

# **Presenting the Business Case for Healthcare Plastics Recycling**

How to Speak to Healthcare Executives about Recycling Plastics at your Hospital

## Starting a Plastics Recycling Program at Your Hospital

Healthcare facilities in the United States generate approximately 6,600 tons of waste per day<sup>1</sup>. It is estimated that between 20 and 25 percent of that 6,600 tons can be attributed to plastic packaging and plastic products<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, 85 percent of the waste generated is non-infectious<sup>3</sup>. This potential for plastics recycling in hospitals is significant to both environmental and human health impacts.

While hospitals have been champions of recycling for decades, efforts have largely focused on food service and administrative functions. The challenges that hospitals are facing now are how to successfully integrate recycling practices into a patient care setting, and understanding the economic, regulatory, resourcing and infrastructure nuances that come with it.

Focused on clean, non-infectious healthcare plastic waste materials, the Healthcare Plastics Recycling Council (HPRC) has developed this guide to help recycling advocates develop and present the business case of healthcare plastics recycling to hospital executives. In this document you'll find insights and tools that can be used to demonstrate business case applicability through environmental, financial and social proof points, enabling relevant links between healthcare plastics recycling and hospital-specific goals. Lastly, two case studies are provided to offer recent examples of how other hospitals have garnered support for and have managed implementation of plastics recycling efforts.

## Acknowledgements

The content presented herein is based on data and lessons learned from plastic waste recycling pilot study work and from valuable insight provided by Stanford University Medical Center and Ascension, who serve in an advisory role to HPRC.

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<sup>1</sup> Kaplan, Susan, Blair Sadler, Kevin Little, Calvin Franz, and Peter Orris. "Can Sustainable Hospitals Help Bend the Health Care Cost Curve?", The Commonwealth Fund, Issue Brief, November 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, B., M. Ellenbecker, and R. Moure-Eraso. "Analyses of the Recycling Potential of Medical Plastic Wastes." Waste Management (2002): 461-470

<sup>3</sup> Grogan, Terry. "Solid Waste Reduction in US Hospitals." Hospital Engineering & Facilities Management (2003): 88-91.

## Checklist

In preparing to develop and deliver a proposal for initiating a plastics recycling program at your facility, you can use the following checklist as a guideline on how to work through the process and specific considerations.

### Step 1: Understand your Audience

- ✓ Who is the ultimate decision maker? Who will sign approvals for the funding and resources needed for to implement a plastics recycling program at your hospital? *Example: Department Head, Green Team*
- ✓ Who are the other stakeholders? Which people might influence the decision maker or affect the outcome of the program? *Example: Facilities, Clinical Leaders in the OR, Nursing Floors, Purchasing/Materials Management*

For each of the identified decision makers and stakeholders, try to understand what their goals are. They will likely be driven by financial goals. However, especially for non-profits, there is a combination of “mission and margin” and there may be someone within the organization that has a passion for sustainability projects. Think through the types of anticipated support or objections you may run into. Specifically, some considerations include:

- ✓ Are there any local, state or federal regulations that may require you to recycle?
- ✓ What are similar peer facilities doing in your area?
- ✓ Does your hospital have a corporate policy or statement on environmental commitments? *Example: zero landfill waste or waste reduction goals*

While you may not immediately know the answers to the above, you can do a little investigative work by talking with colleagues and peers in professional organizations, or conducting internet searches.

### Step 2: Find a High Level Champion

Use your network (or start creating one!) to find someone who supports the idea of sustainable solutions and/or who has experience getting new sustainability projects approved. This person may be able to help you navigate through the project approval process based on previous experience. Ideas on where to find a champion include:

- ✓ Asking a current formal or informal mentor
- ✓ Talking to colleagues and asking them for recommendations on 1-2 people you should talk to. Using this method, you will likely find someone and you may expand your network in the process.

### Step 3: Understand your Institution's Financials

- ✓ What resources will you need? Keep in mind that capital, expenses and people often have different approval processes for investment.
- ✓ What is the optimal timing for your proposal? Consider the fiscal year that your organization uses and when the budgeting process typically takes place. *Example: if your fiscal year begins on July 1, decisions on where to invest for the coming next year likely take place several months prior.*
- ✓ What could affect the prioritization of your proposal? Are there other investments that may “compete” with your project?
- ✓ How will your proposal tie into key performance indicators set by your hospital? Will your project impact operating profit, expenses per adjusted patient day, or patient satisfaction?

#### **Step 4: Build your Hospital-Specific Business Case**

Use the tools provided in this guide to create a business case specific to your hospital.

- ✓ Be succinct. If the business case is more than one page long, provide a one-paragraph Executive Summary at the beginning.
- ✓ Be accurate, especially when it comes to cost. Use the formula in the presentation template to help estimate costs associated with implementing a plastics recycling program at your hospital. Use your hospital's standard financial metrics when presenting the cost analysis.

