

## Spring 2025 Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (SMRP) Grant

Application Period: April 1 – June 2, 2025

Question Period: April 1 – May 5, 2025

The following questions were submitted to MassDEP during the designated question period noted above. MassDEP's Municipal Waste Reduction Branch compiled the questions based on each grant category and prepared formal responses below. For more information, visit: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-sustainable-materials-recovery-program-smrp-municipal-grant>.

### General Questions:

*Q1: When will a model EPP policy and example(s) be available?*

**A1:** The Municipal Branch is currently developing a model policy. Our plans are to not formally roll it out until after the Grant applications close. Slide #15 in the PPT presentation from the Grant Webinar (see: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/webinar-presentation-slides/download>) contains resources and links that lead to model policies or sample policies, which is a great place to start. In addition, we are collaborating with the Operational Services Division (OSD) to offer a webinar on **Tuesday, June 17, 2025, at 2:00 PM** to review this new requirement. Please stay tuned for a formal announcement, with registration starting June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

*Q2: Please provide more detail on the definition of "dedicated account." Are you asking a municipality to open a separate bank account for RDP funds or have a separate line item (account line) on their accounting list like they do with other grant funds? The money is considered restricted and not part of the general fund money.*

**A2:** No, we are not asking a municipality to have a separate bank account. A "dedicated account" can be a separate line item or fund managed by the municipality for specific funding sources. In the case of an RDP dedicated account, this means that the municipality will save all RDP funds awarded by MassDEP separately to ensure that these funds are utilized for approved waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. See the RDP Approved Spending Categories document: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/rdp-small-scale-initiative-approved-spending-categories/download>. Most municipalities (94%) indicated in their most recent RDP Spending Report that they already have a dedicated account. If a municipality does not, they will need to implement a dedicated account as described above within 30 days of notification of the RDP grant award.

*Q3: Do the RDP Funds get allocated by the calendar year or fiscal year?*

**A3:** RDP funds are awarded based on the fiscal year. For Spring 2025, this means that a municipality can earn RDP points for activities implemented between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025. The awards are expected to happen sometime in the Fall of 2025, which is the middle of the following Fiscal Year 2026.

*Q4: If the RDP funds that we are approved for come in the middle of the fiscal year, do those have to be expended by June 30th of that year, or can we roll those over and use them in the next fiscal year.*

**A4:** A municipality can roll them over and use them in the next fiscal year.

*Q5: I teach 6th graders at the Chenery Upper Elementary School in Belmont, MA. I also run our school's recycling and composting program in our school's cafeteria. My school has about 1100 students (Grades*

4-6); Belmont has a population of about 27,000 people. I'm looking for new sources of funding to maintain our contract with Black Earth Compost and I have heard a little about the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program. Is there a particular grant that you would recommend I apply for?

**A5:** Eligible applicants for SMRP grants include individual Massachusetts municipalities or regional governmental entities with legislative authorization to apply for grants on behalf of member municipalities (see: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/certification-of-smrp-minimum-eligibility-criteria/download>). There is one ReTRAC account assigned per municipality, with the contact who is the person in charge of recycling programs, typically a representative from the Department of Public Works or Board of Health. There is not a specific grant for schools to help cover ongoing operating costs for recycling and composting services. However, these are expenses that a municipality could choose to fund using money accumulated from RDP grants. See the RDP Approved Spending Categories document: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/rdp-small-scale-initiative-approved-spending-categories/download>.

*Q6: I discovered today that Mass EOEEA 2022 Updated Environment Justice Map added Sheffield. However, Sheffield is not listed on your EJ Community list for this year or last year, which impacts the amount of funding per point earned. Would you please update your list for this year to include Sheffield, as well as the other 17 municipalities added in 2022. If not, we would appreciate a reason why Sheffield is not accurately listed. Thank you.*

**A6:** The Environmental Justice (EJ) designation for RDP is unique for this grant only. It represents a small subset of all municipalities identified by the Commonwealth. This subset is defined as those communities in which 45 percent or more of their residents live in an EJ Census Block Group that meets combined criteria for either 1) minority population AND income (“MI”) components OR 2) minority population, income, AND English isolation (“MIE”) components. The criteria and definitions for the “RDP-EJ” designation is further detailed on pages 2-3 in the RDP Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-recycling-dividends-program/download>. When reviewing the specific details for the Town of Sheffield, it appears that Sheffield meets the EJ population definition for Income (I) only and the percentage of residents included in this population is 15%. The Town does not meet the criteria for minority population (M) and English language isolation (E), nor the 45% residential population requirement.

