Ohio EPA and The Recycling Partnership Recycling

Recycling Contamination Grant Program
Request for Proposals- November 2018

The Recycling Partnership is a national nonprofit transforming recycling across America. Improved recycling creates jobs, protects the environment, and empowers communities. For more information regarding our programs, staff, and funders, visit: www.recyclingpartnership.org.

The need to improve the quality of recyclables is a high priority in light of today’s market conditions with contamination rates in excess of 25 percent. This challenge is compounded by the recent restrictions by China on recyclable materials that exceed 0.5 percent contamination. Due to these market conditions and the current state of recycling, Ohio EPA and The Recycling Partnership (The Partnership) have partnered on a grant application process. The purpose of this grant is to partner with Ohio communities by providing financial and technical assistance to develop and implement a comprehensive education and operations behavior strategy to decrease contamination from curbside recycling programs while increasing recycling.

Ohio EPA and The Partnership are seeking grant applications from communities to engage with residents directly and indirectly to change the curbside recycling behavior of those contaminating the stream. To accomplish this, we will be working within four specific Material Recovery Facility sheds (MRFshed) in two specific Ohio regions (northeast and southwest). Within each MRFshed, Ohio EPA and The Partnership will select one community (depending on population and household counts) that offers its residents non-subscription single stream curbside recycling services. This grant is targeting 155,000 households representing 390,000 in population for the entire project. Additional households could be added depending on matching funds from additional partnerships with other stakeholders such as industry, solid waste districts and communities. 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 hauler(s) and the material recovery facility (MRF). All questions related to this application should be sent to Jill Martin at jmartin@recyclingpartnership.org.

Applicants should carefully read this entire document prior to submitting a proposal.
Recycling Contamination Grant Program Eligibility Requirements

For the purposes of this grant program, an eligible applicant is a local government entity or a public solid waste management authority/district that is located in northeast or southwest Ohio. An applicant must be from one of the following Solid Waste Management Districts to be eligible:

**Northeast Ohio**
- Summit-Akron Solid Waste Management Authority
- Portage County SWMD
- Medina County SWMD
- Cuyahoga County SWMD
- Lake County SWMD
- Geauga-Trumbull Joint SWMD
- Mahoning County SWMD
- Carroll-Columbiana-Harrison Joint SWMD
- Belmont-Jefferson Regional Solid Waste Authority
- Stark-Tuscarawas-Wayne Joint SWMD
- Lorain County SWMD

**Southwest Ohio**
- Butler County SWMD
- Warren County SWMD
- Darke County SWMD
- Preble County SWMD
- Adams-Clermont Joint SWMD
- Greene County SWMD
- Montgomery County SWMD
- Hamilton County SWMD
- Clinton County SWMD
- Clark County SWMD
- Logan County SWMD

**Additional Requirements**

An applicant must also meet all of the following requirements:

1. **The applicant must provide curbside recycling collection either publicly or privately collected**
   - a. Preference will be given to communities that have:
     - i. Automatic curbside recycling service for all residents
     - ii. Recycling Carts of at least 65 gallon or greater in size
     - iii. Commitment from hauler and community to reject contaminated carts at the curb

2. **Education and Outreach** – Based on previous lessons learned and research data, The Recycling 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 applicants:
   - a. Coordinating inspection of recyclable materials placed in collection containers by residents to determine if non-acceptable/detrimental materials are being deposited into the container; and
direct engagement with the resident to educate them on the acceptable items for the program via the tagging protocol established. Depending on the community, if a container is identified with non-acceptable materials, then the container will be tagged and rejected until the correct materials are deposited in collection container (community will be responsible for inspections and field work through existing staff or temporary employees)

b. Developing detailed printed materials such as educational flyers/postcards that include specific messaging regarding service collection days, acceptable materials and other information. Printed materials will be distributed to the targeted community in a minimum of two mailings.

c. Developing and placing signs to educate residents

d. Developing social media messaging programs.

e. Developing and implementing a community-wide information system where residents can obtain detailed information on their recycling program (Recycle Coach, ReCollect, Recycle by City, or other).

   i. A successful applicant will receive an optional one-year paid subscription to a community-wide digital online communication platform tool that all residents will have access to.

