

North Shore Recycling Program Compost Coaching

District of North Vancouver, City of North Vancouver &
District of West Vancouver in Metro Vancouver, BC



Population: 180,292¹
Land Area: 259.84 km²²
Population Density: 714.3 persons/km²
Median Age: 44.4
Housing Mix – SF/MF – 65:35
Single-Family Households: 45,840
Average persons per household: 2.5
2012 per capita disposal rate:
for the three municipalities, per capita disposal was
198 kg/capita/year (496 kg/household/year) for
residential waste only

Program Highlights / Summary³

The North Shore Recycling Program (NSRP) focuses on waste reduction, recycling and composting for three municipalities along the North Shore in Vancouver. The Compost Coaching program was started in 2007 to reduce organics in the waste stream.

A pilot program was conducted in 2008–2009 with full implementation in 2011–2013. The program addresses the Metro Vancouver goal of 70% diversion by 2015.



Compost Coaching is an outreach program that focuses on helping residents compost in their own backyards. The program looked at how much material was composted before and after the training, as well as how much waste was produced per household. Using a Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) approach, in the first year 156 local residents learned how to improve their composting skills through hands on coaching at their residences. This coaching resulted in an additional 36 kg/capita/year of organic material composted on site for households that were already composting and 190 kg/capita/year for households that had not composted before. Households that participated in the program improved their composting skills, produced higher quality compost in a shorter time and reduced hazard from bears and pests.

¹ BC Stats 2013 population
(<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Demography/PopulationEstimates.aspx>)

² Stats Can Census 2011

³ Note that figures have been change from per-household to per-capita using the average of 2.5 persons per household.

Organics Case Study 2: Waste Reduction

The Program cost \$18,000 for the first 5 months including set up, staff, training, advertising etc.; after that, annual promotion cost was \$3,000; coaching at 2 hours per visit (including the preparation, administration, travel time, site visit and follow-up) was \$32 per visit with a target of 500 visits per year. The NSRP anticipates a payback period of 2-5 years, based on avoided hauling costs and tipping fees.

A pilot program was conducted before full roll out to help ensure a successful program, gather data and understand the reasons residents are not currently optimizing backyard composting. The program showed that waste reduction is greatest in communities without any organics collection. Initiating Compost Coaching is valuable in any community to promote backyard composting, increase composting efficiency and reduce organics in the waste stream.

Program Details

Collection

Not applicable

Processing

This program focuses on helping residents compost in their own backyards.



Promotion / Education / Behaviour Change

The pilot program looked at how much material people composted before and after the training, as well as how much waste they produced per household. This included 25 families weighing all their organics for a year. After conducting surveys, waste audits and literature reviews, the outreach programs were developed. Literature showed that personalized, repeated messaging with a real person to assist increased bin usage and long-term success. Key motivators were word-of-mouth and peer examples.

Compost Coaching is offered free to residents, removing any financial barriers to resident participation. A poster advertising the Compost Coaching program was put up in community centres and garden centres and ads were placed in the local newspaper. In addition to providing information about composting, the program's weblink connected to an online booking page to arrange home visits. Stickers advertising the program were placed on every composter sold by the municipalities. Appointments could be booked on line or by phone. After booking, a confirmation email was sent to confirm the time and date of the meeting, the name of the coach and what would be covered in the coaching session. Residents were also encouraged to invite their friends and neighbours to the session. A reminder email was sent a few days before the session and the coach would also phone the residents to ask a few questions prior to the meeting. If picking up a compost bin was identified as a barrier, the coach would bring a bin to the session.

Intended to be fun, informal and based on the residents needs, the coach bases the conversation on the participants' questions, level of knowledge and condition of their compost bin. The 30-45 minute session covers basic composting principles as well as provides tips for coexisting with bears. At the end of the session, participants get a *Pass It On* card to encourage them to tell others about the program. The coach makes thank you calls a few days after the session and a follow up calls in six to eight weeks to check on progress. For the first five months, there were 118 households participating (156 residents + 23 guests).

Organics Case Study 2: Waste Reduction

Supporting Policies and Regulations

Each of the three municipalities supports backyard composting through subsidized compost bin and aerating tool sales. The Metro Vancouver goal of 70% diversion by 2015 supported the need to increase diversion.

Supporting Systems and Programs

NSRP worked closely with North Shore Black Bear Society to develop messages that encouraged waste reduction and reduced human-bear conflict. The partnership with Edible Garden Project and Lynn Canyon Ecology Centre for the Garden Smart program provided a way to increase promotion of the sessions.

Program Results

Financial Data

Capital Costs

None (minor adjustments to online booking system).

Operating Costs

\$18,000 for first 5 months including set up, staff, training, advertising poster, stickers, cards, printing, mileage, safety service and newspaper ads; after that, annual promotion cost \$3,000; coaching at 2 hours per visit (includes the preparation, administration, travel time, site visit and follow-up) was \$32 per visit.

Staffing Implications

0.3 FTE to manage the program; compost coaches hired as needed for 2 hours per visit; target 500 visits/year.

Cost Recovery

2-5 years based on amount of tipping fees saved from reduced curbside collection requirements.

Environmental

Reduction and Diversion

The program resulted in a reduction of 450 kg/household of organics for households that had not been composting and 90 kg/household for households that had already been composting without training.

The program also noted a side benefit of reducing total waste generation (waste/recyclables/organics) from 1428 kg/household/year to 1171 kg/household/year; a reduction of 257 kg/household/year (107 kg/capita).

Total tonnes – 30 tonnes in first 5 months, an 18% reduction in disposal.

Disposal Impact / Landfill Space Savings

Waste disposed decreased from 198 kg/capita/year to 90 kg/capita/year for participating households. Yard trimmings set out for collection decreased from 117 kg/capita/year to 86 kg/capita/year reaching a 68% diversion. (Waste disposed decreased from 496 kg/year to 225 kg/year per participating household and yard trimmings decreased from 293 kg/household/year to 216 kg, reaching 68% diversion.)

GHG reduction – 17-26 tonnes for first 5 months (CO₂e).



Organics Case Study 2: Waste Reduction

Social

Political Acceptability and Community / User Acceptability

Households receiving training improved their composting skills, produced higher quality compost in a shorter time and reduced hazard from bears or pests. The program created compost champions within the community. The program reached an average of 1.5 people/visit as friends and neighbours attended. In addition to creating compost champions, the program created champions for waste reduction with people so excited about their progress that they would email pictures of their family's weekly waste.

Community Economic Development

Jobs were created within the NSRP but that was not the focus of the program.

Lessons Learned

- Running a pilot program before full roll out is beneficial to learn lessons, tweak the program gather data and understand the reasons residents are not currently optimizing backyard composting.
- Waste reduction is greatest in communities without any curbside food scraps collection; the benefit would be even greater in communities with no organics collection (such as yard waste) at all.
- Existing databases might need to be altered to ensure compatibility with program objectives and to accommodate on line booking services.
- In order to get the needed support from the engineering department, it was necessary to provide a cost-benefit analysis of the program including data for waste collection and diversion.
- Program success includes the enthusiasm of the participants and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing which is very hard to quantify.

Communities with Similar Programs

None reported.

Program Contact

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