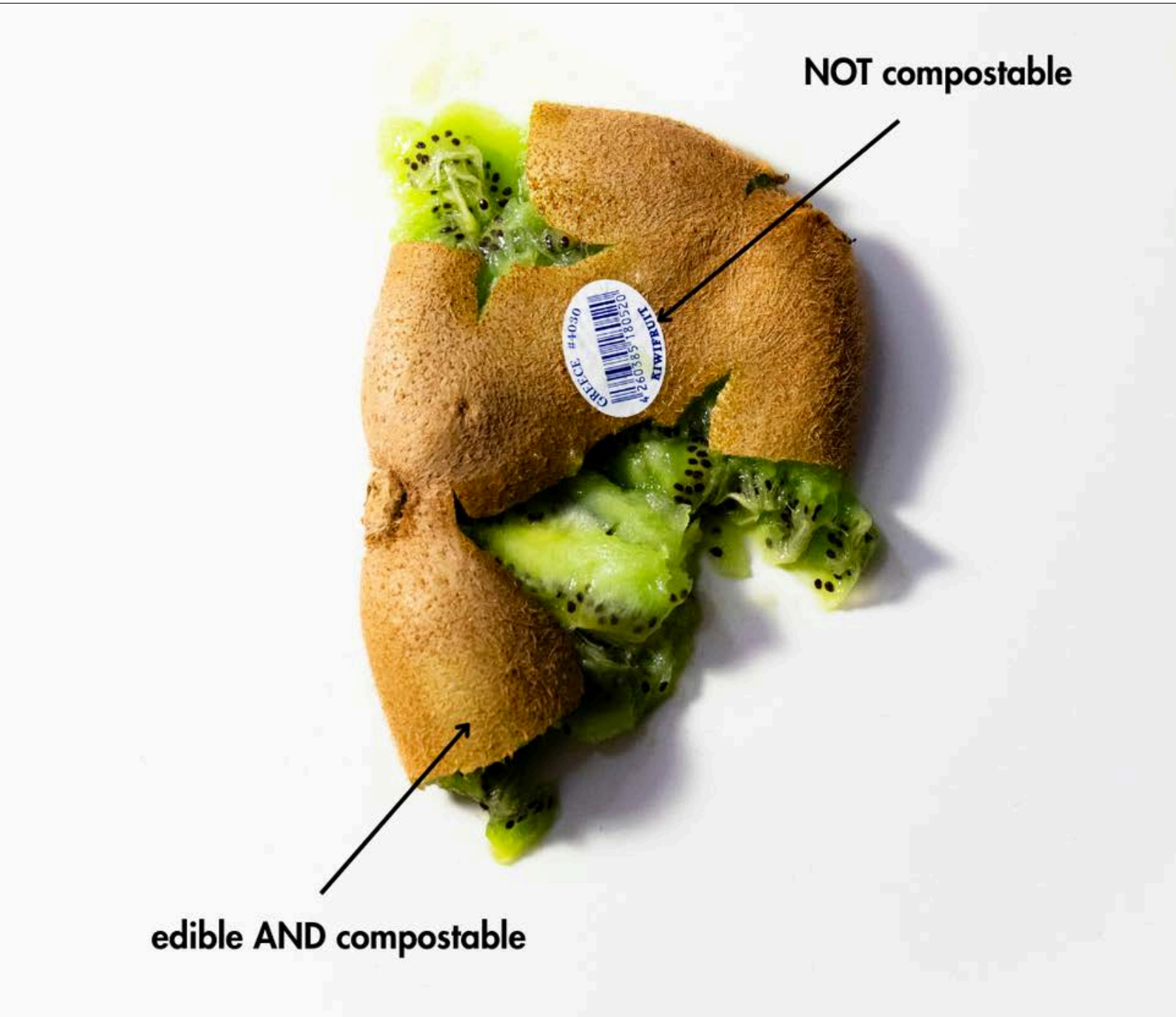
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Michigan: **Compost Drop-Off Program Guide**

AUGUST 2026



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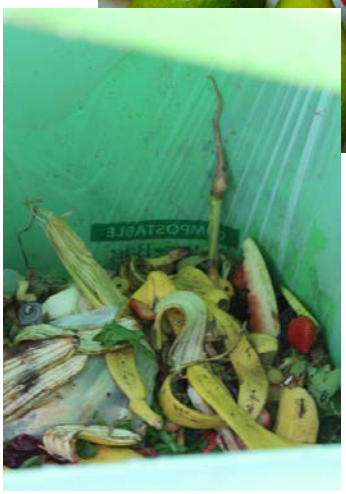
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Lastly, thank you to my 2026 CLCF Cohort for making this experience a memorable one and for your commitment to building a more sustainable future. Here's to having the whole banana.

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How to Use This Guide





This guide is intended for municipal staff, public works employees, solid waste coordinators, local government leaders, and community partners supporting the implementation of compost* drop-off programs.

- ***Exploring a compost drop-off program?*** Begin with **Introduction** and **Planning Considerations** sections to understand the benefits, assess municipal infrastructure, and build organizational support.
- ***Designing a program?*** Refer to **Phase 1**, **Phase 2**, and **Phase 3** to guide program design, implementation, and evaluation.
- ***Looking for adaptable tools?*** Refer to the **Appendices** for registration form questions, pre- and post- surveys, social media and communications tools, funding opportunities, and additional resources.
- ***Need to get to the Table of Contents?*** Click on any page number (excluding references) to return.



*Referred to as a compost drop-off program throughout this guide. Alternative names include food scrap or food waste drop-off program. *See Choose a Program Name*.

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Executive Summary

Food waste is the largest contributor to municipal solid waste sent to landfills at 19%,[1] and 30-40% of the food supply is wasted every year.[2] This represents a critical environmental, economic, and health challenge, as well as an opportunity for municipalities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, divert food waste from landfills, and support local and national sustainability goals. Michigan set a Healthy Climate Goal to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030 and the state is transitioning its Materials Management Plans by 2027 to focus more on composting and circular economy strategies.[3] As municipalities across the state are working to integrate sustainable solutions, many municipalities are piloting or expanding compost drop-off programs as an accessible first step to diverting food waste.

This guide was developed to support municipalities interested in launching or expanding their own residential compost drop-off programs. While it is based on real-time experience of the City of Novi starting a program, the recommendations presented have been intentionally developed to be adapted. This guide incorporates lessons learned from conversations with communities across the state, from ideation to expansion, as well as best practices identified through research to create a practical, replicable resource for local communities.

This guide provides a flexible framework that municipalities can tailor to their own community priorities, available resources, staffing capacity, and local infrastructure. While common themes came up during the research phase for this guide, communities differ in population size, demographics, funding, access to composting processing facilities, and organizational capacity. The long-term success of compost drop-off programs must consider these local conditions.

Topics covered include:

- Benefits of composting and drop-off programs
- Planning considerations including program logistics, operations, and evaluation
- Common challenges and strategies to address them
- Lessons learned from Michigan communities

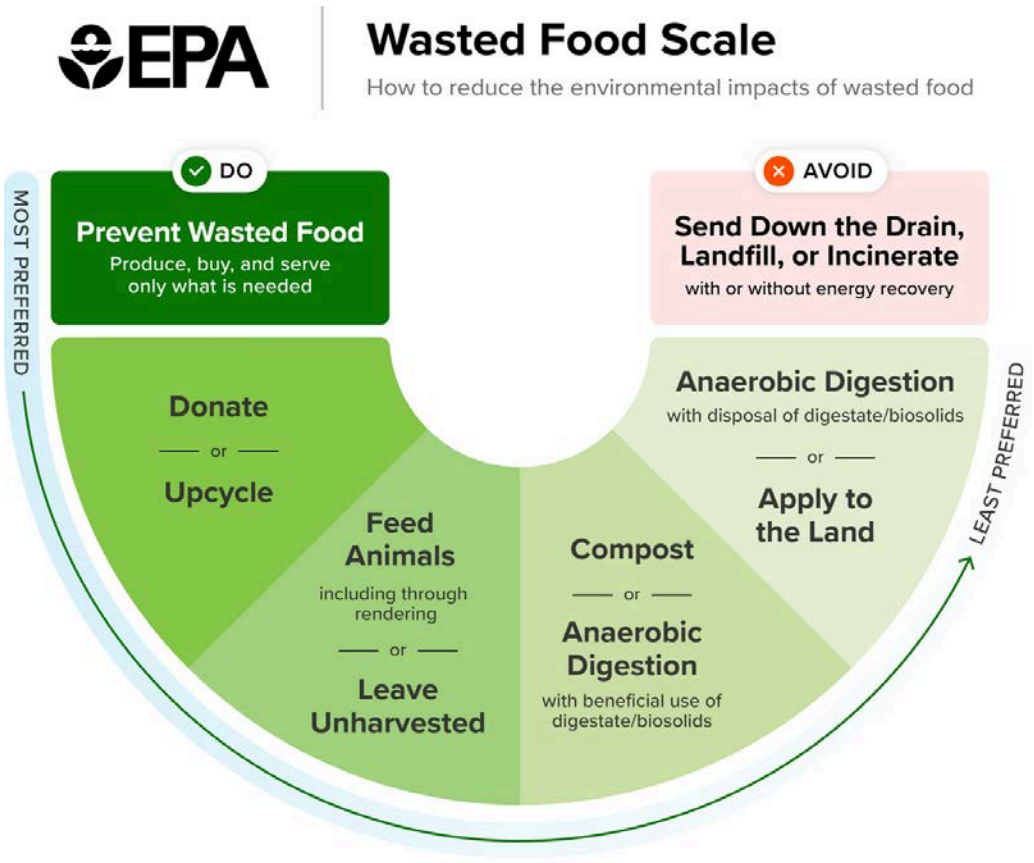
By documenting practical experiences, highlighting lessons learned, and providing adaptable planning resources, this guide aims to reduce barriers for municipalities considering compost drop-off programs and support the successful launch and future expansion of food waste diversion efforts across Michigan.

Introduction

Purpose of This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to serve as a starting point for municipalities interested in or developing compost drop-off programs. It compiles information from federal and state agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), as well as organizations like Make Food Not Waste (MFNW).

The EPA's Wasted Food Scale[4] (shown below) outlines a range of strategies for reducing landfilled food waste. While food waste prevention, recovery, and rescue are critical components to reducing food waste, the scope of this guide primarily focuses on composting. This guide is intended to support municipalities in planning, launching, evaluating, and building upon compost drop-off programs.



Wasted Food Scale ranging from Most to Least Preferred strategies. (Source: EPA)[4]

Food Waste is a National and State Issue

The United States wastes more food than any other country in the world, with nearly 40% of the nation's food supply left uneaten each year.[5] An estimated 58% of methane emissions from municipal solid waste landfills come from landfilled food waste.[6] Methane has a warming potential 28 times that of carbon dioxide and is a major driver of climate change.[7] Even with the best technologies available, over half of the methane created in landfills from decomposing food cannot be captured.[8] Not only does this have significant environmental and economic impacts, but it also contributes to a substantial loss of resources used to grow, transport, and prepare food.[9]

1 in 5 pounds of municipal waste sent to Michigan landfills is food waste.[10]

Reducing food loss and food waste is consistently ranked by Project Drawdown as a top 5 climate solution.[11-12] Since food waste is generated in every community and the residential sector contributes about half (~43%),[5] municipal governments are uniquely positioned to address this issue. By offering accessible and convenient composting opportunities, like compost drop-off programs, municipalities can provide practical and scalable solutions to landfill diversion while engaging residents in sustainable waste management practices.



