

The Upper Valley
Super Compost Project
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Institutionalize living compost systems into your schools' outdoor classroom to increase real world problem solving opportunities, enhance the health of your schoolyard and save money!

The Upper Valley Super Compost Project (UVSCP) will support living compost systems as K - 12 outdoor classrooms in schoolyards across 5 supervisory unions in the Upper Valley of Vermont. This replicable model will lay the foundation for other regional schools to collaborate in systemic change-making. Participant schools will reduce food waste, connect with local farms to divert food scraps to farm animals, and manage the rest in student-run, hot composting systems. The project includes developing a community of practice to support the ongoing resilience of the program. Early estimates from survey results of the 24 participating schools indicate that at least 200,000 lbs of food scraps will be diverted from the trucking and landfill waste streams into quality compost to enhance the soil health of schoolyards and community projects throughout the region.

The Upper Valley Super Compost Project is a partnership of public and nonprofit entities united by the goal of institutionalizing responsible organics management for Vermont schools using a [Just Transition \(JT\) framework](#). Through its School Compost Program (SCP), UVSCP supports schools to close the nutrient loop, so that food scraps get turned on site into quality compost to nourish landscape soils and a generation of future composters. To build successful, student-run, expert-managed hot composting systems, UVSCP provides community outreach and network-building, planning, construction management and funding, initial supplies, and two years of technical expertise. In return, schools pledge long-term stewardship of the physical system, classroom integration, and the commitment to build a culture of reduction and responsible waste management.

On-site compost systems have the potential to shift current organics hauling fees paid by most schools into an investment in school staff, students, community engagement and regeneration. In addition to saving money, compost systems serve as a classroom extension enhancing STEM curriculum and providing a mechanism for a student-run business.

SCHOOLS GET:

- A complete compost system of your choice, installed (menu of options to come!)
- a roofed area to house the compost system, year-round
- 2 years of expert training from technical service providers (roughly 50 hours per school) and ongoing support from [Regeneration Corps](#)
- All of the tools needed to sustain a program, including curricula

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS:

- Be a school within the 6 SU's in Vermont invited to this pilot project:
 - Orange East; White River Valley; Rivendell; Windsor x 2; Hartford (declined)
- Must be student run. Must use the compost system as an extension of place and project based education.
- Must include Food Service and Facilities Maintenance team in the design process.
- Must commit to reinvest a good percentage of current organics hauling fees into the school composting program, to include an ongoing stipend for leadership.

Program History & Timeline

The UVSCP began in April 2022 when the first funding came in to support student-run, on-site composting as a project based learning tool at schools in our service area. The first year focused on school recruitment, preliminary budget development, and assembling our project team and a network of partners ranging from construction and legal services to technical and fundraising support. Twenty-four (24) schools signed up to participate in the program.

In our second year, FY 23, we received funding to build our proof-of-concept model at Sharon Elementary School (SES), and are currently in the onboarding phase for 6–10 more schools, a complicated process that's different for every school. SES began implementing composting immediately after the build was complete in November 2023 and is serving as a model for the development of the UVSCP onboarding framework, including technical and classroom support.

In our third year, FY 24, we will launch our Advisory Team, increase marketing and visibility of the UVSCP to attract more funding and disseminate program impacts, apply what we have learned to realize new or improved compost system and support program implementation at 6 –10 identified participating schools beginning in the summer of 2024.

In our fourth year, FY 25, we anticipate our first school, SES, will move to the Transfer stage, 10 schools will be either in site plan or implementation phases, and the remaining 13 schools will enter into the onboarding phase.

In our fifth and sixth years, FY 26 and FY 27, all schools will move or will have moved through the implementation and transfer stages, our shareable toolkit and supplemental curriculum will be developed, and school communities of practice will be connected and thriving.