

Strategies for addressing key barriers to EPS Recycling

During the Pilot Program, some significant barriers were identified to the successful introduction and implementation of an EPS recycling program. Some of these are discussed in the table below with some suggested strategies to address each of these identified barriers.

Planning and Priority Issues [Pilot Project]	Strategies to Address these Issues
Lack of holistic planning: <i>In the pilot program, many recipients just put the machines and cages in place without thinking through a complete plan – collection, marketing, communication, induction.</i>	Develop a comprehensive Business Plan before implementing the program.
EPS not a priority: <i>In some cases in the pilot program, EPS did not seem to be a priority with the council. As one informant said: ‘EPS is not a priority’ – not given time and budget needed – no plan – no energy – no product – lack of commitment.’</i>	For EPS recycling to be successful, adequate time and budget must be allocated to it. There is no point in even starting the project, unless it is seen as a priority for your organisation, with buy-in from all levels. Communication will be the key to this. The business case should determine if it is a priority. (see Step 2)
Underestimating the complexity of the project: <i>One recipient could not engage councils to the extent that was anticipated. Hence limited EPS was collected. The company strongly considered selling its compactor, before they successfully sourced more product.</i>	Completing all the steps in this Guide will help you to appreciate the complexity involved with the project and to plan accordingly. Comprehensive planning based on a real business case, will identify potential risks
Overestimating the yield: <i>Most grant recipients seemed to have overestimated the tonnages they would collect and process. As one key Informant said there was: ‘An overestimation of targets – Were targets a wish list to get the grant?’</i> <i>A targeted Communication Plan may have helped them to achieve their targets, but for some, Communication was not given a priority.</i>	Your preliminary research should give you a reasonable estimate of the quantities that you can expect to be collected. Senior management will expect your estimated target yields to be realistic.
Planning and Priority Issues [Pilot Project]	Strategies to Address these Issues
Lack of control over communication: <i>Some project managers do not have any control over communication, with a special department having that responsibility; e.g. the Sydney Fish Market and most councils.</i>	It is crucial that the purpose and benefits of this new program is well communicated to all stakeholders, including the Communication Department. Once the program is running, it is equally important to provide feedback about any success stories and to involve the Communication Department in communicating the success of the program.

<p>Education – confusing messages: Some organisations were concerned that the education message would be confusing for residents and businesses ‘Concern that the EPS recycling message will be misconstrued: for example, if it’s recyclable it must be able to go in the yellow lidded bin.’</p>	<p>Keep your messages simple: EPS can now be recycled in our Council. It can only be dropped off at the Drop Off Centre. It must not go in the rubbish bin or the recycling bin. The online Communication and Education materials will be able to help you with these messages.</p>
Infrastructure Issues	Strategies to Address these Issues
<p>Equipment problems: Some groups had problems with their machine. Time that the machine was off-line was a problem for some of the projects the yellow lidded bin.’</p>	<p>Be certain that the companies providing any equipment that you purchase can provide reliable and speedy repairs should machine break down. Otherwise, you may end up having to stockpile un-compacted materials, or worse having to landfill the material.</p> <p>A service contract signed at time of purchase would be advantageous.</p>
<p>Leasing or buying: Some organisations in the NSW EPA Pilot Program purchased a machine (often using the grant money) without having done a great deal (if any) research or planning. One found that after a short period of time, the program was not financially viable and sold their machine.</p>	<p>Before even considering buying a machine, undertake your research (Step 1) and complete a business plan (Step 2). For small councils, it may be more sensible to lease a machine than to buy one, and to pilot the program for a year or so before committing to the program for the long term.</p>
System Issues	Strategies to Address these Issues
<p>No buying system in place at the start of the program: In some cases, they did not have a buying system in place before the start of the program and therefore did not want to promote the service as they did not want to stockpile EPS.</p>	<p>Get all logistical arrangements in place before commencing the program.</p>
<p>Transporting issues: For many out of Sydney grantees, transport to market was an issue that had to be overcome by smart planning.</p>	<p>As for the previous issue.</p>
<p>Inadequate storage area for compacted EPS: Some organisations found that they did not have sufficient space to store the un-compacted EPS and the compacted material.</p>	<p>As for the previous two issues.</p> <p>Hot melt compacted ingots are best stored on a pallet, ready for transport. Your buyer should advise you how to best prepare your ingots and to stack them to minimise storage space. This will also make it easier to collect and remove the pallet of ingots from your storage area.</p>

Further helpful information to overcome barriers was identified through the delivery of a survey for residents and businesses within LGAs involved in the Pilot Program. Information in the Box below provides a summary of relevant data.

Survey of EPS Recycling Pilot Program 2013

The NSW EPA commissioned this survey in 2013 to help them to understand community awareness of the availability of Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) recycling services across 12 local government areas in NSW. This follows completion of a joint program with the Australian Packaging Covenant (APC) in 2012-13 which provided grant funding to 17 organisations in NSW to enable the installation of recycling infrastructure and services in their local areas.

The survey was conducted by an external consultant during December 2013, using two methods for approaching survey participants: one method involved direct postal survey (or in one LGA an emailed survey form), with a paid return envelope included; and the other promoted the survey in mass media and other local communication mechanisms (methodology known as 'crowd sourcing'). This was to ensure a spread of responses which would represent the views of the approximately 279,000 households and 58,000 businesses in the 11 of the LGAs who were involved in the grants program (one Council was not involved in the survey). In all, 495 responses were received to the survey, with 38 from businesses and 457 from residents. 437 responses were received in response to method 1 (mail/email) while 58 responses were received via method 2 (crowd source).

Findings of the survey

The survey report provides a quantitative analysis and findings against the key research objective – *to gain an understanding of the level of awareness of availability of EPS recycling in areas where grant funding was provided* – and offers commentary about key findings.

The survey results reveal low overall levels of awareness of EPS recycling services in local areas across NSW, with just 20% responding that they were aware of the existence of a service in their local area. Randwick City Council stands out as having the lowest level of awareness across all LGAs with just one of 44 respondents saying they were aware of the service. In Albury almost 30% of people who responded were aware of the service.

The results indicate higher awareness of EPS recycling services among businesses, with 37% of businesses reporting knowledge of an EPS recycling service in their local area, compared to 19% of residents.

Ninety percent of respondents reported having received goods packaged in polystyrene in the last 12 months. Sixty percent reported receiving goods once or twice: 25% about monthly; 4% once a week or so; and 1% every day, while 10% report receiving none at all.

The results of the survey indicate that the more regularly a person received goods packaged in polystyrene, the more likely they were to know that there was a polystyrene recycling service in their local area.

Sixty percent of those who are aware of the EPS recycling service in their local area have used the services.