Arlington County Fair Recycling and Composting Final Report
November 2013

Over the course of the three fairs we worked this summer, as well as KAB staff’s previous experience in North Carolina and academic research on recycling, composting, signage, bin type, and other related topics, we have created a list of lessons learned and best practices for use by the fair in implementing their recycling and compost programs in subsequent years.

We will review infrastructure purchased and used, personnel, communication to various audiences, composting, the waste audit and waste reduction results.

In addition, KAB conducted an observational study and survey on recycling and compost behavior. [A report on this research will be coming later this winter.]

Summary

A. Twin each recycling bin with a trash can
B. Place bins in sitting areas
C. Make sure all bins have good signage
D. Utilize flags as a way of drawing attention to low-profile bins
E. Make sure someone is in charge of recycling and the recycling crew
F. Educate, Educate, Educate – all audiences (internal and external)
G. Rewards good recyclers
H. Phase in a comprehensive composting program
I. Incentivize vendors to use recyclable and compostable serveware
INFRASTRUCTURE/BIN

1) Bin Placement
   a) Pairing trash cans
      i) One of the most important lessons learned in terms of infrastructure is to ensure that all recycling bins are closely paired with a trash can (and that there are enough trash cans to do so). Observational research suggests that unpaired recycling bins will begin to be used as trash cans. Based on the academic research, we believe that having both bins in one spot works toward the goal of increasing convenience, which is the main barrier to recycling. Therefore, it is important to consider how many trash cans are available before the purchase of recycling bins.
   b) Suggested locations for bins at a fair
      i) Vendor booths
         (1) Vendors generate a large amount of material, making them a prime opportunity for collection. However, their stall was often too small for their own recycling bin, so they needed to have a public bin close enough, a communal area nearby marked off for vendors, or be allowed to pile material behind their stalls to be picked up on recycling rounds.

(2) At the Arlington County Fair, vendors were used to breaking their cardboard boxes down for recycling collection by fair staff. However, with the addition of 35-gallon roll carts we attempted to collect other material besides cardboard. This included large ketchup bottles, steel food cans, aluminum soda can paperboard packaging and the like. Continued education with the vendors in subsequent years will help improve this component of the program.
(3) There was also a lot of plastic film (shrink-wrap and bags) generated by vendors. This cannot be collected with traditional material but we recommend that the Fair speak with the County recycling office about how to collect it for recycling.

(4) The outdoor vendor booths generate a lot of material during move-in and move-out. For the first 2 days of move-in the recycling dumpsters were not on-site. Due to this timing issue lots of recyclable material was placed in the garbage dumpster.

Crude drawing of what bins were where by the food area:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 Vendors</th>
<th>2 Vendors</th>
<th>3 Food Trucks (i.e. Big Cheese)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recycling roll cart x 3</td>
<td>Compost roll cart Recycling roll cart x 2</td>
<td>Recycling roll cart x 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash x 3</td>
<td>Trash x 2</td>
<td>Trash x 3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Trash x 2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

←-----Pigs   Parking Lot Entrance ----→

ii) Exhibition Area

(1) While drinks are not allowed in the indoor exhibition hall, we found it important to still place bins in the hall, particularly in the doorways. People following the rules with drinks would be likely to finish them outside, and then need a place to dispose of them as they enter the hall. Moreover, we included two bins within the exhibition area in case people had continued to carry drinks around with them through the exhibits. We found these 2 inside bins to be too small so we added more as the fair went on. All of the expo hall bins needed to be emptied on a regular basis.

(2) Similar to the outside vendors, these vendors need to be educated about the new recycling program. In the future, it may be valuable to partner with the various environmental and recycling groups that work within the exhibition hall to build on the recycling program.

