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Introduction

Over the years, Rubicon has worked with thousands of clients of all shapes, sizes and industries to embrace sustainable business practices. In doing so, we're able to implement a series of practical steps to reduce and divert waste. We call it the RUBICONMethod.

Whether it's paper, plastic, cardboard, organics, electronics or even hazardous waste, your business is likely throwing away something that could be reused, recycled, or even eliminated from the start. The worst part? Both your business and the environment are paying for it.

The RUBICONMethod solves many of the most common waste challenges and provides step-by-step instructions on how to make a sustainability program work for your business. It includes

six basic steps that guides your business or organization through initial examination and planning, fundamentals for communication and waste reduction, and finally to tactical implementation and tracking.

There's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to sustainability. We all have one thing in common: waste, and the RUBICONMethod provides a proven solution. Are you ready to get your hands dirty?

Most recyclable materials in the U.S. wind up in landfills (or even waterways), instead of being recycled. Did you know that the U.S. recycling rate is only 34%? This rate lags far behind many other nations' rates.

6 STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL RECYCLING AND WASTE REDUCTION

D I V E R T

01 Determine	02 Initiate	03 Vocalize	04 Eliminate	05 Roll-out	06 Track
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current state of waste and recycling program • accepted materials and local regulations • needs, goals, and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new plan for waste and recycling collection • optimized services and hauler schedule • equipment and sustainable office supply purchases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program improvements to staff, vendors, and custodians • what to recycle through picture-based bin signage • internal team leaders for feedback and questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food waste • disposable tableware and non-recyclables • individually packaged goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • side-by-side bin stations • color-coded bin liners (landfill, recycling, compost) • bins for donations and hard to recycle materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recycling rates and bin contamination • ongoing program adjustments • sustainability goals and reporting



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1

Step 01:
Determine

The first step of the RUBICON Method is to **determine** your current waste landscape.

This includes the types of waste materials being collected, the services and equipment used for collection, and the local infrastructure for accepting and processing different materials.



Current state of waste and recycling program

We encourage you to conduct a waste audit to understand what materials your business is generating.

A waste audit is a survey of your business's waste stream. The goal is to discover what types and quantities of waste you produce within a time frame.

By conducting a waste audit, you can analyze the results to change dumpster size and frequency, identify potential materials that can be recycled, and even ensure employees are recycling correctly.

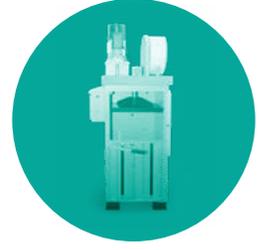
See our practical guide to a self-conducted waste audit.

COMMON WASTE MATERIALS

Start by making a list of the most prevalent waste materials your business produces. This checklist can help get you started.

- Food waste
- Cardboard
- Paper
- Plastic bottles
- Metal cans
- Glass
- Packaging
- Food service ware
- Plastic film
- Napkins/paper hand towels
- Bio/medical or hazardous

Next, take a look at the services used to manage the waste materials in your list above.



Below are all the various types of waste removal services. Which combination of these does your business have?

WASTE REMOVAL SERVICES

- Municipal Solid Waste (MSW)**
Common, run-of-the-mill “trash” or “garbage” consisting of everyday discarded items that are landfilled or incinerated
- Organics Recycling**
Food scraps and other natural materials sent to compost/anaerobic digestion/animal feed
- Single Stream Recycling (SSR) or Mixed Recycling**
Unsorted recyclables often including plastic, metal, glass and paper
- Cardboard/OCC Recycling**
Cardboard boxes and packaging, often broken down and baled for rebates

Disclaimer: We do not have all of these offerings in every market. If you don't have any one of these bins but generate the material, contact Rubicon to discuss adding new waste streams.

Accepted materials and local regulations

Waste and recycling facilities vary from one location to another. Before you can **initiate** a plan (Step 02), you will need to know which of your waste materials above are (or are not) accepted by your local facilities.

Check the RUBICONConnect Portal for videos and signage to help you understand what materials are generally recyclable.

WHICH MATERIALS ARE NOT ACCEPTED IN YOUR AREA?

Listed below are materials that are occasionally not accepted in certain areas. Check with your waste provider and/or Public Works Department and mark the materials that are not accepted in your area. If your business operates in multiple locations, repeat the activity below for each location.

