

Colorado Extended Producer Responsibility Needs Assessment

Statewide, Colorado

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022, the Colorado Legislature passed House Bill 22-1355.

The bill set guidelines for a nonprofit to implement and manage a statewide packaging and paper materials recycling program for residences, public spaces, businesses, schools, hospitality locations, and government buildings. The bill also set guidelines and dates for assessing the state's current recycling services and reporting results to the legislature.

The needs assessment — the first of its kind in the United States — is the first step in the process, a comprehensive assessment of the current recycling system. HDR's team, working for Circular Action Alliance and alongside Eunomia Research & Consulting, evaluated the existing recycling services and infrastructure for managing single-use packaging and paper products while identifying gaps in existing services. Their research process produced more than 100,000 data points from more than 90 interviews and facility tours, 150 surveys, webinars, research, hundreds of comments and dozens of meetings with stakeholders, such as communities, schools, end markets, non-profits, environmental justice groups and businesses within a four month period.

The result showed disparities in recycling opportunities, often dependent on where residents live. The new statewide recycling program could increase curbside recycling accessibility from 20% to 55% of rural households, with others receiving more access to drop-off collection.

The team developed three future recycling scenarios based on the current system's cost, performance and potential improvements in accordance with the legislation. These scenarios outline the recycling and collection rates the state could achieve by 2030 and