STRATEGY

# Participation Mailers + In-Home Bins (Curbside)

Send a series of 3-4 participation-focused, empathetic mailers to households with little or no set-out or routes with low recycling tons paired with the delivery of an in-home bin (universal delivery or opt-in).

| 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

→ Initial research into this emerging strategy shows that it is likely to motivate non-participants to start recycling and encourage optimized in-home flow and set-outs for existing participants.

→ While mailers alone may boost participation at a lower cost than bins, they are likely not as effective at getting non-participants to start; providing bins removes a physical barrier by helping move recycling from the home to the curb.

→ The long-term impact of this strategy is not yet known. The Partnership's research shows a strong link between in-home bins and higher Recycling Confidence Index scores. More than half of U.S. households lack even one bin, and only 24% have more than one—limiting material capture throughout the home. Given that in-home bins are associated with stronger confidence and a greater sense of engagement, these findings underscore the importance of developing strategies to expand access to this essential tool, especially among the households that need it most.

### Behavior Impact

→ **26-43% increase** in household set out

→ **Increases** in pounds per household captured

### Estimated Cost Per Household (HH)

**$18-25/HH**

For households that receive an in-home bin.

The programmatic cost for delivering this intervention is much lower per household since not all households receive a bin.



*The Recipe for Recycling Behavior Change*

Or click here to learn more.

# IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

## Recommended Process

1 — Before the project, measure curbside recycling set-out within your community.

2 — Identify households with little or no set-out or routes with low recycling tons and estimate the cost of sending mailers or mailers paired with in-home bins.

3 — Implement the project, distributing mailers with in-home bins.

4 — Measure curbside recycling set-out again after the project to evaluate impact.

## Things To Consider

→ Accurate set-out data from your hauler or on truck camera vendor can be difficult to obtain, as it is not always tracked. Consider pairing this intervention with a Smart Camera contamination project to take advantage of HH data. If set-out data is not available, consider focusing this effort on routes with low recycling tons. In future collection contracts require your haulers to collect and provide this data.

→ One mailer is usually not enough to drive behavior change; 3–4 mailers are critical to engage no- or low-set-out households.

→ The Partnership's studies show that Business Reply Mailers are effective tactic to drive opt-ins, accounting for 62% of sign-ups in one study (Cincinnati).

## Measurement Recommendations

### Good
Collection tonnage (trash and recycling)

### Better
Recycling set-outs and tonnage

### Best
Participation rate and capture rate

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## Variations

**OPT-IN VS. UNIVERSAL DELIVERY OF BINS:**

- **Universal** delivery of bins ensures all households receive this tool to increase participation. It is more cost effective per household but increases total project cost.

- **Opt-in** delivery of bins increases delivery cost per household but reduces overall cost. It requires people to take action; in one TRP study (Cincinnati 2022), the no and low recycler opt-in group showed the greatest increase in participation, suggesting that taking the step to opt-in was a strong indicator of engagement.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### CASE STUDIES

Studying Recycling Behavior and Participation with In-Home Recycling Bins, Cincinnati, OH 2022

Springdale, AR – Smart Engagement Drives Better Recycling

Kalamazoo, MI, Data-Driven Action, Community-wide Results