



## **EPA Awards Food Lifeline \$200,000 for Project to Reduce Methane, Food Waste in South Seattle**

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded Food Lifeline of Seattle approximately \$200,000 to assist in the development of a community-owned anaerobic digester in the South Park neighborhood of Seattle.

Anaerobic digestion is a process in which microorganisms break down organic materials, such as food scraps, manure, and sewage sludge, in the absence of oxygen. The process produces digestate, a nutrient-rich product used for fertilizer, and captures the methane produced when organic materials decay. Rather than being released into the atmosphere as a potent greenhouse gas, the methane or “biogas” is captured in an anaerobic digester for energy production.

Food Lifeline will partner with Duwamish Valley Sustainability Association, Black Star Farmers, and Sustainable Seattle, to develop new anaerobic digester capacity for the South City Biodigester Collaboration project. This project is designed to be a demonstration of the potential for a larger scale biofuel system and serve as an example of a closed loop “circular economy.” It is also intended to help provide Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and low-income communities autonomy over their waste-to-energy cycle, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and introduce immigrant, first-generation, and BIPOC youth in the Duwamish Valley to STEM career pathways.

The demonstration project will measure specific AD deliverables, including pounds of waste diverted from landfills and large composting facilities, gallons of digestate used by Black Star Farmers in their local farms, amount of community participation and youth involvement, and number of education and engagement events held. Activities will be conducted by project partners will include:

- Duwamish Valley Sustainability Association: technical expertise, youth and community network engagement, workshops and community education events, up to 200 hours of curriculum.
- Black Star Farmers: technical expertise, a Black and Indigenous farmer network, use and demonstration of co-products, identification of other BIPOC farms in need of excess co-product, up to 200 hours of curriculum.
- Sustainable Seattle: program oversight through up to 100 hours of relationship and project management support, promotion of classes, distribution of project information to their network.

The goal of the EPA grant is to help reduce food loss and waste, and to divert food waste from landfills and incinerators by expanding anaerobic digester capacity. The grant is one of 11 projects selected for funding in 2022 which include feasibility studies, modeling efforts, demonstration projects, as well as technical assistance and training.

“Projects like this one underscore the benefits of a collaborative, community-centered approach,” said Casey Sixkiller, regional administrator of EPA’s Region 10 office in Seattle. “The EPA is excited to support this anaerobic digestion project and other efforts in the Duwamish Valley that bring people together to fight climate change, protect public health, and empower communities.”

The South City Biodigester Collaboration project will be an initial exhibition of a new technology process for the South Park community, leveraging breakthrough technology that involves the AD process coupled with very low energy inputs making it more accessible for small scale businesses and organizations. The project will evaluate the cost effectiveness of inputs and output potentials for scalability in small business and community use, leverage its findings and impact to assess the technological feasibility and cost effectiveness of a larger scale biofuel system in the South Park community, and develop a local, community based, BIPOC led farm-to-table-back-to-farm lifecycle.

For this year's grant competition, EPA evaluated applicants on how their projects addressed numerous factors resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial, and/or other actions: human health, environmental, social, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts, and accompanying economic challenges of such impacts. EPA prioritized environmental justice by ensuring nearly half of the \$2 million awarded nationally under this grant program this year were to projects or recipients located in underserved communities. Specifically, EPA considered the effects of this program on People of Color, low-income, Tribal, and Indigenous populations, and other vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and children.