



# Budgeting & Fundraising

The first step of fundraising for your community composting site is to develop a budget. Depending on your situation, and ability as (or access to) a Do-It-Yourself-er, you can scale the start-up cost to fit almost any budget. There's nothing wrong with starting small (in fact, it's encouraged!) and iterating your site and system as you learn, grow, and deepen your connections with your community. This tip sheet helps you think through budgeting for your site as well as identifying potential sources of in-kind or financial support.

## Thinking about your budget:

### 1. Siting

Do you own the land where the site will be located? If not, will there be a rental or leasing fee?

### 2. Compost Infrastructure

This will vary depending on your system (see the *Community Composting Systems & Operations* Tip Sheet), and the system you chose will be influenced by the location and vision for your site.

Infrastructure can be homemade or store bought, built from upcycled or new materials, and constructed by paid contractors or volunteer help.

Here are some common items you may need:

- Pre-made bins (Soil Saver, AeroBin, etc.)
- Tumblers (premade or homemade)
- Building materials for bins (lumber, hardware)
- Building materials for a shed or other structure to cover your compost
- A tool box or tool shed (or materials for building these)
- Containers for dry materials and/or food scrap collection
- A watering spigot or rain barrels
- Fencing for the site, if needed

Several different plans for DIY bins and tumblers are available online, as well as YouTube videos showing how it's done.



*Compostville 2.0 (top) and 3.0 (bottom). Photo credit: The Garden at 385 Elm*

### 3. Feedstocks

Chances are you won't be purchasing food scraps – in fact, many sites charge a small fee for people to contribute their scraps to community composting sites, or trade for volunteer time.

And often you can procure manure for the cost of collecting it yourself from a farm.

However, depending on your community, you may need to purchase carbon materials (the “browns”, sometimes called “bulking agents”), such as wood chips, shavings or pellets. Remember – most

### Greens:

Neighbors, Community gardeners, CSA members, Schools, Businesses, Nonprofits, Churches

### Browns:

Wood shavings, saw dust, wood chips

- Wood workers, Town or utility crews, Landscapers

Leaves

- Neighborhood, Landscapers

Livestock/animal bedding

- Farmers, Neighbors with rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, etc.

Shredded paper or cardboard can also be used!

compost systems require 3 times the carbon material compared to the food scraps (or “greens”); **not** something you can skip on!

## 4. Tools

You may already have, or be able to borrow tools from members of your site. Minimally, it’s helpful to have tools to chop your feedstocks (organic materials), something to aerate your compost with, and something to move materials around.

Here are some categories of tools to consider or to get over time:

- Chopping & Shredding
  - Hand shovels or trowels for tumblers
  - Hand fork or claw for mixing in tumblers, bins
  - Garden edger or spade shovel
  - Pruners, garden scissors
  - Mulch mower
  - Hatchet, machete
- Turning & Material Moving Tools
  - Pitch fork or spading (digging) fork
  - Shovel
  - Wheel-barrows, garden carts
  - Bobcat/tractor
- Thermometer
  - For hot composting
- Other
  - Steel, level-head or bow rakes, for incorporating compost into the soil
  - Hose and/or water cans

## 5. Supplies

Here are supplies to consider, depending on the system you are using and what your budget allows for.

- Food scrap collection at the site:
  - 5 gallon buckets with lids
  - 5-20 gallon buckets or tubs with lids
  - Larger totes
  - Signs (see *Community Composting Effective Signage Tip Sheet*)
- Home or business food scrap collection (for generators):
  - Kitchen caddies for members
  - 5-20 gallon buckets or tubs with lids
  - Larger totes
  - Biobags (if accepted)
  - Fliers, stickers or fridge magnets (of acceptable – & not acceptable – materials)
- Communication & Outreach (flyers for neighbors, advertisements, promotional items, etc.)
- Other helpful things to have onsite:
  - Log books
  - Gloves for handling food scraps, shovels, etc. (reusable or disposable)
  - Tarps for covering carbon or cure piles/bins
  - A bulletin board, if desired
  - Garbage bags for collection of trash
  - Potentially locks, to secure the site, tools, tumblers or bins

## 6. Other things to consider:

- Landscaping your site
  - Wood chips for paths
  - Plants & trees to provide cover, if needed, so compost area cannot be viewed by neighbors

## 7. Personnel

Community compost sites may be volunteer-run, managed through a business or organization, or may be its own entity, with paid staff.

- Some **volunteer-run sites** offer a stipend for the site coordinators. While this may not fully compensate them for the time they spend at the site, it does acknowledge their commitment and can be an encouraging gesture.
- If the site is **managed through a business or organization** (nature center, library, or other), it may be helpful to include compost-related duties in a job description, so that the site remains well maintained during staffing transitions.
- If the site is setting up as **its own business entity**, there will be a host of other small business considerations not covered in this tip sheet.

**Training for Your Site** (some may be free, some you may need to budget for)

- Master Composters
- Extension Agents
- Composting Associations
- Solid Waste Management Outreach Coordinators

## Ways to “resource” and fund your project

There’s no “one way” to set up a community composting site. It’s important for your site to “fit” your community culture – whatever that may be. This may guide some of your decisions about system choice, landscaping, and other budget-related concerns. However your site comes together; it’s likely going to be through a combination of donations and purchases, and volunteer effort and perhaps some paid labor.

### Examples of recycled/reused items

- Pallets for bins
- Used drums for tumblers – be sure there was never anything hazardous stored in the drum
- Buckets or pails from delis or food processors

### Examples of donated (or discounted) items

- Manure from local farms
- Wood chips from a woodworking neighbor
- (Possibly) Food scrap bins from your Solid Waste Management Entity
- Materials from a local hardware store or other merchants in your area
- Compostable kitchen caddie liners or thermometers from companies that make donations (this may require a non-profit status)

### Donated time

- Boy and Girl Scouts or similar groups
- Businesses that encourage volunteering or sponsor Volunteer Days
- Rotary Clubs
- Personnel from your Solid Waste Management Entity
- Schools, colleges or universities in your area that promote Community Service Projects

## Funding from your community

- User fees (i.e. member fees, drop-off/tipping fees, hauling fees)
- Crowdfunding platform (i.e. GoFundMe, ioby)

## Grants:

- This is something that may be specific to your area or State, but it's often worth spending some time talking with your local Solid Waste Management Entity, Composting Association, University Extension, & Master Composter Program Coordinator for ideas about funding opportunities.
- Do an internet search with a combination of the following key words: your town, county, state or region; small grants; community grants; composting; organics management; organics diversion; environment; community projects; community resiliency. As you search, pay attention to the words used on the sites you find, and add those to your search terms.

### Articulate Your Vision

Whether asking for donations or applying for grants, being able to explain what you're doing and why – the value of it and how you see it supporting your community – is key. Letting your passion shine through is how you can inspire others to support your vision! Spend some time getting your “pitch” down before reaching out to people for support.

Other Community Composting Tip Sheets to Reference: [Local Opportunities, Issues, and Priorities](#); [Community Composting Overview](#); [Effective Signage](#); [Systems & Operation](#); [Feedstocks & Recipe Development](#).

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