

HATFIELD RESIDENT FELLOWSHIP PROJECT BRIEF

Indicator Development for 2030 Regional Waste Plan

Project Dates: August/2023 – February/2024

PROJECT GOAL

Metro is a regional government serving over 1.7 million residents in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties. Part of Metro's portfolio is planning and overseeing the region's solid waste system. The 2030 Regional Waste Plan (RWP) is a vision for the solid waste system and a blueprint for achieving that vision.

The project goal was to research and design methods for measuring RWP goal outcomes for the 2022 annual progress report and for future measurement. The Hatfield Fellow stewarded the development of several goal indicators: 1) size and capacity of the reuse sector, 2) low environmental impact procurement policies, and 3) equitable access to economic benefits of the solid waste system.

CHALLENGES

Tracking progress towards RWP goals occurs annually, requiring staff to develop and update goal indicators each year. Four years into implementing the 10-year plan, the goals that remain to be measured are complex and pose challenges.

The main challenge the Fellow faced was defining intangible concepts present in goal and indicator language. For example, cleaning the dataset for the Portland area's reuse sector involved reviewing data row-by-row to determine if the organization or business fit the spirit of reuse and if the majority of operations focused on reuse activities.

A second challenge was the access to reliable, complete data. To assess environmental impacts of procurement practices for example, a standard for eco-labeling and other sustainable practices had to be applied to transactions year over year. This practice was not uniformly followed, jeopardizing the reliability of procurement data for measuring the indicator in question.

STRATEGY

The Fellow researched and developed a methodology for defining the reuse sector based on studies conducted by other jurisdictions, and applied methods to the greater

Portland area. Findings were then published in the annual progress report looking at 2022.

- Reviewed reuse economy literature to define the scope of the reuse sector for measurement, including reuse, rental, and repair businesses.
- Refined reuse sector findings into graphics and text to be included in the annual progress report.

The Fellow then conducted a feasibility study for using agency financial data to measure indicators for the environmental impact of the agency's procurement practices, and the share of garbage and recycling revenue that goes to community organizations advancing racial equity and women- and minority-owned businesses.

- Consulted with Procurement, Community Services & Education, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion departments regarding access to transaction information, COBID certification status, and other vendor information.
- Assessed the feasibility of approaching indicator measurements through agency financial data.
- With discovered information, developed recommendations for future measurement opportunities.

RESULTS

At the completion of the fellowship, the Fellow achieved the following results, briefly:

- Reported on the greater Portland region reuse sector in 2022 RWP Annual Progress Report,



published here:

- Found that, in 2022, roughly 5,400 employees worked in the reuse (3,519) and repair (1,880) sector in the greater Portland region at nearly 800 businesses.
- Estimated that over 153,000 tons of material were collected (reuse only). If all tons recovered for reuse were kept out of the waste stream in 2022, waste generated per capita would be reduced from 2,950 pounds to 2,784 pounds.
- Determined feasibility of measuring spending on women- and minority-owned businesses through COBID certification fields in PeopleSoft.
- Determined potential feasibility for quantifying spending on community organizations advancing racial equity. The agency has no unified definition or criteria to define whether or not a community organization advances racial equity. This indicator may rely on pulling data on special procurement requests, and relying on anecdotal knowledge of program managers as to the nature of organizations that Metro partners with.
- Determined infeasibility of measuring environmental impact of purchasing due to incomplete data caused by inconsistent use of sustainable purchasing coding practices.

Additional exploration into potential measurement methods is needed.

TAKE-AWAYS

The Fellow will take away the following things from the Hatfield Fellowship placement and work experience at Metro:

- The importance of consistently collecting and storing complete data on various projects, programs, transactions, and other work. Data availability and governance directly impacts an agency's ability to measure performance and growth over time.
- Further, the importance of co-creation and development of criteria for program and goal measurement. Discrete departments will have their own scope of what data are useful for internal performance measurement and progress towards goals. But, other areas of the agency may have a need for access to current and historical data that participating departments could not anticipate.
- Collaboration between units to creatively problem solve and share information can be effective and is even welcomed, despite being somewhat outside the scope of work.
- Many thanks to the WPES Analytics team for welcoming the Fellow and supporting their contributions to this work!