STRATEGY

Carts Deployed with Education

Implement a cart-based universal recycling program supported with an early education and outreach campaign to amplify adoption and material quality.

The Recycling Partnership

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

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

What's Known & Why This Works

→ Communities that implement automated cart-based universal recycling programs see long-term efficiencies and significant increases tons collected. It also makes it easier and safer for residents. All recyclables can fit into one container that is simple to roll to the curb.

→ The Partnership's recent national survey finds that households with carts are significantly more likely to view themselves as active participants, reinforcing a sense of self-efficacy that is foundational to both participation and material recovery.

→ Access is critical, but it doesn't drive participation on its own. Residents need to know what to do and why it matters. That's where outreach makes the difference to inform, engage, and empower residents before and during the launch of their new curbside service. Carts delivered with information get your program off on the right foot, providing residents with the guidance they need to adopt this new service.

Behavior Impact

→ Programs using carts, common suite of education materials, and other BMPs can recover **400-450 pounds per household per year.**

Cost Per Household (HH)

$40-65/HH for Carts

Depending on size and additional features. See The Recycling Partnership's Carts Guide for more budgeting guidance.

$1.50-2/HH for Education

Includes a press release, cart packet, and mailer

The Recipe for Recycling Behavior Change

Or click here to learn more.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

Recommended Process

Refer to The Recycling Partnership's **Guide to Implementing a Cart-Based Recycling Program** for a comprehensive explanation of planning and process for rolling out carts. Here's the high-level view:

1 — Engage with community groups in early planning to allow community members to ask questions, give feedback, and spread the word.

2 — Deliver carts with packets of information, affixing them securely in a waterproof baggie or envelope.

3 — Follow-up with additional touchpoints to keep residents engaged in recycling.

Things To Consider

→ Focus on basic yes and no instructions, realistic illustrations, plain language, and multilingual communications. Use fewer words, more pictures.

→ Keep it simple. Show that cart recycling makes their lives easier. Simplifying people's lives is universally accepted as a good thing.

→ Frame the messaging as an invitation to join. Cart rollouts create a unique window when households are especially receptive to new information, tools, and systems. Delivering the right invitation at that moment is critical to capturing attention and establishing an immediate sense of belonging—reinforcing that their participation truly matters.

→ Don't bury the lead. When you talk about rolling out carts, avoid the temptation to inform your audience of EVERYTHING happening with your program. The cart messages get lost in the mix.

Measurement Recommendations

Good
Collection tonnage (trash and recycling)

Better
Material composition audit and tonnage

Best
Capture rate study including trash and recycling

The Recipe for Recycling Behavior Change

Or click here to learn more.

Variations

- Deploy carts with clear instructions about the carts and services changes **plus one year of sustained engagement post service change**, including continued guidance and feedback on top contaminants or areas to improve (i.e. recycle more plastics), how to prepare material (cardboard), and recyclables around the house.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

TOOLKIT

A Guide to Implementing a Cart-Based Recycling Program (The Recycling Partnership, 2018)

CASE STUDY

Sahuarita, AZ – Implementing Universal Curbside Carts with E&O