STRATEGY

Multiple Mailer Campaigns

The Recycling Partnership

Send a series of four participation or contamination-focused mailers with empathetic messaging, engaging creative, and simplified yes/no instructions for accepted materials.

Program Type	Primary Impact	Recipe Activation	Evidence Base
✓ **Curbside**	✓ **Participation**	⬜ Access & Program Design	⬜ Effective
✓ **Multifamily**	⬜ Capture	⬜ Ease (Physical)	✓ **Emerging (Curbside)**
✓ **Drop-Off**	✓ **Contamination**	✓ **Ease (Mental)**	✓ **Understudied (Multifamily, Drop-Off)**
		✓ **Appeal**	
		✓ **Norm**	

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

What's Known & Why This Works

- → Sending four consecutive mailers has led to improved recycling participation and curbside set-out rates in some pilot projects.
- → Empathic messaging, with bright colors and engaging creative, aims to make people feel understood by acknowledging and normalizing their feelings (e.g. confusion, frustration) about recycling, motivating participation.
- → In one study, The Partnership found that frequent mailings had a significant impact on increasing recycling set out at households that were already recycling. At households that were not recycling, the mailings were not enough to drive significant increases, indicating that this group likely needs additional support to start recycling.
- → This concept is continuing to be tested to better understand the impact on recycling participation and contamination, and for use with drop-off and multifamily programs.

Behavior Impact

Curbside:

- → **No or limited impact**, in some studies
- → **29-64% increase** in set-outs (3 studies)
- → **14% contamination rate decrease** (1 study)

Drop-Off:

- → **4-6% increase in site usage** (1 study)

Estimated Cost Per Household (HH)

$3-4/HH

The Recipe for Recycling Behavior Change

Or click here to learn more.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

Recommended Process

1 — Conduct baseline measurements.
2 — Send four consecutive mailers with intervals of 4-6 weeks in between.
3 — Conduct post-intervention measurements.

Things To Consider

→ Include a mix of motivational and informational content with a focus on key areas where residents can improve recycling (for example: no plastic bags, recycle more containers).

→ This strategy may be a good concept for rural areas with universal, opt-in, or open-market curbside recycling services where other tactics (like cart tagging) may be less feasible or cost-effective.

→ Ensure that materials are translated, transcreated, and effectively marketed to multicultural communities is essential to mailer campaigns in communities with diverse populations.

→ Develop your mailer as a doorway into a longer engagement journey. Provide multiple ways for residents to learn more or get in touch, ensuring everyone has a pathway to connect. This can include a website URL, helpline phone number, email address, and QR codes or other quick links to digital content. When designed thoughtfully, mailers can be a driver of digital engagement, often generating measurable spikes in website visits, QR code scans, and use of search or lookup tools on or immediately following delivery days.

Measurement Recommendations

Good
Collection tonnage (trash and recycling)

Better
Recycling set-outs and tonnage

Best
Capture rate study

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CASE STUDIES

Studying Recycling Behavior and Participation with In-Home Recycling Bins, Cincinnati, OH
Kalamazoo, MI, Data-Driven Action, Community-wide Results
East Lansing, MI, Personalized Recycling Education

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Or click here to learn more.