

Toolkit: Improving Recycling at Leased Sites

Applicable for sites, which are not owned or operated by one of the four LMHAs and are leased from other building owners or property managers.

Please note, each site will be unique, and these steps are meant to be guidelines. Use your own judgment and ideas when walking through this toolkit.

Contact Sarah Currie, Green+Leaders Lead at sarah.currie@fraserhealth.ca, with any questions.

Objective

The objectives of this toolkit are to:

- Improve or expand an existing recycling program at a leased site.
- Ensure positive uptake of the improved recycling program.

Background

Many staff work in buildings that are not owned or operated by one of the four Lower Mainland Health Authorities and are instead leased from an owner or property manager. This means that management of the waste and recycling in these buildings is not covered by the LMHAs Recycling Renewal Program, and is instead determined by the building manager and the staff who occupy the space.

Any funding for recycling programs at leased sites (new bins, signage, hauling costs, etc...) must be provided by the occupants and/or negotiated with the property manager.

Fortunately, there are many cases where Green+Leaders and other staff have worked with managers to develop strong reduction and recycling programs at their leased sites.

Steps

The following steps may vary, depending on your site. Modify them to suit the needs of your workplace.

Step 1: Contact your office manager and/or building management.

- Contact your office manager or the equivalent staff person to bring them on board with the plan to improve recycling (See *sample communication at the bottom of the toolkit*).
- Consider if you want to augment what is currently recycled with additional items such as batteries, compost or Styrofoam. (See the [“Where do I Recycle?”](#) resource).

Step 2: Conduct a visual audit of waste bins before improving the new system.

(See the [visual audit tool](#) included in this document and Step 5.)

- This step will allow you to determine the amount of recyclables currently being thrown in the garbage and the amount that are in the garbage after the recycling bins are in place.
- Don't forget to communicate the impact of changes in behaviour, once the recycling program is established.

Step 3: Communicate to your colleagues, before and during the program improvement.

- Send a message from yourself, or through an appropriate manager, that communicates the following:
 - The vision for a waste-free office.
 - What kinds of changes can be expected (new bins, new locations of garbage bins, etc...).
 - Why this is important and what kind of difference it will make.
 - What, specifically, your coworkers will be asked to do. (*See the sample email at the end of the toolkit*).

Step 4: Tune-up your bin location and signs

Use the following resources and tips to ensure your program is living up to its potential. Recycling is a simple change, but it still requires attention to details and maintenance. Be patient. It can take a long time to change habits.

Ensure you have clear and prominent signage for all bins.

- The kinds of items that can be recycled will depend on the hauler for your building. Once you know exactly what the hauler will accept, ensure you have clear and visually prominent signs for each bin.
- Show images of what can go in each bin, including the garbage bin. (Words take longer to process and make it more difficult for users to quickly determine where to place their waste).
- Place these signs on the lid and/or on the wall behind the bin.

Examples of signs can be found here:

- On Greencare: <https://bcgreencare.ca/program/recycling-renewal-program>;
- On Metro Vancouver's website: <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/solidwaste/Resources/Pages/default.aspx>

Locate your bins all together, in convenient location(s).

- Place the recycling bins side-by-side, along with a garbage bin, in a single station. Note: Recycling containers that are located without garbage bins beside them are more likely to be contaminated with non-recyclables, as people will have no place to put their garbage.

Step 5: Audit bins and report on progress

- It's important to audit bins at regular intervals to see if your program is having its intended outcomes, to see where improvements are needed and to share the successes with colleagues.
- Auditing simply means looking inside bins to assess if they are contaminated with materials that belong either in the garbage or in a different recycling bin, and then documenting this using the [Audit Tool](#).
- At the beginning of a program improvement, you may want to audit more frequently (every 1-2 weeks) than you will once a program is up and running.
- Remember to provide an update to your colleagues on how they're doing. One of the strongest motivators is the knowledge that our actions have an impact!
- Use the results of your audit to determine if changes are needed in things like bin location and clarity of signage.

