

## Organics Management Guide Submission

**Name:** Sarah Woodruff

**Title:** Director of Development

**Organization:** Big Initiatives Incorporated dba Big Reuse

**Email Address:** sarah@bigreuse.org

**Website:** bigreuse.org

**Select the Primary Entity Type Please identify the category that best represents your project:** Nonprofit or Non-Governmental Organization

### **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.**

Big Reuse has led composting efforts in NYC since 2011; we were recognized as US Composting Council's Composter of the Year in 2020 and awarded USDA's first grants for urban composting in 2021. Our community participation programs built local composting networks and wide support for rollout of largest curbside organic waste collection program in the nation. We are currently focused on helping to expand our decentralized community composting program that works toward creating a resilient network of closed-loop micro-processing operations across the city. With a decentralized system, we activate and train a local network of community composters, volunteers, and NYC residents engaged in diverting organic materials from landfills to create a resource that stays in communities to strengthen their local green spaces.

In 2025, with funding from NYC City Council for community composting for FY26, Big Reuse launched a partnership with the Central Park Conservancy to install and continue to operate a Dumpster system on-site to compost Central Park's horticultural waste. This supports Central Park's 2025 sustainability goals of taking transformative action and advancing a zero-waste future. Composting locally reduces the climate impact of transporting the yard waste and ensures the yard waste is actually composted and used to green the Park. The partnership also serves as a model for composting in NYC Parks, illustrating how green infrastructure can be integrated into dense, public urban environments.

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

The site is located at the Mount on the east side of Central Park at 104th Street. We estimate the system is capable of diverting 400,000 pounds annually of the Park's horticultural waste and producing high quality compost for use in the Park. Composting in the park will reduce the need to purchase soil amendments, and reduces waste, improves efficiency, and supports healthier park landscapes. The location will provide exciting opportunities for public engagement and educational events.

**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.**

The new system will allow Big Reuse and Central Park to actively manage the leaf and yard waste generated in the Park and compost it on-site into a beneficial resource returned to the Park. We estimate up to 400,000 pounds diverted annually.

**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.)**

Leaf, weeds, and other yard waste are managed. They are collected on-site by Central Park staff and composted by Big Reuse staff; The Dumpster system is a solar powered in-vessel compost system that is fully modular, meaning no changes will be made to the landscape - providing benefits to the park while maintaining flexibility of use in the area. This is a partnership between Central Park and Big Reuse; Big Reuse staff are regularly on-site to manage the composting process. Compost is generated, used to strengthen and improve the Park's landscape. The program is currently funded by NYC City Council through their

funding for community composting in fiscal 2026 (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026). The materials are generated through Park operations.

**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.**

NYC City Council using discretionary funding to support community composting efforts in NYC provided funding making this partnership and site build possible.

Other recent bills have influenced the city's overall responsiveness and support for composting. DSNY's residential curbside composting program is now citywide and mandatory.

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

The site opened recently (February 2026) and we've experienced a cold, snowy winter, so we have limited data so far, but expect to see immediate impact this Spring.

**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.**

We expect being able to use the site for public education opportunities will provide more visibility and understanding of compost and its importance to green spaces; Central Park is highly trafficked, both with NYC residents and visitors. Another goal will be to write up a case study after the first year of operation that can be used as a proof of concept and blueprint in other Parks. We will also be able to give tours of the site for hands-on examples of how the system can be successfully implemented elsewhere, and plan to do this with other large NYC Parks including Prospect Park.

- 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.**

Significant waste diversion from landfills; avoiding truck emissions by needed to move materials off-site or bring soil amendments in; strengthening Park land against climate impacts and supporting healthy landscapes; training Park staff in the composting process and importance of composting; spreading awareness for composting through public engagement opportunities; providing a lower-cost, low impact to surrounding Park land model that can be used in Parks across the city and beyond; meeting zero-waste goals.

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

City Council and Department of Sanitation were excited to see funding spent to create a composting system in one of the largest parks in NYC - creating an opportunity for significant diversion and lasting impact. The Parks Department was eager to partner as they saw the immense benefits, especially in directly aligning with their 2025 zero-waste goals, and the convenience of having a compost system on-site. We were able to use existing materials and machinery supported by the Department of Sanitation, which cut down initial costs. The Dungster system is fully modular, meaning no changes were made to the Park's landscape - providing benefits to the park while maintaining flexibility of use in the area.

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

N/A

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

N/A