

# NextCycle Washington Circular Accelerator Application

This packet is for informational and guidance purposes. You will need to fill out and submit the application on the online portal located at this [link](#).

Washington State is incubating and accelerating big ideas in material waste prevention, reuse, repair, recovery, recycling, and composting to help grow the state's circular economy<sup>1</sup>.

NextCycle Washington is a circular economy innovation platform designed to support the growth of businesses, community-based organizations, tribal nations, and institutions working within Washington's waste prevention, reuse, repair, recycling and/or organics recovery industry. By nurturing projects, the program helps reduce waste, keeps materials in use longer, and regenerates natural systems while developing equitable local economies.

A core element of NextCycle Washington is the Circular Accelerator Program, designed to provide technical assistance for promising businesses and projects. Selected projects are supported through a six-month program that includes consulting support, business planning, pitch development, and investment-readiness assistance.

The program will select up to 10 projects that contribute to building Washington's Circular Economy. We are looking for projects focused on waste prevention, reuse, repair, recovery, recycling, organics management, and product development using otherwise-wasted materials. The application is open to Organizations or a Team of Organizations: for-profit businesses, nonprofits or community-based organizations, university/research institutions, tribal nations, public-private partnerships, or trade organizations.

The application period is **December 1, 2023 – January 26, 2024**.

Submissions are due on or before **5:00 PM PST on Friday, January 26, 2024**.

<sup>1</sup> A Circular Economy is a systemic model to reduce waste through Recycling, Reuse, Return, and Repair. For more information on the concept of a circular economy, see: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/circular-economy-introduction/overview>



Please reach out to [NextCycleWA@recycle.com](mailto:NextCycleWA@recycle.com) if you require interpretation or translation services. A Spanish version of this application can be downloaded at [www.nextcyclewashington.com](http://www.nextcyclewashington.com).

Comuníquese con [NextCycleWA@recycle.com](mailto:NextCycleWA@recycle.com) si necesita servicios de interpretación o traducción. Se puede descargar la aplicación en español en [www.nextcyclewashington.com](http://www.nextcyclewashington.com).

## Circular Accelerator Timeline



## Program Benefits for Selected Projects

- **Preparation for Larger Investment Pathways<sup>2</sup>:** Teams that are selected for the Circular Accelerator will learn about the range of funding available to develop their projects and grow their businesses and organizations. Educational and consulting support will be provided to each team to help prepare a successful pitch for funding. The range of options includes but is not limited to: public or private grants, impact investment, venture capital, or traditional financing through a local bank or Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs). Learn more now by downloading the NextCycle Washington [Circular Funding Resource Guide](#).
- **One-on-one Consulting:** Consulting services with specific task outcomes will be available from expert-in-resident economists, operators, engineers, researchers, and graphic designers at [Resource Recycling Systems \(RRS\)](#), [Cascadia Consulting Group](#), [Start Consulting Group](#), [Traversal Design](#), and other partners from businesses, community organizations, universities, research institutions, and local/state governments.
- **Expert Mentorship from the extended NextCycle network:** Teams will have access to leading subject matter experts who can:
  - Provide insight into business and project planning;
  - Provide helpful information about the recycling landscape, and markets in Washington State and beyond; and
  - Facilitate connections along the supply chain.
- **Accelerator Academy:** This multi-day, intensive experience includes workshops focused on developing project and business plans, identifying funding and investment opportunities, leveraging partnerships, developing the perfect pitch, and interacting with other NextCycle Washington teams and industry experts. Travel and attendance costs are supported by NextCycle Washington. **Successful applicants will be notified by NextCycle Washington staff in early March 2024.**
- **Networking and Partnership Facilitation:** Teams will learn with previous and future Next Cycle WA cohorts to expand the circular economy network within Washington State.
  - Teams will have many opportunities to connect with:
    - > Experts and investors in the industries
    - > Community Organizations and Nonprofits;
    - > Universities and Research Institutions; and
    - > Local and State Governments.
  - Teams will be supported in developing partnerships including;
    - > Supply chain partnerships,
    - > Cross-organization partnerships, and
    - > Public-private partnerships.
- **NextCycle Pitch Showcase:** Teams will have the opportunity to pitch their venture to potential funders, investors, and partners at the conclusion of the track experience in **August / September 2024.**
- **Recognition and Publicity:** Teams are promoted through press releases, social media, published articles, webinars, the NextCycle website, showcases, and public presentations, providing exposure to a larger network of investors and partners.

