

**NLC 100**  
YEARS

1924-2024: A CENTURY OF STRENGTHENING CITIES



# Recycle Right

CAMPAIGN  
TOOLKIT

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# Introduction

Municipalities across the country have included recycling in their waste management programs. Depending on the desired outcome – such as realizing cost savings from avoided landfill fees, helping the environment by avoiding greenhouse gas emissions associated with the use of raw materials rather than recycled materials as feedstock for products, or adding local jobs associated with waste diversion – there are a variety of best practices available to local governments. For the best outcomes, a recycling program should be paired with strategic education, engagement and communication efforts.

However, recent surveys show that residents lack confidence in their ability to recycle, find it confusing and question their impact when they recycle.\* The Recycle Right Toolkit, brought to you by NLC and WM (formerly Waste Management), is designed to be an approachable, open source, “plug-and-play” guide for municipal leaders to conduct outreach to residents to help them overcome this lack of confidence in recycling. By taking the [Recycle Right Pledge](#) and utilizing the tools and resources provided in this toolkit, you are one step closer to supporting a community of conscious residents who have been empowered to Recycle Right!

There are several reasons residents have lost confidence in recycling – they don’t believe material is truly recycled, they think their efforts are too small to make an impact, they have heard negative media coverage about recycling and packaging industries or they are confused about what goes into the recycling bin, and either limit/avoid recycling or risk contaminating a load as a result of misunderstanding what is appropriate for the recycling receptacle.

This toolkit is intended to address some of these barriers to recycling. Part 1 has collateral you can send to residents to clearly and simply define what they should put into their bin, while Parts 2 and 3 provide resources to show residents that recycling is real and is something they should participate in with confidence. Parts 4 and 5 offer suggestions for personalizing recycling and getting out into the community.

For municipal governments who have recycling programs, reducing contamination is critically important to ensuring that the program is effective and efficient. It is also critical for cities, towns and villages to remember that recycling itself should be paired with other sustainability initiatives to holistically work toward mitigating climate change and creating healthy, resilient and thriving communities for us all!

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\* Source: The Recycling Partnership 2022 Recycling Confidence Index.  
[https://recyclingpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2023/06/Recycling\\_Confidence\\_Index\\_Final.pdf](https://recyclingpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2023/06/Recycling_Confidence_Index_Final.pdf).

# Recycling Resources for Your Community

Before you begin your campaign, we encourage you to look at these valuable recycling resources. They can help you effectively communicate and educate your community about recycling, improve recycling participation and build trust in your recycling system.

NLC's policy brief, [Beyond Recycling: Policy to Achieve Circular Waste Management](#), explores the significant systemic challenges and policy tools that can pave the way for a bold and sustainable vision for more circular waste management. Taking a holistic approach has the potential to transform waste management systems, making them more efficient, cost-effective and environmentally friendly.

Additionally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website provides more information on the U.S. [recycling system](#) and the [circular economy](#). The Agency has [facts and figures](#) on materials, waste and recycling, along with a [report](#) on the economics of recycling.

Understanding the [recycling landscape](#) before you begin this campaign will help you lead by example and effectively communicate and educate your community to improve recycling efforts and build trust in the recycling system.



# Finding Federal Funding

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides funding for improving certain recycling infrastructure and recycling programs. Local governments are eligible to apply to the following federal grants programs for potential future funding opportunities:

**Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grant** – Under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, funding may be available to improve post-consumer materials management and infrastructure, support improvements to local post-consumer materials management and recycling programs, and assist local waste management authorities in making improvements to local waste management systems.

**Battery Recycling, Reprocessing, and Battery Collection** – Under the U.S. Department of Energy, funding may be available to increase consumer participation in battery recycling programs, improve the economics of consumer battery recycling and help establish state and local collection programs.

Local leaders can also inquire with their state department of the environment, or similar agency, for any state funding opportunities to support local recycling efforts.

# Planning for Recycling Success

Developing a sustainability goal with clear objectives and targets will make your community's journey towards waste diversion more transparent. Cities, towns and villages frequently include recycling strategies within their sustainability and/or climate action plans, which can include specific zero waste goals. Here are some examples of recycling and waste management elements from local governments:

- ▶ Launch a curbside or drop-off composting program.
- ▶ Support the creation of a public “lending library” to encourage community members to share household tools and equipment.
- ▶ Host monthly repair cafes and/or host an online directory of resources for material donation, lending, reuse and recycling.
- ▶ Update codes or ordinances to require a designated space for recycling and composting containers in new developments.
- ▶ Incentivize small business owners to adopt more sustainable waste management practices.

## PART 1:

# Building Awareness Locally

Whether or not recycling is a priority in your community, it's time to get back to the basics of good recycling!

As you kick off the Recycle Right Campaign, educating the community about the basics of recycling is a good first step. Materials provided in this toolkit will help you get started. Here are some tips and key messages to share with your residents.



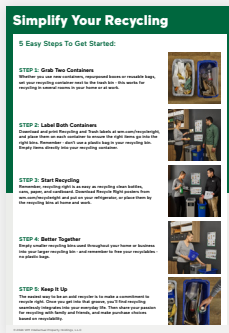
**What can almost “always” be recycled** – Plastic bottles and containers; food and beverage cans; paper, flattened cardboard and paperboard; and glass bottles and containers. Always recycle items loose in your cart – do not put them in bags. Make sure recyclables are clean and dry with minimal food and liquids. Check local guidelines for specific requirements.



