



# *Down to Brass Tacks*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BRASS TACKS INITIATIVE



*IWR Co-owner, Steve Widdicombe. Image courtesy Innovative Waste Recycling*

## ***Business Spotlight: Innovative Waste Recycling***

MINNESOTA COMPANY CONVERTS WASTE MATERIALS INTO VALUABLE PRODUCTS.

Innovative Waste Recycling has one mission—to reduce the amount of food waste that ends up in landfills and instead turn it into something useful and valuable. This is an important service as The U.S. sends over 35 million tons of food waste to landfills every year, according to the EPA. Since its founding in 2017, IWR has diverted thousands of tons of waste from landfills.

Prior to co-founding Innovative Waste Recycling, Steve Widdicombe worked for a German company as a salesman for equipment used in anaerobic digestion, composting, organics recycling, materials recycling, and wastewater treatment plants. Basically, if you needed a machine to process waste, he was your man. This experience prepared him for work at an anaerobic digestion site here in Minnesota where he helped manage feedstocks and the land application of their byproducts. There, he learned that the digester was not an option for some food producers because their byproducts didn't fit with the digestion process. "Even though it couldn't be put in the digester, I still wanted to help these businesses find a sustainable option for their byproducts," says Widdicombe. "I took it upon myself to help them find a better fit."

Through his work with the digester, Widdicombe envisioned a business that would help connect the dots from producer to outlet in the name of sustainability - this was the start of IWR. "The food industry was and is still struggling to handle its waste material," says Widdicombe. "IWR is specifically taking byproducts that would go to the landfill and finding sustainable solutions that capture the organic material to support a closed loop food system." One way they are doing this is by working with poultry producers. . These businesses

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**Contact us:**

info@thebrasstacks.org  
P.O. Box 192  
New Prague, MN 56071  
www.thebrasstacks.org



# JOIN US!

The Brass Tacks Initiative is seeking volunteers for the following committees to help us continue our mission to support sustainable practices in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration.

## Marketing

Establishing, maintaining, and growing the visibility of the BTI. Helps promote our programs, products, and services.

## Development

Helps BTI achieve its mission by developing new resources and funding opportunities for the organization.

## Outreach/Education

Plans and implements educational events that inform and engage communities on sustainability in the food system.

For more information visit our website [www.thebrasstacks.org/volunteer](http://www.thebrasstacks.org/volunteer) or email [Rachel@thebrasstacks.org](mailto:Rachel@thebrasstacks.org)

## *Funding Opportunities*

The following list of funding opportunities is provided for informational purposes only. The granting entities have no affiliation with BTI. For more information or to apply, please visit the granting entities' websites.

### STATE

#### *Green chemistry and engineering internship grant*

Granting Entity: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Deadline: March 31, 2023

Funding: \$12,000

#### *Small business environmental improvement loans*

Funding Entity: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Deadline: N/A

Funding: Zero-percent interest loan amounts between \$1,000 and \$75,000

### FEDERAL

#### *U.S. Embassy Bangkok FY23 Notice of Funding Opportunity*

Granting Entity: Department of State | U.S. Embassy Bangkok

Deadline: July 21, 2023

Funding: \$5,000 to \$25,000

## BTI Business Spotlight: Innovative Waste Recycling

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have byproducts that usually go to wastewater treatment plants which can be highly expensive. According to Widdicombe, "it is the liquid waste that causes a problem wherever it goes, but we have a good system of moving that into energy, compost, and soil amendment."



*IWR co-owner Steve Widdicombe on site. Photo courtesy Innovative Waste Recycling.*

IWR has also carved out a niche in the packaged goods industry. "The package materials industry typically sends their waste to landfills," says Widdicombe. "However, we separate the packaging from organic material and use the organic material in animal feed or compost and recycle as much of the packaging material as possible." This not only saves the organics from the landfill, but also the plastic, metal, and glass that was holding the organic material as well. Recycling not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions, but also helps to conserve our natural resources.

If recycling and reclaiming organics is so important, then why are more businesses not pursuing sustainable options? According to Widdicombe, the biggest challenges businesses face when trying to be more sustainable are government regulations and the high costs of labor, freight, and hauling. Because of these factors, many businesses are reluctant to even look for more sustainable options. However, he says, "Education is the first step – know your waste stream and don't be afraid to reach out to an expert in the sustainability space! We can help navigate the regulations and find an option that works best for your business goals.

For more information about Innovative Waste Recycling visit their website [www.IWRRecycling.com](http://www.IWRRecycling.com) or email [Steve@IWRRecycling.com](mailto:Steve@IWRRecycling.com)

## Make a Contribution!

As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, we rely on public contributions to help us continue our mission to support sustainable practices in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration. Your contribution of any size helps us provide free and low-cost programs to families, small businesses, and other organizations.

**For more information or to make a contribution visit [www.thebrasstacks.org](http://www.thebrasstacks.org)**



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## ***About BTI***

The Brass Tacks Initiative is a 501c3 nonprofit founded on a mission to support sustainability in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration.

Our name comes from the phrase "let's get down to brass tacks." The phrase means to address the most important facts of a project or problem. The fact is food waste is a problem with environmental, economic, and social impacts. We believe the only way to make an impact on food waste is to **research** best practices and new methods of recycling, **collaborate** with the companies who are generating waste to find alternatives to the landfill, and make sure that current and future leaders are equipped with the **education** needed to make sustainable impacts in their community.

*For more information about BTI visit our website [www.thebrasstacks.org](http://www.thebrasstacks.org) or contact us via email at [info@thebrasstacks.org](mailto:info@thebrasstacks.org).*