

**SMALL BUSINESS HAZARDOUS WASTE
COLLECTION & RECYCLING PROGRAMS
DIRECTORY & OUTREACH PROJECT ~ Year 2
&
PROMOTING LINKAGES BETWEEN MATERIAL
EXCHANGES & PUBLIC SECTOR PURCHASING
OFFICIALS**

**FINAL REPORT
To the USDA Rural Utilities Service
Solid Waste Management Grant Program**

Submitted by: Northeast Recycling Council, Inc.

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I. SMALL BUSINESS HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION & RECYCLING PROGRAMS DIRECTORY & OUTREACH PROJECT ~ YEAR TWO

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Small Business Hazardous Waste Collection & Recycling Programs Directory & Outreach Project ~ Year Two was the second year of a project funded by USDA through its Rural Utility Services Solid Waste Management Grant program and undertaken by the Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. The following were the goals and objectives:

Goal: To decrease the amount of hazardous waste being disposed in the solid waste stream by small businesses by directly supporting the use of existing and pilot hazardous waste recycling and management opportunities.

Objectives

1. Survey small businesses in communities to be served by pilot programs to determine barriers to proper management of hazardous waste, and using the results to develop an outreach and implementation strategy tailored to rural small businesses.
2. Develop and implement a minimum of two (2) pilot small business hazardous waste recycling and management programs. The criteria for selecting the pilot locations will include that the programs be regional in nature, serving at least two communities with populations under 10,000, with at least one pilot in each of the states of Vermont and New Hampshire. Thus, there will be a minimum of at least two regional pilot projects serving a minimum of four qualifying communities.
3. Promote the availability of hazardous waste recycling and management opportunities and resources for small businesses, including promoting the availability of resources developed as a result of NERC's current RUS grant project. In addition to targeted outreach for small businesses in the pilot communities, we will expand upon our outreach and publicity efforts begun under the current RUS grant to promote the general availability of services and resources to the rural small business communities in New Hampshire and Vermont.

2. PROJECT TASKS & PROCESSES USED

(1) Form Advisory Committee. An Advisory Committee was developed to serve as a second set of eyes and ears for the project, in addition to NERC's oversight and management. Committee members included three people from the project's Year One Advisory Committee – two from the NH Department of Environmental Services, and one from the VT Agency of Natural Resources. The Committee also included three representatives from the municipal hazardous waste programs that were selected as project participants. In addition, two other Year One Advisory Committee members agreed to be project advisors - to be called on when needed.

The Committee members' experience of municipal hazardous waste programs and working with businesses complemented NERC's expertise. Together, the Committee

members developed the strategy for actively including businesses in the selected hazardous waste collection programs. NERC staff worked with the VT and NH Committee members separately. The VT group met three times and the NH group met twice, in addition to communicating through emails and by phone.

NERC originally planned on including businesses from VT and NH on the Committee to be representative of the project target audience. After discussing this with Committee members, it was decided not to include them. The decision was based on the observation that businesses that generate small quantities of hazardous waste are generally small businesses, and as such, lack time and staff to donate to projects. The Committee also felt that it had the knowledge and information necessary to move ahead with the project without business representation. NERC agreed that we could better serve the businesses by developing hazardous waste programs that they could easily access rather than requiring their participation on a committee.

(2) Identify pilot hazardous waste recycling and management program locations. The VT and NH state Advisory Committee members provided NERC with a prioritized list of potential locations for the pilot hazardous waste recycling and management programs in their states. The lists included regional collections that serviced at least two rural towns. NERC finalized the selection of the participant programs by calling the primary contacts for these programs and discussing the project with them until the appropriate sites were identified. Approximately 15 calls were made.

The selected programs were: the Vermont District of the Southern Windsor/Windham Solid Waste District; and the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. Each of these programs surpassed our objective of the number of rural towns serviced by the collections – the VT District offered their collections to 14 rural towns, and the NH collections to 11 rural towns. In addition, each of these programs offered two hazardous waste collections during the project term.

These programs were both very excited about participating in this project, because they know that the businesses generating hazardous waste are forced to pay exorbitant fees to vendors in order to properly dispose of or recycle these wastes. By participating in the municipal hazardous waste collection programs, the businesses are only required to pay the disposal and/or recycling fee, thus increasing the likelihood that they would be properly managed. All other fees are paid for by the town or district organizing the collection.

The participant programs also felt that working with this project assisted them in strategizing how to reach out to businesses. Previously, they had only targeted residents for hazardous waste collections, and all of the promotional material was geared to them. Business-specific outreach materials were developed that can be used for future collections.

