



Tackling Trash

Engaging Staff

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THANK YOU

Waste Working Group

Reduction In Motion: Consultants

Aramark: Custodial

SSA Group: Cafe

Event Network: Gift Shop

Why Tackle Trash



ALIGN OUR PRACTICES
WITH OUR
CONSERVATION ACTION
PLAN



WORK TOWARDS OUR
GOAL OF BECOMING NET-
ZERO CARBON
EMISSIONS BY 2035



ALLOW US TO “WALK THE
WALK” AND BE AN
EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS



RELIEVE OUR WASTE
HAULERS OF EXTRA
WORK



REDUCE FINES FOR
CONTAMINATION

How do you tackle trash?

1

Step 1:
Understand
Baseline

2

Step 2:
Evaluate
Options

3

Step 3:
Try
Something

4

Step 4:
Educate
Everyone

1

Understand



1

Understand

CONTAMINATION / OPPORTUNITY RATES BY WASTE STREAM PER AREA OF OPERATION						
Area of Operation	Trash (lbs)	<- Missed Opportunity	Recycling (lbs)	<- Contamination	Compost (lbs)	<- Contamination
Animal Kitchens	119.47	16%	18.96	5%	6.9	0%
Gift Shop	20.52	0%	77.1	0%		
Guest Spaces	210.69	16%	103.16	56%		
Harbor View Room	53.85	19%	24.67	24%		
H.J.W. Waterfront	177.71	21%	48.08	66%		
Pier 3 Cafe	68.64	36%	35.41	19%	99.12	25%
Pier 4 Canteen	103.91	23%	32.68	21%	7.12	20%
Staff Back-up	104.48	16%	34.67	29%	36.23	0%



Understand

- Survey to all employees and volunteers
 - 191 employee responses
 - 54 volunteer responses

1

Understand

- Rating Questions:
 - I know what items belong in the trash, recycling, or compost bins at the National Aquarium. (scale 1-7). **Overall rating: 5.9**
 - Reducing waste often means being conscious about our purchasing decisions, and limiting what we bring to the Aquarium from outside (Ex. Food from home or nearby restaurants packaged in non-recyclable packaging, individually wrapped items, etc.). How likely are you to change your habits to help the National Aquarium reduce waste? Scale (1-4) **Overall rating: 3.2**



Understand

- Open Ended Questions
 - What is the most important thing the National Aquarium can do to reduce the amount of our waste that ends up in the landfill or incinerator?
 - What is the most important thing you can do to reduce waste while at work or volunteering?
 - Please tell us specific items that confuse you.
 - What items, if any, do you commonly see misplaced in trash, recycling, or compost?

1

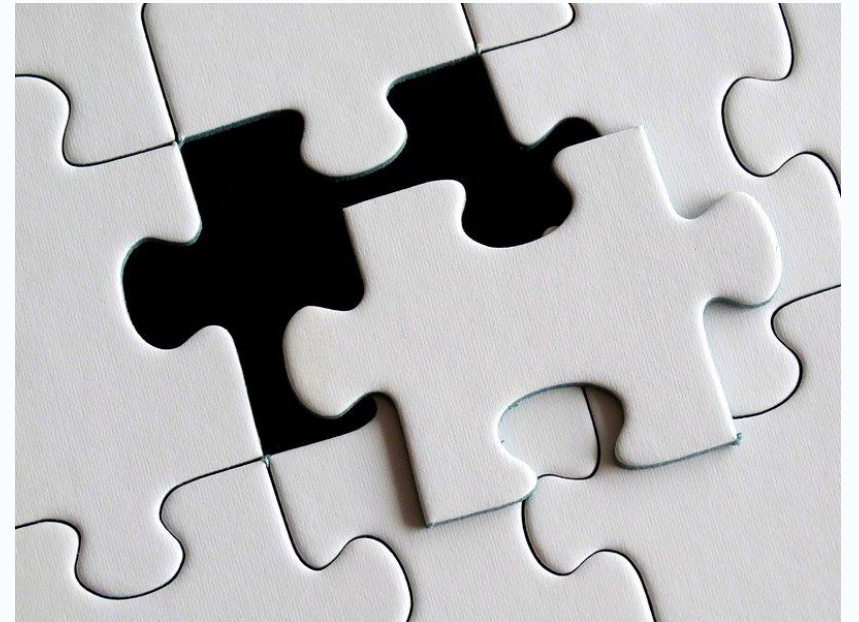
Understand

- How would you prefer to learn more about recycling and composting at the National Aquarium?
 1. Clear signage near waste and recycling bins (83%- 159 responses)
 2. Direct email to all staff and volunteers (52%- 99 responses)
 3. “How to Guide” in document library (40%- 77 responses)
 4. Post to Chatter/Aquanet/Volunteer Community (32%- 61 responses)
 5. Lunch and Learn (31%- 60 responses)
 6. Presentations to Teams (23%- 44 responses)
 7. Team meetings (16%- 30 responses)
 8. Volunteer Weekly Briefing (13%- 24 responses)

1 Understand

What staff throw away is one piece of the puzzle.

