



Drop-Off Recycling Quality Improvement Grant Program - Request for Proposals – August 2022

The need to improve the quality of recyclables is a high priority in light of contamination rates in excess of 25 percent around the country. This challenge is compounded by the contamination restrictions on recyclable materials set by international markets. Due to these market conditions and the current state of recycling, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) and The Recycling Partnership (The Partnership) have partnered on this grant application process.

The Recycling Partnership is a nonprofit organization that works with city governments nationwide to transform their recycling programs. We work on the ground with thousands of communities to transform underperforming recycling programs; we partner with companies to achieve packaging circularity, increase access to recycled materials, and meet sustainability commitments; and we work with government to develop policy solutions to address the systemic needs.

For more information regarding our programs, staff, and funders, visit: www.recyclingpartnership.org.

The purpose of this grant is to partner with Ohio local governments (cities, townships, and villages), counties, and/or solid waste management districts to decrease contamination from drop-off recycling programs while increasing recycling participation and capture of more recyclable materials. This will be achieved by providing financial and technical assistance to develop and implement a comprehensive education and operations behavior strategy. Ohio EPA and The Partnership are seeking grant applications from local governments, counties, and solid waste management districts to engage with residents directly and indirectly to change recycling behavior of those contaminating the stream. To accomplish this, we will be selecting up to four applicants in Ohio by this request for proposal (RFP) process that includes local governments or groups of local governments diverse in geography, population density, and socio-economic status.

The overarching goal of this grant is to improve the quality of recyclables collected at drop-offs for at least 60,000 single-family households representing more than 120,000 people. Additional households could be reached depending on the amount of matching funds available from grantees and other local partnerships with stakeholders such as industry, counties, and solid waste management districts. This is an exciting, high-profile initiative that requires a high degree of readiness and commitment on the part of the applicant's elected officials, city administrators, and those involved with the community's recycling program, including the material recovery facility (MRF). All questions related to this application should be sent to Samantha Longshore at slongshore@recyclingpartnership.org.

Please join us at 1:00 PM ET on Wednesday, October 12th, 2022 for a grant webinar to answer questions. [Register for the webinar here.](#)

Applicants should **carefully read this entire document prior to submitting a proposal.**

Recycling Quality Improvement Grant Program

Eligibility Requirements

For the purposes of this grant program, an eligible applicant is a local government or a solid waste management district representing a region of local governments located in Ohio. Non-profits may apply on behalf of one of these applicable entities. An applicant must operate a drop-off recycling program and have indications of a contamination issue. The proposed service area can be a local government or a portion of a local government, county, or solid waste management district subject to funding availability as outlined below. The Partnership and Ohio EPA seek to select up to four applicants geographically dispersed throughout the state of Ohio, with a priority on rural areas.

Funding Availability and Use of Grant Funds

The average implementation cost for this recycling quality improvement program is estimated to be \$4/household for drop-off programs. Therefore, grant funds of \$3/ household will be distributed up to a maximum of 25,000 single family households (\$75,000) with a minimum of \$1/household coming from the grantee match.

Grant funding is available for the following items:

- Seasonal and/or third-party staff for engaging residents at drop-off sites*
- Survey design, development, and deployment*
- Drop-off signs to educate residents*
- Printing and mailing direct mail pieces*
- Website* and other social media
- Community signage
- Drop-off site anti-contamination security solutions (i.e., fencing, cameras, etc.)
- Other innovative contamination reduction strategies

*Required components of the program. Internal forms of staff may be used to engage residents but will not be eligible for grant funding.

The Partnership will provide graphic design support to customize the educational materials for each grantee. The Partnership requires that the grantee use The Partnership's template for educational materials. However, each grantee can use its existing recyclable material images and icons as needed. Grant funds cannot be used for internal staff costs, or for purposes other than education and outreach for cleaning up the drop-off recycling stream from residential homes. While grant funds will be based on the count of single-family households in the service area, this grant does not preclude providing education to multi-family residents with a goal of improving the drop-off recycling program. Additional programmatic efforts may be included as agreed upon by all parties as long as the minimum educational requirements are met. The list of minimum educational requirements can be found in "Education and Outreach" within the *Additional Requirements* section below. The Partnership is open to creative solutions by applicants to combat contamination and will work with grantees to find solutions that fit their needs.

