



## Why Should Businesses Recycle?

Recycling is the reprocessing of materials into new products, which generally prevents the waste of potentially useful materials, reduces the consumption of raw materials, lowers energy usage, and decreases greenhouse gas emissions compared to virgin production. Standard materials include: mixed paper, cardboard, mixed plastics, glass, metals, and compostable items (if there is a locally available program in place).

**It's the law in Rhode Island:** The Rhode Island Recycling Act states that solid waste “both from cities and towns, and from commercial establishments, will be separated into recyclable and non-recyclable components.” The law does not exempt commercial properties.

**It could be good for the company's bottom line:** More recycling means less garbage, which means that the company is in a better position to control costs as trash fees increase. Having a firmer grasp of waste and recycling fees allows for better overall business management. Actual program costs will vary by business size and sector.

**It helps the State's economy:** Recovering the value of materials through recycling creates jobs and spurs the state's recycling sector. Recycling industries provide jobs for area residents and add the State's tax base.

**It helps the environment:** The environmental benefits of recycling are found at every stage of a consumer product's life cycle—from the mining of raw materials, through use, and final disposal. By redirecting waste to serve as raw materials for industry, recycling conserves valuable natural resources, saves energy used in extracting and processing those resources, reduces greenhouse gases, and decreases air and water pollution from disposal.

## Easy to Implement Strategies

- Place recycling bins next to trash receptacles so it's just as easy to recycle as it is to throw something in the trash.
- Take the guesswork out of recycling by prominently posting signage at each trash and recycling station so it's easy to know whether an item is recyclable or trash. [Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation](#) (RIRRC) offers downloadable flyers, posters, and recycling bin labels on its website.
- Posting the Recycling Plan and distributing copies to all employees and tenants is a good step, but sending out a memo or having a quick meeting to notify staff that the business is implementing a recycling program might have a deeper impact. It is beneficial to notify them first-hand about what materials will now be recycled and how it might impact their daily activities. This will give employees and tenants an opportunity to ask any questions.
- Make sure recycling is easy and bins are abundant. Most people want to do the right thing and recycle, but the demands of a busy work schedule can make it difficult if recycling bins are hard to access or it's unclear what to recycle. If employees have individual workstations, place recycling bins at each workstation.

# Steps to Create a Commercial Recycling Program

1. Get management aligned with the work. Management buy-in is critical to launching a successful program. This signals to employees and customers that recycling is important to the business and should be taken seriously.
2. Identify a recycling champion. While it's critical to have management on board, it's also important to identify someone to "own" the recycling program – someone who is the point person for recycling questions and issues that might arise. This person could be at the management level, or could be an employee who is particularly passionate about recycling. At larger businesses, it might be beneficial to have multiple people who can champion recycling in various departments.
3. Determine recycling needs. The company will be in a much better position to set up a cost-effective recycling program if it is aware of how much of the waste stream is recyclable. Many businesses can determine recycling needs by visually inspecting their trash to get a sense of the kinds of waste they generate and in what quantities.
4. Line up a licensed hauler. If a private hauler picks up the trash, approach them about adding recycling pick-up. Then shop around to see if another hauler can offer a better rate or services that better suit the needs of the company.
5. Access local assistance. Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RICC) provides technical assistance and waste assessments to RI government entities, schools, businesses, institutions, and housing communities at no cost. RICC staff will visit an organization/site to determine the types of materials currently thrown away, strategize options for establishing or improving the existing recycling program, and assist in developing an action plan to reduce waste.
6. Get everyone on board. Buy-in from all stakeholders is the key component of any recycling program, and to make company's plan successful, everyone needs to be on board, from upper management to janitorial staff. Meet with housekeeping staff to inform them of the new recycling program, and solicit their feedback on how to best make it work.

## Resources

- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) has a [Commercial Recycling Program](#), which is dedicated to increasing the amount of business recycling in Rhode Island and diverting commercial waste from the landfill. Program staff will provide assistance to RI businesses upon request.
- [Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation](#) provides a variety of relevant resources, including educational programs, how-to guides, and access to recycled materials.
- [Recycle Together](#), Rhode Island's bin/cart recycling program, provides simple guidelines on what can and cannot be recycled in Rhode Island.

## Associated Resource Guides

- Accredited Green Buildings & Working with Landlords
- Energy Conservation & Efficiency