<sup>2</sup> Note: Accelerator tracks use a zero-equity model: they do not directly provide or guarantee seed funding, and, they also do not take an equity stake in a company.



# Application Submission Details

## How to Respond:

Applications must be submitted through the [online submission portal](#). Submissions are **due on or before 5:00 PM Pacific Time on Friday, January 26, 2024**. If you need assistance navigating the online submission portal, please reach out to our team at [NextCycleWA@recycle.com](mailto:NextCycleWA@recycle.com).

## Selection Process:

Evaluation criteria and the scoring rubric are included as an Appendix in this document.

Applications will be reviewed for eligibility by the NextCycle Washington staff and scored by a Review Panel of experts and Governance Team Members. Final recommendations will be made through consensus with external reviewers, facilitated by NextCycle Washington staff. Approval of the selected teams will be made by the Washington Department of Ecology).

**Successful Applicants will be notified by NextCycle Washington staff in February 2024.**

## Project Eligibility:

Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed project has the potential for direct positive impact on Washington's circular economy.

- Projects must be Washington-based or expanding to Washington and focused on waste prevention, reuse, repair, recycling, organics recovery, and/or product development using otherwise-waste materials.
- Projects must have some existing traction. Ideation and feasibility studies **are not** eligible. Research projects working on product market fit and pilot projects **are** eligible.
- This program is open to private sector businesses, nonprofits, community-based organizations, institutions, and tribal nations and organizations.

## Applicants And Applicant Teams:

NextCycle Washington Applicants may include one or more entrepreneurs/start-ups organizations, small businesses, established corporations, social enterprises, community-based organizations or nonprofits, trade organizations, tribal nations and organizations, universities, or research teams. Community-based organizations operating under fiscal sponsorship by another organization are welcome and encouraged to apply. Applicants are encouraged to form local and regional collaborative partnerships and apply as a Team. Local governments may be included on an Applicant Team but may not be the Lead Applicant. Out-of-state organizations are eligible, but the proposed project or venture must be located and directly address the

# Example Projects

- 1 A community-based non-profit builds support for recycling leadership in their community by developing a Training and workforce development program
- 2 A start-up business developed region's first successful food scrap composting collection and processing program
- 3 A niche packaging manufacturer develops a new product using recycled content plastic
- 4 An international food waste prevention technology provider expands into the Washington Market
- 5 An enterprising non-profit is developing a production model to upcycle textile waste into felted fabric

More project examples can be found [here](#).

circular economy in the state of Washington. Cross-sector partnerships and existing end markets from out-of-state are eligible to apply as long as their project is focused on Washington and addresses Washington-based material.

Applicants may submit more than one application if the projects are different.

NextCycle Washington Program Governance Circle Members and NextCycle Washington Application Mentors are not eligible to apply. This program is not intended for individuals not operating under a business or organization.

## Projects & Material Streams:

Any project that directly or indirectly improves waste prevention, reuse, repair, recovery, recycling, organics management, and product development using otherwise wasted materials and products that help grow the circular economy in Washington will be considered for funding. Projects may focus on any material that is otherwise wasted or where there is a proposed higher, better use of materials, according to the [waste hierarchy](#). Eligible waste streams include pre-consumer, post-commercial, post-consumer, industrial, and agricultural waste streams or by-products.

Follow this link to learn about previous projects and teams: <https://www.nextcyclewashington.com/teams>

Visit our YouTube channel to watch previous team pitches: <https://www.youtube.com/@nextcyclewashington/>

Examples of past NCWA Circular Accelerator projects and teams :

1. A community-based organization working to expand a pilot composting project to a larger community-scale operation.
2. A start-up business working to commercialize a new technology to enable fiber-to-fiber textile recycling.
3. A nonprofit developing new upcycled products using industrial scrap while creating job opportunities for refugee women.
4. A local business collaborating with a national trade organization to develop a hub and spoke collection system for glass in Eastern Washington.
5. A tech startup developing an app to facilitate peer-to-peer outdoor gear rental.

## Centering Equity:

The NextCycle Washington vision for a local circular economy is one where the people, businesses, and local economy benefit first and foremost. This program aims to be inclusive in its engagement, practice, and process, and has a goal to help reduce barriers to participation in Washington state's circular economy ecosystem.

NextCycle Washington strives to create an equitable system, especially for businesses owned by [socially and economically disadvantaged persons](#), as defined by the Washington State Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE).