(3) This group also had a large amount of cardboard and plastic film for recycling. Placing some of the vendor roll carts in this building helped to capture some of that material but were not in place in time for move-in.
Crude drawing of what bins were where in the Expo Hall:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Door 6</th>
<th>Door 7</th>
<th>Door 8</th>
<th>Door 9</th>
<th>Door 10</th>
<th>Door 11</th>
<th>Roll-up Door</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Corex plastic bin</td>
<td>- Corex plastic bin</td>
<td>- Corex plastic bin x 2</td>
<td>- Corex plastic bin x 2</td>
<td>- Corex plastic bin x 2</td>
<td>- Corex plastic bin</td>
<td>- Corex plastic bin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Trash can</td>
<td>- Trash can</td>
<td>- Trash can</td>
<td>- Trash can</td>
<td>- Trash can</td>
<td>- Trash can</td>
<td>- Trash can</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXHIBITS**

- Permanent recycling bin
- Trash can

- Permanent recycling bin
- Trash can

**Ping-Pong and Billiard Tables**

**By Water Fountain**

- Permanent recycling bin
- Trash can

**Stage**

**ENTRY TO COMM CENTER**

- Recycling roll cart
- Trash can

**Desk**

- Permanent recycling bin
- Trash can

**Vending**

- Permanent recycling bin
- Trash can

←-----Pigs

Parking Lot Entrance ----→
iii) Stages
(1) Based on our observations, one type of area at the fair that could use more recycling bins was stands or bleachers where people sit to watch a show, such as the piglet races or near the shows going on at the basketball courts. Many people at such sites arrive with a drink in hand, finish it during the show, and then need somewhere to dispose of the product. In contrast, it was more difficult to predict where people on the move would finish their drinks, making it harder to place bins intended for them. However, these stands or bleachers provide an opportunity to take advantage of areas where people congregate with recyclable material.

(2) When thinking about stages it is also important to place a recycling bin back stage/near the stage where performers wait. It is likely that the performers consume large amounts of liquids in cans and bottles while waiting for their time to start, or between sets on stage.

iv) Sitting areas
(1) Another spot for recycling bins are areas where people sit to eat and drink. Similar to the stage areas, people in these zones are stationary for a period of time while they finish their beverage, and then require a place to dispose of the container as they leave.

(2) At these Arlington fair locations, we utilized two types of bins – a wireframe and a roll cart. The wireframes were zip-tied to each trash can, making sure they couldn’t blow away, and they were placed very close to the picnic tables. The roll carts were closer to the back of a vendor booth but were still acceptable by a customer. Due to this situation, the bins used must be appropriate for both public and vendor use (i.e., clearly and prominently labeled, with an opening large enough for vendor material, such as the roll carts).

v) Port-o-johns/Bathrooms
(1) Another suggested location for recycling bins is by the port-o-johns and/or bathrooms. Before entering the bathroom area, people often want to get rid of their drinks so they do not have to carry them into the bathroom with them. At fairs, while monitoring the fullness of bins, ones near bathrooms often received a great deal of traffic.

vi) Rides
(1) Most Midway Operators require fair-goers to dispose of their food and drink before getting on a ride. Placing a paired recycling bin and trash can at each midway ride, right by the cue line is best. The Arlington Fair followed this best management practice well.
vii) 5K Run
   (1) This year the fair conducted a 5K run. Two roll carts were deployed to the start/finish line to collect water bottles that were distributed as part of the event. It is recommended that this continue and possibly expand to other areas of the run if water is distributed in recyclable containers throughout the race.

viii) Campgrounds
   (1) Almost all fairs have some sort of campground(s), either for the carnival workers, agricultural staff and/or fair-goers. Placing bins in a campground is a best management practice in order to collect cardboard and personal bottles and cans.
   (2) We noticed a pile of trash and recycling near these port-o-johns on move-in day. We immediately had the fair deploy a trash can and 2 recycling roll carts. Besides the food vendor roll carts these were the most successful. The carnival workers essentially need a curbside recycling program while on site considering their homes are stationed at the campground.
c) Information on bin type
   i) Recycling Lid types
      (1) One issue faced by an event is that the lids typically used for public recycling bins (e.g., hole for bottles/cans, slit for paper) were not compatible with vendor material, as the larger recyclable containers used by vendors did not fit through the lid. This issue led to the purchase of roll carts for vendor usage. However, it must be emphasized that not all vendors will have space to keep these bins separate from the public, and therefore they must have signage appropriate for public usage. Furthermore, there is an increased issue of “convenience” when using these bins, as the lids need to be lifted for material to be deposited in them.

