

**INCREASE RECYCLING, REDUCE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COSTS,
AND REDUCE CLIMATE POLLUTION**



How Local Governments Will Benefit From a **PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY POLICY IN COLORADO**

Through a Producer Responsibility policy, Colorado can transform its current recycling system from a disjointed, confusing, and inconvenient patchwork of programs into a coordinated, equitable, and cost-effective statewide system. This will rapidly improve Colorado's recycling rate and result in fewer greenhouse gas emissions, cleaner air and water, less waste sent to landfills, and stronger local economies. [Start here for more background on how the policy works.](#)

A statewide producer responsibility policy for containers, packaging and paper will provide every Coloradan with convenient, easy access to recycling for common materials such as plastic bottles, aluminum cans, glass bottles, cardboard, and printed paper. This will greatly benefit Colorado's cities, towns and counties by:

- Providing recycling to all residents at no cost to residents or local government.
- Expanding recycling to underserved multi-family buildings and rural areas.
- Reducing local government expenses to provide recycling services.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and plastic pollution.
- Retaining municipalities' right to choose their level of involvement in recycling services.

HOW DOES PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY WORK?

The policy would require brand owners to pay for and manage a statewide recycling system for cardboard, plastic, metal, paper, and other common recyclables. The companies would form an independent nonprofit organization, called a producer responsibility organization (PRO), to coordinate, fund, and manage this statewide recycling system. Companies will pay membership dues to the PRO based on the amount and type of packaging they sell in Colorado. The PRO will create one consistent statewide list of what can be recycled, and then the PRO will pay private companies and local governments to operate recycling collection and processing programs. The PRO will cover 100% of the costs of recycling, including consumer education and government oversight of the program. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment will oversee the PRO and establish an advisory board composed of local governments, recycling companies, nonprofits and other key stakeholders, to help oversee the program and ensure the PRO meets the needs of local Colorado communities and businesses.

Learn more about producer responsibility for containers, packages and paper in Colorado and how you can get involved at <https://ecocycle.org/take-action/zerowastecolorado/legislation>.



PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY IS PROVEN TO HELP COLORADO COMMUNITIES

Producer Responsibility has the most successful track record of sustainably financing and expanding recycling programs to reduce landfill waste and litter. Colorado has had a [producer responsibility program for paint](#) since 2015 that has substantially increased paint recycling, provided recycling access to 95% of Coloradans, and saved municipalities tens of thousands of dollars per year. Producer Responsibility policies have been used in 40 countries and provinces to improve recycling. Maine and Oregon adopted the first US producer responsibility policies for packaging in 2021 and [seven other states are actively pursuing policies](#) to improve packaging recycling and reduce plastic waste.



Over [100 global companies](#) support producer responsibility policies to increase recycling, reduce plastic pollution, and help strengthen local economies.

PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY WILL REDUCE COSTS FOR MUNICIPALITIES AND COUNTIES

Many local governments spend tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to run or support recycling drop-off centers or curbside collection programs. These costs have escalated over the past several years, forcing many communities to raise rates and to cut back on services. Through Producer Responsibility, the companies that make these products will pay for the recycling programs, providing substantial cost savings to local governments while maintaining or increasing existing services.

EXAMPLES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT COSTS THAT WOULD BE REDUCED BY PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

Community	Program	Annual Costs*
Alamosa	1 drop-off center	\$8,000-\$20,000
Boulder County	4 drop-off centers	\$215,000
Lakewood	1 drop-off center	\$100,000
Pueblo	1 drop-off center	\$299,000
Summit County	4 drop-off centers	\$103,000
Westminster	1 drop-off center	\$60,000

* Costs taken from budgets on public web pages and email exchanges with municipal staff.

PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY CAN CREATE A MORE CONVENIENT, EQUITABLE RECYCLING SYSTEM

Colorado's current recycling system is fragmented, inequitable, and confusing. Most residents must subscribe to and pay more to have curbside recycling services. This creates substantial inequities as recycling is more available in wealthier communities.¹ There are also very limited recycling services for multi-family properties such as apartments and condos, which make [up 20% of Colorado's housing](#).

¹ Eco-Cycle calculations based on U.S. Census data and communications with municipalities, see reference list http://ecocycle.org/files/pdfs/2020_State_of_Recycling_and_Composting_in_Colorado.pdf.



Recycling in Colorado's mountain and rural areas is often significantly more expensive than in the Front Range, which makes it more challenging to financially sustain these programs. **A producer responsibility policy will provide convenient and equitable recycling systems across all of Colorado, from rural to urban areas, including single-family and multifamily homes.**

PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY PROVIDES FLEXIBILITY AND CHOICE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Recycling in Colorado is managed primarily at the local level and there are different approaches to how cities, towns and counties engage in recycling. **This policy provides flexibility for local governments to decide if and how to engage in recycling collection, and does not impose recycling requirements upon local governments.** This program will only fund recycling collection programs; it will not fund, manage or otherwise interact with trash collection.

HOW PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY COULD IMPROVE RECYCLING IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES		
Program Type	Examples	How producer responsibility will fund recycling*
Municipally provided recycling collection	Denver, Durango, Longmont	PRO reimburses municipalities for full costs to provide recycling services to residents.
Municipal recycling contract with private hauler	Golden, Louisville, Carbondale	Municipalities continue to manage local contracts. The PRO pays the full costs of recycling.
Drop-off center	Greeley, Summit County	PRO reimburses the local government for the costs to run the drop-off center for eligible recyclable materials (e.g., cardboard, paper, some plastics, etc.)
No local government services	Lakewood, Colorado Springs	PRO pays for recycling collection from households by contracting with private sector companies.

* Under any of these situations, the local governments may also choose to step out of the management or operations of recycling services, and turn over the operations to the PRO. Residents receive recycling service under all of these systems at no cost.



PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY WILL STRENGTHEN LOCAL ECONOMIES

Increasing recycling in Colorado will support local economies by increasing the supply of reliable recycled materials for local manufacturers to incorporate into their manufacturing processes. Because recycling one ton of material creates nine times more jobs than landfilling that material, increased recycling through a Producer Responsibility program will also create green jobs in Colorado.

PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY WILL INCREASE RECYCLING AND REDUCE CLIMATE POLLUTION

Colorado's recycling rate is a [dismal 15%](#), less than half the national average and well below the state goal of 28% by 2021. By recycling more, Colorado will reduce climate pollution, protect our clean air and water, and create jobs. Even at our current rate, recycling in Colorado reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by [over 1.9 million MTCO_{2e}](#), the equivalent to removing over 407,000 cars from the road annually. Recycling one ton of materials [saves an average of three tons of climate pollution](#). Producer Responsibility will help municipalities meet their climate action plans by boosting recycling rates.

SUPPORT A PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY POLICY FOR PACKAGING IN COLORADO

A producer responsibility policy for packaging in Colorado is a groundbreaking opportunity to transform our recycling system and accelerate progress toward state recycling and climate goals. Learn more and show your support at <https://ecocycle.org/take-action/zerowastecolorado/legislation/>

Producer Responsibility in Colorado has strong bipartisan support from local governments, consumer goods companies, recycling businesses, environmental groups, and many more. For more information, please contact:

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Learn more at ecocycle.org/take-action/zerowastecolorado/legislation