

Organics Management Guide Submission

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Select the Primary Entity Type Please identify the category that best represents your project: Local, State, or Federal Government

Questions:

- 1. Background: Provide context for the program, project, or policy — why it was developed, when it began, and the problem or opportunity it addresses.**

Food waste separation is challenging in multifamily buildings, especially where there are high levels of resident turnover. This case study shows a few strategies that seem to work.

- 2. Summary: Briefly describe the initiative, including its goals, location, and primary outcomes.**

The City of Cambridge began offering free food waste pickup citywide for 1 to 12-unit buildings in 2018. Since then, the City has slowly expanded the program to include 300 buildings ranging in size from 13 to 525 units. Because large buildings present unique challenges to achieving high levels of participation, the City is hoping to use case studies to share successful strategies that other buildings could use.

- 3. Percent of Overall Diverted Material: If available, include data or estimates on the portion of the community or organization's total diverted material no longer associated with the waste stream that this program or policy addresses.**

As of 2/20/26 the City has diverted 13,524 tons of food waste from the trash since 4/1/2018. The City discontinued food waste pickup service between 03/17/20 and 05/17/21. The City averaged 9.2 tons of food waste per collection day in 2025.

- 4. Key Program Elements or Policy Provisions: Describe the structure and main components of your program or policy. Explain the investments origins (who, how much). Please include as many of the following elements as applicable: What types of materials are being managed? (e.g., surplus recoverable foods, food scraps, wasted food. How are these materials managed? Who is responsible for managing them? (Organizations, agencies, businesses, or other entities) What products are generated, and how are they utilized or managed? (e.g., compost, animal feed, energy products) Who funds the management of these materials? (Funding sources, grants, partnerships) Who generates these materials? (Identify the origin: households, institutions, businesses, etc.)**

The food waste comes from 40,000 residential units with access to curbside pickup, plus schools, city buildings, nonprofits, and 80 small businesses.

- 5. Regulatory Impact: Describe how laws, policies, regulations, and/or code have affected your program or project. This may include positive, negative, or neutral impacts. Consider noting which regulations apply, how they influenced implementation or operations, any challenges or barriers encountered, and how compliance requirements shaped program decisions.**

Food waste in the trash is limited to 1/2 ton per week in Massachusetts. There is no City ordinance requiring food waste separation.

- 6. Measurable Increase in Supply: Include data or qualitative outcomes showing growth in collection, diversion, or reuse volumes if available.**

The program has grown from averaging 6.6 tons per collection day in 2018 to 9.2 tons in 2025.

- 7. Behavior Change: Describe whether the initiative resulted in measurable behavior change and explain how you determined this. If behavior change occurred, outline the strategies that proved most effective. Please include any available data or evidence that supports your findings.**

Please see attached document.

- 8. Benefits and Impacts (Economic, Environmental, and Social): Describe the economic, environmental, and social sustainability impacts of the program, policy, or initiative. This may include both positive and negative outcomes. You may address impacts such as costs or savings, job creation, waste reduction, emissions, resource conservation, community engagement, equity, or public health. Please include data or qualitative observations where available and note any trade-offs or challenges.**

Keep Rodents out of the Trash. Putting food waste in locking carts is your best defense against rodents.

- Lower Plumbing Costs. Keeping food out of garbage disposals cuts disposal and plumbing repair costs.
- Support Cambridge's Zero Waste Plan. Together we are working to reduce trash by 50% by 2030.

- 9. How Stakeholder Buy-In Was Achieved: Explain how the program gained support from key stakeholders (e.g., government agencies, businesses, residents, nonprofits).**

Resident to resident outreach and communication. Availability of supplies.

- 10. Stakeholders' Perspectives and Dynamics at Play: Highlight collaboration dynamics, challenges, or differing stakeholder interests and how they were addressed.**

Please see attached document.

- 11. Lessons Learned: Share what worked well, what didn't, and recommendations for others seeking to replicate your approach.**

Collaboration among diverse stakeholders. City plays a backup roll of making supplies and information available for building occupants to use as appropriate.