

Preamble

The following municipal multi-residential recycling program best practices were identified in the 2009 KPMG report, *“Blue Box Program Enhancement and Best Practices Assessment Project”*:

- Build and maintain a database of all multi-residential properties
- Benchmark performance and monitor on a regular basis
- Provide adequate recycling bin capacity
- Provide promotion and education materials
- Set a minimum threshold for recycling for buildings to be eligible for municipal garbage collection and disposal services
- Identify buildings that are not recycling and determine the feasibility of extending municipal services
- Engage in outreach activities including training for stakeholders
- Develop design requirements for new building developments that design of increased diversion. Municipal approval for new building developments should be subject to meeting these mandatory requirements.

These established best practices have been guiding the activities of multi-residential (MR) programming and Continuous Improvement Fund (CIF) funding requirements since they were published. Our understanding of multi-residential recycling sector is always evolving, however. Through the gathering of municipal and CIF experience, the Multi-Residential Working Group can now *add* to the collective multi-residential Blue Box programming tool kit.

Emerging Best Practices

The following are emerging best practices and recommendations as gleaned from the municipal experience, research, presentations and discussions of CIF Multi-Residential Working Group members. They have been categorized under overarching MR task areas: management, operations, promotion and education (P&E), and by-laws and enforcement.

These emerging best practices provide insight into what is working for some municipalities and alternatively, what other municipalities can test in their own communities.

At the time of writing, the municipal representatives in the Multi-Residential Working Group were: Barrie, Guelph, Halton, Hamilton, London, Niagara, Ottawa, Peel, Toronto and Vaughan.

NOTE: Due to various municipal circumstances, the emerging best practices and recommendations below are not necessarily implemented by all of the municipalities represented in the Multi-Residential Working Group. For these municipalities, the practices are endorsed in principle based on their experience and expertise.

1. MANAGEMENT

- a. **Collection trucks with weighing options** - Develop your collection contract to include trucks with on-board scales and regular weight tracking by drivers.
- b. **Comprehensive evaluation with new or changing programs** - Apply quantitative and qualitative evaluation tools to new or changing programs, or when an operational element is introduced or adjusted. Quantitative tools will provide data to identify problems areas, set goals and determine success, while qualitative tools can identify relevance and comprehension, answer “why” questions, and inform program development.
- c. **Problem-solving culture** - Promote a departmental culture of program reflection and trouble-shooting. Set aside time and use a variety of evaluation tools to unearth unidentified challenges and opportunities.
- d. **Involve all stakeholders** - If possible, during initial multi-residential property engagement, contact all stakeholders: property owners, property managers, superintendents, condo board members, and when able, on-site staff. If a stakeholder contacts the municipality first, recognize their potential as the property’s recycling champion; encourage, reinforce and support their initiative.
- e. **Support property engagement** - Encourage properties (superintendents, property managers or resident champions) to monitor their recycling efforts. For those that do, provide the opportunity to understand and improve their performance:
 - encourage them to *regularly check, maintain and repair equipment* (ex. bins), and to report unfixable damage to the bin provider,
 - ask them to set-up *convenient* recycling stations throughout their building,
 - ensure they understand what optimum *capacity* is and why it is important to their recycling success; provide them with the tools, strategies and contact people to increase it,
 - ask them to *communicate* regularly with residents about recycling expectations and performance, and to keep them stocked with bags/bins and guides.
- f. **Identify barriers by speaking to a diversity of users** - The ability to recycle easily must be an option for all. Speak to residents who represent outlier demographic groups to uncover as yet unidentified needs and barriers.

2. OPERATIONS

- a. **Stakeholder inclusion and role identification** - All relevant stakeholders should be present during site visits, building meetings, and cc'd on communications. This will reinforce role responsibilities, accountability, trouble-shooting capacity, and general program knowledge. Consider who should be at visits ahead of time and ensure they are invited within a reasonable timeframe. This is especially important when discussing issues, property damage, and when setting up a new site.
- b. **Operations consultation** - Be sure to consult with superintendents and property managers when installing or making changes to MR collection equipment and logistics (ex. placing anti-gravity locks on FEL bins). Include them in operations by encouraging them to: report implementation challenges, equipment damage, and to provide general feedback; provide them with direct contact information.
- c. **Labelling** - All carts and bins set-up for collecting recycling materials should be labelled. Ensure labels are placed at a level wheelchair users can see.

