



The Foundation for New York's Strongest

DSNY's Foundation for New York's Strongest Announces First Microgrant Awardees

Four Small NYC Businesses all Making Efforts Towards Food Waste Reduction

The NYC Department of Sanitation's Foundation for New York's Strongest has announced the winners of its inaugural Microgrant Program. The Microgrant Program helps small businesses either begin or expand their food waste reduction efforts. The awardees will receive \$2,000 and technical assistance from leading experts in the field for projects ranging from implementing compost systems to creating zero waste event stations, and are funded via proceeds from the Foundation's successful Food Waste Fair last year.

"Given the more than 650,000 tons of food scraps New York businesses produce annually, these kinds of efforts have never been more important," said **Elizabeth Balkan, Executive Director of the Foundation for New York's Strongest and Director of Policy at the Department of Sanitation**. "The microgrants provide city businesses extra support as they transition to more sustainable operations. Additionally, these partners will help us develop and demonstrate best management practices to the larger business community, in the city, and the nation."

The awardees include:

- **Ox Verte** is a plant-forward food company working to reinvent office lunch and breakfast, making seasonally-fresh, locally-sourced food an everyday occurrence, and offering wholesome meals that can nourish bodies and nurture the communities it serves.

Ox Verte has encountered challenges in full product utilization due to fluctuations in client order volumes and desired lead times, the limited accuracy of forecasting tools, and minimum purchase requirements. Ox Verte will be using their grant to purchase a commercial freezer to best use raw food at a later date. Increasing the cold storage capacity at Ox Verte will reduce the amount of food discarded or diverted for compost, reducing the businesses' footprint and potentially allowing Ox Verte to glean additional insights into strategic procurement.

"As a company with a triple-bottom line, Ox Verte is committed to making a positive impact on various stakeholders, including the planet. Reducing food waste in our kitchen is one important way we can protect and preserve the planet," said **Jessie Gould, Ox Verte founder**.

- **RoHo Compost** is a food waste diversion and education non-profit providing services to businesses in the New York City area. These services include hauling organic waste to compost facilities and transporting surplus food to food pantries.

RoHo Compost will be using their grant to design and install zero waste stations throughout the event grounds of Smorgasburg's Williamsburg and Prospect Park sites.

The zero waste stations will include a sorting platform to remove contamination from the market's organic waste stream, education stations for outreach to the public at the markets, and coordination of volunteers to spearhead interactive educational programs at the markets.

“RoHo Compost's mission is to divert food waste from landfills, through composting and food recovery programs. We collaborate with Brooklyn Flea's Smorgasburg markets to divert their food and organic waste through composting,” said **Marc de Konkoly Thege, founder, Roho Compost**. “With the Foundation's funds, we are implementing zero waste stations at the Smorgasburg markets to educate the public on our joint effort to divert food waste and increase diversion rates of what is composted, recycled, and sent to the landfill.”

- **Trans Am Cafe** is a local vegetarian/vegan community-based cafe on the border between Bushwick and Ridgewood.

Trans Am Cafe will be using their grant to install a three-bin compost system and a storage site for processing compost on-site. Once built and in operation, they will look into selling the compost they produce.

“Trans Am Cafe is a local cafe seeking to serve its community, and is a collaborative creative space for connecting the neighborhood, and serving fresh food and drinks,” said **Bradford Still, owner of Trans Am Cafe**. “We provide healthy vegetarian and vegan options, as well as locally roasted coffee. The cafe seeks to reduce waste as much as possible, and is excited to be working with Hila Perry on creating an educational environment surrounding compost and gardening. By having a composting facility in our backyard we can turn what was once waste into high value product for our gardens and our community.”

- **The White Moustache** is dedicated to making handmade yogurt. Using the leftover whey from their yogurt making process, they have created a variety of probiotic tonics and ice pops in addition to their yogurt line. U.S. yogurt manufacturers dispose of more than 150 million gallons of whey every year, and The White Moustache is finding tasty and impactful uses for it. Six flavors of their Probiotic Pops debuted at Foundation's Food Waste Fair preview event last June.

