

# Recycling Education & Outreach Toolkit



FeedTheCart.org



# Overview



## Table of Contents

• Overview	2
• Illinois recycling guidelines	4
• Recycling benefits	6
• Recycling myth-busters	7
• Communication recommendations	8
• Event materials & educational activities	10
• Using Feed The Cart resources	14
• QR code flyer	15

## Top Considerations

When it comes to educating the public on curbside recycling, keep these three tips in mind.

1

**Use regional guidelines**

2

**Positive messaging is key**

3

**Keep it simple**

[Download a printable toolkit here.](#)

# Overview



## Toolkit Purpose

**Feed The Cart** is a regional campaign aiming to educate Chicagoland residents on proper curbside recycling and the important role it has. To establish and reinforce residents' confidence and recycling knowledge, **Feed The Cart** uses simple, streamlined information and positive messaging.

This toolkit was designed for use by local governments and environmental commissions. It will aid outreach efforts with best practices for:

1. **Sharing regional recycling guidelines**
2. **Communicating the importance of recycling**
3. **Engaging residents at events**
4. **Customizing communication to residents**
5. **Utilizing materials supplied through Feed The Cart**

**Feed The Cart** was developed in partnership with DuPage, Kane, McHenry, and Will Counties, as well as the Solid Waste Agency of Lake County, the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County and the City of Chicago. All agencies work closely with recyclers in their area to provide the most up-to-date and accurate information on recyclable materials. The collaborative nature of the campaign aims to cultivate residents' relationship with these credible sources and their own community.

# RECYCLING GUIDELINES

## YES!



### METAL

Steel & Aluminum Containers and Foil



### PAPER

Cardboard (flattened),  
Office Paper, Newspaper, Magazines

**Clean & Empty**

Replace lids & caps

**Put material in loose  
- Not in bags**



### GLASS

Containers: Bottles & Jars Only



### PLASTIC

Containers: Bottles, Tubs, Jugs,  
and Jars Only



### CARTONS

# NO!



**No Plastic Bags**  
**No Plastic Wrap**  
(return clean to retailer)



**No Big Items** (Electronics, Wood,  
Propane Tanks, Scrap Metal or Styrofoam-  
check local authority for other options)



**No Tanglers** (Hangers, Hoses,  
Wire, Cords, Ropes or Chains)



**No Clothing**  
Textiles or Shoes (donate)



**No Food, Liquid, Diapers,  
Batteries or Needles**



**No Shredded Paper**  
(check with local  
authority for other  
recycling options)

These guidelines represent the common items accepted in most recycling programs in Illinois. For greater detail on specific items or programmatic variations, reach out to your local authority.

To find out more details, including local resources, visit [FeedTheCart.org](http://FeedTheCart.org).

This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement 84079901 to Metropolitan Mayors Caucus.



[FeedTheCart.org](http://FeedTheCart.org)



# DIRECTRICES PARA EL RECICLAJE



## METAL

Envases de acero/aluminio y papel de aluminio



## PAPEL

Cartón (aplanado), papel de oficina, periódico, revistas



## VIDRIO

Botellas y frascos solamente



## PLÁSTICO

Botellas, jarras, y recipientes de plástico solamente

# ¡Sí!

## Limpios y vacíos

DEJE LAS TAPADERAS PUESTAS



## ENVASES DE CARTÓN PARA ALIMENTOS Y BEBIDAS

# ¡NO!



**No coloque los reciclables en bolsas**



### No papel triturado

(Consulte con las autoridades locales para conocer otras opciones de reciclaje)



### No a los artículos que se enredan

(Ganchos, mangueras, alambres, cordones, cuerdas y cadenas)



### No artículos grandes

(Electrónicos, madera, tanques de propano, deshecho metálico, o unicel)



**No comida, líquidos, pañales, baterías ni agujas/jeringas**



**No artículos de ropa, textiles ni zapatos (donar)**

Estas directrices presentan los artículos comunes que se aceptan en la mayoría de los programas de reciclaje en Illinois. Para obtener más detalles sobre artículos específicos o variaciones en los programas, comuníquese con su autoridad local.

Para obtener más información, incluidos recursos locales, visite [FeedTheCart.org](http://FeedTheCart.org).

