



EXPLORING MULTIFAMILY RECYCLING

Tools for the Voyage

EUREKA!
RECYCLING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

The Sea: Multifamily Recycling Programs 4

The Icebergs: Looking at the Program as a Whole 10

Diving Deep: Understanding the Foundation of the Program 14

 Dropping Anchor: Addressing Program Design 16

 Charting the Waters: Information Systems 21

 Steering in the Right Direction: Basic Recycling Structure 26

Onward and Upward: Utilizing Strategic Outreach and Management 30

The Tip of the Iceberg: Problem Solving for Unique Issues at Buildings 40

Bon Voyage 50

The Tools: Packing for the Journey 54



Minnesota
Office of
Environmental
Assistance



Eureka Recycling is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit recycler providing education, advocacy, collection and processing services to Saint Paul and the Twin Cities metro area. Eureka Recycling's mission is to reduce waste today through innovative resource management and reach a waste-free tomorrow by demonstrating that waste is preventable, not inevitable. Eureka Recycling (formerly the recycling department of the Saint Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium) launched Saint Paul's multifamily program in 1986.

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INTRODUCTION

In Minnesota, and the United States as a whole, the amount of trash generated by residential buildings is increasing. Yet residential recycling rates have leveled off. For those who value recycling and its many benefits to communities and the environment, this is a distressing fact. To keep up with this increase in waste, traditional recycling techniques must be augmented by new and innovative approaches to increase the total recovery and reuse of materials. According to several recently issued reports, multifamily recycling provides an opportunity to do this.

Multifamily recycling programs face challenges that are very different from curbside recycling programs. For example, multifamily residential buildings face high resident and management turnover, space restrictions, and diverse building size, structure, and demographics. But historically multifamily programs and single family (curbside) programs have had to use the same tools and have been judged on the same scale for success. As a result, multifamily programs—and the people using and managing the recycling services at these apartment buildings—are continually criticized because they simply do not compare well to curbside programs. Multifamily recycling coordinators can become overwhelmed and frustrated as they attempt to improve their programs without a realistic way to measure their progress. But if we look at multifamily recycling programs in a fair light, and use appropriate tools to improve them, we can increase recovery and reuse.

A January 2002 State Auditor's report entitled "Recycling and Waste Reduction," which identifies multifamily recycling as a key opportunity to increase recycling, calls on the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance (OEA) to "gather, synthesize, and communicate research results on effective recycling and waste reduction practices." The OEA awarded Eureka Recycling a grant to begin this work. Eureka Recycling (formerly the recycling department of the Saint Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium) was recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency for excellence in the multifamily recycling program in Saint Paul. Eureka Recycling created this toolkit, "Exploring Multifamily Recycling," utilizing our experience and researching the best multifamily practices in the country. The toolkit provides tools for recycling program coordinators to assess their multifamily programs and improve them using the best practices in multifamily recycling.

This toolkit is designed for recycling coordinators who manage all or part of a community's multifamily recycling program. We are aware that many communities in Minnesota do not have the staff resources and funding to invest significantly in their multifamily programs. To address that reality we have focused this toolkit on providing cost-effective methods for waste reduction and increased recycling recovery.

Multifamily recycling's success depends in great part on the legal structure that governs its functions. Your program is designed in accordance with (and could be limited by)

the legal structure in your community. Legal structure may include state, county, or city mandates, ordinances, franchises, or contracts. In your community you may be faced with faulty or insufficient legal structure, which can make it difficult for you to run your program as efficiently and successfully as possible. For example, you may have vague or difficult-to-enforce ordinances, or you may have an “open hauling” system. What is really needed in many of these cases is a profound change in the legal structure of recycling. However, many communities lack the political support to address such change. This toolkit cannot help you overcome the inherent problems in the legal structure in your community, but it does provide you some tools to change parts of the legal structure and to help you work more effectively within the existing structure. We recognize that most people responsible for recycling in their communities are already aware of mechanisms such as contracts, ordinances, and license requirements that can be the true foundation of a successful recycling program. It is our hope that some of the tools in this toolkit can overcome the obstacles and can be used successfully in these instances to substantially increase material recovery and reuse.

It is important to recognize that recycling coordinators are just part of the picture of improving multifamily recycling. Finding measurable success is going to take effort on multiple fronts. The challenge for recycling coordinators is to demonstrate positive outcomes that are a result of the successful application of their limited resources. This success—or challenges to this success—needs to be conveyed to those who can give the support and leverage needed to continue improving the recycling program. The framework in this toolkit can help to guide decision makers, such as city council members or county commissioners. The ambition of the toolkit is to provide a map that can point elected officials, recycling coordinators, haulers, landlords, and recycling advocates in the direction where their efforts will have the greatest impact.

Eureka Recycling, the nonprofit that operates Saint Paul’s recycling program, started one of the first multifamily programs in the nation. Drawing on the history of our award-winning program and other respected programs throughout North America, we collected and analyzed information and strategies to develop a more complete picture of multifamily programs. Then, with our partners in the City of Fridley, a suburb of the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and Washington County, a less populated area northeast of Saint Paul, we applied and tested the best ideas and strategies. The results are here in this toolkit.

The research behind this toolkit includes a compilation and analysis of the best practices that Eureka Recycling has developed in the course of eighteen years of operating the city of Saint Paul’s multifamily recycling program. It includes all recent studies of multifamily recycling. It also includes surveys of and communications with the coordinators of multifamily recycling programs in cities across North America including Boston, San Mateo, New York City, Toronto, and many others. Using that research we identified common barriers, successful tools, and other current tools. Select focus groups

and individuals gave their feedback on current outreach tools and methods before they were “street tested” in multifamily complexes over several months. (See toolkit CD for the report on all this work.) Final modifications were then made to the tools you find here. We will continue to modify and improve this toolkit. This toolkit, and any future versions, will be made available on our website at www.eurekarecycling.org.

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a large, jagged iceberg floating in a calm, blue ocean. The iceberg is white with some blue shadows, and its surface is uneven with many cracks and peaks. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue, suggesting a clear day.

THE SEA:

Multifamily Recycling Programs



For many multifamily recycling program coordinators, running their program can seem like navigating a ship through a sea filled with icebergs. Each iceberg is one building in the program, and each has its own recycling problems. Many icebergs are easy to sail around, but others are jagged and dangerous. Their problems may be so profound that you find yourself constantly pulled toward them by a tide of need. As criticisms and comparisons with curbside programs batter the ship, the pressure increases to grow and improve your multifamily programs. Many people have tried to identify what makes multifamily programs less successful than our curbside programs, and many people have worked hard to make improvements. But often it feels like the ship is filling with water. This toolkit will show you that, while the dangers of the sea are real, it is also a sea of possibility.



Characteristics are inherent to multifamily programs and are traits we likely cannot change.

Challenges are those barriers, issues, and problems that we can address with proper tools.

This toolkit will introduce you to new **tools** and reintroduce familiar **tools** that can help you understand the characteristics of multifamily recycling and address the challenges.

To see the possibilities, we have to change the way multifamily recycling is viewed. The first step is to stop using the same standards of success that are used for curbside programs. Curbside programs and multifamily programs, though they both serve residential recyclers, are very different from each other. It is highly unlikely that any given multifamily recycling program will average as many pounds per unit per year as an average single-family household. Multifamily programs should be measured in relation to other multifamily programs. This toolkit provides some information about goals for multifamily recycling tonnage that are not based on curbside programs but on the proven potential of other multifamily programs across the country. And it provides a way of looking at multifamily recycling that will enable you to assess the potential and limitations of your program.

CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES

Besides being different from curbside programs, multifamily recycling programs are also different from each other. Furthermore, each building within each program is different from the other buildings in the program. Still, most programs share certain universal **characteristics** and **challenges**. Characteristics are defined as the things that we likely cannot change, such as high resident turnover and building size. Challenges are defined as the things that we can change and must address in order for our programs to operate and be more successful. It can be easy to misdirect our resources by focusing on what cannot be changed. With an understanding of the differences we can overcome challenges.

JUDGING SUCCESS

By now it should be clear that comparing multifamily recycling success to curbside success is unfair and unhelpful. But what standards should be used? In 2001, the Environmental Protection Agency released “Multifamily Recycling: A National Study,” (EPA5430-R-01-018, November 2001), which attempted to provide benchmarks for multifamily recycling success. Based on a survey of forty selected communities, including Saint Paul and Maple Grove, Minnesota, the EPA compiled the following statistics that show the current averages in per-household and per-unit tonnage for both the curbside and multifamily programs in these communities.

Type of Program	Multifamily Average lbs/unit/yr	Curbside Average lbs/hh/yr
High Diversion Programs	422 lbs/unit/yr	594 lbs/hh/yr
Medium Diversion Programs	290 lbs/unit/yr	520 lbs/hh/yr
Low Diversion Programs	122 lbs/unit/yr	278 lbs/hh/yr

Note: The EPA divided the forty communities into three categories based on their multifamily diversion rates, and added curbside rates for comparison.

These numbers clearly demonstrate how different the per-ton measures of success are for curbside and multifamily programs, even within the same community. Again, the success of your multifamily recycling program should be measured in relation to other multifamily programs, not in relation to curbside programs.

It is important to note that these statistics reflect the average tonnage these programs were producing at the time of the EPA report, nothing more. Similarly, the per-unit tonnage of your program, if you can get those statistics, will tell you only how many tons your program is currently generating. That one figure does not tell you anything about how your program may have improved or declined compared to past performance, and it does not tell you much about the potential of your program.

That is where this toolkit comes in. As you voyage through the icy waters of multifamily recycling, this toolkit can help you see the potential of your program. It will also help you diagnose the problems that you face in order to help you reach that potential. In the following pages you will learn that the key to smooth sailing lies in understanding the entire problem not just the tip of the iceberg.

