9.2 Implement Unit-Based Pricing

5 – 35 Points

Action Updates

This action was last updated in 2024. A version of this action from the prior program year is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow.

Objective

Reduce residential trash generation.

Note: Unit-based pricing, also known as "pay as you throw" and "save money and reduce trash(SMART)", is a method of charging for trash disposal based on the amount disposed

Complementary Actions:

- Report Materials Management Data and Reduce Waste
- Recycle Additional Materials
- Reduce and Compost Organic Waste

What to Do

The more you do, the more points you earn.

1. Build a Unit-Based Pricing Task Force or use your Sustainability Team to facilitate the completion of the steps needed for ultimate Unit-Based Pricing program implementation. **(5 points)**

   All elements must be completed and outlined in the worksheet provided to receive credit.

   a. Designate a person(s), agency(ies), or committee to lead the Unit-Based Pricing Task Force. Potential membership is outlined in the Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators section below, may begin with your existing Sustainability Team, and should include diverse stakeholders representing at least three different sectors (e.g., local elected officials, municipal staff, community stakeholders, etc.).

   b. Reach out to and meet with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for partnership, guidance and support, which may include funding assistance.

   c. Complete the remainder of this worksheet 1 to guide the Unit-Based Pricing Task Force's initial efforts.

   Submit: A completed Unit-Based Pricing Task Force worksheet 1 and at least one additional piece of documentation related to the meetings, such as a promotional flyer, an agenda, minutes, presentations, or photographs. If any of steps a, b, or c were completed more than three years ago, include a brief description of how the Task Force's efforts are still relevant and used by your municipality.

2. Conduct research, an analysis, and internal education regarding Unit-Based Pricing program adoption. **(10 points)**

   All elements must be completed to receive credit.

   a. Analyze municipal collection methods, hauler requirements, contract expiration dates, and the distance

municipal waste is being hauled and cost structure for collection.

b. Calculate the projected cost savings or new municipal revenue you would gain as a result of implementing a Unit-Based Pricing program.

c. Research how other municipalities have implemented Unit-Based Pricing, including a visit to at least one municipality with a Unit-Based Pricing program. Using residential solid waste generation per capita as a benchmark, compare Unit-Based Pricing to other waste reduction strategies, such as education programs, reward programs, and overflow programs.

d. Educate elected officials in small groups to explore internal support for Unit-Based Pricing.

Submit: A completed Unit-Based Pricing program worksheet 2, inclusive of the required elements above. If any of steps a, b, c, and d were completed more than three years ago, include a brief description of how the work is still relevant and used by your municipality.

3. By municipal resolution, ordinance, or another implementation mechanism, adopt a Unit-Based Pricing program consistent with the following framework: **(20 points)**

    - Has a linear or near-linear rate structure for disposal (collection can be a flat fee);
    - Uses a bag, a tag, or variable-sized carts; and
    - Has cart pricing that increases significantly with size, to incentivize waste reduction.

    Additional Notes:

    - For a program at a community transfer station, collection must occur by the bag (not weight) with an initial bag size of no larger than 15-30 gallons.
    - Any curbside variable sized cart program must offer a small unit size option of no larger than 15-30 gallons, in addition to at least two larger sizes offered, and ideally should utilize monthly or quarterly billing to incentivize waste reduction.
    - Any curbside bag (including bag in a cart) program must offer a small unit size option of no larger than 15-30 gallons, in addition to larger sizes offered.
    - An overflow program that charges residents for "extra" trash is not considered a Unit-Based Pricing rate structure.

    ***You may mandate a Unit-Based Pricing rate structure for residential subscription haulers through their permitting process. Unit-Based Pricing is an effective pathway to achieving reductions in residential solid waste generation per capita, eligible for points under Sustainable CT Action** Report Materials Management Data and Reduce Waste*.

    Submit: Documentation showing the implementation of Unit-Based Pricing. Documentation may be a resolution or ordinance formally adopted by your governing body, meeting minutes or a letter from your chief elected official or legislative body.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "Partners Guidance Document".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

SMART Task Force Members suggested by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection SMART guidebook include elected officials, one or members of the public works department, or recycling coordinator, local haulers, local business representatives, community organizations and members of the public.

Additional information.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Sustainable CT Community Match Fund
- State Funding Readiness Project

- Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection Funding Opportunities

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents Organizations and Relevant Programs

- Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection SMART (Pay-as-You-Throw) Implementation Handbook
- State of Massachusetts Pay-As-You-Throw: An Implementation Guide for Solid Waste Unit-Based Pricing Programs

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- SMART Programs in Connecticut
- payasyouthrow.org
- Northeast Recycling Council
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Waste Prevention – King County, WA

Why This Matters

Waste-to-energy facilities contribute to climate change by emitting greenhouse gases. Reducing, reusing, re-purposing, recycling, and composting keep items out of these facilities. Comparison studies show that "SMART" towns recycle more and dispose of less waste than neighboring communities.

A key to making SMART work is providing opportunities for people to do something with their trash other than throwing it out. Waste reduction programs, reuse facilities, expansion of curbside collection services, and yard and other organic waste composting programs are complementary activities that enhance the impact of SMART (See the Recycle Additional Materials and Compost Organics and the Develop A Food Waste Prevention Campaign or Food Scraps Recovery Campaign or Program Actions.)

Benefits

When you implement SMART, your town will be measurably reducing waste generation. This Action produces environmental benefits, greenhouse gas reductions, improved community health and wellness, municipal and residential cost savings, and potentially enhanced economic well-being.

CT Success Stories

- Mansfield - Oct 2022 Certification
- Rocky Hill - Oct 2022 Certification
- Stonington - Oct 2022 Certification
- Middletown - Sep 2023 Certification
- Deep River - Oct 2024 Certification
- West Hartford - Oct 2024 Certification