



case study

City of Lowell Mandatory Recycling Enforcement Coordinator Program

The City of Lowell received a mandatory recycling enforcement grant from MassDEP for \$50,000. The approach and results of implementing mandatory recycling in Lowell are discussed below.

Community Population: 106,500
Households Served: 25,000
Services Provided: Weekly curbside trash and dual-stream recycling collection

Program Overview

- MassDEP grant funds for this project were disbursed over 15 months, beginning February 2012 and ending May 2013.
- Lowell used the funds to hire a dedicated employee to serve as the Mandatory Recycling Enforcement Coordinator, who carried out enforcement activities in conjunction with a public outreach campaign.
- The goal of this program was to increase recycling tonnage collected, to be accomplished through an education and enforcement program to insure that the City of Lowell's residents are separating recyclables from trash to the fullest extent possible, and placing them curbside for collection.

Implementation

- Baseline data was collected (city-wide recycling and solid waste tonnage and the set-out rate on three collection routes) to benchmark the progress of the recycling enforcement program.
- The City of Lowell printed outreach materials and publicity tools (brochures, inserts in water/sewer bill and Motor Vehicle Excise Tax bill, etc) to notify residents of the City's intent to enforce mandatory recycling and to explain the benefits of recycling to the community.
- The Coordinator conducted two follow-up recycling set-out rate surveys six months apart for the three collection routes used for establishing a baseline.

Enforcement

- The Coordinator regularly monitored all trash routes and documented any residents found out of compliance with the City of Lowell's mandatory recycling ordinance.
- When a resident was found out of compliance, a door hanger was left with education material, and the noncompliant item was stickered. If the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance was violated a second time, the item was stickered and a letter was sent to the tenant and landlord outlining potential fines. The third time a residence was found out of compliance, a non-collection notice was issued and a fine was mailed to the property owner.
- The Coordinator took a photo each time a non-compliant setout was observed.
- Over the course of the program, the Coordinator issued more than 3,000 cart stickers, and more than 50 fines.

Results

Waste Reduction & Financial Results

- Trash tonnage decreased by more than 4% in the first year of the grant program, compared to baseline years.
- In 2012, the City of Lowell reduced trash by 514 tons. With a tip fee of \$70/ton, this resulted in a \$36,000 savings for the City.
- Recycling set-out rates increased by 15% over the course of the grant program.

Other Positive Outcomes

- The Mandatory Recycling Coordinator improved data tracking for Lowell's curbside program and increased waste diversion and overall program participation
- The City of Lowell saw a decrease in overfill issues and dual stream recycling contamination.
- The City of Lowell experienced an increase in school and student, neighborhood, and peer enforcement support.

For More Information

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For Information about MassDEP's grant program visit our website:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/recycle/grants/smrp-grants.html>

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