Summary of “The Sea: Multifamily Recycling Programs”

1. Running a multifamily recycling program can feel like navigating a ship through a sea filled with icebergs. But this sea is also full of possibilities.
2. Characteristics: Multifamily programs are defined by a different set of characteristics from curbside programs even though they are both residential programs. Characteristics generally cannot be changed.
3. Challenges: Although all types of recycling programs share some of the same traits, multifamily recycling has its own unique challenges. This tested toolkit includes methods and devices that can help overcome some of the challenges in multifamily recycling.
4. Success: The success of your multifamily recycling should be measured in relation to other multifamily programs.

NOTES:

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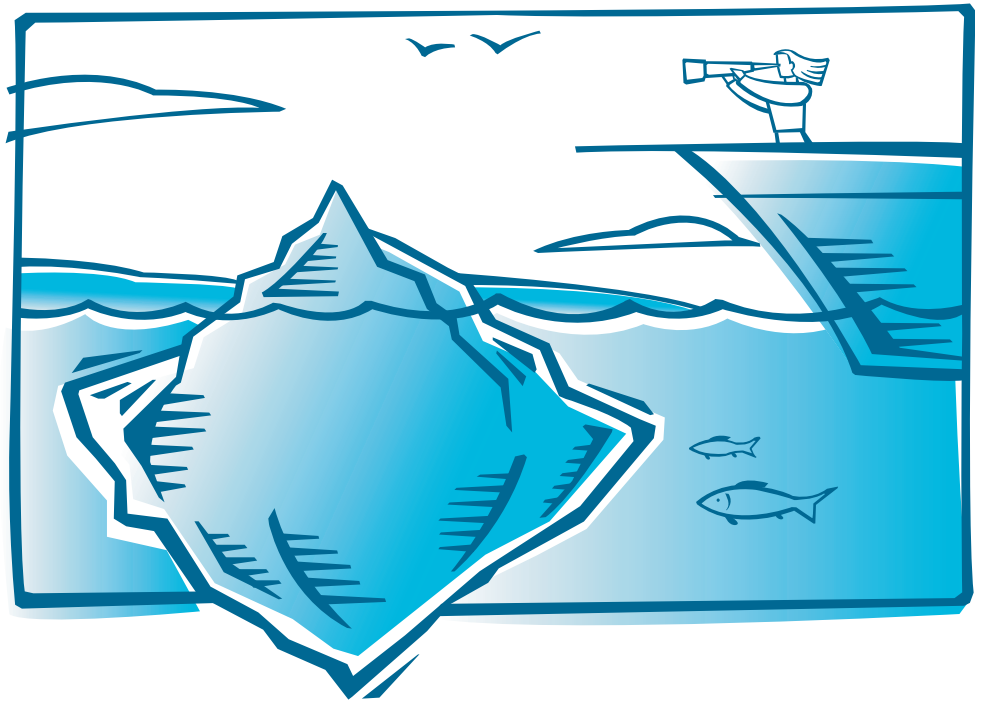
A large, jagged iceberg floats in the ocean, its surface covered in cracks and ridges. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue. In the distance, a small boat is visible on the horizon.

THE ICEBERGS:

Looking at the Program as a Whole



If each building in your multifamily program is like an iceberg, then the most noticeable elements of those icebergs are the tips—the specific and unique problems of each building that demand our attention. These problems are poking out of the water, making themselves noticeable, because they are urgent, nagging, and often overwhelming. Examples are trash chutes that make garbage disposal much easier than recycling, a building demographic that speaks different languages or that is primarily elderly, management that will not cooperate, and so on. Most program coordinators can spend the majority of their time and resources addressing the problems at the tip. Just below the surface, however, is the biggest part of the iceberg. There is more to the challenge than what you can see if you focus on the tip.



Multifamily coordinators are usually the coordinators of all recycling programs—and sometimes other environmental programs—in their municipality. As such, they are faced with many immediate problems. When your most troubled multifamily building gets all your attention and resources, you lose the opportunity to address the bigger picture of your program. But when you fully commit yourself to understanding the entire challenge you will see that every iceberg shares the same foundation. By approaching your multifamily program as a whole, you will be able to skillfully navigate the sea.

TOOLS FOR NAVIGATING

When faced with many problems in your multifamily program, it is easy to get confused because you are so close to the problem. Your boat is filling with water faster than you can bail it out. Our advice is to stop the boat. Do not go full-steam ahead into the next iceberg. You need to pull back and look at the program as a whole, starting with the foundation. To become a good explorer you need a plan.

We call this report a toolkit because it provides examples, models, samples, and other tools that you can use to prioritize your work and improve the success of your multifamily programs. When one of these icons appears in the margin, it signifies a correlating tool:



Each icon represents a tool that can help you with a different part of your program.



The anchor identifies a tool for your program's design.



The compass is a tool for information systems.



The wheel is a tool for the basic recycling structure at each building.



The message in a bottle is a tool for outreach.



The telescope is a tool for the individual, unique problems at buildings.

Some of these tools are recommendations we make based on our experience and our research in creating this toolkit. These recommendations are included right in the text next to the icon. Most of the tools are not in the text; they are electronic files of samples and templates that you can adapt to your own program. These tools are located on the accompanying CD. All the tools in the toolkit are listed in the last chapter.

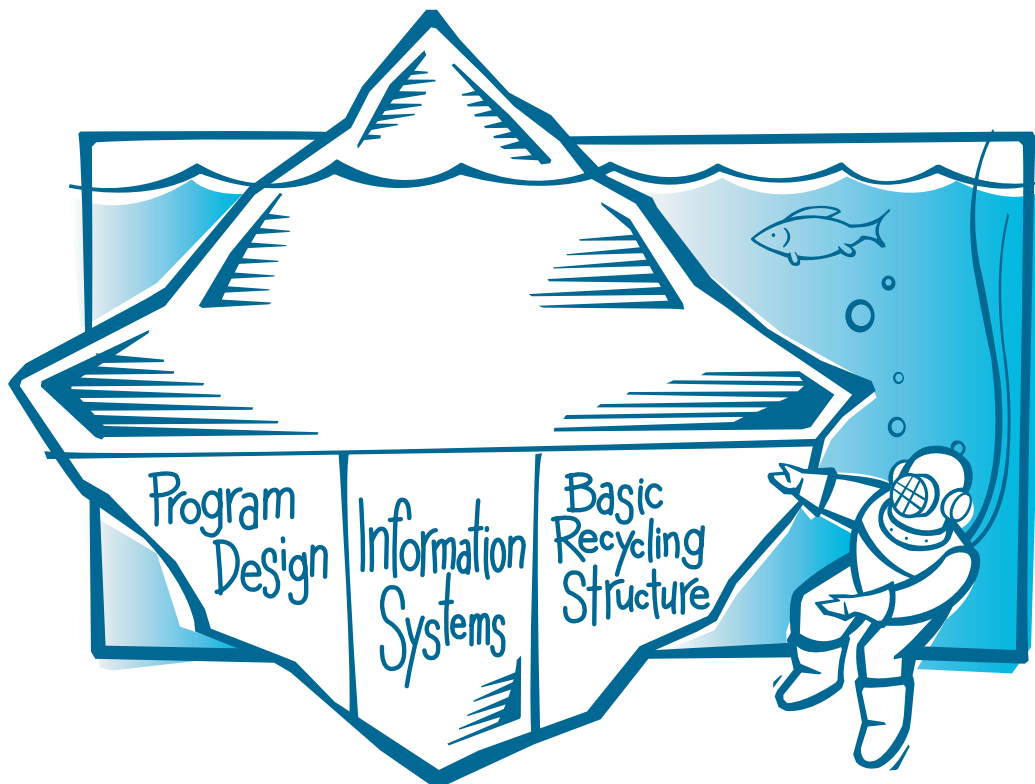


DIVING DEEP:

Understanding the Foundation of the Program



The most important part of your program is its foundation. The foundation is made up of three important elements: Program Design, Information Systems, and Basic Recycling Structure. Any work done on these elements at the foundation of the program will help build a structure that can sustain the overall program. Without proper attention to these elements, your time and resources may be drawn to areas of the program that will not provide sustainable improvements.



DROPPING ANCHOR: ADDRESSING PROGRAM DESIGN

One **characteristic** of multifamily recycling programs is that every program operates within a legal framework that determines its design. Some programs are under one or more contracts, a franchise system, or are operated by their municipality. Most multifamily programs in Minnesota have open hauling, where individual building managers are responsible for contracting with a hauler that provides service in their area. In these programs, there can be great differences in almost every aspect of the service, including container type, signs, education, and outreach provided. These differences can occur from one building to the next.

The **challenge** is to understand how the legal structure helps or hinders the success of your program, and then to make improvements. This is the hardest work a recycling coordinator has to do, but it's worth it. Anything you can do to strengthen your current design will improve recycling at every building in your program. Therefore it is critical to know exactly how your program is designed, including how state, county, and city laws support it. Learn all that you can about the ordinances, contracts, or franchises that apply to your program. This is public information and should be easy to access in the governmental or municipal code or by asking the jurisdiction's attorney.

To help you understand the legal structure and design of your program, we are providing a description of the different program designs commonly used for trash and/or recyclables collection services in Minnesota. These systems are not mutually exclusive. In other words, there can be combinations of two or more categories by service type (e.g.,

recyclables collection may be under a single contract where trash collection is open hauling). Your program is currently operating under one of these designs:

A. “Organized Collection”

1. Municipal (city, township, county) hauler

Government entity’s employees provide the service with city-owned trucks. The government entity may finance the municipal collection service using a variety of funding mechanisms, including: (1) General real estate taxes which may or may not identify the services being paid for; (2) Specific taxes or service fees (e.g., municipal utility bills) where the customer is billed for that specific service; and/or (3) Grants from higher levels of government (e.g., county and state SCORE grants).