#### Drop-off Equipment Grant:

##### Glass Container

*Q7: NOTE: We received two similar questions related to the type of container allowed for source-separated glass: Is there an option for the municipality to choose a closed-top roll-off for glass collection as opposed to an open-top roll off?*

**A7:** The equipment offering for a glass container specifies that the container should be an open-top roll-off as it is generally the standard container for glass collected at transfer stations and what MassDEP understands as being the most efficient. However, we can consider these requests on a case-by-case basis if there's a particular reason why a municipality prefers an alternative type of container. Note that the grant allows municipalities to purchase a gable-top cover with this grant funding. See Page 1 of the Drop-off Equipment Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-drop-off-recycling-equipment/download>.

*Q8: If I already purchased a glass container, can I get reimbursed through the grant?*

**A8:** No, grantees are not eligible to receive grant funds for items that they have already purchased.

#### Cardboard Compactor

*Q9: Why is the cardboard compactor intended to only collect OCC cardboard and not for mixed paper?*

**A9:** MassDEP's waste ban inspections show that large amounts of cardboard are disposed of in the trash. Because cardboard is a high-volume material that takes up a lot of space, and when separated from mixed paper for recycling it is more valuable, using a compactor to collect cardboard would provide the greatest increase in efficiency. In addition, municipalities with cart collection of recyclables would benefit from providing a separate collection for the large quantity of cardboard from online shipments. These grants will be competitive, and it will be important to demonstrate impact on the amount of cardboard that can be captured for recycling.

*Q10: If the cardboard compactor is a reimbursement, when does the purchase need to take place?*

**A10:** All purchases must take place after the municipality is awarded a grant and signs a statement of work, typically in the Fall/Winter of 2025. MassDEP cannot reimburse for any purchases made before a grant contract is signed. The municipality will have until the end of June 2026 to submit reimbursement requests.

*Q11: Your info says to "expand an existing recycling program". Our need for a compactor is to compact our current paper/cardboard collection so as to reduce the required number of hauls to the out-of-town processing facility. Does this qualify for a grant application? We do collect commingled and paper/cardboard.*

**A11:** Municipalities are not eligible for a compactor for use with commingled paper/cardboard. The "cardboard compactor" grant is intended for old, corrugated cardboard (OCC) only and specifies that the target material is cardboard. See the Chart on Page 1 of the Drop-off Equipment Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-drop-off-recycling-equipment/download>. Also see the response to Question 9 above.

#### Universal Waste Shed

*Q12: If a Universal waste shed is already at our recycling center, can this grant be used for an expansion/renovation of the existing shed? For example, our recycling center does not accept paint waste at this time. Would a renovation of the existing shed to accommodate paint waste fall within the scope of the grant?*

**A12:** Paint vendors and universal waste vendors are distinct so storing these materials in the same shed/structure would not necessarily be ideal. This is another situation that would likely need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis to understand if there's a particular reason why a municipality requires this method of collection. It is important to note that the grant award allows MassDEP to award a municipality "up to \$5,000" and this is intended for a brand-new shed or piece of equipment. If MassDEP were to approve expansion or renovation of an existing structure, the award may be adjusted to reflect a lesser amount.

*Q13: Has FAC110 been updated with contractors and pricing for July 2025 on?*

**A13:** Vendor pricing was due at the end of April 2025 so it's currently in process. The contract should be updated and posted by the start of the new fiscal year, July 2025. The new contract is identified as WMR001.

#### Paint Shed

*Q14: Does the Paint Drop off Shed add points to the RDP Application?*

**A14:** For the RDP grant application, a municipality is reporting on what they're already doing in this current fiscal year (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025). Programs implemented after June 30, 2025 would only apply to the next grant application issued in Spring 2026.

#### Food Waste Collection Bins

*Q15: Can the funds for food waste drop-off be used to purchase containers that utilize apps and measure fullness such as Big Belly or metroSTOR?*

**A15:** Yes, a municipality can buy whatever container works best for them with the available funds.

*Q16: To qualify for the drop-off equipment grant, specifically for drop-off food waste containers (like metroSTOR or big belly), must the municipality pay for the hauling of the food?*

**A16:** Yes, the municipality is responsible for coordinating and paying for the hauling costs of their food waste collected from their drop-off locations. A list of eligible uses of grant funds can be found on page 2 of the Drop-off Equipment Grant Details document found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-drop-off-recycling-equipment/download>. Please note that RDP funds can also be used to pay for food waste hauling costs. See page 2 of the RDP Approved Spending Categories document: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/rdp-small-scale-initiative-approved-spending-categories/download>.

