



**DATE:** October 13, 2016

**TO:** Programs & Administration Committee  
Planning & Organization Committee/Recycling Board

**FROM:** Wendy Sommer, Executive Director

**BY:** Rachel Balsley, Senior Program Manager  
Michelle Fay, Program Manager

**SUBJECT:** Business Assistance Program – Fiscal Year 2015-16 Highlights

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## **SUMMARY**

This memo serves to provide a summary of the Business Assistance program and highlights some of the achievements as detailed in the StopWaste Business Assistance Program Fiscal Year 2015-16 Annual Report. A full copy of the report is available at: [2015-16 Annual Report.pdf](#). Staff will also share a brief presentation at the October 13, 2016 Programs & Administration meeting.

## **DISCUSSION**

The StopWaste Business Assistance program (formerly “The StopWaste Partnership”) has provided waste reduction and diversion assistance to Alameda County businesses since 1998. Until 2011, the program primarily served only large businesses. Over the last several years, the Business Assistance program has evolved to address the changing needs of businesses as they seek to comply with ACWMA’s Mandatory Recycling Ordinance 2012-01, effective July 1, 2012. To align with the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance (MRO), the StopWaste Business Assistance program expanded its services to include all businesses covered by the Ordinance, regardless of garbage volume, and as of FY 2014-15 also provides organics collection assistance to multi-family properties. Efforts are focused on building awareness of the ordinance and helping covered accounts comply with the ordinance requirements.

The technical assistance provided is in addition to enforcement-related direct communication and general ordinance outreach through direct mail sent to account holders with new requirements, as well as communications through chambers of commerce, business associations, and other media outlets. In many jurisdictions, assistance is also provided by hauler or member agency staff.

### Overview of Contractors and Services

After a competitive RFP process in spring 2014, Cascadia Consulting Group was contracted to provide technical assistance and implement new or increased recycling and organics services at businesses and multi-family properties located in jurisdictions participating in the MRO.

Businesses are targeted in two primary ways:

1. Through enforcement referrals after official notification or warning letters are issued
2. Upon direct request for assistance submitted through the Ordinance Help Line or website

Participating properties are offered free on-site waste assessments, customized reports with recommended service levels and cost savings estimates, communication with service providers to coordinate new recycling or organics collection service, staff training, and follow-up assistance after new services are implemented. Cascadia business assistance representatives are assigned to specific member agencies to foster continuity within a jurisdiction, knowledge of local rates and services, and maintain relationships with hauler and member agency staff.

#### Technical Assistance Highlights from the Past Year

- In FY 2015-16, the Business Assistance program reached 1,286 businesses and 54 multi-family through direct contact made by the team or in response to requests for assistance submitted to the Agency.
- Of the businesses reached, approximately 739 were provided with at least some level of assistance, ranging from phone or email support to on-site waste assessments, reports and trainings. Not surprisingly, member agencies with new ordinance requirements effective in the last year had higher numbers of businesses requesting and taking the offer of assistance.
- A total of 209 documented services changes were implemented to begin new or expanded recycling and/or organics collection programs at businesses. An increasing number of accounts worked with already have the appropriate services in place, but need support to improve their programs with staff trainings, indoor containers, and/or color-coded signage.
- These service changes resulted in an estimated 10,490 cubic yards or 634 tons of new diversion in FY 2015-16. By volume, 78% of the new diversion was single stream recycling and 22% was from food scraps/organics collection. By weight, however, the new diversion was 71% organics and 29% recycling since organics weigh significantly more than single stream recyclables.
- Of the businesses that were contacted but did not utilize our assistance (574 or 43%), approximately half informed the representative that they initiated compliance measures on their own and/or directly with their service provider as a result of receiving communication about the MRO. The remaining approximately half simply declined assistance or did not respond to the representative's contact attempts.
- Of the 54 multi-family accounts reached, 12 multi-family properties added new organics and/or recycling service. While the reach to multi-family properties was small compared to business assistance efforts, multi-family property managers and owners often receive assistance directly from their service providers.
- Nearly half (48%) of businesses and multi-family complexes that made service changes saw an increase in their garbage bill, 25% realized a cost savings, and 27% had no change in cost. On average, bills were increased by \$66 per year.
- The addition of the use of tablet computers for on-site waste assessments and site visits has improved efficiency of the business assistance representatives.
- The Rethink Disposable program was integrated with StopWaste Business Assistance outreach. Businesses with opportunities to reduce single-use food service ware were identified during

MRO site assessments, and implementation assistance was provided directly by Cascadia staff.

### Free Indoor Food Scrap Bin Program

In addition to technical assistance, the StopWaste Business Assistance project offered free indoor organics collection containers valued up to \$500 per approved business. The Free Indoor Food Scrap Bin Program was implemented in December 2014 and replaced the Business Mini-Grant Program. Typically, haulers provide the outdoor organics collection carts or bins to accounts but it is left up to each business to set up their own internal separation system, including indoor collection bins.

The Free Food Scrap Bin Program was designed to expand the Agency's reach to businesses in need of indoor organics bins. Businesses complete a simple online application at [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/containers](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/containers), and if approved, select green containers from a variety of options from one of three partner vendors. StopWaste covers the cost of the order up to \$500, including taxes and shipping. These containers are often placed in break rooms, work stations, and kitchens to help employees keep food scraps and food-soiled paper separate from garbage.

A total of 374 business sites were approved in FY 2015-16 to receive free indoor organics bins. Of the approved applications, 246 businesses completed the process and ordered equipment valued at approximately \$90,000 for FY 2015-16 with an average order amount of \$366 per business. Business assistance representatives reported that the program was an efficient way for them to connect with willing candidates for organics program set-up assistance, as well as for businesses to more comprehensively set up their indoor collection infrastructure.

### Looking Ahead

The FY 2016-17 Business Assistance project incorporates an increased focus on delivering quality customer service, reducing the response time between technical assistance activities to move properties through the process more efficiently, and improving the quality of participation in waste diversion programs. With thousands of Administrative Official Notifications planned to be mailed to businesses in FY 2016-17, in addition to a continued level of enforcement inspections, the Business Assistance team anticipates an increased number of direct requests for assistance.

The Free Indoor Food Scrap Bin Program is expected to see a significant increase in participation over the next year as organics requirements become effective in more cities and multi-family properties begin to utilize the assistance. New for 2016-17, the program is offered to multi-family property managers and owners to purchase containers in common areas such as lobbies and chute rooms, or to purchase in-unit kitchen pails if unavailable from their city or service provider. In the first quarter of 2016-17 alone, 312 business and multi-family sites were approved for free bins.

Emphasis will be placed on reaching more multi-family properties, particularly large multi-family property management companies with multiple sites that could use organics set-up assistance.

An RFP process is scheduled for spring 2017 to solicit proposals for consulting services for the Business Assistance project. The project team generally conducts an RFP process for business assistance services every three years.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This report is for information only.