2. Private hauler(s) under a “Contract” or “Franchise”

A city, township, or county arranges for collection services on behalf of residential, commercial, and/or multifamily housing waste/recyclables generators.

A. Contract — The municipality contracts with hauler(s) for zones or the entire jurisdiction, and for one or several services (e.g., recyclables collection, yard waste collection, and/or trash collection). As a general rule, “contracts” can be defined to mean the municipality makes a payment to the hauler using a variety of optional municipal financing mechanisms.

B. Franchise — Through an ordinance, the municipality grants an exclusive right to one or more hauler(s) to provide selected collections services in certain zones or an entire jurisdiction. The customer is billed directly by the hauler.

B. “Open” or “Subscription” hauling

The customer (building manager or resident) contracts individually with a hauler that is licensed to operate in that area. The government issues licenses to haulers and can dictate the number of licenses issued, the requirements for obtaining a license, and other parameters of collection service. Haulers set rates for services and bill the customer directly.

ASSESSING YOUR PROGRAM DESIGN

The City of Hawthorne, California, hired the consulting firm Gary Liss & Associates to assess which program design would best suit its needs. Their report is included in this toolkit and provides a good overview of the pros and cons of open hauling versus franchises or contracts. The program design features are relevant to almost any multifamily recycling program, but the laws cited in the document are specific to California. There are laws in Minnesota and other states that allow you to create a recycling program in any of these legal structures. Consult an attorney for specific advice.



LEGAL TOOLS: CONTRACTS, FRANCHISES, AND ORDINANCES

Following are brief descriptions of three basic legal tools used to manage multifamily recycling programs. The CD contains samples of these tools. PLEASE NOTE: None of this information has been reviewed by an attorney. Please seek legal advice on your program design.

Single Hauler Contract Template



Contracts: The basic process for a contract involves a municipality issuing a request for proposals (RFP) for collection services. This toolkit includes a single hauler contract template, not RFP documents. RFPs are public information and are widely available from municipalities. The criteria for selection of the “hauler” can be established in the RFP documents and that document usually serves as the basis of the service and contract itself.

It is important that the contract makes as clear as possible the reporting that you want from the hauler. Be specific about requiring data on the amount of recyclables collected, route information (what buildings are served on what days), and information about contamination problems at buildings. Require a procedure for servicing contaminated carts and one for setting up a new account. Also be sure to include language that requires cart placement that is convenient for residents, requires the distribution of approved or provided labeling systems and educational material, and establishes clear levels of expected customer service. Include language that gives you authority to charge damages for poor service (called liquidated damages).

Franchise Ordinances



Franchises: The process or authority for a franchise agreement is set up through an ordinance but accomplished through a franchise agreement. More than one hauler can be awarded a franchise through this process. If only one is awarded it is called an “exclusive franchise.” Franchises set geographical boundaries, set rates that haulers can charge customers, provide required levels of service, and generate a franchise fee for the local jurisdiction. Once again, clear requirements can be set in the ordinance and through the franchise agreement, like the examples in this toolkit, that can ensure successful multifamily recycling.

Franchise Agreement



Ordinances: An ordinance is a law that is established by the municipality and passed by your city council. It makes the local government the enforcer of the law. While often not as clear cut as a contract and generally not as easy to enforce, ordinances can provide important structure. Open hauling is a common design established through an ordinance. You can submit a proposed ordinance for discussion and approval by your council that would improve open hauling situations where the agreement for service is between the hauler and the individual resident or building. Ordinances can require building owners to acquire certain recycling services or forfeit other permits and licenses that allow them to operate buildings. Ordinances can require property owners to provide adequate space for recycling carts and inform their residents of the service. Ordinances can also require haulers to provide levels of service and report certain information. These service requirements can be reinforced by making them a stipulation of the issuance of a

hauler's license to operate within a jurisdiction. Make sure that the ordinance addresses health, safety, quality of service, and accounting and reporting requirements. Also make sure that it mandates what materials must be recycled and that it is enforceable. Remember, it is very likely that there is already an ordinance in your city code that addresses multifamily recycling because it is required by Minnesota state law. The ordinance template included with the tools may help you improve an existing ordinance.



ENFORCEMENT

Even if you have the best ordinances and contracts in the world, you need good management and enforcement to make them effective. As recycling coordinator, you may not have the authority to enforce codes and contracts. Someone must be the enforcer, and the enforcement mechanism needs to be established in the contract or ordinance to provide an incentive or disincentive based on performance.

Do not be afraid to ask for special requirements in your ordinance. You will need to consider the cost and efficiency of the requirements, but there are many reasonable requirements. For example, you can require all haulers to use your labels and educational materials. Or require that they create materials to your specifications and distribute them as part of the service they provide. Then, give the haulers some real incentive to cooperate. In an ordinance, make compliance contingent on the license to haul. In a contract, the threat of liquidated damages is powerful incentive. Liquidated damages are not penalties or fines, but they are a repayment of financial damages that a community suffers when a contractor does not adhere to the contract agreement. For example, if a hauler fails to provide labels for carts, participation in recycling declines and the community loses. Liquidated damages repay that loss. The contract template includes specific language for liquidated damages.

You can provide building owners and managers a service by reviewing their specific contract language and making recommendations regarding elements they may want to include in their next hauling contract. Waste Wise is a nonprofit in Minnesota that may be able to assist with this language. We do not include an example because all contracts are private agreements. Again, watch out for legal issues. Do not write contract language without legal advice and always recommend that the building owner or manager get legal advice about recycling contracts.



Before you change anything, learn about the program by riding with drivers who do multifamily collection. Most haulers will allow government staff to ride along and observe the program firsthand. This can help develop a relationship with the hauler and create a better understanding of the challenges the hauler faces. This can also give you the confidence and information you need to address operational issues directly.



Summary of “Dropping Anchor: Addressing Program Design”

1. Assess the legal structure of your program.
2. Make service requirements clear in contracts and/or ordinances. Be sure to get legal advice!
3. Create enforcement mechanisms. Recycling coordinators need this support to provide and improve multifamily recycling.

NOTES:



CHARTING THE WATERS: INFORMATION SYSTEMS



Every multifamily recycling program has the **characteristic** of including a wide array of building sizes and types—a lot of different icebergs. Chances are many buildings within your multifamily program have consistently high resident turnover, which changes the personality, demographic, and management of each building. The **challenge** is to determine which buildings will benefit most from your attention and to target your efforts at each building. You cannot make those decisions until you gather some information about your buildings.

Most recycling coordinators know that tracking the amount of material that a building sets out for recycling is key to understanding that building. You may become frustrated if you cannot get access to numbers that show how much material is getting set out. After all, these numbers are the easiest way to identify a measure of success. But if you want to see a sustained increase in recycling, tracking the way a building behaves is just as important as tracking the amount that gets recycled.

If collection data cannot be gathered at a particular building—and the program design cannot be changed to allow for the collection of such data—look for other information about that building and its recycling history. Information such as building size, building contact, any demographic information, and a record of outreach or problems can be easy to find and can help you assess where you need to focus your efforts.



Tracking
Worksheet



Access
Database

TRACKING SYSTEMS

If your program is designed so that it allows you to collect some data, then start now! A tracking system is one of the most valuable tools in multifamily recycling and is an important service that recycling coordinators can provide. The system can be as simple as a piece of paper or as technical as a database (both are included with the tools). No matter what form it is in, having an accurate history of materials collected, problems, contacts, and outreach applied is invaluable as you move forward. The more history and detail collected over time, the clearer the challenges that need to be addressed. Do not worry about building a perfect database. This is just like explorers who create maps—the maps get more and more detailed over time.

Information to Track

The following list represents a set of basic facts about any building that can be tracked. This is a good place to start mapping your territory.

- Building name and address
- Number of units and buildings on site
- Sorting system and hauler
- Any demographic information
- Contact information and history with people at the building. This includes the number of attempts made to work with a manager.
- Outreach history at the building, including the information they have received about recycling

The next list represents more specific and much more helpful information that you should track if your program design allows. The best way to track this information is to make it required through a contract. Otherwise it may be difficult to get:

- Quantity and/or quality of materials recycled
- Improvements in the quantity and quality of materials based on outreach efforts
- Other information about the building, such as the length of time a building has sustained a clear and convenient recycling setup
- History of problems including building issues such as contamination or carts blocked by snow or a vehicle, and hauler issues such as a building that was not serviced when scheduled

Once you have the basics, try to get even more details. The following list represents information that you can get by simply going to a building site or working with a person at the building.

- Details about the building layout and trash system (e.g. chutes, dumpsters)
- Number and location of cart sites
- Unit numbering for mailings

You can rely on local sources for more complete information. The local Fire Prevention Department, which maintains contacts for buildings in its area, and public housing organizations are good places to get more information about the buildings in the recycling program. You may have access to public records through other departments in your municipality.



REPORTING AND BUILDING CONTACTS

Another **characteristic** of multifamily recycling programs is that the people at buildings will change, and change often, and management can turn over almost as often as the residents. The **challenge** that follows is the need to continually re-establish contacts and relationships, which is time consuming.

However, if you have a contact history with a building it is easier to establish a new relationship with a new person. By explaining the history of the program at that building to a new manager, caretaker, or resident, you establish some authority and credibility with the new contact. Also, never underestimate a resident who has an interest in recycling. This type of contact can be a more effective tool than building management.