We anticipate that successful Applicants will explicitly recognize how their project reflects Washington State Department of Health's principles of [environmental justice](#)<sup>3</sup>, equity<sup>4</sup>, and inclusion, and demonstrate how it will serve and engage with overburdened<sup>5</sup> members of the community<sup>6</sup>. Applicants are encouraged to design projects that include benefits and positive economic impacts (such as jobs, livable wages<sup>7</sup>, and labor income) for overburdened, under-resourced, or under-represented communities.

## Project Commitment:

Participants must be committed to engaging in the entire circular accelerator experience. This includes, at a minimum:

- One-hour monthly meetings over the six-month program period:
  - Participation in a multi-day Accelerator Academy;
  - Preparation and participation in the pitch showcase; and
  - Engagement in one-on-one consulting activities.

Teams should expect to commit a total of 40-60 hours over the six-month program period, all of which will be focused on advancing your vision.

Applicants selected for the Accelerator will be asked to sign a release giving NextCycle Washington permission to use the Project Title, Team members' names, bios and headshots, brief organizational and project descriptions, project photos, and logo(s) for communications and promotional purposes.

## Indemnification:

If awarded, the Applicants must agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the state of Washington, Washington Department of Ecology, agencies/contractors of the state, and all officials, agents/contractors, and employees of the state, from and against all claims for injuries or death arising out of or resulting from the grant project execution. "Claim" means any financial loss, claim, suit, action, damage, or expense, including but not limited to attorneys' fees, attributable for bodily injury, sickness, disease, or death, or injury to or the destruction of tangible property including loss of use resulting therefrom.

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<sup>3</sup> Environmental justice means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

<sup>4</sup> Equity is defined by the Washington State Office of Equity as the process of developing, strengthening, and supporting policies and procedures that distribute and prioritize resources to those who have been historically and currently marginalized.

<sup>5</sup> Overburdened community means a geographic area where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts, and includes, but is not limited to, highly impacted communities as defined in [RCW 19.405.020](#).

<sup>6</sup> In connection to the HEAL Act "community" is defined as individuals who have been historically excluded including: low-income, marginalized communities, Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, and entities or organizations in service of the needs of these populations.

<sup>7</sup> Hourly rate that an individual in a household must earn to support themselves and their family. Visit this link for reference: [Living Wage](#)

# Application Resources and Support

## Application Party:

Applicants are invited to attend a virtual application party to ask questions about the Circular Accelerator application process and receive support and guidance - in preparing for and completing their applications. Please check the NextCycle Washington website for details and instructions on how to join.

- Application Party 1: Tuesday, December 5, 2023, 12:30 pm - 2:00 PM (PST): [REGISTER HERE](#)
- Application Party 2: Thursday, January 11, 2024, 5:00 pm - 6:30 PM (PST): [REGISTER HERE](#)

## Office Hours:

Applicants may sign up [here](#) for a 30-minute, one-on-one virtual meeting to receive guidance on the application process.

## Resource Library:

All Applicants can access NextCycle Washington [Resource Library](#), which contains literature and other resources pertaining to:

- Recycling reports and data
- Business and financial planning
- Policy and regulation
- Industry organizations and specifications
- Standards and best management practices
- Washington Small Business Resources

## Services:

Please reach out to [NextCycleWA@recycle.com](mailto:NextCycleWA@recycle.com) if you require interpretation or translation services.

Note: Full language support may not be available; however, NextCycle is working to develop these services. Informing us of your needs will help us develop appropriate services.

## Get Involved:

Click on the Get Involved button on the NextCycle Washington website to be included on the latest NextCycle Washington updates including application openings, upcoming events, new funding partners, and more.

## Contact Us:

Email us at: [NextCycleWA@recycle.com](mailto:NextCycleWA@recycle.com)

# Confidentiality

The financial and commercial information pertaining to or on your application will be kept strictly confidential pursuant to [RCW 42.56.270](#). Any information given on an application or subsequent completion report and surveys will only be reported as part of aggregated data that does not identify any individual responses or companies.

# Scored Application Questions

Applications must be submitted through the [online submission portal](#). Submissions are **due on or before 5:00 PM Pacific Time on Friday, January 26, 2024**. If you need assistance navigating the online submission portal, please reach out to our team at [NextCycleWA@recycle.com](mailto:NextCycleWA@recycle.com).

## 1. Share Your Vision with Us

This is your chance to give us the big-picture view of your project. It should serve as a high-level introduction and summary of the key points from the entire application (you will have a chance to go into more detail below). It will be the first content that the reviewers see, so make sure that it paints a complete picture. Consider skipping this and returning to it after filling out the rest of the application. Relates to Project Overview criterion (**10 points total**).