Additional Requirements

An applicant must also meet all the following requirements:

1. **The applicant must provide drop-off recycling sites either staffed or unstaffed** – Preference will be given to applicants that have the following:
 - a. Identified an existing contamination problem within their recycling collection system.
 - b. A commitment from the grantee to staff drop-off sites to engage residents and audit materials as they come in during the project period.

2. **Grantee Match** – The applicant must demonstrate a minimum funding match of \$1/household and detail the source of all matching funds in the application.

3. **Education and Outreach** – Based on previous lessons learned and research data, The Partnership has developed education and campaign materials to support all requirements listed below including printed materials, signage, and social media programs. The following strategies are a minimum of what is required of all successful grant applications.
 - a. Engaging with residents at drop-off sites to administer surveys gathering basic user information and inspection of materials brought to sites for recycling to determine if non-acceptable/detrimental materials are being mixed with acceptable materials.
 - i. Direct engagement with the residents will also include education about the acceptable items for the program via an informational card for drop off sites. The grantee will be responsible for inspections and field work through existing staff or temporary employees (e.g., seasonal, interns, contractor, etc.)
 - b. Developing detailed printed materials such as educational flyers/postcards that include specific messaging regarding acceptable materials and other information. Printed materials will be distributed to the targeted households in a minimum of two mailings.
 - c. Developing and placing signs to educate residents.
 - d. Developing online messaging programs. At a minimum, each grantee must have a website to allow for proper recycling information to be disseminated to the residents on an ongoing basis. Grantees without an existing recycling program website can find design guidance in the Partnership's [Recycling Website Best Management Practices](#) document. Additional social media messaging is encouraged but not required.

4. **Material Mix and Top Contaminants** - The material mix should match the existing contractual obligations and practices that have evolved between the MRF and applicant. This program is not intended to re-evaluate the material mix outlined in a contract. The program is an effort to refocus the anti-contamination messaging on the most detrimental non-acceptable material.

5. **Technical Assistance** – A grantee must work with The Partnership for technical support and assistance to ensure the adoption of best management practices for its contamination reduction program. For more information regarding these practices, see The Partnership's [Drop-Off Contamination Reduction Kit](#).

6. **Measurement Plan** – A grantee must agree to various measurement requirements including a minimum of four weeks of onsite staff to engage and educate residents for drop-off recycling programs and before/after recyclables quality audits.
- a. **Drop-Off Site Engagement** - Each successful candidate or designated staff will be trained by The Partnership to conduct onsite audits of materials as they are being brought into a drop-off site for recycling collection. The onsite auditor will talk to residents about why any contaminants found are not recyclable and provide educational cards as a reminder for next time. The auditor will record the number of interactions with patrons, the types of contaminants found, the number of patrons using the site, the number of patrons with contaminants, patrons' driving distance to drop-offs, and any additional data necessary to evaluate the drop-off program. A decrease in patrons with contaminants, while maintaining or improving the number of visitors, will be an indicator of improvements in material quality. A minimum of four weeks of auditing per drop-off site is needed to determine if contamination decreases over time. Data collection through the use of online/offline Nest Forms or other methods will be used to track information gathered onsite.
 - b. **Recyclables Quality Audit** - Each successful candidate will audit the quality of recyclables entering the drop-off sites before and after project execution. The Partnership will work with each grantee to develop the best plan based on their project and budget. Strategies may include a full material audit with the grantee's MRF, visual inspection of containers at drop-off sites, and/or use of cameras in dumpsters to measure contamination.
7. **Funding Recognition** – A grantee must be willing to use The Partnership logo on education materials and make mutually-agreeable acknowledgments indicating the project was “funded in part by” a grant from The Partnership and Ohio EPA. Grantees must agree to acknowledge special support of other funders as appropriate in educational materials and outreach efforts. An example of logo usage is available upon request.