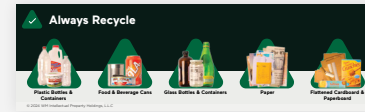
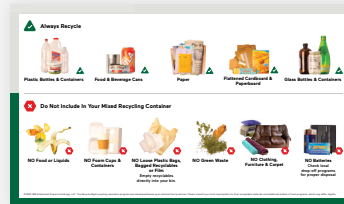
**What should “never” be recycled in your curbside cart** – Clothing and textiles; batteries; electronics; needles; appliances; furniture and large household items; scrap metal, auto parts and tires; food or liquids; foam cups and containers; loose plastic bags or film; and yard waste. Many communities, businesses or organizations have takeback programs or other solutions for these items.

Local recycling programs may differ (slightly), so it's important to inform residents about acceptable and unacceptable materials for recycling, as well as any additional details specific to your local program.

On the following page you will find sample flyers and graphics that can be used as Public Service Announcements around your community (post them at a bus stop, city hall, library, community center etc.), on social media, in constituent and community newsletters or as mailers to residents.



**DOWNLOAD  
RESOURCES**



We've also provided customizable language to include in your constituent or community newsletter, highlighting your city's participation in the Recycle Right Campaign, including a placeholder for a link to the NLC Recycle Right Pledge page or a local page pertaining to recycling.

❗ See Item #1 in the Appendix for sample newsletter language.

Additionally, you can also explore EPA's [Model Recycling Toolkit](#) to help communities increase participation in recycling programs and reduce contamination in the recycling stream.

Finally, you can learn from municipalities that are tackling other waste management operational challenges.

- ▶ [How Local Leaders Can Make Community Events More Sustainable](#)
- ▶ [How Real-time Data Reshaped Houston's Solid Waste Department](#)

## PART 2:

# Planning and Executing Recycling Events

Events serve as powerful platforms to educate the public, foster community engagement and enhance recycling practices. Especially for regions with newly implemented recycling facilities and technologies, this is a moment to lead by example. By actively promoting these innovations, you not only increase public awareness, but also set a benchmark for other areas to follow. Showcasing successful implementation can attract new partners and support.

The steps below can help guide your community in effectively planning and executing successful waste management events. From facilitating educational sessions to media events, municipalities can highlight and emphasize the significance of proper recycling and solid waste management.

**Offer Tours of a Recycling Facility:** While residents may be familiar with the practices of recycling, they often lack awareness of what happens to their recyclables after leaving their bins. This part of the process frequently goes unnoticed. To bridge this knowledge gap, municipalities, organizations and private groups can organize tours to foster transparency and help educate and motivate residents about recycling.

Consider organizing both in-person and virtual tours of a recycling facility in your community. Schedule tour times, ensure safety measures are in place and create informative materials for visitors.

Whether your facility is owned or operated by a public or private entity, coordinating tours can be an effective method of public education. Here are some steps to ensure successful tour programming.

- ▶ **Assess Facility Suitability and Target Audiences.** Conduct a facility audit to ensure it is safe and suitable for public tours and identify points of public interest — what parts of the facility will be the most educational for visitors? Sorting lines, educational displays, new recycling technologies, etc.? Consider creating an introductory video outlining what visitors will see and providing safety information before they enter the facility. Define the educational content you want to impart. Depending on certain age groups and backgrounds, engagement may look different, such as hands-on activities for younger audiences and structured discussions for adults.



- ▶ **Ensure Visitor Safety.** Communicate safety rules that impact visitors before they arrive on site (i.e., closed toe shoes required, long sleeved shirts and pants strongly recommend, etc.). Consider creating a short video to communicate safety information to visitors before they enter the facility. Give guides a list of safety protocols to study prior to tours.
- ▶ **Develop Tour Content.** Based on audits, create a tour path that covers key areas and equipment installations. Select and train staff members and, if appropriate, volunteers as tour guides. Provide them with FAQs to ensure standardized, comprehensive information. Develop educational content that explains the recycling process, the importance of material separation and the environmental impact of recycling. Include visual aids and handouts to distribute prior to/ following the tour.
- ▶ **Schedule and Promote Tours.** Require visitors to book their tours in advance on a designated website. Offer tours on a regular schedule—weekly, biweekly, monthly—to make planning easier. Decide on times that don't disrupt the facility's operations. Promote tours through local media, school/community center flyers, social media, ground signs, etc. Provide scannable QR codes for easy booking.
- ▶ **Offer Virtual Tour Options.** Create a YouTube, Instagram or Facebook video that overlooks the facility grounds. Plan your content, consider interviews with staff or showcase specific operations that reflect your facility's impact. Identify team members who are comfortable with camera work and can narrate or guide the tour engagingly. Pre-recorded or live video tours could depend on your facility's staff resources and skill sets.
- ▶ **Provide Feedback Forums.** Send out feedback surveys to attendees after tours or have tour guides informally discuss to gather insights.
- ▶ **Collaborate Locally.** Reach out to school districts, businesses or government staff. Engage with environmental organizations or local businesses to sponsor or support the tours.

