Organics Management Guide Submission

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Select the Primary Entity Type Please identify the category that best represents your project: Brands and Manufacturers

Questions:

1. **Background: Provide context for the program, project, or policy — why it was developed, when it began, and the problem or opportunity it addresses.**

In-sink food waste disposers (aka garbage disposers, grinders, etc.) were invented 80 years ago to solve a basic problem of diverting food scraps from trash. Well studied for their system benefits and impacts, little was known about actual use and efficacy as a diversion tool - which cities considering options, e.g., trucks, drop-offs, etc., wanted to know what difference they do/could make.

2. **Summary: Briefly describe the initiative, including its goals, location, and primary outcomes.**

Five major cities in the U.S. - Philadelphia, Boston, Milwaukee, Chicago and Tacoma, plus Calgary, Alberta - agreed to partner with InSinkErator to design and execute an analysis of their efficacy. Over 500 disposers were installed in low/moderate-income homes and apartments; waste composition studies conducted before installation and one year later; participant surveys and focus groups, too, with help from local organizations. Projects found 30% to 60% diversion of food waste, high levels of customer satisfaction and no operational concerns. Key result was Philadelphia adopting in 2016 a building code requirement for in-sink disposers in new residential construction.

3. **Percent of Overall Diverted Material: If available, include data or estimates on the portion of the community or organization's total diverted material no longer associated with the waste stream that this program or policy addresses.**

As noted above, cities found a reduction in household food waste of 30% to 60%, after just one year of use. (Waste composition analysis also found @ 10% of discarded food still in some type of packaging.)

4. **Key Program Elements or Policy Provisions: Describe the structure and main components of your program or policy. Explain the investments origins (who, how much). Please include as many of the following elements as applicable: What types of materials are being managed? (e.g., surplus recoverable foods, food scraps, wasted food. How are these materials managed? Who is responsible for managing them? (Organizations, agencies, businesses, or other entities) What products are generated, and how are they utilized or managed? (e.g., compost, animal feed, energy products) Who funds the management of these materials? (Funding sources, grants, partnerships) Who generates these materials? (Identify the origin: households, institutions, businesses, etc.)**

Household generated food scraps, from both houses and apartments. Previously managed as mixed waste/trash. Homeowners and and property managers play key roles, but disposers are user-friendly and commonly available and utilized. For the five-city projects, InSinkErator covered purchase and installation, the waste audits, and engagement by community-based groups for participant outreach and support. Cities covered some operational costs.

5. **Regulatory Impact: Describe how laws, policies, regulations, and/or code have affected your program or project. This may include positive, negative, or neutral impacts. Consider noting which regulations apply, how they influenced implementation or operations, any challenges or barriers encountered, and how compliance requirements shaped program decisions.**

As noted, the key outcome was Philadelphia's use of the project results to support adoption of a building code requirement. In all cities, disposers were legal but not required or incentivized, leaving it to the market to decide installation. In all cases, cities were considering other options for diverting and capturing food scraps, including truck-based collection and drop-off initiatives.

6. **Measurable Increase in Supply: Include data or qualitative outcomes showing growth in collection, diversion, or reuse volumes if available.**

Professionally conducted waste audits in each city provided quantitative data about diversion. Surveys and focus groups provided qualitative data about behavioral change, usage, satisfaction, etc.

7. **Behavior Change: Describe whether the initiative resulted in measurable behavior change and explain how you determined this. If behavior change occurred, outline the strategies that proved most effective. Please include any available data or evidence that supports your findings.**

The projects studied behavior change - both quantitative and qualitative. Acceptance of disposers by the consumer market already well established, but the projects emphasized actual and intentional usage as a waste diversion tool. Presumably the projects also made participants more aware of food waste related practices, e.g., buying and using food. To achieve the desired behavioral changes, the projects engaged trusted local partners, provided regular communications, and other engagement techniques - beyond just getting a free disposer.

8. **Benefits and Impacts (Economic, Environmental, and Social): Describe the economic, environmental, and social sustainability impacts of the program, policy, or initiative. This may include both positive and negative outcomes. You may address impacts such as costs or savings, job creation, waste reduction, emissions, resource conservation, community engagement, equity, or public health. Please include data or qualitative observations where available and note any trade-offs or challenges.**

Even cities with well-established greenbin collection systems struggle with actual participation and effective diversion, especially in apartment building where residents can be anonymous about their waste management habits, and inconvenience is a significant barrier. The well-established in-kitchen convenience of in-sink disposers is a clear and continuing advantage to optimize diversion. For cities, understanding food as mostly liquid, and using existing infrastructure for underground conveyance via pipes and processing food waste into resources at WRRFs provides a systems solution for this challenge.

9. **How Stakeholder Buy-In Was Achieved: Explain how the program gained support from key stakeholders (e.g., government agencies, businesses, residents, nonprofits).**

InSinkErator's direct engagement with cities through expert national and local consultants was key to its recognition as a credible and capable partner. Philadelphia's agreement to be the first gave assurance to other cities that this was a serious initiative. The use of RRS and SERA as respected national consultants also helped, as was engaging respected regional firms for the waste audits.

10. **Stakeholders' Perspectives and Dynamics at Play: Highlight collaboration dynamics, challenges, or differing stakeholder interests and how they were addressed.**

As this type of project had not been undertaken before, it benefited from considerable up-front "workshopping" of how best to do it with the aid of experts in this type of research, with a keen eye towards replicability in terms of the rigorous construction of the quantitative and qualitative research methods. Engaging high-level/City Hall attention also was key, with assistance from local public affairs experts.

11. **Lessons Learned: Share what worked well, what didn't, and recommendations for others seeking to replicate your approach.**

Overall, amazing that six major cities agreed to partner with InSinkErator, and that InSinkErator itself was willing to make a considerable investment. The credibility of InSinkErator's consultants and senior leadership also supported the reception of city agencies and elected officials.