

Compost Hub Program Guide

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1. Background Information

In January 2022, SB 1383: California's Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy came into effect, mandating organic waste collection and services for composting across the state. The bill also requires jurisdictions (cities and counties) to "procure a minimum amount of products made from recycled organic waste each year." The minimum quantity is referred to as a jurisdiction's "procurement target," and most jurisdictions will procure compost in order to meet their target. Targets are based on population size. A city of 100,000 would need to procure 11,600 cubic yards of compost in order to meet their target – that is a lot of compost!

Donating and giving away compost is allowed under SB 1383, and many jurisdictions already host annual compost giveaway events where residents pick up bagged compost. These events are very popular, but require heavy involvement of staff, are limited in scale and compost distributed, and produces plastic waste. Most jurisdictions are considering expanding these programs in order to help reach their procurement targets, and there are opportunities to partner with community-based organizations when considering how to expand these programs.

2. Compost Hub Description and Goals

A Compost Hub is a site operated by a community-based organization (CBO) or jurisdiction that provides free compost to residents on an ongoing basis. Compost is distributed through a communal compost pile accessible to the public during open hours set by the host site. The Hub also provides educational resources about composting and waste sorting. Depending on the host site, there is also the opportunity to connect residents with other services, volunteer opportunities, and educational workshops.

Free bulk compost is supplied to the Compost Hub by a partnered jurisdiction, counting the distributed compost towards their procurement target. CBO's that are users of compost, such as urban farms and community gardens, make ideal partners as Compost Hub sites. The CBO has access to free compost for their own operations, in addition to distributing to the public.

A Compost Hub may require an MOU agreement between a jurisdiction and CBO if the CBO partner hosts the Compost Hub. An MOU is a legal document that clarifies partner roles and responsibilities. StopWaste is committed as a long-term partner providing start up guidance, public education resources, staff and volunteer trainings, and data collection support.

The goals of a Compost Hub should be co-defined by all partners involved. Distributing free compost to the public to meet jurisdictions procurement targets, supporting communities and residents in building healthy soil, and leveraging education opportunities are the initial goals of a Compost Hub.

3. Partner Roles

Compost Hubs will operate as a partnership between StopWaste, the CBO, and the jurisdiction. The jurisdiction and CBO will arrange a formal agreement, and StopWaste will offer ongoing informal support. The following is a template of basic roles:

1. Community-Based Organization/Site Managers
 - a. Use compost on-site
 - b. Identify and communicate open hours and promote to public
 - c. Post directional signage
 - d. Provide public access
 - e. Manage compost pile and posted materials, as needed
 - f. Coordinate ongoing compost deliveries with jurisdiction
 - g. Agree that all compost is used at the behest of the partner jurisdiction
 - h. Promote Compost Hub
2. Jurisdictions
 - a. Pay for compost and delivery
 - b. Maintain compost invoice records for SB 1383 procurement tracking
 - c. Promote Compost Hub
3. StopWaste
 - a. Help source a quality compost product
 - b. Track public participation using on-site surveys
 - c. Provide educational resources and tools for the Compost Hub and the public
 - d. Provide technical assistance and share learnings and best practices
 - e. Promote the Compost Hub and connect partner organizations
4. All Parties
 - a. Promote the use of reusable containers for collecting compost, including reusable buckets, wagons, and burlap sacks
 - b. Collaborate on compost public education
 - c. Provide ongoing feedback

4. Compost Hub Site FAQ

Compost Hub operations will vary site to site, and partners may decide together what their hub looks like, how often it is open and accessible, where it is sited, how residents will access the hub, and what education and tools are provided to aid residents.

StopWaste will learn from multiple hubs and help share information to guide the development of new hubs.