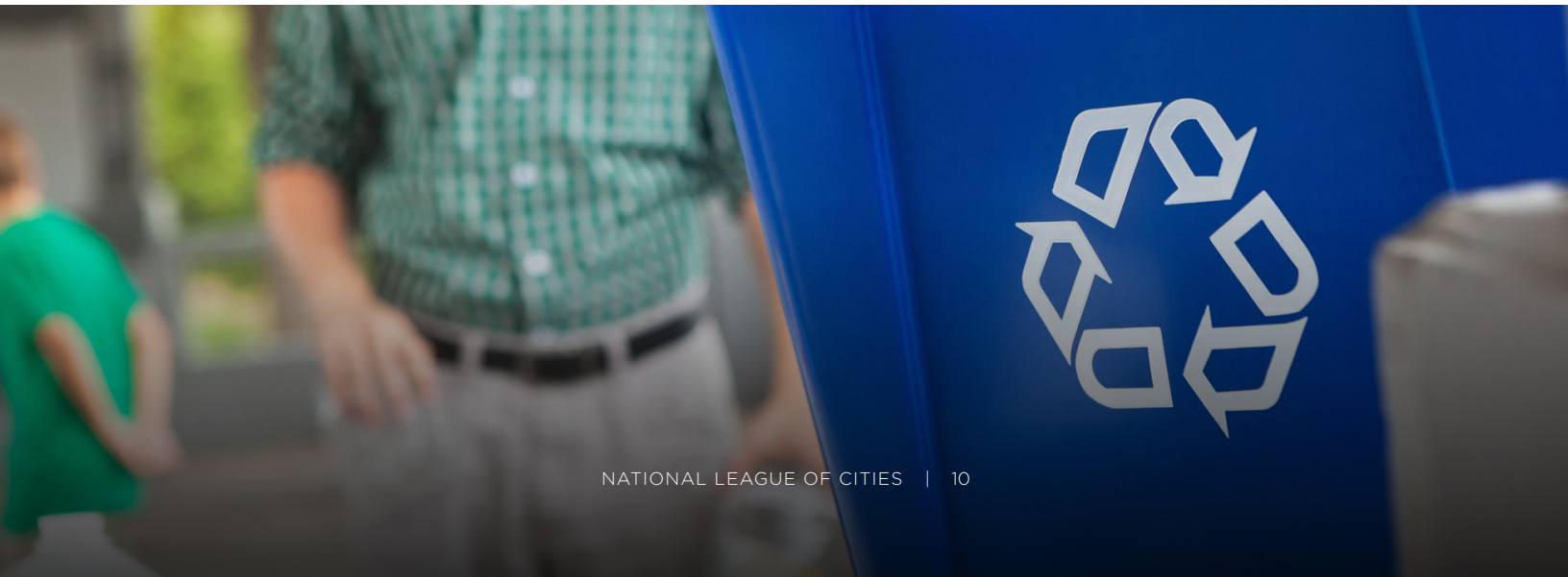
ⓘ *See Item #2 in the Appendix for a partner invitation email template.*

ⓘ *See Item #3 in the Appendix for sample tour description for promotional material.*

**Host a Community Gathering or Media Event:** Plan a community gathering or media event featuring public works staff and bring together local government officials and other stakeholders such as environmental advocates and industry experts to lead panel discussions or activities.

- ▶ Explore ways in which your community has demonstrated impactful recycling practices. Have leaders share the history, their own contributions and/or plans to improve. Most importantly, highlight how these things affect your target audience (residents, etc.).
- ▶ Construct event-specific activities.
  - ▷ Line up speakers, including public works staff, small business owners, community leaders, and elected officials and conduct preparation calls to brief speakers on the key objectives.
  - ▷ Have event signage.
  - ▷ Leverage social media and community groups to spread the word.
  - ▷ Arrange setups that highlight the equipment, technology and people behind your recycling success.
    - ◆ Consider informative banners or posters as backdrops for photographs.
    - ◆ Live stream the panel or event.
    - ◆ Have a dedicated website page for the event.
- ▶ Utilize the promotional materials provided in this toolkit to notify individuals, including media or potential attendees, about the event.

ⓘ *See Item #4 in the Appendix for a media advisory template for a local press event.*



## PART 3:

# Demonstrating Recycling Impact and Leveraging Engagement

Corporate engagement plays a crucial role in local governments' efforts to educate the public about the positive impact of recycling. Many companies are leading the way by incorporating post-consumer materials in their products. This emphasizes the advantages of a circular economy and presents a tangible vision of a more sustainable future that we can all work toward.

As a community, you can draw inspiration from these companies and use their initiatives as case studies to educate and motivate the public.

## Innovations in Manufacturing

### **Rethinking Footwear: How Shoe Companies are Embracing Recycling Initiatives**

Many footwear companies are redefining their manufacturing processes to prioritize sustainability by incorporating recyclable materials and reducing waste. For example, companies are transforming plastic bottles into high-quality footwear, showcasing the potential of recycling to create valuable products.

