

Cardboard Recycling Collections



Collecting recyclables from businesses can be a great opportunity for a recycled material business. The first step is to assess the type of “at the curb” recycling collections already offered in the targeted community. Half of all recyclables are generated at businesses and the waste stream from businesses is usually a manageable and clean source of material. In New Mexico’s small to mid-sized communities focusing on a cardboard collections business is a natural first step.

It is important to evaluate the requirements of the local community recycling program and work out an understanding of conditions to be met for the material brought to them. If cardboard is targeted from the business environment, the next step is to determine the method in which that material will be collected. Cardboard can be big and bulky, therefore collecting this material in carts may prove to be a challenge. In many cases, a large investment of dumpsters and an appropriate truck isn’t possible. One solution is to identify an enclosed area that your customers can set out broken-down cardboard materials on a predetermined pick-up day. Ensure the material will not get blown away or create a nuisance.

To collect the material there are a variety of options, including loading the back of a pick-up truck or adding wooden or metal sides to the pick-up in order to hold more material. An enclosed utility trailer or even a horse trailer could also work well for collections. Plan for tarping or enclosing the material to prevent blow-away during travel. Breaking down boxes at time of pick-up will ensure the number of pick-ups and amount of material in the truck is maximized. Hauling businesses should check with New Mexico Environment Department: Solid Waste Bureau to determine if they need to register as a solid waste hauler.

Work with your local recycling facility partner to understand optimal drop-off times for the material and what percentage of non-cardboard material is allowed before drop-off penalties may be enforced. In most cases the community recycling center will not be able to provide a profit-share on the material as they will incur their own costs to process that material. Consider collaborating with a local public partner to explore other opportunities.



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Potential Customers

- Furniture Businesses
- Grocer or Convenience Stores
- Truck Stops
- Office Buildings
- Retailers
- Manufacturers
- Healthcare Facilities
- Restaurants
- Schools, Colleges and Universities
- State or Federal Offices
- Local Town/City/County Offices and Buildings
- Large Public or Private Events
- Prisons and Detention Centers

Equipment Needs

- Collection Vehicle Possibilities: tall-sided utility trailer, horse trailer, pickup truck with added tall caged sides or box van (Could Lease/Rent)
- For high-volume customers, a trailer to collect cardboard in to leave onsite
- Appropriate Collection Carts or Containers Per Material Type Collected
- Website, Flyers, Outreach
- Closed Toe Shoes, Gloves, Picker
- Signs
- Scale (Optional)
- Applicable licensure and insurance
- Start up costs vary widely. Check with your local NM Small Business Development Center (www.nmsbdc.org) for assistance determining costs and fees

Collection Considerations

It is essential to understand how to best collect the targeted material. For densely located business centers, identify one centralized area as the set-aside area for the targeted material, for instance cardboard. Consider building a wooden set-aside area with old pallets, a sturdy form of cover and clear signage to store materials before pick up.

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Value-Added Services: Offer business customers monthly or quarterly reporting about how much material they diverted and the economic and environmental impacts of that diversion. The EPA has an online Waste Reduction Model (WaRM) to help estimate energy savings from recycling. Training staff on source reduction and diversion best practices could be an additional service that could lead to reduced trash collection costs. Consider collecting other recyclable materials (for an additional fee) as a possibility if the transport vehicle used for collections has flexibility.

Service Fees: It is crucial to set collection service rates that will ensure cost of operations and any debt service/future equipment needs are covered. In this business model, the material will be taken to a local municipally-run recycling center, so revenue will be solely based on collection fees. If some higher-volume customers require a permanent collection trailer, consider asking them to purchase the equipment or charge a monthly rental fee.

Customer Selling Points:

Evaluate with client how they can reduce the amount of recyclable material and solid waste in the first place with waste reduction tactics. Then look at solid waste collection service and costs. In many businesses where cardboard is the primary material disposed, customers will be able to either reduce the size of their trash collection container and/or the number of times their container gets picked up.

Adding Other Materials To Collect for Recycling:

After establishing a healthy cardboard collections business, consider providing collections of other recyclable materials, be it other sorted recyclable items, yard waste/tree trimmings, food waste, electronics or larger recyclable items.



Considerations

It's important to collaborate with local solid waste and recycling management to ensure that the business may collect this material and that it does not violate any local ordinances or existing contracts in regard to who can collect or process solid waste or recycling.

If the local community is the only entity able to handle the waste stream in the area, the community could issue an RFP to work with a private entity to collect the cardboard as a partnership. Discuss with local governmental partner concepts regarding how to develop a public-private partnership. An example of how this can be accomplished is if the local government provided collection containers or set-up consolidated recycling centers in dense business areas.

Please refer to the Public-Private Partnerships & Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) fact sheet for further guidance.



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