

RECYCLING EDUCATION AND OUTREACH (REO)

2023 GRANT APPLICATION



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****Project narrative, appendices, and letters of support are available online****

www.columbus.gov/reogrant

I. Project summary and approach

The City of Columbus is seeking \$2 million from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Consumer Recycling Education and Outreach (REO) grant program. This funding is necessary for developing a new Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle program that is essential for supporting the expansion of the city’s curbside recycling from biweekly to weekly collection, and helping to achieve significant landfill waste diversion goals established by the Columbus Climate Action Plan (CAP). Columbus is committed to engaging local residents and ensuring this program is implemented equitably. Program activities fall into one of the following categories: (a) Research, (b) Training and Education, (c) Communications, (d) Outreach, and (e) Capacity Building.

A. Overall project description

I. Project background

a. Project location

The City of Columbus (906,528 residents) is the 14th largest city in the United States, and the largest city in Ohio.¹ It is at the center of a region experiencing significant growth, with more than 3.1 million residents predicted by 2050.² This predicted growth will likely be accelerated by Intel Corporation’s 2022 announcement to construct two semiconductor factories in Central Ohio, just outside of the Columbus corporate limits. Intel has described its site as a “mega-site,”³ and this investment will significantly impact growth, the need for additional housing, greater densification, and expanded local waste infrastructure throughout Columbus and Central Ohio. Managing the waste and recycling associated with all of this growth is the City of Columbus Department of Public Service (DPS). Through its Refuse Collection Division, DPS (1) provides weekly refuse collection and bulk collection services directly for all city residents, and (2) manages the citywide residential recycling contract.

b. Current recycling programs in Columbus

Columbus has provided a biweekly curbside recycling program since 2012.⁴ It is currently serviced by a third-party vendor and administered by Refuse Collection. The program is available to all households that currently receive trash collection at no additional cost to residents. Last year, a total of 34,788 tons of single-stream recycling was collected and diverted from the landfill, and this total is expected to increase 25 to 40% once weekly collection starts. The city began a pilot program in 2021 to identify how recycling at apartment complexes could best work in Columbus. Forty recycling dumpsters have been deployed to multifamily complexes across the city; Refuse Collection services these dumpsters, educates residents of the units on how to recycle, and monitors material collected and capacity to best learn how to expand recycling to all residents within the city. Residential recycling is further augmented by drop boxes distributed throughout Columbus, which allow residents to recycle additional materials free of charge. However, these locations do not collect batteries, electronics, or food waste. Columbus is working to expand its collection and waste diversion capacities through the construction of physical infrastructure. These

¹ “Fastest-Growing Cities Are Still in the West and South,” CB22-90, U.S. Census Bureau, May 26, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/fastest-growing-cities-population-estimates.html>.

² “2024-2050 Population Growth Forecasts,” Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), https://www.morpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Population_Growth_Forecast_2024-50.pdf

³ “Innovating and Investing in Ohio,” Intel Corporation, last accessed Jan. 17, 2023, <https://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/corporate-responsibility/intel-in-ohio.html>.

⁴ The proposed 2023 budget would expand this program will move recycling from bi-weekly to weekly collection. For information on this, and solid waste infrastructure expansions, please see “Weekly Residential Recycling Fact Sheet,” City of Columbus, <https://www.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147527763>.

locations will significantly expand collection capacity for materials currently collected curbside and create capacity for new waste streams like batteries, electronics, and food waste. They are a critical component in meeting the ambitious goals laid out in Columbus' first Climate Action Plan (CAP), adopted in 2021.⁵ They are also essential for supporting the circular economy, as Central Ohio has nearly 400 recycling-reliant businesses, and these businesses receive 80% of recyclables collected in Central Ohio.⁶

c. Education and outreach are necessary to achieve Climate Action Plan goals

In December 2021, Mayor Andrew J. Ginther formally unveiled the city's Climate Action Plan after a broad planning and community and stakeholder engagement process. This plan commits the city to a 45% reduction in emissions by 2030 and a goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. Rooted in equity, this plan has an inclusive, community-derived planning process that focuses on residents and communities impacted most by climate change. Part of the plan focuses on waste reduction through increased diversion.⁷ Greenhouse gas emissions from the waste sector are directly tied to methane emissions. As the population of Columbus is projected to continue growing, landfill space becomes more constrained. It will be the most efficient use of public dollars to reduce the volume of waste and amount of physical space needed to contain it.

