

Resource Management (RM)

West Des Moines Community School District

Encompassing over 36.6 square miles in Polk and Dallas Counties, Iowa, the West Des Moines Community School District (WDSM) consists of ten elementary schools, two junior high schools, a 9th grade school, a high school, and an alternative high school, with a student population of 8,600 and 1,200 staff.

A Request for Proposal for RM services was issued in October 2002 and WDSM awarded the business to a team of a local waste hauler, Artistic Waste Services, Inc. and a consulting company, EnviroConn Consulting in December 2002. A 3-year RM contract wasn't formally signed until December 2003.

The contract scope is for all waste and recyclables. Within the first year, WDSM credits RM for raising the awareness of students and teachers on source reduction and recycling, and for institutionalizing a school district-wide recycling program.

Progress to Date

- The resource manager and the District Recycling Coordinator of WDSM conducted a walk-through assessment at every facility in the district in January and February of 2003. The audit was used to identify waste reduction opportunities at each facility.
- The major achievement to date is the establishment of recycling programs from scratch. This included obtaining new containers and working with the custodial staff to implement the program (fall 2004).
- Recycling rates vary by school between 15% and 35% since the first 4 months the containers have been in place. The average across all schools is 20%.
- The recycling program includes mixed paper, cardboard and tin cans. Beverage containers are collected in the same manner as before RM -- by the custodial staff.
- The custodial staff serves as the liaison with the teachers on the major elements of the recycling program. Teachers oversee students who collect recyclables and bring them to a central collection area at each school.
- RM has had an overall positive effect on the District's recycling efforts and relationships with their contractors. Plastic containers are now collected at sporting events at the school stadium and students at several schools have started voluntary recycling programs for inkjet cartridges and electronics.

The Extra Value of RM Services

- The RM was innovative in establishing the District wide recycling program:
 - The resource manager coordinated with the Iowa Recycling Association (IRA) to solicit funding for acquiring more recycling bins. IRA succeeded in securing sponsorship, at no cost to WDSM, from a private telephone company and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Over 750 new recycling bins (one for each classroom) were distributed in the Fall of 2004.
 - Recycling Manuals were developed for each facility and will be distributed in January 2005 at the beginning of the school semester. The manual includes two sections: general information on recycling programs at WDSM, and facility-specific guidelines on how to improve source reduction

Organizational Profile

Industry: Educational Services

*Contractor: Artistic Waste Services, Inc./
EnviroConn Consulting*

Program start date: December 2003

Contract structure:

- 3-year contract, with 2 one-year renewal options
- Separate waste and recycling service fees
- Rental fee for equipment (compactor)
- Incentives for gain sharing (50/50 split)

Recycling rate before RM: <2%

Current waste and recycling rates (12/04):

- Average across all schools of 20%
- Rates vary by school between 15% and 35%

and increase diversion at each facility. Photos of each facility are included in the manual to better illustrate facility-specific recommendations.

- Artistic provides transparent invoices that break down waste disposal and recycling costs by facility. They also note how full containers are when tipped which has led to some reduction in service levels.
- The RM is actively providing input into a major expansion at a District High School for the loading dock and other related areas to ensure enough space is given for recycling containers and waste.

Looking forward:

- WDSO expects recycling to double in 2005 to be at 40%. In fact, roughly half the schools are requesting higher levels of recycling service and lower levels of trash service.
- Since they started recycling in the fall of 2004, the major challenge has been not enough larger containers to store recyclables collected from classrooms. The RM and WDSO are in the process of revamping service levels for waste and recycling based on the success of the program to date.
- The RM initially focused on readily recyclable materials (such as paper and cardboard recycling), but anticipates extending recycling to other waste streams, such as food waste from cafeteria.

Finances and Cost Savings

- Waste and recycling costs have remained constant. While RM has not generated significant cost reductions, it has helped WDSO achieve broader goals around waste management and recycling without increasing costs. WDSO has been able to get much more service, institute a comprehensive recycling program and dramatically increase recycling while keeping their waste/recycling budget constant.
- WDSO comments that the improved billing system has saved WDSO substantial administration costs for verifying the bills – administration staff now spend 1-1.5 hours per month on billing, compared with 2-4 workdays per month prior to RM contracting.

Challenges

- The slow decision making process and organizational structure in the school district has been cited as the greatest challenge for implementing RM at WDSO.
 - Contract negotiation and approval process took more than 11 months to complete. Much of the delay can be attributed to the number of people who had to agree to recommend the program and the quarterly meeting schedule of the Board who must give final approval of the contract.
 - The closing of one school and a multi-million dollar expansion at another has slowed the pace some programs could have been implemented.
 - New programs are implemented at the beginning of either the fall or winter semesters to minimize disruption during the academic year. Numerous stakeholders have to be brought on board including teachers, students and custodial staff.
- The District Recycling Coordinator for WDSO has had to remain active to facilitate communications between the schools and the resource manager so that internal stakeholders are engaged in the implementation of new initiatives.

For more information about WDSO's experience with RM contracting, please contact Doug Woodley at (515) 226-2858 or send an e-mail to <WoodleyD@home.wdm.k12.ia.us>.

Additional RM information and resources are available on the WasteWise Web site at <www.epa.gov/wastewise/wrr/rm.htm>.