

WHAT IS CURBSIDE RECYCLING

Curbside Recycling is primarily a service for houses, that allows the household to place specific recyclable materials in a defined bin to be picked up at the curb on a regular basis. Curbside Recycling programs benefit households as they may not have to separate the materials, nor do they have to drive to the local recycler to deliver/drop off their recyclable materials. Programs can include multiple smaller bins with the recycle material separated in each bin or larger bins that have all the material commingled inside.



STARTING A CURBSIDE RECYCLING PROGRAM

There are several ways to go about starting a curbside recycling program in your community and multiple resources online that will help. In many communities the program is started by the local hauler or the local governmental body deciding to start or contract out a curbside recycling program. The other big challenge you will have to overcome with recycling, is it takes a little manpower and monitoring and a lot of education. Either way, you will need to consider several factors to ensure that you have the support, dedication and resources to be successful in your program. Recycle Montana suggests a seven step process as follows:

1. Find Local Supporters
2. Define Your Recycling Objective
3. Determine Where the Material Can Get Recycled
4. Determine What Materials Can Be Recycled
5. Minimize Contamination
6. Develop a Start-up Plan
7. Educate, Educate, Educate

FIND LOCAL SUPPORTERS

For the program to be successful, you will need the support of your neighbors, home owner association, local government, trash hauler, politicians or anyone else who can provide support for building the program. The truck will need to travel down the road, dumping recycling bins, so the more per street they can pick up, the more cost effective the program. Like anything new, some people will be naturally against the idea, so be prepared and focus on those who are more environmentally friendly.

DEFINE YOUR RECYCLING OBJECTIVE

You want the program to be successful and long lasting so spend some time evaluating what that would look like. People will need to be engaged with the program and feeling good about what they are doing. This will keep them participating. Consider an ideal participation rate, % of recycled material per household, area to be covered, include apartments/businesses and reasons why the program is needed in your community. Once you have a good basis for these items then you will be able to gauge your success and what it will take to be successful. Who can complete the hauling for the program, one option or several?

WHERE CAN THE MATERIAL GET RECYCLED

Some communities have multiple recycling facilities and others do not have any. This will be a key factor to understand as you want to make sure you have a viable option for the recycled material. You will need to contact the local recycling facility to ensure they have capacity to handle the material and the cost for this service. If you do not have a local processing center, you will need to be a little more creative in how you will transport to a facility or limit the types of recyclable materials you accept and manage/bale locally.

WHAT MATERIALS CAN YOU RECYCLE

Cardboard, Paper, Aluminum, Plastics, Tin and Glass are common items for a curbside recycling program, but they all have exceptions as follows:

- Cardboard – Flatten where possible, keep dry and free from food waste and no wax coating.
- Paper – Keep anything that is not paper out.
- Aluminum – Don't recycle in plastic bags, make sure they are empty, no liquid, dirt or rocks.
- Plastics – Your programs will need to define if you can accept Plastics #1-#7, or just Plastics #1-2. Keep foam cups, plates and packing materials out of the bin.
- Tin – Easy to recycle, clean, rinse and you labels can be left on.
- Glass – Verify your recycling facility can accept.

Your recycling facility will be able to help finalize what you can recycle.

MINIMIZE CONTAMINATION

Contamination ties in with Education, and it can make or break your program. Contamination occurs when anything other the specific items you were recycling gets mixed into the recycling process. The only time you should commingle recycling materials together is when the parameters of the program allow. Food waste, oils, dirt, rocks, grass and other debris should also be kept from the recycling stream. Contaminated loads of recycling can potentially result in the whole load being disposed at the landfill. Ultimately, your program needs a lot of education and an enforcement component to verify that the proper items are being recycled.

START-UP PLAN

You have decided how, what, who and where you will recycle, so now is the time to finish the plan. You need to fully evaluate your costs, which will also be driven by the expected participation rate. You also need to finalize the frequency for service, which can vary from once per week, every other week or once per month. Most of the time, you can work the costs out with the hauler. Depending on the specifics of your program you will also need to finalize your collection bin choice, finalize contracts and create a budget for the program. Marketing the program will require specific goals along with creating an extensive education and public awareness plan.

EDUCATE, EDUCATE, EDUCATE

You will need to educate on the specifics of the program, along with acceptable materials and contamination.

- Program Specifics – This will be your opportunity to ask local and community supporters to help sell the recycling program. Find people from other communities who have similar programs for their expertise. Most people who are currently in a curbside program can attest that it feels good to put materials in the recycling bin versus their trash can. Visit with the mayor, city council, local chamber or any other groups that would be excited to hear about your great program and what you are doing for the environment. Prepare handouts with the program specifics, costs, service frequency and what materials are accepted.
- Acceptable Materials and Contamination – Educating on these items will continue as long as your program exists. You are creating a long-term plan, not just a start up education program. Customers need to be continually reminded about what is accepted, what is not accepted, and the consequences to the program when contamination occurs.

CONCLUSION

Recycle Montana applauds you for considering a curbside program for your community. The process is not easy, and you will have many supporters and detractors, but stay focused on the fact that you are doing the right thing for the environment. People will be interested in your program, so take advantage and tell everyone about the great thing you are doing.

Recycle Montana



Our mission is to strive to be the leading statewide voice of recycling and an ongoing resource to advise, support and educate Montanans on waste reduction opportunities. Recycle Montana works to increase recycling in Montana through education and building coalitions between communities, schools and recyclers. Visit www.RecycleMontana.org for more information.