



Recycling Program Improvement Opportunities

FACT SHEET

INCREASING PARTICIPATION

Increased participation in your community's recycling program makes it more successful. Recycling programs with 70, 80 or 90 percent participation prove their worth to elected officials and best achieve the many benefits of recycling. Here are some key steps you can take to accomplish participation excellence:

- Become a full partner in using the RE3 and Recycle Guys campaigns.
- Ask for and commit budgetary resources to conduct recycling education.
- Implement participation incentives – prizes, lotteries, awards and pay-as-you-throw. Many of these can be done cheaply with maximum effect.
- Commit yourself in the coming year to use at least five different ways to reach the public. Need ideas? Call DPPEA or talk to recycling peers who've had success with different approaches.
- Use opportunities for personal contact to promote recycling – i.e., through drop-off attendants, volunteer educators or block leaders.
- Use www.cleanup.org to help get your message out.

INCREASING MATERIALS

Your program can achieve excellence by giving citizens the chance to recycle all the materials that markets allow. The good news is that markets are available for a wider array of materials than ever before. Ready to give the public the best recycling opportunities possible? Here's how:

- Investigate and talk with the markets and MRFs in your area to see what they can take.
- If you use a contracted private hauler, ask them to add materials to your program, and then put it in the contract.
- Think about these excellent candidates for collection:
 - Magazines and catalogs
 - Cardboard
 - Mixed paper
 - Office paper and junk mail
 - Plastic bottles beyond “soft drink bottles and milk jugs” – think about all bottles.
 - Steel cans (if you aren't collecting them already)
- If you can't add materials to curbside pickup, at least add them to drop-off centers or start drop-off opportunities for them.
- Think about adding services for materials “outside the bin” – e.g., electronics, telephone books, food waste, oil filters, toner cartridges, antifreeze, books, household batteries, textiles, cooking oil, eyeglasses, electronic media (disks, tapes, CDs) and fluorescent lights. Choose one and try something new this year.
- If you don't have one, start a swap shop. If you have one or more, add another.
- Do at least the minimum of source reduction – promote junk mail reduction, backyard composting and green purchasing.

N.C. DIVISION
OF POLLUTION
PREVENTION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSISTANCE

1639 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1639

(919) 715-6500
(800) 763-0136

INCREASING CHOICES

Make it simple and easy for citizens to participate in recycling – they will appreciate it and more will use your service. Changes to your collection mix, increases in participation and new market opportunities offer you the chance to modernize your program. Look around at the latest trends, plan carefully and dive in.

- New collection techniques:
 - Commingle – take advantage of regional MRFs and the opportunity to make your collection efforts both simpler for citizens and more efficient. Commingling can be done many ways – DPPEA and peers can help you decide the best plan.
 - Switch to carts instead of bins, or use two-bin systems for dual-stream collection. Give your citizens more volume to recycle more stuff (and your program the ability to commingle).
 - At drop-off sites, consolidate collection containers through commingling (bottles and cans in one, fiber in another), reduce container clutter, make it simpler for citizens and save money in the long run.
 - Look for ways to parallel recycling services with garbage – put the services on an equal footing and send a signal to the public that they are equally important.

- New venues
 - Offer recycling services at “away-from-home” places people congregate: parks, ball fields, community centers, greenways, concert locations – help citizens see that recycling is something they should do everywhere they go.
 - School recycling is becoming more common in communities around North Carolina. Have you started a program yet?

- New customers (commercial and multi-family)
 - Examine your curbside routes and look for possibilities to “in-fill” small commercial customers into the collection system.
 - Investigate other ways to serve the commercial community. Consider central OCC drop-off sites near major business clusters. Start a pilot paper collection program in an office area in town. How about a glass/aluminum collection route in a restaurant and bar area? Or how about a food collection route? All of these are examples of programs already being run by N.C. communities.
 - Do your apartment and condo residents have access to recycling? Can condo units be added to curbside? Work with property management companies to start drop-off at multi-family complexes. Alternatively, establish or promote nearby existing public drop-off centers to multi-family residents.
 - Offer recycling opportunities to builders and industrial customers – e.g., a pallet and clean wood drop-off site or wallboard collection facility.

Local governments across North Carolina have implemented an amazing spectrum of recycling services, including all of the initiatives mentioned above. Many local governments have programs unique to their jurisdiction. But they are all doable by any community. The cupboard of ideas is full, and you can use it to make your local recycling program the most outstanding service citizens receive from their local government.



The North Carolina Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance provides free, non-regulatory technical assistance and education on methods to eliminate, reduce, or recycle wastes before they become pollutants or require disposal. Telephone DPPEA at (919) 715-6500 or (800) 763-0136 for assistance with issues in this fact sheet or any of your waste reduction concerns.

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