

## **United States submission in response to Basel Secretariat's call for information for good practices and examples with regard to waste prevention and minimization**

The United States is sharing information of its successful voluntary partnerships, and pay-as-you throw programs to incentivize waste prevention and minimization. Additionally, the United States has included information on the USEPA Business Guide for Reducing Solid Waste to help organizations develop waste reduction programs.

### Voluntary partnerships

Voluntary partnerships encourage organizations to reduce the amount of waste they generate by offering technical assistance and public recognition for waste prevention and minimization efforts. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) established a voluntary partnership program, WasteWise, to help organizations reduce waste through a broad range of approaches. Through the program, USEPA provides technical assistance to help participating organizations conduct waste assessments, identify ways to reduce waste (through prevention, recycling and composting, and buying recycled-content products), educate employees, and collect data to track and measure progress on waste reduction activities. USEPA also recognizes organizations that demonstrate high-achieving waste prevention and reduction activities through annual national awards.

WasteWise currently has nearly 1,300 active participants representing over 50 sectors that commit to reduce and recycle municipal solid waste and select industrial and commercial wastes. Partner organizations include large corporations, small and medium-sized businesses, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, state and local governments, tribes, and other institutions.

Since USEPA launched the program in 1994, participants in WasteWise have recycled, composted, and reduced more than 200 million tons of solid waste. In 2016, participants reported preventing and diverting 8.5 million tons of waste from landfills or incinerators, recovered more than \$290 million in materials, and avoided more than \$400 million in landfill fees.

More information about WasteWise is available on USEPA's website at:

<https://www.epa.gov/smm/wastewise>

### Pay-as-you throw programs

Unit pricing, or pay-as-you-throw (PAYT), is a system where residents pay for waste management based on each unit of waste they dispose of rather than through a fixed fee. U.S. communities with unit pricing on waste disposal realized a number of benefits, including:

- Waste reduction. Unit pricing incentivizes individual households to generate less waste for disposal to reduce their fees. Communities with unit pricing programs have reported up to 45 percent reductions of waste shipped to disposal facilities.
- Reduced waste disposal costs. Communities find their overall municipal solid waste management costs decline with a reduction in waste for disposal. However,

communities note revenues previously spent on waste disposal may be re-directed to recycling, composting, or other diversion activities.

- Increased waste prevention. To take advantage of the savings in a unit pricing system, residents modify their purchasing and consumption patterns to reduce the amount of waste for disposal. These behavioral changes have beneficial environmental effects beyond reduced waste generation, including reduced energy usage, materials conservation, increased composting and recycling programs. Recycling and yard waste composting programs present opportunities for residents to divert waste away from paid disposal. Recycling and composting complement unit pricing by increasing diversion by up to 13 percent by weight.
- Support of the waste management hierarchy. Unit pricing supports the waste management hierarchy by creating an incentive to reduce waste first through source reduction and then through recycling and composting remaining waste.
- Equitable waste management fee structure. Under unit pricing, waste removal charges are based on the level of service the municipality provides to the individual for collection and disposal of the waste. Unit pricing for waste is the similar to the fee system for gas and electricity based on the amount of use. Customers have more control over the amount of money they pay for waste management, as compared to traditional waste management fees where residents who generate a small amount of waste subsidize those who generate a greater amount.
- Increased understanding of waste impact on the environment. Through unit pricing, individuals come to associate more waste generation with a negative impact on the environment as demonstrated by greater fees. Traditional waste management systems with a single fee obscure the economic and environmental costs associated with waste generation and disposal.

USEPA's guide on establishing a pay-as-you-throw program describes how to design a unit pricing program tailored to local needs including benefits, common challenges, and lessons learned from previous programs. The guide and toolkit to establishing a PAYT program is available at: <https://archive.epa.gov/wastes/conserve/tools/payt/web/pdf/payasyou.pdf> and <https://archive.epa.gov/wastes/conserve/tools/payt/web/html/toolkit.html>.

#### USEPA Business Guide for Reducing Solid Waste

USEPA developed a Business Guide for Reducing Solid Waste (EPA/530-K-92-004) to assist organizations in establishing a successful program. The Guide offers instructions designed to assist medium and large businesses, governments, and other organizations develop and implement a waste reduction program. The guide presents an overview of a waste reduction program including a series of worksheets to help conduct a waste assessment and design a program tailored for a company's specific goals. The guide is available online at <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi/10000ME4.PDF?Dockkey=10000ME4.PDF>.