- Glass
- Plastic bags/film
- Flexible packaging
- Organic/food waste
- E-waste
- Hazardous waste
- Compostable serviceware
- Steel cans
- Styrofoam

Needs, goals, and opportunities

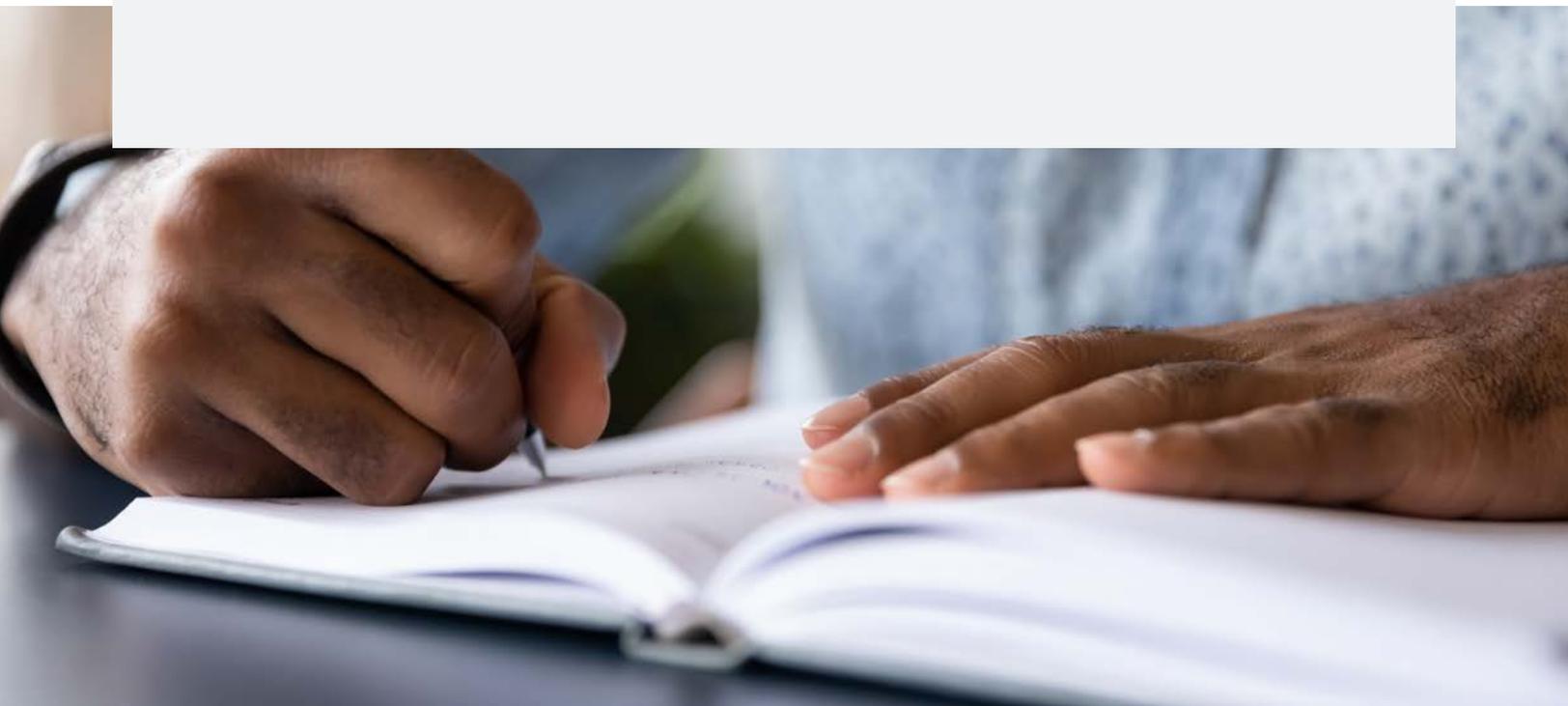
Make a list of the specific needs for your site as well as opportunities. Take time to set goals around waste reduction and sustainability. Sharing these goals will help your key stakeholders understand why this project is meaningful and requires their help.