40% of the U.S. food supply goes to waste each year.[5,13,14]



The average Michigander spends $759/yr on food they don't eat.[15]

43% of all food waste generated comes from households.[5]



Michigan landfills more than 2 billion pounds of food a year.[16]

1.4 billion is edible.[16]

When food scraps are viewed as resources, the value of investing in food waste reduction programs is clear.

Increase food security[17]

$307 per ton
net value created by recycling food waste[16]

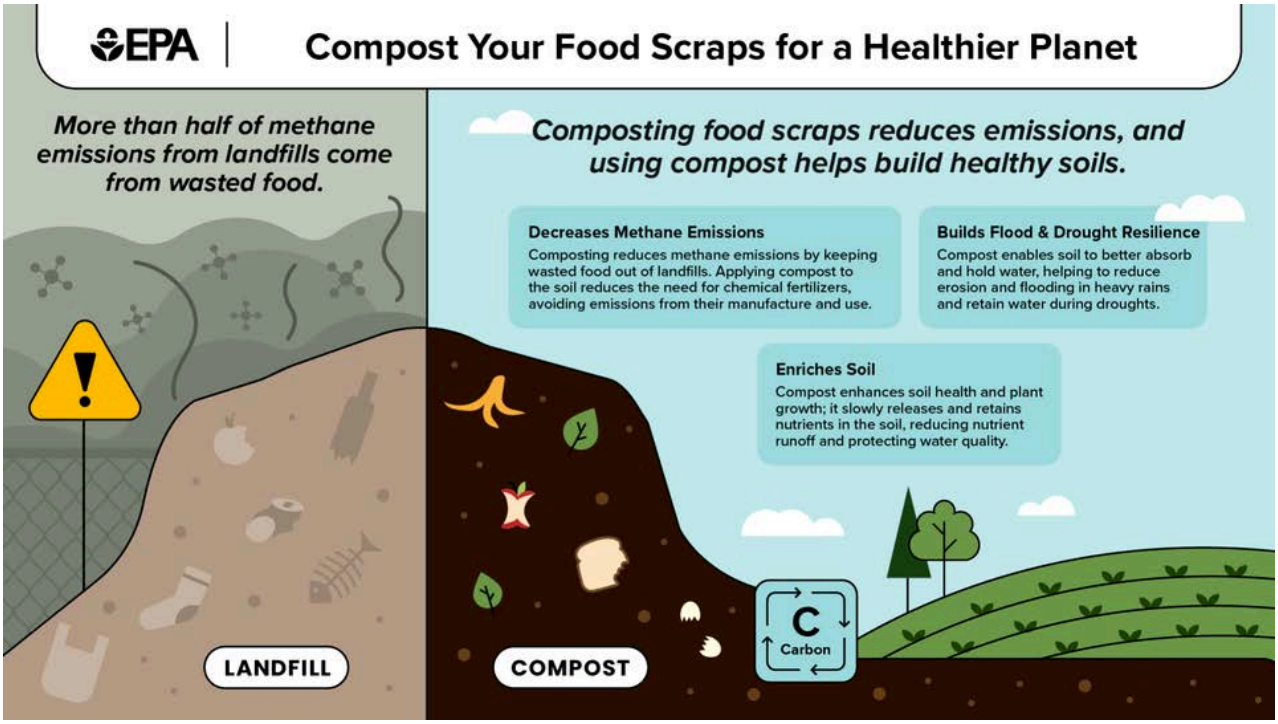
3-5%
annual savings in food costs for businesses[16]

$3,000
annual household savings for families of four[16]

Reduce neighborhood exposure to methane emissions[18]

Make better use of land, water, and energy used to create wasted food[16]

Composting Overview



Compost Your Food Scraps for a Healthier Planet. (Source: EPA)[4]

Composting is an aerobic process where food scraps and other organic materials decompose into a nutrient-rich soil amendment. Read more about the benefits of composting here.

- **Commercial composting** uses large-scale methods, such as windrow composting, aerated static pile (ASP) composting, and in-vessel composting to break down organic waste.[19]
- **Compost Classification System**: A framework that categorizes compost products into four classes based on their level of maturity, stability, and degree of processing. Learn more here.



Backard compost bin. (Source: EPA)[20]



Large-scale composting facility. (Source: BioCycle/Dirt Hugger)[21]

Quick Terminology

Anaerobic Digestion: Decomposition process in which microorganisms break down organic materials in the absence of oxygen to produce biogas (renewable energy).[22]

Backyard Composting: Small-scale composting that residents can do at home to recycle food scraps and yard waste into nutrient-rich compost for personal use.[20] *See Backyard Composting vs. Commercial Composting.*

Biodegradable: Products that can break down naturally. Unlike BPI-certified compostable materials, which must break down in a specific timeframe (typically under 90 days in commercial facilities), there are no regulations on timeframes for biodegradable materials.[23]
Note: All compostable items are biodegradable, but not all biodegradable items are compostable!

BPI-Certified: Products or packaging verified as compostable by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI).[24] Look out for this icon:

Circular Economy: Prioritizes keeping materials, products, and services in circulation for as long as possible to reduce the generation of waste, protect the environment, improve economics, and uplift communities.[25]

Contamination (Related to composting): When non-accepted materials (e.g., metal, plastic) are discarded in bins meant for accepted materials (determined by hauler). This is a common issue, especially in the initial phases of a compost drop-off program.

Finished Compost: Ready to use compost that has fully decomposed, has a dark, rich color, is crumbly and smooth, and is earth-smelling.[26]

Quick Terminology

Food Loss: Prior to reaching the retail level, food left uneaten as a result of issues in the production, storage, processing, and distribution phases (e.g., crops left unharvested, grain lost to pests, milk that spoils during transit to a store).[2,27]

Food Waste: Food that was once fit for human or animal consumption but is no longer suitable as food and is discarded.[2,9,27]

Hauler: Collection services that pick up food scraps/waste and/or accepted compostable products from drop-off sites.

Methane: Potent greenhouse gas that is generated when food waste decomposes in landfills.[6,28]

Processor: Facilities that receive, break down, and turn food waste into finished compost.

STA-Certified: Compost products that have been tested and verified through the U.S. Composting Council's Seal of Testing Assurance (STA) Program to meet quality standards.[29,30] Look out for this icon:



Tipping Fee: Fee that a processor charges a waste hauler to drop off waste materials at their facility.[31]

Wasted Food: Food that was not used for its intended purposes. Differentiated from "food waste" by the EPA.[27]

Wish-Cycling: Phenomenon when a consumer disposes of a material with the hopes or belief that their material can be recycled or composted, when oftentimes it is unlikely to and then contaminates the bin.[32,33]

Why a Drop-Off Program?

Compared to curbside collection, drop-off programs require lower upfront costs, can be implemented more quickly, and allow municipalities to evaluate resident participation before making larger infrastructure investments.[34] They also provide an accessible option for a wide range of households (e.g., multi-family units) and are designed to be conveniently located, in an effort to meet people where they are.

Considering a Pilot?

Many municipalities begin with a pilot compost drop-off program because it offers a practical, cost-effective opportunity to introduce residential food scrap collection to communities. Among the Michigan municipalities engaged in the development of this guide, nearly all began with a pilot residential compost drop-off program and identified curbside collection as a future expansion opportunity. Importantly, municipalities interested in expanding to curbside collection emphasized the value of maintaining drop-off sites even after introducing curbside service. The benefits of maintaining both services include offering residents more options to divert food waste from landfills and reaching residents across a range of household types.

Pilot programs have the capability to capture valuable data[35] on participation rates, collection volumes, contamination, and operational needs. These insights help municipalities refine program design, identify where additional resident education is needed, and improve collection processes before expanding the program.[35] For example, common contaminants like pet waste or plastic bags can provide useful, real-time information around what items residents understand to be accepted or not accepted, while frequently asked questions can inform future outreach campaigns, social media content, and educational materials.

Beyond program operations, pilot data can be used to quantify environmental impacts, including the amount of food waste diverted from landfills and associated greenhouse gas emissions avoided. These metrics help municipalities evaluate pilot success, demonstrate a case for expansion, communicate progress to residents and elected officials, support existing and future funding opportunities, and contribute to local, state, and national waste reduction and healthy climate goals.

Planning Considerations

Launching a successful compost drop-off program typically begins with strong internal support, clear goals and roles, community buy-in, and a realistic understanding of costs and available funding. Whether you are launching a pilot or permanent program, municipalities should build support from their local elected officials (e.g., city council, village council, township board), identify key partners or champions, assess local policies and resources, and develop a clear budget and financing plan.

Investing in planning is critical to program success.

Gaining Internal Support

A strong foundation of internal support is critical for ensuring that a compost drop-off program has the necessary staff capacity, resources, and long-term commitment to succeed. Municipal leaders should begin by engaging decision-makers, including local elected officials, managers, and department heads, to demonstrate how composting aligns with existing municipal priorities such as waste reduction, sustainability, climate action, economic development, and community health.

Connecting the program to a municipality's strategic plan or sustainability goals can help frame composting as an extension of existing priorities rather than a standalone initiative. Some examples include:

- This initiative is a critical component of Material Management Plans (MMPs), which aim to transition Michigan counties towards landfill diversion and other sustainable practices.[3]
- In climate action plans, identifying food waste reduction as a strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions because food waste sent to landfills generates methane.
- Council committees (e.g., environmental, sustainability) are looking to implement cost-effective initiatives that fit into broader initiatives of waste reduction.[36]

Identifying internal project champions early can help maintain momentum throughout planning and implementation. When these champions are also prominent or active community members, this can also help to establish trust within communities. A project champion may be an elected official, sustainability coordinator, public works employee, or community leader who can coordinate across departments, communicate program benefits, and help address challenges or concerns. Critical to any success is recognizing the importance of cross-department collaboration, particularly with public works, facilities, parks and recreation, sustainability offices, communications teams, finance departments, and municipal management.

Understanding Municipal Policies and Ordinances

Before beginning to design a drop-off program, municipalities should review existing policies, contracts, and ordinances that may affect operations. This includes evaluating current solid waste agreements, site-use policies, nuisance ordinances, and any local regulations related to waste management. Understanding these requirements early can help identify potential barriers or hurdles and how best to design your drop-off program.

Determine who to talk to about site selection and design policies. In Novi, an ordinance states that all refuse bins must be located away from public view. Because of this, the City placed bins in the rear lot at the Civic Center. In Kent County, they discovered that even as city staff determining site locations on city property, they needed to go through their design team for site approval.

Developing Partnerships

Partnerships can provide technical expertise, operational support, outreach capacity, and community trust.[37] A successful compost program recognizes the collective effort needed to achieve success, which includes collaboration between a range of groups, from municipal departments to regional organizations to businesses to schools and community groups.

