

Best Practices

There are many ways to approach instituting a book recycling program and it depends on whether or not an infrastructure already exists in which to add this waste to other materials being recovered. From the many people we spoke with about how their educational institution implements book recycling, we have gathered some best practices that appear to work well for different educational institutions and/or groups. We offer these as examples of what could be put into place to achieve high-quality results.

Best Practices Methodology



Education



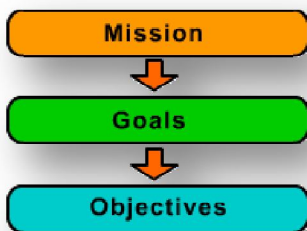
The key step in the development of any recycling program is the education of all the potential participants. Educational institutions interested in establishing a book recycling program need to educate not only the students, faculty, book stores, libraries, community neighbors, building and facilities staff, but the team that is organizing these efforts must be educated about setting achievable goals and implementing successful processes.

Some suggested best practices to ensure that the staff, program team, students, and interested parties are educated about the recycling process include:

Best Practices for Education:

- ▲ Assign or elect a point person for the book recycling program
- ▲ Work with your school's facility manager or school district's operational manager to find out what materials are currently being recycled at the school, and which company or companies handles the waste hauling and/or recycling
- ▲ Investigate whether or not the current waste hauler/recycler can accept hardcover and/or soft-cover books in the waste stream
- ▲ If the current waste hauler/recycler cannot accept books in their waste stream, review [NWF's online resources](#) to find other companies that can assist you
- ▲ Contact the local municipal recycling facility and request a meeting to discuss options for recycling books
- ▲ Contact your town/municipality's recycling coordinator to see if there is an opportunity to expand this event throughout the community

Mission, Goals, and Objectives



It is critical to the success of a book recycling program to have an established mission with specific goals and objectives. What do you hope to achieve? How will you reach your goals? Who will be part of the process? How will you measure your success? These are all important components to having a successful book recycling program.

Some suggested best practices to help you with this are included below:

Best Practices for Establishing Mission, Goals, and Objectives:

- ▲ As a team, establish a mission statement for the program, i.e., "Our goal is to recycle all textbooks that have reached the end of their useful life and can no longer be used"
 - ▲ As a team, establish strategic goals, i.e., "Our goal is to recycle X pounds of textbooks in year 1, X pounds of textbooks in year 2, to engage 50 percent of the faculty and student population in the effort," etc.
 - ▲ As a team, establish objectives that will help you to reach your goal. These can be objectives for partnerships, communication, education, implementation and evaluation
 - ▲ Communicate your goals and objectives to school administration and faculty and facilities/operations staff as well as interested community partners and students
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Communication



As with any project or program, communication is a key essential for the project's success. Sharing information on the project with peers, like-minded organizations, partners, and participants is critical to ensuring that everyone has common and shared goals, and works together to achieve those goals.

Some suggested best practices to enhance communication are listed below:

Best Practices for Communication:

- ▲ Set communication benchmarks and goals
- ▲ Create distribution and communication strategy plans
- ▲ Reach out to other book generators in the community (e.g., K-12 schools, libraries, universities) to coordinate events to achieve economies of scale needed for more cost-effective recycling of books
- ▲ Create and distribute flyers and/or other informational materials about the event
- ▲ Create updates and notices for online websites about the project and upcoming recycling events
- ▲ Involve each of the schools in the region in the communication and planning processes
- ▲ Involve local media with the event

Planning Process



The success of your book recycling program hinges on proper planning, communication, and implementation. For planning purposes, it helps to identify key stakeholders as well as the actions that each of them will contribute to the program. As Dwight Eisenhower put it, "The plan is nothing. The planning is everything."

Some best practices for establishing a planning process include:

Best Practices for Implementing a Planning Process:

- ▲ Remember that the hard part is not writing a plan. The hard part is doing the planning – thinking, negotiating, balancing, asking, listening, and thinking some more.
- ▲ A useful plan is much more than just a schedule or task list. It also includes:
 - Team roles and responsibilities
 - How you will recruit and train team members
 - Assumptions, dependencies, and risks
 - Establishing target dates for major deliverables
 - Identifying the “life cycle” of the project
 - How you will track and monitor the project
 - Metrics that you will collect and analyze
 - How you will manage any external and internal relationships
 - Project funding mechanisms

Facilitation



Someone has to facilitate the project to ensure that no stone goes unturned. The key point person would generally have that responsibility, but it can also be shared among the team members. The facilitation portion of the program ensures that communication lines are open, that expectations from each of the partners and team members are assigned and acknowledged, and that all the tasks flow into one another smoothly.