Be patient and find allies

- Participation from coworkers is essential for getting your program set up, and running successfully. At first, this will require extra effort. Changes, even small ones like recycling, can take some getting used to. It's not easy to shift our habits!
- Finding a group of like-minded allies in the workplace can be a big help in building momentum, generating creative ideas and keeping everyone motivated.
- Recycling is something that most of us already value. That means that non-participation has more to do with habits, lack of attention, convenience or concerns about issues such as fruit flies, than with an absence of caring. It can be helpful to remember this, when taking steps to motivate and remind coworkers.
- If you're not already working with another G+L or a like-minded coworker, see if you can find some supportive partners for this project!

Sample Communication to Office Manager (Step 1)

The following outlines (*in italics*) key components of communication with your office/site manager or person responsible for working with the building owner/manager. Keep in mind that each situation will be unique and these are only guidelines. Your primary goal is to bring this person on as a collaborator or supporter.

- 1) *Acknowledge the work and effort they already make to make office operations run efficiently. Introducing a improvements can sometimes make people feel that they are being criticized for the job they've done to-date.*
- 2) *Provide background context, showing organizational support.*
All four health authorities in the Lower Mainland have adopted [sustainability policies](#) that:
 - Commit our organizations to working towards “a healthy environment and a healthy population”
 - Recognize our “duty to minimize environmental impact.”
- 3) *Speak to shared values about a clean environment and reducing unnecessary waste.*
Recycling is an important part of this responsibility.
 - Recycling materials keeps toxins out of the air, land and water by reducing incineration and the production of leachate that can seep into groundwater and soil.
 - Recycling is good for the climate. Statistics Canada estimates that up to 25% of our country's carbon emissions come from landfills, which produce methane (a powerful greenhouse gas) as the garbage decomposes.
 - When we recycle, we're reusing valuable raw materials and reducing the need extract new resources from the Earth through practices like mining.
- 4) *Make a clear request/invite them to be part of this effort. For example, you might say, “These are some of the reasons I'm passionate about introducing this program. I'd love to have you on board. Can we talk about what steps are needed to make this happen? Would you be willing to support me/us to improve recycling at our site? In what way?”*

If they are not supportive, consider asking what they would be willing to do, something that might be a lower or more accessible commitment. Remember, it may take patience and time to find acceptance for this new way of doing things.

Sample email to coworkers to introduce improvements (Step 3)

I'm excited to let you know that our office will be improving our recycling system over the coming months.

Why? Because taking responsibility for the waste we produce is an important step to becoming a more sustainable organization. In a recent audit of a typical day's garbage, we found X amount of recyclables in the bin. This means we have a great opportunity to make sure those valuable resources are being recycled and not lost in a landfill.

Starting XXX we'll have XXX bins located in the following locations _____. You can now recycle the following items at work _____.

We're looking forward to working with you to make this system work as smoothly and effectively as possible. If you have suggestions or questions for improving our waste reduction, please contact _____.

Thank you,

PS We can feel good about recycling and reducing waste for so many reasons. Here are a few:

- Recycling materials keeps toxins out of the air, land and water by reducing incineration and the production of leachate that can seep into groundwater and soil.
- It's good for the climate! Statistics Canada estimates that up to 25% of our country's carbon emissions come from landfills, which produce methane (a powerful greenhouse gas) as the garbage decomposes.
- When we recycle, we're reusing valuable raw materials and reducing the need extract new resources from the Earth through practices like mining.

Resources

[Where do I Recycle?](https://bcgreencare.ca/system/files/resource-files/RRP-Recycling%20Resources%20ChartJan27.pdf) is a comprehensive list of haulers and drop-off locations for a wide range of recyclable and compostable materials. <https://bcgreencare.ca/system/files/resource-files/RRP-Recycling%20Resources%20ChartJan27.pdf>

The Recycling Council of BC <http://www.rcbc.ca/> is a great resource for hard-to-recycle items and for information on the latest provincial news regarding zero waste and waste diversion.

[Metro Vancouver's website](http://www.metrovancouver.org/SERVICES/SOLIDWASTE/Pages/default.aspx) has a comprehensive overview of how your efforts fit within a regional plan and strategy. <http://www.metrovancouver.org/SERVICES/SOLIDWASTE/Pages/default.aspx>