(3) Develop and implement a phone survey of small businesses in pilot communities to determine barriers to proper management of hazardous waste. After several discussions about the phone survey, the project Advisory Committee decided that this was not the best approach for assisting small businesses. It was agreed that it was more important to inform the businesses of the availability of the municipal hazardous waste collections and the dramatic cost-savings available by participating in them. Instead of the survey, the Committee decided that NERC should make calls to a representative group of small businesses in the serviced towns (approximately 40 calls in all) to inform them of the upcoming collection dates and times, as well as the exact locations and eligibility requirements. The business lists used for the calls were developed by the Advisory Committee members. (See Appendix A for these lists.)

(4) Develop and implement an outreach strategy for securing participation of small businesses in hazardous waste recycling and management pilot projects, including relying on the tools developed in the previous year's RUS project and incorporating the small business phone survey results.

The outreach strategies developed by the Advisory Committee relied heavily on the knowledge that NERC acquired in the first year of this project about VT and NH state laws pertaining to the eligibility of businesses to participate in municipal hazardous waste collection programs. These strategies included:

- (1) Developing a one-page flier for each program. (See Appendix B.) The flier included the logistical details for the collections, state laws, as well as information on how to access the Hazardous Waste Guides completed in the first year of this project. In response to a request made by the NH Advisory Committee members, NERC also made the flier into a poster size for the NH collections.
- (2) Emailing or mailing the flier to each of the businesses that were contacted by phone, and hanging the flier and poster in towns serviced by the collections at locations that the Advisory Committee believed businesses would frequent: community bulletin boards, in convenience stores, breakfast and lunch eateries, hardware stores and banks. In total, more than 300 fliers and 30 posters were distributed.
- (3) Adding an additional element to this project at the direction of the Advisory Committee. The Committee believed that municipalities, like businesses, were uninformed about their eligibility to access the hazardous waste collections unless specifically told that they could. In response, NERC revised the fliers to include municipal government, made introductory phone calls to each Town Clerk in the towns serviced by the collections, and either mailed or hand-delivered at least ten copies of the fliers to each of these towns so they could be distributed to the municipal offices.

(5) Develop and implement pilot regional, rural small business hazardous waste recycling and management programs.

During the project term, each participant program held two municipal hazardous waste collections. Businesses were asked to pre-register for the event so that they would know in advance how much they would be required to pay for the disposal/recycling of their hazardous waste and in order for the hazardous waste vendor to be prepared for the associated logistics. Due to state requirements, it was necessary to keep the household hazardous waste segregated from businesses hazardous waste. As a result, each program accepted businesses during pre-set times before residents were scheduled to attend.

(6) Promote and publicize the availability of hazardous waste recycling and management programs and resources. In addition to the outreach strategy described above, NERC developed a press release announcing the collection programs and their availability to businesses and municipalities and distributed it to the newspapers considered to be the most commonly read in the serviced towns. Advisory Committee members provided NERC with the press list (See Appendix C. for the press release, and Appendix D. for the press list used.)

NERC also sent an email announcement to VT and NH municipalities to again announce the availability of the Hazardous Waste Guides produced in the previous year of this project, and as a result, mailed 300 additional copies of the Guides.

(7) Create a replicable model for establishing effective small business hazardous waste management outreach and programs in rural settings.

The replicable model that resulted from the development and implementation of these pilot projects includes the following elements:

i. Create a project Advisory Committee to discuss and make decisions on all the project tasks. This Committee should include:

- State Hazardous Waste Specialists
- Non-regulatory State Business Specialists
- State Recycling Specialists
- Recycling Coordinators from the regions of the participant hazardous waste collections.

ii. Identify pilot hazardous waste collection programs to participate in the project. These programs must be willing to include businesses in their programs, and to take the necessary steps to make this happen. These steps include:

- Interpreting the state legal requirements so eligible businesses (including municipalities) are clear under what circumstances they can use the municipal hazardous waste collection programs for disposal of their hazardous waste.
- Work with the hazardous waste hauler to ensure that the conditions for small business access are clearly understood and the necessary logistics are established.
- Organize the collections so the businesses and residents arrive at the collection site at different times. This will allow the hauler to easily keep the business and residential hazardous waste separate to accommodate state regulations.

iii. Develop and implement a low-cost outreach strategy for spreading the word about the collections to the business community. These may include:

- Directly phoning the business sector(s) you'd like to target for the collections.
- Developing a flier targeted to businesses. This flier should include:
 - Logistical details for the collections.
 - Details on how the municipal program may save the businesses a significant amount of money to properly dispose of their hazardous waste.
 - Examples of Items that are and are not accepted at the collections.
 - State laws that pertain to businesses using municipal hazardous waste collection programs.
 - The process businesses need to follow for using the collection (i.e., pre-registration required)

(A sample of this flier may be found in Appendix B.)

