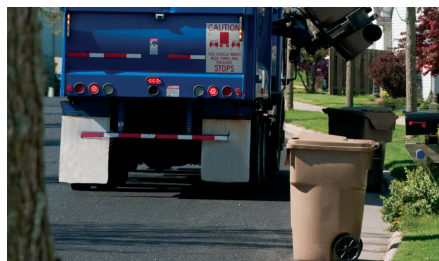


Tips for Responsible Units



Reducing Recycling Costs and Strengthening Your Program



Reducing costs and strengthening your program

Short-term adjustments

- Work with your hauler
- Shop around for services
- E-Cycle electronics
- Collaborate with neighboring RU programs

Medium-term changes

- Increase participation through outreach
- Re-evaluate yard materials collection
- Purchase your own carts

Long-term redesigns

- Pay as you throw
- Alternative funding options
- Single stream
- Automated carts

While most Wisconsinites agree on the value of recycling, the costs of running a collection program can be challenging. Many local government responsible units (RUs)¹ in Wisconsin have found that making changes to their programs—even small ones—can reduce costs. This document summarizes actions taken by RUs across the state to make their programs more effective and efficient.

Remember that it takes time and patience to implement change and realize the benefits. Some of the options listed here may not provide immediate cost reductions, but all can lead to a more effective program and save money in the long run.

All resources listed inside are accessible through our website. Visit dnr.wi.gov and search “managing RU costs”

Along with the resources listed inside, here are more resources for reducing costs:

- UW Extension-Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Program: www.uwex.edu/shwec/ or email: shwec-help@uwm.edu
- Wisconsin Business Recycling Toolkit: www.shwec.uwm.edu/recyclingtoolkit
- EPA Tools For Local Government Recycling Programs: www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/tools/localgov/index.htm
- Contact your DNR Regional Recycling Specialist: dnr.wi.gov/staffdir/dynamic/recycling.asp
- Call the DNR Recycling Program at 608-267-7550.

¹ Wisconsin's recycling law requires local units of government called responsible units to implement recycling programs to manage waste materials banned from landfill disposal or incineration under s. 287.07, Wis. Stats. For more information visit dnr.wi.gov and search “recycling laws”.

Tips for Responsible Units

Short-term adjustments

1. Work with your hauler

Your hauler may have suggestions on how to improve your recycling and/or trash collection program. Even if improvements don't result in immediate savings, this

conversation will foster a better relationship and put you on better ground for future contract negotiations.

Check your bill!

Billing mistakes, though uncommon, sometimes occur. Some RUs have reported that a review of their bill revealed their haulers were overcharging them. Examples include being charged for houses not receiving services and paying disposal fees for refuse picked up between the RU and the landfill.

Questions to ask:

- Are dumpsters or bins full? Can you reduce the number of pickups or size of the bins/dumpsters?
- Are residents doing a good job preparing and separating recyclables? Has the hauler given you and your residents a list of materials that they accept?
- Is the hauler willing to make cost reducing changes in exchange for a contract extension?

Additional resources:

- dnr.wi.gov and search for "managing RU costs" There are a number of UW SHWEC and other publications listed including
 - "Contracting for Municipal Solid Waste Collection Services (UW SHWEC)
 - "Contracting for Collection Services: Contract Provisions (UW SHWEC)

4. Shop around for services

In 2011, one RU was receiving 65-85 cents per gallon for the used oil they collected from their residents. At the beginning of 2012, a competitor called and offered them more money. A few phone calls later, their original service provider met the competitor's offer of \$1.25 per gallon and included a complimentary cleaning of the spill containment tank. The recycling chair reminds us to shop around for better prices, just like we do when we are spending our own money.

Additional Resources:

- www.WisconsinRecyclingDirectory.com is a database of companies that collect and/or process recyclable materials.

2. E-Cycle electronics

- Become a registered E-Cycle Wisconsin collector and work with a registered recycler that receives funding from electronics manufacturers to help cover recycling costs.
- If your RU is a registered E-Cycle collector, check with other registered recyclers to see if they can offer a better deal.

**E-CYCLE
WISCONSIN**



- Don't want to be a collector? Direct citizens to a registered E-Cycle collection site rather than providing the service directly.

Additional resources:

- dnr.wi.gov/ecycle

3. Reach out to neighboring RUs

You may achieve better services for lower costs by working together with other RUs. Many RUs in the state work together on things like education and outreach, joint operation of a drop-off facility or jointly contracting with haulers (larger service areas are more lucrative and give you more negotiating power).

Questions to ask:

- Is there a neighboring municipality that is similar to yours? Could you combine resources or services to reduce costs?
- Are you or a neighbor looking to open a new program/facility? Perhaps you could work together and share the costs.

Additional resources:

- dnr.wi.gov and search for "consolidation"
- Working with another RU may make you eligible for additional grant funding. dnr.wi.gov/Aid/Consolidation.html

Medium-term changes

1. Increase participation

The 5 Ws of Recycling

- Who should recycle?
- What to recycle and how to prepare and sort it?
- Where to recycle it?
- When is the recycling picked up/when is the drop-off open?
- Why is recycling a good idea?

