

Professional Training Program on Sustainable Materials Management

English Bird, New Mexico Recycling Coalition

english@recyclenewmexico.com

The New Mexico Recycling Coalition (NMRC) provides training on the principles of Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) through our National Sustainable Resource Manager certification program and our newly created Recycling Professionals Training course. Using the basis of the National Recycling Coalition (NRC) certification program Student Learning Outcomes, students complete 30 hours of training with a comprehensive perspective of the recycling and material management sector in which they specifically work. From baseline operational training and policy initiatives to looking at how products are designed and producer responsibility concepts, the NMRC training program is able to lead students through the big picture of SMM.

The initial New Mexico Recycling and Compost Facility Operator Certification Courses were launched in the 1990s in response to state guidelines that required registered recycling and compost facilities to have a certified professional at the facility at all times. The New Mexico Environment Department, in response to this need, chose to partner with NMRC to launch the program and has remained a co-host and training lead. Both New Jersey and Pennsylvania, which have had long-standing programs as well, have similar requirements to ensure certified professionals are in place at registered facilities.

These core trainings have served as a cornerstone of NMRC's services over the years and as a source of member retention through a discounted rate offered to NMRC members. With the addition of the newly designed Recycling Professionals Training (a 6-hour course to complement the existing 24-hour Recycling Facility Operators Certification Course), New Mexico's professionals can now gain a nationally-recognized certification from Penn State Altoona to use on their resume, that will be valued if they transfer to another state, and hopefully will allow them to excel in their field.

The certification program brings a consistency of knowledge and expertise to professionals across the state, ensures those entering the field are proficient in recycling sector best practices, and fosters the next generation of leaders. Professionals and new entrants are taught the connections between the materials they manage, commodity marketing, the producer's role in material management and ultimately, how their role in the recycling sector plays a critical part in the SMM landscape.

The NRC professional certification program is poised to blossom in 2015. The National Certification Board wishes to support new state/regional training programs to come online over the next 1-2 years. Outreach is underway to gain Letters of Interest by June 30 in order to examine NRC fundraising opportunities to support the growth of these programs. The National Certification Board also plans to create demand for the professional certification through employer outreach. Through the belief that training is essential for professional success in this sector, NMRC has made a commitment to help grow this national program to ensure its long-term viability. With each additional state participating in the program, the credibility of the program is strengthened.

Complete details of the NRC certification program accreditation requirements are online at www.nrcrecycles.org.

National SMM Action Plan Recommendations from the National Certification Board

- EPA support NRC Recycling Certification program so that all professionals have consistent training
- All professionals in sector are professionally certified
- States either require or prefer certified professionals at facilities
- Professional certification required as part of job descriptions in all sectors (public and private)
- Federal funding support provided by EPA, USDA, DOE, Department of Commerce or Department of Labor to grow new state programs (for example Illinois' program was developed under a Department of Labor grant). Initial funding is required to develop state-level curriculum and administrative support systems to launch programs that then become self-sustaining based on earned income in future
- Work with the NRC Campus Council to connect university research and development programs to investigate problem materials, improve product design and develop recycling sector innovation
- Renew the Jobs Through Recycling grant funding program