



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ADAM J. BELLO
MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO OPENS APPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT FOOD WASTE DIVERSION PROGRAM

Grant applications due on April 20

ROCHESTER, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello announced today the return of the Food Waste Diversion program for the 2026-2027 academic year. The program will provide matching funds up to \$5,000 to school districts located within Monroe County that start or expand food waste diversion projects in their buildings. Grant applications are due on April 20, 2026.

The Food Waste Diversion Program is part of the second phase of Monroe County's Climate Action Plan (CAP), which seeks to address greenhouse gas emissions from Monroe County residents, businesses and organizations. Food waste diversion plays a key role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from decomposing food, as well as reducing the energy and resources used to produce uneaten food.

Successful school district grant proposals in the 2025-2026 cycle included initiatives such as waste tracking systems, staff training, student education, and composting programs in food preparation areas, cafeterias, and at school events. Students, teachers, and staff took an active role in reducing food waste through new and expanded programs. Between September 2025 and December 2025, schools participating in the program diverted 85,000 pounds of food waste to food scraps recycling, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills and helping lower greenhouse gas emissions. Schools that were previously awarded a grant remain eligible for this new cycle and are invited to apply again.

"Educating our students on environmental stewardship is crucial to building a cleaner future," **said County Executive Bello**. "I'm happy to announce the Monroe County School Food Waste Diversion Pilot Program will accept applications for a second year and thank our Department of Environmental Services for their continued innovation in developing programs that reduce waste and protect our environment."

"Learning how to respect our earth with and for our students - that's what this program is all about," **added Legislator John Baynes**.

"For too long human society has relied on one-way systems that extract resources and send them to trash heaps. In order to protect our children's future, these systems will need to be redesigned into circular systems. Composting is an excellent example and with

this school partnership we take a step towards protecting the environment while inspiring another generation to care for it,” **said Legislator Sue Hughes-Smith.**

“The continuation of the Food Waste Diversion Pilot Program offers Monroe County public schools and BOCES an important opportunity to build on their recycling efforts by reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste—one of the largest waste streams in educational settings,” **said Mike Garland, Director of Monroe County’s Department of Environmental Services.** “Now in its second year, the program helps keep organic waste out of landfills and sewers, educates students about environmental stewardship, supports the donation of excess food to those in need, and strengthens the circular economy by partnering with local businesses.”

The program was voted on and approved by the County Legislature on March 10, 2026. Applications will be accepted Wednesday, March 11 through Monday, April 20, 2026. To learn more about this program and apply, please visit: <https://www.monroecounty.gov/des-school-food-waste>.

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Media inquiries:

Steve Barz, Director of Communications

steveBbarz@MonroeCounty.gov

(585) 753-1064

Kara Osipovitch, Deputy Director of Communications

KaraOsipovitch@MonroeCounty.gov

(585) 753-1081