



# FACT SHEET: MUNICIPAL FOOD WASTE DIVERSION MODELS

The Massachusetts **Solid Waste Master Plan** sets a goal of reducing food waste going to landfills by 750,000 tons a year by 2030. Municipal, residential, and small business food waste diversion programs will be critical in meeting this goal. Municipalities can use a variety of approaches to help prevent food loss and divert food waste from the trash. As of 2023, municipalities in Massachusetts prevented over **20,750 tons of food scraps** from going to landfills or incinerators through curbside and drop-off collection programs. There are **144 communities in Massachusetts that have an option for residents** to drop off their separated food scraps at a central location or via curbside collection service.

According to MassDEP’s most recent **recycling and solid waste survey data**:

- 5 municipalities collect food waste at both curbside and drop-off locations.
- 12 municipalities contract with a hauler or composter via a municipal contract.
- 55 municipalities have selected a “Preferred Vendor” for residential food waste collection.
- 72 municipalities collect food waste at a local drop-off location.
- In addition, 161 municipalities sell **backyard compost bins** to residents.

## MUNICIPALLY CONTRACTED SERVICE:

Municipality issues a request for proposals (RFP) and contracts with compost operator/hauler to provide curbside food waste service to residents.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipality will be able to outline terms and cost of services.</li> <li>• Potential to reach many residents, particularly if the fees for residents are low, wrapped into other municipal service fees, or if the service is fully covered by the municipality and free to residents (e.g., tax-based).</li> <li>• Municipality may fund through tax levy or fees..</li> <li>• Municipality may see reduction in trash hauling and tipping costs over time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have a higher initial cost for the municipality</li> <li>• Will require more administrative involvement from the municipality</li> <li>• Potential for higher contamination rate in the curbside bins as residents become accustomed to the process of separating food scraps and learn what is and is not compostable.</li> </ul>

## PREFERRED VENDOR:

The municipality chooses a preferred vendor to serve residents with curbside pickup. This may or may not be done through a public procurement process. Residents sign up for private food waste collection with the preferred vendor and the municipality promotes the service.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-cost option for municipalities.</li> <li>• Implementation and management are handled by vendor.</li> <li>• In many cases, the municipality can negotiate a lower cost service for residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipality may need to invest in advertising or incentives.</li> <li>• Vendor may require a minimum number of household subscriptions.</li> </ul>

**Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection**

100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA 02114

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This information is available in alternate format. Please contact MassDEP at 617-292-5500

TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370

**PRIVATE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE:**

Residents subscribe to a curbside food waste service with a private vendor.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No municipal cost or involvement.</li><li>• Vendor responsible for communicating, contracting, and billing.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Municipality has less involvement in negotiating cost or quality of service.</li><li>• Cost for residents may be higher (or subject to more fluctuation) than if the municipality provides incentives or reaches a preferred vendor or contracted agreement with a vendor.</li><li>• Vendor may require a minimum number of subscriptions to provide service.</li></ul>

**FOOD WASTE DROP OFF SITES:**

Residents bring food scraps to a centrally located food waste collection bin, which the municipality arranges to have hauled to a compost or anaerobic digestion facility.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective, low cost, and low risk way to start residential food waste collection.</li><li>• Helps educate residents previously unfamiliar with food waste diversion.</li><li>• Variety of cost structures. Municipalities may charge a small fee to gain access to the bins or include it with a transfer station fee.</li><li>• Smaller municipalities may be able to manage and process food waste themselves, eliminating the need to move the material off-site, and provide finished compost to residents.</li><li>• Bins are available on <a href="#">State Contract FAC113</a> at a pre-negotiated price.</li><li>• Great option for residents that do not have backyard space.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires municipal management and oversight of bins.</li><li>• Bins may need to be locked to prevent misuse.</li><li>• Outreach and education are important to ensure residents know the availability of the service and understand the correct use.</li><li>• Requires additional effort from residents, particularly if they have curbside service for other waste materials.</li></ul>

**BACKYARD COMPOST BIN DISTRIBUTION:**

Municipalities supply at-cost or low-cost backyard compost bins to residents. The bins stay outside and, by mixing kitchen food scraps, leaves, twigs, paper, and other compostable materials, residents can make compost to use in the garden, in potted plants, or on their lawns.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Once purchased, backyard bins are free to use, easy to manage, and will create valuable compost for the homeowner or resident.</li><li>• Bins are available for purchase off <a href="#">State Contract FAC113</a> at a pre-negotiated price.</li><li>• <a href="#">Recycling Dividend Program (RDP)</a> funds can be used to purchase bins as well as counter-top kitchen scrap buckets.</li><li>• All food scraps are processed at home. No hauling required.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Residents require outdoor space to place the compost bin.</li><li>• Residents may <a href="#">need outreach and education</a> on how to successfully separate food scraps and use the backyard bin, as well as what materials are able to be composted.</li></ul>