- Distributing the flier in well-frequented locations by businesses - community bulletin boards, convenience stores, breakfast and lunch eateries, hardware stores and banks.
- Distributing a press release to the local media outlets announcing the collection and its availability to businesses.
- Request the Advisory Committee to distribute the collection announcement to their colleagues through email listservs, newsletters, and by emailing it to the potentially affected communities.

iv. Provide outreach and education to the small business community about compliance with hazardous waste requirements. (Go to the following websites to see the Hazardous Waste Guides developed in the first year of this project.

<http://www.nerc.org/documents/hzdwstvt02-04.html>,
<http://www.nerc.org/documents/gdhzdwstnh02-04.html>

- v. **Implement the hazardous waste collections and evaluate** them. The lessons learned from the collections will assist in making decisions on how to improve the program in the future and to get more businesses to participate.

3. LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the beginning stages of this project, it became clear to NERC that not all of the involved state employees interpreted the state legal requirements for businesses to use the municipal hazardous waste collection programs in the same way. It took several in-depth discussions between NERC and the state hazardous waste staff before an agreement was reached on the appropriate message to share with the public. The necessity for clarification had the potential to develop into a significant obstacle if it had not been addressed early on in the project.
- The VT municipalities requested a fact sheet to clarify some questions they had with their participation in municipal hazardous waste collection programs. This request was forwarded to the VTANR hazardous waste staff – two of the project advisors – but they were unwilling to develop any guidance because they felt that all the needed information was already available on their website; although the municipalities felt differently. This information remains an unmet need of the municipalities.

NERC staff became aware of the municipalities' questions from their discussions with the Town Clerks when visiting them to distribute the project fliers. Their primary questions were:

- How does a municipality know if they are eligible to bring their own hazardous waste to the collections?
 - As municipalities, are they exempt from any of the existing state regulations?
 - Are they able to collect household hazardous waste from residents and businesses in their towns and transport it to the collection sites?
- If staff time and funding are concerns when developing an outreach strategy for the municipal hazardous waste collection programs to businesses and municipalities, NERC suggests limiting the outreach to the business sectors that showed the most interest in the program when contacted during this project: dentists and orthodontists. For the most part, these are small operations that can truly benefit from the cost-savings available by using the municipal programs. Mercury disposal is a particular concern for these businesses. Municipalities are also an easily accessible target audience that showed interest in the collections, but have many unanswered questions

which may affect their participation in the collections unless they get answered.

II. PROMOTING LINKAGES BETWEEN MATERIAL EXCHANGES & PUBLIC SECTOR PURCHASING OFFICIALS

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

(1) Working Committee – A Working Committee was developed to serve as a second set of eyes and ears for the project, in addition to NERC’s oversight and management. Committee members included representatives from the New England states’ recycling offices and Materials Exchanges, and school and municipal purchasers. The Committee participated on four conference calls to discuss the progress of the project tasks and to provide feedback and suggestions on every step used for the project implementation and development of deliverables. (See Appendix E. for the conference call minutes.)

Committee members included:

- Judy Belaval and KC Alexander, CT Department of Environmental Protection
- Paula Flack, ReCONNstruction Center, CT
- Sharon Bruce, CT Government Finance Officers Association
- George MacDonald, ME State Planning Office
- Harold Arndt, ME Materials Exchange
- John Crisley, MA Department of Environmental Protection
- John Majercak, MA Materials Exchange
- Marilyn Gordon and John LaFleche, MA Association of School Business Officials
- Mark Toussaint, NH Materials Exchange
- John Trevor and Paul Caccia, RI Resource Recovery Association and Resource Xchange
- Carolyn Grodinsky, VT Agency of Natural Resources
- Ellen Roffman, VT Business Materials Exchange

(Please note that there was no representative from the NH Department of Environmental Services due to staff layoffs.)

Our original plan was to include three school and three municipal purchasing agents on the Committee. In our efforts to recruit these members, we found that most of these public purchasers were unable to participate on the Committee due to time constraints, but were willing to assist us with getting on the Association of School Business Officials (ASBOs) and Government Finance Officers Associations (GFOAs) meeting agendas to present the survey, and to electronically distribute the survey and other emails to their membership. In order for us to better understand the perspective of these purchasers without their presence on the Committee; we made it a point to have individual conversations

with the ASBO and GFOA members after the presentations we made at their events.