Internal Partnerships

- **Department of Public Services/Works (DPS/DPW):** Supports site preparation, site management, bin monitoring (primarily for contamination), and coordination with haulers or waste service providers.
- **Facilities Department:** Operate and maintain all buildings, building grounds, and equipment. Similar role to DPS/DPW.
- **Sustainability Department:** Often leads and coordinates program goals, partnerships, grant applications, and evaluation.
- **City Management:** Appointed by city council to oversee daily city operations.
- **City Council:** Elected officials who determine what programs get funded.
- **Sustainability/Environmental Committees:** Elected officials and/or volunteers who publicly champion the program.
- **Parks and Recreation:** Assist with community engagement, can provide access to parks for site location and monitor bins.

Promote a circular food system. Rather than treating this as a standalone program, connect it to existing municipal operations. Communities have integrated compost drop-off sites with community gardens (Grand Rapids), local farms (Detroit), and farmers' markets (Royal Oak, Grand Rapids, Farmington), while others offer finished compost to residents (Canton, Ann Arbor) or return it to the community (Grand Rapids, Detroit). These efforts create a closed-loop system and demonstrate food scraps as a valuable resource.

- **Communications Teams:** Can help to determine which audiences are primarily engaged on different platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor) and monitor channels for common questions or program feedback. They often create, are involved in creating, and give final approval for resident-facing material.
- **Finance Teams:** Assist with budgeting, funding strategies, contracts, grants, and long-term cost planning.

External Partnerships

- **Haulers and Processors:** Provide collection, transportation, and compost processing services. Read more about haulers and processors in the next section.
- **State and Regional Organizations**: Major groups include Michigan Recycling Coalition, Michigan Organics Council, Michigan Sustainable Business Forum, and Make Food Not Waste. Organizations can provide education, outreach, funding, and technical resources and expertise.

Consider partnerships that serve different purposes. This can include grant funding, support writing grant applications, support developing public educational campaigns and communications materials, and networking. Washtenaw County found out about My Green Michigan and the compost drop-off program by attending the Michigan Recycling Coalition Conference!

- **State Agencies**: EGLE provides guidance, resources, and funding opportunities related to waste reduction, landfill diversion, and organics recycling. For general solid waste and food waste inquiries, contact EGLE at Assist@Michigan.gov or 800-662-9278.
- **Community Organizations and Businesses:** Farmers' markets, public libraries, nonprofits, K-12 schools, universities, and businesses can support outreach, provide sponsorship opportunities, and increase community participation and engagement.

In Royal Oak, they started their program at a farmers' market because it naturally fit. They also work with their library to hold different educational events with speakers.

In Canton, they are exploring opportunities to expand partnerships with K–12 schools. They currently have one drop-off site at an elementary school and hope to engage more schools and students. However, interest and capacity vary based on considerations such as staff burden, monitoring, and pickup frequency.

- **Volunteers:** Especially during initial program phases or labor-intensive collection (e.g., farmers' markets), consider how volunteers can champion the program or assist with monitoring bins for contamination.

Hauling and Compost Processing

Backyard Composting vs. Commercial Composting

Understanding the distinction between backyard composting and commercial composting is important when communicating with residents. Backyard composting is typically designed for single-family households and relies on natural decomposition processes managed by residents. Appropriate materials are generally limited to food scraps (fruits and vegetables) and yard waste (e.g., leaves, wood chips). In contrast, commercial compost processors use controlled systems designed to manage larger volumes of organic material and may accept additional materials (e.g., meat, grease, dairy, BPI-certified compostable products) that are not suitable for backyard composting. Residents should also follow local municipal ordinances and guidance.

Haulers and Compost Processors

Haulers and compost processors are critical partners in the development of a compost drop-off program. While residents may collect and manage some food scraps through backyard composting, municipal compost drop-off programs often rely on specialized collection and processing systems to manage a broader range of organic materials at a larger scale.[34,38] Because accepted materials vary by hauler, it is important to check with your chosen hauler to ensure only accepted materials are being collected.

Some municipalities have the infrastructure, equipment, and resources needed to haul and/or process organic materials on their own.

In Detroit, the City purchased a MegaReencle digester machine, an electric digester machine that is able to break down food scraps in about 24 hours. In Grand Rapids, the City recently (July 2026) purchased a Green Mountain Technologies 40-foot-in-vessel composter and are closer to becoming their own processor.

Choosing a Hauler

When choosing a hauler, municipalities should consider available providers based on geographic location, collection capacity, processing partnerships, service model, reporting capabilities, and cost. Because Michigan's composting infrastructure varies by region, communities should identify haulers that can reliably accept collected material and provide documentation needed for program evaluation and reporting.

Municipalities want to ensure that the company is reputable, their services are doing what they say they're doing, and this information can be transparently communicated to residents.

Questions for Haulers

1. Can you explain the services provided, including add-ons and costs associated with these services? (e.g., pickups, liners, bin washing, bin replacements)
2. What are my pickup options? (e.g., pickup days, frequency)
3. What metrics do you capture?
4. Are collected materials weighed?
5. How are metrics communicated to me? Through monthly and annual reports or summaries?
6. Where will our picked up food waste go?
7. What are the rules on contamination?



Hauler picking up a collection bin. (Source: My Green Michigan)[39]

As of July 2026, the City of Novi uses My Green Michigan (MGM) as their hauler. MGM services major metro areas in Southern Lower Michigan and Novi food waste is processed at Spurt Industries in Wixom.[39] Benefits of this extend beyond operations since this compost facility is located closer to the City of Novi than landfill facilities, reducing transportation costs and environmental impact.

Reporting capabilities may include estimated food waste tonnage*, estimated greenhouse gas emissions avoided, and reports detailing environmental impact suitable for city sustainability reporting, ESG (environmental, social, and governance) and climate action initiatives, internal benchmarking, and public communications.

*MGM currently estimates food waste tonnage based on bin size and number of pickups. Their trucks are not equipped with scales, so they are unable to provide specific weights or measurements. However, if a bin is empty, missing, or inaccessible, drivers will log that specific status.

Compost Processors

Once bins have been collected by haulers, they are taken to composting facilities where organic materials are processed into finished compost.

To understand what compost facilities operate near you, please refer to EGLE's Material Management Dashboard here.

Note: Sometimes, it might be useful or necessary to develop the relationship with a compost processor before finding a hauler. The processor may also have recommendations on haulers that have the capacity/equipment/interest in hauling food scraps.

Funding Sources and Program Costs

Understanding program costs and identifying sustainable funding sources is an important, and often underestimated, step in planning a compost drop-off program. Costs will vary depending on program size, collection model, number of sites, types and number of bins, hauler, and staffing needs. According to Part 115 (Solid Waste Management) of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA), municipalities may use several funding mechanisms to support materials management programs.[40]

Funding Sources

Municipalities

- **Solid Waste Fee**: Flat fee per household for trash collection and disposal
- **Millage**: Property tax based on home's assessed value

Diverting food waste from landfills may offer cost-saving advantages. If a compost drop-off program diverts enough material from the residential waste stream, reduced landfill disposal needs may strengthen the business case for cost savings under the municipality's solid waste hauling or landfill contract.

Identify how trash, recycling, and yard waste are managed and funded. In communities with pay-as-you-throw or other volume-based waste collection, trash may be collected by private companies, with compost drop-off programs funded through solid waste fees or millage. In these cases, communications to residents can more directly highlight potential cost savings (Grand Rapids, Lansing, Kalamazoo).

- **Grants**: Grant funding can help municipalities launch pilot and/or permanent programs by covering costs, such as equipment, outreach materials, and staffing. Note that most grants will not cover fees such as hauling fees.
  - See the Funding Opportunities Table (Appendix D) for a list of potential grants and financing resources.
- **Sponsorships / Partnerships**: Local businesses and organizations may provide or subsidize program materials, such as countertop bins.[41]

Seek mutually beneficial partnerships. Successful partnerships are built on shared value. As you identify potential partners, consider how the collaboration can benefit both the municipality and the organization, whether through increased community visibility, filling operational gaps, or improving data collection.

Partnerships with Make Food Not Waste have supported resident education and community outreach (Southfield), BioBag has helped to reduce contamination (Southfield), and Rego, an AI-powered software/platform, has helped to more accurately measure diverted food waste (Kalamazoo).

Program Costs

Collection Bins

Plastic rolling bins (typically 32- or 64-gallons) are a good entry-bin when your goals are to get the program off the ground quickly and at low cost.

The City of Novi, along with communities (Washtenaw County, Royal Oak, Canton, Madison Heights), use or have used these bins. An estimated monthly budget for four bins at two sites is $340-400 with a one-time delivery fee of around $80-100.

Note: This is an approximate range based on the City of Novi's program configuration and travel costs from their drop-off sites to partner compost facilities as of July 2026. Please consult your provider for pricing.





Left: Plastic collection bin at MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center. (Source: Atika Gupta)
Right: Plastic collection bins at Novi Civic Center. (Source: City of Novi)

Enclosed bins can vary in size (typically 47-, 95, or 150-gallons) and added features such as custom graphic wraps or applications/software, so the cost is estimated between $2,400-$4,000 per bin.[42,43] This estimate is for bins alone and does not take into account app subscription fees, delivery fees, or hauling fees.

In Detroit, one consideration when selecting drop-off sites was whether concrete pads were already installed, as they can provide a stable, durable surface for the enclosed bins and avoid the added expense of pouring new concrete.

Municipalities can choose to use enclosed bins regardless of hauler. Some reasons communities may use these bins over plastic bins include: communities have already piloted with plastic bins and are now in the expansion phase, had early council and community support and expansion was always in the plan, have the infrastructure and funding to support it, want a more secure bin option (requires app or keypad access to open bins), plan to keep drop-off bins as a permanent service even if future expansion includes curbside service.



Left: Kent County metroSTOR bin. (Source: Kent County)
Right: City of Southfield Bigbelly bin. (Source: Make Food Not Waste)[44]

Include a buffer for design customization costs when estimating your budget. Vendor quotes often start with a base price, but optional design features can increase the total project cost. As you compare vendors, you may discover customizations options you had not considered, such as different handle styles or materials. Leaving some room in your budget for these decisions can help proactively manage unanticipated design costs (Kent County, Ann Arbor).

Liners

Liners for drop-off bins can often be provided by haulers for an additional cost. If you decide to provide liners to residents for countertop bins, make sure that they are compatible with your hauler's accepted materials. **Not all biodegradable bags are compostable.**[23]

Note: Some haulers and processing sites, such as the City of Ann Arbor and WeCare Denali, do not accept compostable liners. Check with your hauler or compost processor before allowing liners in your program. Where liners are not accepted, encourage residents to use plain brown paper bags or collect food scraps in a container without a liner.

Starter Kits / Countertop Bins

While optional, many communities offer starter kits that include **countertop bins** (0.8 to 5 gallons), small liners, and educational materials. Funding for these bins have come from department budgets and grant funding. When residents are introduced to a new program like this one, providing them with something to get started can be just what they need.

Countertop bins come in a variety of shapes and sizes. For giveaways, durable plastic bins are commonly used and may include features such as handles, sealed lids, ventilation, and carbon filters.[45] Communities can also add branded stickers listing accepted and non-accepted materials to help minimize contamination and reinforce proper sorting over time.