3. **Material Mix and Top Contaminants** - The material mix should match the existing contractual obligations and practices that have evolved between the MRF and community. 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.

4. **Technical Assistance** - An applicant must work with the Partnership for technical support and assistance to ensure the community adopts best management practices for its anti-contamination program. For more information regarding these practices, see the Partnership’s anti-contamination tool kit. The collaboration will allow the Partnership to take learnings and develop a toolkit to be implemented state-wide.

5. **Measurement Plan** - An applicant must agree to various measurement requirements including a minimum of 4 cart-taggings over entire service area during the course of the project and before/after sampling analyses of incoming loads from the community to its respective MRF.

   a. **Cart tagging** - Each successful candidate or designated staff will be trained by The Partnership to conduct cart inspections prior to recycling collection. The Partnership will facilitate regular meetings throughout the project and provide graphic design support, but the grantee will be responsible for the oversight and execution of the weekly tagging program. Each cart set out for recycling will be examined through one full city-wide collection cycle by opening the lid, visually assessing the contamination on the top layers, and then tagging where warranted with an instructive message to the resident. Each set-out cart will be examined and tagged again in a minimum of three additional collection cycles following the first round of tagging and beginning an outreach program to reduce contamination. The number of carts tagged will be recorded over a minimum of four collection cycles to track whether the need for tagging decreases. A decrease in tagging will be an indicator of improvements in material quality. An app via mobile phone or tablet may be provided by The Partnership to record and analyze tagging results.

   b. **MRF Sampling Analysis** - The destination MRF for each of the selected MRFsheds will conduct a benchmark sampling analysis of loads coming from the selected communities to determine the level and kind of contamination in the loads (this analysis will be used to determine the outreach and tagging process described above). The combined loads of at least two incoming truck routes will be isolated on the MRF floor, or other destination as appropriate, and eight, 200-pound samples will be extracted from the loads for further analysis. This analysis will be conducted through standard waste composition techniques, by separating clean recyclables (which can optionally be further sorted into composition categories) from contaminants. The contaminants will then be further sorted into pre-
determined categories to assess the leading types of contaminants and the relative weights or volumes of each. Specific protocols will be outlined with each MRF partner and will be consistent throughout project.

This same procedure will be followed after the last cart-tagging round is completed. Changes in contamination levels will be tracked and reported.

6. **Funding Recognition** - An applicant 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. Applicants 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.

**Funding Availability and Use of Grant Funds**

Grant funding is available up to $2/Household up to 40,000 households per community for the following items:

- Staff for tagging carts (temporary staff)
- Printing tags
- Printing and mailing direct mail pieces
- Social media
- Community signage
- One-year subscription to an online recycling digital communication platform

The Partnership will provide graphic design support to customize the educational materials for each community. The Partnership requires that the grantee use The Partnership’s template for educational materials. However, each community 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 residential curbside recycling stream from single-family residential homes. Grant funds cannot be used for multi-family education and/or outreach. Additional programmatic efforts may be included as agreed upon by all parties as long as the minimum educational requirements are met.

**Grant Program Deadline and Submittal**

The **REVISED** deadline for submitting an application to the Partnership is 3:00 p.m. EST on Monday, February 11, 2019. January 14, 2019.

A proposal for grant funding, including the completed application form and the required letters of support, must be submitted via email to Jill Martin at jmartin@recyclingpartnership.org with the email subject line reading “Recycling Contamination Grant Proposal.” An applicant may include an optional cover letter with their application for funding should they wish to provide additional information or address issues not raised in the application form. See details on application process below.
Grant Review and Selection Process
Each applicant will be notified by The Partnership upon the receipt of their proposal. Applications will be reviewed by The Partnership and Ohio EPA. Grant recipients will be notified of preliminary award no later than March 15, 2019. Final grant awards will be determined by The Partnership and Ohio EPA.

Key grant selection criteria will include:
• Ability of applicant to conduct all the required elements of this grant program;
• Readiness of applicant to successfully implement an anti-contamination recycling program including the required related outreach efforts;
• Number of households in proposed project area;
• Willingness to reject contaminated carts at the curb; and
• 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 applicant.