(2) Identify and Assess Capacity Building and Outreach Needs

NERC conducted a survey of school and municipal purchasing officials to learn about their purchasing habits and methods for disposing of surplus property. Working with the Committee, NERC created the survey forms – one for the schools and one for municipalities- and posted them on NERC's website. They could be filled in on-line or downloaded and then faxed or mailed to NERC. (See Appendix F. for the survey forms.) NERC sent an announcement of the survey request through the GFOA and ASBO electronic listservs, newsletters and email lists. (See Appendix G. for the announcement.) In addition, Committee members made a total of six presentations at ASBO and GFOA events to educate these purchasers about the Exchanges and to directly request them to fill out the surveys, which were distributed at these events. (See Appendix H for the PowerPoint presentation used).

In order to have a strong response rate to the survey, the Committee felt it was important to offer an incentive. As a result, we created a raffle for the survey respondents. The prizes included four \$50 gift cards donated by Staples. The four raffle winners were selected during the regional strategic planning meeting. The winners were: George Nelson of the Grand Isle Supervisory Union, VT; Katherine Bryant of the Windham NE Supervisory Union, VT; James Finch of the Town of Brandford, CT; and Charles Volpe of the City of Danbury, CT.

In addition to the school and municipal surveys, NERC developed a survey for the Materials Exchanges. This survey was designed to understand the Exchanges' marketing practices. (See Appendix F. for the Exchange Survey.) The results from this survey were used to develop the afternoon regional meeting discussion.

(3) Analyze Survey Results & Draft Strategic Outreach and Education Plan

NERC received 25 survey responses from school purchasing officials and 13 from municipalities. NERC analyzed these responses and created a PowerPoint presentation that was shown at the regional strategic planning meeting. (See Appendix I. for the survey analysis presentation.) NERC also summarized the six responses from the Materials Exchange. Three Committee members and NERC staff incorporated all of the survey results to create a draft outline for a Strategic Outreach & Education Plan. This outline took the form of the agenda for the planning meeting. (See the section on the planning meeting below.)

(4) Hold Regional Strategic Planning Meeting

GFOA and ASBO members, Materials Exchanges, State Surplus Property managers and state recycling officials were invited to attend the Workshop. The invitation was sent to ASBO and GFOA members via their email distribution lists. (See Appendix J. for the invitation.) The total attendance at the Workshop was 21 - 4 school purchasers, 1 municipal purchaser, 8 Materials Exchanges and 7 government recycling staff, and 1 NERC staff. Although enthusiastic about the project and the opportunity to network with schools and municipalities, the State Surplus Property managers were unable to attend the workshop. We learned that this was because of two factors: 1) most of their offices are one-person operations, and 2) almost all of their time is consumed organizing state vehicle and equipment auctions.

The Working Committee decided to call this one-day meeting the Workshop for New England Materials Exchanges, State Surplus Property Programs, Schools and Municipalities, because we wanted attendees to realize that we were holding this event to do more than just talk with each other. We wanted to end the day with having developed a plan for what to get school and municipal purchasers to consider the Exchanges and State Surplus Property programs as viable options for their acquisitions.

In addition, the Committee and EPA, Region I agreed to combine the afternoon Workshop session with the Annual Materials Exchange Managers Workshop. The Workshop morning sessions were geared toward introducing Materials Exchanges to schools and municipalities, presenting the survey results and discussing methods for keeping schools and municipalities informed about Materials Exchanges and state Surplus Property Programs. (See Appendix K. for the PowerPoint presentation on Materials Exchanges.) The afternoon session focused on marketing strategies for Materials Exchanges to encourage working relationships between them, schools and municipalities. (See Appendix L. for the Workshop agenda and minutes.) The Workshop minutes have been distributed to the Materials Exchanges, and the Survey Analysis presentation and the Surplus Property Program Fact Sheets have been posted to NERC's website.

(5) Finalize the Plan

NERC drafted the Education Plan from the feedback received during the discussions at the Workshop. This Plan was distributed electronically to the New England Materials Exchanges for comment, and was then finalized by NERC. (See Appendix M. for the Education Plan.) This Plan, which outlines NERC's continued work with Materials Exchanges, was posted on NERC's website at <http://www.nerc.org/bulletin/20041201.html#2>.