      (2) Trash Lid Types
          (a) One type of trash can lid used by many Midway vendors includes the face of a clown and the person throwing something away is supposed to put the garbage through the clown’s mouth.

          (b) The clown’s head attached to the top of trashcans seemed to confuse the issue of bin identification. In order to get people to use bins correctly, it is important that people know what should go into them. However, a bin with a clown top gives no indication of what it should be used for and therefore causes confusion. In addition, the clown head may bother some people who may have a fear of clowns.

          (i) The clown bins also made it difficult to dispose of large items. Next to several of the clown trashcans, we observed recycling bins with larger non-recyclable items inside them. We believe this may have occurred because the recycling bin lids are easier to remove than the clown heads on the trashcans when trying to fit large items in. Therefore, we would suggest having open topped bins for trash to make it easier to deposit large items, which we believe would help reduce contamination in recycling bins.

          (ii) Next year the fair should request that these clown lids not be used.

(3) Color
    (a) Research conducted by Keep America Beautiful and George Washington University suggests that the most recognizable color for recycling bins by far is blue. Therefore, the Arlington Fair should keep with the blue bins for recycling.
Various bin types

(a) The Corex plastic bins pose no big issues, and worked well inside buildings, such as the exhibition hall. The color and graphics all over the bin were well received.

(b) In terms of the roll carts, originally the wheels did not come off, but KAB staff were able to fix the issue. Three good locations for these bins are the campgrounds, in order to collect cardboard and personal bottles and cans, and behind the food and midway vendors, in order to collect the large material they generate. However, if they are used behind vendors’ stalls, it is important to remember that the bins will be used by the public and need better signage. In addition, if the compost program continues, these roll carts could be used as compost bins; however, it will be important to pair these bins with a trash can and a recycling bin so people are more likely to use each one correctly.

(c) For the wireframe bins, there are potential issues with the bins blowing away. However, KAB staff ziptied these to the trash can handles, which solved the problem. Therefore, we recommend this ziptie system, and simply cutting the zipties when the bins need to be removed.

(d) We recommend having recycling dumpsters delivered a day before the fair opens to catch cardboard from unpacking all the items needed for the fair.

d) Signage

i) Prompt Best Practices for making a sign
- Be specific about the desired behavior.
- Repeat prompts as often as possible.
- Place prompts close to the desired behavior and in ways that they cannot be missed or ignored.
- Target behavior that is convenient to perform.
- Use wording that is not intrusive or demanding.
- Emphasize what individuals will be missing out on or losing by not performing the desired behavior.
- Convey prompts through a trustworthy source.
- Tailor the message to the target audience.
- Start with an easy-to-do behavior.
- Engage the mind.
- Utilize motives for why your audience might decide to perform a behavior.
- Encourage positive behaviors.
- Based on the previously mentioned research with George Washington, the most understandable language to indicate a bin accepts all recyclable material was “Mixed Recyclables” (instead of “Single Stream” or “Commingled”), so this language was employed on the signage in order to increase understandability.

ii) Flags
- One of the issues the fair had with their previous bins was that they felt the bins blended into the background and were not noticeable. This is obviously an issue as people trying to recycle may not have been able to find the bins, and people who would recycle if prompted were not getting prompted to do so.
- Based on the above best practices, one idea to improve the level of prompting provided by the recycling bins was the use of tall flags displaying the phrase “Recycle Here” to serve as attention-getters. These flags are specific to the behavior, provide a second iteration of the prompt (after any prompts on the bins themselves), are close to where the behavior occurs, and are not intrusive.
In total, we employed 4 flags. These flags were placed strategically near areas next to bins where people would enter the fair. We wanted people to be aware of that recycling was happening on the property before they were distracted by rides, food, and other activities on the fair grounds. For example, we had one flag placed right before the walk down the food corridor in order to get recycling on people’s minds. Moreover, this flag was highly visible above the crowd, making it easy to identify. Another issue to consider for flag placement is areas where there were fewer bins, such as in the midway area, so someone wanting to recycle but not wanting to hold onto their item for long would be able to spot a bin more quickly.

