

CHAPTER 10 MATERIALS IN THE WORKPLACE

INTRODUCTION

Master Recyclers are usually the sustainability champions wherever they go, including the workplace. As a Master Recycler, it is likely that your co-workers will look to you for information and motivation because they see your commitment.

Workplace sustainability champions are important and as a Master Recycler you can help keep momentum going, seek out answers and resources, and identify barriers that you see in your workplace.

Sustainability champions should also realize that it is not sustainable to try and go it alone. You can pull out recyclables from the garbage, bring your own mug to work, lug special plastics to the local depot yourself and get a few things recycled. Or you can get your workplace organized so that everyone plays a part and recovery dramatically increases, waste dramatically decreases, and policies are put in place that dramatically reduce the consumption of our natural resources.

The free resources available in our region work best when a workplace champion is onsite and able to tailor the approach to the specifics of the particular workplace. This chapter will help you think through the best way to utilize these resources.



COMMERCIAL MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

There are many different sectors of work in the metro area and each utilizes and discards a large quantity of specific materials. The work sectors in our region are generally divided into these groupings:

- Real Estate/Rental Listings
- Accommodation and Food Services (hotels, cafeterias, restaurants, etc.)
- Educational Services (schools)
- Financial Services
- Health Care and Social Assistance (soup kitchens, drug rehab, homeless shelters, clinics, hospitals)
- Manufacturing (from computer chips and solar panels to building, cars and HVAC units)
- Professional, Scientific or Technical Services (consultants, CPAs)
- Retail
- Transportation and Warehousing (distribution centers, trucking companies, Tri-Met)
- Communities of Faith

As you can imagine, materials will vary quite widely from sector to sector. The strategies to manage these materials will be equally variable. Despite the wide range, some approaches can be generalized and then tailored for each of these sectors. Master Recyclers utilize their skills and enthusiasm to help conserve our natural resources in each and every one of these sectors, and in settings that range from a tiny office to a large factory. Master Recyclers have found making change at work to be rewarding because these changes can be quite large scale.

Some Master Recyclers have also found that including the training and experience received in the program in your résumé can greatly increase your value to potential employers who want to improve their sustainability practices. Even if you are applying to positions unrelated to operations, your expertise and demonstrated commitment can be an added bonus for prospective or current employers.

COLLECTION PROGRAMS AT WORK

Standard collection services

Like in the residential collection system, in Washington County (excluding unincorporated areas), Clackamas County and Multnomah County (excluding Portland), garbage and recycling companies serving businesses are franchised. You will recall from previous chapters that means they contract to serve allotted territories and offer standardized services and fees, much like the residential services.



Portland differs in that hauling companies compete with one another for commercial accounts. They also set their own rates and services. Haulers do, however, have to meet some basic requirements to receive a permit to operate in Portland. These basic requirements include providing at least the basic recycling that is required of businesses. Business-related haulers in unincorporated Washington County have certificates that regulate a set of standards, much like the franchised system.

Throughout the region, the same materials that residents may leave at the curb are also accepted from businesses. Specified glass bottles and jars, plastics with a neck, plastic tubs, paper, and metals are allowed. Most haulers accept two sort source separation, where glass is kept separate from all other recyclables. However, often businesses will separate out more valuable materials, like cardboard or office paper, to be sold or to get a different price in hauler pickup fees.

Business Recycling Requirements

All kinds of businesses throughout the metropolitan region are doing their part by recycling at work.

However, during an average year, businesses in the area still throw away more than 100,000 tons of recyclable paper and containers. These valuable materials should go back out into the markets and help us conserve precious natural resources.

For this reason, Metro adopted Business Recycling Requirements (BRR), where businesses must at least recycle the same items residents recycle at home.

In general, businesses are required to:

- Recycle paper, cardboard and containers (aluminum cans, plastic bottles and tubs, and glass bottles and jars).
- Ensure there are containers for collection of these materials.
- Post signs at collection areas, indicating which materials should be recycled.

While this is a Metro requirement, local governments are responsible for enforcement. Most cities and counties have adopted local ordinances to match the Metro rules. Most are matching Metro’s goal of a 50 percent recycling rate in the business sector, while Portland is aiming for 75 percent. Businesses are not, however, being required to recycle their waste to 50 percent and 75 percent. But one strategy for meeting the regional goals of 50 percent and 75 percent is to require that businesses recycle paper and containers. The requirement for businesses is focused on getting all of the basic mixed recycling and glass recycled.