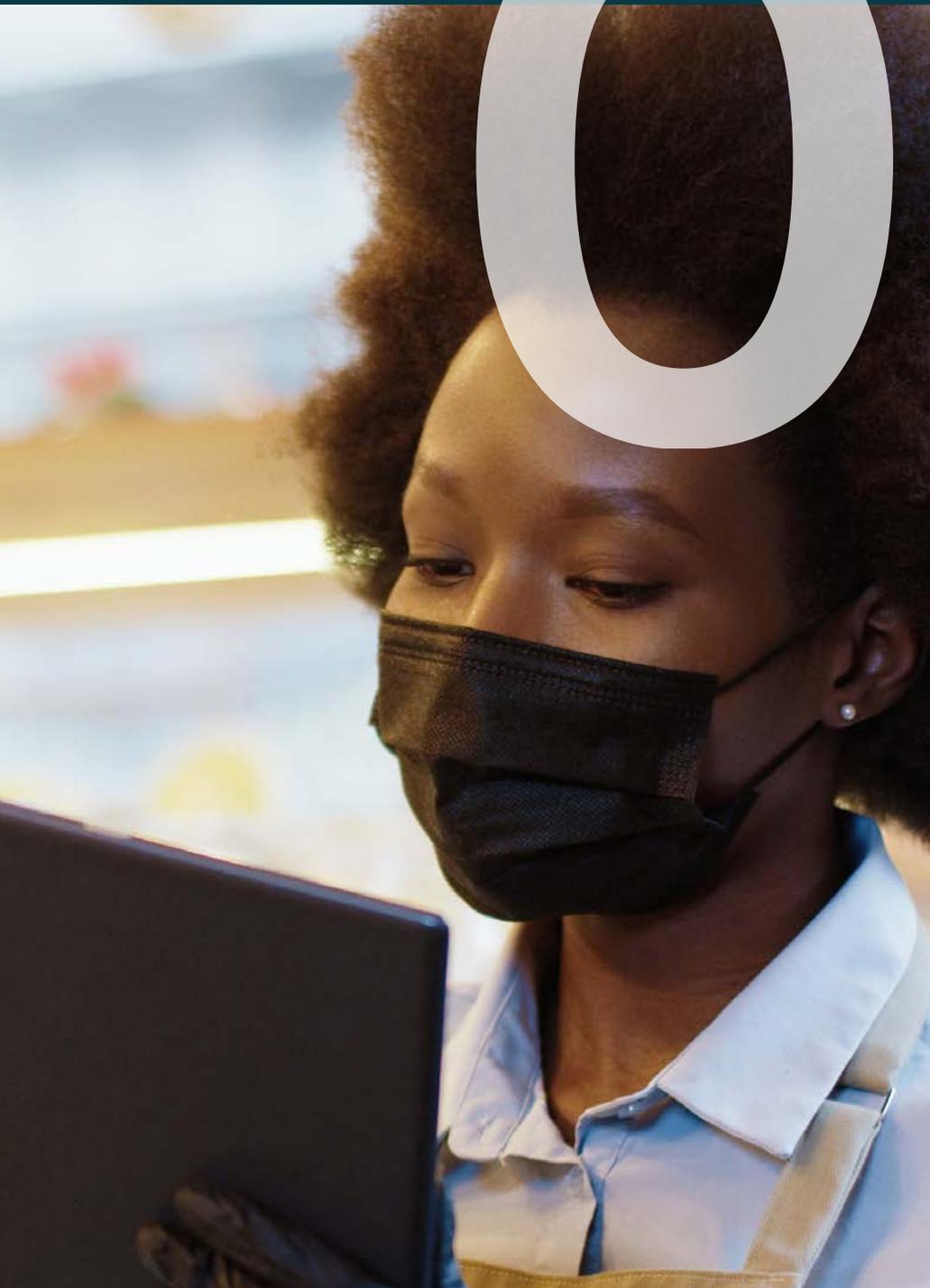
EXAMPLES:

— Choose a material in your trash bin that you found in your waste audit and try to find a reusable, recyclable, or compostable replacement.

— Ask vendors if they can take back packaging they use to deliver products.

Contact Rubicon for a consultation specific to your business.





02

Step 02:
Initiate

Now that you have determined your current waste landscape, it's time to **initiate** a plan forward.



New plan for waste and recycling collection

Start by looking at the data you collected in Step 01. Identify which of your waste materials can be recycled locally going forward. Also be sure to check with local regulations in case recycling or organics diversion is mandated.

Below are some of the most common and impactful solutions. Consider these as part of your plan, as well as any other relevant services outlined in Step 01.

WASTE REMOVAL SOLUTIONS

- ❑ **Single Stream Recycling (SSR)** or Mixed Recycling, is a common solution because it enables the collection of multiple types of materials—paper, glass, plastic, metal—all in one bin. If SSR is not available in your location, or if certain materials (like glass or paper) are not accepted, then your plan should account for collecting those materials in separate bins.
- ❑ **Food Waste/Organics Recycling** is a popular plan for restaurants and businesses with large amounts of break room waste. Food waste is heavy and often causes high garbage removal costs when not recycled.

- ❑ **Cardboard/OCC Recycling** can be a smart collection plan for businesses producing large volumes of cardboard boxes and packaging waste. Rebates are also available.