The other, is where it goes.



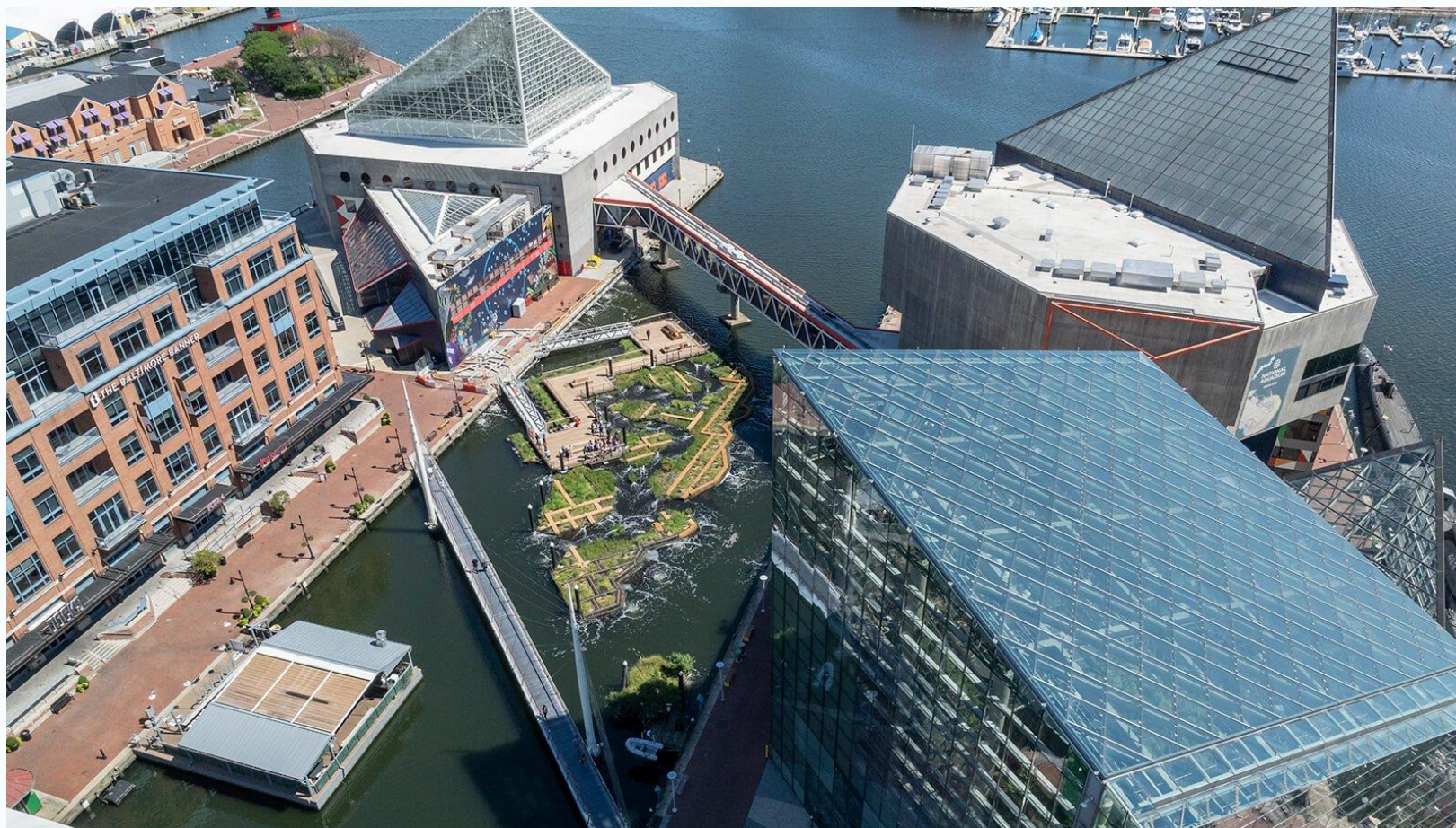
1 Understand

PURE CHAOS!