The fact is, you may not be able to maintain a contact at a given building. In that case, you need a system to track information about the building to maintain a relationship with the building even if you lose contact with an individual. Other information about the program—such as hauling service and successful cart location—also reduces your dependence on the internal contact at the building. Remember that those who manage the program after you will need your knowledge and history or they will have to start from scratch. Significant improvement of recycling at a building without a high level of management involvement is possible if you have information about the building to target your outreach.

INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING

Tracking data is a good way to make sure your resources are used wisely. The first thing to do is assess the data available to you. If the program design includes a contract or ordinance that requires reporting you have a clear advantage. The information you gather will show the root problems at specific buildings and in your program as a whole. If the program design does not allow for the reliable collection of data, then you have no realistic way to gauge the success of your program or know what kind of attention your buildings need. Your program design needs to be changed or you will just continue to guess.

Determine how much information you have. The more information you have, the more accurately you will be able to assess the actual needs of each building. Information can give you the level of confidence you need to address any issue at any building. Without it, you are making assumptions about what a building needs for improvement. Our advice is to address challenges at the buildings where information is available first. Then move on to harder targets.

Difficulty gathering data may remove many buildings from the list of those that can be assessed. This may mean some needy buildings are neglected. However, it will ensure that your time and resources are spent on buildings that have an actual need that you have identified. If you cannot verify problems through some source of data collection, you may be wasting your time and resources attempting to address problems with the wrong information.

Assess the buildings for which you have information. Although the variables seem endless, critically analyze the information you have to determine if there are any similar issues among buildings. Reoccurring issues are a good place to start because your efforts will benefit your whole program. Start with the basics at each building. If you have tried without success to make improvements, then move on. For example, if continued efforts have been made to get a functional cart system set up at a building, but uncooperative management has stymied these attempts time and time again, then let it go for now.

Summary of “Charting the Waters: Information Systems”

- **You need a map!** Tracking information about the amount of recyclables collected is a reliable and easy way to make decisions, but is not always possible. Other system information can be important and helpful.
- **Creating a system:** Tracking information about a building will help overcome contact turnover and reduce your dependence on management.
- **Decision making:** Track as much data as you can about your program and use it to make decisions about where and how to spend your time and resources (and what to avoid!). Decisions made on assumptions alone can be costly and ineffective.

NOTES:



STEERING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION: BASIC RECYCLING STRUCTURE

Basic recycling structure refers to the location, condition, and labeling of recycling carts at each building. This is a crucial component of a successful multifamily recycling program. No matter how thorough, consistent, and ingenious the outreach you conduct at a building, if the carts are not consistently available, convenient, and clearly labeled, all your efforts will be in vain.

CONSIDERING CONVENIENCE

A **characteristic** of multifamily programs is that every building needs a different setup. Recycling coordinators do not always have influence over how recycling is set up in buildings. Setup is often done by the hauler who is providing the service. The **challenge** arises when containers are placed without thought to the convenience of the residents who are using the service. Examples are recycling carts that are moved without notice, that do not look any different from garbage containers, or that are poorly labeled, hidden, or blocked.

Setup Manuals



There are several things to consider when establishing a recycling setup, and many toolkits have already been created that help you and property owners do this well. We refer to two examples in this toolkit: one from the City of Saint Paul and one from the City of Austin, Texas, but there are many others out there. It is important to consider safety, fire codes, aesthetics, weather, and accessibility for the people using and servicing the containers. One recycling truth is that the recycling carts must be at least as convenient if not more convenient than the trash dumpster to attain a high level of participation and minimal contamination, so keep carts close to trash dumpsters. Carts need to be in a consistent, convenient place—do not keep moving the carts. If they must be moved, let residents know where they have been moved. Multiple collection sites for large complexes may be needed. If recycling carts are in a hard-to-locate area, signs providing directions may be required. You may also advocate to building management for a better location.

In an open hauling situation there are no requirements for service setup unless they are established through ordinance or licensing. Every building may have a different system. If that is the case, and there are no required service levels, it will be difficult to apply uniform outreach and education. If you are setting service levels in a contract or through an ordinance, you can easily address standards for good education and clarify the roles of landlords, haulers, and others in providing basic education and outreach.

ADDRESSING CONTAMINATION

Garbage is a real problem in multifamily recycling containers. A **characteristic** of multifamily programs is that most are unsupervised drop-off sites and, unlike the containers for curbside programs, multifamily containers look just like trash cans. It is

also often impossible to determine who has caused the contamination since usage is communal and anonymous. Some **challenges** are to clearly differentiate the recycling containers from trash container, keep the carts clear of contamination, and communicate clearly with everyone who may use the carts about contamination. Unlike curbside programs, where residents may receive educational notices from the drivers when they make a mistake, residents in multifamily programs may not know there is a problem because they do not receive these notices. As a result, they will not know how to improve their actions.

Contamination in multifamily programs is often large volumes of trash, not simply residents who make mistakes about what can be recycled, although that happens too. Without really good signage, your carts will continue to be mistaken for trash containers by residents and outsiders. Once a cart is contaminated, it encourages and accumulates more contamination, so it is very important to keep carts clear of unwanted material.

Good signs both on and around the carts are the only effective way to help people to understand their purpose. This includes labels for individual carts and signage for the general recycling area to distinguish it from the trash. Color-coding may help but color-coding carts is often not an option for recycling coordinators due to cost or the fact that cities do not own the carts. Good signs and good location of carts are your best tools to get residents to see them and to identify the carts as being different from the trash.

Single Stream and Contamination

Single stream collection, where cans, bottles, paper and cardboard are all collected in the same container, adds to the confusion about recycling versus trash. A whole cart of mixed recyclable materials looks much more like trash than separated items do, and several studies of curbside programs have shown increased contamination in such carts. Because multifamily programs use carts that look very similar to trash carts, it already takes extra work to distinguish them. Single stream is designed to streamline collection and can be perceived as simpler for residents, but residents may have a more difficult time distinguishing between the trash and single stream recyclables because of the mixed content of the carts. This can be especially true where information about the program is not clear, labels are not obvious, or information is not well designed. This toolkit is designed to increase participation and increase the amount collected, but only increase the recyclable material. Collecting more trash is not the goal.

When you are developing your multifamily contracts and ordinances, do what you can to require two stream or source separated collection where residents can clearly see that recycling is different from the garbage. If you do choose single stream, make sure your contract includes requirements for signs, labels, outreach, and education that is simple, clear, and ongoing to help residents discern between trash and recycling.

Labels

Create and mandate consistent labeling and signage for your program through your contract, ordinance, or licensing structures, or provide them yourself. A variety of label templates are included with the tools. Labels help to visually distinguish the recycling

Reminder:

By revisiting, strengthening, and updating your ordinances, you can make requirements for setups and labels stronger.



**Sorting
Requirements**



Label Templates

Photographs



containers from trash containers, which are typically unmarked. Use photographs or illustrations. Photographs of common recyclables are included with the tools. Pictures assist those who do not read (children) and those who do not read English. Labels should be clear and simple with minimal words to provide residents with a quick reference to what belongs in the carts. People will not learn detailed information about what is recyclable and what is not from a label. Remember this is about keeping large amounts of trash out of the recycling carts. This is not about the level of education we are used to delivering to residents with curbside recycling services. Do not focus on the yes and no list.

Recycling Setup Signage Templates



Signage

Signs are an effective tool for identifying recycling areas and distinguishing between garbage and recycling containers. It is well worth the investment to make your signs permanent and high quality, such as an aluminum sign or a weather-proof banner. Templates of signage—for both outside and inside buildings—are included with the tools. You can use these signs to demonstrate ownership to people outside a building and reinforce the residents' sense of community involvement in recycling. Consider messages such as "Our Building Recycles Here" and "Do Not Put Trash in Our Recycling Carts." Signs should be simple, with few words, clear messages, and widely recognized symbols such as the recycling icon of the chasing arrows (included with the tools). You can add a bit more detail by showing a picture of a specific recyclable item. For example, put a picture of a steel or aluminum can with the word RECYCLING. Put a picture of a full trash bag with the word TRASH.

Signage inside the building can direct residents to the recycling carts. This simple gesture can create good awareness about recycling at a building and can create an increase in participation. For larger buildings, it is good to invest in permanent directional signage with arrows pointing the way to the recycling carts.

Recycling Monitor



Monitor

If you have the good fortune to have a contact at a building, use it! Ask the contact to recruit a volunteer to monitor the recycling carts. This monitor can act as your eyes and ears and can report important information such as broken carts, carts without labels, or contamination. They can also get the word out that recycling exists at the building. Some monitors will take on the added responsibility of cleaning out containers before a little contamination spirals into something worse. As a gesture of appreciation, you can buy your monitors equipment, such as a long trash-picker, to make it easier for them to keep the carts contamination free.

Equipment for Volunteers



Summary of “Steering in the Right Direction: Basic Recycling Structure”

1. Carts need to be in a consistent, convenient place for residents. Communicate with residents about where the carts are located. They need to know a recycling system exists in their building.
2. Carts must be at least as convenient to residents as the trash containers.
3. Recycling carts must be easily distinguished from trash containers.
4. The first line of defense against contamination is in the setup. Trash begets trash. Carts need to be regularly serviced to keep them clear of unwanted material by haulers and cart monitors.
5. Carts must have easy-to-understand labels and signage. This sets the stage for effective basic education and more complex outreach messages.

NOTES:

A blue-tinted photograph of a person climbing a large, jagged rock formation. The person is positioned in the upper left, reaching up towards a peak. The rock face is textured and craggy, with various ledges and overhangs. The overall scene conveys a sense of challenge and upward movement.