#### Food Waste Collection Carts:

*Q17: With the food waste bin [cart] grant, can municipalities split the cost and use some for bins and some for subscription?*

**A17:** The food waste cart grant is for the carts themselves. MassDEP requires that the municipality is also funding a portion of the program, whether that's for the balance of the cost of the carts, additional carts, bag liners, or towards the cost of hauling and subscriptions. But the \$25 per household awarded for the Food Waste Cart grant may only be used to pay for carts. A list of eligible uses of grant funds can be found on pages 1-2 of the Food Waste Collection Cart Grant Details document found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-food-waste-collection-carts-0/download>.

*Q18: In the Organics Carts grant overview file, it says that "phase-in style" organics collection programs are eligible, but I heard in the SMRP webinar that pilot programs are ineligible.*

**A18:** Pilot programs are no longer eligible under this grant. The Food Waste Collection Carts Grant Guidelines document specifies that "Municipalities with new or phased-in programs must commit to operating the program for a minimum of 2 years." See page 2 under "Use of Grant Funds": <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-food-waste-collection-carts-0/download>.

## Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) Program Funding:

*Q19: NOTE: The question that was submitted included commentary of one individual municipality and included many details related to their specific program. It has been edited to better reflect the specific question only: ...In reviewing the grant paperwork, there appears to be a discrepancy regarding a few spots listed, namely "Use of Grant Funds" and the reference towards just 35-gallon trash carts (assuming weekly collection), and the non-inclusion of 64-gallon trash carts (only collected every other week), as the Program Structure "Updates to Existing PAYT Program" has recently been changed to accommodate 64 -gallon carts (collected every other week), with a \$5 award/cart amount.... [Our municipality is asking for] clarification, and ultimately permission to use any awarded grant funds "towards the purchase of" 64-gallon trash carts based on our collection schedule of trash and recycling every other week, consistent with the existing language for 35-gallon carts (weekly collection).*

**A19:** The language is intentional. MassDEP does not approve of the use of \$5 per household (HH) for this grant option for the purchase of 64-gallon trash carts. This \$5 per HH served can be used towards the municipality's expenses for other approved funds including PAYT bags, outreach and educational materials, enforcement, and a program coordinator (i.e., personnel). See Page 2 of the PAYT Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-pay-as-you-throw-payt-funds/download>.

*Q20: What is the process for determining "other approved expenses" for the PAYT grant?*

**A20:** While the high-level items are listed under "Use of Funds" in Page 2 of the PAYT Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-pay-as-you-throw-payt-funds/download>, the Agency does realize that sometimes expenses may not fit squarely into these guidelines. These "other approved expenses" would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, most likely during the required Technical Assistance (TA) process before the municipality applies for the grant.

*Q21: Can we use PAYT [grant funding] for yard waste bags? We are thinking about enhancing our program here for now.*

**A21:** No, yard waste bags are not an eligible expense for PAYT grant funds. See "Use of Funds" in Page 2 of the PAYT Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-pay-as-you-throw-payt-funds/download>.

*Q22: How would the 64-gallon every-other-week collection be implemented into our program already where we have 64-gallon carts?*

**A22:** If a municipality currently collects residential trash on a weekly basis, the municipality will have to modify its collection and hauling contract to collect trash every other week. MassDEP recommends that the municipality first apply for a Technical Assistance Grant to evaluate whether there is local support to pursue a change such as this. See <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-smrp-municipal-technical-assistance>.

## Recycling Dividends Program (RDP):

### Center for Hard to Recycle Materials (CHARM)

*Q23: Can the Paint Swap Shed be open seasonally to earn the RDP Point, [including being] closed during winter to avoid freezing paint.*

**A23:** Yes, the paint shed can be open seasonally in RDP. The requirement is that it must be open at least 6 months out the year as noted in the CHARM section, page 3 of the RDP Grant Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-recycling-dividends-program/download>.