### **Building Markets for Recycled Materials: WM + Repreve®**

REPREVE®\* fiber, a product of Unifi, Inc., has become an important end market for plastic bottles, which the company transforms into sustainable polyester using its REPREVE® process. REPREVE® sources bottles from recycling facilities, including WM's, which are then delivered to their bottle processing facility in North Carolina where they chop, wash and melt the bottles and transform them into flakes and then chips. Finally, the chips are heated, extruded and spun into a variety of high-quality and versatile fibers. The fibers can be used to create clothing, such as WM frontline uniforms and a line of Peter Millar apparel that was available at the 2024 WM Phoenix Open. To learn more, click [here](#).

### **Circular Plastics Microfactory**

A new Circular Plastics Microfactory in Phoenix is setting new standards in recycling innovation, transforming post-consumer plastic into valuable products. Showcasing closed-loop recycling, this small-scale facility offers a decentralized approach to process discarded plastics into pellets, which are then used to manufacture various items. The microfactory, a partnership between Arizona State University, the City of Phoenix, Goodwill and Hustle PHX, also creates new green jobs and grows the workforce. If your municipality is considering launching a new recycling facility or

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\* REPREVE® is a registered trademark of Unifi.

integrating new recycling technologies, use this story as a way to emulate success and position your community as a leader in sustainable practices. Learn more [here](#).

- ▶ **How You Can Take Action:** Local leaders can explore and partner with local businesses and manufacturing companies that are already incorporating recycling and reuse into their operations. By collaborating with these entities, you can not only showcase their initiatives but also inspire widespread community engagement and commitment to sustainable materials management. Take this opportunity to highlight the benefits of recycling and reuse.

## Short Engagement Videos

Stakeholders from the public and private sectors can benefit from creating short, educational videos to promote proper recycling practices. For inspiration, consider these examples:

- ▶ **Local Elected Officials:** Nate Duckett, Mayor of Farmington, NM discusses recycling best practices and the recycling process with a visit to the county landfill. Watch it [here](#).
- ▶ **Myth Busting:** WM addresses common recycling myths and misconceptions, focusing on the importance of understanding recycling symbols. Check out the video [here](#).
- ▶ **Basics of Recycling:** Collier County, FL released a short YouTube video on recycling correctly in the community that highlights the do's and don'ts of local recycling to prevent contamination. Watch it [here](#).
- ▶ **Recycling PSA for Kids:** The City of Murfreesboro, TN released a video to educate young residents about the importance of recycling as a way to reduce waste going to landfills. The City of Calgary, Canada also created an animated video explaining what can and can't go in Calgary's blue bins that is unique to their community. Watch the videos [here](#) and [here](#).
  - ▶ To educate families about the significance of recycling, consider creating engaging and informative videos targeted at children. Local governments can distribute these videos through school programs and social media platforms, offering fun, visually appealing ways to engage a young audience.
- ▶ **Demystifying Recycling Symbols:** CBS Philadelphia produced a video addressing the public's confusion about recycling symbols, particularly the recycling numbers, which many mistakenly believe indicate universal recyclability. This video explains the true meaning behind these symbols and discusses the efforts being made to clarify recycling practices. Watch it [here](#).

## How Can Your Community Make an Engaging Video?

Below is a step-by-step outline for creating a short, educational video, along with a customizable script.

- 1. Define Your Objective:** Determine the specific recycling behaviors you want to address in your video and why it matters to your audience. What's been a persistent issue with your local recycling facility? Have workers recently dealt with hazardous issues or disruptions with machinery? Address these specific problems. Aim to provide a general overview of correct recycling practices alongside any local instructions, which can sometimes differ slightly by jurisdiction or region.
- 2. Develop a Script:** Write a clear and concise script that conveys your message effectively. Sprinkle in messages about why your audience might care about this issue and/or how it impacts them (lower rates, save taxpayer money, leave a more sustainable legacy for the next generation, etc.).  
*! See Item #5 in the Appendix for a sample video script.*
- 3. Review with Your Local Recycling Facility:** Engage (or reengage) local recycling experts before finalizing your script and moving onto the next steps. It's important to validate all the information about your recycling program is correct.
- 4. Choose the Right Format:** Depending on your intended audience, determine what video format works best. Get creative and consider incorporating local landmarks to increase relatability and interest. Ensure the video is accessible and offers captions and alternate text.
- 5. Involve Local Influencers or Officials:** Involve local leaders, influencers or community members who are respected and recognized. Their participation and encouragement to Recycle Right can lend credibility and encourage viewers to take the message more seriously.
- 6. Engage Local News Outlets:** Partner with local television and radio stations or other print/online news media to broaden your reach. These outlets have the resources to help amplify your message and can play a crucial role in educating the public about how to Recycle Right.
- 7. Call to Action:** End your video with a clear call to action. What needs to change in the community? Tell viewers exactly what they can do to make a difference.
- 8. Promote Across Platforms:** Distribute your video across platforms where your community is most active, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram or local community channels. Consider also showing the video in schools, at local events and in government buildings.

