

Community Recycling Grant Program Application | Hendricks County Recycling District

1. Provide a background to your organization and overarching context to the proposed project. What is the need or motivation behind the project?

The Hendricks County Solid Waste Management District was formed in 2005 after Hendricks County removed itself from the West Central Solid Waste District. In 2020, to make the District's name more meaningful to the residents it serves, the organization's name was changed to the Hendricks County Recycling District.

While the District's name changed, its mission did not. It remains dedicated to promoting waste reduction, recycling, and responsible waste management in Hendricks County. That mission is achieved through active community engagement and waste management programs tailored to meet the needs of the community. Meaningful community education is a focus of the District. Connecting residents with information is achieved through a compelling website (RecycleHendricksCounty.org), an email newsletter delivered twice-monthly to nearly 2,000 subscribers, a printed Recycling Guide, participation in local events, connections through social media, and more.

The District's youth education efforts rival any other environmental programs offered to K-12 students across the state. Most programs satisfy state academic standards and are in very high demand. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person youth programs were presented to approximately 10,000 Hendricks County students each year. Since in-person presentations are not allowed due to the pandemic, the District's youth education team has focused on making online resources available for teachers to use in e-learning settings including the development of more than eighty educational videos.

In addition to those robust education and outreach activities, the District provides several programs that further its mission and give residents meaningful and convenient waste management options that are not being provided otherwise.

- Each year, five Tox-Away Days are provided. The events allow Hendricks County households to safely dispose of and/or recycle chemicals, bulbs, batteries, tires, electronics, appliances, and more. Since 2015, an average of 4,150 users have utilized the Tox-Away Days and disposed of or recycled more than 370,000 pounds of material annually.
- Two Yard Waste Recycling Centers provide households the opportunity to recycle brush, grass clippings, leaves, and more. The staffed centers operate from April through November and are open three days each week. On average, 4,500 visitors use the centers each year.
- Four Recycling Drop-off Centers are located in portions of Hendricks County where curbside recycling is not available to households. Traditional recyclables such as plastic bottles and jugs, aluminum and steel cans, glass bottle and jars, cardboard, and paper are accepted at the unmanned recycling centers. Activity at the Recycling Drop-off Centers has grown significantly in the past five years from 712 tons collected in 2016 to 1,196 tons in 2020.

The *Hendricks County Recycling District | 2020 Summary Report* (see Appendix D) highlights the above achievements along with other activities, programs, and partnerships in which the organization is engaged.

The project for which the District is seeking grant assistance will relocate and improve the Recycling Drop-off Center located in Lizton. The busiest of the recycling centers, the Lizton weight of material collected there has grown by 78% since 2016. By weight, 70.5% of the recyclables collected at the Drop-off Recycling Centers are now captured at the Lizton location. That increased activity has come with significant challenges; specifically, more illegal dumping, overfilling of recycling bins, blowing litter, and other misuses at the center. (Appendix E includes photos of recent challenges experienced at the center.)

Additionally, the costs associated with providing the Recycling Drop-off Centers have grown substantially in recent years. In 2014, the District agreed to take responsibility for the recycling center in North Salem as the town could no longer afford to provide the center. That was the first year the District provided four Recycling Drop-off Centers and the cost to do so was \$66,324. Costs have risen since that time and the District paid \$115,287 in 2020 for the centers; 65% of that cost is for the Lizton center. (See Appendix F for more.)

A staffed recycling center is needed to ensure the program can continue. The District does not own or lease the property where the center is currently located and the owner plans future development of the property which will ultimately force the center to be moved. The District's staff and Board of Directors have identified a suitable property nearby and are currently working through planning and pre-purchase steps to prepare an offer to purchase the property. (More specifics are included in answers to questions 8 and 9 below.)