3. P&E

- a. **Targeted demographic campaigns** - When in the planning stages of a campaign that targets a clearly-defined audience (ex. seniors building, student residence), gather the insight of relevant stakeholders as to their unique needs and nature. Apply this information to program development and delivery.
- b. **Coordinated P&E materials** - To reduce resident confusion, coordinate (brand) the graphic design and content of all communications materials and operations labelling.
- c. **In-unit containers** - All residents should receive in-unit containers - a bag or recycling bin - to bring their items to their recycling station.
- d. **In-unit container distribution** - Distribute in-unit containers on a regular basis to accommodate resident turnover, reinforce program adoption, and to replace containers that have been damaged.
- e. **Define partnership roles** - When working with partners (including internal municipal departments) to deliver a recycling program, ensure roles, expectations and timelines are identified during the initial stages of the collaboration.
- f. **Comprehensive P&E** - When able, distribute all regular multi-residential program information through one material (a guide, for example); not piecemeal (campaign material and prompts excluded).
- g. **Use photographs to avoid confusion** - Use recognizable photographic images to depict recyclables on all promotional material.

- h. **Accommodate high turnover** - Schedule regular outreach activities and communication (don't miss these costs when budgeting) to accommodate the high superintendent and resident turnover characteristic of the multi-residential sector. Provide chute and common room posters to superintendents and property managers bi-annually; if delivering them in person, help put them up.
- i. **Effective open houses** - Open houses are an effective outreach tool. Ensure attendance by offering food and identifying them to residents as the pick-up point for new containers or other incentives. During the open house, engage residents in conversation, answer questions and importantly, document concerns to feed into program development. Use this face-to-face opportunity to understand the building demographic and recruit champions.

4. BY-LAWS AND ENFORCEMENT

- a. **Use of letterhead to inform of possible fines** – To underscore the seriousness of the contamination, send a letter on municipal letterhead to residents informing them of potential fines placed on the misdemeanor.
- b. **Waste management plan for bylaw violators** - Request a waste management plan from property managers, superintendents or boards of properties that have had a waste bylaw violation. Ensure it includes a solution to the identified problem. Indicate that the municipality will not provide service until this plan is provided.
- c. **Uniformed delivery** - Ensure that offenders understand the seriousness of compliance when delivering notices and fines do so through a uniformed staff member/enforcement officer.

Additional Recommendations

In addition to the emerging best practices, the Multi-Residential Working Group makes the following recommendations as listed under the overarching task areas:

1. MANAGEMENT

- a. **Allow for P&E material sharing** - To support cross-municipal efforts to improve multi-residential recycling, stipulate in P&E design contracts that artwork or images may be shared with municipal peers.

2. OPERATIONS

- a. **Bins for wheelchair users** - Make small 4-gallon recycling bins (if providing bags) available to those using wheelchairs so that they have the option of carrying recyclables on their lap.

- b. **Flexible service delivery** - When possible, be flexible in your service delivery so that you can tailor services to the needs of each building. For example: by offering multiple size carts, increasing recycling collection frequency, conducting workshops at different times for different demographic groups, etc.

3. P&E

- a. **Expand influence** - Build relationships and facilitate greater engagement by making presentations at board meetings (ex. condominiums, social housing and co-ops) and other influential stakeholder group gatherings.
- b. **Recycling workshop enhancement** - When planning superintendent and property manager recycling workshops consider:
 - Making your workshop mobile by taking it to potential attendees (at an annual property managers' meeting, for example)
 - Marketing your workshop through formal and informal property manager groups
 - Ensuring your workshop is short, addresses superintendent and property manager needs and contains an "ask" the municipality can follow-up on (ex. "Determine your building's capacity needs. Compare it to what you have. Contact us with the outcome.)
 - Indicate that food (ex. coffee and snacks) will be offered.
- c. **Comprehensive campaign** - In addition to a guide (sorting list) and an in-unit container, common area notices (ex. elevator poster) and an occasional prompt (ex. door hanger) are recommended to assist with program reinforcement. Fridge magnet sorting guides are helpful.
- d. **Go beyond the basics (residents)** - When able, go beyond telling residents simply what to recycle. Educate them on the municipal recycling service as a whole (the benefits, where the material is going, what it gets made into, how sorting works, etc.) so that they have an enriched understanding of why the program is important and why we need them to participate and sort properly. This knowledge can increase their motivation to participate.
- e. **Site inspection guests** - Include on-site staff in your visual audit inspections. It provides an opportunity to reinforce your relationship, educate on material sorting, and answer questions on other aspects of the service.
- f. **MRF Tours for property managers/staff** - When possible, invite property managers or on-site staff to tour your MRF.
- g. **Multilingual P&E** - P&E should be made available in other languages. This can include online PDF versions for superintendents and property managers to download and print, as well as hard copies to be provided by municipalities when requested.