Can your residents quickly and accurately tell you? Help them by providing each household with a simple flier that explains the 5 Ws.

The greatest barrier to a fully optimized recycling system is knowledge. Some people still don't know that recycling is provided, have not been convinced that it is worth the effort or do not know all 5 Ws. Correcting these conditions is a major step to increasing participation, which in turn makes for a stronger program, gets residents more involved and increases the amount of materials recycled. This means less garbage and reduced costs for disposal, and the potential for increased income from sales of recyclables.

Additional resources:

- Check dnr.wi.gov for new publications on participation
- Request free DNR outreach materials and signage at dnr.wi.gov/topic/outreach.html
- Use the Brochure Creation Tool: www4.uwm.edu/Dept/shwec/brochure/

2. Re-evaluate your yard materials collection system

- Evaluate the number of collections per year
 - Can you get by with fewer?
- Evaluate yard materials collection site hours
 - Can you reduce them?
- Can you consolidate collection sites with a neighboring community?
- Is there a commercial composter interested in your compostable material? You may save money by working with a private operator to collect and compost your residents' yard materials.
- Encourage home composting! Much of the food and yard materials generated can be handled with a simple household compost bin.
- Remind residents that using a mulching mower and leaving grass clippings on the lawn can save time and money.

Additional resources:

- UW-Extension SHWEC website: www.uwex.edu/shwec/
- dnr.wi.gov and search for "compost"

If you must reduce employee hours, check with local service organizations about manning your drop-off center as a community service project.

3. Consider purchasing recycling bins or carts

Quick facts on carts:

- Plan for one cart per household for each recycling or trash service provided.
- Carts cost \$50-75 each. It's better to spring for the more expensive carts. They last longer and save money in the long run.
- Remember to factor in spare carts for replacement and growth.

Some haulers charge a cart surcharge. This is meant to pay for the purchase of carts, but often continues after the carts have been paid for. It may be cheaper in the long run to purchase your own carts.

Questions to ask:

- Does your hauler charge a cart surcharge?
- Would having your own carts reduce your costs?
- Are you able to secure funds to cover up-front purchase costs?

Additional resources:

- UW-Extension SHWEC "Recycling Containers, Carts, and Bins—Source List:" www4.uwm.edu/Dept/shwec/publications/publications.cfm

Tips for Responsible Units

Long-term redesigns

1. Pay-as-you-throw

PAYT, also known as volume-based fees, charges residents for garbage collection based on the amount they throw away. It is similar to other utility services, such as water and electricity, where households pay according to the amount they use. Because residents pay for garbage based on volume, this system encourages residents to reduce waste and increase the amount they recycle, reuse or compost. There are many PAYT methods; one might be right for you!

Additional resources:

- dnr.wi.gov and search for "PAYT"
- There are a number of UW SHWEC and other publications listed including
 - "Volume Based Fee Collection Guide" (UW SHWEC)
 - "PAYT Toolkit" (US EPA)

2. Look into alternative funding options

Traditionally, RUs have relied on the general property tax levy as the payment mechanism for garbage and recycling services, and recycling costs not covered by a state recycling grant come out of the general budget. Today, more municipalities are shifting to alternative funding options to help cover recycling and trash collection costs. Examples include creating a line item on the tax bill that goes directly to fund recycling and trash collection or charging user fees such as under a PAYT system.

Additional resources:

- UW-Extension SHWEC "Primer on Financing Municipal Recycling and Solid Waste Management Programs" www4.uwm.edu/Dept/shwec/publications/publications.cfm

3. Switch to single stream collection

Single stream means that all recyclables are placed in one bin and sorted at the processing facility. This reduces handling costs because there is only one bin, and increases participation because recycling becomes more convenient. Often this switch is accompanied by a change to automated carts (see below). This is a big change and involves a lot of work between the RU, the hauler, and the processing facility, but many Wisconsin communities have taken the plunge. The first step is to start this conversation with others that currently operate or have considered single stream.

Additional resources:

- UW-Extension SHWEC "Single Stream" www4.uwm.edu/Dept/shwec/publications/publications.cfm

4. Consider an automated cart system

Automated carts mean that recyclables are placed in a specially designed cart that is rolled out to the curb for collection. The collection truck has a mechanical arm that dumps recyclables without the driver getting out of the truck. This reduces time spent on collection (less time per bin), requires a smaller crew and reduces on the job injuries and workers' compensation claims (one driver, no one handling bins). Automated carts are also known to increase recycling rates since the carts are often more convenient to use and move than the old style bins.

Automated carts may entail a large initial capital expense and require a commitment from both the municipality and the hauler. These systems, however, usually pay for themselves in a few years.

Questions to ask:

- Does your hauler have the capabilities and/or interest in doing this?
- Are there other haulers in your area that are using or exploring this technology?



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