Grant Program Deadline and Submittal

The deadline for applying is **3:00 p.m. ET on Friday, November 18, 2022**.

A proposal for grant funding, including the application form, and the required letters of support, must be completed online by the date and time listed above. See details on the application process below.

Grant Review and Selection Process

Each applicant will be notified by email upon the submission of their completed application. Applications will be reviewed by The Partnership. Selected applicants will be notified with an award letter in December 2022, with final grant award and contract to follow.

Key grant selection criteria will include:

- Ability and readiness of applicant to successfully implement an anti-contamination recycling program including the required elements of the grant program

- Applicant has support from MRF, hauler (if different from MRF), and solid waste management district (if applicable)
- Number of single-family households in proposed service area
- Leverage of additional resources, including local, state, or other non-profit funding

Application Revisions: The Partnership may work with an applicant to revise an initial proposal before entering into a grant agreement. Any changes to an initial proposal must be approved by The Partnership, Ohio EPA, and the applicant, and elements of the revised grant proposal will be incorporated into the grant agreement between The Partnership and the grantee.

Anticipated Grant Project Start Date and Grant Period

Grantees will be required to enter into a grant contract with The Partnership. Resulting grant contracts will generally have a term not to exceed eighteen (18) months in length. Adjustments may be made to actual project start dates and contract periods by mutual agreement between The Partnership and grant recipients. Each grantee must expend funds and submit a final report within the grant contract period unless the term of the grant is extended by written agreement of the grantee and The Partnership. Requests for contract extensions should be submitted by the grantee at least sixty (60) days prior to the grant expiration date.

Disbursement of Grant Funds

Distribution of grant funds is on a reimbursement basis, and payment of funds will take place within thirty (30) days of receiving a properly prepared invoice and required documentation of expenditure from a grantee. Total grant distributions from The Partnership will not exceed 90 percent of reimbursable costs until the grantee submits a final project report; the remaining 10 percent of reimbursable expenses shall be paid upon final report submittal. Funds not expended by the end of the grant contract term will be forfeited. Any funds expended prior to the start of the grant period will not be reimbursed. Grantees will be asked to register with Bill.com for the use of administering grant funds.

Required Application Format & Submission Process

Applicants must complete their application online at www.municipalmeasurement.com. Once the Ohio applicant has registered a new account (or logged into an existing account), the grant application survey will appear in the survey list. If an application is being submitted on behalf of multiple local governments, separate applications are not needed. Only one letter of support from each solid waste management district (if applicable), MRF, and hauler (if applicable) will be required for each application.

The following information outlines the mandatory components of an application for grant funding. Applicants must complete the proposal application online to answer the questions below. The form correlates to each section outlined below. ***The online application form must be used; no other application format will be accepted. Incomplete applications are likely to be denied.***

Section 1 – General Information, Key Contacts, & Letters of Support

Each applicant is required to provide general information about the applicant and key contacts, as well as letters of support from the solid waste management district (if applicable), MRF, and hauler (if applicable). Information must include:

- **Project Director:** The project director should be the main point of contact for the grant project and responsible for daily operations of the recycling program. This individual will also be responsible for understanding and providing information about the project.
- **Solid Waste Management District (if different from project applicant):** Provide the name and location of the solid waste management district the applicant is a part of. The letter of support from the solid waste management district must indicate support for the project and willingness to assist as needed to ensure project success.
- **Material Processor or Transfer Station:** Provide the name and location of the material recovery facility (MRF) or transfer station where the applicant's recycling material is delivered and processed. The letter of support from the MRF operator or transfer station must indicate a list of the materials accepted for processing, and the facility's ability and willingness to assist or conduct the measurement and reporting of contamination data.
- **Hauler (if different from MRF):** Provide the name of the hauler(s) utilized by the applicant if material is not collected by the applicant. The letter of support should include the hauler's ability and willingness to assist or conduct the measurement and reporting of contamination data.
- **Other Key Project Team Members:** This may include designated outreach and education staff, etc.