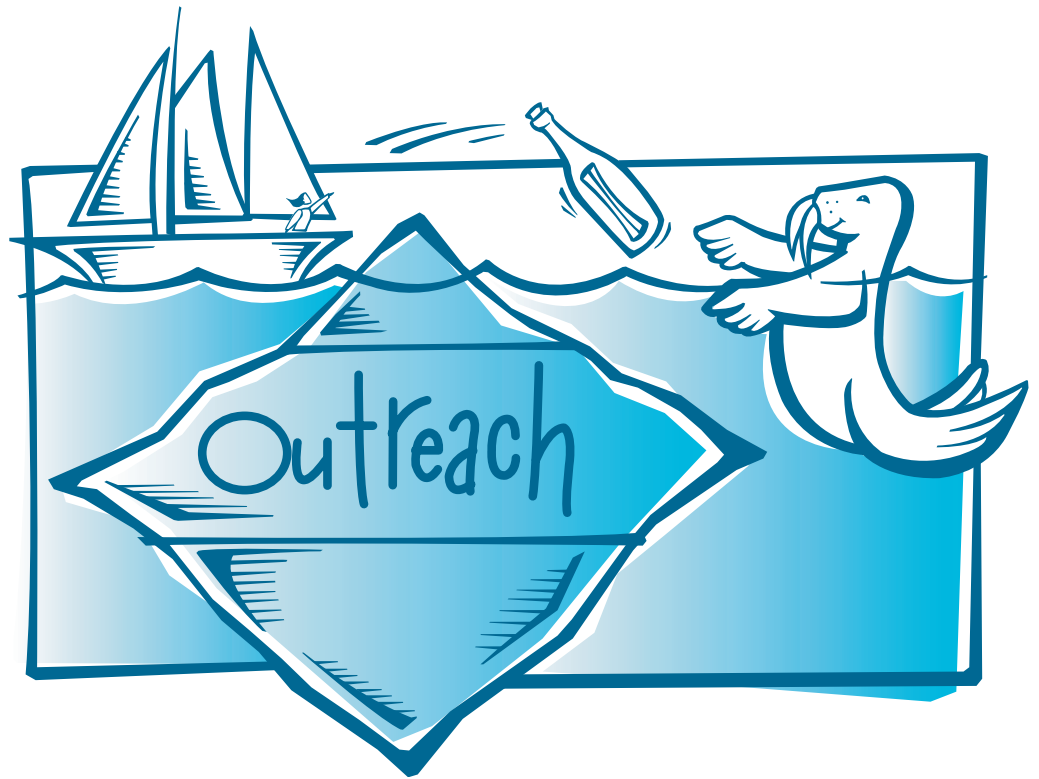
ONWARD AND UPWARD:

Utilizing Strategic Outreach and Management



Studies show that almost all outreach to the residents who use your recycling program results in a “bump”—an increase in participation occurs regardless of where your program foundation is currently. The trick is to turn the bumps into sustained increases. There are real long-term problems to be addressed and counting on bumps is an expensive, unsustainable way to “improve” the program. Once you have established a solid foundation, then it is time to reach out to your residents.

Starting outreach without assessing the foundation of your program can be done—it is done all the time. But do not bank on long-term results from outreach alone. Results may or may not last, and the success or failure of the effort may or may not lead to wasted resources. If you regularly apply outreach to a building that already has good hauling, a good recycling setup, and adequate information recorded, you can expect relatively large and sustainable increases in participation and quality. But if the building has few or none of these basic elements, you will likely see a very small and very short-term increase, if any at all. When this happens it is easy to blame your outreach effort, or worse, the residents, for the failure. It is more likely, though, that your outreach was fine and your residents do care about recycling. The failure probably occurred because the building had a poor foundation.



MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

When it comes to multifamily outreach it often feels like we are sending out a message in a bottle on the wide open sea. We are not sure if the right message is getting to the right person or if the bottle will land on shore at all. There are many messages, methods, and audiences to consider, and the key is to direct your messages to the places that will be most effective.

The only way to effectively determine where and how to apply outreach that will make real change is by assessing the information you have collected about each building. If there is a group of properties that have a good hauling system in place and clearly labeled and consistently located recycling carts, they would be good candidates for outreach. Start by applying your time and resources there. An even better bet is if you have those components and a building contact to work with. Through this person you can get access to the building to distribute or install materials as well as the apartment numbering system for mailings.

Just as outreach without a strong basic recycling foundation is unlikely to get you increased participation, the opposite is also true. If your recycling basics are stable, it is unlikely that any increase in participation will happen without some outreach, and very little will last for long without some consistent effort. Remember, results from a single outreach effort will not last forever. Only on-going, consistent outreach in a program or building with a good foundation leads to sustainable results.

SAY IT OFTEN ENOUGH

A **characteristic** of multifamily programs is the regular turnover of the resident population and the change in management. The **challenge** is keeping residents and management engaged and informed. That means making wise decisions about the frequency and timing of your outreach.

Frequency

Consistent and basic outreach is much more effective than complex, one-time outreach efforts. Do not blow your budget and energy on a huge event or a one-time brochure with complex details. Many of the residents who receive that outreach may be gone six months later. A percentage of the direct mail material will also be returned due to vacancies in the buildings—expect this. The limited amount of time, money, and tenacity—and the need to spread it a long way—requires critical judgments be made about the potential for long term success. What is most important is not the choice of one outreach strategy over another, but the devotion of time and resources to a few consistent outreach messages. Programs that take the time to implement a balanced and consistent set of outreach messages and continually re-apply them report more success. Outreach is needed at a building every four to six months to sustain participation.



Frequency

Timing

Another consideration for outreach application is timeliness. An opportune time to be “talking” to residents is when there is something new to say or announce. Are there new labels or locations? Is there a new hauler or new carts? How about a new ordinance or recycling requirements? Capitalize on the novelty of these changes and let people know about them!



Timing

There may appear to be nothing new to a recycling coordinator who has been doing this for a while, but there is probably some old news that would be new to a resident. For example, you can remind them that they can recycle items that are not from the kitchen, such as junk mail, magazines, and shampoo bottles. These are typically under-recycled and can always be “introduced” or promoted as if they were new.

GENERIC MESSAGING

A **characteristic** of programs with open hauling is that the program can vary from building to building in terms of what is collected, who is collecting it, and how it needs to be sorted. The **challenge** is to produce materials that have content relevant to many buildings. This means you need to find the similarities of what to recycle and use general messages about recycling.

The language on any materials you create can be used to create community. Outreach language, particularly about multifamily recycling, should be inclusive. Deliver messages such as “Our Building Recycles” and “Do Not Put Trash in Our Carts.” This will help to build a culture about recycling. These general messages also get the word out about recycling and can be used generically to cross program specifics. It helps people who are learning the rules of a particular building, such as new immigrants and



Inclusive
Language

other new tenants, and can include basic information such as the location of carts and who to contact with questions. All of the templates and examples in this toolkit use this language.

When there is important information to get across, it is important to keep in mind that any message is competing with an enormous amount of advertisement and other forms of marketing. Because of this competition, your messages need to be clear, to the point, and engaging. Avoid including more than one message in one mailing, sign, or other outreach tool—this gets too diluted and overwhelming, and the result may be that no message is received at all. If you have a strong foundation in place yet your messages repeatedly fail to get results, you may need to take a closer look at your messages. Make sure they are clear, direct, and simple.

SUPPORT THE BASICS

Do not underestimate the significance of outreach that supports the basics of the recycling structure at a building. In other words, once you have put the time and resources into creating a solid recycling structure, let the residents know about it. These are the people who will use it!

Basic Brochure Template



Always do the foundational pieces first: labels and signage for the recycling carts, directional signage in buildings, and posters and signage letting residents know that recycling is available. Reinforce these with a good, basic brochure or flyer (often via mail or management). Remember, this should not include an exhaustive yes and no list. Distribute this basic information in a poster that can be put up in shared spaces like laundry rooms or entryways. Templates of a how-to brochure and poster are included with the tools. When you focus on broad categories instead of the details, it is possible to create materials that can be used in different programs with slight variations. This is important if you are generating the education in an open hauling system. If your haulers are providing information, be sure to use your program design tools to ensure that information follows these important, effective outreach principals.

Basic Poster Template



No Garbage Outreach Templates



Since the focus of your basic recycling structure is to differentiate the recycling area from trash, you can reinforce this with outreach materials that have the “Do Not Put Trash in Our Recycling Carts” message. This message defines recycling for audiences who are not familiar with recycling as a habit or understand the concept in general. Templates of door hangers and postcards with this message are included with the tools.

Recycling Kit Templates



The message “Here’s how to recycle and it’s easy” focuses on the convenience of recycling. This message can come in the form of “kits” for residents’ apartments. The kits can provide them with containers to keep in their apartments to sort into and then transport materials out to the carts. Our experience shows that permanent containers such as buckets or canvas bags and temporary containers such as paper bags are both effective. For ideas, view the pictures of different kits that are with the tools. The containers should be coupled with a message about the specifics of the recycling program to give residents a complete orientation to recycling. A template of a letter

introducing the kits to residents is included with the tools, too. This orientation message helps people understand the logistics of what to recycle and where to take it. The purpose of this outreach message is to train the action and habit of recycling.

BEYOND THE BASICS

So far we have described the outreach tools that will provide the most results over the long haul: labels, signage, and introductory kits. Beyond that, there are many more options. The following paragraphs describe a few more tested, effective examples of generic messages that will help. Once residents have basic, clear information in place about recycling, these more complex campaigns can help sustain the program.

Commitment cards: “I agree to recycle!”