Sometimes these requirements seem complicated in a business setting because there may be multiple players. This is particularly true in a setting where waste is managed in a building with multiple tenants or businesses. In this case, the responsibility to comply with recycling requirements falls on the party who contracts with the hauler for services. This is most often the building property manager. If you are working at a business within a larger building, this person will be an important part of ensuring that the materials you separate for recycling get picked up.

Except in Portland, there are not yet requirements for businesses to compost food, although there are programs to assist businesses with food composting in most parts of the region. Portland City Council has adopted a food compost requirement, but it is not yet implemented. Enforcement will likely only focus on large food waste generators. Food composting at work will be covered in more detail later in this chapter.

Requirements related to construction and demolition businesses will be covered in the Green Building chapter.

RESOURCE

For more information on the Recycle at Work program you can visit their website.

RECYCLE AT WORK

While there are Business Recycling Requirements in most parts of the region, Metro and local jurisdictions focus on an assistance-based approach to gaining compliance and supporting businesses to achieve sustainability goals above and beyond basic recycling requirements. That is where Metro’s Recycle at Work Program comes in.

The Recycle at Work program provides free, customized assistance to all types of businesses throughout the Portland metropolitan area. Recycling Specialists can help your business with:

- On-site evaluations
- Working with waste haulers and property managers
- Finding markets for items not accepted curbside
- Resources for sustainable purchasing



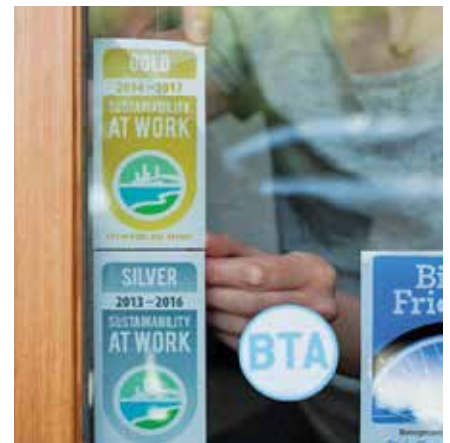
- Free education materials, containers and signage
- Free deskside recycling boxes
- Presentations
- Employee training

Recycling Specialists in each local jurisdiction implement the regional Recycle at Work program. Some of the programs have expanded their services beyond the program that is funded by Metro to include a broader range of sustainability goals such as energy and water conservation. The City of Portland's program is called Sustainability at Work to reflect these additional goals. These professionals will be your main allies if you want to make changes in your workplace.



Awards programs

Along with technical assistance, local jurisdictions also recognize businesses that go above and beyond. Most jurisdictions have a basic certification program, while many also have tiered award programs to showcase businesses that demonstrate a deeper commitment to sustainability. Businesses can demonstrate their commitment by displaying window clings and awards. You can visit the Recycle at Work or Sustainability at Work program website for your area to learn what is available where you work. These awards programs are a great way to encourage your workplace to strive to do better.



WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHERE YOU WORK?

Recycle at Work Specialists can help you create a recycling program that's good for our planet and helps your company reach its sustainability goals. They can also help you assess what sorts of change your organization might be ready for.

What counts as payback at work?

Master Recyclers are a volunteer outreach corps. The program was not created to train professional sustainability coordinators or managers. However, that does not mean that projects at work are off limits for volunteer hours. On the contrary, it is incredibly valuable to have trained workplace champions.

If you decide to do a project at work, it will count as payback if the work involved with the project is above and beyond your normal job description. Master Recycler bartenders, administrative assistants, bus drivers, veterinarians, factory managers and nurses have implemented long lasting changes in their workplaces. Starting a green team, acting as an office champion, helping implement strategies and systems of change, organizing events and brown bag presentations all count as payback. Tasks that are expected of you as part of your job because you are a sustainability coordinator do not count as volunteer payback.

If you are thinking about doing a project in your workplace and are not sure if it would count as payback you can ask the Master Recycler Program Coordinator (masterrecycler@portlandoregon.gov).

FIVE PROJECTS

Getting started on a workplace project is easier than you think. The five ideas listed below (and discussed in greater detail in the rest of this chapter) are great potential projects. Business recycling specialists from Recycle at Work will help you tailor these strategies to fit the specific needs of your organization.

