



# COMPANIES & PARTNERSHIPS

## 1. Local Infrastructure

As a student, it can be difficult to navigate the company partnerships and agreements that exist on campus. Reach out to your administration, Facilities Management, or the campus Procurement Department to learn what contracts exist and how these agreements can be aligned with sustainability initiatives.

### Expand...

Look into the services offered by recycling companies that your institution is already contracted with. If they collect plastic film and Styrofoam™ but your campus is only contracted for normal recycling pickups, advocate for the contracts to be expanded for hard-to-recycle materials.

### Research...

Research local Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in your area to determine potential partnerships. A good search engine resource is the [Earth 911 database](#).

### Leverage...

Specific state's laws and regulations will vary on what materials are included in mandated recycling. In many states, it is illegal to throw e-waste into a landfill waste stream. Use existing legislation as a founding argument for expanded recycling programs on campus.

*For a detailed list of e-waste disposal legislation by state, see the [Electronic Takeback Coalition website](#), or the [US EPA eCycling page](#).*

## 2. Understanding Your Campus Infrastructure: In-House vs. Contracted

Two approaches schools can take to bring recycled materials back to recovery facilities for processing, refurbishment, and re-entry into the market, are in-house pickups and contracted collections.

**In-House Pickups:** Facilities on campus take care of the recycling program logistics and drive the materials to the recyclers or intermediary facilities.

**Contracted Collections:** Companies provide their own bins, transportation, insurance, etc. at a steady rate for all scheduled collections and pickups.

Regardless, of the system that your campus already has in place, your program will face costs for equipment repair, labor and training, transportation and fuel. It is possible for your campus to utilize a mixture of the two approaches as shown on the chart on the next page.



## Benefits

## Challenges

### In-House Pickup

- In-house staff is generally more flexible and can provide special collection services without additional fees.
- Space can be designated for contaminated materials to be sorted out.
- Freedom to choose bin design for collections.
- Ability to post signage/advertisements for outreach.
- Able to address customer service and other performance issues with in-house staff.

- Program may require certain permits and/or licenses to legally operate on campus and within the community.
- Requires strong coordination efforts throughout campus.

### Outside Contractor

- Contracted company has capacity to run the entire program, from supplying containers to pick up and maintenance.
- Campus can share in the revenue while saving money on landfill dumping costs.
- As specialists, contracted companies are able to provide expertise that in-house crew may not possess.
- Pre-set fees and pricing make costs more predictable than in-house collection.
- Contractors can provide backup services for any in-house collection operations.

- Contracted vendors must charge enough for their operations to sustain a decent profit margin.
- Outsourcing collection can oftentimes remove opportunities for students and staff to become involved and learn about your program.
- May be difficult to verify whether your recycler handles material in an environmentally and socially responsible fashion.

### Combination of In-House and Contracted

- Campus can maximize special collections with in house staff who have knowledge of the space.
- Contracted vendors can more effectively provide specialized services or equipment for special collection needs.

- Need to establish continuous communication and coordination between the contracted company and campus operations.

## 3. Negotiating Contracts

When choosing between in-house and external contracted recycling, your campus will have to take into account **fee appropriation**. State-allocated budgets and other campus funds designated for waste management may not be adequate to cover the cost of pick-ups and tipping fees for expanded recycling operations. Thus, your campus might have to apply fees for expanded operations **annually and collectively** (i.e. once a semester to all students and staff) or **individually** (i.e. to the individuals who recycle their goods). Relying only on students and staff for funding can be a disincentive. Pursuing grants and other award-type funding can be a feasible alternative. The hope is that your project is eventually able to leverage support from administrators who may be able to offer more stable sources of funding. In the meantime, see our “Fundraising Guide” in your Google Drive folder for tips on more immediate funding sources and advice.

It is helpful to know where the company you are partnered with conducts the actual recycling of the materials that they collect. This is a controversial issue for hard-to-recycle materials, especially in regards to e-waste (see pg. 29 in the "E-Waste" chapter). For example, there are recycling companies that are e-Stewards certified, but will only refurbish or resell specific products (see the “Finding the Right Company” section on pg. 53). Products that they do not accept may be sold by the company to another recycler. Thus, there is value in your campus partnering with specialized recyclers in addition to larger contracts.