An interesting tool for addressing the anonymous nature of multifamily recycling is a “commitment card,” a community-based social marketing approach that has been getting attention in the recycling field throughout the nation. Residents feel a greater sense of ownership and obligation when they have officially signed a document saying that they will recycle. Even though there is no way to monitor when people are living up to their promise, the good—or perhaps the guilt—in people generally moves them to recycle. Recent social marketing research indicates that commitment cards tend to elevate people’s willingness to do an activity. As you might have guessed, it helps to provide an incentive that inspires people to sign the cards. For example, all the signed commitment cards can be entered into a drawing for gift certificates or a discount off one month’s rent for the winner.

To distribute these cards, going door to door is good for the face time with residents. The cards can also be postage-paid for mailing to save time. But beware: postage-paid mailings add up because you pay postage to send the card, you pay postage to have it mailed back, and you pay a fee for the service. Return rates on commitment cards that include an incentive are on average about 10 percent if mailed and about 25 percent if distributed door to door. Keep your budget in mind. Templates of commitment cards are included with the tools in door hanger and mailer formats.

Deeper message: “Recycling is good for the environment”

Although this is often where recycling program coordinators want to begin, the message that “recycling is good for the environment” is a distinctly deeper message. In other words, it is unlikely to change anyone’s behavior. If residents do not know there is recycling in their building or do not understand the concept of recycling, this message means nothing to them.

However, once the foundation for recycling is in place, the environmental message can be effective for people who are already committed to recycling. It may be useful in helping people continue to make the right choices at the right moment. This positive reinforcement tells people that the extra effort is worth it and recycling really does matter. Focus groups have shown that the more people recycle, the more they want to know about the environmental benefits of recycling. Recycling advocates want



Commitment Card Templates

Adjusting Expectations

Materials collected at multifamily buildings will rarely be as clean as curbside materials, not because the residents are worse recyclers, but because the multifamily recycling services are not catered to the individual. It can be futile and expensive to focus on the detailed messages of the program when you have bigger messages like “no garbage” which need to be constantly repeated. Focus on getting more recycling and less trash.



information to counter the persistent myths that the net environmental impact of recycling is not worth the effort.

If you have access to information about how much an individual building or all the buildings in your program recycle, hang a poster in the lobby and send an annual letter to each building with individualized statistics about how much that building or program is recycling. Templates for both are included with the tools.

There are some reliable “recycling calculators” available on the Internet that can be used to calculate environmental impacts such as trees and electricity saved. The National Recycling Coalition has an online Environmental Calculator. If you do not have the individualized information for a building, you can include facts and figures for citywide, countywide, or statewide recycling rates. The Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) has pre-made fact sheets available for the state of Minnesota and can create a specialized fact sheet for your community.

INVOLVING MANAGEMENT IN YOUR OUTREACH EFFORTS

Having someone at a building do outreach is the ultimate tool for effective outreach and time management. In a perfect world, there would be a manager at each building who is willing to put all the recycling basics in place and do added outreach, such as including recycling in lease language, giving new residents information about recycling and carts during their move-ins, and paying a “recycling coordinator” or “cart monitor” to perform these duties at the building.

Unfortunately, a **characteristic** of multifamily buildings is that recycling is usually a low priority for building owners and managers because it is added work (although there are cases where managers are advocates of recycling). This is exacerbated by the fact that there are often no real or perceived financial incentives to offer building owners and managers to provide recycling. The **challenge** is to maintain proactive communication with building owners and managers and not to just communicate with managers when there are problems at buildings. This takes extra time and commitment. Management is often not anxious to return calls when recycling coordinators are asking buildings to take on added responsibility (and sometimes financial cost) to add recycling to their building. Not all your buildings will have management involvement. Those that do will have it to varying degrees.

Survey

Many programs provide management with education resources upon request. Why wait for a request? You can get more involvement, and develop more relationships, by taking proactive steps to reach out! Send out a simple annual survey (included with the tools) to find out what outreach materials management needs. These surveys will also help you find out valuable information about additions or changes to building contacts. This will not solve all your problems, but it will identify the easy-to-reach contacts. Those that respond care enough to ask about recycling—build on this foundation.



Recycling Agreement

When talking to management, be clear from the beginning what you are offering and what you are expecting. Let them know that you are invested in ensuring a successful recycling program at their building and will help communicate with the tenants. Tell them they are responsible for keeping the carts free of trash, and/or for the cost of dumping their recycling in the trash when the carts are contaminated. Let them know there are tools to help. If you work directly with building managers to provide recycling, formalize this relationship with a contract like the one included with the tools.



Account Contract
Template

In general, the best tool is to offer management something of real value and to alleviate as much of the hassle as you can. Consult with them while you develop your plan, provide them with the materials you want them to distribute, and offer to install labels or signage for their cart area. The more you work with them while you develop the foundation, the more likely you will find a partner to help you do additional promotions of recycling.

Job Description for Paid Monitors

Suggest that management hire a recycling coordinator at their buildings to deal with the hassle of maintaining the program. If program managers are required by ordinance to offer recycling services—and they take this ordinance seriously—you would be surprised how many are willing to provide \$25 to \$100 a month in rent reduction to a person who can be the “official” recycling coordinator at a building. This person can serve as the cart monitor, the contact within the building for people with questions, and a contact with the hauler and you. A recycling monitor job description is included with the tools.



Job Description
Template

Free MarketSM

The key to recruiting involved management is to offer an incentive. For example, building managers deal with large amounts of furniture and other preventable waste on move-in and move-out days, which can cost a significant amount of money to have collected as trash. In the metro area, the City of Saint Paul along with Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington, Anoka, and Dakota counties and the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board have helped fund the Twin Cities Free Market, a tool you can use to help building managers deal with this problem. The Free Market is a website that promotes waste reduction by providing an online forum through which people can list and give away items they no longer need but that someone else could use. In 2003, 460 tons of material was exchanged and diverted from the trash through the Free Market. Contact your county to find out how they are promoting the program. You can also promote the program to building management. Let them know that move-in and move-out trash is something that can be proactively reduced when residents use the Free Market. This might act as incentive for them to do more to help with the building's recycling program. On Eureka Recycling's website you can download materials for two campaigns to help you promote the Free Market. One campaign is specifically aimed at apartment movers. Both include templates for door hangers, ads, posters, and rack cards that you can have printed and offer building managers.



Free Market
Materials

BUILDING SIZE IMPACTS OUTREACH

In Saint Paul, we have learned that building size has an impact on the results of outreach efforts. Through an exclusive contract with the City of Saint Paul, Eureka Recycling provides multifamily recycling services at all buildings with eleven units or more. (We service buildings with fewer than eleven units through our curbside blue-bin program.) We have tracked data on the buildings in the program for more than seventeen years, including contact and program histories, information on cancelled and re-established accounts, demographics, and tonnage collected. We provide consistent, basic recycling setups at each building, including on-location consultation for cart placement, easy-to-read labels with photographs, and basic how-to brochures. Given that most of our buildings benefit from this solid foundation, our applied outreach results in the following trends.

Large Buildings (32 units or more)

Signage and labels for recycling carts are critical to maintaining participation levels and keeping contamination levels low. The need for outreach that supports the basic recycling setup is constant.

To make recycling sustainable in buildings with more floors and more people, efforts are needed to extend the recycling setup beyond the carts. People need greater assistance finding the carts and getting their materials to the collection point. Efforts that pay off the most include providing collection containers for each unit, a more structured collection effort within the buildings, and identifying and supporting dedicated recycling monitors or janitorial staff. Even with solid foundations, we rarely apply outreach that moves beyond the basics at large buildings. Most of our outreach time and money is spent keeping carts in a convenient location, distinguishing the recycling carts from garbage containers, making sure people know the service is available, and getting the basic information into the hands of recyclers.

Medium Buildings (15 to 31 units)

Once the foundation is in place (i.e. consistent service, information about how buildings behave, and clear recycling setups with good signage), medium buildings see the most gains from applying additional outreach. Unlike larger buildings that require more constant attention to foundational issues and basic outreach, medium buildings sustain the basic outreach longer and are responsive to more complex campaigns.

Small Buildings (14 units or fewer)

At small buildings, reinforcing the basics is not as critical because carts are usually more obvious to find. Most small buildings are more self-sufficient in sharing basic information. Small outreach efforts can produce results that you would not see at larger buildings. A simple poster in the lobby or laundry room can reach a few dozen people more effectively than a few hundred. Because of their size, addressing the tip-of-the-iceberg issues at small buildings may not provide big increases in tonnage, but grouping small buildings with the same tip-of-the-iceberg issues together and addressing them simultaneously might. More information about how to do this follows.

Summary of “Onward and Upward: Utilizing Basic Outreach and Management”

1. Foundational elements have to be in place before your outreach will be sustainable.
2. Frequent and timely communication about the basics is key to sustaining recycling levels. Other targeted outreach can provide additional gains.
3. Interest management in your outreach by addressing their problems.
4. Our Experience: Different approaches are needed based on building size.

