



CIRCA Report Cover Climate & Equity Grant Program

North Hartford Composting Initiative

Jan. 29, 2026
North Hartford Partnership



Connecticut Institute for Resilience
and Climate Adaptation

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**NORTH
HARTFORD
PARTNERSHIP**

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CLIMATE AND EQUITY GRANT PROGRAM

FINAL REPORT

NORTH HARTFORD PARTNERSHIP

JAN. 29, 2026

Summary (1 paragraph): Please provide a brief summary of the completed grant project, including activities, outcomes, and lessons learned.

Through support from CIRCA's Climate & Equity Grant Program, North Hartford Partnership (NHP) launched a community composting initiative designed to increase climate resilience and environmental equity in North Hartford, a former federally designated Promise Zone. During the grant period, NHP partnered with Blue Earth to establish food scrap collection and composting infrastructure at the Swift Factory campus and across three multifamily residential properties. Key activities included installing compost collection bins and signage, providing composting education and training for commercial kitchen tenants and residential households, and initiating regular organic waste collection. The project engaged nine incubator kitchen businesses at Swift and residents of NHP's 18 affordable housing units, diverting food waste from the landfill and supporting local compost use for soil regeneration. Through this pilot effort, NHP strengthened organizational capacity around sustainable property management while increasing community awareness of composting as an accessible climate mitigation strategy. Lessons learned include the importance of ongoing education, clear signage, and regular communication to sustain participation in multi-tenant environments.

Grant Project Activities:

- **What activities did your organization complete using Climate & Equity funds?**

CIRCA funds allowed NHP to launch a composting initiative for business tenants at Swift and residents of its three affordable housing properties. Key activities included installing compost collection bins and signage, providing composting education and training, and initiating regular organic waste collection. The project diverted food waste from the landfill and supported local compost use for soil regeneration.

- **Please indicate any important project milestones (such as hiring a staff member, holding a workshop series, completing a draft plan, etc.).**

- o April 2025: Composting begins at NHP affordable housing properties
 - o April - May 2025: When were **bins/signage installed?**
 - o April - September 2025: Three separate composting training sessions held for Swift kitchen tenants.
 - o Summer 2025: 7/18 residential families now participate in the program
- **Where did your organization complete activities? Please indicate any project sites (specific locations if possible, or general neighborhoods). Feel free to add any maps or photos.**
 - o NHP established food scrap collection and composting infrastructure at the Swift Factory campus and across three multifamily residential properties located on Bethel, Pliny, and Capen streets in North Hartford.

Grant Project Outcomes:

- **What outcomes resulted from the grant project activities?**

By the end of the project period, composting was operational for 10 incubator kitchens and 18 residential households, with 100% of Swift tenants and 7/18 residential tenants participating.

Through regular food scrap collection, the project diverted 5,927 lbs of organic waste from the landfill over 12 months of active operation. Collections occurred on a weekly basis, with an average of 114 lbs collected per week. Organic material collected through the program was processed off-site for compost at Quantum Organics anaerobic digester, contributing to soil regeneration and reduced greenhouse gas emissions and creating clean energy. Based on Blue Earth data, the project resulted in an estimated reduction of 1,243 lbs of carbon dioxide.

Community engagement was a central outcome of the project. NHP and Blue Earth provided three composting training sessions for commercial kitchen tenants. Staff also met individually with kitchen users and residential tenants to explain the composting process and distribute posters to hang near the composting bins. Participants also receive periodic emails with reminders to compost.

Training sessions covered compostable materials, contamination prevention, and the environmental benefits of composting. Over time, staff observed positive change indicating growing familiarity and comfort with composting practices. For example, the founder of Ovelle Coffee Roasters, a Swift tenant, was heard promoting composting as

a benefit to renting space at Swift. The program is also promoted at a weekly support group meeting hosted at Swift. Additionally, NHP was pleased to be found in compliance with the state's Commercial Organics Recycling law (CGS 22a-226e) after a surprise inspection by CT DEEP.

