

City of Allentown

Reduced Plastics Certification Program

The City of Allentown is developing a certification-incentive program to provide three levels of recognition to local businesses in Allentown for reducing their plastics use. The certification will be recognised and provided by the city government in partnership with other collaborating organizations. To make this simple and encourage a progressive achievement process, this program is divided into three unique stages: 1) Assessment, 2) Business Plan, and 3) Inspection. This process will help local businesses evaluate their current practices, create a guided plan to make changes, and validate their achieved progress with an inspection.

First Stage (Assessment)

The first stage involves a questionnaire assessing businesses existing plastic practices. I have provided a draft of the “Plastics Assessment”, the link is shared with you below in blue, or in a separate document. Until the assessment goes live, we are open to altering this as we receive feedback from business owners and a plastics environmentalist .

 [Plastics Assessment](#)

The ideal way of providing this assessment is in an online form format, including multiple choice questions and written responses. As businesses fill out the form and submit their contact info, this data will be added to a database of local businesses to be used for certification related communications. Google Forms or Survey Monkey are specified as data collection platforms that would meet the needs of this program. At first, the database will be managed in a Google spreadsheet, after 200 participants join the program, we will move the data to a free CRM, like hubspot. We are also open to considering other online assessment hosts.

Businesses will receive the first level of certification upon completing the assessment, and join a locally recognized reduced plastics community. All businesses who achieve this will receive access to download official graphics and marketing materials supporting the certification and helping to advertise their participation. This should include an official stamp and digital certificate for them to use in their marketing and communications. Businesses should have the right to include the logo on their personal print media and merch. If a business uses these graphics without permission they will be asked to remove them.



This business completed the Allentown plastics reduction assessment and has met the requirements for a level 1 reduced plastics certification

For more info or to certify your business please visit website123.gov

First Stage

Tasks:

- ◉ Find a (volunteer) group of different businesses and ask for feedback, so that all types of needs and considerations are included in the assessment
- ◉ Finalize Draft of Plastics Assessment
- ◉ Discuss Google Forms or Survey Monkey as a viable free or affordable online assessment software that can:
 1. Provide a good user experience with multiple choice and written responses
 2. Record Completed Assessment Documents
 3. Register Contact Information and Compile Level 1 Business Directory
 4. Link businesses to Level 1 stamp and certificate file downloads when completed
- ◉ Provide Assessment on Allentowpa.gov website
- ◉ Design and approve certification logo graphics
 - Discuss using "Stage" or "Level" wording
 - Discuss colors, font type, and other design considerations
- ◉ Find legal counsel to discuss legal issues and copyright enforcement...
 - So that only approved businesses may legally use official certification materials
 - To clarify to businesses the use of their contact information if necessary
 - Foresee any other possible legal tasks
- ◉ Identify any foreseeable costs and self-sustaining financial opportunities to meet them including grants from Spark Grants, The Foundations Center, BAYROC, and collaborations with waste management

Second Stage (Business Plan)

The second stage of the process involves businesses developing a personalized plan to reduce their use of plastics. This process will be unique to every business and could involve a mixture of biodegradables, reusables, and other solutions. The responsibility on our part is to create a support guide that inspires and supports the process of discovering and meeting sustainable goals. This will incorporate specific goals, and be created in a guided worksheet format, to make this as simple as possible, while leaving sufficient opportunity for business to freestyle as they address solutions unique to their situations. This stage needs the most work.

A working group of volunteers from different organization partnerships are needed to submit data relevant to different businesses and see how we can include options for them. The following is a list of possible workbook modules:

- “Current Practices And Statistics”
- “Current Recycling Practices and Resources”
- “Single Use Paper and Biodegradable Products”
- “Purchasing Responsibility”
- “Scheduling your Level 3 Inspection”
- A database of companies who provide biodegradable and reusable products could be made to help map out real life plans.

We have compiled notes and inspiring ideas to later incorporate into modules here:

[Stage 2 Business Plan](#)

Once a business has developed a personal plan to meet their goals and submitted it to the city, they will receive their second level of certification and related logo and materials.



This business has created and submitted a Allentown plastics reduction business plan and has met the requirements for a level 2 reduced plastics certification

For more info or to certify your business please visit website123.gov

Second Stage Tasks:

- Identify the needs of businesses transitioning to reduced plastic, or plastic free operations
- Identify foreseeable steps for different businesses reducing plastics or going plastic free
- Create goal worksheet sections for biodegradable and reusables in areas such as:
 - Dining utensils, platewares, straws, and to go containers
 - Programs to reward customers for bringing their own cup/container/bag
 - Biodegradable shipping supplies
 - Shifting products vended using plastic packaging to those that do not
 - Addressing other plastic products used by the business such as produce and groceries, cleaning formulas and supplies, and other items routinely purchased
 - Technologies and machines that reduce the use of plastics such as water filters or refillable soap containers for bathrooms
 - Demonstrate models of easy to use labeled recycling bins for landfill, and paper, aluminum, and glass

not all of these options are relative to every business, they should still be discussed where applicable and executable

- Council with biodegradable and reusable companies as well as an experienced plastics environmentalist and discuss how to form business plan guide
- Recognise collaborating organizations who have submitted studies and content to help advise transitioning businesses with comparable solutions, facts and resources. This page will also help validate certification credibility.
- Explore the possibility of sponsorships or collaboration with companies by including their services in a business plan resource section
- Council with a financial planner to create a worksheet assessing the cost difference to transition from plastics to reduced plastics or plastic free

Third Stage (Inspection)

This level of certification will involve passing an inspection based on the unique goals the businesses have set in Stage 2. After a certain amount of time, as requested by the business, (possibly 3 or 6 months after submitting a plan) they will be physically visited by a trained volunteer inspector. The inspector will look over the submitted plan, ask questions, and tour the business. If a business has met the goals outlined in their business plan, they will receive a third certification. If not, the inspector will link them with more resources to further help problem areas, and reschedule an inspection.



**This business has passed an
Allentown plastics reduction inspection
and has met goals required for a
level 3 reduced plastics certification**

**For more info or to certify your business
please visit website123.gov**

Third Stage Tasks:

- Look into funding opportunities for creating a green jobs training program
- Explore existing organization relations to find and train inspectors
 - Student Internship Opportunities (Lehigh University, Muhlenberg University, Moravian College. etc)
 - Allentown 2030 Community Ambassador Partnership
- Create and execute training for volunteers
- Explore financial needs and possibility of an affordable inspection fee
- Discuss annual certification renewal to make and achieve new goals

Future work:

We look forward to the social impact of creating a recognizable plastics free program and hope to support and promote these businesses in real and creative ways, working with local media and other local government offices. A consumer guide for locals to see what businesses are certified could help incentivise new certifications and establish an eco-ethical local culture.

Beyond this three step certification, the process could also include a program for households to design and implement a plastics program, though this certification is important, it would be completely self-accountable.