Some facilitation best practices include:

Best Practices for Facilitation:

- ▲ Work with team members to plan the process
 - ▲ Ensure that all participants know the objectives and the intended outcomes
 - ▲ Develop a common direction
 - ▲ Manage the time properly for the project in order to achieve the objectives
 - ▲ Guide the team’s discussion, and ensure that points are understood by all members
 - ▲ Ensure that program content (education, communication, etc.) is applicable and of high quality
 - ▲ Manage the participation, energy, and group dynamics
 - ▲ Actively listen
 - ▲ Capture information in a comprehensive and organized manner
 - ▲ Provide expertise. If you don’t know the answer, find someone who does
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Implementation



Implementing a book recycling program is where the “rubber hits the road.” This is where the efforts you’ve expended through the education, communication, planning, and facilitation processes bear fruit. This is also where you need to have the best handle on program logistics and partner relationships.

Don’t be afraid to ask for help – there are many people and organizations that can help you to succeed.

Here are some suggested best practices for implementation:

Best Practices for Implementation:

- ▲ Use existing recycling company with whom the school or organization already works, if possible
 - ▲ Contact the recycler to see if they can pick-up and process books for recycling. If not, research other recycling companies in the community that accept books or online at www.nwf.org or www.Earth911.com
 - ▲ Understand the economics involved in a recycling program – and the factors that can either make a program economically feasible or not. These economic factors can include transportation costs, processing materials (i.e., Gaylord pallets and/or cartons), staffing costs, market value/price of recovered fiber, etc.
 - ▲ Ensure that notices have gone out to school faculty, administration, students, parents, and community members about the event well in advance, and again the week before the event
 - ▲ Set out bins in heavily trafficked areas of the school or in a common area that has been agreed upon beforehand
 - ▲ Ensure proper signage is in place for the event
 - ▲ Ensure that the drop off location is staffed by team members or volunteers
 - ▲ Prepare your books for pick-up: use Gaylord boxes, if possible, and use shrink wrap to secure each package. This ensures containment of the material and also the safety of the workers
 - ▲ Send pictures of the current state of your books boxes and packing to the recycler before pick-up to ensure that everything is packaged appropriately for pick-up day.
 - ▲ Have the recycling company weigh the books so that you know how much has been recycled
 - ▲ If payment is involved, ensure that everything from pick-up to weighing to recycling is documented
 - ▲ Document and photograph the process so that you have a record of your achievement
 - ▲ Don’t forget to thank everyone involved in the process and remind that this will be an annual event
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Evaluation



The project isn't over until you evaluate your progress against the goals and objectives you set out at the beginning. Evaluation includes assessing the planning and implementation processes, gathering the data, and reporting the results.

Here are some best practices that can help you with evaluation:

Best Practices for Evaluation:

- ▲ The purpose of evaluation is not only to gather metrics that measure the effectiveness of the project; it is also helpful to pinpointing areas that worked particularly well and those that did not
- ▲ Review the entire process from planning through implementation with your team
- ▲ Record information regarding what worked and what didn't as well as what might have worked better
- ▲ Gather data on the resources that you used, i.e., man hours, number of people engaged in the process, number of Gaylords, boxes, and pallets that you used, etc.
- ▲ Gather data on performance of partners – the recycling company, the staff and faculty, the community, the students, etc. How many participated? How was their performance? Did they meet expectations?
- ▲ Gather financial data associated with the project – both expense and revenue
- ▲ Prepare a report for administration on the success of the project. Identify what could be done to make the project even more successful for future years
- ▲ Communicate the results of the collection event back to the students and faculty, including how many books (or pounds of books) were collected and recycled.
- ▲ Include in the final report recommendations for future book collection events, i.e., making this an annual or semi-annual event.
- ▲ Celebrate your successes

This might help you to keep the entire process in perspective – it takes vision to implement a program, it takes strategies, goals and tactics to make it happen, and it takes metrics to measure success.



Appendices

Appendix	Focus/Subject
A	National Resources
B	State Resources