- 1. Form a green team.** You may be the recycling champion who will track and guide your workplace efforts, but you don't have to do it alone. Starting a green team spreads the work and improves communication with co-workers, business and building managers, custodial staff and haulers.
- 2. Conduct a sustainability assessment.** Examining purchasing, waste, and other aspects of your business can reveal opportunities for reducing consumption and disposal while improving your organization's financial, social and environmental bottom lines.
- 3. Implement best practices.** Put a few best practices in place and you will be pleasantly surprised at the results.
- 4. Promotion and outreach.** Once your workplace recycling system is set up, it's crucial to let co-workers know how to use the system through varied and ongoing outreach strategies.
- 5. Setting policy.** Sustain your efforts by setting purchasing policies, contracts and job descriptions.

Before you get started!

Find out if there is already a designated sustainability coordinator and then work collaboratively with them.

Form a green team

Recruit committed co-workers

A motivated green team will share the workload, build support among co-workers and make sure that your recycling efforts are successful.

A Recycle at Work Business Recycling Specialist can help you get a green team started and if necessary educate your business's management on the importance of allocating resources and time to a green team. Support from your management will also ensure that the program is a priority.

Put the call out to committed coworkers who can devote time and energy to the program. And be sure to include a representative from your facilities, maintenance and purchasing departments. These co-workers will be directly affected by the program and should help with its design.

Once your green team is in place, clarify the roles and expectations for each member. Then work together to establish goals and objectives for your sustainability program.

Most green teams meet monthly at a regular time. If an organization is large with many locations it may be more effective to have a green team for just your site.

Start with an assessment

A sustainability assessment can help evaluate the flow of materials through your organization. There are many different assessments you can conduct. A purchasing assessment includes everything from one-time large procurement, such as constructing a new building, to smaller day-to-day purchases such as office supplies. Purchasing entails contracts as well as one-time expenses. A waste assessment includes such activities as reviews of disposal records, walk-through evaluations of facilities and operations, and manual sorting of material pulled from garbage containers. Assessments may also include onsite use of materials or manufacturing choices in certain sectors.

Policy assessment

A good place to start is by looking at current policies and contracts that control the flow of materials in and out of the workplace. An audit of the purchasing policies and waste contracts will help you get a good sense of the existing trends and priorities. Do your purchasing policies only focus on cost? If so, then you will know that a good place to start is by integrating environmental and social requirements into the policies. If the current policies include environmental and social requirements, are they being implemented or is there work to be done in this area?

A scan of policies and contracts can also alert you to specific obstacles that you may have to work around. Some policies may exist that will conflict with goals you may want to set. Contracts may already be in existence with paper purchasing or custodial companies that do not include new potential requirements or tasks. It will be helpful to know this ahead of time so that you can plan a work-around until the contract term ends and a new one can integrate the new requirements and tasks.

Waste assessment

A waste assessment can reveal opportunities for reducing disposal costs and improving your organization's financial and environmental bottom lines.

A waste assessment is a cost-effective step in setting up or improving your organization's waste reduction and recycling programs. It allows you to develop baseline data on the quantity and type of waste your organization generates. **Baseline data can be used to:**

- Estimate cost savings potential of recycling and waste prevention activities.
- Identify specific materials to target for inclusion in recycling and waste reduction efforts.
- Measure progress and communicate results to employees.

Conducting a waste assessment involves many people within an organization. However, one person will need to be responsible for coordinating the assessment and recruiting a team. This individual should be familiar with the overall operations of the organization and in particular with purchasing, garbage collection services, and janitorial contracting. The team size will vary depending on the size of the organization, and the departments and operations represented. For example, a small sort team may consist of one or two people. For larger organizations, create a team that encourages diverse input and support. This may include establishing teams made up of environmental health and safety staff; building supervisors; officials involved with the technical/operational, administrative, facilities maintenance and/or purchasing aspects of your organization; or employees interested in waste reduction.

Examine facility records

Facility records provide useful information, such as the cost, quantity and pickup schedule for materials. Additionally, this information will assist in the identification of potentially hazardous materials at the work site. Information gleaned from these records will assist the waste assessment coordinator in setting goals and making recommendations, as well as developing safety and sort plans.

Examples of useful documents include:

- Purchasing, inventory, maintenance and operating logs.
- Supply, equipment, repair and raw material invoices.
- Waste hauling and disposal records and contracts, including contracts with recycling facilities and records of earned revenues from recyclables.
- Equipment service contracts and health-and-safety logs and invoices.

Conduct a facility walk-through

A facility walk-through provides the waste assessment coordinator with valuable information regarding the day-to-day activities that ultimately affect the waste stream. A walk-through can include more than just waste assessment. Most Recycle at Work Specialists are trained to include other materials management goals when helping you with a walk-through.