*Q24: Who takes Solar Panels to be recycled? We'd be interested in doing it but can't find anyone in MA.*

**A24:** A few options that MassDEP is aware of include Good Point Recycling in Brockton, METech Recycling in Worcester, and Complete Recycling Solutions (CRS), a TerraCycle company, in Fall River. Municipalities can also search the business directory from Recycling Works Massachusetts for PV solar panel recycling outlets at: [https://recyclingworksma.com/recyclers/?fwp\\_material=pv-solar-panels](https://recyclingworksma.com/recyclers/?fwp_material=pv-solar-panels). Note that MassDEP does not endorse individual companies for recycling services.

*Q25: For the CHARM points, we don't offer drop-off for large appliances, mattresses, and yard waste. However, we offer weekly [curbside] collection of each. Could we count these items since the access to residents is the same (if not, better)?*

**A25:** Yard waste collection specifies curbside pickup as applicable. See optional item #16 in the CHARM section, page 4 of the RDP Grant Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-recycling-dividends-program/download>. Mattresses and large appliances are not granted the same exception for curbside collection; however, we could consider this in future years.

*Q26: Since yard waste is listed as a CHARM item I wanted to see if I can use my RDP funds to pay for the grinding of yard waste. We collect grass and leaves at our Compost Center. We pay a company to come in and grind the material and haul it away.*

**A26:** Yes, a woodchipper or stump grinder is included in the RDP Approved Spending Categories document, on page 1 under "Equipment": <https://www.mass.gov/doc/rdp-small-scale-initiative-approved-spending-categories/download>.

*Q27: NOTE: The question that was submitted included commentary of one individual municipality and included many details related to their specific program. It has been edited to better reflect the question being asked: We have been collecting all universal waste for the past 20+ years and if not being open for the month of February disqualifies us from receiving points towards the grant, [we request] that you take in consideration the reasons why we have to close [this one month], recognize the efforts that we have made to make sure that residents can still recycle some items during that month, and [consider us eligible] for charm points.*

**A27:** Any special circumstances or additional information that is specific and unique to the municipality should be documented in the municipality's RDP application, under the "Comments" section at the end of the application. Please note that SMRP is a competitive grant program. Applicants may apply for whatever category they feel they meet and MassDEP staff will evaluate their award based on the information provided in the application; there are no guarantees for approval.

*Q28: For the "paint" CHARM item – we only accept oil-based paints. Does that qualify?*

**A28:** Yes, the collection of oil-based paint meets the CHARM criteria.

#### Curbside Recycling Regulations

*Q29: We have regular recycling audits conducted by our contractor, Casella. Do the audits need to be conducted by the municipality, or do these contractor-conducted audits qualify? If this qualifies, I believe both of the following options are applicable to us. Which would you recommend we select? The Comprehensive Hauler Regulations: Municipality is actively enforcing regulations, including bundled*



*trash and recycling services, that apply to both residents and businesses. Mandatory recycling is required. [3 points] or the Mandatory and Quality Recycling: Municipality regularly enforces these rules AND is measuring the results through annual recycling audits to assess contamination levels. [3 points].*

**A29:** The recycling contamination audit should be conducted by the vendor and documentation in the form of the audit results, including contamination rate, must be attached to the application. As SMRP is a competitive grant, MassDEP cannot advise applicants which grant option they should select and there are no guarantees for approval. Municipalities should consider all options and the requirements for each. If they are still unsure, they can consult with their Municipal Assistance Coordinator (MAC) for guidance, see: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massdep-municipal-assistance-coordinators>.

#### Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Recycling Programs

*Q30: For the optional DEI Activities # 1: We offer a reduced fee for senior citizens to purchase a Transfer Station Access Permit. Does this qualify as a residential hardship?*

**A30:** Yes, MassDEP has accepted seniors as an applicable group for this category. As noted in this section, MassDEP acknowledges that low-income and hardship classification varies amongst municipalities. When selecting applicable activities, use the municipality's classification standards. See the last two sentences of opening paragraph in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Recycling Programs section, page 5 of the RDP Grant Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-recycling-dividends-program/download>.

*Q31: Will having links on our Town website to the recycling guides in multiple languages be sufficient, or do we have to actually have the guides posted on the website?*

**A31:** Clearly labeled links that go directly to the translated document are allowed.

#### Household Hazardous Waste Collection

*Q32: We have never formally notified MassDEP through their Notification for Household Hazardous Waste Events system. However, we've made it clear with our MAC and through a significant amount of promotion/outreach that we conduct household hazardous waste events for 6 months out of the year. Is that sufficient?*

**A32:** All municipalities should utilize the notification system form as this is a requirement of MassDEP under regulation 310 CMR 30.392 (<https://www.mass.gov/regulations/310-CMR-30000-massachusetts-hazardous-waste-regulations>). This is also a requirement of the grant as the notification system is cross-checked with the information provided by municipalities in the RDP grant application. See the third sentence of the second paragraph in the Household Hazardous Waste section, page 6 of the RDP Grant Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-recycling-dividends-program/download>.

