

## RECYCLELEAGUE

### A new recycling pilot from NUS and Coca-Cola

## 1. Background and context

### 1.1 What's the competition aiming to do?

We know students care about sustainability. Over the last year, there's been a huge increase in public awareness about plastics pollution. Large scale systemic solutions to these issues are needed. Recycling saves energy, reduces raw material extraction and combats climate change. Recycling is also an important part of the subliminal curriculum on university campuses. It's a visible sign of an organisation's commitment to sustainability which helps normalise sustainable behaviours by the people who use that campus. Recycling is part of the waste hierarchy – reduce, reuse, recycle, and we want to engage and excite people in innovative ways of increasing recycling, as part of their wider waste strategy.

### 1.2 Who's involved?

The project is being piloted through a partnership between Coca-Cola and NUS, who have worked together for 20 years through NUS' purchasing consortium and have a long track record in working constructively on ethical and environmental issues of concern to students.

By 2025 Coca-Cola aims to ensure all its packaging is recycled so that none of it ends up as litter or in the oceans – and part of this is using the reach of the Coca-Cola brands to inspire everyone to recycle. That's why they're funding this piece of work.

NUS work to ensure all students leave their education with the skills, values, attributes and knowledge required to create a sustainable and just future.

NUS will be delivering the day-to-day elements of the pilot, whereas Coca-Cola will be providing strategic input, supporting communications and marketing, and coordinate the end-of-competition party.

At least ten universities from across the UK will participate in the pilot, although many more have fed into its design.

### 1.3 What's Coca-Cola's approach to waste?

Coca-Cola's World Without Waste global ambition is that by 2030 they aim to help collect or recycle a bottle or can for every one that we sell. They want to make recycling more accessible for everyone, and do this in three ways in this country:

- By making sure all their plastic bottles contain at least 50% recycled PET by 2020;
- By using brands to communicate this message to consumers, for example by placing the "Please recycle me" messaging on all our Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola Zero Sugar and Diet Coke plastic bottle tops;
- By supporting recycling programmes and infrastructure to better recover our cans and bottles for reuse, for example working with the Scottish Government to implement a well-designed deposit recovery scheme and of course, RecycleLeague

### 1.4 How can we align messaging about RecycleLeague with our health and wellbeing work on campus?

Coca-Cola make over 20 brands and over 80 drinks, and they're continuing to evolve their range to make sure there's a drink for everyone, whatever the occasion. Since 2003, they've introduced 35 new drinks with low or no sugar and have reduced the amount of sugar in drinks by 23%.

Coca-Cola products are very popular with students and have long been sold through NUS' purchasing consortium. We want students to have the choice to make healthy options and enjoy what they drink – a good balance.



### 1.5 Where's the project come from?

[RecycleMania](#) began in January 2001 as a challenge between Ohio University and Miami University. Looking for ways to motivate students to recycle more, their recycling coordinators tapped into the existing sports rivalry to see which one could recycle the most per student over a 10-week period. Miami won that first year and the RecycleMania Tournament was born.

Over the next several years the competition grew informally, adding schools by word of mouth. Beginning in 2004, RecycleMania partnered with the US EPA WasteWise program to develop a website and for the first time provide dedicated administrative support for the program. In 2005 the program expanded to include the Recycling Rate category (later to be retitled Diversion), followed the next year with the introduction of the Waste Minimisation, Food Organics and targeted materials categories.

RecycleMania has continued to grow. Since 2001 over 1,000 colleges and universities across the US and Canada have participated. During the 2018 competition 3.6 million students from 300 campuses recycled and composted 68.6 million pounds preventing the release of 94,152 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO<sub>2</sub>E) into the atmosphere, which is equivalent to preventing the annual emissions from 20,160 cars. Schools from 46 U.S. states, the District of Columbia and Canada participated.

The competition is a branch of the RecycleMania program that was established in the U.S. in 2001. RecycleMania is a friendly competition and benchmarking tool for college and university recycling programmes to promote waste reduction activities to their campus communities. RecycleMania is governed by a U.S. non-profit 501c (3) organisation called RecycleMania, Inc. and is made up of a board of directors who are recycling and sustainability professionals from a variety of participating universities and community organisations. National Wildlife Federation is the manager of the RecycleMania Program, and works in partnership with RecycleMania, Inc. We're really grateful to the shared learning and generosity of resources that RecycleMania, Inc and the National Wildlife Federation – their expertise has helped us design the pilot and avoid some rookie errors!

## 2. Keeping the competition fair

### 2.1 What are the rules of the game?

The rules are still being finalised with participants, but you can see the latest version [here](#). They're due to be published in final version w/c 29 July 2019.

### 2.2 But my campus is different to others...

All university campuses have their own identities. Whether you have halls or not, whether you're city based, or campus based, we still want to encourage good recycling habits and conscious waste decisions. And the different prize categories mean there's something for everyone. If you have a large campus with residences, perhaps that puts you in good stead to win the most improved category? If you're already doing lots on waste management, perhaps you'll be top for the least waste and recycling produced per capita category.