The White Moustache has found that serving and selling their Probiotic Pops is a twofold challenge: first, engaging consumers on the subject of yogurt whey, and second, finding an effective way to keep the pops frozen at large and outdoor events. The White Moustache will be using their grant to purchase a customized, branded freezer cart that will serve as a mobile vending and marketing unit for their Probiotic Pops. The cart will enable them to expand their market presence and educate the public about the impact their purchases have at reducing food waste.

“Up to now, there has been no demand for the millions of gallons of yogurt whey produced in this country, so most companies treat it as waste. The White Moustache is striving to show the world that yogurt whey is a nutritious, delicious ingredient that tastes creamy and lightly tangy, and is full of probiotics, just like our yogurt,” said **Homa Dashtaki, founder of The White**

Moustache. We are proud and excited to introduce the world to yogurt whey through our Probiotic Pops. Thanks to our Foundation grant we will be buying a freezer cart so we can serve refreshing, fruity Probiotic Pops all around NYC this summer.”

The New York State Pollution Prevention Institute is the Foundation’s technical advisory partner for the Microgrant Program, and served on the Microgrant Advisory Committee. The Institute will offer technical brief assistance to the grant awardees, including creating a tracking mechanism for recording food waste, advising on how to efficiently sort waste on site, assessing the environmental benefits of food waste prevention, and sharing best practice. The Institute will also hold regular check-in calls with the grantees and conduct site visits.

“The NYC Food Waste Fair was proof of the significant interest small food-related businesses have in reducing food waste in their operations, and the Microgrant Program picks up where it left off,” said **Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia**. “We are seeing tremendous, innovative solutions for food waste emerging in New York City and beyond, which can save businesses money and improve their operations. I am pleased to see the Foundation for New York’s Strongest Microgrant program helping small, local businesses implement food waste reduction strategies, and witness the steps all New Yorkers are taking to reach zero landfill waste by 2030.”

“These smart solutions led by The Foundation for New York’s Strongest will help local businesses save money, better manage the impact of food waste in our growing city and use innovation to drive New Yorkers forward towards the goal of sending zero waste to landfills,” said **Mark Chambers, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Sustainability**.

For more information on the Foundation’s Food Waste Fair, and its activities on ending food waste, visit www.foodwastefair.nyc.

About the Foundation for New York’s Strongest

The [Foundation for New York’s Strongest](#) is the official nonprofit organization of the New York City Department of Sanitation. Supported by private funding and in-kind donations, the Foundation leverages non-traditional strategies to promote sustainability and advance the essential services Sanitation employees. The Foundation’s core mission is to highlight the important contributions made by the DSNY workforce to keep New York City clean and safe every day; to support zero waste goals, and to celebrate and preserve DSNY’S rich culture and history. The inaugural event hosted by the Foundation, the [NYC Food Waste Fair](#), brought together more than 1,000 attendees from the local business community, 75 food waste solution exhibitors, over 40 thought leaders and dozens of partner organizations to catalyze action in NYC.

About the New York City Department of Sanitation

The Department of Sanitation (DSNY) keeps New York City healthy, safe and clean by collecting, recycling and disposing of waste, cleaning streets and vacant lots, and clearing snow and ice. The Department operates 59 district garages and manages a fleet of more than 2,000 rear-loading collection trucks, 450 mechanical brooms and 689 salt/sand spreaders. The Department clears litter, snow and ice from approximately 6,500 miles of City streets and removes debris from vacant lots as well as abandoned vehicles from City streets.

About the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute

The New York State Pollution Prevention Institute is a partnership between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Rochester Institute of Technology and the university's Golisano Institute for Sustainability, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the State University of New York at Buffalo and Clarkson University, with a statewide reach. NYSP2I also works with the state's Manufacturing Extension Partnership to help disseminate data and strategy. NYSP2I's goal is to make the state more sustainable for workers, the public, the environment and the economy through pollution prevention. Pollution prevention is reducing or eliminating waste at the source by modifying production processes, promoting the use of non-toxic or less-toxic substances, implementing conservation techniques, and reusing materials rather than putting them into the waste stream. Go to <http://www.rit.edu/affiliate/nysp2i/> to learn more about NYSP2I.