Another note is to think about the kind of bin that might most benefit from a flag—such as the much less visible wireframe bins.

One note about the flags is that they do require a hammer and a good level of upper body strength to get them in the ground. If locations are chosen on a map by the coordinator (see next section, “Personnel”), this could be a good activity for a physically strong high school or Americorp volunteer, as it is important to keep up maintenance staff moral in the chaos of the fair by using volunteers and such to support them.
PERSONNEL (need someone taking responsibility for program)

1) Sustainability coordinator
   a) KAB partially filled this role in 2013 via the grant program. Staff spent at least 10 hours a week between April and July planning for the recycling program and conducting PR tasks (160 hours total). This doesn’t include the time spent purchasing bins (which would not necessarily be needed each year). Three to five KAB staff members then spent five days on-site at the fair working 8 hour days. Another 50 hours has been spent calculating results, evaluating lessons learned and writing a report.
   b) First, the fair could hire a sustainability coordinator (full or part time) who focuses on different environmental attributes each year and builds a system for use the following years. For example, this coordinator would use the information in this report and on the KAB website to run, grow, and improve the recycling program next year, and then if that goes well, perhaps start looking at other environmental elements such as runoff or water usage. They may also coordinate one of the volunteer systems described below.
   c) Some of these tasks could possibly be added to the County liaison job description that works with the fair. The most important times to be at the fair conducting this oversight is morning and night.

2) Americorp
   a) Alternatively, the fair could hire an Americorp member or graduate student to oversee a team of volunteers (e.g., Americorp members, high school students, or university students) that assists with running the program. This would likely be less effective than a sustainability coordinator, since they would presumably be less experienced, less able to make changes, and less likely to be a part of the program the following year. However, it would pose a significantly lower expense and could be a good way to test out having a coordinator without the full commitment of a staff member.
   b) Also, each year the Fair’s volunteer coordinator solicits all age groups to help with fair operations and education. One or two of these volunteers would be helpful in coordinating day-to-day recycling and composting activities on-site.

3) Fair board
   a) Similar to either the sustainability coordinator or the Americorp member, a member of the fair board could take on the recycling and/or composting, or the larger concept of sustainability as their contribution to the board in order to ensure someone follows best practices.
WHO NEEDS COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM

4) Staff
   a) Maintenance and custodial staff are clearly an integral piece of a recycling program, but they need proper training and engagement in order to run the program effectively. There are several recommendations for effective training. First, research suggests that skills on how to engage in a behavior are more effective when conveyed through in-person training than when conveyed through signage or pamphlets. Other ways to influence maintenance/custodial engagement would be to emphasize that the recycling program is important to their boss, why the program is critical, how vital their role is, and provide feedback on how the program is going. Research suggests that feelings of participation in purposeful activity are related to spurring conservation behavior. Furthermore, feedback is particularly useful for engaging low performers, such as those within a new program. Utilizing these aspects within a training system will help build a level of personal responsibility and pride in the program.
   b) Another concern is that multiple crews service different areas of the fair—i.e., a different crew services the bins inside the hall versus the bins around the outdoor area of the fair. It is important to make sure that all crews that will be working with bins are educated in the recycling program.