2 Evaluate

- How do we have the capacity to recycle it all?
- How do we optimize the equipment we have? Is there other equipment we could use?
- Are we using the best recycling and compost haulers?
- How will changes impact aquarium operations?

2 Evaluate

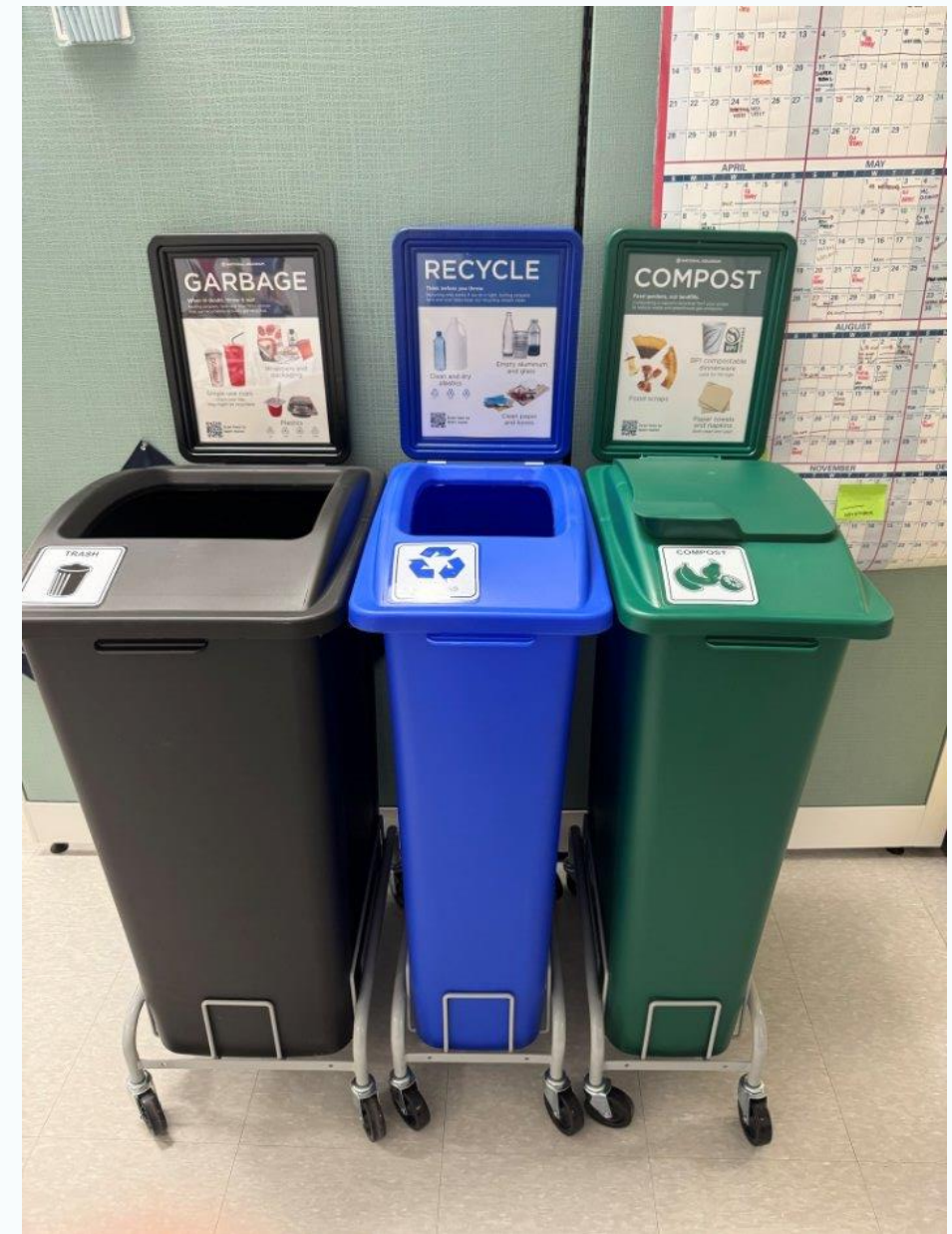


2 Evaluate

- Met with EVERY area manager and walked through their space
 - Identified number of bins
 - Discussed what bins are not needed
 - Walked through standardization plan
 - Talked about picked up schedules with Aramark (custodial partners)