- ❑ **Mail-back programs** Mail-back programs are convenient pre-paid pack and ship disposal method for retailers and other generators to dispose of regulated waste materials.

It is a great option for value and cost savings. The containers take up very little space. They are compact and easy to handle. They can be easy filled, closed, and shipped via Fed-Ex or UPS.

You can get mail-back boxes for batteries, PPE, light bulbs, plastic bags, and more via the Rubicon Marketplace.

Optimized services and hauler schedule

Refer back to the list of current services and equipment in Step 01. Then, work with your Rubicon team to answer these three questions:

01.

Which existing services and equipment are still appropriate as-is?

02.

Should any services be revised, optimized or removed entirely?

03.

What new services and equipment are needed?

Landlord/Leasing agreements can pose challenges when setting up new services and equipment. Ask your waste partner to help you figure out a plan that works.

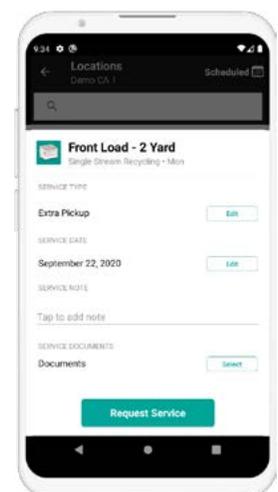
Often when new recycling plans are implemented, businesses find that they produce significantly less “trash” and more recycling. This could mean that your dumpster is half-full, while your recycling container is overflowing. Talk to Rubicon about rightsizing and optimization to help match the right equipment and services to your needs.

Next, match your pick-up schedules and frequency with your services.

If your dumpster is only half-full at the end of every week, perhaps a pick-up every two weeks

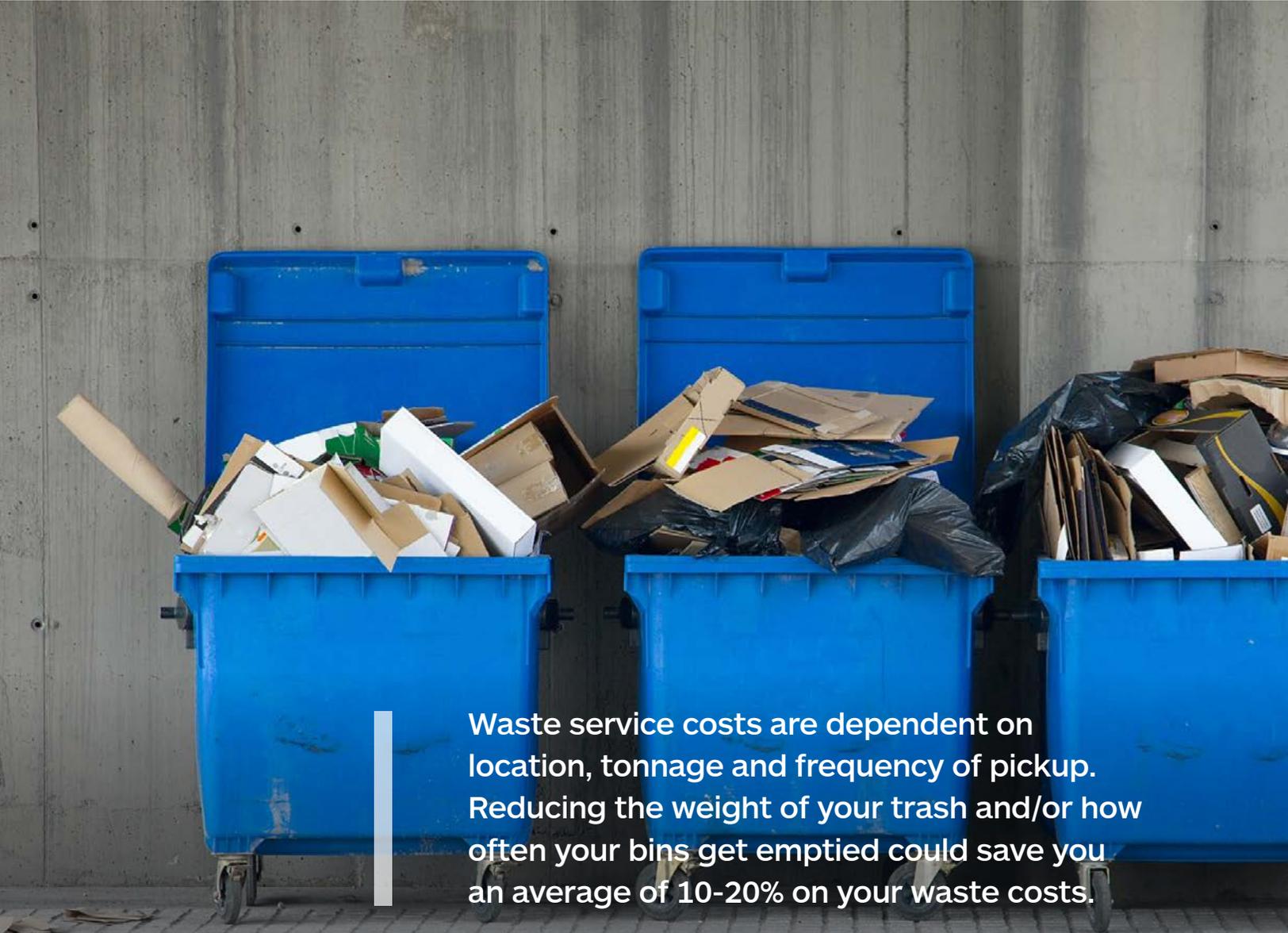
is more appropriate. On the other hand, if your recycling container is overflowing, perhaps it requires more frequent pick-ups.

