



Ditch the Disposables

Awards to Reduce Waste, 2022-2023 cycle

Questions & Answers

Application Questions

How do I apply?

Chesapeake Bay Trust is administering the program. The full Request for Applications (RFA) and the online application can be found here:

<https://cbtrust.org/grants/district-of-columbia-ditch-the-disposables/>.

If I meet all the application requirements, am I guaranteed to receive a grant?

Because there is a limited amount of funds available for this program, we may not be able to fully fund all applicants. Applications will be thoroughly evaluated on the strength of their proposal, including a reasonable and justified budget and the transition's financial and logistical sustainability beyond the grant period. We encourage potential applicants to take advantage of the application assistance we offer to make their proposal as strong as possible.

Can multiple food service entities apply together?

Only one applicant is allowed per application. If multiple food-serving entities would like to implement a joint project, only one of them may apply and the others involved must submit letters of support with the application to show all entities involved agree to the project.

If I'm not a food service entity but there is a food service entity at my location (such as a BID or food hall owner/manager), can I apply?

Yes, but you would need to submit a letter of support from at least one food-serving entity to demonstrate it will be part of the project.

Can I apply for the grant for a food business that hasn't opened yet?

As long as there is an active Basic Business License for the location at which the grant funds will be used, and it will be fully operational with the reusable foodware project implemented by August 23, 2023, then the business is eligible to apply.





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Do you offer application assistance?

Yes! We will offer virtual information sessions while the application period is open. We can also offer one-on-one assistance during this time. All assistance we provide will be based on the published Request for Applications (RFA).

Reusables & COVID-19 Questions

I don't want to use reusable foodware while COVID is still out there. Can grant funds be used to buy a dishwasher and reusable dishes now to start using after the pandemic is over?

No. Food service entities that receive grant money under this program must make the transition from disposable to reusable foodware by the end of the project period on August 23, 2023. If a food service entity is not comfortable with reusable foodware at this time, they should not apply for the program this year.

Is it safe to use reusable foodware during a pandemic?

Absolutely! There was some uncertainty at the start of the pandemic about how easily the virus could spread through surfaces, but the research since shows a very low risk of surface transmission. An international group of scientists and public health researchers have released a [statement](#) addressing the safety of reusables. The organization Upstream Solutions has some additional [resources](#) that can help food service entities and the communities they serve better understand the safety of reusable foodware.



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Foodware Questions

Reusable dishes make sense for dine-in food, but for takeout? How does that work?

There are indeed ways a restaurant or food-serving entity can use reusable takeout containers for pickup/to-go meals, especially with regular customers. As long as a container is designed for



repeated washing and sanitizing, then it can be safely used to transport food before the customer returns it to the business to undergo the proper cleaning protocols before being used and distributed again. Some restaurants tie reusable takeout containers in with a loyalty program for regular customers, or charge a deposit which they refund when the customer returns the item. You may have other ideas!

Why is disposable foodware a problem?

Disposable foodware often ends up as litter in our streets, parks, and waterways, which is unsightly and harmful to ecosystems. When disposed of properly, it is a growing portion of the trash that ends up landfilled or incinerated. The good news is that switching to reusables can address these issues and provides other benefits too. In addition to reducing the waste associated with single-use items, switching to reusable foodware can save money and create a better dining experience for customers. Furthermore, reusable foodware branded with the business name and/or logo can be a way to increase visibility and build loyalty.

I'm already using recyclable and compostable foodware. Isn't that enough?

Recycling and composting are important to do but sometimes are not enough. Recycling and composting capabilities vary widely by locality, and many items are cross-contaminated which means they can't go through those processes. Because of these factors, it is better to avoid using disposable and single-use items in the first place whenever possible, regardless of their material. You can learn more about the vast impacts of food service ware waste at doee.dc.gov/foodserviceware.

How does transitioning to reusable foodware help my bottom line?

In more ways than one! The costs of disposable foodware have increased significantly since the pandemic took hold, and this has made it more difficult for food-serving entities to find and afford these items. The organization ReThink Disposable has several [case studies](#) documenting disposable-to-reusable foodware transitions and how they were able to not only reduce waste at the participating businesses, but also save money.

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How can I give customers their food or beverage in a reusable takeout or to-go container brought in from outside? Isn't that a health code violation?

Good question! District health codes already allow for the filling/refilling of customers' own beverage containers as long as the food-serving entity complies with DC Department of Health regulations to prevent contamination. Customers' own containers are not allowed for food or other non-beverage items for consumption, but applicants can apply for a variance to distribute reusable takeout containers that are housed, collected, and sanitized in-house at the establishment. The codes can be found [in this document](#) and the relevant sections are 815 (Preventing Contamination – Refilling Returnables) and 1910 (Methods – Cleaning for Refilling of Returnables). Please contact food.safety@dc.gov for specific questions regarding reusable foodware and health codes compliance.

Will I need any special permits or permissions for transitioning to reusable foodware?

This will depend on what kind of foodware transition you're interested in. If you are looking to install a new commercial dishwasher at your location: you will need to apply for or already have the necessary permit from the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. If you are looking to start a reusable takeout container program, either in-house for a single location or to start a third-party shared system, you will need to apply for a variance from the Department of Health. Information on the process for obtaining both can be found on the Chesapeake Bay Trust's [Ditch the Disposables webpage](#).





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Grant Program Questions

If I apply for and receive this grant, does my entire operation have to fully transition to reusable foodware? Would I be allowed to use any disposable items at all?

Making a 100% transition to reusable foodware can be difficult for many places that serve food, but it doesn't have to be all or nothing. There are ways to greatly reduce the amount of disposable foodware for dine-in and even takeout, and they can result in a significant decrease in the use of disposable items that can save money, reduce waste, and create a better dining experience for customers. The fewer disposables used, the better for everyone!

Will this grant pay for me to hire someone to wash the reusable dishes?

Labor costs are not a qualified expense for this program. Grantees must be able to absorb any labor, electricity, water, and other costs associated with in-house dishwashing without the grant funding so the foodware transition can sustain itself beyond the grant period.

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