



STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

JANUARY 22, 2025

The overall strategic focus of this planning session was to determine what bold actions over the next five years will strengthen our collective capacity, foster collaboration among members and partners, and drive impactful change for sustainable materials management in Nebraska.

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NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUS

What bold actions can we take together over the next five years to strengthen our collective capacity, foster collaboration among members and partners, and drive impactful change for sustainable materials management in Nebraska?

PROCESS

The process was a modified version of Technology of Participation's Strategic Planning process and incorporated additional methods from Liberating Structures and Appreciative Inquiry. The process was facilitated by Greta Leach, Principal with Mission Matters.

NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

The Nebraska Recycling Council is a statewide, member-based, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Their mission is to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery in Nebraska. Their vision is a future in which all materials are reserved for their highest and best use and landfill disposal is the last resort. Their wish is to protect Nebraska's good life for future generations.

Nebraska Recycling Council advocates for local and statewide policies that improve outcomes in recycling and composting programs. They provide materials, management, technical assistance, education, and resources for businesses, municipalities, schools and institutions.

MISSION | VISION

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Nebraska Recycling Council is to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery in Nebraska.

OUR VISION

To be the authority on sustainable materials management in Nebraska for a future where all materials and resources are reserved for their highest and best use and landfills are the last resort.

CONTEXT & ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

What do we need to know or understand about our current circumstances to plan well for our future?

- I. Connection to mission and vision
- II. Stakeholder Engagement: Community Partner listening sessions
- III. Past/Present/Future scan

TAKING STOCK

- **Connection to mission and vision** - Stakeholders engaged in appreciative inquiry conversations about what makes NRC special and why NRC's work matters.

Finish the sentence: Nebraska Recycling Council's work matters because:

- No other entity acts like a bridge like we do
- Hate putting things in the trash!
- People want to recycle and don't know how
- It ensures accessibility – especially in rural!
- We need to educate people because they will recycle more
- A pivotal point where people want true sustainability — people, planet, profit
- It's an avenue to make a difference (esp. commercial construction)
- Recycling is constantly evolving, policy too! NRC is a resource.
- We are reaching a global tipping point on the amount of waste produced – NRC is critical

STAKEHOLDER SESSION

- **Stakeholder Engagement: Community Partner listening sessions** - During a session with stakeholders, participants reviewed the stakeholder session summary and identified the most important recommendations below

Recommendations – Stakeholder Session

Diversify funding

Focus on projects that move the needle long-term

Rebuild the value of membership in NRC

Build true collaboration and partnerships

Provide a contact list for waste diversion based on geography

Activate members with advocacy calls to action (e.g. emails)

Add an economist to our team who can help draw a larger picture of economic benefits

Become known as ‘the expert’ — especially to industry

Customize educational offerings to audiences with dynamic and relevant resources

Streamlining

PAST / PRESENT / FUTURE

- **Past/Present/Future scan** - Stakeholders engaged in a discussion to examine the factors at play in their strategic plan. Responses are listed:

Past		Present		Future	
Accomplishments	Setbacks	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Risks
Still here!	Turnover	Fresh slate — ability to change	Lack of institutional knowledge in staff	Succession planning	Cost
ED choices — driven and focused	Funding	Progress from the past brought us here	Staffing turnover	Increased membership	Staff sizing
Charm	Wage caps	Board knowledge	Limited ability to be competitive with wages	Membership's willingness to help	Declining membership
Feedlot	Lack of collaboration	Staff experience — skill matches roles	Need more unrestricted dollars	Utilizing networking	Legislative changes
Haley testifying	Decrease in membership	Clear vision/shared vision	Lacking legislation in state	Legislative changes	Funding: NDEE & NET
General outreach and content	COVID	Climate of global society	Lack of comprehensive data (but improvements have been made)	Activities that tie into new strategic plan (coordinated effort)	Staff turnover
5-year data set	Loss of Haley	Upstream thinking		More board engagement (more board members?)	Loss of board members with institutional knowledge
Conference Growth	Remote working / prior leadership decisions	Buy-in across stakeholders		Identify board member strengths — board member tasks	
NECC	Recruit board members based on map of Nebraska	Driven leadership		Building evergreen projects	
Survived Covid and leadership changes	Advisory board utilization / value limited	NRC now provides "data"			
Paper to digital	Loss of committees				
Network stability	Loss of focus on strategic planning				
Toolkit	Change in tech industry				
Waste Char study					
Reputation					

PRACTICAL VISION

What do we want to see in place in three years, as a result of our actions?

The group engaged in a creative ideation exercise called a Consensus Workshop to incorporate ideas from all individuals and organize them into nine categories by similar intent. Stakeholders contributed ideas to the exercise.