Washtenaw County countertop bin giveaway. (Source: Atika Gupta)

Dashboard Interfaces

In addition to evaluating the benefits and challenges of different bin types, municipalities should consider which software platforms best capture meaningful metrics to align with program goals. For example, the metroKEY dashboard (for metroSTOR bins) tracks key performance indicators, including bin utilization, active versus registered users, and exact opening frequencies. This data can be critical for municipalities for several reasons, including being able to identify and analyze high-performing sites, implementing targeted improvements, and analyzing user behavior at different locations.



metroKEY app sample display on smartphone and laptop. (Source: metroSTOR)[46]

Hauling Services

This includes transportation costs, contamination fees, and tipping fees. When determining pick-up frequency, many communities started with biweekly or weekly pickups. Some haulers, like My Green Michigan, allow you to change the pickup frequency at any time, so you can assess usage and adjust in real time. Since all haulers have their own policies, it is important to check with your hauler to determine if features like this are available.

When to schedule bin pickup is another consideration for municipalities. Your reasoning for choosing a specific day of the week may come down to community programming or whether you want bins to be empty and available during weekend events.

Some communities schedule pickups at the same time each week, regardless of how full the bins are, to reduce the burden on staff to monitor bin cleanliness. While this helps to simplify operations, it may result in partially full bins being collected, creating economic and environmental tradeoffs.

Staffing and Labor

In addition to collection logistics, municipalities should account for staff time needed for program coordination, communications, resident education, fielding resident questions, site monitoring, data collection and reporting, grant writing and administration, and ongoing program evaluation. When developing a budget, it is also helpful to include a contingency to account for inflation and unexpected costs, as equipment prices, contractor rates, and other expenses may increase between planning and implementation. Building this flexibility into the budget can help prevent funding shortfalls and reduce the need for program adjustments later.

To build a sustainable program, invest in planning. Municipalities found that pilots require the most staff time during planning and the first few months following the initial launch. Once processes, partnerships, and resident participation are established, programs generally become self-sustained within a few months of the pilot. The upfront investment in planning, communication, and troubleshooting is critical to achieving program goals and overall success.



CLC Fellows learn about sustainability initiatives from mentors, Rebecca Runkel and Matt Heintz, at Novi Civic Center, July 2026 (Source: Sarah Lee)

Engaging Your Community

Successful food waste reduction and diversion depends not only on telling people what to do or providing services, but also including residents in program design, championing the program within their communities, and ensuring residents know how and why they should use the program. See Appendix C: Communications Toolkit.



Give someone a banana without showing them how to peel it, and it may just go to waste.

Similarly, even the most thoughtfully designed compost drop-off programs will not achieve their goals unless municipalities can **effectively communicate both the WHY and the HOW.**

Why compost, why a drop-off program? How do I sign up, how do I collect scraps?

Simple, clear, concise communication bridges that gap and is essential to the success of a compost drop-off program.

Include community members in program planning and decision making.
In Grand Rapids and Ann Arbor, municipalities engaged residents to brainstorm and determine where sites should be located.[47] In Southfield, advisory committee members conducted resident focus groups, school discussions, and commercial outreach to inform program strategy.[48] In Kalamazoo, they reached out to all neighborhood associations and worked with the ones that responded they were interested in setting up drop-off sites.

Building Your Communications Strategy

A strong communications strategy helps municipalities build awareness, make participation easy, and sustain engagement over time. Whether launching a pilot or establishing a permanent program, messaging should be clear, consistent, and tailored to the community. An effective strategy can help residents understand why the program exists, how to participate, and how their actions contribute to the program's success. See Appendix C: Communications Toolkit.

Define Your Objectives

An effective communications strategy begins with clearly defining what the program aims to achieve. While increasing awareness of a new compost drop-off program is often the most immediate objective, municipalities should consider both short-term goals, such as reaching a target number of participants, and longer-term goals, such as shifting resident behaviors to prevent food waste in the first place.

Food waste is a broad issue that can be addressed in many different ways, as illustrated by the EPA's Wasted Food Scale. Communications can easily become unfocused or pull residents in too many directions, leaving them overwhelmed, confused, or unengaged. Establishing a clear communications strategy and consistent messaging helps keep outreach centered on the goals of the municipality's compost drop-off program.

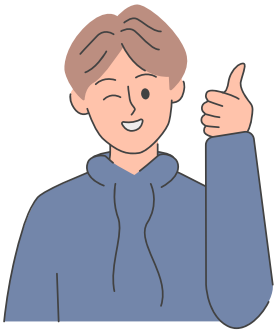
Identify Your Audience

Residents will engage with a compost drop-off program from different perspectives, bringing varying levels of knowledge, experience, and motivation. Early participants are often residents who already compost, are interested in sustainability, or have previously expressed interest in a composting program. Municipalities can intentionally reach these early adopters through targeted outreach at locations and events where they are already engaged, such as farmers' markets, environmental events, community gardens, or sustainability-focused organizations. Building participation among these groups can help establish early momentum and create community ambassadors for the program.

As outreach expands to the broader community, communications should not assume prior knowledge of composting. Messaging should clearly explain why the program exists, how it works, what materials are accepted and not accepted, and how residents can participate. Municipalities should also consider the needs of different audiences, including differences in language, age, housing type, and communication preferences.

Community Characters

The Early Adopter



- Likely familiar with composting
- Backyard composts or has composted before
- Moved from a community with composting or uses another community's program
- Has dreamt of a program like this
  - They can be a champion for your program!



The Curious Newcomer

- Likely has heard of composting but unfamiliar with how it works
- Wants to learn how to participate
- May be hesitant or unsure if they can participate
  - You'll want to emphasize how easy it is to participate, including being able to use any container to collect food scraps!

The Concerned Skeptic



- Likely unfamiliar with composting
- More likely to focus on program challenges
  - You'll want to address common concerns, such as odor or pest/vermin (refer to Common Concerns table)

While your outreach may not single out any one character, it is important to understand who makes up your audience to be able to anticipate the information they'll want to receive, how they want to receive that information, and what questions or concerns they may have. When developing materials, consider:

1. Who is your audience?
2. Why are you communicating with this audience?
3. How does your audience best receive information?
4. Are you communicating with your audience across appropriate channels?
5. What does your audience value? What resonates with them?
6. What do you want your audience to take away?
7. What do you want your audience to do?

Develop Clear and Consistent Messaging

Communications should explain not only **how** to participate, but **why** the program matters. Connecting residents to the broader purpose of food waste reduction and composting, such as diverting waste from landfills, improving soil health, or returning finished compost to the community, can help motivate participation and reduce contamination.

Keep instructions for accepted and non-accepted materials simple and visual. Use clear language, images, and examples of common contaminants to help residents quickly understand what belongs in the drop-off bins. Consider proactively addressing common questions or misconceptions, such as how to manage odors or what happens to food scraps after they are collected. See Education - Common Concerns.

Use Existing Channels and Community Partners

Municipalities do not need to create new communication channels to promote a compost drop-off program. Instead, consider how existing municipal platforms and community networks can be used to reach residents, including mailers to new residents, newsletters, community events, and social media.

Community partners can also help extend the reach of municipal communications. Farmers' markets, community gardens, schools, environmental organizations, community centers, neighborhood groups, and other community-based organizations may be able to share information with residents who are already engaged with these networks. Municipalities should establish clear messaging and provide partners with consistent materials to ensure residents receive accurate information.

Communications Before and After Launch

When possible, begin outreach before the program launches so residents know what to expect and have time to understand how and why to participate. Pre-launch communications can introduce the program, explain its purpose, identify the drop-off location(s) and hours, and share accepted and non-accepted materials.

Communications should continue after launch with regular reminders, educational content, and program updates. Community events can also provide opportunities for residents to ask questions and learn how to participate.

Learn and Adapt

Communications should evolve based on how residents respond to the program. Municipalities can monitor resident feedback and discussions on commonly used communication channels, such as Facebook and Nextdoor, to identify recurring questions, misconceptions (e.g., accepted vs. non-accepted materials, what happens to the food scraps after pickup), and areas where additional education is needed. These insights provide feedback on how residents are responding to existing messaging and can help municipalities refine their communications strategy over time.

Creating Effective Communications

Start with the Purpose

When launching a new program, it can be tempting to share every detail at once. However, too much information can overwhelm residents and make important messages less memorable. Before creating a communication, identify one thing you want residents to take away and make that the focus of the outreach. See Appendix C: Communications Toolkit.

- **Build Program Awareness**
  - Share drop-off site locations and operating hours.
  - Share the registration form, if applicable (see Program Management Considerations and Appendix B for sample questions)
- **Educate**
  - Address common resident questions or misconceptions.
  - Share accepted and non-accepted materials to reduce contamination.
  - Explain the benefits of food waste diversion.
  - Encourage long-term food waste prevention behaviors.
- **Remind**
  - Reinforce key program information, such as registration and drop-off locations.
  - Repeat important messages to reinforce behaviors over time.
- **Celebrate Wins**
  - Share how the community is engaging with the program, such as highlighting community compost champions or partner organizations.
  - Highlight collective impact, such as the number of participants or amount of food waste diverted.

Find What Resonates with Your Community

Different communities may respond to different messaging. Some residents may be motivated by climate action and greenhouse gas reduction, while others may respond more strongly to composting, landfill diversion, reducing costs, supporting local agriculture, or preventing food waste. Tailoring messaging to local priorities can make the program feel more relevant and engaging.

City of Novi residents were asked, "Why are you participating in this program?"

93.8% of respondents selected, "To protect our environment."

Knowing this is a strong motivator, the City can tailor communications to highlight the environmental benefits of the program. These include reducing methane emissions, which significantly contribute to climate change and making better use of land, water, and energy resources.[16]

Have One Clear Call to Action

This could include directing residents to the program website landing page, asking participants to register for the program, following municipalities on various social media platforms to stay updated on the program, and identifying a convenient drop-off site.

Communications Best Practices

- Use clear, plain language.
- Focus on one clear message or call to action.
- Lead with visuals.
- Repeat key messages often.
- Use formats that fit your audience and communication channels, including short-form video or reels, when appropriate.
- Direct residents to the program website.
- Include contact information.
- Maintain a living FAQ based on resident questions.
- Be mindful of accessibility.
    - For example, do not rely on color alone to distinguish accepted and non-accepted materials. Pair colors such as green and red with clear labels, symbols, or other visual cues.[49]

Direct residents to one reliable information source. The municipality's website should serve as the primary source for program information, with outreach materials directing residents back to the program webpage. Include the program's location, hours, accepted and non-accepted materials, registration information (if applicable), FAQs, and contact information in one easily accessible location. This also gives municipalities a consistent place to post program updates as information changes.

Education

Residents may have varying familiarity with composting, so it is important to anticipate and do your best to minimize (perceived) barriers to participation. Effective education materials are critical to residents' feelings of self-efficacy, or ability to participate, and ineffective education materials can have the opposite effect, deterring participation.

Common Concerns	Solutions	Responses
Will the bins smell?	Proper material management, collection/pick-up frequency, container design	"By keeping the areas around bins clean, you can help to minimize odors." "Our bins are picked up [weekly/biweekly] to keep our drop-off sites clean and well maintained."
Will the bins attract pests, rats, or other vermin?	Secure containers, acceptable materials, maintenance, collective participation to keep collection areas clean	"Food waste is just being sorted into a different bin. If you don't have an issue with pests/rats/vermin going into your trash bins, then there shouldn't be an issue with them going into your compost bin."
How can we minimize contamination?	Resident education, clear signage, periodic monitoring	"The food scraps you drop off are turned into compost that helps grow more food. Help keep the bins free of unwanted materials like plastic bags, produce stickers, and aluminum cans, because they don't belong in the soil where our food grows."