Reach out to a Rubicon representative if you want to explore options and change or add any services.



Identifying the right frequency of pick-ups not only keeps your back-of-house tidy, but it can also reduce service costs. New services, equipment and pick-ups might sound costly, but there are many ways to make your plan fit your budget.

Cost savings often offsets the price of additional recycling services, and rebate programs can actually end up turning a profit. Keep this in mind when mapping out your plan and budget.



Waste service costs are dependent on location, tonnage and frequency of pickup. Reducing the weight of your trash and/or how often your bins get emptied could save you an average of 10-20% on your waste costs.

Equipment and sustainable office supply purchases

Now that you have a plan, figure out what equipment you have and what you may need to purchase such as new bins and liners. Mapping your sites' bin stations will help ensure you buy the correct number. Refer to Step 05 for more information on bin placement and color-coded liners.

This is also a good time to think about more sustainable purchasing choices in general. Can you ditch plastic shopping bags, Styrofoam, and straws? How about buying paper with recycled content? Other good labels to consider include: Fairtrade, FSC Certified and Certified B Corporation.

Sustainable Sourcing

Consider having a conversation with your suppliers or vendors about the way they package their shipments. Perhaps they could cut out or cut down on their plastic film wrapping around pallets, or replace packaging peanuts with recyclable paper. Develop a Sustainable Purchasing Protocol as a requirement for doing business. At a minimum, you can use this protocol to assess new suppliers and materials going forward. Finally, conduct a Cost Analysis of switching to more sustainable suppliers. You might find the decreased cost in waste removal offsets the potential increased cost of more sustainable suppliers.



New recycling plans don't always require new bins. Consider repurposing old trash cans to be relabeled as recycling.



03



Step 03:
Vocalize

With your action plan in place, it's time to **vocalize** the plan and educate a variety of stakeholders.

The best way to do so is through signage, training and a central point of contact.



Program improvements to staff, vendors, and custodians

Once you have the appropriate signage, it's time to train all staff, vendors and custodial services across the business.

Staff and Vendor Training

It's important to remember that your staff and vendors may not all understand the impact recycling has on the environment, your brand, or the bottom line—or even how/why their individual actions matter. Consider sharing some background information with them before diving into training.

It is important to continually train current and new employees.

Once they understand the why, train them on the nuts and bolts of your plan, the signage, and how it will impact their daily actions. Be sure to cover the topics in the list below and anything else relevant to your specific plan.

You should set out clear expectations with employees on ensuring they throw away items properly and if customers will be throwing away items, employees are there to help them.

Another key stakeholder could be your landlord. Make sure they know your goals and see how they can help too.

STAFF AND VENDOR TRAINING LIST

- Where should staff/vendors put their different types of waste?
- What signage should they look for, and what does each sign mean?
- Where can they direct questions, seek clarification and report issues?
- How can they get more involved? (e.g. a company “Green Team”)

Employee and Custodial Services Training

Employees and if applicable, custodial services, are responsible for depositing bin contents into the correct back-of-house equipment. Training is as critical for this team as it is for staff and other vendors. Follow the list below to ensure this team is trained appropriately.

While this seems relatively straight forward, you shouldn't assume that one training meeting is enough to change old habits. Provide regular reminders and set up a system to enforce accountability. Ensure that your waste plan and sustainability protocol are part of your reporting structure and that each stakeholder is accountable for his/her impact on success.

