



Gold Star in Waste Overview

The **Gold Star in Waste** is intended to achieve the Sustainable Jersey goals for the waste dimension as set forth in [New Jersey Sustainable State of the State Report](#):

1. **Solid waste** generation is minimized.
2. **Reuse and recycling** of waste generated are maximized.
3. The production of **hazardous waste** is minimized, and that which is produced is disposed of in ways that are safe for both humans and the environment.
4. There is an **equitable distribution** of the impacts on human health of all forms of toxic pollution and waste disposal.

In order to achieve the Gold Star in Waste, municipalities must be approved for two Gold actions and four designated Sustainable Jersey actions in the Waste Management category. The two Gold actions set municipal performance standards:

1. Gold Star Standard in Waste – Waste Reduction

- **2%** or more per year reduction in **total solid waste**¹ generated within municipal boundaries per resident and worker,² averaged over the most recent three years for which data are available.

2. Gold Star Standard in Waste – Recycling Rate

- Annual **total solid waste recycling rate** of at least **65%**
- Annual **municipal solid waste** recycling rate of at least **55%**; both rates are exclusive leaves and are averaged over the most recent three years.

¹ Total solid waste is defined as municipal solid waste plus bulky items.

² Total solid waste/(number of residents + number of people employed in municipality).

In addition, the two Gold Star Standard for Waste actions together require a municipality to be currently approved for a total of four Sustainable Jersey actions in the Waste Management Category.

- [Commercial & Institutional Recycling](#)
- [Prescription Drug Safety and Disposal](#)
- [Household Hazardous Waste Disposal](#)*
- [Recycling and Waste Reduction Education and Compliance](#)*

*The last two of these actions must be completed at the Gold level, i.e., at the highest point level offered.

Gold Star Standard In Waste – Waste Reduction

Feasible Standard and Effective Actions

From 2010 to 2014, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection statistics show that the state reduced its total solid waste generation (disposal plus recycling) at a rate of 2.7% per year. This suggests that it is quite feasible for one municipality to exceed the Gold Star Standard rate of 2% per year today – although sustaining that rate of improvement into the future will become more and more challenging.

As shown in the table below, our research demonstrates that the required rate of reduction can be achieved each year, and sustained for roughly the next decade, by implementing the existing slate of Sustainable Jersey actions. Not all strategies will be equally effective for all municipalities; however, taken together they show the Gold Star Standard is achievable. (Note that some of these strategies overlap, and therefore their impact is not completely additive.)

WASTE REDUCTION STRATEGIES	ESTIMATED IMPACT ON ANNUAL WASTE REDUCTION
Pay-As-You-Throw Program	14 - 27%
Cut It and Leave It Program (Grass)	3 - 5%
<i>Recycling and Waste Reduction Education & Compliance*</i>	1 - 10%
Backyard Composting	1 - 5%
Materials Reuse Program	1 - 5%

Reusable Bag Education program	≈ 0.6%
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* = required action

Gold Star Standard in Waste – Recycling

Feasible Standard and Effective Actions

Sustainable Jersey's analysis of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection recycling statistics shows that in 2012,³ for example, 12% of New Jersey municipalities would have met the total solid waste recycling rate component of the Gold Star Standard for Waste. However, none would have achieved the required rate of municipal solid waste recycling (exclusive of leaves) averaged over the three-year period 2010-2012, although several came close. Thus, while sustaining and improving the high level of performance demanded by the Gold Star Standard in Waste would be challenging, this result suggests that it is feasible for some municipalities to qualify in the near term.

Even if there is work still to be done in many municipalities, Sustainable Jersey's research demonstrates that significant gains in recycling rates can be made by implementing the slate of Sustainable Jersey actions available today. (See table below. Note that some of these strategies overlap, and therefore their impact is not completely additive).

RECYCLING STRATEGIES	ESTIMATED ANNUAL INCREASE IN RECYCLING RATE
Pay-As-You-Throw Program	30 - 60%
Food Waste	8 - 25%
<i>Recycling and Waste Reduction Education & Compliance*</i>	1 - 20%
Non-Mandated Materials Recycling	5 - 15%
Construction and Demolition	4 - 11%
Commercial & Institutional Recycling*	4 - 10%

* = required actions

³ 2012 is the most recent year for which *statewide* municipal waste generation data are available. The requirements for the Gold Star standard will be assessed on the basis of the data from the most recent three years of data available for the municipal applicant.