The City of Columbus has the following goals and quantitative metrics related to waste reduction in the Climate Action Plan: 90% reduction in organic waste by 2050 resulting in 133,784 MT of GHG; 95% reduction in recyclable waste landfilled by 2050 resulting in 278,687 MT of GHG; and 2,000 green jobs creation related to circular economy by 2050. Creating infrastructure to capture and divert materials from the landfill is only part of the solution. Education and outreach programming on reducing and reusing are also essential, and they are the basis for the proposed community outreach and education grant.

d. Recent outreach and education pilot programs

Over the past year, the Division of Refuse Collection has managed multiple pilot programs to learn and test outreach and education strategies and tactics in anticipation of developing and launching broader and large-scale citywide programs to achieve CAP goals. These include the following:

- *Pumpkin Collection*: The city held a pumpkin and gourd drop-off for residents, collecting over 6 tons of organic waste to be composted. This activity has helped inform what types of materials residents would bring to a refuse station and at what frequency.
- *Electronics Recycling Event*: On New Year's Eve, the city held an electronics and cardboard recycling event. In four hours, over 500 residents brought in 15 tons of material.
- *Ohio State Off-Campus Move In/Move Out Recycling*: During a two-week window in early August, tens of thousands of OSU students move out and move into the city's University District neighborhood. Refuse Collection crews traditionally work overtime to keep the area clean and assist with waste collection and diversion. In 2022, the city used a combination of education, outreach, and six additional recycling dumpsters to capture and divert more than 6 tons of cardboard.

⁵ Columbus's CAO is available at <https://www.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147522706>.

⁶ See Joe Lombardi, "Opinion: Weekly curbside among ways Columbus area will keep recyclables from landfill." *The Columbus Dispatch*, Feb. 14, 2023, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/opinion/columns/guest/2023/02/14/joe-lombardi-columbus-area-is-keeping-recyclables-from-landfill-solid-waste-authority-central-ohio/69782285007/>.

⁷ In addition to leading waste diversion efforts, Refuse Collection is pursuing its first-ever all-electric trash truck, purchasing electric box trucks for recycling and trash container delivery, and installing charging stations.

- *Recycle Right Canvassing*: Staff from Columbus and the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) went door-to-door to in the Linden neighborhoods to educate residents on how to recycle, sign up for a new recycling cart, and answer questions about the Recycle Right program.
- *Resident Communications*: New tools and tactics have been utilized to communicate with and educate residents, including: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; resident communication tools such as Nextdoor and ReCollect; community events; and personal outreach to community leaders.

Columbus would use the requested grant funds to leverage the lessons learned into coordinated, citywide education and outreach programs focused on creating a culture of reducing, reusing, and recycling materials in everyday life of residents.

2. Concise project description

Columbus is seeking funding to develop a new Reduce, Reuse, Recycle program. This program is essential for successfully expanding the city’s recycling to a weekly collection schedule, and achieving the CAP’s waste diversion goals. It is also essential for safety. Properly recycling electronics and batteries not only diverts items from landfills and creates new opportunities for local businesses—it also helps to prevent potential injuries and save lives.⁸ The program’s planned activities fall into one of the following categories: (a) Research, (b) Training and Education, (c) Communications, (d) Outreach, and (e) Capacity Building.

a. Research

Engaging and surveying Columbus residents is essential in developing the new materials and activities. This process will establish a baseline of recycling and composting knowledge, interest, and current uses of the infrastructure in place. It will also identify how residents prefer to receive and learn new information, and how future program ideas can help shape additional engagement opportunities. Columbus would use grant funding to support three research initiatives that are intended to ensure the city’s reduce, reuse, recycle campaigns and material appropriately engage all Columbus residents and neighborhoods:

