Beyond 34 Task 1.0: Current State Assessment Template

Rob and Melani Walton Sustainability Solutions Service
Arizona State University

U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION

BEYOND 34

PROCESS OVERVIEW

The Current State Assessment (CSA) evaluates the waste and recycling systems and diversion rate for a municipality. The Current State Assessment should provide a holistic overview of the material and system flows in the waste and recycling systems, how the municipality's recycling system operates, why it operates this way, and who are the key stakeholders that can impact this system. Additionally, local, national, and global politics and markets should be understood and how these impact the municipal recycling system.

The subtasks of Task 1 should inform the Current State Assessment, as the Current State Assessment will be a primary resource that will inform the rest of the Beyond 34 process. Figure 1 below illustrates an overview of the Current State Assessment process flow as well as the potential inputs and outputs

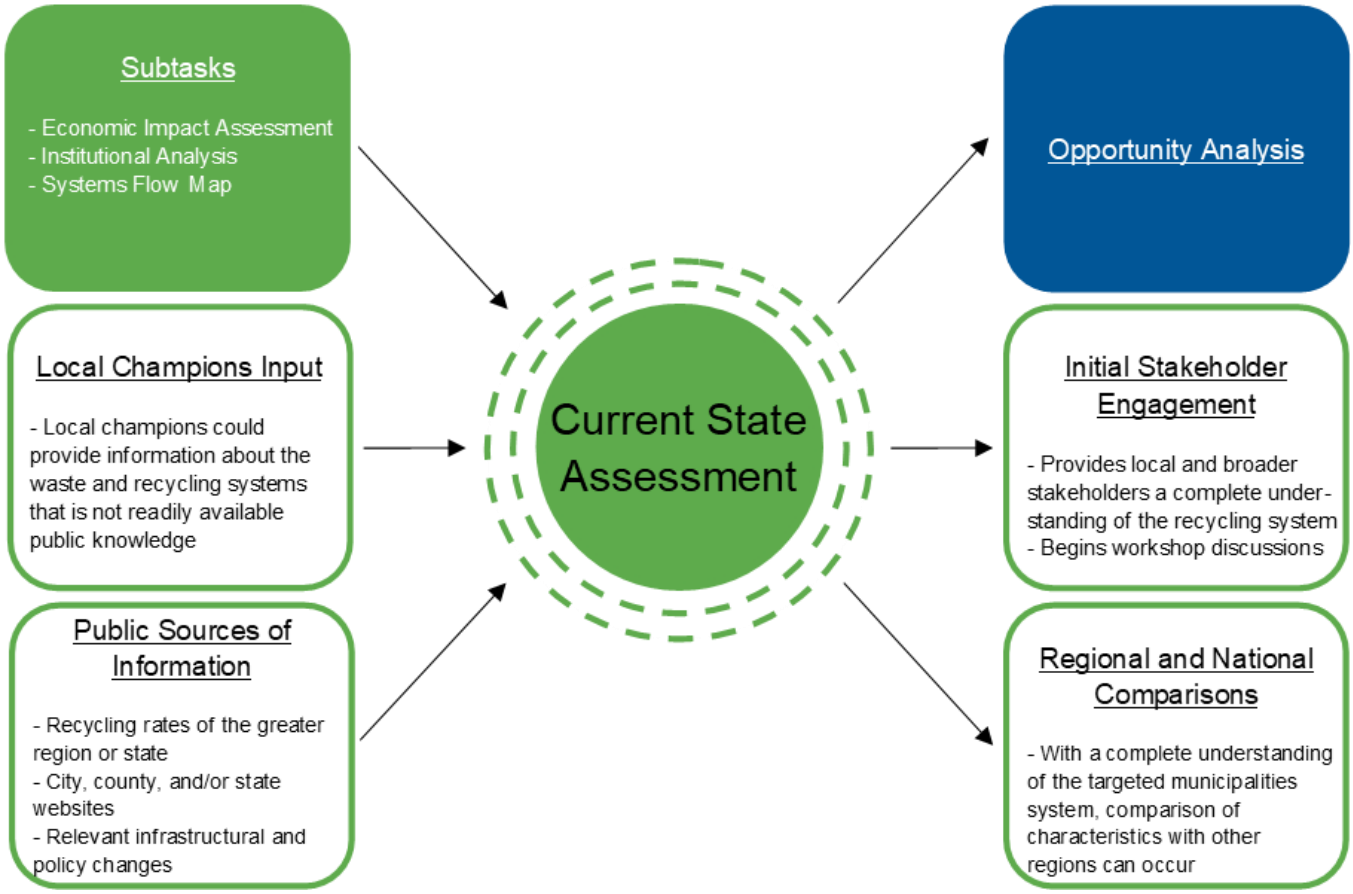


Figure 1: Current State Assessment Inputs and Outputs

CURRENT STATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS FLOW

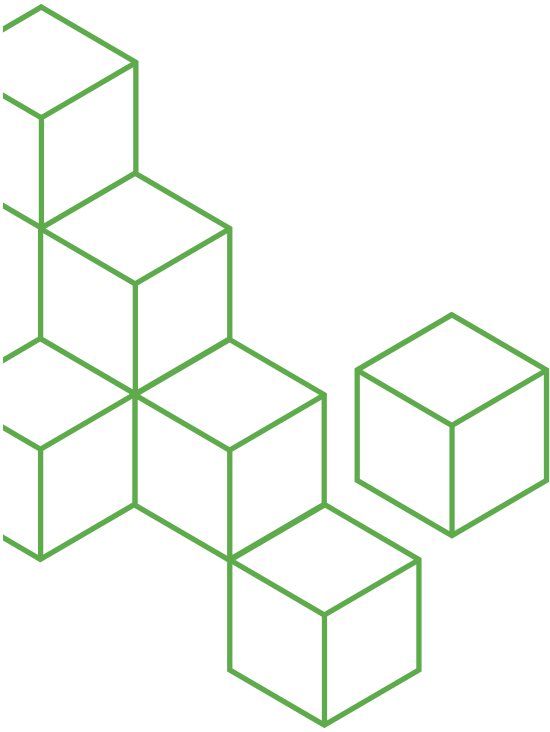
- ✓ Identify characteristics that are important to the targeted region's recycling system
- ✓ Collect and synthesize current state information
  - >>>> Primary sources (interviews with local champions)
  - >>>> Secondary sources (websites and news articles)
- ✓ Incorporate the major finding from the subtasks and describe how these findings impact the current state