The new, improved, staffed recycling center will include a fenced, hard surface (concrete and/or asphalt), two compactors that will be used to collect and consolidate recyclables (bottles, cans, jugs, jars, cartons, paper, and cardboard), and an attendant building with a restroom. To monitor the facility and dissuade illegal dumping when the center is closed, a video surveillance system will be installed.

The benefits of the new Lizton Recycling Drop-off Center are three-fold:

- Capacity at the center will increase resulting in more recyclables being captured
- Residents will be using the center when a staff person is on-site to answer questions, provide correction and assure that only acceptable materials are being recycled
- The well-lit, fenced, and monitored property will significantly decrease instances of illegal dumping, blowing litter, and misuse of the center

Based on initial planning and budgeting work, the overall cost of the project could exceed \$500,000. While this would be the largest capital investment the District has ever made, leadership understands the on-going challenges the current center presents; both the escalating operational costs and the persistent misuse and abuse of the center. The relocation and reconfiguration of the recycling center will be a substantial improvement and better serve our community.

2. How will the outcomes and effectiveness of the project be measured? Measurable outcomes vary, but ideally should be quantifiable measures that document: behavior change, public benefit to the environment and individuals, and a return on the public investment.

Through a Request for Proposals process, the District periodically selects and contracts with private recycling companies to provide bins and the recycling service to the Recycling Drop-off Centers. The contract used to formalize those agreements requires monthly reports that reflect the weight collected at each recycling center. The District will continue to receive those reports and monitor changes in the overall weight of materials being recycled through the program. Available space in the recycling bins has been a limiting factor of the current Lizton Recycling Drop-off Center. Utilizing compactors will allow for more and cleaner material to be collected and recycled.

The District does not presently receive specific reports on contamination levels at the recycling centers but visual inspections often reveal bagged materials, plastic film, polystyrene, building materials, and other unacceptable material in the recycling bins. Having a staff member available to provide oversight and answer questions will certainly improve residents' recycling experience and limit contamination, benefitting the recycling company that receives the materials for sorting and sale.

Lastly, District staff members are managing instances of illegal dumping and/or recyclables left on the ground weekly. While the upgraded recycling center will not eliminate these issues, it is expected to limit how often they occur. Additionally, District staff has been in contact with the Hendricks County Sheriff's Department and has received assurances that if proper signage is posted and identifying evidence (vehicle descriptions, license plate numbers, etc.) can be captured via a surveillance system, law enforcement is willing to help hold those that illegally dump or abuse the property accountable for their actions.

3. Describe the anticipated environmental outcomes.

Since 2016, tonnages collected at the District's Recycling Drop-off Centers have increased by an average of 13.9% each year. Using a conservative growth estimate of 10% per year, an estimated 2,052 additional tons of material will be collected and recycled over the next five years (2021 to 2025). If we assume the same annual growth rate of 13.9%, that estimate of additional tons captured from 2021 to 2025 jumps by almost 1,000 tons to 3,007. (See Appendix F.)

Another exciting aspect of the project relates to the environmental history of the land the District is working to purchase for the improved recycling center. The property was previously a Phillips 66 filling station. In July of 2008, a release from an underground storage tank located at the property was reported to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). After inspection and environmental testing, a Leaky Underground Storage Tank (LUST) case was initiated. After removal of the underground tanks, remediation work, and years of monitoring, in 2016, IDEM indicated that the property no longer required additional remediation or monitoring. Due to the past contamination of the property, an Environmental Restrictive Covenant (ERC) was placed on the parcel. The ERC limits the ways the property can be used in the future. While the past environmental issues on the property present additional challenges in the planning and purchasing

processes, the District is excited about revitalizing a property that was environmentally damaged into one that will provide an important environmental benefit to the community.

Estimated annual waste quantity generated before project (mark lbs. or tons): 152,301 tons ((170,311 residents X 4.9 pounds per person per day X 365 days)/2000))

Estimated annual waste quantity to be diverted from landfill, either by source reduction or recycling/composting: 2,293 tons/year (in year 2025 assuming 10% annual growth)

Percent reduction from landfill: 1.5%

4. What are the economic impacts of the proposed project (organizationally/locally/statewide)? Will this project serve communities with higher concentrations of low-income residents? If yes, describe.