Anticipated Grant Project Start Date and Grant Period
Successful applicants 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 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 and any unused funds must be returned to the Partnership. Any funds expended prior to the start of the grant period will not be reimbursed.
Required Proposal Format

Applicants must submit their proposal using the proposal application form. If the applicant is applying on behalf of more than one community, a separate grant application will be needed for each community although only one letter of support from MRF, Hauler and District will be required.

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

Section 1. Key Contacts and Letters of Support: Each applicant is required to provide its key contacts as well as letters of support from MRF, Hauler and Solid Waste District. Information must include:

- **Project Director:** Provide the name, phone number, email address, and mailing address of the Project Director that will oversee program. 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.
- **Material Processor or Transfer Station:** Provide the name and location of the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) or transfer station where the applicant is located. The letter of support from the MRF operator or transfer station must indicate a list of the materials accepted for processing, the facility’s ability to and willingness to assist or conduct the measurement and reporting of contamination data;
- **Hauler:** Provide the name of the hauler(s) utilized by the applicant if material is not collected by the applicant.
- **Solid Waste District:** Provide the name, phone number, e-mail address and mailing address of the Director of the Solid Waste District that applicant is from.
- **Other Key Project Team Members including designated outreach and education staff:** Provide name, phone number, e-mail address and mailing address.

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

Section 2. Curbside Recycling Program and Project Description: This section of the proposal should provide the background that reviewers need in order to understand the context of an applicant’s recycling program; including information on current recycling program detailing out collection methods, frequency, participation rates (if available), educational and outreach strategies, successes and challenges currently facing recycling program efforts. If the applicant represents multiple communities, each community included in the application should be listed and described. Information provided should include a brief description of current curbside collection system. Each applicant must also provide the most recent full year of curbside recycling tonnage data.

Section 3. Budget: In this section of the application, applicant will complete the budget table by filling in the number of households in the service area and estimating the budget for the required elements of the campaign.
When planning for education and outreach expenditures, please consider that at a minimum, The Partnership requires five (5) educational components for supporting the recycling contamination work:

- An annual info. card to be directly mailed to each household in service area (basic yes and no recycling information)
- “Oops” tags to reinforce correct recycling behavior as described above and;
- Top issue mailer to be directly mailed to each household in service area (targeting the most problematic contaminant agreed upon by MRF and applicant)
- Top Issue Signage
- Top Issue Social Media

The Partnership requires that grant funds be used toward procuring these key outreach items. Additional outreach and educational efforts are encouraged to support the minimum key items above. The Partnership requires each successful applicant to update its website(s) to communicate the top identified contaminant in the recycling stream.

**Section 4. Timeline:** The Partnership seeks projects that can be implemented beginning March-June of 2019 and may extend through June 2020, although exact timeline will be finalized and agreed upon between successful applicant and The Partnership. A typical timeline to conduct the program as outlined including all best management practices, including pre-program contamination sort, tagging over 4 collection cycles, educational campaign and post contamination sort is estimated to be 6-12 months depending on size of project area.

**Section 5 Measurement Plan:** The Partnership is grounded in measuring and reporting results. In support of this, applicants must indicate their willingness and ability to measure set out rates, recycling tonnage, tagging rates 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’s willingness to assist in measuring and reporting contamination data.

**Section 6. Material Mix:** In the proposal form table, applicants should check off materials that are currently acceptable or not acceptable in the public recycling program and provide any additional information that is relevant.