NOTES:

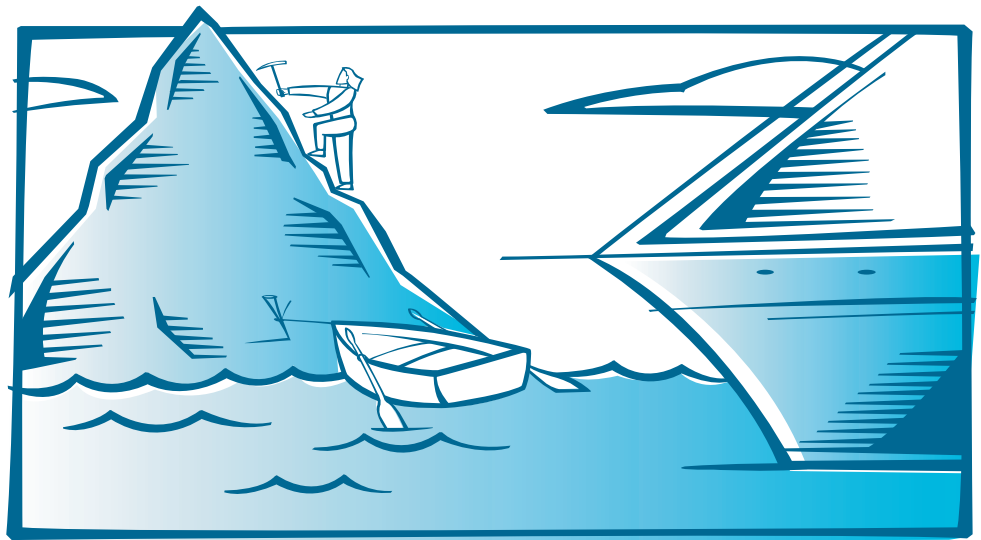
A large iceberg floating in the ocean, with only the tip visible above the water surface. The iceberg is a light blue color, and the water is a darker blue. The sky is a light blue gradient.

THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG:

Problem Solving for Unique Issues at Buildings



Once you have your foundation in order and have conducted some strategic outreach, it is time to look at the individual problems that your buildings may have. However, with the foundation and outreach in good shape, you will probably find that many of the problems at the tips of the icebergs have disappeared. The ones that remain will be much easier to deal with.



GETTING PERSPECTIVE

The tip of the iceberg can include a wide array of interesting **characteristics**: buildings with many nonnative English speakers, management that does not return phone calls, landlords that refuse to recycle, buildings with difficult structures such as a trash chutes or no place for carts, buildings with disabled or elderly residents who need door-to-door pick-up . . . the list goes on!

It is easy to mistake the problems at individual buildings as the sources of the problems in an entire program. The **challenge** is to make sure these buildings do not define your program and to focus on the real root solutions that can improve your overall program. A bigger **challenge** is securing more funding for the much less flashy infrastructure problems described earlier and to prioritize those problems for funders and policy makers.

The best tools available have already been mentioned in previous sections of this toolkit. Working from the base makes the tip just what it is—a small tip. Solving the largest, most foundational problems will likely fix many of these smaller issues. For example, focusing on strengthening ordinances can address the compliance issues of many buildings and/or haulers at once. Contract requirements can also render all the tracking of information needed to apply outreach to address these smaller issues.

TO CLIMB OR NOT TO CLIMB?

Different communities are at different places with recycling. Whether it is aging infrastructure, language barriers, or lack of consistent messages, the most important tool

to use first is an assessment of the whole program before making assumptions and possibly wasting limited resources. Addressing unique building problems takes time and energy away from other buildings in your program, so you need to have confidence that it is worth the effort before you leave the rest of the program behind to climb a tip. If you are faced with serious flaws in program design, you will not be spending much time here.

Some tip-of-the-iceberg problems can be solved by improving upon the recycling setup so that it is more convenient to use. This is true in buildings with many floors or residents who have difficulty transporting recycling. Other problems are structural, such as the presence of trash chutes or the complete unavailability of space for carts. Still other problems arise when neighboring properties—such as a fast food restaurant or empty lot—leave the carts with too much public access. And, of course, there are problems involved in addressing the legitimate needs of a specific demographic, such as seniors or nonnative English speakers. Most special problems are going to require that you work in partnership with someone else to make a change—the neighbors, the staff at the building, or other community members—which is why solutions to these problems can be so time consuming and hard to sustain.

If you have extra money and time, you may decide to tackle some unique issues and go the extra mile to improve recycling one building at a time. Start with the problems that are not so unique. For example, you may have several senior housing buildings in your program. Focus on problems that require expanded recycling setup. This is foundational work that will go further than most other activities. Finally, if you are still standing, tackle the buildings that require additional relationship-building to maintain a solution. Remember, this is going to take time and can be expensive, so you need to choose your efforts wisely. Here are some examples of ways these unique problems might be addressed.

STRUCTURAL ISSUES

Trash chutes make it impossible for the carts in the parking lot to compete with the garbage chute on each floor. There is little you can do. If you have a building with absolutely no space for carts, you can not magically make space appear. These are some of the most difficult problems to solve. The trash chute building may benefit from door-to-door collection. For the building with no space for carts you may be able to find a neighboring building to house the carts. But in each case your efforts will be extremely difficult to sustain. Consider addressing other tips and leaving these for another day.

TOO MUCH PUBLIC ACCESS

Taking on issues caused by location requires working with neighboring buildings or businesses. In the City of Fridley, a building was struggling with contamination issues. To make matters worse, the open-access, empty lot next door was making the dumping of bulky waste a real problem for the landlord. Rather than address the hard-to-solve, tip-of-the-iceberg issue first (the dumping as a result of too much public access) the recycling coordinator addressed the basics. She discovered that the single stream

recycling dumpster looked just like the trash dumpster next to it. So, she worked with the building contact and the hauler to replace the single stream dumpster with two stream cart service. Now, the building is one of the best performing buildings in the city. Her efforts spent at the foundation produced better results (in the quality and quantity of materials collected for recycling) and were more sustainable than her efforts would have been if spent at the tip. Now, if she has extra time and money, she can return someday to address the dumping issue.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Generally speaking, demographics are not tip-of-the-iceberg issues. You certainly need information about who lives in a building so that you can set up carts appropriately and target your outreach, but the makeup of the residents usually does not pose any unique problem. But sometimes buildings with special demographics do create special, tip-of-the-iceberg issues. Here are two examples.

Seniors

The mobility challenges that seniors face can make it difficult for them to haul recycling from their apartments to the cart. This dilemma could be addressed by offering door-to-door collection of materials. This is going to take coordination with management, special containers, and a unique outreach message. But it may be a good place to start if you have several senior buildings in your program. You can replicate what you do at one building to several, which will stretch your resources more effectively.

In a senior building you may consider hosting a social event instead of door-to-door outreach because seniors enjoy socializing and strangers knocking at doors can be alarming for seniors living alone. This is not a problem, it is just good targeting.

Multicultural Populations

Minnesota's (and the nation's) growth in diverse, multicultural populations has garnered much attention recently. Language barriers and translations are something that everyone is talking about—including recycling coordinators, who have often argued that demographics can be correlated with recycling participation. What we have learned from our work in Saint Paul and the development of this toolkit is that (with the exception of some unique and intense situations), even in buildings with very diverse populations, the real problems and obstacles to recycling are still at the foundation with the recycling basics. Language barriers, believe it or not, are not at the foundation. If residents are able to read the flyer about recycling but cannot easily identify the recycling carts at their building, they will not recycle. The results from our research, focus groups, and interviews found that motivations to recycle are less different across cultural groups than we typically think. Barriers to recycling for these groups are also similar to what we hear from native English speakers: confusion about recycling logistics, sorting rules, and what materials are recyclable—the issues at the foundation. Providing translations is an important service, but do not assume language is the main inhibitor to participation levels.

Overall, the longer individuals within a cultural group are established in the community, the better they understand recycling as an activity. Conversely, the less established a population is (communities of new immigrants), the less recycling collection in general is understood by that population. In speaking with Latino, Hmong, and Somali community members, we found that the concept of trash collection, let alone recycling, is a new one for many recent immigrants. As a community becomes more established in the United States, recycling is first embraced as an activity that “good citizens” do to follow the cultural rules. Later, community members develop a deeper understanding of the economic and environmental benefits of recycling.

Fifteen years ago, Saint Paul was one of the few recycling programs nationally that had taken a proactive approach to non-English-speaking recyclers. In subsequent years the city’s demographics changed and we had new groups for which accurate translations were not available. In addition, increased interaction with our diverse communities made us aware that some of the old translations were inaccurate. At the same time, there was a dramatic increase in the number of immigrants, nonnative English speakers, and bilingual residents settling in Saint Paul. The good news was that even though our information was outdated, these communities were using word of mouth to participate in both multifamily and curbside recycling programs.

Based on our assessment of the language-barrier challenge, and the rate at which it was growing, we decided that the time was right to spend limited resources supporting the efforts of nonnative-English-speaking communities to recycle, and to assist these residents in understanding the relevance of recycling in general. What follows is what we learned when we tackled this tip-of-the-iceberg issue.

Community Connections

Before creating materials that you think a community needs, you should get help from within the community to accurately gauge exactly what kind of information is needed. Contact community members, social service agencies, advocacy organizations, community groups, English as a Second Language instructors, churches, or other groups that are working within a community. Speaking with these groups can help you get a general sense of how familiar the community you are targeting is with recycling, so you can adjust your educational materials accordingly.



Networks

You might not be able to address the concept of recycling in a translated brochure. Nonnative-English-speaking and bilingual communities often have well-established communication networks of their own. Applying multicultural outreach through venues like radio programs, local news, and community events can get people talking and can move a community to embrace and identify with recycling. These messages should begin with very general information. Once again, you will need to focus on distinguishing recycling from trash and then the broad categories of recycling, rather than the details of what exactly to recycle. These networks typically do not fall neatly within our cities’ boundaries. However, word of mouth is a powerful tool that these



communities rely on and can be very advantageous to you. If the community takes up recycling as a topic of interest, your program will be more sustainable than it will if you just impose recycling talk from the “outside.”

Bilingual Materials



Bilingual Communities

Many communities are bilingual and bicultural, meaning they are familiar with the languages, customs, traditions and values of two or more different cultures. Be aware that an increased use of English in these communities does not mean a decreased preference for native language. In fact, most bilingual communities prefer recycling materials in both English and their native language, rather than a single language. This allows all members of a household, regardless of their English speaking and reading level, to use the brochure and to practice their English skills. This also allows people to see what information was trying to be translated in case a different dialect or meaning was used. In other words, if your translation contains errors (and it likely will) they will have a better chance of comprehension. The reader is likely to know English better than you know their language.