Overall, the composting initiative advanced environmental equity by reducing barriers to participation in climate mitigation efforts for low-income residents and small food businesses in North Hartford. By pairing infrastructure with education and on-site access, the project positioned composting as an accessible entry point to broader sustainability and resilience strategies within the community.

- **Was your organization able to achieve your project goal? If yes, please explain how the outcomes of your project achieved the goal described in your organization's project application; if not, please explain the challenges that prevented the goal from being achieved.**

The project successfully launched a composting program across NHP's commercial and affordable housing portfolios, including educating users about the value of composting and diverting organics from the waste stream. The resulting compost material benefitted local farms and gardens and supported trash-to-energy programs. This initiative directly contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and soil regeneration. A key learning is that large-scale behavior change, such as introducing a new practice of separating organics from trash and recycling materials, requires sustained effort. To ensure long-term success, dedicated resources for ongoing resident education, benefit promotion, and incentive programs will be essential.

- Was your organization able to engage the community described in your organization's project application? If yes, please describe the community engagement involved in your project.

NHP held three composting training sessions with Swift business tenants during the project period. Staff also met individually with business and residential participants to explain the composting process. Posters that clearly described which materials do or do not qualify for composting were distributed to all participants to hang near composting bins. Additionally, NHP engaged the community by promoting its composting program on its social media channels.

OUTCOMES:

- 5,927 pounds or tons of organic waste collected
- An average of 494 lbs of compost collected per week

- 7/18 residential households participated
- 10 commercial tenants participated (plus common area kitchen and flex room)
- 18 residential and 12 commercial compost bins distributed.
- An estimated 1,243 CO2 greenhouse gas emissions avoided

According to Blue Earth Compost, the program also resulted in:

- Fuel savings: 64 gallons not burned
- Less congestion: 1,399 fewer miles driven
- Clean energy: 776 kWh created (equivalent of 68,560 smartphones charged)
- 9 seedlings planted

Capacity-Building Progress:

- **Community capacity-building: How did your project help to increase the capacity of vulnerable communities in Connecticut to mitigate, plan for, and respond to climate change impacts?**

This project increased community capacity in North Hartford to mitigate and respond to climate change by embedding composting infrastructure and education directly into affordable housing and food-business settings. By establishing on-site composting at the Swift Factory and three NHP-owned multifamily residential properties, the project reduced common barriers, such as cost, transportation, and lack of access, that often exclude low-income residents from participating in climate mitigation efforts.

Through targeted training and ongoing engagement, residents and commercial kitchen tenants gained practical skills related to organic waste diversion, contamination prevention, and the climate impacts of landfilled food waste. Over time, NHP observed increased engagement in and promotion of the program.

By offering composting as a standard, shared amenity rather than an individual responsibility, the project strengthened collective capacity in a dense, resource-constrained environment. This approach helped normalize climate action as part of everyday community life and positioned composting as an accessible entry point to broader sustainability and resilience efforts. In doing so, the project contributed to long-term climate mitigation while laying the groundwork for future environmental initiatives in North Hartford.

- **Organization capacity-building: Did you learn any lessons / make any connections / develop any resources through this project that will help your organization do its work more effectively in the future?**

The project moved composting from a pilot initiative to an integrated, core component of our operational model. We developed standardized procedures for collection, processing, and community redistribution that can be replicated across our property portfolio. This successful systems-based approach has given us the confidence and blueprint to expand into adjacent waste-stream innovations, specifically greywater reclamation and used cooking oil collection, creating a more holistic resource recovery program.

- **Knowledge-sharing: Do you have any advice for other organizations doing similar projects?**
 - Set clear roles and responsibilities for staff
 - Early engagement with participants is critical to get them on board and knowledgeable about the benefits of participation.
 - Providing clear signage about what materials are eligible for composting
 - Ongoing monitoring and checking in with users for feedback in order to make adjustments as necessary
 - Sharing successes (stats on energy savings, environmental impact, etc) with users helps keep them engaged.