

Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) – Material, Recycling, and Waste Minimization Call Notes

March 18, 2008

General questions about this category

The documentation section asks for data from the last year; when does the last year begin?

Schools should use the most recent consecutive 12-month period for which data are easily available. In some instances data will be organized by fiscal year, for others academic year, and for others it may be something else.

Have you looked at asset management and materials reuse?

At this point, materials reuse programs are included as a couple of Tier Two credits (one for office supplies and one for chemical). AASHE welcomes suggestions for how to develop additional credits around this issue.

OP Credit 14: Waste Minimization

There were no questions or comments specific to this credit.

OP Credit 15: Waste Diversion

A caller noted that this credit includes materials that were re-sold, but reuse isn't included in OP Credit 14: Waste Minimization. This is because OP Credit 14 is based on waste generation and in general, waste generation doesn't include reused materials since those products aren't being disposed of, they are being redistributed. Waste diversion calculations usually do include reuse, since reuse indicates avoiding throwing something away.

Several callers suggested adding further definition to help distinguish between general waste (included in OP Credits 14 and 15) and construction and demolition waste (covered in OP Credit 16). A caller suggested having people report as much detail as they can to help determine where the separation between those categories is unclear. Another participant suggested following LEED's guidelines for construction and demolition waste. AASHE is trying to maintain as much consistency as possible between LEED standards and STARS and will look into ways to more clearly define construction and demolition waste. Specific suggestions in this regard are welcome.

OP Credit 16: Construction and Demolition Waste Diversion

A participant's institution doesn't have a consistent method for tracking construction and demolition waste diversion and asked for suggestions from other schools on how to gather this data. One caller recommended the College and University Recycling Council and the conversion factors provided for the RecycleMania competition. Another participant said her school has two primary approaches. Major construction jobs are handled by contractors and the university stipulates in contracts that waste and recycling information needs to be recorded. For small retrofits handled by internal staff the institution set up an internal transfer station. When they accumulate significant quantities, they have a contract with a waste hauler to collect the materials. The hauler provides weight information for both waste and recycling.

OP Credit 17: Electronic Waste Recycling Program

There was some discussion about whether or not schools should be required to collect electronic materials from students. Some callers felt that students should be responsible for their own electronic materials. For comparison, institutions wouldn't be expected to collect the used motor oil from a student who changed his or her oil on campus. Also, some schools are limited by their location and the availability of local electronics recyclers and/or drop-off sites.

Other callers felt that it would be helpful to gather information about the schools that do offer electronics recycling programs for their students. A caller mentioned hosting electronics recycling round-ups on campus that are open to the entire community as a public education and outreach service. Callers felt that institutions should be recognized for having these programs.

Callers generally agreed that institution-generated electronic waste and student-generated waste should be treated separately. AASHE plans to make two credits or make this credit worth two points for future versions of STARS.

Several callers indicated that it would be difficult if not impossible to gather data about the weight or number of electronic devices collected from students for recycling. In some instances schools don't distinguish between what is coming from students and what is coming from the institution. This will be considered as AASHE moves forward. Suggestions for resolving this challenge are welcome.

OP Credit 18: Hazardous Waste Minimization

The previous draft version of STARS included a prerequisite stipulating that schools must comply with environmental, health, and safety regulations. AASHE received feedback that this prerequisite may end up prohibiting schools from participating due to a minor infraction, such as a missing sign. Based on this feedback, AASHE plans to take an approach similar to LEED and stipulate that STARS is intended for institutions that are in compliance with regulations and reserve the right to withdraw ratings due to egregious non-compliance.

This credit about hazardous materials management was added to enable the collection of data about hazardous waste on campus and to foster collaboration on how to safely handle and reduce hazardous waste. AASHE is interested in the possibility of adding additional credits to be based on best management practices related to environmental, health, and safety activities. Please send suggestions about this to stars@ashe.org.

A caller said her institution deals with some chemicals that have to be registered with the Department of Homeland Security. They would hesitate to make information about chemical quantities publicly available for security reasons. This type of information is helpful for AASHE to know; we don't want to do anything to jeopardize security. As currently worded, the credit doesn't ask schools to report on quantities for specific chemicals, just by product type. We will consider feedback to determine what level of disclosure is appropriate.

A participant noted that earning this credit isn't based on reusing or reducing hazardous waste; the title of the credit could be misleading.

There were several suggestions about how to improve and supplement the documentation reporting for this credit:

- Separate total pounds of chemical waste into regulated and non-regulated materials.
- Regulatory visits should include only those related to treatment of hazardous materials. (Currently the credit asks for information about visits from “EPA, NRC, DOT, OSHA, and other federal regulatory agencies.” OSHA and other agencies conduct inspections that aren’t related to hazardous materials management.)
- Add a reporting field for universal waste.
- Ask for quantities of hazardous materials that are recycled or reused.

OP Prerequisite 1: Recycling Program

This prerequisite stipulates that all schools have a means for recycling for all occupied buildings or building clusters. A caller said that “building cluster” and “occupied” mean different things for different schools and AASHE should clarify. AASHE will attempt to do so in future versions of STARS.

Several callers suggested adding a credit based on making recycling accessible. As the prerequisite is written, an institution could have a locked recycling collection area in the basement of each building and comply with the prerequisite. A participant suggested stipulating the number of containers per square foot or occupancy level and/or requiring that recycling is available on each floor of a building. Another caller noted that schools develop recycling infrastructure and programs to meet the needs of that building. STARS could help develop best management practices for recycling collection.

The prerequisite requires that schools collect, “bottles, cans, paper, and cardboard.” Bottles refers to both glass and plastic bottles. A caller said that glass recycling is on hiatus at her institution because there isn’t a recycler who will accept the materials to recycle, even if the institution were to pay them to take the glass away. The jurisdiction in which the school is located is stockpiling glass as well, in hopes of finding a glass recycler. AASHE doesn’t want to exclude campuses from participating in STARS that are making a good faith effort to recycle and will incorporate this feedback into future versions of the prerequisite.