

The Recycling IQ Kit provides cities and towns with steps, tools and resources to help improve the quality of local recycling programs by providing direct feedback to residents about what should and should not be recycled.



Community Population: 34,336

Households Served: 13,026

Households Targeted: 979

Town information: Dartmouth has low population density and is made up predominantly of single-family homes

Recycling Program: Dual-stream curbside collection with paper/cardboard and comingled materials on alternating weeks (64 gallon carts)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: DARTMOUTH WAS ONE OF THE FIRST COMMUNITIES TO APPLY FOR THE RIQ

GRANT IN 2017. THE TOWN WAS AWARDED ITS SECOND GRANT FOR UP TO \$40,000 IN FEBRUARY 2018. THIS CASE STUDY FOCUSES ON THE RESULTS OF THE 2018 PROGRAM.

- The top contaminants consisted of plastic bags, plastic case wrap, and bagged recyclables.
- Signage and social media focused on the “No Bags” message
- Enforcement efforts focused on comingled recycling carts, as they were found to be more contaminated than the paper/cardboard carts
- 979 households (7.5%) were selected for direct feedback with checks done every other week

IMPLEMENTATION

Training:

- Staff participated in training prior to the launch, during which they were shown photos and sample contaminants and discussed when to tag and reject a cart
- A reference sheet of the agreed upon threshold for rejection was created and used while cart checking to ensure consistency

Education and Outreach:

- Both a general information postcard and a targeted issue (No Bags) postcard were mailed to all 13,026 households, with key phrases translated into Portuguese
- Outreach included bilingual flyers, posts on social media, and ads in newspapers, on local radio stations, and movie theater pre-shows

- In-Town signage consisted of two-sided A-frame signs, decals for recycling carts, a retractable banner, and a billboard

Cart Checking:

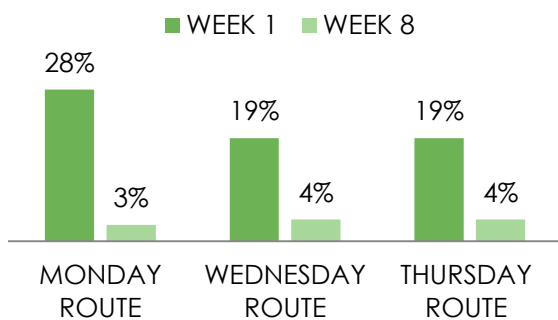
- The cart checking areas were chosen based on contamination data from the Waste Reduction Enforcement Coordinator and feedback from the recycling collection drivers
- Two teams, each consisting of one experienced staff person and one temporary worker (hired through Associated Career Network LLC), split the addresses and on average checked 163 households per morning
- Carts were rejected and given an “oops” tag if they contained 3 significant plastic bags or pieces of wrap, 5 containers with residue, or were at least 1/3 full with bulky contaminants
- Cart checkers noted at each address whether a cart was set out, whether the cart passed or failed, and what contaminants were present if the cart failed
- Cart checkers texted rejected addresses to drivers and the DPW office, and the office was also notified of the contaminant found to help respond to phone calls

“It was clear that the focused outreach helped to meet the goal of reducing contamination.”

RESULTS:

- Tagging rate decreased by 88% in the Monday area, 77% in the Wednesday area, 81% in the Thursday area, and 82% overall
- The threshold for rejection was stricter in 2018 than in 2017 and yielded better results
- The Town spent \$32,234.78 of the grant

Tagging Rate



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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