**Section 7. Commitment to Best Practice Education and Outreach:** Each proposal should explain the applicant’s commitment to best practice education and outreach (See above additional requirements 2. Education and Outreach), as well as describe the current education and outreach program including current strategies (and results if available) used such as website, social media, radio, tv, newspaper etc. An applicant should also describe any current digital online platform communication tools that are used (Recycle Coach, Recycle by City, Re-Collect, other). If no digital online communication platform tool are currently used then describe if applicant will be taking advantage of the funding available for the first-year subscription to one of these tools.
Definitions

**Bag (or Blue Bag):** Referring to containers used for bag-based curbside recycling collection. A Bag is a container made of flexible material, generally flexible plastic film, that is used by residents to collect and contain household recyclables and place materials at the street for curbside recycling collection service. A typical bag-based curbside recycling program requires residents to prepare materials for service by placing them in a translucent plastic bag that is blue in color (thus, these programs maybe known as Blue Bag recycling programs). Service of a Bag/Blue Bag is performed manually, requiring the collector to bend, pick up the bag, and carry it to the collection vehicle in order to perform recycling collection service. Processing of recyclables collected in a bag-based curbside recycling program requires that materials must be removed from the bag in order to be sorted into commodities.

**Bin (or Recycling Bin):** An open container, typically constructed of plastic and measuring 12 to 18 gallons in volume, that is used by residents to collect household recyclables and place materials at the street for curbside recycling collection service. Service of a Bin/Recycling Bin is performed manually, requiring the collector to bend, pick up the container, and carry it to the collection vehicle in order to perform recycling collection service.

**Cart:** Plastic recycling cart with wheels and lid. Also referred to as roll carts, barrels, or containers.

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

**Participation Rate:** The number of homes that put recycling out to be collected at least once during a monthly period. This is analyzed by actually observing specific addresses over a month-long period and counting each time they recycle. To calculate this rate, take the number of addresses that have recycled at least once per month and divide that by the total addresses observed. For an observation of a two-week period, if one hundred (100) homes are observed and forty (40) recycle one week and forty (40) completely different homes recycle the next week, that is an eighty percent (80%) participation rate.

**Set-Out Rate:** The number of homes with recycling placed curbside at any given time. This is calculated by counting the number of homes with recycling out and dividing that number by the total number of homes on a route. For example, if there are 100 homes on a route and 40 homes have recycling out, the set-out rate is forty percent (40%).

**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. If this is the case for your community, please note whether or not these properties will be a part of the cart transition campaign and the number of units that will be impacted by the transition.
Classifications for Homes to Participate in Curbside Recycling Services

In Section 2 of the application for grant funding, communities are asked to indicate the type of curbside recycling program that is currently in place. The following descriptions describe the choices that applicants may select from when indicating their current recycling program.

**Automatic Service:** An automatic system where curbside recycling service is automatically provided to every single-family residence in the community and is paid for through general taxes, fees, or a utility bill. In this system, participation by any household is voluntary, though it is not possible to opt-out or avoid payment of the fee or tax that funds the service. A cart is delivered to every home; the resident is assigned a recycling day and on which he or she has the opportunity to place the cart out at the curb for collection. The actual collection service may be conducted by public staff or through a private hauler contracted by the community, with the local government being billed for the recycling service and acting as a single-payer for service at all covered properties.

**Opt-In:** The curbside recycling service is available to every single-family residence in the community (thus paid for through general taxes or fees), but the resident must specifically contact the local government or private hauler to set up service and/or purchase a cart to start receiving the service. If a resident does not request the service, he or she still pays for the program through general taxes or fees. This can be provided through a public or private hauler.

**Opt-Out:** A curbside recycling service established by a local government that is available to every single-family residence in the community and is typically paid for through a utility-style fee. Each resident receives a recycling cart and collection service unless he or she contacts the local government and Declines service or cart and is therefore not subject to the fee.

**Subscription Service:** The approach is a free-market system, where haulers provide service to customers upon request, financing the service through direct charges to the customers. The sub-categories of subscription service include:

- **Private Opt-In:** Resident must specifically contact the private hauler to set up service and receive a recycling cart. The resident then pays the private hauler directly for service. Those residents that do not contact a private hauler do not receive recycling service or pay for the program through taxes or fees.

- **Universal Private Subscription:** Residents are automatically provided with a recycling cart without having to opt in or contact their garbage hauler to add the service. A local government may require garbage haulers to provide automatic recycling service as a condition of receiving a franchise or license. Subscribers may pay a separate fee for the automatic service or the recycling service may be embedded in an overall combined trash fee. Either way, residents must pay the hauler directly for the service and the pricing does not change whether or not they participate in the recycling program.