#### Organics/Food Waste

*Q33: Both of the following options are true for Brookline. Which should we select? The Curbside Collection: Food waste was collected curbside at least weekly from households participating in a municipally funded or subsidized private subscription collection program. A municipal contribution of at least \$35 towards the yearly rate or provision of a food waste cart to each participating household may qualify as a municipal contribution. [1-2 points] or the Drop-off Center Collection: Food waste was collected at a municipally owned collection center AND the municipality offered home compost bins to residents at cost or less with an effective promotion and outreach program. [2 points].*

**A33:** As SMRP is a competitive grant, MassDEP cannot advise applicants which grant option they should select and there are no guarantees for approval. Municipalities should consider all options and the requirements for each. If they are still unsure, they can consult with their Municipal Assistance Coordinator (MAC), see: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massdep-municipal-assistance-coordinators>.

#### Recycling Center Access

*Q34: NOTE: MassDEP received two similar questions regarding whether municipalities were allowed to charge a fee for businesses and non-residents to tip recyclables at their recycling center.*

**A34:** Yes, a fee can be charged for all options under the Recycling Center Access section on pages 7-8 of the RDP Grant Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-recycling-dividends-program/download>.

#### Reuse Programs

*Q35: Will a regional repair event count as credit for multiple towns?*

**A35:** Yes, a regional repair event would fit if the municipality applying for this point provides significant monetary and/or in-kind donations to the event organizers AND promotes the repair events on its website/social media platforms. See optional item #9 in the Reuse Programs section, page 8 of the RDP Grant Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-recycling-dividends-program/download>.

#### Waste Prevention Outreach & Education

*Q36: NOTE: MassDEP received two similar questions as to whether municipalities could claim credit for sharing Recycle Smart MA social posts on Facebook Groups that were not owned by the municipality. In at least one of the cases, the municipality does not have its own social media account.*

**A36:** While the grant states that these shared posts must be on a municipal social media platform, in the event a municipality does not have their own social media page, if they share the post to a public community page that is geared towards the residents of the specific municipality, they can claim credit. This type of unique situation should be documented in the municipality's RDP application, under the "General Comments" section at the end of the application. See optional item #14 in the Waste Prevention Outreach & Education section, page 10 of the RDP Grant Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-recycling-dividends-program/download>.

*Q37: Do the pizza boxes have to meet certain criteria to be recycled due to the oil on them?*

**A37:** Greasy pizza boxes are acceptable for recycling. They should be empty (no plastic tables, food bits, wax paper).

*Q38: If the Recyclopedia widget cannot be added to our municipal webpage due to a technical error that isn't resolved with troubleshooting, will our municipality lose the RDP Waste Reduction Outreach points?*

**A38:** MassDEP would not intentionally penalize a municipality for their inability to meet a requirement if it is beyond their control. We understand that there are some instances when technical issues cannot be overcome. If you have exhausted the tips in the troubleshooting guidance and still cannot embed the widget, you should document this in your RDP application under the "Comments" section at the end of the application. MassDEP will review on a case-by-case basis.



## Waste Reduction Projects:

*Q39: NOTE: This question was submitted in writing for consideration under the Waste Reduction Project grant category, but it may be better suited for the Food Waste Collection equipment option in the Drop-off Equipment Grant. However, we are including the response here because it is where the applicant is likely to look... Is it possible to obtain grant funding to add additional public compost drop-off bins and to support the cost of pickup of the food waste by our vendor instead of purchasing bins for households? We have two locations with public compost drop-offs currently that have been successful, and we would like to add more in other locations.*

**A39:** MassDEP is offering up to \$12,000 for municipalities to establish or expand residential food waste collection at up to four drop-off sites (\$3,000 per site). This equipment may include carts or dumpsters and other public space containers. The sites must be publicly accessible and located on municipal property. For full details of the grant opportunity, see the Drop-off Equipment Grant Details Doc: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/details-drop-off-recycling-equipment/download>.