- *Focus Groups*: Resident-based focus groups will help solicit and refine opinions and feedback on the city’s efforts and human behavior. There will be an emphasis on both the Somali and Latino communities to develop programs that are better suited to engage these communities.
- *Online surveys*: Ongoing online surveys will track changes in behavior and test messaging and program effectiveness. There will also be A/B testing of messages and content generated to determine if changes in language and/or graphics increase or decrease engagement and individual behavior throughout this work. Engagement will continue through implementation.
- *Post-Program Evaluation*: At the end of the grant cycle, a final survey will be commissioned to evaluate changes from the initial baseline survey and track changes in behavior, attitudes, or knowledge on recycling and composting. This data will help determine what practices were most effective and where progress occurred in changing behavior of residents; it will be made available to other municipalities and organizations interested in implementing similar programs or building upon this education and outreach work.

⁸ A privately contracted trash truck on a route in Columbus recently had to make an emergency stop to dump its load due to laptop having been improperly thrown into the garbage. See Cole Behrens, “Don’t put lithium-ion batteries in trash, Rumpke warns after garbage truck fire,” *The Columbus Dispatch*, Feb. 8, 2023, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/local/2023/02/09/garbage-truck-fire-caused-by-lithium-ion-battery-in-laptop-rumpke-says/69886377007/>

b. Training and education

Online and in-person training modules will be developed to serve residents and educate them on best practices to reduce, reuse, and recycle. This not only will include traditional and new recyclable materials, but also food and yard waste and other organics as they make up a significant portion of our waste stream. These programs will be adaptable to numerous audiences, communities, and backgrounds.

- *Master Recycler Certification:* A program to educate residents on becoming citizen-experts on recycling and equip them with skills and tools to teach their neighbors and community members about the importance of recycling and how to Recycle Right.
- *How to Compost Training:* A Composting 101 class to be available online and in-person to teach residents the basics of composting and its importance to organic waste reduction goals.
- *Pre-K-12 Reduce and Reuse Course:* Creation of curriculum materials that speak to the economic, environmental, and human health need for reuse. Potential collaborators for developing these materials include Columbus State Community College, The Ohio State University, Center of Science and Industry (COSI), PAST Foundation, Columbus City Schools, and Battelle Memorial Institute. The program will target two specific audiences: (1) school administrators, teachers, and facility managers; and (2) students in grades pre-K-12.

c. Communications

New communication materials and efforts will be developed that will support reduce, reuse, recycle education and outreach campaigns, while also educating and engaging residents. These will include the following:

- *Evergreen Reuse Materials:* New and updated materials will be designed, created, and distributed throughout the community, with the goal to create a unified brand, awareness, and level of action from residents to reduce and reuse materials as part of their recycling efforts. Materials will be designed to be sustainable by being evergreen and able to last multiple years without needing a refresh; by using digital items instead of print or physical material (when applicable); and by being updateable and customizable to adapt to the growing needs and changes throughout the city. Creating these materials and resources will provide opportunities to work with local design talent and graphic artists. These materials will be made available in English, Spanish, and Somali to increase Reuse outreach to the broadest possible audience.
- *Online Reuse Directory:* Develop and maintain an online directory of organizations and businesses that engage in and support Reuse that is publicly accessible from multiple websites.
- *Social Media Education Campaign:* Create images, videos, and other forms of content to educate residents on reduce, reuse, and recycle and promote through social media channels.
- *Traditional Media Campaign:* A traditional media campaign, with a specific emphasis on multilingual communities, to reach and educate residents about reduce, reuse, and recycle.

d. Outreach

The diverse population and size of Columbus calls for varied and multiple strategies to engage, communicate, and educate residents. Outreach will include the following:

- *On to Off Campus Transition:* This program will help educate Ohio State University students on how to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials during their transitional move (e.g., recycling moving boxes, donating old furniture and clothes, and properly disposing of e-waste) and how the city's existing recycling, food waste, and litter abatement programs encourage a culture of recycling.