As noted above, the annual cost of providing the four Recycling Drop-off Centers has increased from \$34,550 in 2008 to \$115,287 in 2020; an average annual cost increase of 18%. The most significant cost of the program is the monthly fees paid to the private recyclers to service the centers. Those fees are based on the number of exchanges required at each of the centers to maintain space in the recycling bins. Utilizing compactors at the Lizton location will decrease that monthly cost of service by at least half. Those cost savings will, in turn, be used to pay for operational expenses and the employment of two part-time recycling center attendants.

The updated Lizton recycling center will be located in the more rural and lower-income portion of Hendricks County.

5. What, if any, is the project's education component? Describe the target audience, educational topics, marketing and communication strategies, and informational source (e.g. personal experience, website, local recycling hauler, etc.)

The most significant educational component will be users having the opportunity to ask questions while using the center and knowing that they are being observed as they are recycling. Having attendants on-site will allow face-to-face, in-the-moment recycling education. Much of the misuse currently occurring at the recycling center is the result of users being unaware of, or unwilling to read, the signs affixed in multiple locations to every recycling bin. Large, simple signs will be installed in critical locations at the new recycling center.

The recycling center will also serve as a distribution point for the District's Recycling Guide and information about other services and upcoming programs and events like the District's Yard Waste Recycling Centers and Tox-Away Days. (A digital version of the District's Recycling Guide can be viewed here: <https://www.recyclehendrickscounty.org/guide-to-being-green/>.)

6. Does the proposed project involve outside partners? Is there an existing relationship with the partners?

The District will contract with a private recycling company to service the recycling center. Requests for proposals are periodically distributed to ensure the District complies with state contracting requirements and is operating the program at a market rate. Ray's Trash Service is headquartered in Hendricks County and has been awarded the contract to service the recycling centers for most years of the District's existence. As location and logistics play a significant role in the costs associated with recycling programs, it is anticipated that Ray's Trash Service will likely remain very competitive in future years when the District seeks proposals for servicing of the centers.

As the project is being planned, the District has hired the services of DLZ, an engineering, planning, and architecture firm based in Indiana. As the process moves forward, the District will also be engaging with the Town of Lizton, the Indiana Department of Transportation, Hendricks County Drainage Board, Hendricks County Planning and Building, and other local and statewide entities.

7. Can the proposed project serve as a model for other organizations to implement?

Yes. As the District plans and constructs this upgraded recycling center, staff and engineers are being very mindful of logistics, traffic flow, signage, and other factors that will impact the operations and longevity of the center. District staff will be eager to share details of the process with any other organization that seeks to undertake a similar project.

Additionally, consideration has already been given to the District building a similar recycling center in another part of Hendricks County. The decision to do so will be based on the results and public feedback generated from the Lizton center.

8. Describe any innovative techniques or processes the proposed project includes.

As noted above, the parcel of land the District seeks to purchase for the improved recycling center was once a Phillips 66 filling station. In 2008, a Leaky Underground Storage Tank (LUST) incident was reported to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). The underground storage tanks were removed and the property was sufficiently cleaned (as proven by subsequent monitoring) to the point that in 2016 IDEM issued a letter indicating that no further action was required at the site. The District "recycling" this parcel that once represented an environmental threat back into use as a recycling center is a powerful metaphor and excellent way to further the District's mission.

9. Are there any anticipated barriers when implementing the proposed project? If so, how will they be overcome?

The property's environmental history has required an extra measure of time and resources as the District steps through the purchasing process. The District has contracted with an Indiana-based engineering firm, DLZ, to request a Comfort Letter from Indiana's Brownfields Program which, if

issued, will qualify the District for exemption from liability associated with the past environmental issues on the parcel. The District is prudently working to limit its liability and protect itself in this regard but, the process by which the Comfort Letter is requested is costly and time-consuming.

