



# Equity study: Overview and initial design ideas

*Draft prepared for the April 17, 2023, Oregon Recycling Council meeting*

## Equity study overview

The Recycling Modernization Act requires DEQ, in consultation with the Recycling Council and local governments, to conduct a study of equity in Oregon’s recycling system to determine conditions and make recommendations, including goals to achieve continuous improvement. ORS 459A.932 requires DEQ to include the following elements in the study, though the law does not limit the study to these elements:

- a. An evaluation of commingled recycling processing facility worker conditions, wages and benefits;
- b. The availability of opportunities in the recycling system for women and minority individuals as defined in ORS 200.005;
- c. The sufficiency of local government requirements related to multifamily recycling services and their implementation;
- d. The sufficiency of recycling education programs relative to desired equity outcomes;
- e. The availability of opportunities in the recycling system for Oregon and other Pacific Northwest businesses; and
- f. Recommendations for improving equity and equitable outcomes for underserved populations in Oregon’s recycling system, including recommendations for new responsibilities of producer responsibility organizations and recommendations for funding such responsibilities.

## Study timeline

- Spring 2023: Initial scoping of the draft study design
- Summer 2023: DEQ will consult with the Recycling Council and local governments on the draft scope of work
- Summer/fall 2023: DEQ will solicit a contractor to perform all or some portions of the study, based on a finalized scope of work
  - Public involvement opportunities must be provided as part of the study, including opportunities for underserved communities
- Summer 2023 through spring 2024: The selected contractor(s) will perform the study, and provide interim reports as appropriate to the Recycling Council and DEQ
- Sept. 15, 2024: Report due to the Oregon Legislature with the study’s findings
- At least every four years thereafter: DEQ will revisit and update the study’s findings, reporting to the Oregon Legislature, for the continued improvement of Oregon’s recycling systems

## DEQ's approach to equity

Oregon's [2050 Vision and Framework](#) explicitly outlines a policy objective where all people in Oregon have access to the knowledge, capabilities, resources and services required to use materials responsibly. This is the basis for the way DEQ approaches equity and equitable outcomes in respect to recycling and the Recycling Modernization Act. This approach means that DEQ expects:

- Education, outreach and engagement materials are made available in the languages spoken and read by the audiences;
- People in rural areas will experience the same opportunities for recycling as people in more urbanized areas of the state; and
- Opportunities for economic and business development will prioritize people who have been excluded from traditional structures of government decision-making and economic power, including women, people of the global majority/people of color, people experiencing houselessness, people with disabilities and people with lower incomes.

DEQ also expects that, in Oregon's modernized recycling system, the benefits and the burdens associated with the responsible use and recycling of materials is more equitably distributed across all geographic, economic and sociodemographic sectors of people in Oregon. These expectations will be codified through the study's design and scope of work, in consultation with the Recycling Council and local governments, and supportive of DEQ's commitment to environmental justice.

## Related projects

Some definitions related to commingled recycling processing facility worker conditions, wages and benefits will be included in the RMA's second rulemaking process, scheduled to begin in summer 2023. That work will occur in parallel to the evaluative elements of the study's requirements for subpart a, and may help inform the final report and its recommendations.

DEQ plans to incorporate past studies and information related to multifamily services into a literature review as part of the study, to reduce duplication of past efforts. Other studies or existing information related to the elements outlined in statute will be incorporated into the initial stages of the study. DEQ intends to include opportunities for additional research or community engagement to update the information as part of the study's design.

Some study elements, especially those relating to underserved populations, will be informed by rulemaking and other policy development activities conducted by DEQ in advance of the study to help define those terms, ensuring consistency when implementing the Recycling Modernization Act.

## Discussion questions

- What information might your organization need to assess the sufficiency and availability of services and opportunities, as outlined in the statute?
- Has your organization, or a partner entity, conducted research in the last 10 years regarding any of the study's required elements?
- What does a modernized recycling system, centering equity, in Oregon look like to you, your organization and the communities you serve?

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