### 2.3 What's included or not in recycling figures?

We're aiming for as close to 'whole campus' as possible but recognise there's a huge diversity in the availability of waste data for university campuses. Therefore, participants can set their own scope for what is or isn't included although there does need to be robust data available for the scope they set.

### 2.4 How will we stop students putting more waste in their recycling bins to increase their chances of winning?

Good recycling isn't just about quantity, it's about quality. We'll be working with participants to ensure students understand which bin to use for what, and about the consequences of contaminating waste streams. Waste data provided by contractors won't be able to recycle waste that's been contaminated so figures used for the competition will only include waste that's actually been recycled.

We will train student auditors to conduct “surprise” audits on the recycling and waste bins to assess that materials have either been recycled correctly, or that recycled material are not ending up in general waste. The auditors will also be ambassadors for the competition and work with their students’ union and environmental officers to promote and lead on best practice for the competition.

### **3. Recording waste figures**

#### **3.1 How will waste figures be logged?**

A simple online form has been created for participants to track their data on a weekly basis. It may be that some weeks you need to estimate your waste figures, whilst you wait for data from your waste contractor. This is outlined in the rules. They’ll be a web tutorial about how to log your data published soon.

#### **3.2 When do we need to provide our data?**

Participants will report weight data on the tracker website on a weekly basis, providing details of the previous week’s data (including the previous Monday through to the Sunday) before 5pm on Wednesday of each week. Weights submitted after this time of a given week may not be reflected in the updated results until the following week. Again, this is outlined in the rules.

#### **3.3 We get monthly, not weekly waste data**

We expect most campuses will have to make some data estimates, so the important thing is that we’re consistent. You can use weekly estimates based on your historic data and the trends you see throughout the competition. Once you have actual waste data, you can update your estimates in time for the end of the competition. Again, this is outlined in the rules.

#### **3.4 d. We only have data for part of our campus**

We expect most campuses will have to make some data estimates, so the important thing is that we’re consistent. If data is only available for a section of the campus you can estimate the number of people occupying that section of the campus and calculate the estimated additional per person usage based on your other campus figures or, you can simply not include that part of campus in your scope.

### **4. Support for participants**

#### **4.1 How will we know how we’re doing?**

An interactive ranking tool will be on the competition website and updated weekly throughout the competition. Here you and your students will be able to see how you’re fairing in the competition, cumulative recycling figures and information on what engagement activities are taking place across the country.

#### **4.2 How will institutions be supported?**

Microgrants will be available for students’ unions and individual students to run their own events, activities and stunts supporting the programme. They’ll also be a fund available for marketing and communications on campus.

There will be branding and templates available for your communications, a toolkit that will help shape your ideas for launching and running great engagement activities during the competition period, and regular participant group calls to help share good practice and troubleshoot. As pilot institutions, you’ll be able to shape the project itself and receive bespoke data about your staff and students’ attitudes and behaviours towards recycling to.

#### **4.3 How will the funding work?**

Students’ unions, student/staff groups or waste management teams can apply for funding to support their activities. Students’ unions each have a budget of £1000 and another £1000 is available for others within each participating university. A simple online form will collect the key pieces of information, our team will assess the application, ask any relevant questions and then provide a PO number which you can use to invoice us.

## 5. The prizes

### 5.1 What do we win?

The overall winner is the university that recycles the most over the 8-week period. They will win an incredible on-campus party supported by Coca-Cola. This could enhance an existing event or be stand-alone. Coca-Cola's events teams will work with your campus to ensure everything is considered for a fantastic, celebratory event.

### 5.2 What about the other category winners?

Each winner will receive a coveted golden recycling bin to take the pride of place on campus. We'll work with the university to ensure it's fit-for-purpose and meets their waste and communications requirements.

## 6. Getting involved

### 6.1 What does it cost to be involved?

Coca-Cola are funding this pilot programme making involvement in it free to participating institutions.

### 6.2 What will we need to do?

We will need pilot participants to be active players – this means attending (largely remote) steering group meetings, providing recycling data and engaging in our monitoring and evaluation processes so we can monitor the pilot's impact on recycling and behaviour change. We will be looking for weekly weight data on all recycled goods and all general waste (although if your data is available monthly you can still participate). Waste data will need to be recorded by institutional waste managers on the dedicated RecycleLeague website.

Each institution and their students' union will also take the lead on communications and engagement of your students, with our support.

### 6.3 How much time will this take?

It's a bit of a 'how long is a piece of string?' question as it depends on your level of ambition, what you're already doing on campus and who's on board locally. It may be that you already have campaigns, events and planned activities that you can use to raise the profile about the competition. We will help you get the buy-in of relevant student groups and colleagues on campus. As with so many things, we anticipate there to be an element of 'you get out what you put in' but we've designed the compulsory weekly data collection to be as quick and easy as possible.

### 6.4 How do I sign us up?

We have now secured our ten pilot participants. However, if you'd like to be involved, be a back-up, or simply be kept in the loop about progress, please contact [jamie.agombar@nus.org.uk](mailto:jamie.agombar@nus.org.uk).

### 6.5 I still have questions

No problem! Get in touch with at [jamie.agombar@nus.org.uk](mailto:jamie.agombar@nus.org.uk) or 07738 883 451.

