National Framework to Advance the U.S. Recycling System

America Recycles Workgroup Participants' and EPA Actions "At-a-Glance"
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Background

On November 15, 2018, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler hosted the America Recycles Day Summit, which brought together stakeholders from across the U.S. recycling system to join EPA in signing the America Recycles Pledge. All 45 signing organizations, including EPA, pledged to work together to identify specific actions to take in addressing the challenges and opportunities facing the U.S. recycling system. Through the pledge, organizations committed to leveraging their collective expertise, strengths and resources to address these challenges and opportunities. Participants included representatives from federal, local, state and tribal governments; the recycling industry; and manufacturers and brands. Following the 2018 America Recycles Summit, EPA worked with the 44 organizations that signed the America Recycles Pledge to form four workgroups aligned with four critical action areas:

- Promoting Education and Outreach
- Enhancing Materials Management Infrastructure
- Strengthening Secondary Material Markets
- Enhancing Measurement

During America Recycles Week 2019, EPA intends to release the *National Framework to Advance the U.S. Recycling System*, which will articulate the collaborative efforts undertaken to-date by the America Recycles workgroup participants as well as the path forward for future action in 2020. 2019 deliverables and announcements, organized by action area, are described below. Also included are anticipated 2020 activities that will be reflected in the *National Framework.*

Action Area 1: Promoting Education and Outreach

2019 Workgroup Participants' Priority Product

- Led by Keep America Beautiful, The Recycling Partnership, and Sustainable Packaging Coalition, workgroup participants have been compiling key messages on recycling issues for public and media audiences in the form of an infographic. This infographic will include messages that:
    - Emphasize the strength of the recycling system.
    - Articulate the range of benefits of recycling to reinforce the importance of recycling.
    - Demonstrate recycled materials have value, are of good quality, and are not diminished because the materials had a prior life.
    - Emphasize the value of recyclables as commodities (rather than waste), including the value of sustainable materials management and life-cycle analysis.

2019 EPA Actions/Announcements

- Release EPA publication featuring pledge signatory success stories and Veteran's Stories.
- Announce release of EPA publication featuring WasteWise Partner success stories in honor of the program's 25th Anniversary.
- Announce plans to evaluate the feasibility of launching a pilot educational campaign on how to decrease the amount of plastic film entering curbside collection programs by encouraging recycling through retail collection programs, anticipated in 2020.

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2020 Actions to be included in National Framework

- Develop and make available a set of common recycling messages on nationally-significant issues (e.g. plastic film/bags), building off the efforts of workgroup participants.
- Evaluate the feasibility of a national public relations campaign to lay the foundation for common messaging on nationally-significant materials or issues. The campaign could be directed at engaging youth or other audiences.
- Share information about available free, open-source, downloadable labels for recycling bins.

Action Area 2: Enhancing Materials Management Infrastructure

2019 Infrastructure Workgroup Participants' Priority Action

- Led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, workgroup participants are compiling available funding opportunities around the country for infrastructure upgrades. To help governments and private companies fund infrastructure improvements, they need to first know what resources are available. The list of resources will provide an overview of funding resources available to supplement organizations' efforts across the system.

2019 EPA Actions/Announcements

- Initiate work to map existing recycling infrastructure. This effort will begin to provide a clearer picture of the infrastructure that is currently available in this country to service millions of Americans' recycling needs. The map also will help identify where there are gaps in service and where more infrastructure is needed to enhance recycling collection and/or processing capabilities in the U.S.

2020 Actions to be included in National Framework

- Conduct and compile research on successful infrastructure investments and potential investment opportunities.
- Continue support of the "Materials Recovery for the Future" pilot project, which launched officially in February 2019.
- Share results and outcomes of the "Materials Recovery for the Future" pilot project to assess potential for replication.
- Explore the creation of incentives to encourage investment in recycling or find existing tax incentives that organizations could leverage to help materials recovery facilities (MRFs) evolve to meet the challenges posed by the evolving materials stream.

Action Area 3: Strengthening Secondary Materials Markets

2019 Markets Workgroup Participants' Priority Actions/Announcements

- Successful initiation of activities to spur market development across the country by EPA and the National Recycling Coalition through the co-sponsorship of two workshops at the Resource Recycling Conference and State of Texas Alliance for Recycling Summit.
- Announce intent to develop a toolkit for governments, MRFs and associated facilities that includes FAQs, guidance on how to conduct cost vs. benefit analysis for investments, incremental and major enhancements, planning for future materials, and contracting best practices to ensure the capability to meet current and future needs.

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2019 EPA Actions/Announcements

- Announce plans to publish a Federal Register notice requesting comments on the recommended recycled content levels and products associated with the Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG).
- Announce intent to launch a new "Recycling Demand Challenge" within EPA's WasteWise Program, modeled after the Association of Plastics Recyclers Demand Champions Program, but could be applied to all materials in the recycling stream.

2020 Actions to be included in National Framework

- Determine the success of the NRC-EPA workshops by assessing results and follow-up activities by participating states. Expand and host workshops in other parts of the country.
- Continue efforts to finalize elements of the toolkit.
- Conduct and compile research on contracts, outreach strategies, financing opportunities, etc. to determine what is working well to better understand investment opportunities.
- Explore creation of incentives to encourage investment in recycling or find existing tax incentives that organizations could leverage to help materials recovery facilities (MRFs) evolve to meet the challenges posed by the evolving materials stream.

Action Area 4: Enhancing Measurement

2019 Measurement Workgroup Participants' Priority Action(s)

- Announce workgroup participants' draft definition of "recycling," which will be shared for public comment on EPA's website.
- Publish a recycling system map that depicts the flow of materials through the system.
- Convey progress on compiling information on a range of metrics and measures, including definitions, what types of analyses these metrics and measures support, where in the recycling process these measures/metrics apply, data available, data gaps/needs, quality of data, and pros and cons of the various measures.

2019 EPA Actions/Announcements

- Continue to facilitate the state measurement data sharing program.
- Provide status update of revisions underway to the 1997 document *Measuring Recycling – A Guide for State and Local Governments*.
- Announce intent to update to EPA's Recon Tool, which calculates greenhouse gas emissions reductions associated with recycled content material.
- Announce intent to establish a national goal(s) to increase recycling by America Recycles Day 2020 with input from the America Recycles Network and the public.

2020 Actions to be included in National Framework

- Obtain public input and finalize definition of "recycling."
- Develop additional definitions associated with materials flow through the system.
- Develop a central compilation of metrics on tonnage and conversions that could include a calculation tool (e.g., EPA's WARM).
- Work with states to understand different methodologies for measuring diversion rates.
- With public input, establish a national goal for recycling activities, similar in concept to the goal of 50 percent reduction of food waste by 2030.

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- Compile results of workgroup participants' activities (definitions, material flow map, metrics, measures and goals) for integration into the *Measuring Recycling: A Guide for State and Local Governments*. Release Guide.

2019 Cross-Cutting Activities that Support Multiple Action Areas

2019 America Recycles Workgroup Participants' Product/Deliverable

- Led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, the Institute for Scrap Recycling Industries, and Keep America Beautiful, announce the launch of a publicly accessible, web-based portal that will serve as a clearinghouse for recycling tools and resources.

EPA Products

- Release the *National Framework to Advance the U.S. Recycling System*.
- EPA will continue facilitating and providing logistical support for workgroup participants' meetings and dialogues, including hosting future meetings to implement actions within the *National Framework*.
- EPA will conduct webinars and outreach on the clearinghouse to increase resources/information included in the web-based tool; provide financial support towards operation and maintenance of the clearinghouse.

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