Maintaining stakeholder buy-in is imperative to achieve the support needed for long-term plan success.

CUSTODIAL TRAINING LIST

- Which bags/liners go in which bins?
 - Clear/Blue liners:** for recyclables
 - Black liners:** for trash/landfill
 - Green certified compostable liners:** for food waste/compost (if applicable)
- Which bins get emptied into which equipment/dumpsters?
- What is the proper breakdown of materials (such as collapsing cardboard boxes) to preserve container space?
- How to operate new equipment, such as balers or compactors?
- Where can they direct questions, seek clarification or report issues?

The questions below can help you think through other stakeholders and what/when to communicate with each group.

It is important to communicate from an ownership level down to employees that it is a huge priority. If applicable, the staff can also communicate priorities to customers and having the appropriate signage, incentives, and etc.

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS



Landlords

Does your landlord understand your waste goals?



Consumer

Does your business target an eco-conscious audience that may applaud or defame your business based on its environmental practices?



Regulatory

Are there food waste or recycling regulations to which your business must adhere?

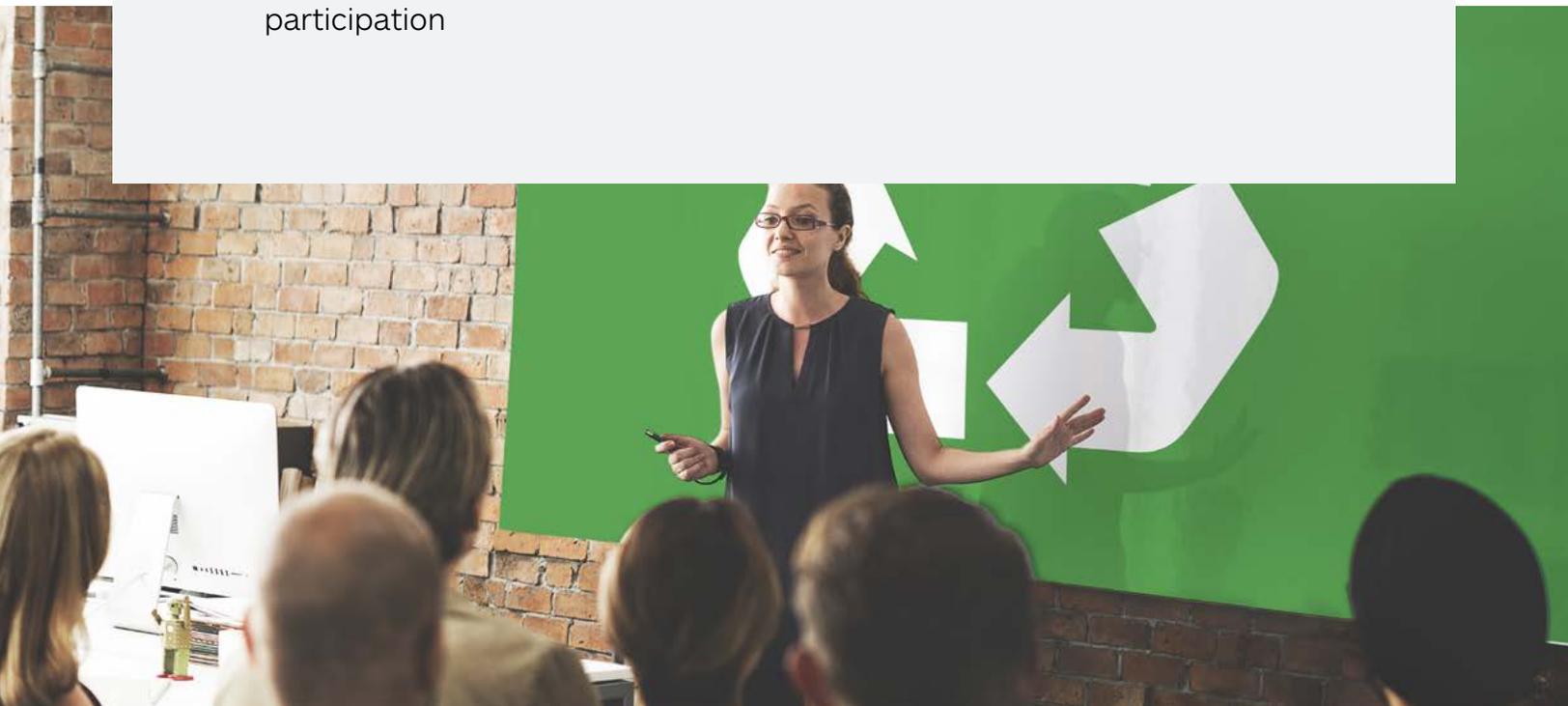
Internal team leaders for feedback and questions

Create a central point of contact for your waste plan, providing all stakeholders with a go-to resource to ask questions, give feedback, report issues and collaborate on key learnings.