(6) Develop Outreach and Education Tools

This implementation of this task was substantively altered from the way in which had been anticipated and articulated in the original project scope of work. This was the direct result of information garnered during the survey process; in order to ensure that these tools would be as effective as possible to meet the needs of school and municipal purchasers.

Procurement Laws: Rather than researching procurement laws and how they address reuse and waste prevention, the Committee felt it was more important to clarify how and if public purchasers may access the state Surplus Property Programs. This led to NERC contacting the state Surplus Property Managers to inquire of their interest in developing a user-friendly one-page fact sheet that would answer the purchasers' most common questions:

- Who is eligible to use the Program and when,
- What types of items are available through the Program, and
- What is the process for accessing property through the Program?

Each individual was very willing to develop a fact sheet in time for the regional strategic planning meeting. (See Appendix N. for a copy of each state's Fact Sheets.) The fact sheets have been posted on NERC's website at <http://www.nerc.org/statesurplus/index.html>.

Reuse and Waste Prevention Toolkit: As a result of dialogues with public purchasers, the survey responses and the Workshop discussions, we found that most school and municipal purchasers are primarily concerned about ease and accessibility in obtaining needed items, the availability of required items within their purchasing timeframe, and then price. These priorities are defined by the parameters of their job responsibilities. Although intrigued by the environmental benefits of reuse or the importance of waste prevention, the type of information they want about the Materials Exchanges is an Introductory Packet rather than a Toolkit, to inform them of the Exchanges and the services they provide, as well as the potential cost-savings from using the Exchanges.

The content for the Introductory Packet reflects the priorities expressed at the Workshop by the purchasers. The Packet includes:

- 1) A cover letter from NERC about Materials Exchanges and the money-saving opportunities they offer to public purchasers. (See Appendix O.)
- 2) Information on individual Materials Exchanges (To be inserted by Materials Exchange before mailing out.)
- 3) A PowerPoint presentation on how Materials Exchanges operate and can assist public sector purchasing officials. (Appendix K.)
- 4) The relevant state Surplus Property Fact Sheet. (Appendix N.)

PowerPoint presentation on Materials Exchanges: This presentation focused primarily on the money-saving opportunities provided by Materials Exchanges and is part of the Introductory Packet.

III. LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Working Committee plays a vital role. They were key in identifying individuals to include in the Workshop and outreach process. They played a critical role in defining the target sectors' needs and priorities. And they provided a mix of perspectives that effectively shaped the project outcomes.
- The more information you can find out about your target audience(s) the more effective your program can be. When we started this project, we didn't know very much about the decision-making processes employed by school and municipal purchasers. That knowledge evolved as a result of taking the time to communicate with them through the surveys, presentations made at their events and the dialogue that followed, and the Workshop discussions.
- Remaining flexible throughout the project was essential to maintaining effective communication with the target audiences. If we had refused to deviate from our plan of promoting the use of Materials Exchanges due to their environmental benefits, rather than the cost efficiencies that they offer our target audiences would have stopped participating, and we wouldn't have learned how to most effectively promote the use of Materials Exchanges.
- Combining events with complementary agendas maximizes everyone's time and guarantees a greater participation level. By holding the Annual Materials Exchange Managers Workshop in combination with the Workshop for New England Materials Exchanges, State Surplus Property Programs, Schools and Municipalities, the understaffed Materials Exchanges were able to maximize their time by spending only one day out of the office, and were given the opportunity to meet with schools and municipalities to learn about their purchasing needs and to begin to develop collaborative relationships.

Also during the Workshop, the participants identified tasks that NERC could do to assist the Materials Exchanges in promoting the availability of their services to schools and municipalities. These were articulated in the Education Plan. This concrete set of tasks persuaded EPA New England and Region II to fund NERC to continue its work with the Exchanges for another year. This second year will include working with the New England Exchanges, as well as the New York Material Exchanges. This work will focus on developing a no- or low- cost marketing plan for Exchanges, as well as continuing outreach to the ASBOs and GFOAs. (See Appendix M.)

APPENDICES

- A. Business Lists
- B. Fliers
- C. Press Release
- D. Press List
- E. Working Committee Conference Call Minutes
- F. Surveys
 - Schools
 - Municipalities
 - Materials Exchanges
- G. Survey Announcement
- H. Survey Announcement PowerPoint Presentation
- I. Survey Analysis Presentation
- J. Workshop Invitation
- K. Presentation on Materials Exchange
- L. Workshop Agenda & Minutes
- M. Education Plan
- N. Surplus Property Fact Sheets
- O. Cover Letter to Introductory Packet