



# Moving to Toward Zero Landfill

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*Moving toward zero-landfill requires your campus or organization to examine current waste management practices and consider how to modify procedures in order to determine the best management system. What is the best system? One that will take all of the*

## **Rally!**

Bring your Green Team together to outline the objectives, discuss the process, and assign point people for each aspect of this undertaking as outlined below.

## **Create a Baseline**

The first step in the process is to understand the current state and what the opportunities are. This includes getting the costs for waste hauling, cleaning services, and recycling.

## **Do a Dumpster Dive**

The purpose of doing a dumpster dive is to understand what's being thrown out. Steps involved in the process:

- Identify a time to conduct the dive. The best time is right before it's emptied.
- Identify and list typical items that can be recycled.
- Separate trash from items that could be recycled.
- Take pictures and/or video of the items from the dumpster.
- Estimate the percent that could be recycled.

Consider recording the dumpster dive for use when rolling out the new process.

## **Review What's Currently in Place**

It's time to take a walk through the building(s) to check out the recycling containers that are currently in place. During this review, look for:

- Locations, quantity, and type of containers.
- Information available/communicated on what can be recycled in the containers.

Document the locations and information available. Consider taking photos for documentation purposes.

## **Identify the recycler and what they will take**

Now that the team knows what's being thrown out and what's in place to support recycling, it's time to create a proposal outlining the different options.

1) Identify and document the opportunity:

- What types of waste are being thrown out?
- What additional types of recycling can be done?
- What types of containers are needed?
- Where should the containers be placed?
- What type of information/communication is needed by the containers?

2) Identify providers, what they will take, and associated costs. There are a few options.



- Stick with the existing garbage hauler: there's usually a cost to do this.
- Research to find a local recycler such as a regional recycler: this could be a wash in terms of cost or could potentially bring in revenue for the school.
- Nonprofit recycler: this approach helps to create a triple bottom line story.
- Local or regional composting industry: consider if you are not already composting food and yard waste.
- Donate: Organizations such as Habitat Restore and Goodwill will be able to utilize gently used items

During this process the team should provide a list of what needs to be recycled to the different recyclers being considered to ensure they can handle all types of waste that need to be handled. The team may also want to focus on how to modify their purchasing practices in order to better ensure that which comes into the facility can be disposed of properly.

3) Develop a proposal outlining the different options and the pros and cons of each.

- During this process, look for options to switch to items that can be reused. An example of this is switching from plastic silverware to stainless silverware. There is typically a cost savings to these types of switches.

### **Rally!**

It's time to get the Green Team back together to present the options and make decisions about what to implement. Objectives of the rally:

- Make a decision about which option to implement.
- Determine who will be responsible for planning the launch. This is an essential part of the process as this person needs to be committed and have capacity to lead the process.
- Confirm the launch date is feasible and adjust if necessary.

### **Prepare for the Launch –**

\*\*\*See Our ["How To Implement Centralized Waste Hubs"](#) document for details on encouraging positive waste management decisions, signage, and more.

- Determine what bins will be used for recycling and composting. If there are existing bins that can be used, they can be used. As necessary, purchase new bins. All bins need to be labeled. Cardboard dividers work well for separating space for different items within a bin. Consider these lessons learned from other implementations:
  - Around Campus
    - Communicate clearly what can be recycled and provide examples. This list should be supplied with the container.
    - Consider putting the recycling bins into place 4 weeks prior to removing trash receptacles. This will help people to become familiar with the process and what goes where.
  - In Offices:
    - Removing trash cans from offices has a significant impact on behavior.
    - Consider providing a receptacle or paper bag for people to keep at their desks for recycling. Employees can empty these themselves at a centralized bin or custodial services can take care of this. There's a cost benefit to employees taking care of this themselves.



- Develop the marketing and communications plan.
  - Identify key messages.
  - Identify communication channels.
    - Leverage professors as a means of communicating with students.
    - Leverage the school website.
    - Leverage Facebook and other social media platforms already in place at the school.
  - Look for ways to show the process.
  - Leverage the video from the dumpster dive.
- Develop the audit plan and the metrics that will be tracked. Ensure that the metrics focus on the positives. This is an essential component in the process.
- Pick a day for the launch and finalize the launch plan.

An essential component for the launch is finding ways to engrain this process so it becomes part of the culture. It will likely take a few semesters for the new process to become the way things are done so plan to “launch” this effort at the start of the next few semesters.

### **Launch!**

It’s time to implement the items in the launch plan. This is a big step in the process and is building and campus specific. Communication plays a major role in the success of the implementation and it doesn’t hurt to over-communicate.

### **Evaluation**

The best way to evaluate how well the process is working is to do another dumpster dive. This will show what’s not being recycled. This should be done at the beginning and end of the semester with a mid-semester audit. By 4-6 months into the process, an evaluation should be done.

### **Keep the Program Going!**

Ensure that people on the Green Team are assigned to ongoing responsibilities.

- Check in with the recycler on a regular basis: Are they getting the materials the way they should?
- Do a dumpster dive on an annual basis: What’s being thrown away that can be recycled?
- Track metrics in a scorecard and publish the scorecard in places where people will see it.
  - How much is being recycled?
  - How much is being reused?
- Capture stories and share them!