Este proyecto ha sido financiado total o parcialmente por la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de los Estados Unidos (EPA) mediante el acuerdo de asistencia número 84079901 con el Metropolitan Mayors Caucus.



FeedTheCart.org

# Recycling Benefits



## Greater benefits

- Conserves natural resources
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions
- Saves energy
- Creates jobs and boosts economy
- Decreases landfill contribution

## Feeding the Loop

Recycling materials reduces the amount of natural resources needed to produce new items. Sharing the 'why' behind the action of recycling is an important step for behavior change.



FeedTheCart.org

# Recycling Mythbusters



**Myth:** **“All plastic with the chasing arrows is recyclable.”**

**FACT:** The chasing arrows we associate with recycling actually only tell us what *type* of plastic the item is made from. It does not always mean the item is recyclable. Instead of using the arrows as an indicator, remember the basics: aluminum cans, plastic tubs, jugs, and bottles, glass bottles, paper and flattened cardboard.

**Myth:** **“Bagging my recyclables keeps them from blowing away- it’s helpful!”**

**FACT:** Plastic bags jam up the machines that sort our recyclables. Workers have to cut these bags and other tanglers out of the machine, which is dangerous. Any bagged recycling ends up in the landfill. Leave items loose in recycling carts to help!

**Myth:** **“I’ve heard only 9% of plastics are actually recycled.”**

**FACT:** The article with this statistic has mislead many. The statistic considers ALL plastic- including plastics which are not eligible to be recycled. This includes tables, plastic encasing technology, playsets, and so on. Recycling rates in our region are actually at 20% and are increasing with your help.

# Communication Recommendations



## Igniting Behavior Change

The information we share is as important as the methods we use to communicate it. Igniting behavior change depends on effective communication.

Think about the most effective form of teaching you've experienced. What helped you retain the information?

Oftentimes, getting information to stick involves a variety of teaching and communication methods.



## Methods

- Utilize your storytelling skills.** It is easier for people to recall a story and how it made them feel than it is to recall a list of rules. Find a way to share the importance of recycling through a story!
- Craft the information to the audience.** Know who your audience is and possible motives for making a change. Try to connect the information to their daily lives.
- Invite participation!** Ask your audience questions and give them an opportunity to put their understanding into their own words. Engage them with activities.
- Engage multiple senses.** Science shows that learning using more than one of our senses assists in stronger memory recall. Create stronger learning pathways with sight, sound, and touch!



[FeedTheCart.org](http://FeedTheCart.org)

# Communication Recommendations



## Storytelling 101

- Use strong visuals
- Keep it short
- Include a call to action

## Examples of stories highlighting the impact of recycling

- **The impact of one bottle, one person, and one action**
  - Hold up a bottle, glass or plastic, and have the audience imagine each of them is holding their own. Now have them imagine they all throw this bottle directly into the landfill and visualize how large the pile of bottles is. What if every person in their school or their town did the same? How much bigger would this pile be? This is what can happen when we don't think our individual actions matter. Encourage the audience to believe in the power of individual action!
- **Recycling made a difference in WWII** 
  - Click the link above to read about one student encouraging her peers, and the Queen of England, to 'help and not look on'
  - A great story to retell to school children! It emphasizes the greater role of recycling, an attitude of frugality, and the impact collective action can make.
- **The lifecycle of the pop can** 
  - Describe the lifecycle of an aluminum can! How many people interact with this can? Share how it goes from the consumer, to the truck driver, to the recycling facility, to the mill, to the manufacturer making a new can, and back to the store- all before it comes back into the hands of the consumers.  
*Sometimes in as little as 60 days!* This story shares the amount of people engaged in recycling and the jobs it creates. Quick facts also grab the audience's attention.

# Event Materials & Activities

**Tip! Utilize freebies made from recycled content**

## Suggested Event Materials (Tabling)

- Laminated flyers with local information (QR codes & URLs)
  - We recommend laminating flyers for you to reuse as they are more durable. Audience members can take pictures of flyers or scan QR codes on the flyer.
  - Note: laminated paper **cannot** be recycled.
- Recycling guideline flyers
- 1-2 activities to engage the audience
- Re-use friendly handouts
  - When it comes to swag or handouts, consider if the items are contributing to further education or unintentionally creating more waste.
  - We recommend passing out activity sheets, items made from recycled material, or materials with recycling guidelines attached.

