

Appendix G: Questions to Ask Potential Buyers of Recyclables

If you need to hire a company to purchase your school's collected materials, there are a number of issues you should discuss. After speaking with the vendor, be sure to check references! Obtain and thoroughly check the buyer's references with existing contract holders, asking these organizations specifically whether their buyer is fulfilling all contract specifications. You may be bound by district or city contractors, so check with school or school district officials first.

What types of recyclables will the company accept and how must they be prepared?

Recycling companies might request that materials be baled, compacted, shredded, granulated, or loose. Generally, recyclers will offer a better price for compacted or baled material. A baler compresses recyclables into bales that are then secured with wire and hauled away for recycling. A compactor is a dumpster in which recyclables are compressed and stored for hauling. By compressing recyclables in a compactor, you are able to store more recyclables in the dumpster before the materials are hauled away. Compactors provide more storage space than a dumpster. Compacting materials before transporting also can be a cost-effective method for lowering hauling costs for the buyer.

What contract terms will the buyer require?

Discuss the length of the potential contract with the buyer. Shorter contracts provide greater flexibility to take advantage of rising prices, while longer contracts provide more security in an unsteady market. Often, buyers favor long-term contracts to help ensure a consistent supply of materials. The terms of payment should be discussed as well, since some buyers pay after delivery of each load, but others set up a periodic schedule. Also, ask whether the buyer would be willing to allow changes to the contract over time. The buyer might want some flexibility as well; in many cases, the buyer will be willing to pay a higher rate in return for a stable supply of quality materials.

Who provides transportation?

If transportation services are not provided by the buyer, you will need to locate a hauler to transport materials to the buyer. The Yellow Pages, local waste haulers, and state or local waste management authorities can help provide this information.

What is the schedule of collections?

If the recycling company offers to provide transportation, check on the frequency of collections. Some organizations might prefer to have the hauler be on call, picking up recyclables when a certain weight or volume has been reached. Larger organizations might generate enough recyclable material to warrant a set collection schedule.

What are the maximum allowable contaminant levels and what is the procedure for dealing with rejected loads?

Inquire what the buyer has established as maximum allowable levels for food, chemicals, or other contaminants. If these requirements are not met, the buyer might reject a contaminated load and send it back to your organization. The buyer also might dispose of a contaminated load in a landfill or combustion unit, which can result in your organization incurring additional costs.

Are there minimum quantity requirements?

Find out whether the buyer requires a minimum weight or volume before accepting delivery. If a buyer's minimum quantity requirements are difficult to meet, consider working with neighboring offices or retail spaces. By working together, it might be possible to collect recyclables in central storage containers and thereby meet the buyer's requirements.

Where will the waste be weighed?

Ask where the material will be weighed, and at what point copies of the weight slips will be available. Weighing the material before it is transported will eliminate the problem of lost weight slips and confirm the accuracy of the weight recorded by the buyer.

Who will provide containers for recyclables?

Buyers should be asked whether they will provide containers in which to collect, store, and transport the material, and whether there is a fee for this service.

Can "escape clauses" be included in the contract?

Such clauses establish the right of an organization to be released from the terms of the contract under conditions of noncompliance by the buyer.