All letters of support must be submitted with the application online.

Section 2 – Recycling Program & Project Description

This section of the proposal should provide the background that reviewers need in order to understand the context of an applicant's drop-off recycling program including the following:

- Geographic, demographic, and socio-economic details
- Municipalities within each county or solid waste management district
- Number of rural and urban drop-offs in the region and within the project area
- Details that could affect recycling contamination such as seasonal populations, tourism, multi-family population, etc.
- Participation rates (if available)
- Educational and outreach strategies
- Successes and challenges currently facing the recycling program

Each applicant needs to also provide 2021 recycling tonnage data if available. If the applicant represents multiple local governments, each local government included in the project service area should be listed and described. A proposed project area can be a local government, multiple local governments, or a portion of a local government, county, or solid waste management district. The service area may exceed 25,000 single-family households, but the maximum grant award amount is \$75,000 (\$3/household for up to 25,000 households).

Section 3 – Budget

In this section, the applicant will complete the budget table by filling in the number of single-family households in the proposed service area and estimating the budget for the required elements of the campaign.

In addition to engaging with residents at drop-off sites, when planning for education and outreach expenditures, please consider that, at a minimum, The Partnership requires the four (4) educational components for supporting the recycling contamination work:

- An info card to be directly mailed to each household in the proposed service area (basic yes and no recycling information)
- Surveys and/or oops cards to reinforce correct recycling behavior at drop-off sites
- Top issue mailer to be directly mailed to each household in proposed service area (targeting the most problematic contaminant agreed upon by MRF and applicant)
- Website outreach
- Top issue social media (not required, but recommended)

Supplementary outreach and educational efforts are encouraged to support the minimum key items above.

For assistance in creating your budget, refer to The Partnership's "Staffing Guidance" and "Printing & Mailing Specification for Education & Outreach Materials" guides. Links to these documents can be found on the final page of The Partnership's [Drop-off Recycling Contamination Reduction Kit](#).

Section 4 – Measurement Plan

The Partnership is grounded in measuring and reporting results. In support of this, applicants must indicate their willingness and ability to measure recycling tonnage, drop-off site usage, and recycling contamination before and after program implementation. To support the commitment towards measuring contamination, the letter of support from the servicing MRF operator should indicate the MRF and/or hauler's willingness to assist in measuring and reporting contamination data.

Section 5 – Material Mix

In the table provided, applicants should check off materials that are currently acceptable and/or not acceptable in the public recycling program and provide any additional information that is relevant.

Section 6 – Commitment to Best Practice Education and Outreach

Each proposal should explain the applicant's commitment to best practice education and outreach, as well as describe the current education and outreach strategies used (and results if available), such as website, social media, radio, tv, newspaper, newsletter, etc. An applicant should also confirm if they currently use any digital online platform communication tools (i.e., Recycle Coach, Recycle by City, Re-Collect, etc.)

Section 7 – Timeline

The Partnership seeks projects that can be implemented February - December 2023, although an exact timeline will be finalized and agreed upon between the grantee and The Partnership. A typical timeline to conduct the program as outlined including a pre-program contamination measurement, engaging

residents and auditing materials brought to drop-off locations, implementing the educational campaign, and a post contamination measurement, is estimated to be 6-12 months depending on the size of the project.

Definitions

Contamination: Refers to the amount of inbound material that residents include in their recycling collection that is not accepted in the program, thus ultimately ending up as residual at the recycling facility.

Drop-off: A form of collection of household recyclables wherein the generators must deliver the items to a central aggregation location.

Drop-off Recycling Site(s): Central aggregation locations, often serving rural areas, where the generators deliver recyclables. Retail collection of plastic bags and wraps at stores is a special type of drop-off recycling site.

Single-Family Residence: Typically, this term is defined as a detached home or multi-dwelling property of up to four (4) units. However, it should be noted that some communities define a "single-family residence" to include multi-dwelling properties of up to a dozen (12) units. Confirm in your application how many dwelling units are included in your definition of single-family households.