A waste assessment walk-through lets you:

- Observe the types and amounts of waste produced.
- Identify waste-producing or waste-reducing activities.
- Account for all garbage and recycling collection equipment.
- Detect inefficiencies in operations.
- Map the path by which waste moves through the organization.
- Observe the layout of operations.
- Observe current recycling and waste prevention educational efforts.

The facility walk-through and record examination provide the waste assessment coordinator with the information necessary to plan a sort strategy. What is the date and time the waste should be collected for sorting? Where is a good location to conduct the sort? How much waste needs to be sorted? Where should the waste be sampled? What material categories should waste be sorted into? Answering questions such as these, sometimes with additional information gained from employee interviews or surveys, will help the waste assessment coordinator properly manage the sort preparation and implementation.

Staying safe during the waste sort

Developing a health-and-safety plan prepares coordinators should an unfortunate injury or accident occur while conducting the waste sort. Communication is crucial to ensure that each team member understands the correct procedures, the potential hazards, and the risk reduction plan.

Risks will vary for each workplace. However, common hazards include: sharp objects in the materials being sorted, such as needles or broken glass and chemical or infectious waste. Injury can also occur from lifting heavy waste bags or encountering on-site vehicles or machinery.

Plan the waste sort

Determine sort categories and prepare data sheets before the sort. Information gathered from the records and facility reviews will help determine what categories of waste to include on your data sheets. Determine sampling and sorting procedures. A standardized process for all participants to follow will help maintain consistency and ensure data integrity.

Consider the following questions:

- Are there waste containers that should not be included in the waste audit because they include dangerous materials such as medical waste, potentially hazardous materials, loose animal or human waste, medical syringes, or broken glass?
- Are you going to audit all waste containers or sample from various parts of the work place?
- Are you going to focus on just one potential waste stream (like food waste or paper or plastics) or will all of the material be assessed?
- Are you sorting materials into the official curbside collection program or are there other materials you also want separated and counted (like non-curbside plastics)?
- When are containers most full, so that you don't set your sorting date right after containers are emptied?
- What is the safest location to sort?

A representative sample should be pulled and sorted from the landfill-bound waste; this sorted sample should comprise roughly 10 percent, by estimated volume, or no less than 300 pounds, of the waste. Consider sorting all collected landfill-bound waste for small-scale sorts.

Most local jurisdictions have waste audit scales, containers and instructions that you can check out, use, clean and return. Check with your local Recycle Specialist to see what is available.



Implement best practices

Once you know you have all the players on board and have a plan for who will haul the recycling and compost and where it will be taken, you now know how materials need to be separated. This is the time to get containers and set up signs. Smaller containers will likely be needed close to workers and larger containers with good signage will be needed to collect the material in one place for the regular pickups by the garbage and recycling companies. The Recycle at Work Specialist will provide free internal containers and signage that can be tailored for your work. Here are a few best practices that will maximize success.

Buddy system

To ensure that materials go where they belong it is important to make all options equally easy. If you only provide garbage containers where recyclables accumulate, you will likely end up with valuable materials in the garbage. It is also true that if you only provide recycling in places where garbage accumulates, you will likely end up with contaminated recycling.



Recycle at Work can provide free desk-side recycling boxes to set next to garbage containers at desks or other work spaces. Unless you have a highly motivated group, do not consider removing the garbage can. Some companies decide to make it harder to throw materials away by making employees get up to get to a garbage can. This approach will likely result in contaminated recycling.

Centralized vs. distributed recycling pickup

Often contracts include custodial staff going around and picking up garbage, but office workers have to get up and empty their recycling when their desk side boxes are full. If deskside garbage pickup is provided, find out if recycling can be included. If not now, when it is time for contract renewal, consider including this option. You can also cut custodial costs by having office workers take both garbage and recycling to the central collection container.

Signage

Rather than making your own, request signage from your Recycle at Work Specialist. These signs were designed to be the most effective tools possible in getting materials where they belong. They utilize more pictures than words, and can include specific languages that may be needed in your work place. They will happily provide specialized signage with your company logo or help you with the design of your own to ensure that best practices are used.





Promotion and outreach

Education, incentives and fun

Often people think that the reason that their co-workers are not recycling right is because they just don't know better. Or worse yet, there is a fear that they just don't care. For this reason, people who want to improve recycling and composting at work often try to educate their co-workers. There is a reason that this chapter does not start with education. It is more effective to use the above best practices that create a path where it is as easy, if not easier, to take the desired action. It is also more effective to build an environment where everyone is working together toward commonly set goals.