Communicating Accepted and Non-Accepted Materials to Residents

Start with your hauler's requirements. Accepted and non-accepted materials vary by hauler. While some materials are commonly accepted, such as fruit and vegetable scraps, others may be subject to more variation. Before developing resident-facing materials, confirm your accepted and non-accepted materials list with your hauler. For example, even if another municipality accepts pizza boxes, your hauler may not.

Explain both the what and the why. Simply listing accepted and non-accepted materials may leave residents unsure about items that are less straightforward. When the *why* is not explained clearly, residents are more likely to rationalize their sorting decisions through a phenomenon called wish-cycling. Explaining why certain materials are not accepted can help residents make better sorting decisions and reduce contamination.

Common Contaminants That May Require Additional Explanation

Non-BPI-Certified Products: For haulers that only accept BPI-certified products, like My Green Michigan (MGM), non-BPI-certified compostable products are not accepted. While MGM allows a small amount of contamination (no more than 1.5% by volume), exceeding this threshold could result in the entire bin being rejected and its contents sent to the landfill.

- World Centric certified compostable materials, for example, are not BPI-certified but maintain other certifications that may be accepted by some commercial composting facilities.[51] It is dependent on your specific hauler whether or not they will accept these materials.

Pet Waste: Commercial and municipal composting facilities across the U.S. generally do not accept pet waste due to pathogen, parasite, and chemical contaminants that composting systems are not permitted or equipped to process safely.[52] For this reason, most pet waste bags are not compostable.[52]

Plastic Bags: Plastic bags are made of plastic, and therefore not compostable. If you drop off food scraps in a plastic bag, the bag will contaminate the load. High-volume facilities don't have the capacity to sort through food scraps and open bags manually. Even if a bag is spotted, the bag and all of its contents will likely be pulled and sent to the landfill for reasons including safety risks from potential hazardous waste.[53]

Produce Stickers: Commonly made from plastic, vinyl, or other materials that do not break down during the composting process and can contaminate finished compost.[54]

Resident Frequently Asked Questions (R-FAQs)

Disclaimer: The FAQs below are based on the City of Novi's program design and are intended as examples. Municipalities should adapt the questions and responses to reflect their own program design, policies, and community needs.

How do I sign up, and is there a cost?

How you respond to this question will depend on whether registration is required, optional, or not applicable to your program. See Program Management Considerations.

It's free! To participate, we encourage you to fill out the registration form: [link]. While registration is optional, your responses allow us to gauge program interest and performance.

What container should I use to collect food scraps?

Any sealable container that is convenient for you! This can be a lunchbox container, a yogurt tub, a coffee can, large glass jars—the list goes on.

As residents collect scraps, they may find that they collect more scraps than they expected. This could help with behavior changes to reduce food waste in the first place, but if residents are looking for larger containers, some municipalities recommend Home Depot buckets to collect food scraps.

I don't have a container I can use. Where can I buy one?

You can buy kitchen compost bins at most major retailers.

How do I store my food scraps in my home so they don't smell or attract pests?

You can store your food scraps in a sealed container, typically on a kitchen countertop or under your sink. You can also store the container in your freezer.

Should I use a compostable liner or pour food scraps into the compost bin loosely?

Either is acceptable and comes down to preference. If you do not line your kitchen compost bin, make sure to rinse after each drop off. If you line your container, make sure that you are using a BPI-certified compostable liner, which you can purchase at major retailers. Some recommended brands include BioBag, EcoSafe, and UNNI.

Note: Biodegradable ≠ compostable. All compostable items are biodegradable, but not all biodegradable items are compostable! Products that are not BPI-certified will not break down fast enough and will cause bins to be rejected and landfilled.

Resident Frequently Asked Questions (R-FAQs)

Disclaimer: The FAQs below are based on the City of Novi's program design and are intended as examples. Municipalities should adapt the questions and responses to reflect their own program design, policies, and community needs.

How often should I drop off my food scraps?

This is up to you and your bin usage—you may choose to empty it more or less often. We recommend dropping off your food scraps weekly to help prevent food scraps from sitting too long and creating odors. You can, however, also store food scraps in your freezer without odors.

I have some plates that look compostable but don't have the BPI certification. Can I still drop them off?

No. Only compostable products with the BPI-certified-compostable logo will be accepted. Please do not dispose of any other products, even if they look or are labeled as biodegradable or compostable.

BPI-certified compostable products go through extensive testing to ensure that they fully break down in composting facilities within specific timeframes without leaving toxic, harmful, or microplastic residues behind.[55] Other materials may not have a time restriction (some biodegradable items could take 100 years to biodegrade!), may have misleading marketing, or can leave behind harmful residue that we don't want in our soil. **Please make sure all items emptied into food scrap bins are BPI-certified-compostable.**

Where can I report a maintenance concern, program issue, or provide feedback?

Please report any maintenance concerns or issues to [email] or [phone number].
For questions, please contact [email] or [phone number].
For program feedback or ideas for improvement, please contact [email] or [phone number].

Can I request a drop-off site location?

Unfortunately, not at this time. This is a pilot program, which will be evaluated in November. If the pilot is successful, we can explore additional funding opportunities to expand the program and drop-off site locations. If there are specific sites you would like us to consider, please contact us at [general email] or [phone number].

Where will the food scraps go?

Our contracted hauler transports food scraps to a composting facility in Wixom, MI.

Resident Frequently Asked Questions (R-FAQs)

Disclaimer: The FAQs below are based on the City of Novi's program design and are intended as examples. Municipalities should adapt the questions and responses to reflect their own program design, policies, and community needs.

When are the drop-off sites open?

Civic Center: 24/7
MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center: Dawn to dusk

How often are the food scrap bins emptied?

The City's food scrap bins will be emptied [weekly/biweekly] on [day of week] by our contracted hauler. The frequency may increase or decrease as we assess participation in the program.

I already compost in my backyard, can I still participate in the program?

Yes, of course! The City's program accepts a broader range of materials than typically recommended for backyard composting, including meats, bones, grease, and BPI-certified products. Feel free to bring those items, along with any other food scraps, to our drop-off sites.

I'd like to compost in my backyard. Do you have any tips?

Backyard composting is a great way to keep food scraps out of landfills. For tips, check out: [list of resources] - *see Additional Resources (Appendix E) for examples.*

Can businesses participate in this program?

Use of the bins is currently for residents only. Since this is a pilot, we do not have the infrastructure or funding to support businesses, schools, or other organizations at this time. As we evaluate this pilot, we are open to continuing the conversation with businesses, schools, and organizations. If interested, please contact us [here].

For collaborations or to host a site, please contact us [here].

Designing a Program

The pilot or initial phase provides municipalities with an opportunity to test program design, understand resident participation, identify operational challenges, and collect data needed to determine whether the program should be expanded or modified.

Municipalities should approach pilots as learning opportunities rather than final program models. Early decisions, including site selection, registration approach, outreach strategies, and collection logistics, can be adjusted based on resident feedback and operational data.



Phase 1. Preparing to Launch Your Program

Define Your Program

Before launching a compost drop-off pilot or permanent program, municipalities should clearly define the purpose, scope, and intended outcomes. Establishing clear goals helps guide decision-making, communicate expectations to residents and other invested parties, and evaluate whether the pilot or permanent program are achieving their intended outcomes.

Key questions to consider include:

- What problem does the program intend to address or solve?
- How many residents or households does the program aim to reach?
- How long will the pilot operate before considering expansion?
- What outcomes will determine whether the program should continue or expand?
- How much funding is required to operate the pilot versus a permanent program?

Common program goals may include increasing community access to composting services, diverting food waste from landfills, offering another service to residents, testing collection locations and operational needs, or contributing to local and statewide sustainability and climate action goals.

Develop Program Goals, Objectives, and Evaluation Plans

If your municipality wants to conduct a pilot program, consider the factors that will impact its duration (e.g., funding opportunities, services offered, resident behavior). In Michigan, pilot programs have ranged from three months to one year.

An evaluation plan should be developed prior to launching the program to identify what information should be collected, how success will be measured, and how findings will inform future decisions, including making the case for expansion.

Choose a Program Name

Communities use different names to describe drop-off programs. The City of Novi has a "compost drop-off program", as do other communities in Michigan. Some other names that municipalities use include:

- Food Scraps Drop-Off Program
- Food Scraps Compost Drop-Off Program
- Food Waste Drop-Off Program

Each program name has potential benefits and limitations,[41] and using different terms interchangeably can make it harder for municipal staff and residents to recognize that they are referring to the same type of program.

When selecting a program name, consider what residents are being asked to do and what they can expect from the program. Terms such as ***food scraps*** or ***food waste*** directly describe the materials residents bring to the drop-off sites, but they can also be interpreted narrowly. For example, residents may assume that food scraps only refers to fruit and vegetable peels or other kitchen scraps, which could lead them to overlook other accepted materials, such as BPI-certified compostable products or prepared foods and meals.

> Make Food Not Waste recommends using the term "food scraps" over "food waste," as waste implies that it has no value. They often differentiate food that goes to the landfill as "waste" and food that is in some sort of circularity program as "scraps."

In contrast, ***compost*** describes the outcome of collecting and processing food scraps, but may create confusion if residents expect to receive or see finished compost and don't. While some drop-off programs offer finished compost to residents, typically through pick-up day(s) where residents can come to a compost site with buckets and shovels and collect on their own, not all programs have the funding or capacity to do so. The term compost can also create confusion with yard waste programs, which many municipalities already refer to as compost programs. This distinction is particularly important because while some municipalities offer commingling services of food scraps and yard waste, others do not and may require different processing infrastructure, permits, or may not be accepted at the same facility.

Municipalities should also make sure staff, haulers, and other program partners are aligned on what the selected program name means. Clear alignment can help prevent inconsistent or misleading information from reaching residents.

Whatever term your municipality chooses, use it consistently. Apply the same program name across signage, webpages, registration materials, educational materials, social media, and other resident communications. Consistent terminology helps build program recognition, reduces confusion, and ensures that staff, partners, and residents have the same basic understanding of what the program is, what materials are accepted, and what happens to those materials.

Use Surveys to Gauge Resident Behavior

If you are conducting a pilot, pre- and post- pilot surveys (see Appendix B) can help municipalities understand changes in resident knowledge, attitude, and behaviors related to program usage. While participation numbers give a general sense of this, surveys can provide insight into why residents participate, barriers to participate, familiarity with food waste reduction and composting practices, and ways to improve the program.

If you are not conducting a pilot, consider how and how often you want to collect data and evaluate this program.

Identify the outcomes you want to measure prior to launching the program. For example, if your goals extend beyond tracking participation to encouraging behavior change, design pre- and post- program surveys that capture changes in residents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to food waste prevention, composting, and waste diversion, and determine how many responses you need to adequately measure these changes. This information can help demonstrate program impact for funders and guide future programming.

While Detroit is in the data collection phase, initial findings suggest possible shifts in resident behaviors, including grocery shopping habits and meal planning.

