

RDN Approves Grants for Innovative Zero Waste Projects

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is pleased to announce that \$300,003 in grants for five local organizations through the Zero Waste Recycling Funding (ZWRF) program have been approved for 2024: Gabriola Island Recycling Organization (\$94,450), Habitat for Humanity (\$80,000), Light House (\$68,400), Ocean Wise (\$40,653) and the Synergy Foundation (\$16,500). Grantees will utilize funds to divert waste in the region through education programs, repurposing waste products, creating resources local businesses can use to become more sustainable, connecting organizations to share and develop zero-waste ideas for even greater impact.

- Funding to the Gabriola Island Recycling Organization (GIRO) will support construction costs so that their building can be fully operational in January 2024 and cover a portion of the first year of the Makerspace operational costs. GIRO will also be developing and implementing a scalable Textile Education Program to be utilized in schools with the goal to divert up to 52,000 lbs. of fabric from the Regional Landfill annually by repurposing it into construction projects, stuffed applications and more.
- Habitat for Humanity will use their funds to increase book recycling from 4,000 to 25,000 units via research and further development of a book log product that can be burned in any wood-burning fireplace. By automating the book deconstruction and book log production process, they will increase the number of books that can be diverted from the landfill and reduce the need for continued funding support in the future.
- Light House will use the grant to connect companies across sectors within the RDN that utilize or have the potential to use construction, renovation and demolition (CRD) materials. This utilization of CRD materials will directly stimulate circular economic activity in the region and drive diversion of those materials from the landfill.
- Ocean Wise will use its funds to understand the impact of plastic takeout packaging and to measure the effectiveness of options to reduce plastic takeout packaging in food and beverage businesses in the RDN. Based on the results, they will create a toolkit local businesses can use to decrease plastic takeout packaging. Their initiative will also identify where the RDN and member municipalities may need to support businesses to achieve this outcome.
- The Synergy Foundation will use the funds to deliver sustainability guidance and support through their BC Green Business program. They will focus on waste reduction/diversion, energy and water conservation, emissions reduction and social impact. They will also promote sustainable purchasing decisions, educate businesses about alternatives to single use plastics and packaging, foster a green business network for knowledge sharing and collaboration, and recognize businesses' efforts to be more sustainable.

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The ZWRF program aims to fund organizations that demonstrate innovative initiatives that increase waste diversion through the development of a circular economy, 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,
- Re-using, 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 that does not rely on ongoing funding. As the program was oversubscribed with requests totaling \$637,000, 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). This grant cycle is the final year of the three-year grant program. To learn more about the SWMP, visit rdn.bc.ca/solid-waste-management-plan. For tools and resources to help reduce waste in our community, visit rdn.bc.ca/rethink.

Quotes

“We are excited to see the progress being made by the organizations receiving another Zero Waste grant and the innovative ideas of first-time grantees, all of which have great potential to reduce waste and support a sustainable circular economy. What used to be considered waste is being transformed into useful products and these diverse initiatives will build on the RDN’s efforts to move closer to our zero waste goals.”

Vanessa Craig, RDN Chair


“Organizations in our region continue to step up and develop new ways to reduce and repurpose waste. The grants provided through the RDN’s Zero Waste Recycling Funding program will help these organizations implement programs and initiatives that will ultimately benefit the broader community and the environment by helping to create a more sustainable future.”

Ben Geselbracht, RDN Director and Solid Waste Management Select Committee Chair

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