## Flyers and Informational Brochures

Educational flyers can address common questions such as, “Where do my recycled products go? What happens to them?” It’s not just about how to recycle, but also what happens to materials after they’re recycled. The Recycle Right Campaign provides sample informational flyers and brochures to provide this awareness to the larger community. Include photos that reflect diversity and inclusion so that all residents can relate to the information. Ensure the text is accessible and in font sizes and colors that are easy to read.

- ▶ [The Life of Recycling](#) details the journey of recycled goods from collection to transformation.
- ▶ [Mixed Curbside Residential Recycling Myths](#) debunks common misconceptions of recycling practices for residents.
- ▶ [Most Common Contaminants](#) provides a visual list of harmful items to keep out of the recycling bin. When you put contaminants into your bin, recycling often becomes more expensive to sort at recycling facilities. Actual recyclable items become devalued when a contaminant is present, reducing the quality of the recyclable product. On top of that, incorrect recycling puts machinery and staff at risk.

By understanding the lifecycle of recyclable materials and the importance of correct recycling, residents can see the direct benefits of their efforts.



## PART 4:

# Personalizing Recycling Benefits

Engaging a community on consistent and correct recycling practices can be challenging. Two ways to overcome this are to make recycling easy and to emphasize that recycling is worth it to residents. Elected officials have the ability to make recycling easier for individuals by implementing steps like single stream recycling programs in carts. Consider other steps that you can take to make recycling easier for your community and what can incentivize an individual to Recycle Right. How can correct practices be shared with different audiences? Approximately 50% of Americans that recycle are confused about how to do it correctly.\* Here are three ways you can make a difference in closing the gap in consumer recycling know-how.

## Share Your Story

Why is recycling important to you? Discuss the personal and community benefits you've experienced from recycling or offer a practical tip that has made recycling easier for you. Personal stories inspire others to act.

- ▶ **Story Example:** [“The ‘Father of Recycling’ Has a Message For You”](#) follows the story of Donald Sanderson, former city council member in Woodbury, NJ, launching the country's first mandatory curbside recycling program. His daughter, a Woodbury City Council member herself, offers some inspiring words.
- ▶ **Community Partnerships That Make a Difference.** WM received a Market Development Grant from Cuyahoga County, OH to support the recycling improvement investment made by WM. Learn more [here](#).

## Share Tips for Better Recycling

Provide specific, actionable tips; instead of giving general advice, give precise, practical tips. For example:

- ▶ **Labeling System:** *“I've set up detailed labels for the recycling bins at home, specifying what type of materials go in each. One label reads, ‘Plastic bottles, tubs and jugs only’ and another ‘Paper and Cardboard’. This helps everyone in my household recycle correctly by removing the guesswork about which items are acceptable.”*

\* Source: Paper and Packaging Board Newsletter, Sept. 2021. [https://www.paperandpackaging.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/PPB\\_Sept2021\\_Newsletter\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.paperandpackaging.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/PPB_Sept2021_Newsletter_FINAL.pdf)

- ▶ **Designate Recycling Space:** *“In my house, we don’t put our recyclables in a basket. Instead, they have a designated place on top of the counter near the back door. This way, it’s easy for someone to take the recycling to the bin before they get in their car.”*
- ▶ **Local Recycling Guide:** *“I printed out a detailed list of recyclable and non-recyclable items according to our local guidelines and placed it on our kitchen bulletin board. It’s an easy reference for my family to know, like how yogurt cartons or pizza boxes must be free of residue before recycling.”*
  - ▷ Typically, this resource could be accessible through a link to a local government or waste management facility’s specific page. You might instruct users to search “recycling rules [their city or county]” for the most accurate information.
- ▶ While recycling rules may differ slightly across jurisdictions, here are some toolkit resources:
  - ▷ What to Recycle Guides: A detailed guide on what items are commonly recyclable, including plastics, paper, metals and glass. Within WM’s “Recycling Resources” tab are posters, guides, labels and other tools for households, businesses, property managers, municipalities and schools to use.
    - ◆ Resource Links: [WM’s What to Recycle](#), [Recycling 101](#), [Recycling Resources](#)
  - ▷ Apps and Tools for Recycling: Recycling apps can provide information on local recycling rules and disposal recommendations.

## Talk About Recycling With Local Community Groups

Engaging local community groups, from schools, to Rotary clubs, neighborhood associations and senior centers, is a great way to share recycling information and promote correct recycling practices. Use the steps below as recommendations for creating an impactful presentation.

**Step 1: Find Common Ground and Shared Values.** Start with a universal concern that affects everyone. For example, *“We all want a healthy environment for ourselves and our children.”* Bring common aspirations and values to the table.

**Step 2: Share a Compelling Story.** Provide a story of a community that successfully reduced plastic waste, for example, and contrast it with how your community can achieve a similar goal.



**Step 3: Create a Call to Action.** Specify actions community members can take, such as attending community clean-up events, attending a tour at the recycling facility or practicing better recycling at home.

**Step 4: Provide Basic Tips.** Give actionable advice on how individuals can contribute to recycling efforts and waste reduction, such as:

1. Bring your own bag to the store.
2. Use a reusable water bottle instead of buying plastic bottles.
3. Educate yourself on what can and can't be recycled in your community.
4. Place a recycling reminder in your home or community. (Expert tip: The closer you put the guide to the bin, where the action of recycling takes place, the more likely it will be effective for your audience.)