Because food waste is already difficult to measure,[56] including pre-survey questions can help to establish baseline data. Coupled with clear goals, municipalities can tailor pre- and post- survey questions to address specific community needs. Surveys can help answer questions such as: Are residents already interested in the program or composting? Are there clear preferences in drop-off sites and utilization? What motivates residents to participate? What has prevented some residents from participating? Did participation influence residents' broader food waste behaviors? How can the program be improved?

Tip: To reduce survey fatigue and improve response rates, consider incorporating baseline questions into program registration forms. Also, try to avoid asking residents for information your team can obtain from existing sources, such as household types from city records (Washtenaw County).

Program Management Considerations

Registration

Municipalities should determine whether residents need to register to participate. Different approaches offer different benefits and challenges.

Registration	Benefits	Challenges
Required	Can track number of participants, communicate program updates directly with participants, collect baseline data, distribute surveys	May create barriers or perceived barriers, email list has to be maintained
Optional (Communicated as Required)	Similar to Required	Likely will not be capturing all participants, email list has to be maintained
Optional (Communicated as Optional)	Will likely engage active participants	Likely will capture fewer participants, email list has to be maintained
N/A (Open Participation)	Reduces barriers to participate, no additional staff time needed to maintain email list	More difficult to track users and collect demographic or behavioral information, cannot establish baseline data, cannot directly provide program updates to participants

Municipalities should consider their evaluation goals, staffing capacity, and desired level of community engagement when selecting an approach.

Seasonal Collection Considerations

When providing a year-round service, municipalities should plan with seasonal considerations in mind.

In winter, these can include snow and ice management around collection sites, reduced participation due to colder months, and bin accessibility after snow events.

In the fall, communities have experienced challenges with bees, and in the summer, with construction. Municipalities should also be mindful of holidays and how this program may be impacted by other program planning throughout the year.

In Canton, the biggest seasonal challenge they found were bees in the fall. For composting, spraying the bees with chemicals would have contaminated the soil or food product, so they hired a beekeeper to resolve the issue naturally.

In Ferndale, one challenge came the week after Halloween when the city offered a special pumpkin collection service (open top dumpster). Residents put pumpkins in food scraps collection bins due to confusion around messaging from the city. This resulted in pumpkins taking up room that would have otherwise gone to other food scraps, pumpkins outside of bins, and the dumpster being less utilized. What they learned was to be more conscious with messaging and coordinating with other departments around different seasons and holidays.

Site Planning and Infrastructure

Choosing Drop-Off Locations: Site selection is a critical component to the success of a program. If locations are not in convenient, highly accessible locations for residents, it can deter or limit residents from participating. Most existing programs identified city-owned properties as ideal locations for drop-off sites. Other locations include community centers, parks and recreation facilities, farmers' markets, libraries, fire stations, and highly trafficked community locations.

Consider spaces where food is already grown, purchased or consumed. In Detroit, they partnered with Detroit Peoples' Food Coop, a community-owned grocery store that was already interested in the program, to host a drop-off site with a digester and to help hire a compost manager. In Novi, they partnered with MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center (see Case Study: City of Novi's Pilot Compost Drop-Off Program). In Madison Heights, Canton, and Lansing, they have drop-off sites at fire stations, which can be both accessible community locations and sites where larger quantities of food scraps may be generated.

The Bigger Picture

While municipalities should focus their planning on designing a successful pilot or permanent program, it is important to consider the bigger picture—what do you hope to achieve or learn during this initial phase? Will something you plan for now benefit future planning? What are your future goals and long-term outcomes?

For Grand Rapids, a primary program focus is on equity. They want to make sure that residents throughout the city have access to drop-off locations and spread them out across wards. While curbside collection is available at a cost, drop-off is intentionally free for residents. To make the program even more accessible in the future, they want to have collection bins in public spaces as well.

In Kalamazoo, equity and accessibility are also priorities. The City is working with neighborhood associations and community organizations to expand drop-off sites across all neighborhoods, including parks and multifamily housing. The City also provides collection bins at events to make food waste diversion visible in public spaces and reinforce its commitment to cutting food waste in half, with a larger goal of achieving 90% food waste diversion.

Equipment and Site Design

Equipment needs will vary based on population and program size, anticipated participation, and collection frequency. Site design should consider accessibility for haulers and residents, eye-level signage, and using available space in the clearest ways possible.

The two photos below were taken during site visits in two different communities. While these are recycling and landfill bins, the same design principles can be applied.



Design 1: Without stopping and looking at the bins directly, you wouldn't be able to tell the difference between these two bins. When looking at the bins, the two icons for recycling (left) and landfill (right) do not offer any guidance on what materials are accepted and not accepted.



Design 2: Uses custom graphic wraps, one of which describes what materials are accepted and non-accepted. However, both graphics do not provide cues for a passerby to immediately tell the difference between the two bins. The images used can also be busy or distracting, detracting from the important information describing what materials can be placed in each bin.

Display key information on multiple sides of bins. This helps to maximize visibility and allow for more processing time. This may include contact information and/or a QR code for feedback or to direct people to the municipal website and/or program landing page. **Prioritize signage with images or icons and take context into consideration.**[57,58] *See Appendix C: Communications Toolkit - Magnets*.

When possible, display signage at eye-level. Across industries, research shows that eye-level marketing works.[59,60] That's why when you go to a bookstore, best-sellers are shelved at eye-level.[61,62]



City of Charleston Residential Composting Food Scrap Drop-Off Program. (Source: City of Charleston)[63]

Common Site Components: collection bins, site identification information, and signage explaining accepted and non-accepted materials. Remember, we want to solve for both **WHY** and **HOW** residents should participate.



Show accepted and non-accepted items with icons; sign is at eye-level

Could improve by having city-branded signage that explains why non-accepted materials are not accepted

Identifiable compost drop-off site w/contact info; sign is at eye-level

Could include an email contact and explain purpose of QR code

Clean surrounding area

Bins are not overflowing

Bins placed away from other similar sized bins**

Site Layout and Accessibility

When choosing sites, municipalities should consider municipal ordinances and policies, proximity of bins to residents, pathways and parking availability, ADA accessibility, safety and lighting, hours of operation, visibility and public awareness. Sites should be convenient and accessible for residents while also allowing easy and efficient collection by haulers. Consider each site individually and use a combination of strategies to balance accessibility with contamination prevention.

Prioritize the location of collection bins before adding other waste receptacles. Rather than automatically placing compost collection bins next to existing trash or recycling bins, first identify the most appropriate location for the collection bin based on your site selection criteria. Then determine how other waste receptacles should be positioned in relation to it.

Place collection bins within convenient access to other waste receptacles. When a compost collection bin is the only receptacle available, residents may use it to dispose of non-accepted materials, increasing contamination. At each site, ensure residents have a convenient option for other waste through one of two approaches: **(1) place a similar sized trash and/or recycling bin near the compost bin, or (2) place a trash and/or recycling bin in more convenient locations than the compost bin.**** The latter approach can create a small amount of separation that encourages residents to make a deliberate decision to use the compost bin and will likely be used primarily by residents who know about the program and what materials are accepted and not accepted.

Consider the needs of each site. The appropriate combination of receptacle placement will depend on the site. A nearby trash bin can help residents dispose of materials that do not belong in the compost bin and reduce the likelihood of contamination or food scraps being left outside the compost bin, particularly when the compost bin is full. At other sites, placing trash and recycling bins in more convenient locations may provide enough separation to encourage deliberate use of the compost bin.

Municipalities should also consider whether public recycling is available at the site and whether trash and recycling bins are clearly differentiated (e.g., signage, color).

Make accepted materials easy to identify. If the compost bin cannot be customized with information about what can and cannot be accepted, provide clear signage at the site. Consider including a list of accepted and non-accepted materials, a QR code linking to the program website, and contact information for questions, issues, or feedback.

Collection Logistics

Municipalities should establish collection procedures before launch, including:

- Pickup frequency
- Who is responsible for monitoring sites
    - Routine monitoring helps municipalities ensure that drop-off sites remain clean, accessible, and operations while minimizing contamination and service disruptions
- How overflow will be addressed
- How contamination issues will be addressed and/or communicated

Collection schedules may need to be adjusted depending on participation and scale throughout the pilot period or initial launch.

Staffing and Operations

While staff are likely to wear many hats, having clearly defined roles whenever possible can help ensure smooth operations. Municipalities should identify responsibilities for: program coordination, resident outreach and continued communications, site monitoring, data collection, hauler coordination, and troubleshooting. Staff capacity needs may also change throughout the program.

Phase 2. Launching Your Program

A strong launch can help build awareness and encourage participation from the start. Municipalities should consider selecting a launch date that aligns with existing community events or sustainability campaigns, such as Earth Day or International Compost Awareness Week. These occasions can provide opportunities to reach residents who are already engaged in environmental initiatives and create additional visibility for the program without placing additional demands on staff.

> In Royal Oak, they could have expanded the program whenever, but they strategically timed it to be around Earth Day and International Compost Week to drum up excitement. In Laingsburg, they kicked off their pilot program on Earth Day 2025 and as of their first anniversary, collected over 8,000 pounds of food scraps!

Outreach and Education

Resident education should continue throughout the program and be integrated into other community programming. Outreach may vary depending on community values and interests. For example, some communities may respond well to outreach explaining why food waste reduction matters while others may respond to how landfill diversion has economic benefits.

Daily Operations

Once the program launches, municipalities should monitor performance and make adjustments as needed. Key operational activities include: Monitoring collection sites, maintaining equipment and signage, addressing contamination issues, managing overflow bins, adjusting collection frequency, responding to resident questions, and reviewing participation and evaluation data.

Regular evaluation allows municipalities to identify what is working, address challenges quickly, and determine whether the program is ready for expansion.

Case Study: City of Novi's Pilot Compost Drop-Off Program

The City of Novi is a mid-sized suburban community of approximately 68,000 residents. For more details, visit the Census Reporter here.[64]

The City of Novi's Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) was established in 2025, and one of the Committee's goals is to divert waste from landfills. This was the catalyst to starting a pilot compost drop-off program. The Committee appealed to the City Council and received funding (not to exceed $10,000) to implement the pilot program. Funding for the first year of the program is being reimbursed through Recycling User Fee revenues, which are generated through solid waste user fees that are added to property owners' trash bills. The goals of this program are to raise awareness about food waste, contribute to Michigan Healthy Climate goals, and divert food waste from landfills.

The City received external funding and operational support from the University of Michigan Graham Sustainability Institute with support from EGLE to have a Catalyst Leadership Circle Fellow and Technical Advisor support the initial phases of the pilot. The program team also applied for a NextCycle Seed Award to support equipment and starter kit purchases as well as signage and public education materials. The City contracted My Green Michigan as their hauler; food waste is transported to and processed at a Spurt Industries composting facility in Wixom, MI. This facility is closer to the City of Novi than landfill sites, therefore also reducing our carbon footprint.

Prior to launching the pilot, the ESC engaged with residents at community events, including Arbor Day and Community Fest, to gauge program interest. Residents ranging from ~18-60 years old, including couples, families, and high school students expressed particular interest in the program. The program team collaborated with the communications team to determine how best to reach residents via its different platforms, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, **Now You Novi** podcast, and newsletters. Through an optional registration form embedded with a pre-survey question asking participants how they heard about the pilot, the program team has learned that residents are primarily learning about the program through social media.

