

# recycle across america®

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## A TOOLKIT TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL RECYCLING PROGRAM

**IS RECYCLING WORTH IT? YES,** if society is *recycling right* it is absolutely worth it! Currently less than 35% of households and less than 10% of businesses in the U.S. recycle (EPA 2011). When the U.S. reaches recycling levels of 75%, it will be the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent of removing 50 million cars from U.S. roads each year and it will generate 1.5 million new jobs. Manufacturers will be able to reuse the materials and it will slow down the depletion of finite natural resources.

Additionally, businesses and schools can save thousands of dollars (net) by increasing their recycling and decreasing their trash hauling. For instance, San Diego Unified School District saved approximately \$200,000 in trash dumpster and trash hauling fees within one school year after implementing the standardized label program because they increased their recycling levels so dramatically. With that being said, below are some critical rules to help you have a successful recycling program within your organization.

### BINS & LINERS

Choose bins that are durable and that have some recycled content. Preferably choose blue bins for all of your recyclable materials and black bins for landfill/trash materials. If you compost or send your food to farms, choose a green bin and use bin liners (bags) that are clearly marked "100% compostable". Even if you aren't composting, consider using compostable liners because they are manufactured without petroleum products and are likely to decompose more quickly. *Do not throw your recyclables in the dumpster in plastic bags. Please remove all plastic bags from your recyclables – plastic bags create problems for the recycling sorting equipment.*



### PROPERLY LABEL YOUR BINS – USE THE STANDARDIZED LABELS ON BINS!

A society-wide standardized labeling system has been created for recycling bins through the non-profit organization Recycle Across America®. Choose the standardized label(s) that suit your sorting needs at [RecycleAcrossAmerica.org](http://RecycleAcrossAmerica.org). The standardized labels have proven to increase recycling levels more than 50% and significantly reduce the amount of trash that historically has been thrown in recycling bins as a result of confusing labels. Imagine the impact when students and the public begin seeing consistent labeling throughout society.



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## PROPER BIN PLACEMENT

ALWAYS keep trash bins, recycling bins, and if applicable compost bins, side by side. Whenever possible, have a recycling bin with every trash bin and mark your bins well with the standardized labels (labels on the top and sides). In food areas such as cafeterias and restaurants, provide a way for people to empty their beverages before they put them in the recycling bins.



## RESEARCH THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF RECYCLING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

***This is very important*** -- contact your city, county and state's waste management government officials and ask them if there are any financial incentives for your organization to recycle and decrease your organization's trash volumes. For example in Minneapolis, MN, the combined state, county and city tax on trash hauling is more than 75%. Therefore if you pay \$1000 for a *trash* dumpster and *trash* hauling, your bill will be more than \$1750 with tax included. But in Minneapolis, there are no taxes charged on *recycling* dumpsters, services and hauling for recyclables. Therefore every organization should increase its recycling levels and dumpster size hauling and frequency for recycling, and respectively decrease their dumpster and hauling services for landfill or trash. This can equate to thousands of dollars in savings for your organization.

Ask your waste and recycling hauler to help evaluate your building's waste and recycling volumes. When requested, your hauler should be willing to help measure the volume of your trash and the volume of your recyclables. Ask them to provide a complete report including itemized and separated fees for your landfill and separate fees and taxes specifically for your recycling. It is up to YOUR organization to request this audit and information if you intend to capture savings.



## MONITOR YOUR RECYCLING FOR MONEY

Once you've done a baseline audit of your landfill/trash volumes versus your recycling volumes, look for every opportunity to decrease landfill waste and increase 'clean' recycling volumes so that you can capture the financial benefits of recycling.

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CONTINUE TO MONITOR YOUR VOLUMES and when possible:

1. reduce the size of your landfill dumpsters
2. reduce the frequency of your landfill hauling
3. increase the size of your recycling hauling
4. increase the frequency of your recycling hauling

Also, if your organization is generating considerable amounts of cardboard, office paper, aluminum cans, and other materials, you might be able to sell your recyclables directly to a processor and make money!!



## CHOOSING COMPOSTABLE PRODUCTS

Composting your organization's food waste and compostable products can save your organization money by diverting significant amounts of material away from landfills while providing nutrient soil supplements to farmers (or your own garden). Remember to always use 'well marked' 100% compostable liners in your bins and keep your compost bins conveniently placed alongside your recycling bin and trash bin in food service areas. Also if you offer compostable dishware and serving-ware, make certain that each product is well marked as compostable. Do not mix and match ... in other words do not offer some products that are compostable and other products that aren't compostable. Commit to fully compostable products or no compostable products; because having compostable products accidentally mixed in with traditional recyclables is very problematic for the recycling processors and having traditional plastics going into the compostables bin is equally problematic for the composter.



## COMMUNICATE YOUR RECYCLING PROGRAM

Communicate and engage all stakeholders in your recycling program. First of all make sure the custodial staff is fully educated to your recycling program and knows exactly how to empty the bins properly so that recycling is not going to the trash and vice versa. Additionally be proud about your organization's recycling efforts and communicate the "Let's recycle right!" campaign to all of your employees, students, visitors, guests and customers. Send out newsletters, announcements and videos to let everyone know that you're ramping up your recycling and how important it is for the environment and the economy that we all recycle *right (properly)*! Also communicate, "*when in doubt, throw it out (throw it in the trash)*". Trash contaminating the recycling bin is a serious problem for the recycling and manufacturing industries. It's better to error on the side of caution by throwing something of question in the trash bin versus in the recycling bin.

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## POSTERS AND BANNERS

Request the celebrity poster and banner artwork from Recycle Across America to you on your premises. Please send an email to [info@recycleacrossamerica.org](mailto:info@recycleacrossamerica.org) if you'd like high-resolution banners of the celebrity "Let's recycle right!" ads for your property!



## RECYCLE EVERYTHING RECYCLABLE

Have recycling drives for all types of materials such as cell phones, batteries, CFL light bulbs, ink cartridges, plastic bags, paint and hazardous materials. You can contact your local city and county government offices to learn where you can recycle these materials. Also, with companies such as [www.TerraCycle.com](http://www.TerraCycle.com) you can recycle materials that aren't usually considered 'recyclable' such as candy wrappers, toothbrushes, glue sticks, flip-flop sandals, etc and you can even generate money for your organization by having these types of recycling drives with TerraCycle.



## BUY RECYCLED AND WORK TOWARD REDUCING WASTE

Always look for opportunities to "close the loop" by purchasing products that are made from recycle materials, such as: paper products, clothing, uniforms, furniture, carpeting, ink cartridges, construction materials, etc. Support manufacturers that are using recycled materials. Recycling is only half of the equation ... buying products made of recycled materials is the other half. And above all, always look for ways to reduce waste to save resources and money. Resources are precious and limitless.



## SHARE YOUR STORY WITH US!

Join the solution and the conversation with Recycle Across America!

Twitter: @RecycleAcrossAm  
Facebook: Recycle Across America  
Email us! [info@recycleacrossamerica.org](mailto:info@recycleacrossamerica.org)