**Step 5: Discuss Local Recycling Rules.** If your community has any particular or unique recycling guidelines, be sure to share those with the audience.

**Step 6: Engage in a Dialogue.** Open the floor to questions, listening to concerns and suggestions from the community.

**Step 7: Use Data.** Incorporate reliable data and statistics in your presentation to back up your claims.



## PART 5:

# Community Day and Interactive Outreach

Building strong, cohesive communities isn't just about living in the same area—it's about connecting, sharing and growing together. Community events, faith-based groups, etc. are a great platform for fostering these relationships, and what better way to unite everyone than with a cause that benefits us all: a healthy environment!

Create a dedicated event in a large public space or transform your next neighborhood day into a fun recycling educational opportunity. By hosting engaging activities, informative tables and interactive stations, you can turn a simple community day into a catalyst for change, encouraging everyone to recycle correctly and protect our planet. Here's how you can make your recycling event informative and engaging.

### Have a Recycling Table at a Neighborhood Day

Identify an upcoming event in your neighborhood where you can set up a recycling awareness table. Engage your local hauling partner, recycling facility workers, council members or community groups to host the table and share their expertise. Leverage monthly cleanup days or other regular community gatherings as opportunities to raise awareness and amplify your message. Look for events where you can collaborate effectively.

#### To make your tabletop a more impactful experience, here are some ideas:

- ▶ **Interactive Booths:** Set up stations to teach people what can and cannot be recycled. Set up boxes for recycling, landfill, compost and specialized waste streams for a hands-on sorting activity.
- ▶ **Games and Challenges:** Organize fun games and challenges.
  - ▷ Have a recycling relay race. Participants sort recyclable items into the correct bins within a certain amount of time.
  - ▷ Create trivia questions and quiz participants on their recycling knowledge.
  - ▷ Set up a spin-the-wheel.
- ⓘ *See Item #6 in the Appendix for a spin-the-wheel game outline.*
- ▶ **Creative Crafts:** Set up a craft station where attendees can make something new from previously loved or used materials, like planters

from plastic bottles or reusable bags from old t-shirts. Show the creative potential of upcycling! Use the crafts made at the end of the event to put on display at a local recycling center or community center.

- ▶ **Informative Displays:** Use clear, visually appealing displays to share facts about recycling, the environmental impact of waste and tips for reducing waste at home. Use the Recycle Right [flyers and brochures as a resource](#).
- ▶ **Educational Talks and Demonstrations:** Invite experts to give talks or to staff the event. Reach out to recycling centers and staff.

## Host a Touch-a-Truck Event

Organize a touch-a-truck event featuring recycling trucks, fire trucks and other large vehicles that keep your community running smoothly. Allow participants to climb into the vehicle, see the controls and even operate certain features under supervision. Participants can explore the vehicles, meet the operators and learn how these machines contribute to recycling efforts.

## Celebrate a Dedicated Recycling Day

Celebrate Earth Day, America Recycles Day or organize a unique city recycling event dedicated to raising awareness and encouraging proper recycling habits. This event could include the suggestions above for tabling as well as:

- ▶ **Collection Drives:** Stations for collecting hard-to-recycle items such as electronics, batteries, paint and other special waste materials.
- ▶ **Educational Workshops:** Sessions on how to recycle properly, reduce waste and compost at home.
- ▶ **Vendor Booths:** Invite local businesses that offer eco-friendly products and services to set up booths and engage with the community. Add requirements in the vendor contracts to use sustainable packaging only. This can include [BPI certified](#) compostable cutlery (if compost services are available in your area) and recyclable bottles and cups. Prohibit polystyrene products whenever possible.
- ▶ **Recycling Pledge Wall:** Have a wall where community members can write down and share their recycling pledges. This can create a sense of commitment and accountability. If possible, make a plan to hang the pledges in a commonly visited public place, like a library lobby.
- ▶ **Recycling Information Kiosks:** Provide kiosks with information about local recycling programs, pickup schedules and tips for reducing waste.
- ▶ **Food and Refreshments:** Offer food and drinks, with minimal packaging and compostable or recyclable serveware. Invite local businesses with sustainable food options.

# Conclusion

By utilizing this toolkit, you're one step closer to improving your community's recycling program.

Now that you are ready to get started with the Recycle Right Campaign, don't forget to track and celebrate your progress.

Complete [this form](#) to let NLC and WM know how you have successfully used this toolkit to educate residents and the community about the basics of good recycling. The information you submit could be highlighted in future blogs and webinars from which others can learn. Good luck!

**Questions? Reach out to [membership@nlc.org](mailto:membership@nlc.org).**



# Appendix: Templates and Outreach Materials



## ITEM #1: Sample Newsletter Language

The [INSERT MUNICIPALITY NAME] is excited to share we have joined the National League of Cities and WM Recycle Right Campaign. Our goal is to help you feel more confident about what can go in the recycling bin, to show you what your recyclables become in their second life and encourage you to recycle more of the good stuff. Learn more here (link “here”) and be on the lookout for upcoming educational information and opportunities.