Not Word for Word

Real quality translations are not just a translation of the language, but a technical translation of recycling information and a cultural translation of the materials as well. It takes time and attention to get translations right. Translations are not just submitted to a translator and returned in perfect form. They are often a description as opposed to a literal translation because many languages do not have words for the technicalities of recycling. Also, there are variations within languages for what items are called (think soda vs. pop). For example, you do not want to translate “glass” literally or you might instruct residents to recycle their window glass. You want a specific translation of “bottles made from glass.” Even the word “recycling” itself can be tricky. Be prepared to be involved in the translation process to provide recycling expertise. Be clear on what exactly you are describing and expect several versions. Translations are always a work in progress as languages and cultures evolve, so your translations will change over time as communities get established and language adjusts. Remember this when re-printing aging materials.

Glossaries



The glossaries we include with the tools are listings of the most accurate translations that we have been able to develop for the Latino, Hmong, and Somali communities of Saint Paul. Check these glossaries for use in your community with the organizations described above, and continue to update your versions.

Cultural Artwork



Design Elements

In addition to translating the words, you should also translate the design of your materials. By using culturally specific artwork, you can help create the feeling that recycling information is part of the culture of the people you are targeting. The idea is to have those in the community pick up your information and distribute it as their own. Design borders adapted from Hmong, Latino, and Somali artwork are included with the tools.

Photographs

Our studies and focus groups showed us that the newer a group of people are to the concept of recycling, the more photographs are preferred over illustrations. Photographs are more specific and can help newcomers understand the seemingly arbitrary difference between one type of glass over another. But once the practice of recycling becomes commonplace, illustrations are preferred because photographs can be too specific and create more confusion. Photographs of popular items purchased from Latino, Somali, and Asian supermarkets are included with the tools.



Photographs

All Dressed Up With No Place To Go

Once translations are created, it is difficult to distribute them to the right audience without help, particularly from building management. If you do not have a way to determine exactly where the people who can use translations live, be ready to hold on to them until someone asks for them! You can help by offering your translations to community organizations that serve the community you are trying to reach—but know that they may only use it where it is requested and the people they serve may or may not use the program you are promoting. Be sure that building contacts know you have translations. A simple survey, like the one included with the tools, can help by providing a building contact the opportunity to request information.



**Information Request
Survey Template**



**Translated
Flyers**

Translated Flyers

The translations we have included with this toolkit have been evolving with our program for many years. They are the result of professional translation services, community reviews, and trial and error. They incorporate all the things we have learned about the Latino, Hmong, and Somali communities in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and they incorporate all the advice we have included here about content, images, colors, design, and language choices. We offer these to you to take as a basis from which to develop materials that serve the Spanish-, Hmong- and Somali-speaking communities in your program. In other words, we are by no means cultural advisors, and these materials can and should be continually reassessed and edited depending on the characteristics of these groups in your community. Like the glossary, these translations should be appropriate for most Latino, Hmong, and Somali communities throughout the metro area and in other areas of Minnesota, which are similar to those communities in Saint Paul. They may not be applicable in other areas of the country.

Summary of “The Tip of the Iceberg: Problem Solving for Unique Issues at Buildings”

1. Even unique issues can be similar among several buildings. Address those first.
2. Addressing issues that support the foundation, such as fixing unique problems in recycling setups, can net good results and take care of some of the perceived special issues.

NOTES:

NOTES:



BON VOYAGE!



We hope that by now the sea you are sailing in seems less intimidating. You understand that the icebergs all around you do not have to be dangerous. You have examined the buildings in your multifamily recycling program and found that they all have similar foundations and outreach needs. You have assessed the health of the foundations and are ready to wisely apply your limited resources to fixing the most important, wide-ranging problems that lie there. And, we hope, you have dramatically reduced the likelihood that an iceberg will sink your ship.



ONE BIG SEA

Recycling work is rarely glamorous. We do it because we believe in the community and the environmental benefits it provides. But there are many obstacles that prevent us from doing the most efficient, effective job possible. Negative myths about recycling are constantly circling, spreading the false word that recycling is not worth the effort. In addition, political support can be hard to come by, making our jobs even harder. When political support fosters funding, it is usually spent on outreach first, something that we know cannot create long-term positive change without a good foundation.

But you are not alone. The sea through which you are sailing, with all of its icebergs and other hazards, is the same sea through which hundreds of other recycling coordinators are sailing. Working together, all of us starting at the foundation, we can make multifamily recycling more successful. We can fulfill the opportunity that is there to increase recycling levels.

The systematic approach to multifamily recycling that we are advocating here is based on solid research and has been tested in the field. It will help you put a structure in place that will make your entire program stronger. As your assessment of your program becomes more complete, it will become easier and easier to determine the buildings within your program that will benefit most from your attention. This effective allocation of resources can help ensure that your program is sustainable over time. It can help you formulate realistic expectations of success given the realities of your program's design.

The potential for multifamily programs is actually limitless, as long as we all have an understanding of our programs and the support of our communities and elected leaders. Together, we can make multifamily recycling the great adventure it promises to be!

Welcome aboard!



THE TOOLS:

Packing for the Journey



In addition to the recommendations throughout the previous pages, we have packed all the tools for your multifamily voyage on the enclosed CD. Many of these templates are starting points for you to modify for your program. For your convenience, we have provided two kinds of formats for printed materials. You can view the universal formats (jpg and Acrobat Reader files) from most computers. Design files (such as Quark and Illustrator files) can be altered by most designers and printers. These formats allow the materials to be easily altered to work within individual programs.

These files, along with new tools that will be added over time, can be downloaded from our website at www.eurekarecycling.org.

We hope you enjoy the journey. Please keep in touch. Drop us a line to let us know which tools prove helpful, which ones do not, or how they might be improved.

THE TOOLS



Anchor: Legal Tools

1. Program Design Assessment (overview) from Gary Liss & Associates
2. Single Hauler Contract Template
3. Franchise Ordinances
 - a. Franchising Rule (Portland, OR)
 - b. Ordinance allowing for franchising (Hawthorne, CA)
4. Franchise Agreement from Hawthorne, CA
5. Ordinance Template
6. Minnesota Waste Wise: Contact Waste Wise for consultation on language for a building's contract for service. www.mnwastewise.org 1-800-821-2230
7. Ride Along: Spend time on route with your hauler to gain first-hand knowledge about operations.



Compass: Information Systems

1. Tracking Worksheet
2. Access Database
3. Local Information Sources: Tap into local sources to track down information about buildings in your community.



Wheel: Basic Recycling Structure

1. Setup Manuals
 - a. "Developing a Multifamily Recycling Program"
 - b. "Guide to Successful Multifamily and Commercial Recycling" Contact Deborah Salzman with the City of Austin, Texas, for a copy of this setup manual. (512) 974-9038 or deborah.salzman@ci.austin.tx.us
2. Sorting Requirements: Require two stream or source separated collection to help control contamination.
3. Label Templates
 - a. Source Separated
 - b. Two Stream
 - c. No Garbage
4. Photographs (to build your own labels)
5. Recycling Setup Signage Templates

- a. *Our Building Recycles* Sign
 - b. *Do Not Put Garbage in Our Carts* Sign
 - c. Recycling Arrows Icon
 - d. *Our Carts are Located* Sign
 - e. Permanent Directional Signage: Create signage specific to the layout of a building.
6. Recycling Monitor: Use your contact to recruit a recycling monitor.
 7. Equipment for Volunteers: Check your local hardware store or supply company for volunteer equipment like “Trash Pickers,” gloves, etc.



Message in a Bottle: Outreach

1. Frequency: Reach out to residents and management often.
2. Timing: Capitalize on what is new in your program.
3. Inclusive Language: Choose language for your outreach that creates community.
4. Basic Brochure Template (two-stream)
5. Basic Poster Template (two-stream)
6. *No Garbage* Outreach Templates
 - a. Postcard
 - b. Door Hanger
 - c. Flyer
7. Recycling Kits
 - a. Cover Letter Template
 - b. Pictures of Kits
8. Commitment Card Templates
 - a. Self Mailer
 - b. Door Hanger
9. Environmental Message
 - a. Environmental Poster Template
 - b. Environmental Impact Letter Template
 - c. Environmental Calculator: The National Recycling Coalition (NRC) has an online Environmental Calculator at www.nrc-recycle.org. (You must be a member of the NRC to access the calculator online.)
 - d. Environmental Fact Sheet: The Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) has developed a fact sheet on the “Environmental Benefits of Recycling.” Visit www.recycleminnesota.org for the latest Minnesota version or contact RAM to customize this fact sheet for your community.
10. Management Survey Template

11. Account Contract Template
12. Recycling Monitor Job Description Template
13. Free Market Materials: Two campaigns with the following items can be downloaded at www.eurekarecycling.org:
 - a. Poster
 - b. Postcard (and Ad)
 - c. Rack Card
 - d. Door Hanger
 - e. County Logos: Washington, Ramsey, Anoka, Hennepin, Dakota



Telescope: Unique Problems

1. Community Connections: Get help from within the community to determine how familiar the community you are targeting is with recycling.
2. Community Networks: Tap into the community networks that are already well-established to deliver your message about recycling.
3. Bilingual Materials: Most bilingual communities prefer recycling materials in both English and their native language, rather than a single language.
4. Glossaries, Cultural Artwork, and Photographs are organized into Spanish, Hmong, and Somali folders.
5. Information Request Survey Template
6. Translated Flyers

“Report

Best Practices in Multifamily (Apartment) Recycling”
Eureka Recycling Final Report for OEA Grant





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