Free resources can be found on the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus' [REO webpage](#) under 'Municipal Resources'. Scan this QR code to find downloadable materials!



# Event Materials & Activities



## Recycling Activity Ideas

- **Recycling wheel**
  - A tabletop wheel spinner can be used to test the audience on what can and cannot be recycled curbside. Consider using a digital spinner if you don't have access or space for a tabletop wheel.
- **Sorting games**
  - Use real materials or print off pictures! Have a 'bin' for recycling, landfill, compost, and a bin for reuse! The audience can physically sort the items into the correct bins. Check out an easy and portable example [here](#).
- **Post consumer recycled products matching game**
  - Want to focus your education on the entire recycling process? Print off pictures of recyclables and pictures of materials made from recycled products. Have the audience match what was to what can be!
- **Upcycling activities**
  - Get crafty! Find items that cannot be recycled- metallic paper or anything with glitter, plastic cup lids, or plastic bags- and turn them into something new. It's a great way to teach folks the importance of reuse.
- **Online games**
  - Utilize online games from organizations like [Will County Green](#) or the [EPA](#).

# Event Materials & Activities



## Tips from our Educators

- Go beyond to guidelines—share the story of circularity with your audience. Where does recycling go when it leaves the curb?
- Be mindful of making your setup travel friendly and weather resistant. Think about wind, rain, and terrain you'll be walking on.
- Bring picnic table clips to keep your table cloth attached.
- Have Recycle Coach loaded on your laptop to demonstrate the tool. It's also helpful to have in case you're stumped by a question.

## Use Recycle Coach!

**Feed The Cart** utilizes Recycle Coach to help residents recycle right! Our partner counties and agencies have uploaded locally accepted materials into Recycle Coach, as well as depots for hard to recycle item.



Find the Recycle Coach widget on [FeedTheCart.org](https://FeedTheCart.org) or in the app store.

- Have giveaways? Make sure your audience members engage with you or learn something before they take an item.



[FeedTheCart.org](https://FeedTheCart.org)

# Event Materials & Activities



## Purchasing guide

Want to engage beyond flyers and handouts? To help you get started, here are two examples of items you can purchase to develop activities for your table:

- Tabletop spinning wheel
  - Attach photos of various materials to each section. Have the participant spin the wheel and quiz their knowledge!
- Tabletop spinning jewelry display
  - Securely fasten items to the display- you can have one display with recyclable items and one with materials not recyclable curbside. Participants can spin the display and see real items- quiz them on their knowledge!

***Purchasing materials & giveaways is not always necessary to educate and engage. Get creative with materials readily available!***

## Freebie recommendations

Consider how your freebie will contribute to further education or engagement. Materials made from recycled content offer an opportunity to further educate what recycling can do! Below are a few suggestions if you are looking to purchase freebies:

- Pencils made from recycled denim
- Reusable items (water bottles, utensils, bags)
- Activity sheets with recycling education and guidelines

# Using Feed The Cart Materials



Engaging residents and educating the public on the importance and effectiveness of recycling can't be done by **Feed The Cart** alone. Local governments can amplify his message by utilizing the library of resources developed by the **Feed The Cart** campaign.

From recycling guides to social media posts you can copy & paste, **Feed The Cart** has it all! **Find the full library of resources in this Google Drive.**

- Newsletters
- Library of social media posts
- Activities & worksheets
- Recycling guidelines (*English and Spanish*)

**Not sure where to start or how your municipality can help? Check out our Guide to Amplifying Loop's Message here.**

## Request More Resources!

Does your municipality need different resources? Would you like customized newsletters or social media posts? Email Recycling Education & Outreach Specialist, Juliet Mathey ([jmathey@mayorscaucus.org](mailto:jmathey@mayorscaucus.org)) for assistance!

# Learn what you can FEED THE CART!



FeedTheCart.org



# Thank you for amplifying Loop's message!



[FeedTheCart.org](http://FeedTheCart.org)

Contact Juliet Mathey with any questions at [jmathey@mayorscaucus.org](mailto:jmathey@mayorscaucus.org)