5) Fair-goers
   a) Fair-goers need to be aware that recycling is happening in order to know to look for a bin. This can be communicated through the fair informational pamphlet, highly visible signage such as flags, a recycling booth at the fair, and/or PR messaging through interviews and notices in local newspapers.
      i) At the 2013 Arlington Fair, KAB hosted a booth with general information on recycling. This booth attracted a good amount of attention from fair goers. In the future, the existing County Recycling booth inside the exposition hall could serve this purpose. Staff sent all county recycling questions to the County Recycling booth in the expo hall.
6) Vendors and Midway Staff
   a) Recycling and/or composting information could be included in their pre-fair informational letter. It is important for vendors to know that recycling/composting will be an option beforehand to make appropriate changes to their serviceware, as well as be on the look out for recycling/composting containers on the property. In addition, when they know that the fair cares about recycling, they will be more likely to make an effort to do so, as they want the fair to continue to let them sell during the event.
   b) KAB staff tested posting awards on the stalls of fair vendors that used environmentally friendly serviceware to encourage this behavior at the Arlington fair. First, the awards served as a small reward and recognition for vendors’ hard work and/or dedication to using these environmentally friendly materials. Second, they served as a descriptive norm, as vendors who were not yet using these materials had their attention drawn to how many other vendors at the fair were using them. This norm could also encourage vendors to start a conversation about how to purchase and use these materials. Third, the award included a message about how many people in the community recycle, which served as an injunctive norm, meaning that it demonstrated that the area was highly supportive of that vendor’s serviceware choice. Normative information has been shown to have a strong influence over behavior, particularly when the descriptive and injunctive norms are both used and align with each other (Kelly et al., 2012).
   c) Overall, these awards were quite popular, and vendors who qualified for them but had not yet received them by the second day began to ask for their award. While we cannot yet speak to how effective they were at encouraging a change in the fair next year, we can say that they were well received by the vendors who got them.
   d) These awards were used in conjunction with the implementation of a composting program as we recognized those that used compostable or biodegradable plates, napkins, etc.
e) This isn’t a comprehensive list but KAB would like to share what packaging products they saw the vendors use:
   i) Farmer Grill and Subs = paper plate
   ii) I love Thai = paper boat, #6 plastic cup, Styrofoam
   iii) Nittaya Grill = tin foil, #6 plastic cup
   iv) Orient = paper boat for the Fried Oreos, tin foil, Styrofoam, #6 plastic cup
COMPOSTING RESULTS

Overall, the post-consumer compost program at the Arlington fair was fairly successful. For two days over the busy weekend, bins were used to collect food waste and other biodegradable material, while KAB staff and 2 hired temps circulated, pulling out contamination, particularly during lunch and dinner times.

1) Bins
   i) The hauler, Fat Worm Compost, provided ten yellow roll carts labeled with compost signs. These bins were put out all day on the weekend. While their color, yellow, is not one of the colors most likely to be recognized as a compost bin (based on KAB’s research from George Washington University, either green or brown bins are most likely to be associated with compost), the ease of having a hauler provide them superseded those concerns.
   ii) One positive piece of the use of roll carts was that the lid required a greater effort to use since it must be lifted, so fair goers were more likely to default to the trash can rather than contaminating the compost bin if they were unsure of which to use. While it would be ideal to have all food waste captured in the compost, we believe it is more important to collect uncontaminated material that the hauler can use, because if the material is too contaminated, it simply becomes trash anyway and the compost program will likely not continue.
   iii) The small-scale functional program can be grown into a larger program in the future. As mentioned earlier, some of the blue roll carts could be painted green or brown and used for collecting compostable material. The vendor required that all the biodegradable material be aggregated in compostable bags. With this operational aspect in mind the fair could negotiate with Fat Worm Compost next year to just provide the hauling of the food waste and not a bin.

b) Contamination
   i) Based on observational research, contamination seemingly came from two places. Those wanting to participate but not understanding how to sort. The majority of people who engaged with the bins were looking at the compost signage to some degree before putting anything in there; however, this did not mean that they necessarily put the right items in. People wanted to dispose of everything in one place. This aligns with the idea of convenience being the most important piece for a recycling program. The most likely incorrect items to end up in the compost bin were foil that had been wrapped around food and utensils, so volunteers or staff should be on the lookout for those items. Many people did not notice the bins or bother to engage with them to figure out what they were, particularly when no one nearby had engaged with the bins recently.