- *Artist-in-Residence*: Host an artist-in-residence (contract position for one year) who addresses waste stream issues through hosting workshops in city recreation centers across the city and/or at a cultural hub.
- *Reuse Boot Camp*: Host an annual Reuse "boot camp" to educate passionate and aspiring reusers about how to incorporate reuse strategies at home and build a network of local reuse leaders.
- *Community Events*: Add city and neighborhood events to the calendars of staff and partner organizations to create opportunities for meeting residents where they are and offer in-person education and introductions to the city's work on reuse.
 - e. **Capacity building**

Grant funding would be used to hire a full-time staff position (salary and benefits) with the City of Columbus to support existing refuse collection, sustainability, and communications staff and coordinate some of the new work detailed in this grant proposal. The position will be a bargaining unit position responsible for community engagement, communications efforts, and partnerships.

B. This project meets the requirements in Section I.G: Scope of Work and I.I: National Recycling Strategy Plan Linkage

This project aligns with all five points of the National Recycling Strategy. It better and more broadly educates residents and the community at large about increasing recycling participation and reducing contamination, resulting in improved markets for recyclables and organic commodities in Columbus and Central Ohio. The detailed and continuous education of residents and the community will result in an increased amount of recyclable and compostable materials. The project will create an opportunity to better educate residents, and continuously, on proper recycling and waste disposal to ensure a cleaner recycling and organics waste diversion stream citywide. Policies to support and grow recycling will result from the community engagement throughout the city, and will encourage development and implementation of policies to support the demand for more and better reuse policies. Data from all the programs will further refine the program, create metrics for future recycling and composting efforts, and ensure progress is being made toward the city's CAP goals and a culture of reuse in Columbus and Central Ohio.

C. Project goals and objectives

Goals: Create a culture of reuse among residents and the community at large while increasing participation and reducing contamination in recycling and composting programs. Build support and organizational infrastructure, and materials to engage and educate residents in both the short and long-term on reduce, reuse, and recycle. Develop best practices that are replicable by other communities to increase recycling and organics participation and reduce contamination.

Objectives: A measurable reduction increase in recycling and composting among Columbus residents. Progress toward the 2030 CAP recycling, organics, and circular economy goals. Production of research, content, training materials, and capacity to support the goals stated above.

Milestones:

- 2024:
 - Onboard staff to coordinate the work outlined in this grant
 - Complete initial resident focus group research, and start ongoing online surveys
 - Social and traditional media campaigns launch to communicate with residents
 - Master Recycling training developed and launched
- 2025:
 - Community ambassador program trained and launched

- Artist-in-residence brought on and program starts
- Composting training developed and offered to residents
- K-12 education materials designed and shared
- Post-program survey of residents completed

D. Project schedule

This proposal will develop, build, and execute a multi-year education and outreach campaign to residents of the City of Columbus. The goal is that materials, programs, and resources developed as part of this work will be evergreen or updatable to give residents the tools needed to create and maintain a culture of reuse through at least the 2030 waste reduction goals of the CAP. Depending on the timing of funding available, this work could start as soon as several months after an award is granted. This program is expected to last two years, with the results and materials continuing beyond the grant program. Please see [Appendix A – Detailed Schedule](#) for a more detailed schedule.

II. Environmental Justice

A. The project will provide significant benefits and help address longstanding issues in CEJST identified disadvantaged communities

Columbus is leading with equity. Impacts of climate change are being felt daily by residents throughout Columbus. As our community faces increasingly hotter days and stronger, more frequent rainstorms, our communities of color and marginalized communities are most at risk. Columbus' 2020 census population passed 900,000 residents for the first time—an increase of over 15% in the past decade. Within that growth comes significant growth in the Black, Asian, and Latino communities,⁹ all of which underscores the significant urgency and need to center equity and environmental justice in how our community achieves our climate action goals. It is necessary go beyond GHG emission reductions to ensure marginalized communities have the resources, programming, and support in place to improve quality of life now and into the future.

Litter, recycling contamination, and the growing urgency of the climate crisis create the urgency and need for justice in our communities. The elements of this proposal invest in and build out the communication and education efforts at the neighborhood level to educate, capture, and divert materials from our landfill. Areas selected are in traditionally redlined communities and all are identified as disadvantaged according to the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)¹⁰

B. Community engagement plan

Columbus will use its established procedures for engaging residents and communities. Since the project impacts services offered to all residents in the city, Columbus will adopt a strategy that engages residents and stakeholders at all levels.