Presently, sanitary sewer service is not available to the parcel in question but is located nearby. Connecting to the sewer system will require an easement agreement from the Indiana Department of Transportation, installation of nearly 1,000 feet of sewer piping via horizontal drilling, and the purchase and fitting of a grinder pump station at the site.

While the environmental history of the subject property and the utility needs are challenges, District leadership believes the size, location and visibility of the property make it the right choice for the project.

10. What is the method for evaluating, and, if necessary, modifying project operations during its implementation?

Evaluation of success will be achieved in three ways:

- More material will be captured at the new center. This will be quantified via monthly reports from the recycling company and can be compared to past results. If activity warrants, the District will consider expanding the days and/or hours of operation to capture more recyclables.
- Better, less contaminated material will be captured at the center. The nature of how materials will be collected and the presence of an on-site attendant will ensure the public better understands and follows the program's rules. Evaluation of success will largely be by observation of materials placed in the bins.
- Abuse and misuse of the recycling center will be significantly reduced. While District staff understands that relocating and upgrading the center will not eliminate illegal dumping, attended recycling centers experience far less abuse than unmanned locations that are available 24 hours per day.

Transitioning the public to a new and better way of recycling in Lizton will require District staff to build the center thoughtfully, paying particular attention to factors such as the days and hours of operation, staffing levels, signage, logistics, traffic flow, etc. Once open, observing how the public uses the center in real-time will be critical as staff looks for opportunities for improvement. Feedback from users will also be valued and considered as changes and adjustments are made.

11. What is the lifespan of the project and/or purchases? Describe how the project will remain sustainable (regarding human and financial resources) after the grant term has ended.

A significant factor in the District's decision to purchase the land on which to construct the recycling center is so its future can be controlled. The lifespan of the compactors, building, fencing, and concrete is expected to exceed thirty years with proper maintenance. The video surveillance system and signage will likely require replacement in 10-15 years. The District will continue to fund

operations of the recycling center from its general fund budget but will be better poised to control the rising costs of the program.

12. Describe the applicant’s experience and qualifications related to implementing and completing the proposed project plan. Was any outside guidance or technical assistance sought when planning the project?

Lenn Detwiler has been the District’s Executive Director since 2005. He holds a bachelor's degree in management from Purdue University. He began his role as Executive Director soon after the District was formed. With leadership and support from the District’s Board of Directors, Mr. Detwiler has overseen the development, implementation, operation, and expansion of every aspect of the District's outreach and services.

As reflected in the previously referenced *Hendricks County Recycling District | 2020 Summary Report* (Appendix D), the District has seen significant growth in its education and outreach efforts, participation in annual Tox-Away Day events, and the weight of recyclables collected at the Recycling Drop-off Centers.

Additionally, for this project, the District has hired the expertise of DLZ, an experienced Indiana firm that provides engineering, planning, architectural services. Mr. Detwiler has also communicated with other, experienced solid waste management district personnel and conducted numerous site visits to understand how other districts’ recycling centers operate. Additionally, Mr. Detwiler has met with representatives from a local recycling company for information and advice on how to plan and execute this project.

13. Is the proposed project inspired by previous successful work, completed internally or externally?

Certainly, other solid waste management districts operate similar, attended recycling centers and/or have undertaken comparable projects to reconfigure a recycling program. Aspects of and advice from numerous other programs have been considered and implemented but this project is not an attempt to replicate an existing program. The conditions, needs, and established behaviors in each district are different and require specific solutions.

The Hendricks County Recycling District has identified an opportunity to provide a better recycling program that will improve residents' experiences at the center, benefit the recyclers receiving more and cleaner materials and help ensure the future of the Lizton Recycling Drop-off Center.