   c) Volunteers
      i) Even with a minimal level of support from two staff members or two temps, the material collected was clean and able to be accepted by the hauler. Therefore, we believe that these 2 to 3 circulating people were sufficient, suggesting that having someone paired with each public space compost bin is not necessary. Having these volunteers provided a level of modeling, which has been shown to influence behavior, and increased the level of interaction between fair-goers and the bins. During a 2 to 4 hour shift, a KAB staff member noted that if she watched for a few minutes after she left from bin checking, the next few people who went up to the bin at least engaged with the bin signage, even if not actually using the bin. Therefore, we do believe this kind of program will grow itself, as people will see others modeling the behavior and increase their likelihood to act.
ii) From the observational research, even a bin without any volunteer support was kept fairly clean—people deferred to using the trash bin for their waste, which led to compostable material being uncontaminated and usable.

d) Hauler
i) The hauler came to collect the biodegradable material and to wash the bins each morning. Working with a hauler significantly increased the convenience of running the program; a previous fair experience where KAB staff had self-hauled compost material proved unsustainable in terms of time and resources needed. Self hauling requires a serious commitment, and after all the other time and resources needed to run a recycling and compost program, it would be best to reduce difficulty in as many program aspects as possible.

e) Recommendations for a post-consumer compost program
i) Utilize clear signage
ii) Have a volunteer take charge of the program
iii) Support vendors using compostable materials
iv) Use clear communication
v) Have a small number of volunteers circulating to clean contamination out of bins
vi) Consider employing either green or brown bins, as these colors were identified as most associated with compost
WASTE AUDIT
KAB staff conducted a waste audit for the Arlington County Fair. Results are shown below.

| Waste Audit Data from 2 garbage bags, corresponding pictures in final report |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Food scraps                     | 12.43 pounds    |
| Other compostables (paper boats, napkins, etc.) | 5.14 pounds |
| Recycling*                      | 1.28 pounds     |
| Trash                           | 4.83 pounds     |
| Total                           | **23.68 pounds** |

% organics in waste stream** 74%

*This shows there were still recyclables in the waste stream
** This shows that by starting a full-scale composting program you could reduce your waste stream by 74%
# WASTE REDUCTION RESULTS

**Arlington County Fair - August 7-11, 2013 with only 3 full days**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>52,000</th>
<th>59,000</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trash Dumpster #1 - hauled 8/9/2013</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1.4 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash Dumpster #2 - hauled 8/9/2013</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1.03 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash Dumpster #1 - hauled 8/14/2013</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1.57 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash Dumpster #2 - hauled 8/14/2013</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>7.46 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL TRASH</strong>*</td>
<td>9.630 tons</td>
<td>11.460 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling - Cardboard**</td>
<td>1.490 tons</td>
<td>1.300 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling - Cans &amp; Bottles**</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composting pilot***</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.555 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fats/Oils/Grease****</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.400 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL RECYCLING</strong></td>
<td>1.490 tons</td>
<td>2.255 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| WASTE REDUCTION RATE | 13% | 16% |
| PER CAPITA RECYCLING RATE | 0.05731 | 0.07644 | POUNDS/person/fair |
| PER CAPITA DISPOSAL RATE | 0.37038 | 0.38847 | POUNDS/person/fair |
| DAILY DISPOSAL RATE | 3.82 TONS/day |  |

* The total cost for trash hauling in 2013 was $1073.34. This included dropping the dumpsters off, 1 collection during the fair and the final collection where the dumpsters where hauled away.

** Even though there were 2 dumpsters and one was more for cardboard and the other was more for cans and bottles, the data was added together when given to us.

*** We collected 9 bags of compost on Saturday, 18 bags of compost on Sunday. We estimated each bag to be 30 pounds. The vendor recommended we use a 40 pound estimate but we felt that was high.

**** 800 pounds of FOG was collected.