

DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Recycling Reform Act

Needs Assessments Subcommittee

May 20, 2026

Purpose of the Needs Assessments

Conduct a **comprehensive evaluation of recycling system** performance and provide **actionable recommendations** for improvements, investments, and performance standards under the EPR program.

- Sets a baseline understanding of current conditions
- Identifies system gaps
- Quantifies system costs and responsibilities
- Informs performance standards
- Supports stakeholder engagement
- Embeds equity and access considerations

Two Versions of Needs Assessments

Preliminary Needs Assessment (2026)

“Where are we now?”

- Covered materials: material types and volumes in WA, amounts processed, end markets
- Service access: residential service types (curbside/drop-off, single and multifamily), costs, and unserved areas in each city and county
- Infrastructure:
 - MRF, compost facilities, transfer stations, and drop-off sites
 - Capacity, technologies, and costs
- Costs and contracts: annual system costs and contract terms
- Gaps and needs: service, capacity, and market constraints

Full Needs Assessment (2027)

“How well is the system working; what should change?”

- Baseline performance and outcomes by covered material type statewide
- Composition of disposal, recycling, and composting streams
- Recycled content opportunities and barriers
- Proposed five-year performance outcomes and statewide requirements
- Collection methods and service system design recommendations
- Infrastructure, capacity, funding, and cost inventory
- Equity, access, and investment needs
- Market readiness, contamination, toxics, and public education factors affecting implementation

Request for Information/Surveys/Interviews

- Service provider registration (January '26)
- Request for information
- Targeted surveys/interviews for needs assessments
 - Municipalities, Tribes, producers, collection service providers, CAA and Interchange360

Request for Information to Develop Statewide Recycling Lists and Needs Assessments

April 1, 2026

Why is Ecology requesting information?

The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is requesting technical information to inform requirements of [Section 090](#) and [Section 110](#) of the Recycling Reform Act passed by the legislature in 2025, which requires an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for consumer packaging and paper products ("covered materials"). The law, codified in Chapter 70A.208 RCW, directs Ecology to:

- Develop four statewide collection lists, due by October 1, 2026, identifying covered materials suitable for residential recycling, residential composting, public place collection, or alternative collection.
- Complete a preliminary needs assessment due by December 31, 2026, describing current recycling system access, infrastructure, contracts, costs, material flows, and market conditions.
- Complete a full needs assessment, due by December 31, 2027, evaluating system performance, environmental and public health considerations, investment needs, and opportunities for improvement.

This Request for Information (RFI) is intended to:

- Identify relevant datasets, studies, and technical insights.
- Support evaluation of specific covered materials for statewide collection lists.
- Identifying and filling gaps in available information to support the needs assessments.
- Gather recommendations on methodologies, performance metrics, and system improvement opportunities and priorities.

The information collected as part of this RFI is in addition to (i) data submitted by service providers through Ecology's service provider registration, as described below, and (ii) data and input collected through surveys to key audiences. RCW 70A.208.110(7)(a) states that a service provider or other person with data or information necessary to complete a needs assessment must provide the data or information to the department upon request.

Ecology has already requested that service providers (including local governments, collectors, material recovery facilities, and processors) register with Ecology and share information pursuant to RCW 70A.208.070. Ecology may reach out to service providers who have not submitted the requested information or submitted incomplete information.

<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2607021.pdf>

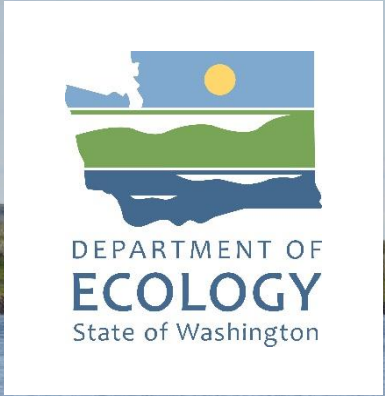
Preliminary Needs Assessment



(Full) Needs Assessment

Due December 31, 2027, and every 5 years after

- Evaluate current system performance
- Inventory the existing system
- Propose performance targets
- Identify investments needed
- Assess markets, contamination, and toxic substances
- Recommend collection methods, reimbursement methodology
- Assess education, outreach, and environmental impacts
- Propose metrics and recommend performance targets



Thank you