

Re+ Fast Start Action Overview

Circular Economy Innovation Development and Grants

Description

King County will deliver business development, mentoring, networking and access to funding pathways for circular economy initiatives through NextCycle Washington, a statewide accelerator program for organizations and businesses. This program is coupled with the Re+ Circular Economy Grants, a \$2 million competitive grant program open to private, non-profit and public entities to support waste prevention and waste diversion. Smaller entities and community groups will also be supported with capacity building and seed funding through NextCycle's Renew Seed Grants.

Background

Market development for recycled materials, waste prevention and reuse are all crucial components of Re+ and for successfully reaching King County's goal of zero waste of resources by 2030. Beyond supporting zero waste goals, market development and waste prevention reduces greenhouse gas emissions, creates local green jobs, and supports regional economic growth. Organizations seeking circular economy opportunities in Washington State often encounter a lack of funding, business development, technical assistance, and other incentives to use materials from the recycling stream in the region.

To close these gaps and build a more comprehensive market development strategy in the region, King County has created a circular economy innovation program, NextCycle Washington, which will act as a platform for all market development and circular economy activities. Offering resources to organizations looking to prevent waste or use recycled feedstocks has proven successful in other states and jurisdictions, including Michigan and Colorado, where they have also implemented a NextCycle platform.

Innovation development includes the following elements:

- **Business Development and Technical Support (NextCycle Washington):** Providing business development, such as business plan assistance, marketing, site development and supply chain analysis, for entrepreneurs and organizations. It could also incorporate already established incubators and accelerators in the region and state. NextCycle Washington supports individuals and organizations in capacity and business development, in order to prepare them for larger investments and funding opportunities, such as the Re+ Circular Economy Grants. Example projects include food waste prevention technical assistance programs for businesses and bottle wash and reuse infrastructure development. The first round of the Circular Accelerator Program was launched over the summer of 2022. More information on NextCycle Washington is available at www.nextcyclewashington.com/apply.
- **Re+ Circular Economy Grants:** This program, launched in mid-2022, supports market development and circular economy opportunities. These grants will amount to \$2 million in funding per biennium and are open to organizations diverting waste from the King County solid waste system. Examples of grant-eligible projects include those that increase access to reuse programs and develop or build reuse infrastructure and systems; or create new markets or expand existing markets and supply chains for recycled materials. More information on Re+ Circular Economy Grants is available [here](#).



- **Renew Seed Grants:** Providing small grants up to \$10,000 for early-stage projects together with technical support and growth planning for businesses, nonprofits and community-based organizations, institutions, and tribal nations. It will also include facilitated networking and matchmaking to help circular economy ideas grow. The grants and the support will be provided by a partnership between the Department of Commerce, Department of Ecology and King County. Renew Seed Grants are expected to be launched in the fall 2022.
- **Partnerships and Networking:** This platform is led by King County and being brought to a statewide audience through a partnership with the Department of Ecology, Department of Commerce and Seattle Public Utilities. It will continue to bring together businesses, community-based organizations and individuals engaged in waste reduction and diversion. The program will assist in making connections for mentorship, partnerships and/or matchmaking. It will also engage networks and community groups to support their participation in this work.

The grant offerings in this program will expand in the next few years, potentially including competitive grants for cities and schools.

Benefits

- Boosting a circular economy in the region that turns waste into resources, so that less materials are sent to the landfill. Re+ Circular Economy Grants and NextCycle Washington will develop end markets for recycled materials and also prevent waste by supporting reuse, repair and remanufacturing, which in turn will lead to greenhouse gas reductions.
- These projects will spur economic investment in the region and support the development of green jobs as well as build regional supply chain resilience.
- Through community involvement and input, these programs are incorporating measures to reduce barriers that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and businesses face when attempting to access similar technical assistance and funding opportunities.

Exact impacts will depend on the projects, organizations and communities that participate in the program, but applications will be scored across several criteria: landfill diversion, climate and environmental benefits, equity and social justice initiatives, and economic benefits.

Considerations

- **Costs:**
 - NextCycle Washington: \$500,000 annually in business development resources, with costs shared among funding partners.
 - Re+ Circular Economy Innovation Grants: \$2 million per biennium.
- **Network coordination:** The NextCycle Washington platform will bring partners together from across the state, which will lead to more collaboration across the region but can make the implementation more challenging. This network will need to be coordinated in a manner that balances the needs of all partners, while maintaining the highest level of support of participants.
- **Other external limitations:** Like any market development support program, this platform will face limitations in the support that it can offer businesses, organizations and communities. While it will offer support in issues including permitting, siting and access to feedstocks, many of these barriers fall outside of the direct control of the project partners, and therefore, organizations and communities might still be hindered by these factors.



Equity and Social Justice Considerations

To reduce barriers to funding and resources for frontline communities, King County has led a co-design process in which community members are treated as equal collaborators and guide the development of the design of the platform and implementation of its resources. This program will also include business development, technical assistance, and smaller grants, called Renew Seed Grants, geared toward community groups, which will offer more opportunities for BIPOC community members and business owners to access these resources and funding.

Next Steps

- Fall 2022: Renew Seed Grants Launch
- Summer 2023: Second round of Circular Accelerator Program
- Fall 2023: Second round of Renew Seed Grants

Questions?

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