## ITEM #2: Recycling Plant Tour – Partner Invitation Email Template

Dear [INSERT INTENDED PARTNER]

I am reaching out on behalf of [INSERT MUNICIPALITY NAME], a proud participant of the National League of Cities and WM Recycle Right Campaign. We are committed to enhancing public confidence and understanding about recycling practices.

As part of our efforts, we are excited to announce guided tours at [INSERT FACILITY NAME], designed to show residents and visitors what happens to their recyclables after they leave your home. Showcasing the processes and technologies we employ will bring us closer to our goal of Recycling Right and fostering a more sustainable future.

We believe that your organization, given its commitment to [MENTION SPECIFIC GOALS OR VALUES RELATED TO SUSTAINABILITY], is an ideal partner for this initiative. Your support and collaboration could help expand the impact and reach of our tours.

We are kindly extending an invitation for your organization to attend a tour. Please feel free to schedule a tour at your convenience through this [LINK] or contact us directly at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER].

To learn more about our initiative, please visit [INSERT LINK TO MORE INFORMATION].

Thank you for considering this opportunity to join us. We look forward to the possibility of hosting you at our facility.



### **ITEM #3: Sample Recycling Plant Tour Description for Promotional Material**

At [INSERT FACILITY NAME], tour participants can get an inside look at how various recyclables are sorted and handled. As a [SINGLE STREAM, DUAL STREAM] facility, we are offering a comprehensive tour of our operations. Participants will visit our [SAMPLE TEXT: Recycling Facility, where items from the recycle bins are sorted]. This tour provides a behind-the-scenes look at our facilities and educates participants on what specific items are accepted in each bin, the importance of correct sorting, and the potential issues and hazards caused by improper recycling. Join us in helping to raise awareness of this important practice!



## ITEM #4: Media Advisory Template for Local Press Event

[INSERT City logo and [Recycle Right Campaign logo](#)]

[INSERT MUNICIPALITY NAME]

For Immediate Release

Date: [Insert Date]

Contact: [Insert Contact Name and Information]

### [INSERT MUNICIPALITY NAME] Joins National League of Cities Recycle Right Campaign in Collaboration with WM

**What:** [INSERT MUNICIPALITY NAME] is proud to announce a public forum event to highlight our participation in the Recycle Right Campaign, spearheaded by the National League of Cities and WM. This event will feature informative panel discussions led by [name specific elected officials, public works staff, environmental advocates and industry experts].

**Where:** [Insert Event Location], [Insert Event Address]

**When:** [Insert Date & Time], [Insert any relevant time details, such as the panel discussion or special presentations time slots]

**Details:** Join us as we explore impactful recycling practices within our community. Discussion points include:

- ▶ Demonstrations of cutting-edge recycling equipment and technology and how it's improving the amount of materials that can be recycled.
- ▶ Insightful discussions led by elected officials, public works staff and community leaders.
- ▶ An overview of the historical contributions to recycling by local figures and plans for future enhancements.

This event will be live streamed to ensure broad access. Photography and video opportunities will feature our latest recycling technologies and initiatives.

**Interviews:** The following individuals will be available for interviews: [Insert names and titles of available interviewees...Mayor, Council Members, Public Works Director, etc.]

**Learn More:** For additional information about the Recycle Right Campaign and our initiatives, please visit [insert a dedicated webpage link here]. For further details or to schedule an interview, please contact [Insert Contact Name and Information].



## ITEM #5: Sample Video Script

“Hello, residents of [INSERT MUNICIPALITY NAME]! As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance community health and sustainability, we’re proud to join the Recycle Right Campaign, a collaboration with the National League of Cities and WM. Recycling properly is so important, not only for our community but also for our economy and the planet. [SAMPLE TEXT FOR AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT: Did you know that incinerating 10,000 tons of waste creates only 1 job, while landfilling the same amount creates 6 jobs? But recycling that same 10,000 tons can create 36 jobs! The National Recycling Coalition reports that recycling has generated 1.1 million jobs, \$236 billion in gross annual sales, and \$37 billion in annual payroll.\*]”

According to the [latest EPA data](#), the recycling and composting of material in 2018 saved over 193 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. This is equal to emissions from over 41 million passenger vehicles annually.

Recycling provides economic benefits, conserves energy, minimizes our carbon footprint and makes our community cleaner. That’s why we should all recycle!

How can you recycle properly? We’ll guide you through the dos and don’ts and explore how each of us can make a significant impact.

### Part 1: Current Recycling Facility Issues

Recently, our workers have faced challenges like [INSERT SPECIFIC ISSUES such as increased contamination from non-recyclable materials, disruptions in operations and safety risks, etc.]. This is not just a facility issue; it affects our entire community by [INSERT IMPACT such as physical harm to workers, costs to fix machinery, increasing processing costs, reducing the effectiveness of recycling programs, etc.]. It’s crucial for our community to understand how incorrect recycling practices can lead to bigger issues.