#### **Step 5: Establish a Meeting Time**

Depending on the meeting participants, it may take some time to align calendars. Begin the scheduling process early so that you build in enough time to develop and rehearse your presentation. Ideally, your presentation should be given in person versus a conference call.

#### **Step 6: Create your Presentation**

Successful presentations are understandable, memorable, and emotional<sup>4</sup>.

- ✓ Keep it short--aim for 1-2 document pages or 3-4 presentation slides. Assume that you will only have 15 minutes of attention from the executive leadership team. If you know you have a "detail person" in the room, you can place additional information in an appendix, or consider sending out a pre-read prior to the meeting.
- ✓ Keep it clear and concise. Avoid jargon and use language that the executive leadership team is familiar with and will understand.
- ✓ Limit the amount of words in the presentation slides, instead using images and data to convey key concepts. Create talking points in the notes section for yourself.

#### **Step 7: Practice, Practice, Practice**

- ✓ Reach out to a friend or colleague to practice your presentation.

#### **Step 8: Present your Proposal with Confidence**

- ✓ Be prepared to answer questions.

### **Supporting Tools**

To help you develop and present a business case for healthcare plastics recycling to decision makers and hospital executives, we have developed the following tools:

- **Presentation Template – Expanding Community Commitment through Recycling. The Opportunity and Benefits of Healthcare Plastics Recycling**
  - This template can be used by recycling advocates to present the business case for healthcare plastics recycling to Healthcare Executives within their own organization or in other organizations.
  - The template can be amended to allow use of branding of the presenters organization.
- **Presentation Template – The Opportunity: Healthcare Plastic Recycling in Clinical & Patient Care Areas**

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<sup>4</sup> Forbes Magazine: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/carminnegallo/2013/02/22/the-three-basic-secrets-of-all-successful-presentations>

- This template can be used by recycling advocates to present the business case for implementing a healthcare plastics recycling program to decision makers within their organization.
  - The template can be amended to allow use of branding of the presenters organization.
  - Slides 4 – 9 require the user to include information relevant to their own organization. Bullets where information is required to be inserted is identified using square brackets ([ ]). Additional information is also noted in the speaker notes section.
- [Guide to Developing a Business Case](#)
  - [Key Results from 2014 HPRC Plastics Recycling Survey of U.S. Hospitals](#)

## Case Study #1 – Stanford Health Care

Located in Palo Alto, California, Stanford Health Care is a 613-bed, academic medical center with over 7,000 staff annually supporting 26,000 inpatient visits and over 1,000,000 ambulatory care visits.

Stanford Health Care launched its first clinical recycling initiative in its Main Operating Room in September 2011. Nursing staff created demand for clinical recycling programs; strong clinical involvement and grassroots effort help pushed the program forward. The Ambulatory Surgery Center followed suit in November of that year. Preparing to further expand the recycling program throughout a number of procedural and ancillary settings, Stanford Health Care partnered with the Healthcare Plastics Recycling Council (HPRC) in the summer of 2012 to conduct a pilot study. The program was implemented across all inpatient units in 2014 and 2015.

Beyond staff demand, there were additional drivers to implementing a clinical recycling program at Stanford Health Care that included increasing costs associated with sending waste to landfill and a City Zero Waste Ordinance in 2005, which set the goal to divert waste from landfill.

Krisanne Hanson, Director of Sustainability at Stanford describes how the program became a reality. “The Zero Waste ordinance and financial benefit of recycling and staff engagement created the business case, so the next step was to identify equipment needed to support both a recycling and a composting waste stream. I presented a capital request to the Vice President of Support Services, which included compactors for the dock area and recycled materials collection containers. The request was reviewed and approved by the capital committee.”

Support from the City of Palo Alto removed one of the challenges faced by many hospitals; the City implemented a franchise agreement with Greenwaste, Inc., with financial incentives to support multiple waste streams being collected for recycling, composting, plus construction and demolition waste. Staff engagement has also been important to the ongoing success of the program. “There is a sense of relief when clinical staff realize the recycling program is about to be activated in their area,” explains Krisanne. “They are still as excited today as when the program started in 2011.” Newly arriving interns, residents and clinical staff expect recycling programs to be available in the work place, particularly Millennial’s who are more environmentally aware.

As the recycling program is activated in each area, Krisanne and her colleague Erika Kimble, RN, work with the department manager to identify a “Green Champion” for every shift. This Champion provides training on the recycling program and ensures proper segregation is being carried out; as Krisanne notes they are an extra pair of “Quality Eyes”.

However, because Stanford is a teaching hospital, there is a new influx of interns and residents each summer; it is important that new staff receive training on the recycling program. Krisanne and Erika have ensured training is included in on-boarding materials for all units with an activated recycling program. Once all units have been activated, the recycling programs will be included in materials for both the hospital New Employee Orientation and annual re-education training.