# Questions to keep in mind:

Generally, you'll want to ensure that the company you contract to collect hard-to-recycle materials can satisfy the waste disposal needs of all stakeholders on your campus. Attributes to look for are reliability and flexibility of service, cost competitiveness, aesthetics of collection sites, transparency of operations, and adequate communication and collaboration with program coordinators on campus. In mapping out exactly what your campus is looking for from a contracting bid, be sure to address the following. Remember, different questions will be important for different campuses, work with your Campus Coordinator and on campus stakeholders to decide what is important for your campus.

- What types of materials can be collected?
- How are materials collected?
- Are there minimum weights required for a pickup?
- How is the charge fixed (per haul, by volume, or is there a standard fee)?
- Is a contract required for service? What are the contract terms and duration?
- Can the campus earn revenue for high-grade paper, container recycling, or aggregations of other materials?
- Can records be provided on the amount of material collected for recycling?
- Do fees reflect the ratio of trash to recycling produced?
- Is collection regularly scheduled or on-call?
- Are collection and storage bins provided? How many? How big are they? Is there a rental fee?
- How is contamination defined? How is contamination handled? How much contamination is allowed for a pickup to be accepted?
- Are confidential materials destruction services offered (e.g. computer hard drive wiping)?
- Is help provided to organize and promote the program to staff and students?

## 4. Finding the Right Company

Finding companies in your area can be simple. We mention Earth 911 in our “Collection & Aggregation” chapter as a great recycling search engine resource. A representative from your Sustainability Department or Facilities Management will know of the local companies that the campus already has relationships for waste management purposes. Ensuring that a company carries out environmentally and socially responsible operations requires more attention to detail.

### Ethical Partnerships

In choosing who to send your hard-to-recycle materials to, it is important to keep in mind the waste hierarchy, and seek out companies that prioritize reuse and refurbishment over recycling. A relatively simple way to discern how ethical a company’s operations are is through national certifications. While many hard-to-recycle materials do not yet have a certification process, e-waste is more regulated by national governments and transnational organizations.

### Certifications

#### e-Stewards

Created by the Basel Action Network, this initiative is an electronics waste recycling standard that attempts to bring transparency to the e-waste recycling process. The program and the organization that created it grew out of the concern that electronic waste generated in countries where wealth is concentrated was being dismantled by underage workers in economically peripheral countries, along with cases of inadequate safety conditions that exposes workers to health hazards.

#### Responsible Recycling (R2)

Discussed on page 29, this is another e-waste certification standard recognized by the US federal government. R2 certification ensures data destruction practices and oversight of occupational health and safety. It is more flexible on the exportation of hazardous waste.

#### Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certification

LEED functions on a point system that rates stewardship of resources for building renovation and construction. Credit is awarded for maintaining up to 95% of an original structure, or reusing at least 10% of materials in the construction process. LEED certification can easily be attained through the mere location of a building, and does not take into account the life cycle of the building after its use.<sup>20</sup>

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Living  
Building  
Challenge  
(LBC)

LBC certification is more concerned with the life cycle of a building, and has more stringent requirements than LEED. All projects are obligated to “feature at least one salvaged material per 500 square meters of gross building area or be an adaptive reuse of an existing structure.” Another requirement is a comprehensive plan that optimizes resources from the design phase and construction, to operations and the end of the building’s life.<sup>21</sup>

## Questions to Answer When Looking at Companies’ Operations

What is their **mission**?

Do they **reuse** or **recycle** the collected material?

If they recycle or upcycle, what is the **end product**?

If they recycle, **can items be reprocessed** once their lifecycle ends?

For **profit** or **non-profit**? Or for profit to fund non-profit (ie. Goodwill)?

**Who** works for the company?

**Who** do they sell their product to?

**Do they process the material** they collect or do they act as an intermediary?

Do they **export** the material that they collect?  
If yes, to where and to whom?