City staff will use established procedures to ensure Columbus City Council and local area commissions are engaged at a citywide level. Councilmember Emmanuel V. Remy, Chair of the

⁹ The Black population grew almost universally over the last decade throughout the rest of Franklin County by 21.3% to just under 300,000 residents, the data shows. The county's overall white population dropped about 0.4%, to 802,685. The county's Asian population grew 64.6% to more than 74,000. The Hispanic or Latino population grew 63.6% to 91,182. Please see Bill Bush and Mark Ferencik, "Where did Columbus' population grow most? Suburbs, Black population increase in census data." *The Columbus Dispatch*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/2021/08/12/columbus-ohio-census-results-population-growth-suburbs-black-residents/8116735002/>.

¹⁰ [Appendix B – Columbus CEJST Information](#)

Environment Committee, will ensure City Council is engaged in the planning efforts. Staff will also work with local area commissions to provide key input from local residents and businesses.¹¹ The Department of Public Service, where Refuse Collection is organizationally situated, is responsible for constructing and maintaining the physical roadway infrastructure within the public right of way; it has significant experience managing projects involving federal funding and National Environmental Policy Act requirements. Refuse Collection also regularly works with residents and local neighborhoods regarding issues involving weekly curbside trash pickup, bulk item collections, illegal dumping investigations, and the city's contracted residential recycling program. In addition to the focus groups, city staff intend to engage the area commissions and the residents of the communities impacted by specific outreach activities and materials to ensure their voices, concerns, and input are heard and incorporated into the city's long-term recycling and organics diversion work. One-on-one meetings with community leaders, group meetings with residents, and online feedback from the community will be continuous from the beginning of the planning stage through the implementation of the programs.

III. Performance measure: anticipated outcomes and outputs

- Measurable increase in recycling participation from City of Columbus residents.
- Measurable decrease in recycling contamination from City of Columbus residents.
- Measurable increase in composting participation from City of Columbus residents.
- Creation of reduce, reuse, and recycling education materials in English, Spanish, and Somali.
- Creation of training materials, courses, and modules for recycling and composting programs.
- Post-survey response shows a measurable increase in interest and level of understanding of recycling and composting based on education and engagement programs.
- Programs and materials that are replicable and sharable with other municipalities and organizations looking to expand reduce, reuse, and recycling policies and programs.
- Anticipated output is to meet the CAP goals of 43,000 tons of recyclable materials and 74,700 tons of organics being diverted annually from the landfill by 2030.

IV. Programmatic capability and past performance

A. Past performance in successfully completing and managing assistance agreements and reporting requirements

Columbus has a significant and established track record of successfully completing and managing federal and state assistance agreements at the federal, state, and regional level. At the federal level, Columbus successfully completed and managed the United States Department of Transportation's Smart City Challenge (awarded in 2016, completed in 2021).¹² At the state level, Columbus is currently managing two Ohio Environmental Protection Agency grants to install EV chargers in two city-owned garages (awarded in 2021). At the regional level, Columbus currently is managing a regional grant from the SWACO to pilot city recycling at multifamily residential apartment complexes (awarded in 2020); it successfully completed and managed a 2018 study of its recycling program (awarded 2018, completed 2019).¹³

¹¹ Columbus has more than 200 neighborhoods; and the city has empowered communities to create resident-based recommending bodies called Area Commissions to review certain projects and serve as a voice for the community. Area Commissions are elected by the local communities; and, while commission votes are only advisory, the votes are highly informative – especially for decisions ultimately presented to the Columbus City Council for a vote.

¹² "Smart City Challenge Final Report," Columbus, https://d2rfd3nxvhnf29.cloudfront.net/2021-06/SCC-J-Program-Final%20Report-Final-V2_0.pdf. See, also, <https://smart.columbus.gov/programs/smart-city-demonstration>.

¹³ Please see [Appendix C – Past Performance and Experience](#) for additional documentation of these awards.

B. Organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project

The City of Columbus Division of Refuse Collection provides weekly curbside trash collection to more than 350,000 Columbus households. The division also manages regular collection of curbside residential recycling and yard waste. As the number of households grows, the division's planning efforts and innovative use of technology and data will continue to drive how Refuse Collection provides trash, recycling, and yard waste pickup services as efficiently as possible. It is a significant point of pride that, more than 99 percent of the time, residents get their trash picked up by Refuse Collection on their scheduled weekly collection day. The division will take this same pride and customer service focus to the waste diversion efforts proposed in this application. The division is dedicating frontline and management staff to lead this work, prioritizing waste diversion and sustainability efforts across the current work, and continuing to fund programs and infrastructure to transition the division to meet the goals of 95% organic diversion and 90% recyclable diversion by 2050.

C. Staff expertise/qualifications

Leading this project will be Tim Swauger, Division of Refuse Collection Administrator, and Aryeh Alex, Sustainability Manager and Keep Columbus Beautiful Executive Director—both staff members in the city's Department of Public Service.

Tim Swauger has served as the Administrator for the Division of Refuse Collection for the last 6 years, leading a team of over 200 employees and managing operating and capital budgets totaling nearly \$100 million. The division is responsible for citywide residential collection of trash, yard waste and recycling materials, and the Keep Columbus Beautiful (KCB) program and serves over 350,000 residential locations. Since joining Refuse Collection in 2016, Tim has led various initiatives aimed at improving productivity and expanding services, including optimization of refuse routes through GIS mapping, the addition of the Solid Waste Investigation program to city code, and the expansion of residential curbside recycling. Tim is a member of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) and collaborates with other cities to continue to improve waste services while leading the way for sustainability practices that will reduce waste, increase diversion, and create green jobs.

Aryeh Alex leads sustainability efforts in the Division of Refuse Collection, where he is tasked with executing three key sections of the city's Climate Action Plan related to recycling, organics, and building a circular economy. Aryeh also oversees the Keep Columbus Beautiful program that leads in volunteer litter cleanups, community beautification projects, and sustainability education. During the past 12 months, these projects have included an ongoing 10,000-apartment unit multifamily recycling pilot, an Ohio State University off-campus move-in/move-out recycling program, the first-ever pumpkin composting drop-off, and two neighborhood-based door-to-door recycling education campaigns that focused on increasing participation and reducing contamination in recycling. Aryeh also serves as a Park Commissioner with the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks, a volunteer leadership position that oversees a \$40 million annual park budget.

V. Budget and expenditure of awarded grant funds – See [Appendix D - Budget](#)

VI. Project sustainability and replicability

The City of Columbus is dedicated to the success and long-term diversion of waste being landfilled. This is key part of the city's Climate Action Plan and essential to the city becoming carbon-neutral by 2050. The Mayor's proposed 2023 operating budget includes substantial new

funding dedicated to educating residents on recycling and piloting new food waste programs. The 2023 funding will help test and build capacity to support the long-term infrastructure needed for the diversion programs detailed in this proposal. The city’s initial commitment to funding education and pilot programs ensures the sustainability of this work now and in the future. It is the intent of the city to continue prioritizing and expanding this work as we move to the 2030 benchmark and 2050 final goals of the Climate Action Plan and overall waste reduction and diversion. It is intended that all the elements of this project will be replicable within the city, region, and in other areas across the country. Collection of data, lessons learned, and best practices will be available to other municipalities and organizations interested in developing similar infrastructure and programs.

VII. Effective partnerships

A. Existing partnerships at time of application

Columbus does not intend to have paid partnerships as part of executing the programmatic elements detailed in this proposal. However, Columbus frequently collaborates with other agencies, and many of these informal partnerships are long lasting and deeply rooted with overlapping sustainability missions.

1. Ohio EPA

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency is a state agency whose goal is to protect the environment and public health by ensuring compliance with environmental laws. Those laws and related rules outline Ohio EPA’s authority and what Columbus can consider when making decisions about regulated activities. The Ohio EPA’s Division of Materials and Waste Management is the lead on solid waste and diversion, with the mission to protect public health and the environment by promoting alternative waste materials management options that reduce reliance on landfills and ensure waste management facilities are constructed and operated in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Columbus is working with the Ohio EPA to develop the idea for conducting neighborhood waste characterization within the city, with a focus on food types, recyclable wastes, and packaging types.