Case Study: City of Novi's Pilot Compost Drop-Off Program

Novi residents primarily drive themselves to work,[64] making conveniently located drop-off sites with available parking an important consideration for program accessibility.

The pilot consists of two drop-off locations, Civic Center and MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center, with two 64-gallon plastic bins at each location (four bins total). Bins are picked up biweekly and will be monitored for usage to determine if pickup frequency should be increased.

Civic Center: This location was chosen for its central location. Residents often come to the Civic Center for different events and programming, to handle administrative tasks and paying bills. It is also located close to the library, which is a primary community resource for many residents.

MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center: This location was chosen for its unique location in the city, where residents with an interest in environmental issues and food systems are more likely to go and see the drop-off sites. The location also offers the opportunity to tangibly witness how a circular food system works.

Taking into account drop-off location criteria, the sites are also accessible by both residents and the hauler, conveniently open 24/7 at the Civic Center and from dawn to dusk and MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center. The sites include designated "Compost Drop-Off" and "Accepted and Non-Accepted Materials" signs and are intentionally located away from other similar sized refuse receptacles.

The pilot was designed in close collaboration with the Department of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center, who all periodically monitor bins. While the pilot is being evaluated on an ongoing basis, the ESC will conduct a formal evaluation in November to determine program feasibility, success, and case for expansion.

Phase 3. Evaluating and Expanding Your Program

Evaluation is an ongoing process that should begin before a pilot or permanent program launches and should continue throughout implementation. Regularly reviewing participation, operations, and resident feedback helps municipalities identify challenges early, make informed adjustments, and build a strong case for continued investment or program expansion.

By documenting successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement throughout the pilot or initial implementation phase, municipalities can determine whether the program is meeting its objectives and identify strategies for long-term sustainability and growth.

Evaluation

Pilot data can help demonstrate the value of compost drop-off programs to city councils, elected officials, residents, and potential funders. Information that may strengthen the case for expansion includes:

- Measured landfill diversion and greenhouse gas emissions avoided
- Alignment with municipal sustainability or climate goals
- Evidence of continued community demand or interest
- Positive resident feedback

City of Novi Pre-Survey Responses

"Thank you for starting this"

"I would love this program be available city wide and collection be done biweekly if not weekly"

"I was using Farmington's bins but happy to see Novi is finally getting on board with this!"

"Thank you for doing this! We compost in tumbler and garden beds, but I hope this program gets support. If gaining traction, one bin for each neighborhood would be nice (so that people aren't driving and causing greenhouse gases as much)."

"Please make it permanent."

Keys to Success for Municipal Compost Drop-Off Programs

PROGRAM PLANNING

Most of your time should be spent here.

- **Don't underestimate the planning required.** A compost drop-off program may be low-hanging fruit, but successful programs require thoughtful planning.
- **Start with your community's needs and resources.** Every community will have different levels of funding, infrastructure, staff capacity, and community buy-in. Consider what is realistic for your community and build a program that meets those needs.
- **Involve your community**, including residents, internal (e.g., DPW/DPS/Facilities, Parks and Recreation, Communications) and external partners (e.g., neighborhood associations, community organizations), to select convenient and accessible locations across neighborhoods (e.g., community centers, senior centers, parks, farmers' markets, and fire stations). *Initially, focus on city-owned properties.*
- **Establish a baseline for program scale.** Before selecting sites, determine how many locations and bins the program will need based on factors such as population and households served, target number of participants, expected food scrap volume, bin capacity and collection frequency, site accessibility, available funding, and staff capacity. Document the reasoning behind these decisions so the initial program design can be evaluated and adjusted over time.
- **Set a date for evaluation.** Use pre- and post- program surveys to measure changes in community awareness, interest, and participation, and to evaluate program success against goals and outcomes. Establish an evaluation date in advance based on factors such as funding to ensure there is time to collect and compare results.
- **Integrate the program into a broader circular food system** by collaborating across teams, departments, and community organizations.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION (0-6 months post-launch)

- Monitor bins frequently during the first several months after launch.
- Expect contamination to be the biggest challenge; treat this as useful data to inform communications, educational materials, and signage.
- Once initial challenges are identified and addressed, programs can transition from intensive monitoring to routine operations and maintenance.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Be clear, concise, and repetitive in all communications.
- Be transparent with residents about program changes or updates. Clear and timely communication can reduce confusion and help prevent residents from making assumptions about why changes occurred.
- Maintain consistent municipal branding across all materials and channels.
- On all communications, direct residents to the program landing page and provide contact information for any issues, inquiries, or feedback.
- Track resident questions and use them to develop future communications.

Scaling the Program

If a program demonstrates success, municipalities may consider expanding services based on participation patterns and operational capacity. Expansion should be informed by data and responsive to community needs.

Potential expansion strategies include:

- Increasing the number of bins at existing locations
- Adding additional drop-off sites in underserved or high-demand areas

Through trial and error, strike a balance between having enough bins that you don't run the risk of them overflowing—or having too many that your drop-off site starts looking like a waste transfer site. If a site consistently needs a large number of bins, consider whether the volume at that site is driven by a particularly dense user base or residents are traveling from a wider area to access the site for reasons including, there are few drop-off sites overall, the site has better hours, the site is particularly convenient. In either case, adding another conveniently located drop-off site may be a better solution than continuing to add bins at one location.

- Offering finished compost to residents
- Adding curbside collection services and/or yard and food waste commingling services

For some communities, offering **curbside collection commingling food and yard waste** may make sense, especially when yard waste is already going to a facility that accepts food waste. The City of Wixom began including food scraps in their curbside yard waste in 2024,[65] Farmington in April 2026,[66] and Lansing is launching a small pilot in August 2026.

Continuous Improvement

Even after a program expands, municipalities should continue evaluating performance and identifying opportunities for improvement. Examples of what this may look like include:

- Updating education materials
- Improving signage
- Introducing new outreach campaigns to reach untapped or underrepresented residents

Conclusion

This guide is intended to be a practical, non-comprehensive resource to help municipalities take the next steps toward developing a compost/food scrap drop-off program. Our goal is to provide as much useful information as possible, from program planning and site selection to communications, educational materials, ongoing evaluation, and expansion, so municipalities can make informed decisions that reflect their own communities and resources.

Food scrap collection and composting in Michigan will continue to evolve. As MMPs are developed, collection infrastructure expands, processing capacity grows, and systems improve, the opportunities and considerations for municipal programs may change as well. This guide, much like your program, should therefore be viewed as a starting point rather than a final destination.

There are many resources available to help municipalities learn more and stay up to date (see Appendix E for additional resources). Municipalities should seek out the most current information when planning or modifying their programs, including through the most recent MI 2030 Food Waste Coalition Directory, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), Make Food Not Waste (MFNW), and other organizations across the state and country working to reduce food waste and divert food scraps from landfills.

Through local action, we can achieve collective impact. Through conversations with municipalities across the state, one clear through-line emerged: just like food scraps, our communities are valuable resources. Many communities learned from others before starting their own programs, and we wanted this guide to build on that exchange of knowledge by bringing together advice, lessons learned, and examples in one place.

We hope this guide helps municipalities learn from communities that have already taken steps toward food waste reduction, identify approaches that make sense for their own communities, and feel better equipped to make informed decisions as they develop their programs.

Appendices



Appendix A

Program Checklist

Pre-Launch Program Planning

- [ ] Internal Support
- [ ] Policies and Ordinances
- [ ] Internal Partnerships
- [ ] External Partnerships
- [ ] Hauler and Compost Processor
- [ ] Funding Sources
- [ ] Program Costs
- [ ] Community Engagement
- [ ] Communications Strategy
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Program Goals
- [ ] Program Name
- [ ] Registration
- [ ] Seasonal Considerations
- [ ] Site Locations
- [ ] Site Design
- [ ] Collection Logistics
- [ ] Staffing

Program Launch

- [ ] Outreach
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Daily Operations/Monitoring
- [ ] Primary Contacts

Post-Launch/Ongoing

- [ ] Outreach
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Daily Operations/Monitoring
- [ ] Evaluation

Appendix B

Registration Form and Surveys

Pre- and post- surveys are beneficial for several reasons, including establishing baseline data to measure against program outcomes; providing insight into food waste behaviors that can be difficult to capture through other methods; allowing municipalities to measure and compare trends or changes in resident awareness, attitudes and behaviors; and generating information that can inform communications and educational materials. Depending on the questions asked, survey findings can help municipalities develop messages that resonate with residents, answer common questions, and address concerns.

The City of Novi made most survey questions required to maximize the amount of usable data collected for both the pilot and future outreach. When developing survey questions, municipalities should consider how each question will be used and what information is needed to evaluate the program. Planning for data analysis during survey development can help ensure that questions generate useful information without placing unnecessary burden on residents.

Mid/post-survey questions: Send during and/or after pilot completion to assess the progress, effectiveness, successes, and challenges of your program. Findings can help municipalities identify opportunities for improvement and build a case for continuing or expanding the program.

Post-survey question examples:

- How often did you use the compost drop-off program?
- What did you like about the program?
- What, if anything, has made it difficult for your household to participate?
- Did you learn anything new about food waste reduction or composting while participating in the program?
- Has your reason for participating changed since you joined the program? If yes, how?
- Has participating in the program changed how your household manages food scraps or food waste? If so, how?
- If the program continues,
    - Where would you like to see additional drop-off locations?
    - How likely would you be to recommend it to a friend or colleague?
    - What could be improved upon?
- Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience with the program?

Appendix B (Continued)

Registration and Pre-Survey Form (Google Form)

Title: Residential Compost Drop-Off Program Signup
Description: Thank you for your interest in participating in the City of Novi Compost Drop-Off Program! Please fill out the following information to confirm your participation and begin using the drop-off areas.

Note: Personal information will not be shared. As this is a pilot program, some questions are asked for planning purposes to estimate the level of participation in the program and for evaluation purposes.

Registration Questions (* is required)

1. First Name*
2. Last Name*
3. Full Address*
4. Email Address*
5. What is the makeup of your household?*
    - Single
    - 2 people
    - 3-4 people
    - 5 or more
6. What is your preferred drop-off location?* (Including map images of locations)
    - Civic Center
    - MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center
7. I understand that not all items are accepted into the compost program and have reviewed the accepted and non-accepted materials illustrated. I agree that by participating in this program, I will only bring acceptable materials to the drop-off locations.* (Yes/No)
8. I agree to treat the drop-off area with respect and cleanliness to do my part in ensuring the program is successful. I agree to report any concerns or messes at the drop-off area to the City Manager by calling 248-347-0445 or scanning the QR code at the drop-off location.* (Yes/No)

Pre-Survey Questions

9. How did you hear about this program?* [Checkboxes]
    - Word of mouth
    - Community event
    - Social media
    - City website
    - Newsletter
    - News article
    - Other
10. Do you currently or have you ever done food composting?*
    - Yes
    - No
    - Other
11. Why are you participating in this program?*
    - Landfill diversion
    - To protect our environment
    - My friends/family are doing it
    - Economic benefits
    - I love composting!
    - Other
12. Anything else we should know?

Appendix C

Communications Toolkit

To ensure communications are clear and consistent, use this framework to guide outreach strategy:

Communication Objective
What do you want to achieve?

Primary Audience
Who are you trying to reach?