Diverse funding enabling
organizational freedom

Increased membership base who
are active & engaged partners

NRC is a key advisor to policy
decisions

Comprehensive comm plan
meeting the needs of all
stakeholders

Right people, right seats, right
price, right time

NRC is recognized as leading
expert on recycling in Nebraska

Understanding of infrastructure
& end market

Board active & with
well-defined role

Streamlined strategic focus

PRACTICAL VISION

What do we want to see in place in three years, as a result of our actions?

Note: The below vision details are product of brainstorming and are neither final nor comprehensive. They were used to surface the priority categories of the Practical Vision.

Diverse funding enabling organizational freedom

- Sustainable funding
- Diversify funding stream
- Develop private funding (Individual Foundation Corp)
- Staff members paid for waste audits
- Unrestricted funding increased
- Independent contracts for funds
- Identify value for NDEE/gov for contract

Comprehensive comm plan meeting the needs of all stakeholders

- Focused communication
 - Members
 - Spectrum
- Public engagement and education
- Comm plan

Understanding of infrastructure & end market

- Attract in-state glass or tire processing facilities
- Existing manufacturers using reused materials
- Proactive recruit in state end market

Increased membership base who are active & engaged partners

- A stable and supportive membership base
- Increasing membership
- Empower membership
- Strong membership base

Right people, right seats, right price, right time

- Target hiring staff – support advance plan
- Staff paid at market value
- Growth in staff
- More specific staff for identified roles

Board active & with well-defined role

- Re engagement of committees
- Empower board — proactive, not reactive
- Board has active role

NRC is a key advisor to policy decisions

- Legislation that provides recycling dollars/infrastructure
- EPR!! Extended pro-ducer responsibility
- Statewide access to recycling
- More engagement with county commissioners and legislators

NRC is recognized as leading expert on recycling in Nebraska

- An outward facing comprehensive mapping tool
- Leading data source
- Regional specific data for waste diversion efforts
- Become important to Nebraska (Legacy)
- Increased awareness of Construction and Demolition opportunities
- Well known to Nebraska industry
- Increased statewide awareness (education)
- Advising on purchasing procured materials

Streamlined strategic focus

- Strategic focus for lens of everything
- Streamlined systems (internal processes)

CRITICAL BLOCKS

What could be standing in the way of reaching our vision?

Stakeholders engaged in facilitated discussion to identify blocks and barriers that could prevent them from realizing the vision. The workshop was an exercise in objectively identifying any negative patterns or issues that could prevent success. The team identified the following critical blocks:

- Reliance on grant funding blocks freedom, limits capacity
- Staff capacity and turnover inhibits ability to expand services
- Unclear name, inconsistent past and misinformation around recycling blocks data sharing and membership growth
- Unwillingness to share info inhibits collaboration
- Nebraska culture not aligned/aware of economic benefits/changing nature of legislation blocks policy changes

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

What actions — innovative and time-tested — will deal with our blocks and make progress on our vision?

Stakeholders applied insights gained in the Critical Blocks conversation to their Practical Vision. The group came to consensus around the following Strategic Directions to guide programs and operations.



IMPLEMENTATION BRAINSTORMING

What does success look like and how might we measure it?

Focus and Streamline Services and Programs	Strengthen Organizational Capacity	Grow and Engage the Membership Base	Expand and Diversify Funding Sources	Position NRC as a Policy Advisor & Recycling Expert
• Focus on the highest impact programs that do the most good for our partners, backed by evaluation and impact measurement. • Reduce duplication and inefficiencies through consolidation and streamlining.	• A fully staffed organization with salaries at market-value based on comparable nonprofits	• Grow membership base to more than 100 members • Continuous growth in reciprocal engagement with partners.	• Expand the number of institutional partners supporting NRC's work through grants. Begin an individual donor and stewardship program.	• Increase outreach conversations about recycling and sustainability with policymakers or stakeholders. • High quality publications that provide expert guidance. • NRC is positioned as a trusted, credible voice through speaking engagements, media, and conference presentations.

Implementation will be supported with an annual implementation plan with identified actionable steps and assigned responsibilities that align with the strategic directions. Progress will be monitored with regular check-ins, updates, and adjustments at least quarterly to keep the team focused and responsive to any challenges or changing circumstances.

PARTICIPANTS



Board Members

Danielle Easdale, Willa DiCostanzo, Benjamin Newton, Melissa Mercier, Kim Burge, Suzanne Gates, Jack MacLean, Frank Uhlarik, and Rich Woodson

Staff Team

Kimberly Carroll Steward, Carina Olivetti, Julie Naughton

Facilitation Partner



Mission Matters exists to support leaders who are creating positive change in their communities, organizations and workplaces by offering professional services in facilitation and strategic planning, nonprofit capacity building, and leadership development and coaching. Greta Leach was the lead facilitator.