

# NAVIGATING THE RECYCLING SYSTEM

For packaging to be recycled successfully, we must consider how it flows through each of the five elements of the recycling system: manufacturing, reprocessing, sorting, collecting and engaging consumers. To start thinking about the criteria that can help assess the recyclability of a product and its ability to create reliable and valuable manufacturing feedstock, use the table below. Think of this as a starting point for a conversation about the recyclability of a product. Start by considering the ultimate goal: that a recycled product finds an end market.



## END MARKETS (Feedstock for Manufacturing)

### Supply/Demand

Is there demand to use the recycled material in products?

### Design

Are brand companies creating a "Demand Pull" by using recycled materials?

### Specifications

Do the product specifications allow for the use of recycled content in it?

### Contamination

Are there contaminants in the material that hinder the end application?

### Infrastructure

### Education

### Profitability

Does it have a positive profitability analysis?



## REPROCESSING (Paper Mills, Plastic Reclaimers, etc.)

### Supply/Demand

Is there demand for the reprocessed material?

### Design

Are there design flaws that prevent reprocessing and recoverability?

### Specifications

Can material be combined or is it compatible with other currently recycled material?

### Contamination

Does the material cause harm or contamination to other materials?

### Infrastructure

Is a new investment required to reprocess the material? Are there markets in different geographic areas?

### Education

### Profitability

Does it have a positive profitability analysis?



## SORTATION (MRF – Materials Recovery Facility)

### Supply/Demand

Do reprocessors want to buy the material? Are there markets? Are they positive?

### Design

Are there design flaws that impact sortation? Does its form enable it to be properly and consistently sorted (size, flatness, 3D, labeling, etc.)?

### Specifications

Do new bale specifications need to be developed? Do bale specs allow for inclusion of the material?

### Contamination

Can the product damage the recovery of other materials? Are there contaminants (moisture, food, etc.) that impact sortation?

### Infrastructure

Is a new investment required to sort the material? Are there MRFs available that can sort and market the material?

### Education

Do MRFs know that it is possible to sort the material? Are pick line workers trained to identify the material?

### Profitability

Is there adequate volume to justify recovery, particularly if it must be marketed independently? Does it have a positive profitability analysis?



## COLLECTION (Curbside and Drop-Off)

### Supply/Demand

### Design

Is there a defined common suite of outreach materials for the region?

### Specifications

### Contamination

Does this material hurt the recyclability of other materials?

### Infrastructure

Is an investment required to collect the material? Are there collection carts or bins? Vehicles? Drop-off locations?

### Education

Do local governments know all the materials that their MRF will accept?

### Profitability

Is there adequate volume being collected to support recycling?



## CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT (Access and Participation)

### Supply/Demand

### Design

Does it have a How2Recycle® label to describe recyclability and any actions consumers need to take to recycle it, such as removing components or returning to a store drop-off location?

### Specifications

Is access to recycling collection automatic or must residents ask for/pay for the service?

### Contamination

Do consumers know how to prepare their materials for recycling (no food residue)?

### Infrastructure

### Education

Do consumers know the material is accepted? Do they know how to recycle it (via curbside, or community or store drop-off)?

### Profitability