Message Strategy
What is the key message you are trying to get across?

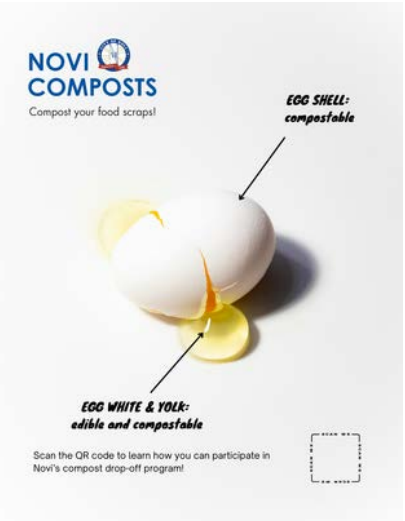
Call to Action
What do you want people to do next?

Example: Social Media

Communication Objective	Primary Audience	Message Strategy	Call to Action
Education	New participants	Accepted vs. non-accepted materials	Scan QR code to register







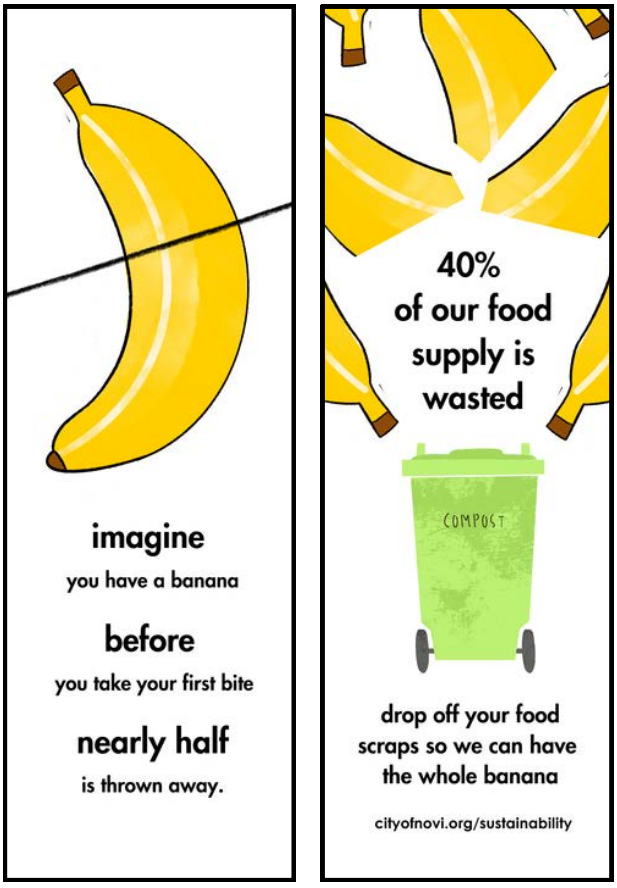
Appendix C (Continued)

Be clear, simple, and repetitive. For one campaign, be consistent across communications and social channels, so it's immediately clear that it's all connected.

When developing outreach and educational materials for the same program, municipalities should use consistent design elements (e.g., fonts, colors, images, branding) across materials. Consistent branding helps residents recognize that materials are connected, making it easier to process information and reinforce program awareness. Even if haulers or other partners have their own materials and signage, municipalities should develop materials with their branding to reinforce the municipality's programming and lead residents back to the website landing page.

Other materials to consider:

Bookmarks: Consider locations that residents are likely to frequent like libraries when creating materials (For Novi, the library is also close to the Civic Center drop-off site!).

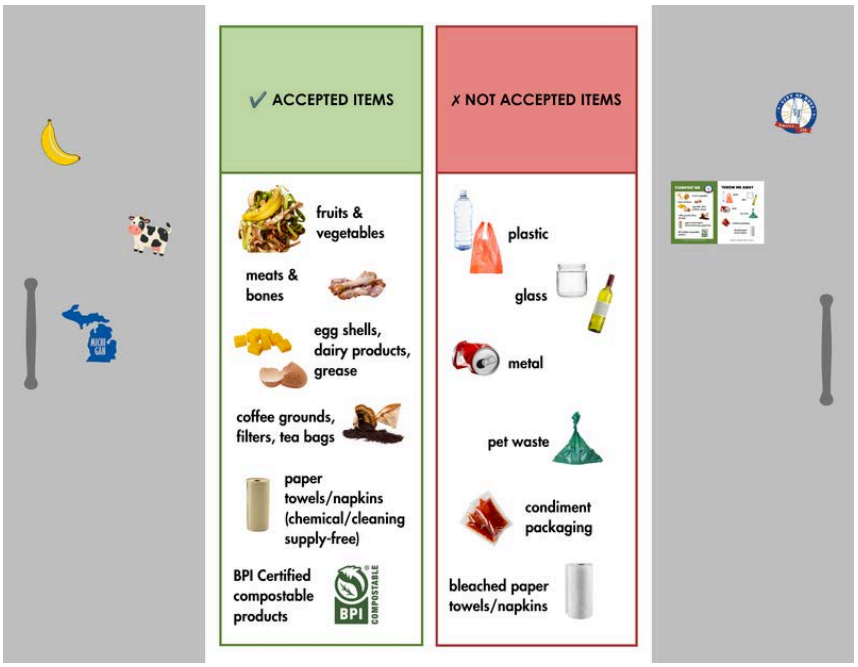


Appendix C (Continued)

Brochures: Residents receive a lot of brochures and other communications materials, so while it is helpful to include program information through existing communication channels, materials should be engaging, concise, and easy to read. Use brochures to highlight key information and direct residents to the program website for additional details.



4-fold brochure: inside contents. Click for larger image.



4-fold brochure: Outside contents (it's a fridge!). Click for larger image.

Appendix C (Continued)

Countertop Compost Caddy Stickers: If you are providing starter kits and/or countertop bins to residents, include signage indicating what materials are and are not accepted. (When you have space, use it strategically!)

Flyers: These are easy to include in welcome packets sent to new residents.



Appendix C (Continued)

Fridge Magnets: Because fridge magnets are placed directly where food-related decisions occur, they can provide repeated visual cues that reinforce program information and remind residents to practice desired behaviors over time.[67]

Consider how information is presented. The same information can be communicated in different ways, but each approach requires a different level of mental processing from the viewer. For example, an educational magnet about what can and cannot be composted could use icons and words, generic images and words, contextual images and words, or images alone. While each may contain the same information, what they are communicating, or what residents process, can be different. Consider which format makes the most sense for your sites and community. For example, images alone may work well when people are choosing from a finite set of options, say in a restaurant, but for a program like this where residents will have a range of products in their homes, signage will more likely benefit from icons or images paired with words.





ICONS





GENERIC

Appendix C (Continued)





CONTEXT SPECIFIC (e.g., office)





IMAGES ONLY

Click or larger images.

Consider your audience and the context when designing materials. In Grand Rapids, they launched an internal pilot where municipal staff signed up as food scrap champions. When communicating to staff, they targeted more of the early adopters, or staff who always dreamed of this type of program. They had to create completely different accepted and non-accepted materials signage based on the kinds of foods people bring for lunch, as opposed to the food scraps from meal preparation that people are more likely to have at home.

Appendix C (Continued)

Signage: In addition to any signage provided by the hauler, consider adding municipal-branded signage at drop-off sites to reinforce program recognition and provide residents with consistent information.



Click for larger image.

Appendix D

Funding Opportunities

Funder	Grant Name	Amount ($)	RFP
EGLE	Organics Infrastructure Grant	$5,000 - $250,000	Link
NextCycle	Seed Award Program	$8,000 - 10,000	Link
NextCycle	Circular Economy Grant	$50,000 - $250,000	Link
Michigan Recycling Coalition	Community Education Grant	$7,500	Link
The Americana Foundation	Grant **Awarded to MFNW in 2023 to support Southfield program*	$10,000- $25,000	Link
Closed Loop Partners, U.S. Composting Council, & BPI	Composting Consortium Grant Program **Awarded to Washtenaw County (3 drop-off sites in Ypsilanti, Dexter, & Salem Twp)*	Up to $50,000	No open grants (Aug 2026)
EPA	Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grants for Political Subdivisions	$500,000- $5,000,000	No open grants (Aug 2026)

Tool: The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and ReFED compiled a Federal Grants Database with food waste reduction federal funding opportunities (here).

Appendix E

Additional Resources

Topic	Resources
Composting (General)	EPA Composting: https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/composting#benefits NRDC Composting 101: https://www.nrdc.org/stories/composting-101
Backyard Composting	EGLE Classroom - Composting [video]: https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/materials-management/composting/food-waste EGLE Home Composting: https://www.michigan.gov/egle/-/media/Project/Websites/egle/Documents/Programs/MMD/Compost/Home-Guide.pdf
Food Loss and Food Waste	EPA United States 2030 Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal: https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/united-states-2030-food-loss-and-waste-reduction-goal RTS Food Waste in America in 2026: https://www.rts.com/resources/guides/food-waste-america/ USDA Food Waste FAQs: https://www.usda.gov/about-food/food-safety/food-loss-and-waste/food-waste-faqs

Appendix E (Continued)

Topic	Resources
Guides, Reports, and Roadmaps	BioCycle Food Waste Drop-Off Program Best Practices: https://www.biocycle.net/food-waste-drop-off/ Closed Loop Partners Blueprint for Scaling Collection and Composting Infrastructure: https://www.closedlooppartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Closed_Loop_Partners_CoCo_MuniBlueprint_Final-1.pdf Food Matters: Solutions for Food Waste Prevention: https://www.denvergov.org/files/assets/public/v/1/public-health-and-environment/documents/cbh/ddphe_foodwaste_focusgroup_report.pdf Michigan Sustainable Business Forum 2024 Economic Impact Report: https://misbf.org/msw/ Michigan Sustainable Business Forum/Make Food Not Waste/EGLE, MI Food Waste Roadmap: https://misbf.org/michigan-food-waste-policy-road-map/ NRDC Estimating Quantities and Types of Food Waste at the City Level: https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/food-waste-city-level-report.pdf NRDC Tackling Food Waste in Cities: https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/food-waste-cities-policy-toolkit-report.pdf ReFED Progress on the Plate: 2026 U.S. Food Waste Report: https://refed.org/food-waste/refed-us-food-waste-report-2026/ ReFED Building a Food System That Works for Everyone: https://refed.org/uploads/buildinga-foodsystem-jedi-assessment.pdf SWACO Food Waste Drop-Off Program Best Practices: https://www.swaco.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/SMTF-Drop-Off-Best-Practices-2023-2.pdf

Appendix E (Continued)

Topic	Resources
Social Marketing/Media and Communications	Closed Loop Partners Composting Educational Materials: https://www.closedlooppartners.com/compost-sign-download/ EPA Social Marketing Toolkit: https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-04/EPA_Wasted_Food_Social_Marketing_Tookit.pdf
Webinars, Tips, and Tools	Catalyst Communities Webinar Mini-Series on Materials Management: https://www.michigan.gov/egle/outreach/webinar-series/catalyst-communities/mini-series-materials-management EPA Waste Reduction Model: https://www.epa.gov/waste-reduction-model NRDC Guide to Funding Food Scrap Recycling and Food Rescue: https://www.nrdc.org/resources/guide-funding-food-scrap-recycling

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