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#### At-a-Glance:

- In 2018, CET's Northampton office reached a diversion rate of over 88% through its dual-stream recycling and food scraps collection programs.
- CET recently updated its waste bin signage throughout the office to reduce contamination and ensure that staff and guests place recyclable and compostable materials in the correct bins.
- Communication with your hauler and custodial staff is critical to ensure that your signage, collection containers, and outdoor equipment are effective.

## Office Recycling and Composting Case Study Center for EcoTechnology Northampton, MA

*The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) is an environmental non-profit that helps people and businesses save energy and reduce waste by offering innovative programs and practical solutions. Since its inception more than 40 years ago, the organization has striven to align office practices with its mission. CET applies the same practical approach for managing waste materials from its operations as when assisting customers in the field. The organization's main office, in Northampton, is the base for approximately 50 staff. Over the years, CET has adjusted its waste diversion program to reduce waste, encourage reuse, and recycle hard-to-manage materials. In 2019, CET staff reviewed the waste diversion program as a whole to identify opportunities, such as updated signage and changes to containers, to reduce contamination in the recyclable and compostable materials collected.*

### Recycling and Food Scraps Collection:

CET's Northampton office has a comprehensive waste diversion program that includes dual-stream recycling, food scraps collection, and separation of several hard-to-recycle materials. Paper recycling bins are co-located with desk-side trash bins throughout the office. Waste sorting stations in the kitchen and central training room include larger bins for mixed containers and paper, as well as a separate container for film plastics.

Since 2012, CET has collected food waste from staff lunches and events, as well as paper towel waste from the bathrooms, for composting. The office also collects some food scraps in a separate vermicompost system, used for outreach demonstrations.

Recycling, food scraps, and trash are transferred to outside storage containers by a contracted cleaning service. All materials are transferred outside once per week, except for food scraps from the kitchen, which are removed twice per week to minimize odor. The cleaning service consolidates food waste and paper towels into compostable bags, and collects recyclables in large, clear plastic bags. The plastic bags are loosely tied so they can be emptied when picked up, and the liners thrown in the trash. Pedal People, a bike-powered waste hauling cooperative, collects this material once each week. New employees are trained on CET's recycling and food waste diversion programs during their orientation and office tour.



### Updates to Waste Collection Program:

In 2019, CET updated all of its waste bin signage to help reduce contamination and ensure that staff and guests place recyclable and compostable materials in the correct bins. Each detailed sign lists accepted and unaccepted materials, accompanied by pictures.

CET staff also adjusted the outdoor storage containers as a result of communication with the cleaning service and hauler. CET swapped the sizes of the containers for recycling and trash, placing recyclables in larger, 96 gallon containers, and trash in a smaller, 64 gallon container. This change reflects the shift in collecting a larger volume of recyclables over time and a smaller volume of trash. A new watertight, 32 gallon bin for food scraps prevents these materials from becoming waterlogged and harder to handle.

All containers are color-coded and labeled so that it is clear to cleaning staff where to place materials when transferring them to the collection area.

### Other Materials:

CET collects film plastics, batteries, and ink cartridges, which staff deliver to local retailers for recycling on an as-needed basis. CET's annual collection of company-owned electronic waste is coordinated with a certified e-waste hauler; CET recycled approximately 1 ton of electronics over the past four years.

The office also collects universal waste, including mercury-containing thermostats and florescent light bulbs, generated from CET's energy efficiency programs. CET works with the Thermostat Recycling Corporation and Complete Recycling Solutions to safely manage these materials.

### Reduction and Reuse:

CET's operations encourage waste reduction and reuse. Some examples of waste reduction and reuse efforts include:

- The staff kitchen is stocked with reusable dishes, silverware, and mugs.
- Staff bring leftover food from events back to the kitchen to share, so that it is eaten rather than composted.
- The organization saves surplus office furniture, such as desks and chairs, transferring items to a storage space at CET's EcoBuilding Bargains store in Springfield, until needed again at one of the organization's three locations.
- Staff reuse shipping materials such as bubble wrap, packing peanuts, and boxes.
- When purchasing new items, CET prioritizes products that contain recycled content, and purchases items in bulk when possible to reduce packaging waste.

CET also hosts an annual "Stuff Swap". Employees bring clothing and household goods to the office, swap with other items over a week-long period, and then donate the remaining items to local organizations. Over two years, CET has donated 235 pounds of reusable goods to the community.

### Program Impact:

CET is an active [US EPA WasteWise](#) participant, collecting and reporting waste data each year for the program. Between 2015 and 2018, the CET Northampton office reduced trash generation by 50%, accompanied by a notable increase in the overall diversion rate through recycling and composting. In 2018, the Northampton office reached a diversion rate of over 88%.

