

Request for Board Action Details

File #: 2021-500

Type: Administrative Item **Status:** Passed

In control: Board of Commissioners

On agenda: 9/21/2021 **Final action:** 9/21/2021

Title: School Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant Program for 2022-2023

Sponsors: Public Health

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Resolution

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
9/21/2021	1	Board of Commissioners	approved	Pass

Sponsor: Public Health

Title
School Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant Program for 2022-2023

Recommendation

1. Approve the Ramsey County School Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant Program for the years 2022-2023.
2. Authorize the County Manager to execute grant agreements and amendments with eligible school districts and charter schools as required for the grant program, in a form approved by the County Attorney's Office.

Background and Rationale

The Ramsey County Solid Waste Management Master Plan ("Master Plan") guides public and private activities related to waste management for the period of 2018-2038 and outlines county actions over the current six-year period, 2018-2024. The Master Plan provides for the continuation of technical assistance and grant funding to schools focused on waste reduction and recycling.

Schools are required by state statute to have recycling programs. The Master Plan contains several strategies related to waste reduction and recycling in schools including a strategy that all public K-12 schools have robust and stable recycling and organics programs. Specifically, the School Waste Reduction and Recycling Program addresses the current Master Plan strategy to "continue a grants program to provide funds to schools and other local public entities (excluding the University of Minnesota, Metropolitan Council and the State of Minnesota) for the purpose of starting and/or improving recycling and organics management programs."

Ramsey County has long supported opportunities for waste reduction, recycling, and organics management in schools, including school recycling programs that educate future generations about the importance of waste reduction, recycling, and overall environmental stewardship. Recycling can also help schools save on disposal costs and taxes associated with solid waste disposal.

In 2020, Public Health, through the Environmental Health Division, developed a solid waste reduction and recycling program for all county public K-12 independent school districts and charter schools with student

enrollment of 250 and above. Private schools and charter schools with less than 250 students are not eligible for the program but may apply for funding through the BizRecycling grant program, administered through Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy (R&E), which includes coordinating school recycling programs as a joint activity between the two counties. By agreement with the two counties, R&E joint activities funding is used to provide consulting services to private schools and charter schools with fewer than 250 students, while the individual counties work directly with the independent school districts and larger charter schools.

This request is for approval to continue the School Waste Reduction and Recycling program as approved by the board in 2020 for another two-year period, 2022-2023. The purpose of the program is to provide technical assistance with outcome goals of increasing recycling and organics diversion, supporting food waste prevention and donation program participation, launching targeted reuse campaigns, and implementing end of year school clean-outs

County Goals (Check those advanced by Action)

- Well-being Prosperity Opportunity Accountability

Racial Equity Impact

Ramsey County is the most racially and ethnically diverse county in the state. The public and charter schools are made up of a very diverse student body, with over 126 languages and dialects spoken in the schools. Many of the charter schools are geared towards a specific racial, ethnic or cultural group. One grant application from a charter school with a predominantly East African student body emphasized the needs of its specific community regarding recycling and waste reduction. This grantee was adamant about creating a recycling education framework that both aligned with their values and was representative of their student body, pointing to the school’s engagement of their students and their families to understand their needs. By offering resources to the public-school districts and charter schools, the county is reaching many racially and ethnically diverse communities it might not otherwise reach for waste reduction and prevention messaging.

Community Participation Level and Impact

Community partnership and participation is integral to the School Waste Reduction and Recycling Program. The program was designed with the direct participation of school stakeholders, including school administration and facility staff. Three facilitated stakeholder group meetings were held prior to the development of the grant program. Stakeholders provided input, ideas, and suggestions, and identified their vision and objectives for implementation. One product of this participation was the development of the school recycling best practices continuum and the identified need for technical assistance to guide the schools through the continuum. As part of the launch of the grant program, a school recycling advisory board, made up of these same stakeholders, was established and continues to meet quarterly.

In addition, educators/teachers were engaged regarding recycling and waste reduction lesson plans for both Ramsey and Washington Counties. Two listening sessions were held and over 1500 surveys were sent out in the two counties to engage educators in what they need in lesson plans regarding recycling and waste reduction. This feedback informed the recycling and waste reduction lesson plans being created.

Whenever possible, students are engaged in the program development. For example, one school’s student green team was instrumental in assisting with the grant application and resulting program implementation. Although the pandemic has made it difficult to engage with community at an optimal level, further community engagement opportunities with the students and parents will continue to be pursued.

- Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

Fiscal Impact

Public Health’s proposed 2022-2023 budget includes \$600,000 per year from the County Environmental Charge which is designated for school waste reduction and recycling grants.

County Manager Comments

No additional comments.

Last Previous Action

On June 2, 2020, the County Board approved the Ramsey County School Waste Reduction and Recycling Program for 2020-2021 (Resolution B2020-116).

Attachments

1. None