### Part 2: How to Recycle Right

Recycling isn’t just about throwing items into a bin. It’s about making sure the right items make it to the right place. Here’s a quick guide:

**Recycling Symbols:** You’ve seen the recycling symbol on many products, but what does it mean? [SAMPLE FOR AUDIENCE: Not everything with this symbol can be recycled. On plastics, this symbol indicates what material a plastic is made of, but it might not be of high enough quality to be turned into something new. So, instead focus on recycling just a few things: bottles, cans,

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\* Source: National Institutes of Health. <https://nems.nih.gov/environmental-programs/pages/benefits-of-recycling.aspx>



paper and cardboard. Everything must be clean and dry. Boxes should have packaging removed and be flattened. And yes, pizza boxes are recyclable, as long as you take out all the food leftovers. Plastic bottles, tubs, jugs and jars can go into the bin.]

**Proper Sorting:** Here's a few expert tips:

- ▶ Your recyclables need to be relatively free of food and liquids, but they don't need to be spotless. You don't need to wash them in the dishwasher or sink, just give it a firm tap over your trash/compost bin. If you need help getting everything out of a container, use a spatula.
- ▶ Anything smaller than the palm of your hand is too small for most recycling facilities.
- ▶ This means you should leave your bottle caps on your bottles, as long as the bottles are empty! Recyclers have put a process in place over the last decade or so to ensure caps are recycled, but they must stay on the bottles.
- ▶ Last tip: All recyclables should be loose in your cart/bin for pickup by [HAULING ENTITY NAME] trucks. This means your recyclables should not be in bags. We know this is different than what you're supposed to do with the trash, and we hope it isn't too confusing. The recycling facility moves very fast, and they rarely have time to safely open bags to see what's inside. Make sure your recyclables make an impact by putting them loose into your cart so they can be sorted to the right place when they get to the [NAME RECYCLING FACILITY].

### **Part 3: Local Recycling Rules**

Some communities have unique rules, including [INSERT MUNICIPALITY NAME—if applicable]. Here are a few key rules to keep in mind [INSERT LOCALIZED RULES]. Always check our local waste management website for the most up-to-date information.

### **Part 4: Call to Action**

We need everyone's help to make recycling a success. Here's what you can do: 1) Educate Yourself and Others: Stay informed about what can and cannot be recycled. 2) Be Mindful: Before you throw, know where it should go. 3) Community Participation: Join us for our next community cleanup day or visit the recycling center.

Let's all Recycle Right and contribute to a more sustainable future for [INSERT MUNICIPALITY NAME]!



## Item #6: Spin-the-Wheel Recycling Game Outline

### Suggested Wheel Sections:

**Trivia Questions:** Ask a recycling-related question. If the participant answers correctly, they win a small prize. Consider offering prizes made of recycled content to reinforce the message.

### Examples:

**1. Q: Can plastic bags be recycled in curbside bins?**

A: No, they need to be taken to special drop-off locations.

**2. Q: Can clothes and shoes be put in the recycling bin?**

A: No, do not put them in your bin. Find a charity or drop off location that will accept your old clothing or shoes.

**3. Q: How many times can paper be recycled?**

A: Paper can be recycled about 5 to 7 times before the fibers become too short to be used again.

**4. Q: What type of glass can be recycled?**

A: Most glass bottles and jars can be recycled, but items like mirrors, windows, and ceramics cannot be recycled curbside.

**5. Q: Should you leave caps on plastic bottles when recycling?**

A: Yes, you should leave caps on plastic bottles when recycling.

**6. Q: Can I put broken glass in the recycling bin?**

A: No, it's hazardous not only to you but for waste handlers. Recycling companies do not accept broken glass.

**7. Q: Can you recycle pizza boxes?**

A: Yes, but only if all leftover pizza has been removed. Grease on pizza boxes is okay! [if compost is available, mention this option.]

**8. Q: What does e-waste refer to?**

A: E-waste refers to electronic waste, such as old computers, phones, and other electronic devices.

**9. Q: Can aluminum foil be recycled?**

A: Yes, but it must be clean and free of food residue.

**10. Q: What is composting?**

A: Composting is the process of recycling organic waste, such as food scraps and yard waste, into valuable soil amendments.

**11. Q: What are the three Rs of waste management?**

A: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

**12. Q: Can you recycle polystyrene (commonly called Styrofoam™) in curbside bins?**

A: No, polystyrene is generally not accepted in curbside recycling bins.

**13. Q: Can you recycle used paper towels?**

A: No, used paper towels cannot be recycled because their fibers are too short to be given a second life.

**Prize Spots:** Participants win a prize immediately. Example prizes: reusable bags, reusable straw, water bottle, Recycle Right merchandise, candy etc.

**Craft Challenges:** Invite participants to create something from a small selection of recycled materials. Example challenge: "Make a flower from old magazines and paper clips."

**Pledges:** Have participants make a pledge to improve their recycling habits and sign a community pledge board. Example pledge: "I pledge to rinse my recyclables before putting them in the bin."

**Recycle Relay:** Participants are timed as they sort items into the correct bins. Example items: plastic bottle, cardboard box, food waste (foam replicas work great for a cleaner experience), clothing, glass jar and/or any old car part.

**Game Instructions:**

**Set Up:** Divide the wheel into sections, each labeled with one of the above categories.

**Spin and Play:** Participants spin the wheel and follow the instructions for the section they land on.

**Rewards:** Offer rewards for correct answers and completing challenges.

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