With consistent signage, repetitive training, centralized accountability and ongoing support, your plan will be well communicated and set for success.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Create a central email address for questions/feedback
- Start a “Green Team” of passionate staff to educate peers
- Devise a rewards/incentives program to encourage participation
- Institute friendly competition among departments/locations
- Supply recruitment and employee on-boarding materials



Customer Communication and Brand Reputation

Consider starting an incentive program for customers. For example, give a 5 cent discount when customers bring a bag or if they bring their own mug.

By proactively communicating sustainability initiatives, you're showing consumers the commitment your business has toward preserving the environment. Make sustainability part of your brand recognition and generate buzz around the great work your business is doing by incorporating some of these external communications activities into your program.

WAYS TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT YOUR SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

- Parking lot signage reminding retail customers: Don't forget your reusable shopping bags
- Table-top signage reminding patrons that: Napkins are made from trees (please use sparingly)
- Server training and signage stating: To reduce plastic waste, we provide straws upon request
- Hard-to-recycle material collection bins, available to customers through the Rubicon Marketplace
- Press releases, media interviews and website postings that announce your business' sustainability goals and offerings. Be sure to check the Customer Toolkit in the RUBICONConnect Portal.

Picture-based bin signage

Picture-based, color-coordinated signage is one of the best ways to build recycling habits and educate stakeholders.

Rubicon provides signage for you to inform employees and customers what is and is not accepted in single-stream recycling, composting, and landfill.

SIGNAGE BEST PRACTICES

- Use only images of materials locally accepted at each site
- Use signage consistently across an entire site
- Use bilingual signs if appropriate
- Leave no bin unlabeled (including restrooms)



The Rubicon team is happy to answer questions about signage designs, placement, and additional options.



04

Step 04:
Eliminate

Not surprisingly, the best way to **eliminate** waste is to not create it in the first place. In this next step, we introduce more sustainable options and methods for reducing everyday waste.



Food waste

Food waste makes up 50% of the material buried in landfills each year. This means that food is an incredibly impactful item to consider when looking at overall waste footprint.

WAYS TO ELIMINATE AND DIVERT FOOD WASTE

- Get a compost service to pick up food waste
- Be more careful when ordering catering (get an exact headcount, ask for specific food orders instead of larger platters)
- Encourage staff to take home leftover food
- Find a local organization who will accept leftover food or ask caterers and food vendors if they have a way to donate leftover food



Food waste makes up 50% of the material buried in landfills each year.

Disposable tableware and non-recyclables

Disposable tableware is a prominent waste material in many restaurants and business break rooms. Polystyrene (i.e. Styrofoam) cups, plates and to-go containers, as well as plastic utensils, are rarely recyclable. Replace them with reusable kitchenware and reduce unnecessary waste material.

Non-recyclable materials can include items such as packing peanuts, polystyrene molds, bubble wrap, potato chip bags, milk cartons, drink pouches, and more. Talk to Rubicon about alternative procurement options for your business.

ITEMS TO ELIMINATE

- Disposable cups, plates, utensils
(use durable goods or provide compostable ware if you have compost collection and do not have a dishwasher)
- Individual sugar packets/creamers (switch to bulk)
- Individual ketchup/mustard packets
(switch to bulk)
- Plastic water bottles
(provide reusable bottles)
- Straws/stirrers

Individually packaged goods

Replace individually packaged goods with refillable dispensers. Examples include replacing individual coffee pods with a pot of coffee, plastic water bottles with a filtered water tap, individual creamers, and sugars with dispensers.





05



Step 05:
Roll-out

Goals have been set, plans established, critical players educated, and initial reduction steps taken. Now it's time to **roll-out** the plan.

Here's how...



Side-by-side bin stations

Next, it's critical to decide on the placement of your bins (i.e. recycling and "trash cans"), ensuring that they are consistently available throughout the workplace. Every trash bin should have a recycling bin next to it (not across the room or down the hall). Bins should always be placed side-by-side with recycling always on the right.

This system of side-by-side bin placement ensures that users select the most appropriate bin for their waste instead of the most convenient. As a result, your bins will be less contaminated and your plan more successful. If you are providing bins for

material such as food waste, make sure the bins are convenient by placing them in the kitchen, cafeteria, break rooms, etc.