### a. Project Title\*

*Character Limit: 100 (approximately 25 words)*

### b. Project Stage

Select one of the following. \*note, ideation stage is not eligible. Please see [website](#) to reference definition of stages.

- Research
- Pilot
- Scaling
- Early Growth
- Pivot
- Expansion

### c. Project Vision / Abstract\* (5 points)

Clearly summarize your project, highlighting the most important things that a reviewer should take away from this application. Make sure to include your "big picture" vision.

*Character Limit: 1500 (approximately 350 words)*

### d. Project Outcomes\* (5 points)

What does success look like for your project in the near term (six to twelve months)? If accepted into the Circular Accelerator, how can NCWA help achieve your vision?

*Character Limit: 1500 (approximately 350 words)*

## 2. Tell Us About Your Team

*This is your chance to highlight the people doing this great work. Feel free to brag about yourself, your team, and your partners. Don't be shy! Relates to Project Team and Partners criterion (20 points total).*

### a. Project Team\* (10 points)

Describe your project team and their experience. Explain how the team demonstrates relevant experience, background, capacity, and leadership to successfully implement the project.

*Character Limit: 2000 (approximately 460 words)*

#### i. Project Team Members

List the core team members on this project, other than yourself.

Please include first name, last name, email address, organization

### b. Project Partners and Supporters Description\* (10 points)

Describe any established relationships that will actively support your project success such as supply chain partners, regional or local partners, mentors, advisors, and/or community representatives. You are encouraged to attach letters of support below.

*Character Limit: 1500 (approximately 350 words)*

#### i. Project Partners and Supporters

List your Project Partners/Project Supporters.

First Name, Last Name, Email Address, Organization

## 3. Tell Us About Your Project

*This is your chance to provide more detail about your project vision and the opportunity that you are building from. We want to see that there is a need for this product, service, or program and that there is a clear path to long-term success. This relates to Concept Feasibility criterion (30 points total).*

### a. Market Opportunity\* (5 points)

Describe in detail the product, service, or program you are providing and why this represents a great opportunity.

Consider touching on the following points:

- i. Details about who your project will serve or benefit.
- ii. Share information about your intended customer base.
- iii. Demonstrate the need / demand for this product, service, or program.

*Character Limit: 1500 (approximately 350 words)*

### b. Scalability\* (5 points)

How do you see your project expanding, replicating, or growing over time?

*Character Limit: 750 (approximately 175 words)*

### c. Strengths and Challenges\* (10 points)

- i. How is your project uniquely positioned to succeed?  
*Character Limit: 750 (approximately 175 words)*
- ii. What are the primary challenges you will face and how will you mitigate them?

*Character Limit: 750 (approximately 175 words)*

### d. Financial Sustainability\* (10 points)

What are your income or revenue streams (select all that apply)

- i. Service-based revenue
- ii. Product or commodity revenue
- iii. Advertising revenue
- iv. Membership or sponsorship revenue
- v. <40% grant funded
- vi. >40% grant funded
- vii. Other revenue

When do you expect to be financially sustainable, defined as having income or revenue at levels that meet or exceed your costs?

- i. I am currently profitable
- ii. I am currently breaking even
- iii. I expect to be financially sustainable within 2 years
- iv. I expect to be financially sustainable within 5 years
- v. Other

Have you successfully raised capital to date (select all that apply)?

- i. Yes, I have raised private capital
- ii. Yes, I have received grants
- iii. No, but I am in the process of fundraising
- iv. I have not started fundraising yet

Provide any additional details on sources and amounts of funds raised to date and how you expect to become or remain financial sustainable over time based on the selected points above.

*Character Limit: 1500 (approximately 350 words)*

## 4. Tell Us About The Outcomes

*This is your chance to describe the economic and environmental benefits of your project. We are looking for projects that benefit both aspects. Relates to Environmental Impact criterion (10 points total) and Economic Impact criterion (10 points total).*

### a. Environmental Benefits\* (10 points)

What materials are you keeping within the circular economy and diverting from the disposal stream?

- i. Plastics
- ii. Textiles
- iii. Construction & Demolition
- iv. Organic Materials
- v. Metal
- vi. Paper
- vii. Wood
- viii. Mixed materials
- ix. Other\_\_\_\_\_

How are you diverting these materials from the disposal stream?