The following is a list of questions to consider:

- **Where will the compost pile be located at the site?**
 - Is it easily accessible at farm entrances? Is it easily viewed and monitored by on-site staff or volunteers from a distance? Is it in front or behind locked fences?
- **How do you safely store a large pile of compost?**
 - Is there storm water to manage, or a nearby storm drain that needs to be protected? Is the compost pile located away from low-elevation drainage zones of the property? Is the compost pile tarped in order to keep dust from blowing, maintain moisture levels, and keep storm water from entering the pile? Is the pile on a flat surface with adequate drainage? Please reach out to Trevor Probert at tprobert@stopwaste.org for a copy of storm water guidelines.
- **How will residents arrive and leave the site with compost?**
 - Are there clearly marked signs and directions to help folks who arrive? What type of road or pathway access is there to the pile? Are trucks or cars able to pull up to the pile, or is there parking nearby? Will the site provide tools, or should visitors bring their own tools? Can burlap bags be provided on site in case people forget containers from home?
- **How much compost can residents and CBOs take at a time?**
 - Maximum amount? As much as they can transport? Does the partnering jurisdiction need to set an annual limit on how much compost they can provide?
- **Do CBO sites want more vehicles and visitors on their site as a result of the Compost Hub?**
 - Do they have capacity to manage more visitors? How much oversight and maintenance is needed?
- **When should the Compost Hub be open to the public?**
 - How often is the communal compost pile made accessible to residents? Every day, during weekends, during open hours? During closed hours if pile is outside locked fences? Seasonal variation, less access during wet winter months?
- **How is the Compost Hub promoted and announced to folks?**
 - Is there a slow roll out when first starting? What tools do partners have in promoting the hub? Is there agreed upon messaging, such as open hours, directions, and
- **How are ongoing compost orders and deliveries made to continually fill the compost pile?**
 - How much compost should be delivered and stored at a time? Should CBO's indicate to the jurisdiction a compost order is needed, and cooperate on scheduling? Does the jurisdiction establish a purchase order with a vendor, and the CBO orders and schedules the compost delivery using the purchase order?
- **Is there a compost spec, or quality of compost, that the Compost Hub should distribute?**
 - Should OMRI or CDFA organic certified compost be distributed? Is there a minimum quality of nutrition needed? Is there an expectation of acceptable levels of inert contamination? Do jurisdictions have established relationships with compost producers or vendors? *StopWaste can help read and interpret compost lab data sheets.*
- **Does the compost hub want to distribute mulch or other gardening materials?**

- Do CBO's want to store and share cardboard with visitors for sheet mulching? Does the jurisdiction able to provide mulch? Does the site have room for two separate compost and mulch piles?
- **What kind of public education can be provided at the Compost Hubs?**
 - Is supplying collateral and signage enough? Can events at the site promote the hub? Can composting and gardening workshops be located near the hub, inviting attendees to use the hub afterwards? How do the partners collaborate on public education?
- **What data do partners want to gather to support and evaluate the Compost Hub?**
 - What needs to be tracked, and who will do the tracking? Is there a self-service survey that visitors fill out? How will partners decide together how the Compost Hub will be evaluated? For an example set of survey questions, reach out to Trevor Probert at tprobert@stopwaste.org.
- **What liability measurements need to be taken?**
 - Does an MOU need to be agreed upon and signed? Does the CBO partner need a minimum amount of insurance coverage? Do visitors need to fill out a waiver form to visit the site? Do they need to fill out a waiver form to take the compost?

5. Supporting Documents

Please reach out to Trevor Probert at tprobert@stopwaste.org for a copy of the following supporting documents:

- **Model MOU**
 - If a jurisdiction and CBO partner together, an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) may be recommended, especially if the jurisdiction is not the property owner of the site location. Partners may have their own boilerplate language or requirements.
- **On-site Compost Hub Survey**
 - A questionnaire for residents to fill out, every time they visit and take compost from the Compost Hub.
- **Storm Water and Storing Materials Guidelines**
 - A list of storm water requirements to follow when storing a pile of finished compost on-site.