



Book Guide

**SETTING UP A SOLID
WASTE PROGRAM
CHAPTER SEVEN**



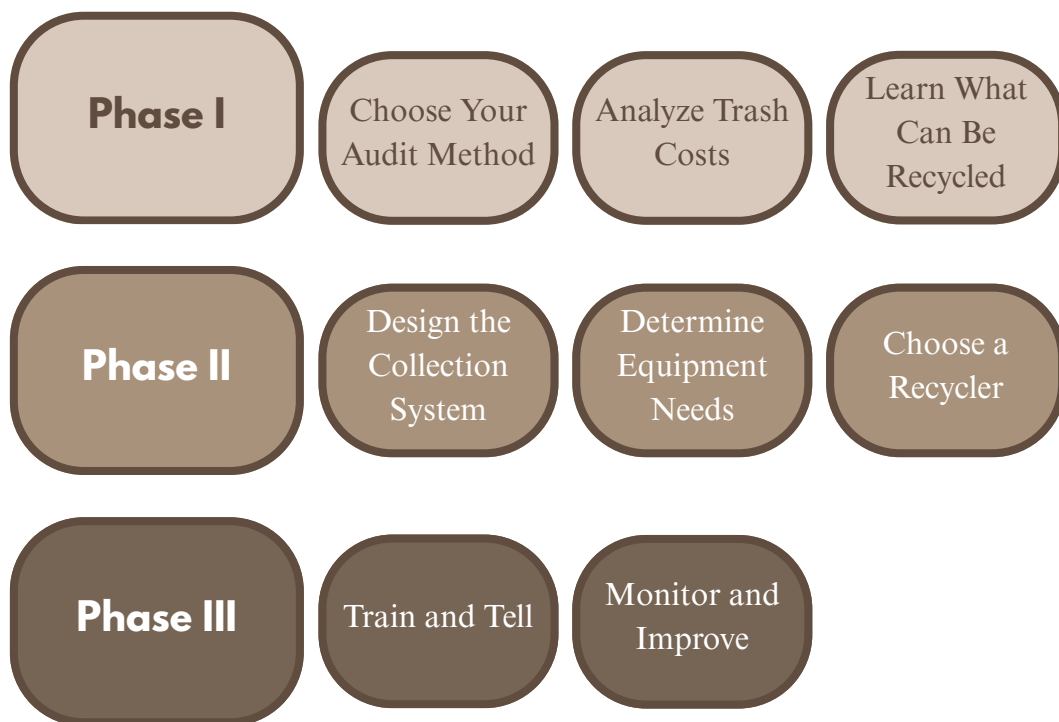
PRACTICAL SUSTAINABILITY

How-to Guide: Setting Up a Solid Waste Program - Reduce, Resue, Recycle

Chapter 7

This guide provides a practical framework for designing and implementing a solid waste reduction program that prioritizes reducing, reusing, and recycling materials effectively within your organization.

Your goal should be to create a system where recycling is easier than throwing something away.



Understanding the Existing Waste Stream

Start by analyzing what's in your trash—this sets the foundation for improvement. Select one of the following audit methods (dumpster dive or waste walk) based on facility size.

Dumpster Dive Audit Method

Perform a dumpster dive audit, a hands-on waste sort to identify recyclables, contamination sources, and opportunities to divert material.

- Take out items from dumpster and spread out on a tarp.
- Categorize materials by what can and cannot be reused, recycled, or composted (paper, cardboard, metal, glass, plastic, organics, landfill items).
- Weigh or estimate volume percentages.
- Document common contaminants in existing recycling bins.

Waste Walk Audit Method

Conduct a waste audit walk of trash areas and bin placement to understand flow and visibility.

- Walk through each office area and collect 10% of the bags.
 - Estimate how much of each material is in each bag. Weigh and measure each one.
 - Complete twice in one month to get an average.

Use your findings to create a map showing all the recycle bins, trash containers and estimates of trash generated.

Analyze Trash Costs

- Review your current waste disposal bills.
- Check your dumpsters just before pick-up and see how much material is there to see if you can downsize.
- Calculate potential savings from landfill diversion.
- Factor in costs for recycling bins, signage, and staff time.

Learn the Local Rules & Coordinate with Trash Handling Staff

Before designing your system, get clarity on what's allowed and who's responsible.

- Contact your local hauler or municipal recycling coordinator to learn:
 - Accepted materials
 - Billing structures and limits
 - Contamination rules and penalties
- Meet with custodial, janitorial, and facilities staff early to gain insight on:
 - Current routes, procedures, and schedules
 - Collection logistics and staff roles
 - Potential challenges to changing bin locations or adding duties

“If you can minimize the amount of times your trash and recycling is touched and moved, the more savings and value you can achieve.” (Practical Sustainability, p. 154)

Design the Collection System

Design a system that aligns with how and where waste is generated.

- Place clearly labeled, color-coded bins at key generation points like breakrooms, copy rooms, and receiving areas. Think about removing individual bins at each employee's desk and having a central recycling hub.
- Ensure bins are sized appropriately for the materials and emptied consistently and place them in high traffic areas (break rooms, printers, entrances).
- Determine where you will store materials. Look for out-of-the-way accessible areas.

Determine Equipment Needs

Once your system is mapped out, identify the right equipment.

- Match bin types, sizes, and lids to the volume and nature of your recyclables.
- Consider whether you need carts or balers to efficiently manage movement and storage.

Choose a Recycler

Ensure your materials have somewhere to go.

- Contact local haulers to confirm who can handle your specific materials.
- Explore specialized outlets for hard-to-recycle waste like shrink wrap, electronics, or pallets.
- Check whether consolidation hubs or business parks offer shared services to reduce costs.
- Have quarterly meetings with your recycler to keep up on how to sort and maximize your recycling streams' value and understand new opportunities.

Train and Communicate

Even the best-designed system fails without user buy-in.

- Launch a training campaign that includes:
 - Bin signage with photos of acceptable/unacceptable materials (labels with pictures and only a few words work best).
 - Visual guides and color-coded systems
 - Short meetings or videos explaining the program's purpose
- Share data and successes with staff to build momentum.
- Use feedback to identify confusion or contamination points.

“We did a small observation study ... and found that if a person doesn't know within the first five seconds where to put the waste, they will pick the nearest opening...”. (Practical Sustainability, p. 161)

Monitor and Improve

Track your results and adapt as needed.

- Monitor volumes, contamination, and participation trends.
- Use bin weight (if tracked) or pickup frequency and bin fullness to estimate success.
- Conduct periodic audits/walk-throughs.
- Celebrate wins, adjust signage and/or bin location, and retrain when needed.

Additional Tips for materials you are still landfilling:

1. Eliminate the material from entering the organization.
 2. Find a creative alternative solution for the material.
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