



Community Composting Site Plan

Whether just beginning to think about starting a community site, or already running one – it's always a good time to think about or review your Site Plan. Whether hard copy or electronic files, it's really helpful to have everything organized!

Elements of a Site Plan:

1. Overview of the site and system

This is a great place to keep any early planning documents, outlines of the vision and mission of the site, the type of composting system you chose and why, and anything else your group might find helpful.

Be sure to note who owns the land that the site is on, and what the agreement is for continued use, including any paperwork to document this arrangement.

Indicate any local zoning, ordinances, rules or regulations that might impact the site. It's useful to include contact information for contacts at the relevant offices, including your local solid waste management entity.

Also, consider including a list of the people involved at your site, the different roles they play, and volunteer job descriptions.

2. Monitoring & record keeping

Depending on your system, you may have multiple ways for keeping records. Details can include everything from who brought food scraps (and what volume) on which day, to system management activities, like turning, watering, temperature, and more. Make a simple list of your site's expectations, including who should be keeping track of what and where the records reside.

Also, keeping easy access to blank copies of your logsheet, or knowing where the file is to print fresh copies can keep a simple task simple and prevent it from becoming something onerous that's put off for as long as possible.

3. Controlling odors

Controlling odors is one of the primary concerns at community composting sites. Note any specific management considerations for controlling odors in your plan. This might include prevailing wind directions, especially sensitive neighbors (ideally with contact information), sources for additional carbon if needed (again with contact information). Having this information in a single place makes management so much easier!

Do you have a neighbor(s) who is especially sensitive to odors?

- Develop a relationship with them and make this work to your advantage! Let them know that you understand the concerns and everything you and your team are doing to control odors. Invite them to contact you if they have concerns (and share the best way to do so).
- Did you kick up something particularly stinky while aerating your system? Be proactive! Call them and let them know that it's natural for compost to be odorous sometimes, detail what you did to correct the situation, and assure them that it should pass soon!

4. Communication & Training

This relates to internal communication and training, among your management team and participating food scrap generators, as well as external, with your neighbors and community at large.

Internal communication and training includes items:

- Names, roles & contact information for everyone involved
- Expectations for participating in the site
- Who to call if you can't show up to work
- Training schedules
- Who to call for technical training or troubleshooting
- Guidelines for new member orientation
- And any other useful information

External communication and training includes items:

- "Be a good neighbor" policy
- Contact information for key people in your neighborhood or wider community, who may not be directly associated with your site
- Communication channels (such as neighborhood forums or Facebook groups) and who is responsible for informing the channels
- Calendar for outreach & community events

5. Animal Control Measures

Whether rural or urban, you want to be sure that the only "animals" involved in composting are the ones you're working to cultivate (the decomposers). Have a plan in place to keep ticks, rats other rodents, fisher, and bear at bay. See the *Community Composting Troubleshooting Tip Sheet* for specific recommendations, and then include details in your plan for what you plan to enact at your site to address your specific animal concerns, as well as who to contact and what to do if there is a problem.

6. Health & Safety

Ensure that everyone participating in your site has a healthy and safe experience. Review the *Community Composting Health & Safety Guidelines* Tip Sheet and then establish a policy with your site and community in mind.

Have a clear Fire Emergency Plan as part of your larger Health and Safety plan. While fires are an unlikely part of community composting, it's best to be prepared. Fires can start from a stray spark to dry carbon, from neighboring properties, or from lightening. Be sure to list the local fire department contact information (in addition to "911"), and provide additional measures and trainings as your site deems necessary.

Also consider whether your site needs a security policy or not. Is theft or vandalism something you're concerned about? What site protections need to be put in place? This varies widely from site to site, so check in with your team and make the best decisions for your location.

Remember – policies are only effective if people know what they are! Be sure to reference these policies in the Communication and Training section on your site plan, post signs so people remember, and send reminders as needed!

7. Contingency Plans

It can be hard to know what contingencies to plan for, and it's understandable that – in the excitement of starting a community composting site – you may not want to think about things not working out. However, this really is an important part of operating a site, especially one that may be primarily managed by volunteers.

Some of the obvious risks may be covered in the sections above, like what to do if you're running out of carbon material, or if someone doesn't show up for a volunteer shift, but this is the place in your plan to think more broadly.

Closure Plans

At any given time, a community composting site has durable goods, like tools and bins, as well as organics at varying stages of decomposition. If the key people who keep the site afloat are unable to continue doing so, for any number of reasons, what happens to these materials?

At minimum, people need to be alerted, signs likely need to be posted, and – until the organic material can be moved, it should be covered in carbon

material, finished compost or soil, which will effectively bring it into a safe, static or cold composting style of system.

List the names of who can help with closure. This might include your local solid waste management entity, a local composting association or local composting educator. If there isn't capacity among your site members, these kinds of folks can likely help with the organics as well as durable goods.

Other Community Composting Tip Sheets to consult: [Systems and Operations](#); [Process Management](#); [Recordkeeping](#); [Volunteer Training & Orientation](#); [Be a Good Neighbor](#).

Written with funding from a USDA Rural Utilities Solid Waste Management Grant. NERC is an equal opportunity employer and provider.