- ✓ Once the document is completed, share the Current State Assessment with key stakeholders

UNDERSTANDING THE REGION

The initial focal point for the Current State Assessment should be to gain a high level of understanding of the characteristics of the recycling system in the region. There can be an innumerable amount of characteristics that are relevant to a region's recycling system, however in this assessment five broad categories have been identified:

1. People and Place: Focuses on the demographics of the region and impactful stakeholders.
2. Government and Policy: Focuses on local governmental agencies, private actors, and the political implications that directly or indirectly impact the waste and recycling systems. This should be partially informed by the Institutional Analysis subtask.

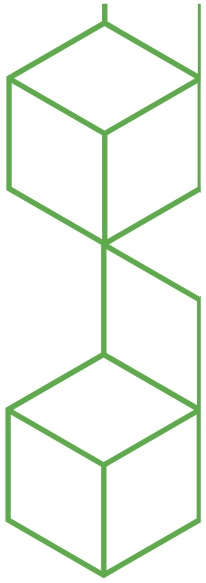
3. Economic Considerations: Focuses on the evaluation of economic opportunities and barriers that exist within the municipality and the greater region. This should be partially informed by the Economic Impact Assessment subtask.
4. Waste and Recycling Infrastructure: Focuses on how the existing infrastructure supports (or hinders) recycling in the region, including operational, collection and processing systems.
5. Recycling Performance: What is the current and historical performance of recycling in the region? This should be partially informed by the Systems Flow Map subtask.



EXAMPLES OF POTENTIALLY RELEVANT CHARACTERISTICS

(number in parenthesis refers to assessment categories above)

