

# Key Takeaways and Recommendations

The main purpose of a government-supported home composting program is to increase material composted. Thus, all programs need to carry out three tasks: make home composting bins more accessible to residents, provide composting education and information, and raise awareness of the benefits of composting.

## Bins

- Provide composting bins to residents: purchase in bulk through a contract with manufacturers and sell the bins at the wholesale price to residents; subsidize the price of bins; or provide vouchers or rebates to give residents discounts on bins sold at local retailers.
- Offer at least one stationary backyard composting bin model (such as the Earth Machine™). These bins can compost both food scraps and yard trimmings and are relatively cheap.

manufacturers offer optional bases to prevent access from unwanted critters. Regardless of the system chosen, proper composting in the system is key.

- Subsidize the price of bins for residents, or offer the bins for free, to get more people to start composting.

→ **See Part 3, Pricing and Delivery of Bins: Finding the Sweet Spot.**

- Consider home delivery of bins to interest more residents in home composting.

→ **See Spotlight - Free Bin and Free Delivery: Orlando.**

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- Offer a variety of bin types – for example, worm bins, Green Cones, tumblers – to accommodate a range of options and household/backyard situations.

→ **See Part 3, Composting Bins and Other Equipment: Bin Options, Prices, and Modes of Delivery.**

- Include worm or vermicomposting bins to provide an option to individuals without yards or who live in apartment buildings. In addition, unlike other composting systems, vermicomposting can be done with old newspaper and food scraps. Carbon sources like leaves and twigs are not needed.
- Offer enclosed systems that keep rodents out if you're in an urban area with existing rat pressure. Tumblers are generally built off the ground and harder for rats to access. Some stationary backyard bin

## Education and Training

- Offer education and training to enable home composters to succeed, troubleshoot on their own, and to produce high-quality compost. Composting is not rocket science but there are some key facts people need to know, such as the importance of oxygen, moisture, balancing nitrogen-rich material with carbon-rich material, which materials not to compost, and how to know the compost is ready to use. When people learn how to compost properly, they will, for instance, avoid odor problems. When people learn to always cover food scraps with a thick layer of leaves and forgo adding problematic materials like dairy and meat products, the compost pile is less likely to attract unwanted critters. Training can also provide other basic information about identifying and mitigating rat activity.
- Tie training to bin give-aways or distribution. Training can be optional or required to obtain a composting bin, but requiring training ensures residents are exposed to best management practices. Requiring training does not significantly decrease program participation rates.

- Make education or training easily accessible in order to encourage participation. Studies have shown that the main reason people are wary to start composting is that they lack confidence in their composting abilities or believe that composting is always smelly and messy (see Appendix E).
- Hold workshops during fairer weather and in places that are already frequented by residents in order to increase participation.

→ **See Part 3, Choosing Who Provides Compost Education and Where to Hold Composting Workshops.**

## Measure, Evaluate, and Improve

- Calculate your program's costs and savings. Overtime, home composting programs can be expected to save local governments more money in hauling and tipping fees than they cost to implement.

→ **See Part 2, Save Money.**

- Solicit volunteers to weigh materials home composted in order to develop more accurate estimations of diversion rates and savings from hauling and tipping fees.

→ **See Spotlight - Measuring Quantities Composted Demonstrates Savings and Diversion.**

- Evaluate your program to determine the effectiveness of current approaches and see where improvements can be made. Data to collect might include: the number of bins distributed, residents' satisfaction with bins, where residents learned about the program (to assess different marketing techniques), the location and times of day the most residents are showing up for workshops.

→ **See Part 3, Comprehensive Research Agenda.**

## Outreach and Marketing

- Develop strong outreach efforts and innovative marketing campaigns to increase program participation.
- Invest in a strong marketing push when launching program to get people interested right from the beginning. The program can follow up with cheaper long-term marketing.

→ **See Spotlight - Orlando's "Get Dirty" Campaign.**

- Show residents how they can save money on their waste hauling bills through home composting. This is relevant in communities with volume- or weight-based trash fees (also known as save-as-you-throw or pay-as-you-throw systems).

→ **See Spotlight - Linking Home Composting to Save-as-you-Throw Trash Fees.**

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## Ordinances

- Review existing laws and rules to make sure none prevent home composting. Update any archaic laws or pass new ordinances to support home composting.
- Focus any new ordinance or rule toward fostering successful and well operated home composting rather than creating prescriptive requirements that may unnecessarily stifle home composting.
- Facilitate budgeting for education and training by passing an ordinance to require the appropriate city/county department provide home composting education and training.
- Instead of imposing fines or shutting down home composting sites that have issues with odors or pests, consider requiring residents in violation of home composting regulations to take a composting class.