Once your contracts, signs and containers are in place, you and your green team are ready for the fun part, promotion! Here are some ways to tell your co-workers how to use the new system:

- Send out periodic emails with instructions and eco-tips.
- Utilize existing communication channels such as a staff newsletter, lunchroom board, or employee website to share messages about changes, to give instructions and to keep people engaged.
- Offer green-bag lunch time presentations on special topics.
- Let everyone know about goals and how they can do their part to meet them. Post charts in prominent places that show the progress toward goals. Make announcements during meetings, by email, through an office newsletter or on a shared web page that let people know when you have passed a major milestone toward the goals.
- Consider prizes to reward folks who do a great job and encourage others.
- Competitions are effective, fun ways to give feedback. Teams or individuals can strive to get to certain goals first.
- Share stories about how co-workers are making changes and succeeding.
- Have co-workers wear buttons or place signs in their workplace to show they are on board with the changes.

Setting policy

Don't let all your great efforts go to waste. Take advantage of the positive support that current management is showing toward these sustainability efforts by ensuring that they will continue into the future. Setting policies that make clear requirements toward environmental and social goals, define who is responsible for carrying out these goals, and measure the progress will help ensure that the shifts you made today become a lasting part of the institution where you work.

One place to start is to take a look at the purchasing in your work place. Sustainable procurement means taking sustainability considerations into account in your procurement actions. This means thinking carefully about what you buy, buying only what you really need, purchasing products and services with high environmental performance, and considering the social and economic impacts of a purchasing decision.

Sustainable procurement activities can range from small-scale actions such as buying recycled paper or less-toxic cleaning products, to the retrofitting or construction of buildings with high energy efficiency standards or developing an alternative fuel fleet. With such a large market share, local businesses, government and nonprofits can have a big influence and drive the market towards sustainable solutions by changing their own procurement practices.

You can also ensure that day-to-day operations are sustainable by including recycling, composting and other environmentally friendly activities. Contracts can also include socially responsible requirements such as paid sick leave for workers and safety training and standards.

Sustainable purchasing policies and contracting may include:

- **Recycled content.** Setting a policy that supplies are made from 100 percent recycled material is likely not a realistic policy. Not all products are offered with such a high level of recycled materials and some are much more expensive than those made from virgin materials. But you could identify the top three supplies that must be made from at least some recycled content. Identify the supplies that are purchased most frequently in your work place and research if there is a similar or same product that is made from at least 30 percent post-consumer recycled material. Determine if the price of this alternative is within your organizational budget.
- **Toxics.** Use cleaning products with less toxic chemicals. When chemicals must be used, train staff to use only what is needed. Require that products disclose ingredients used.
- **Buildings.** Take good care of the buildings where you work by setting maintenance policies and schedules. Identify required standards for buildings, furniture and office fixtures that include sustainable material, reuse and salvage.
- **Sweatshop free.** Purchase products or prioritize products that offer safe and dignified work for their employees and the contracted companies.
- **Paper reduction.** Purchase copy machines and software that set two-sided printing as the default and set policies that require electronic filing.
- **Lunchroom.** Install a dishwasher and provide durable dishes for workers to use during break time. Include cleaning durable dishes and recycling or compost pickup.



Your Recycle at Work Specialist can help you get resources to meet these goals.

FOOD

Whether you are managing food in your lunchroom or you work in a large food waste generator like a school, grocery or restaurant, food is an important part of any sustainability plan. As you will learn in the food chapter, the growing and processing of food requires enormous natural resources. Meanwhile there are people in our region who do not have access to fresh healthy food. Businesses can play a role in utilizing those resources to their maximum level and then donating or composting what is left.

Source Reduction

Reducing the volume of surplus food can help your business:

- Reduce over-purchasing and labor costs.
- Cut down on disposal costs.
- Conserve resources.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

How can your business prevent food waste? Below are strategies for different sectors.

Restaurants, campus institutions, caterers and hotels

Start by monitoring and recording pre-consumer food waste. The EPA has a handful of food waste assessment tools your business can use. If you are a large vendor, the Lean Path food waste prevention system can help your staff track and monitor food waste. Lean Path's Zap program is designed for small to mid-sized operations who want to use the Lean Path software to monitor food waste.

Grocers

Grocers can adjust purchases to reduce pre-consumer food waste. Grocers can monitor food waste in the deli/prepared food area like a restaurant. Some grocers have also begun selling produce at a discount if it does not meet the traditional standards of appearance but is still completely safe to eat.