The recycling program at Stanford Health Care is expected to be fully implemented in 2015. The next challenge will be to expand the program to off-campus locations, which have their own unique challenges and encompass several different municipalities with new franchise agreements.

To monitor the results of the sustainable waste management program, Stanford Health Care tracks 26 separate and distinct waste streams and in 2014 achieved a 38% diversion rate.



## Case Study #2 – Ascension

Programs developed to recycle materials from clinical settings progress through multiple stages of implementation and measurement. Once Group Purchasing Organizations complete negotiations and sign contracts with waste management vendors, programs related to training and communications become the responsibility of an Environmental Stewardship Leader.

At Ascension, this person is Lois Sechrist, Environmental Stewardship Senior Analyst. Ascension is the largest nonprofit health system in the United States and the world's largest Catholic health system ([www.ascension.org](http://www.ascension.org)).

Ascension's Group Purchasing Organization, The Resource Group, executes contracts for Ascension goods and services, including engaging a waste service management company that implemented a system-wide program for five categories of waste: Solid, Recycling, Regulated Medical, Hazardous and Pharmaceutical Waste. Now, with the program framework in place, Ascension can begin investigating the environmental benefits. Working with over 100 hospitals across 23 states, it is Lois' role to:

- Coordinate with environmental services managers and the waste service management company to educate clinical staff at each hospital location.
- Communicate the nature of the program, including categories of waste, collection methods and procedures to safely comply with codes and regulations.
- Review the tools available for program training and metrics.
- Utilize an on-line data portal to monitor hospital performance by tracking weight of material by waste category.

Another key service Lois provides is to advocate and promote waste management programs. Lois explains, "With a centrally managed waste management system, I can demonstrate how increasing the amounts of material recycled in our clinical areas compares to national averages. Using these metrics as a guideline, we will use training and communication programs to target specific areas for improvement. I'd like to create friendly competition among the hospitals to drive goal setting and improve performance over time."

Setting goals and measuring performance serves as a foundation for tracking progress and celebrating success. Clinical recycling requires advocates to promote programs and take full advantage of useful tools and metrics provided by Practice Greenhealth, HPRC and other industry organizations. Environmental Stewardship Leaders also play a role in influencing and encouraging vendors to improve the industry as a whole. Through the clinical recycling program, Ascension demonstrates the significant volume of high quality, uncontaminated plastics generated by healthcare facilities. Lois states, "We're helping the industry to think about healthcare plastics in a different way. Consistent, high value plastics are beneficial to the recycling market. Currently, a large volume of plastic and paper goes into regulated medical waste (i.e. the red bag). Training associates which materials can go into recycling will reduce trash sent to landfill and incinerators and help reduce waste disposal costs over time. As part of the clinical recycling program, Ascension will train our staff to keep uncontaminated products out of the solid and regulated medical waste streams and into the appropriate recycling streams."

Messaging and communications are key components to Ascension's program at all levels of the organization and strongly tie to their Mission of Care of the Earth. Clinicians have an interest in environmental stewardship programs and their connection to health outcomes. Value to the community resonates with associates at all levels of the organization. Keeping the community cleaner, reducing the amount of waste sent to local landfills and incinerating fewer materials are all visible ways hospitals strive to reduce their environmental footprint.

The Environmental Stewardship Leader needs to determine effective communication tools to advertise programs, training and success stories. Identifying the right team at the beginning of the decision-making and implementation process is crucial. This is challenging, because each hospital may have a different person acting in the Leader role. Large-scale operations with numerous facilities add more complexity, as managing a clinical waste program may be only one category of work for the Environmental Stewardship Leader. Finally, it is necessary for the Leader to devote adequate time to clinical recycling in order to reap the program's benefits.

Executing a successful clinical recycling effort requires planning, coordination among a complex team and numerous hours of preparation and training. Once the initial program is in place, continued improvements and enhancements can be expanded to other departments and functions within the hospital. Hospitals must include the Environmental Stewardship Leader in the clinical recycling project at the outset in order to take full advantage of the Leader's insights and expertise.



HPRC is a private technical coalition of industry peers across healthcare, recycling and waste management industries seeking to improve recyclability of plastic products within healthcare. HPRC is made up of brand leading and globally recognized members including Baxter, BD, Bemis Healthcare, Cardinal Health, DuPont, Eastman Chemical Company, Halyard Health, Johnson & Johnson, Medtronic, Ravago and SABIC. The council convenes biannually at meetings hosted by an HPRC member that include facility tours to further learning and knowledge sharing opportunities through first-hand demonstration of best practices in sustainable product and packaging design and recycling processes. For more information, visit [www.hprc.org](http://www.hprc.org).