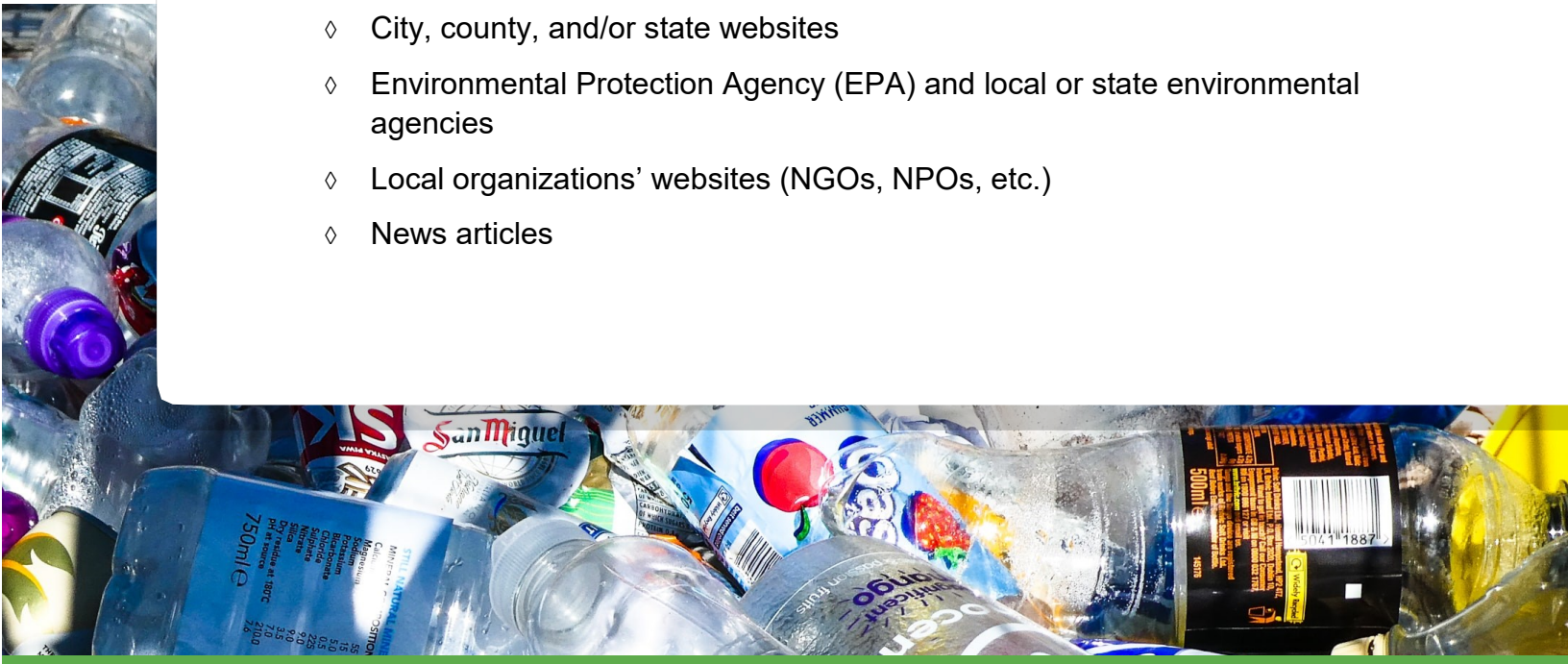
- Local recycling NGOs (1)
- Common languages (1)
- Increased diversion goals (2)
- Climate or CO_2 goals (2)
- Funding for education (2)
- Material bans (2)
- Recycling policies (2)
- Existence of a pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) program (2)
- Barriers to a PAYT program (3)
- Current landfill tipping fees (3)
- Cost to citizens to recycle (3)
- End markets for materials (3)
- Recycling costs and revenues (3, 5)
- Collection costs (3)
- Public/private ownership of the material recovery facility (MRF) (4)
- Is the recycling program op-in or opt -out? (4)
- Collection systems (4)
- Waste characterization (4)
- Current diversion rate (5)
- Current contamination rate (5)
- Current residential participation rate (5)
- Current commercial participation rate (5)



POTENTIAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Finding reliable and up-to-date sources for the Current State Assessment may be a challenge depending on the municipality and the region. Some potential sources for information include:

- Direct communication with local champions and stakeholders
- Local recycling professionals
- City, county, and/or state websites
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and local or state environmental agencies
- Local organizations' websites (NGOs, NPOs, etc.)
- News articles



MATERIAL FLOWS

The waste and recycling systems dictate the physical flow of material within a region. The System Flow Map subtask provides the volumes of the material processed in the region and a breakdown of the specific material categories. Understanding the flow of each material category, the economics and the stakeholders involved will establish a baseline of the current state and provide the ability to explore opportunities to reduce cost and/or increase diversion.

CURRENT STATE ASSESSMENT ORGANIZATION

Current State Assessment provides an opportunity to begin stakeholder engagement. As systems and process flows are evaluated, it is the engagement with stakeholders that will provide a deeper understanding of the current system and potential opportunities. As such, the Current State Assessment should be created in such a way that the initial stakeholders can be easily engaged and educated throughout the process. Some considerations when creating the Current State Assessment may include the order in which information is presented and what specific information to include.

EXAMPLES OF CURRENT STATE ASSESSMENT ORGANIZATION

1. Current State of Recycling in (State), (County), and (Targeted Region)
2. Stakeholder Analysis (supplemented by Institutional Analysis)
3. Economic Considerations (supplemented by Economic Impact Assessment)
4. Summary of Findings

Actions that occur at the county or state level will likely be impactful on the waste and recycling systems of the targeted region as well. The information gathered should become increasingly more detailed as the focus narrows down from the state to the municipal level. State level information should include the state level diversion rate (where available), recycling processing infrastructure and policies impacting the recycling system. Municipal level information should include residential, commercial, and industrial waste generation, recycling and processing infrastructure, collection protocols, policies and municipal objectives.

The Current State Assessment will likely serve as an introduction for stakeholders while also providing more contextualized details and a deeper understanding of the current state. As such, an overview of the stakeholder analysis from the Institutional Analysis should aid in the holistic understanding of the current state for both current and future stakeholders. Additionally, the economics of the municipalities recycling system should be understood. This may include more than the collections fees and disposal or selling of the material. For example, understanding how trash collection and disposal fees compare to the fees for recycling and other diversion programs could provide insight into new opportunities. Additionally, some municipalities have built in incentives that support financial incentives for increasing the amount of material that is diverted from the landfill.