Offices

Utilize buffet style-meals for catered events, meetings, office gatherings and conferences. Boxed lunches result in wasted food because there is a standardized quantity. Not everyone will eat their apple or cookie or wants a full sandwich. Laying food out for people to choose for themselves will greatly reduce waste.

 **DEEP DIVE** 

To learn more explore the EPA's Sustainable Management of Food Tools for Assessing Wasted Food as well as the Lean Path websites.





You can learn more about Fork It Over! on their website.

Crave Catering grew out of a taqueria Mark Lopez started with his family in 1997. Crave makes smart use of their leftovers to cut down on food waste.

- Clients can choose to keep their leftovers.
- Remaining leftovers are offered to employees.
- Large quantities of leftovers are donated to local food rescue organizations.
- If food has been sitting out for a while, it gets fed to the chickens or composted.



Feed Hungry People

Grocers, restaurants, hotels, caterers and food service companies produce a large volume of perishable, but fresh and nutritious food. These businesses can donate extra and leftover food to food banks, soup kitchens and shelters. They can also use what isn't edible to feed animals. As businesses shift to view surplus food as a resource and not as a waste product they can:

- Provide food to people in need.
- Build employee morale.
- Potentially reduce garbage costs.

How can your business feed hungry people?



Fork It Over! links businesses in the metropolitan area with food rescue agencies. The agencies that are listed are equipped to accept perishable, non-perishable and prepared foods that have not been served or sold. Fork it Over! also has information to help you make the case for food donation. It includes information about Good Samaritan laws that protect businesses from lawsuits when donating food in good faith. It is important to note that there has not been a single lawsuit in the state of Oregon related to a business donating food to an agency.

Feed Animals

Some waste from food is not edible for people, but can be fed to animals. Many local breweries, grocers and farmer's markets connect with farmers to donate their spent grains and produce for animal feed. Some food companies, like Crave Catering, are closing the loop and using their own vegetable waste to feed chickens whose eggs are then used at their catered events.

A lot of resources go into producing feed for livestock. Feeding livestock with unused food frees up resources to feed more people. According to the National Corn Growers Association, about 80 percent of all corn grown in the U.S. is used in livestock, poultry and fish production.

Compost

Food waste that can't be donated (food prep scraps, plate scrapings, and food that's gone bad) can be composted. Composting has many benefits.

Wasted food that ends up in our closed landfills breaks down and emits methane which is a potent greenhouse gas. Our landfills are able to capture some of the methane, but the rest is released into the atmosphere. Now, organic material from participating businesses in the region is transported to an anaerobic digestion facility near Eugene where it is turned into biogas and fertilizer.

Please note: We learned in the Recovery Infrastructure Chapter that residential and commercial organic waste go to different facilities that accept different materials. Facilities that accept the organic waste from Portland's residential curbside collection program need a certain level of carbon matter to function correctly. Residential compost is made mostly of yard debris which is high in carbon materials like leaves and wood. The residential program also accepts some other fibrous materials such as paper products including napkins, teabags, coffee filters and pizza boxes. Food scraps are accepted only in Portland's residential program until there is more capacity for this kind of composting.

Commercial compost is made entirely of food scraps which are wetter, heavier and break down so quickly that they require quicker processing. They can also create odor faster. The facility in Eugene is able to manage these problems, but it cannot process high fiber materials. For this reason, commercial compost programs in the region accept food only. No other materials should be placed in the containers for these programs. Most businesses in the region are now able to participate in a commercial food scrap composting program.

To learn more and determine whether your workplace is ready to start food composting, contact your local Recycle at Work or Sustainability at Work Program Specialist.





CONCLUSION

Materials management at work makes good business sense. Besides providing jobs and services or products, our factories, hospitals, schools, restaurants and grocery stores can make a difference, both environmentally and economically. Our region showed during the recession in 2008 that we can make sustainability commitments and still be resilient during an economic downturn. We now look to a future that will be inclusive and sustainable. There are a lot of business people who believe that climate change is a problem and that we ought to take action now. Because our region started early on the path of green business practices and because we have been leaders in improving how we make products, we are able to prosper by exporting sustainable goods, services and ideas. People are moving to this community because they like the sustainability values that they see here.

Employers are finding that they can attract a strong workforce by having sustainability policies in place that meet their triple bottom line of economy, equity and the environment. Investors and consumers are also savvier than ever before. They want to see investment reports, they ask about sustainable materials and they expect to get information. Combined, these circumstances create unique opportunities for Master Recyclers to have significant impacts at their places of work.