We strongly recommend removing all waste bins from personal workstations or desks, and placing bins in high-traffic, communal areas instead. This requires employees to get up and think about their waste. It also reduces janitorial work by cutting down the number of bins that need to be attended to and enables the custodial team to focus more on implementing the new recycling plan.



Color-coded bin liners

It's critical to use standardized, colored liners (i.e. bags). For example, a black liner for trash (or landfill), a blue/clear liner for recycling, a certified compostable green liner for organics recycling. If possible, match the color of the bin on the outside to the liner.

People are visual learners and these colors have been used for years to designate waste bins nationwide.

Bins for donations and hard-to-recycle materials

Rubicon offers hard-to-recycle material bins that you can mail back. Determine a convenient, accessible location and schedule for the drop-off and pickup of donated materials, such as food, clothing or books. Hard to recycle items include PPE, batteries, light bulbs, and plastic bags. Ensure the bins are labeled with the types of materials and condition accepted.

Want to learn about what to do with materials that are hard to recycle? Check out the Rubicon Marketplace for more information.





6

Step 06: Track

Whether your plan is designed to save money, divert more waste from landfills or achieve an ambitious zero waste goal, it's important to **track** and report progress regularly. Data helps to engage and retain the support of stakeholders, while allowing for continuous improvement.

Rubicon's portal provides information about your waste services and can provide diversion and carbon data.



Recycling rates and contamination

If the objective of your plan is to divert waste from landfills (and recycle more), you'll likely see early signs of success as the most obvious solutions are implemented. But proving success can often be harder than achieving it. Fortunately, certain waste partners offer verified sustainability reporting platforms that track detailed waste data from

source to disposal site, allowing you to see exactly how much waste your business is producing (by location) and where it is going.

New waste plans often see the greatest results in the first 6 months to a year of implementation.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Importance of Public/Private Partnerships

Ongoing program adjustments

No new plan is perfect and breakdowns that result in the contamination of waste streams will occur. Identifying such weaknesses is not a mark of failure but rather an important step in continuous improvement.

Contamination occurs when materials are put in the wrong bins, thereby degrading the contents and rendering them non recyclable.

To understand where the breakdown may be occurring, it's important to conduct regular waste characterizations, assessments and audits with help from your waste partner. These detailed

reports can help you set baseline diversion numbers, identify weaknesses, and evolve your plan going forward.

You may find that other changes at your site require adjustments to your waste and recycling services. Perhaps you add a significant number of new employees, add compost service, or make upstream adjustments that reduce your waste—all of these changes may require you to adapt your service and frequency. Making these adjustments over time ensure that you are receiving the right kind of service and can sometimes create cost savings.



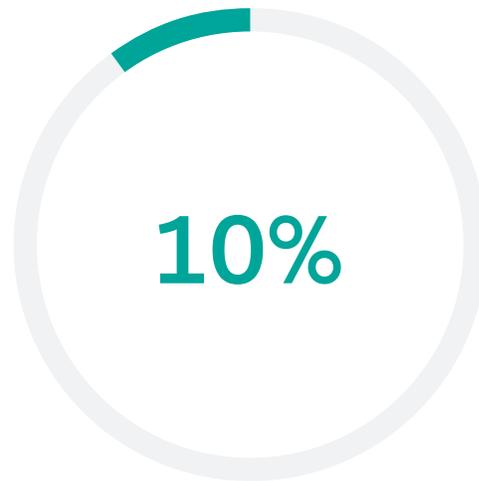
Sustainability goals and reporting

While some businesses simply aim to recycle more, other businesses choose to set defined sustainability goals. Programs such as the TRUE Zero Waste Certification system are designed to help businesses and facilities of all types define, pursue and achieve their zero waste goals.

When a business sends less than 10% of its MSW stream to landfills or incinerators (also considered a 90% diversion rate), it has achieved zero waste.

Whether or not you are ready to declare a zero waste goal, you can begin your sustainability journey by setting your own clear targets. Rubicon can help you determine how to structure goals that make sense to your business and define what success means for you.

You can also consider getting certified through local business recognition programs. Be sure to check with your local municipality or County to see if they offer one.



Zero waste is achieved by sending 10% or less of MSW streams to landfills or incinerators.

Have questions? Need help getting started?
Contact us for a free consultation specific to your business.

It's time to get started.

Thank you for committing to
the Rubicon Recognition Program
and taking the time to learn
about RUBICONMethod.

Log in to your RUBICONConnect
Portal for more information and
training materials:

customer.rubicon.com

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