2. The Ohio State University

Over 100,000 of students, faculty, and staff step onto Ohio State’s Columbus campus every day and use a wide array material—from food to furniture, from paper to medical supplies. In 2015, the university committed to a comprehensive set of world-leading ambitious goals to address its resource footprint, which includes a commitment to diverting 90% of its solid waste materials away from landfills through recycling, composting, reuse, and waste reduction. Since 2015, Ohio State has grown the diversion rate from 29.2% to 40% by utilizing a roadmap developed through expanding composting, waste characterization studies, and the “Recycle Right” campaign. Their efforts have won state and national awards. Ohio State Athletics has been a leader in waste diversion for over a decade. Ohio Stadium is the largest stadium in the country to continuously strive for zero waste status. Since 2012, Ohio Stadium has exceeded at least an 80% diversion rate, with five years exceeding an impressive 90% diversion rate. Recent accolades include the Keep Ohio Beautiful education award in 2021 and the National Recycling Coalition Higher Education Award in 2022. Columbus frequently collaborates with Ohio State, and it anticipates this EPA grant would provide additional opportunities for collaboration.

3. Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO)

SWACO serves Franklin County and neighboring areas with solutions for solid waste. It is one of 52 solid waste districts created by the Ohio General Assembly in 1989. These districts were

established with the mission to reduce reliance on landfills. Acting upon that mission, SWACO provides consumers with recycling opportunities around Franklin County at drop off-locations. SWACO's mission is to manage the waste stream to enable community growth, prosperity, and environmental stewardship. Columbus has a close working relationship with SWACO, as more than 60% of all materials going to SWACO's landfill are generated from Columbus residents. Shared goals of waste diversion, increased recycling, and build-out a food waste program extend the landfill's life and make neighborhoods healthier and more sustainable.

4. Central Ohio Reuse Coalition (CORC)

The Central Ohio Reuse Coalition is made up of nonprofits, local sustainability groups, green businesses, faith-based organizations and committed individuals who live and work in Central Ohio. CORC's vision is to reduce plastic pollution and improve the health of the community by replacing single-use plastic containers with reusables. CORC is composed of representatives of sustainability groups representing six (and counting) municipalities across Central Ohio, including Columbus, Worthington, Bexley, Westerville, Upper Arlington, and Delaware. Coalition partners also include local nonprofits such as Simply Living, The Sierra Club, Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW), and Franklinton Farms. CORC was seeded by and receives organizational support from Upstream Solutions. CORC Founder and Director Douglas Calem is a member of the Columbus CAP Waste Working Group and a member of Upstream Solution's National Reuse Network and their National Coalition Leadership Network.

VIII. Incorporation of evidence-based outreach and messaging

Data will be critical to developing, deploying, and updating communications, outreach, and messaging throughout the project and beyond. Ensuring all aspects of this program are rooted in evidence-based research will help increase reach, success, and sustainability of the long-term waste diversion goals of the City of Columbus. Additionally, as real-time data is collected, it will influence and adapt programmatic elements to help increase efficiency and productivity.

IX. Leveraging

Columbus intends to leverage existing relationships with The Ohio State University, the Central Ohio Reuse Coalition, the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio, and others. This will be important to reach broad segments of the community, use centralized and shared messaging, and rely on and build out new capacity to achieve these goals. Columbus City Council has proposed budgeting for a new Community Relations Coordinator in Refuse Collection. This new position will leverage existing sustainability and communications staff to coordinate some of the new work detailed in this grant proposal. The position will be a bargaining unit position responsible for community engagement, communications efforts, and partner support; it will work closely with the additional staff member Columbus would hire with these grant funds. This award will help Columbus leverage the local and federal funds to fund these programs and build a sustainable operation that works toward achieving the city's Climate Action Plan goals.

X. Attachments:

- [Appendix A – Detailed Schedule](#)
- [Appendix B – Columbus CEJST Information](#)
- [Appendix C – Past Performance and Experience](#)
- [Appendix D – Budget](#)
- [Letters of Support](#)