

THE BENEFITS OF A PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN WASHINGTON

Increase Recycling, Reduce Costs, and Reduce Climate Impact



The Problem

Recycling programs are increasingly expensive and challenging for local governments to manage.

How Did We Get Here?

The volume and types of packaging are increasing and changing rapidly. In many parts of the state, the high cost of collecting, transporting, and processing recyclables has led to a reduction in recycling services, with increasing amounts of packaging and paper ending up in landfills. The result is that recycling rates have stagnated, and residents are losing trust that materials are being recycled responsibly.

The Solution is a State-wide Producer Responsibility Program.

The Benefits

REDUCES BURDENS ON CITIES AND COUNTIES. The Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) will fund residential recycling programs, providing substantial cost savings that can be passed on to residents or used for other programming. For example, funding residential organics services required under the organics management law RCW 70A.205.540.

PRESERVES FLEXIBILITY AND CHOICE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. Local jurisdictions will retain their authority over residential recycling services and decide if and how to engage in the producer responsibility program, including opting out entirely or partially.

SUPPORTS EDUCATION FOR ALL RESIDENTS. A producer responsibility program will create a new statewide list of accepted recyclables, reducing confusion for residents. The PRO will also fund culturally relevant education and outreach for all Washingtonians.

IMPROVES ACCESS IN UNINCORPORATED AND RURAL AREAS. For the first time, all Washingtonians with curbside garbage collection service will have access to curbside recycling service. For rural communities without curbside garbage service, there will be convenient drop-off locations and/or frequent collection events.

INCREASES RESIDENT TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE RECYCLING SYSTEM. The program will include increased transparency requirements, methods to reduce contamination, incentives for waste reduction, and recycling targets that provide more certainty materials are being recycled responsibly and made into new products.

REDUCE COST. INCREASE ACCESS. ENSURE RESPONSIBLE RECYCLING.

How Producer Responsibility Works



Before the start of the program, a needs assessment is conducted to determine what service changes, infrastructure investments, and funding levels are required to meet increased recycling and reuse targets.



Producers form an independent nonprofit organization, called a Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO), to fund and coordinate reuse and recycling of packaging and paper statewide.



Producers pay fees to the PRO based on the amount, type, and recycling characteristics of packaging and paper they sell in Washington.



The program is updated every five years with input from all stakeholders.



The PRO reimburses local governments for providing residential recycling services for a common list of materials statewide.

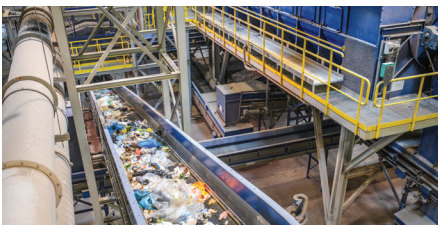


An advisory council, with seats for local government, advises on all aspects of the program and ensures the PRO meets the needs of local Washington communities and residents.



The Department of Ecology oversees program implementation.

A Producer Responsibility Program for Paper and Packaging Will:



Fund and modernize the current recycling system, building on our existing infrastructure



Save local governments and residents money, by covering the cost of recycling services



Create one clear common list of what can be recycled statewide and potentially establish a beverage container deposit system



Provide recycling collection to all households that receive garbage service, including those living in apartment buildings and rural areas



Increase transparency and safeguards to ensure materials are responsibly recycled



Maintain local governments authority to provide recycling services while getting reimbursed for their costs