14. For Solid Waste Districts only: If the district maintains a cash balance greater than \$500,000, provide a statement of why grant funding is necessary. Considerations may include the cash balance required to maintain district operations, one-time capital purchases, and declining revenue patterns.

Over 90% of the Hendricks County Recycling District's annual revenues are realized via a one-dollar-per-ton tipping fee assessed at the Twin Bridges Recycling and Disposal Facility (landfill) in Danville.

That facility is owned and operated by Waste Management, Inc. based in Houston, Texas. The District does not impose a property tax levy nor household fee.

District leadership has always recognized that the landfill has a finite lifespan and has made plans and decisions based on the notion that the tipping fee income the District presently relies upon will eventually cease.

In 2007, the Board of Directors established a Rainy Day Fund with the expressed purpose of helping to fund future operations of the organization. The resolution establishing that fund stipulates that the money held by the Rainy Day Fund cannot be accessed until such a time that the fund holds at least \$2,000,000 and there is no final disposal facility operating in the district or tipping fee income from the landfill is deemed insufficient to effectively operate the District. The resolution also limits withdrawals from the fund to an amount equal to no more than 95% of interest earned on the fund during the previous year. (See Appendix G for a copy of Resolution 2007-04)

From 2005 through 2015, the District built financial reserves as annual revenues routinely exceeded expenditures. Tipping fee revenue in recent years has been below average and 2018, 2019, and 2020 were three of the four leanest years the District has experienced in terms of tipping fee income.

As shown in answers to prior questions, the District has seen significant growth in many of its most important programs. The costliest programs the District offers are the Tox-Away Day events and the Recycling Drop-off Centers. As those programs have grown, the costs to provide them have naturally done the same. In 2020, the Tox-Away Days and Recycling Drop-off Centers cost \$168,495 and \$115,287, respectively. The annual costs associated with Tox-Away Days have leveled off along with the number of annual users. However, costs associated with providing the four Recycling Drop-off Centers have grown significantly, especially since 2013. (See Appendix F)

The District recognizes that continuing to provide the Lizton Recycling Drop-off Center is critical and certainly the participation levels at the center reflect its importance to the community. As noted earlier in answer to question 1, the Lizton location accounts for 70.5% of the recyclables captured through the program and 65% of the cost. The District's efforts to upgrade the recycling center will not likely result in annual cost savings but will help mitigate future cost increases related to the program.

In response to the higher expenses and declining revenue pattern experienced in recent years, the District is currently undertaking a financial analysis to plan for its long-term viability. This analysis is taking into account the life expectancy of the Twin Bridges facility, how the current tipping fee rate compares to rates imposed by other districts and other available funding mechanisms.

15. For equipment purchases only: Describe why or how private sector services will not be displaced as a result of the proposed project, in accordance to IC 13-20-22-2.1(b)(1). Consider the anticipated impact of the project when it is fully operational, comparing the types of materials being collected, the method of collection, the source of the materials, and the waste diversion achieved to that of any relevant non-governmental services.

The District is sensitive to the fact that the curbside recycling programs offered in Hendricks County by private sector companies (Ray's Trash Service and Republic Services) are preferable to drop-off recycling programs. District staff routinely educates about the benefits of recycling curbside and encourages residents to subscribe to those programs if they are offered where they live. (A recent article is available here: [https://www.recyclehendrickscounty.org/better-way-recycle/.](https://www.recyclehendrickscounty.org/better-way-recycle/))

While essentially the same materials are collected in both types of programs, the District-sponsored Recycling Drop-off Centers have always been located in portions of the county where curbside recycling is not offered by the private sector as their main objective is to give a viable and convenient recycling option to those Hendricks County households with no other recycling option available.

The Lizton Recycling Drop-off Center will remain in the portion of Hendricks County where curbside recycling is not currently offered. The District will continue to contract with a private-sector recycling company to transport, sort, and market the materials collected.