**Upstream:**

- i. Waste Prevention
- ii. Materials Reuse Operations and Programs
- iii. Reuse Operations to Prevent Single-Use Packaging
- iv. Upcycled Products
- v. Sharing or Rental Systems for Reuse
- vi. Reuse, Repair, or Share Technology Platforms
- vii. Food Waste Prevention

**Downstream**

- i. Organics/Composting Systems
- ii. Recycling Supply Chain (includes collection, processing, and end markets)
- iii. Recycling Innovation and Technology (novel approaches)

Provide additional details on your processes or approach to diverting materials from the disposal stream and why you see this as an opportunity.

*Character Limit: 750 (approximately 175 words)*

Select areas where your project will have positive environmental impact:

- i. Reduce materials disposed in the landfill
- ii. Increase material reuse
- iii. Reduce consumption virgin materials and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- iv. Other positive environmental benefits (Please explain)

Describe how your project has a positive environmental impact on the selected areas. Include consideration of the full lifecycle impact of the product, service, or program.

*Character Limit: 1500 (approximately 350 words)*

**b. Economic Benefits\* (10 points)**

Describe how this project will create direct economic opportunities such as jobs, livable wages<sup>8</sup>, and labor income or result in other indirect economic impacts such as supporting other businesses in the local community and/or along supply chains within the state.

*Character Limit: 1500 (approximately 350 words)*

**5. Tell Us About Your Approach to Community**

*This is your opportunity to describe the ways in which you center people and the communities in which you operate and serve. Relates to **Community and Environmental Justice** criterion (20 points total).*

**a. Community Engagement (5 points)**

How do people directly impacted by your work participate in the decision-making of your work? How do you engage with people in the communities that you will serve or operate in?

- i. My project already includes and involves people in my impacted community in the project.
- ii. I plan to include and involve people in my impacted community in the project.
- iii. Not applicable.

Describe how you are or plan to include and involve people in your impacted community. If not applicable, please explain why.

*Character Limit: 750 (approximately 175 words)*

**b. Community Benefits (5 points)**

Describe how your project benefits the people and communities in which you serve and operate, such as building the capacity of community members, providing access to additional services and opportunities, or improving [community resilience](#).

*Character Limit: 750 (approximately 175 words)*

**c. Environmental Risks (10 points)**

- i. What potential environmental risks might your project present to the communities or people in which you serve and operate?

*Character Limit: 750 (approximately 175 words)*

- ii. How will you work towards the fair treatment and engagement of overburdened communities that bear the burden of environmental impacts and mitigate risks for these communities?

*Character Limit: 750 (approximately 175 words)*

<sup>8</sup> Hourly rate that an individual in a household must earn to support themselves and their family. Visit [this link](#) for reference

# Evaluation Criteria for Scored Application Questions

Applications will be evaluated and given a score of up to 100 possible points.

Criteria	Definition
<b>Project Overview</b> <i>10 POINTS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clearly describes the business or project</li><li>• Includes the “big picture” vision for the business or project</li><li>• Articulates what outcomes of success looks like for the business or project</li><li>• Understands how the accelerator can achieve the business or project goals</li></ul>
<b>Project Team/Partners</b> <i>20 POINTS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project team demonstrates relevant experience, background, capacity, and leadership to ensure successful implementation</li><li>• Team includes partners or relationships that will contribute to project success</li></ul>
<b>Concept Feasibility</b> <i>30 POINTS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clearly explains the opportunity and need for the project, product or service and the audience who will benefit and use the product or service</li><li>• Has a clear vision of how the project can scale or replicate</li><li>• Understands the challenges this project or business may face</li><li>• Is clear on the strengths the business or project has to set them up for success</li><li>• Project can be sustained or has lasting impacts beyond grant period</li><li>• Demonstrates understanding of costs and revenues</li><li>• Has the capacity to manage the project</li></ul>
<b>Environmental Impact</b> <i>10 POINTS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project clearly articulates the environmental benefits</li><li>• Has a clear plan to keep materials within the circular economy</li><li>• Considers the full life cycle impacts of their product, project, or service</li></ul>
<b>Economic Impact Potential</b> <i>10 POINTS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clearly explains potential direct economic impacts such as job creation, living wages, or other positive impacts</li><li>• Demonstrates understanding of indirect economic benefits such as supporting businesses in the local community and/or along supply chains within Washington</li></ul>
<b>Community and Environmental Justice</b> <i>20 POINTS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrates effort to assess community impact through community engagement</li><li>• Project builds capacity within overburdened communities, provides lasting benefits</li><li>• Has awareness of potential environmental risks / environmental justice impacts</li><li>• Thoughtful approach to mitigate environmental justice risks</li></ul>

