



# NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

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## Why is Recycling Important?

Statewide waste reduction and recycling is the most prudent way to manage the increasing waste in Nebraska. The EPA defines [recycling](#) as the series of activities by which discarded materials are collected, sorted, processed, and converted into raw material and returned to the economic mainstream for the production of new products. This does not include the use of these materials as a fuel substitute or for energy production.

- 1) Recycling creates an estimated [9 times more jobs](#) than landfilling.
- 2) Resource conservation protects the good life for Nebraska.
- 3) A circular economy is achieved when materials are returned to the economy and used efficiently as opposed to the linear economy (take, make, use, dispose) approach that depends on landfills.
- 4) Landfills are necessary to reduce waste in the environment and help prevent disease transmission, but we must not rely on them as the only method of waste management. Landfills take land out of agriculture production, can contaminate the environment, produce greenhouse gas emissions, devalue surrounding areas, and more. Municipal solid waste landfills are the [third-largest source](#) of human-related methane emissions in the US.

### Recycling Impact in Nebraska

Economic Impact	\$495,182,700
Jobs	2,218
Wages	\$127,959,800
Taxes Generated	\$41,738,300

*Table 1 Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries 2021  
[Economic Impact Report](#)*

## State of Recycling

A [survey](#) by the NE Recycling Council found that one third of communities do not offer recycling due to factors such as lack of hauler options, cost, and contamination.

- 1) Many communities are motivated to recycle but lack resources or funds. Recycling costs are typically absorbed by the municipality which is disproportionately more expensive in rural areas.
- 2) Grants from the Nebraska Department of Environment & Energy (NDEE) and Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) are available to assist recycling and composting efforts but are limited. Each year around 6 communities receive [Nebraska Recycling Council Equipment Grants](#) funded by NET.

## Needs

- 1) Recycling captures the economic value of waste materials, and a waste characterization study details the composition of the waste stream. Conducting regular studies is best practice. Nebraska's [most recent study](#) was published in 2009. Iowa conducts this research every 5-6 years to identify changes in the waste stream, determine market development, appropriately allocate funds, address persistent issues, and support economic development. Drastic change can happen in just a few years and current data is needed to effectively manage waste materials.
- 2) NRC recommends the [Hub and Spoke](#) model to reduce recycling costs for rural areas but a statewide waste reduction and recycling plan is necessary.