3 Try Something

- Standardize Bins
 - All trash, recycle, and compost bins will look the same and be color coded
 - Black bins will be for trash, blue bins will be for recycle, and green bins will be for compost
- Standardize Bags
 - Only two bin sizes allows for us to purchase less variety of bags
 - Centralized waste stations will reduce the number of bags needed
 - Bags will be color coded to ensure they reach the proper end destination
 - Black bags will be for trash, clear bags will be for recycle, and green bags will be for compost
- New Waste Flow
 - To increase our recycling capacity



3 Try Something

- Went from 174 bins to 82
- 154 old bins were donated to second chance
- 20 old bins were repurposed
- New bins include 379.55 lbs. of recycled plastic

4 Educate

- Met with recycling and compost haulers.
- Asked them EVERY SINGLE QUESTION that was staff included in their survey responses.

4 Educate

- How would you prefer to learn more about recycling and composting at the National Aquarium?
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4

Educate



Scan here to learn more!

NATIONAL AQUARIUM.

GARBAGE

When in doubt, throw it out!
Sorting properly *here and now* helps ensure that our recyclables actually get recycled.

NATIONAL AQUARIUM.

RECYCLE

Think before you throw.
Recycling only works if we do it right. Sorting properly *here and now* helps keep our recycling stream clean.

NATIONAL AQUARIUM.

COMPOST

Feed gardens, not landfills.
Composting is nature's recycling! Sort your scraps to reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions.



Single use cups
check your lids, they might be recyclable



Scan here to learn more!



Wrappers and packaging



Plastics



Clean and dry plastics



Scan here to learn more!



Empty aluminum and glass



Clean paper and boxes



Food scraps



Scan here to learn more!



BPI compostable dinnerware
Look for the logo



Paper towels and napkins
Both clean and used

NATIONAL AQUARIUM.

4

Educate



LOOSE CARDBOARD



Take to
Pier 4



BLACK TRASH BAGS



Place in
Compactor



CLEAR RECYCLE BAGS



Empty in
Dumpster



GREEN COMPOST BAGS



Outside to
Bins



4 Educate

Remember:

- No one is perfect
- Forgive yourself
- Ask questions



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Understand

- How successful were these changes?
 - Did we reduce contamination in recycling and compost?
 - Are staff adjusting to the new flow?
 - Have the new signs been effective?
 - How has this impacted our operations?
- More waste audits!
 - Conducting waste audits in staff spaces allows us to gather feedback from teams.

1

Understand

Pre-Deployment Diversion Rate	Post-Deployment Diversion Rate
21.14%	41.86%

- How successful were these changes?
 - Staff reduced our average recycling contamination rate in all three buildings by 57% (extra credit goes to ACRC staff who reduced their recycling contamination rate by 77%)
 - Our new overall recycling contamination rate is less than 10% which is below the threshold of “contamination” defined by our waste hauler (they no longer dispose recycling as trash and charge us extra fees)
 - In 10 out of 14 staff spaces (all three buildings), we saw 0% contamination in our compost bins post-bin deployment. All of the contamination occurred in shared spaces, and this will be the focus of additional education/training efforts in 2025

2 Evaluate

- All of the compost contamination occurred in shared spaces, and this will be the focus of additional education/training efforts in 2025.
 - How do these spaces differ from other locations?
 - What are common contaminants in these areas?
 - What are our options to address this?

3 Try Something

More to come!



Surprise new step!

- The “ask questions” approach delivered!
- Led to staff asking about other items
 - Many of which could go in other already established aquarium recycling programs.
 - Staff began looking for alternatives to trash such as donating items.
 - Helped to centralize data collection of these efforts.

5

Surprise new step!



2024 Waste Diversion	
Stream	Weight (lbs.)
Batteries	101.60
Electronics	3,366.00
EPS Foam	216.85
Lightbulbs	299.00
Shoes	45.00
Pallets	24,300.00
Salt Bags	2,880.00
Wetsuits	58.00
Metals	4,628.60
Donated Items	3,697.60

Thank You



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1 Discussion- Understand

- Where is your organization at in understanding a baseline?
- What tools does your organization have to gather baseline information?

2 Discussion- Evaluate

- What are some challenges your organization has faced and how did you address them?
- What does your relationship with your waste haulers look like?
- What sort of communication or training is provided to your custodial team?

3

Discussion- Try Something

- What has your organization tried?
- What succeeded and why was it successful?
- What did not work and what could have been improved?

4 Discussion- Educate

- What staff engagement was involved in what you tried?
- How many different forms of learning are available to your staff in understanding this issue?
- Did your education extend beyond your organizations staff?