expand compost education and outreach into schools and urban gardens

Center for Latino Progress (CLP)

Hartford, CT

Grant Amount: \$8,250

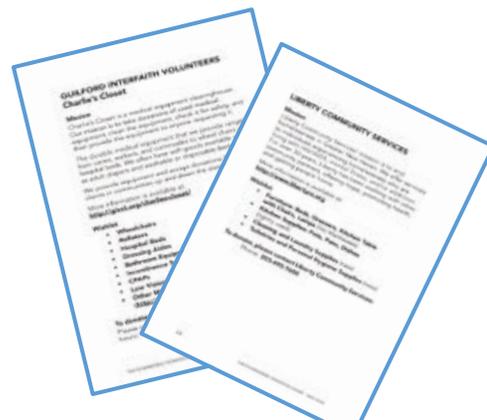
In partnership with Blue Earth Compost, purchase collection bike for youth employment to start bike-collection of food scraps

The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Center for Food Equity and Economic Development

Bridgeport, CT

Grant Amount: \$9,530

Business development/training using recovered food with low-income residents



Product Stewardship Institute

Boston, MA

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Outreach, education and consensus building around plastic film/plastic bags

All Our Kin

New Haven, CT

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Waste reduction, recycling and worm composting for their 3 CT sites including all staff and provider training programs.

The Home Haven Inc.

New Haven, CT

Grant Amount: \$2,750

Downsizing donation guide for greater New Haven region

https://housing.yale.edu/sites/default/files/file_s/TheDownsizingDonationGuide.pdf

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