



THE GREAT WITH PURPOSE TOOLKIT

ReMida Perth

Build on the good towards the better and the best.



The GREAT with Purpose Toolkit, written by Dr Paul Armishaw for ReMida Perth Inc. as part of the GREAT with Purpose project, funded under the Waste Authority's Community Education grant scheme, 2022

ReMida extends its thanks to everyone who contributed to the development of this Toolkit.



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Preface

The *GREAT with Purpose Toolkit* represents the knowledge gained by ReMida¹ across its eighteen-year history as a creative reuse centre, combined with elements from the Waste Avoidance and Recovery Strategy 2030² and the Department of Water and Environmental Regulations' (DWER) Be a GREAT Sort³ program.



The work that led us here began in 2018 when ReMida secured funding for its Jellyfish Plastics project, supported through the Waste Authority's Community Industry and Engagement program. During the formation of Jellyfish Plastics and the first attempts at establishing community-based plastics repurposing hubs, we developed a body of work regarding the language of recycling and reuse, which we have added to over the last several years.



But we have not journeyed alone.

ReMida takes this opportunity to thank the people and groups that have contributed to the formation of this Toolkit.

- The City of Albany
- The City of Bunbury
- The City of Stirling
- The City of Vincent
- Manea Senior College
- North Metropolitan TAFE
- The participants of the GREAT with Purpose information and Maker sessions
- The Town of Claremont
- The City of Armadale
- The Waste Authority and the State Government of Western Australia
- Yakamia Primary School

This present work is the first version of this Toolkit and is a language-rich document that condenses the sum of our learning in one place. The Toolkit includes simplified overviews and downloadable copies here.⁴

The creation of the GREAT with Purpose Toolkit was made possible by the support of the Waste Authority's Community Education Fund, and ReMida Perth gratefully acknowledges their support for this Project.



¹ Discover | REmida WA.

² Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030 | Waste Authority WA.

³ Be a GREAT Sort | WasteSorted.

⁴ GREAT with Purpose | REmida WA.

Background to the Project

ReMida Perth's (ReMida) inspiration for the *GREAT with Purpose Toolkit* is the Be a GREAT Sort program and two broader questions concerning behaviour change. First, how far had the language of the GREAT acronym spread throughout the community, thus far, and secondly, what resources could help people move from awareness to action? Alternatively, what happens when we examine the distance between language, awareness, and behaviour change. And by extension, if language drives change, then a clear association between language, meaning and application are crucial for positive and practical waste avoidance and recycling behaviours.

ReMida directly repurposes⁵ clean industry discards and offcuts into education and arts settings. For the suppliers, educators and artists who know us, the language, directly repurposed, makes sense because familiarity with ReMida links our use of language to the materials we collect from suppliers and provide to members. However, people will often contact ReMida for mainstream paper, e-waste, plastic and furniture recycling, which is outside our scope. The language ReMida employs is that of *directly repurposed*, but the terminology associated with us is that of recycling. And for many people, recycling is a universal term that applies to all materials, so ReMida, by association, must take everything, which is not the case.

Experientially ReMida knows that recycling is a key or foundational word that underlies a broad range of ideas linked to waste and waste behaviours. There is a growing desire within the community to improve its (collective) waste and recycling efforts, and recycling is often the first step on that journey. But it is not the only step, and some actions, like Avoidance (a central focus of the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030), alleviates the pressure on subsequent recycling processes. So, we have a keyword, recycling, that motivates people to action; however, it is one word with many connotations that sits within a much larger waste and reuse vocabulary.

Understandably, much of the language associated with waste and recycling is reactive, focusing on the point of disposal. Avoidance, which sits atop the waste hierarchy,⁶ is proactive, but most of the community's actions are reactive, focusing on options for disposal rather than prevention.

Households and businesses have multiple threads of waste and recycling processes to follow, and even for the individual, it is a lot of information to track and keep current. In response, the *GREAT with Purpose Toolkit* is a resource that helps you take those steps. Along the way, we outline the research and activities that informed our thinking and sparked a journey we know extends onwards.

⁵ ReMida focuses items that can be collected by its volunteers and then used by educators and artists, with the minimal amount of processing required.

⁶ See page 27.

Introduction – Building on the Research

ReMida's *GREAT with Purpose Toolkit* (the *Toolkit*) creates practical links between knowledge and practice in creating positive waste outcomes at all levels of life and work.

Between March and June 2022, the project team engaged with the community to explore people's awareness of the language and ideas associated with the Be a GREAT Sort Campaign. From there, we unpacked participant responses and asked ourselves two questions. Firstly, what is the relationship between the language of waste and recycling and the activities or behaviours covered by the GREAT acronym? And secondly, how can we build on the community's positive behaviours towards the better and the best?



The *Toolkit* builds on the relationship between language, meaning and value in changing people's broader waste generation behaviours. People are often surprised to discover they have a waste and recycling vocabulary absorbed from various sources. As with any language, there are levels of understanding regarding each word's meaning and significance. A key finding from our research was the utility enjoyed by the term recycling and its counterparts, reduce and reuse. But knowledge of a word does not equate to behaviour change, at least not alone.

The *GREAT with Purpose Toolkit* employs four strategies to transition from information to knowledge and from knowledge to change.

1. Support investigations into the waste-based vocabulary utilised in a given context.
2. Ways to create meaningful links between language and behaviour change.
3. The development of reuse and disposal pathways for items frequently discarded in your context.
4. The importance of staying updated with systemic waste and recycling practices as laws and expectations change over time.

The key to this process at whatever level you begin is language or the relationship between language, value and meaning. For example, you buy a milkshake from your local takeaway. The focus of the purchase is the milkshake and not the cup. And the language we use before the purchase confirms this.

Milkshake descriptors	Cup descriptors
Delicious Sweet Filling Treat Chocolatey Sugar rush Icecream headache Money well spent	Disposable Trash Rubbish Are they recyclable?

There are two distinct parts to the successful milkshake purchase, contents and container. Our focus is on the contents; the container (the cup) is an incidental part of the exchange, although essential. The movement towards keep-cups and biodegradable food containers will hopefully eliminate this issue over time, but presently, it is still something to consider.

If the cup is plastic lined or just straight plastic, its *useful life* extends beyond its milkshake mandate.

The secret life of cups
Cleaning artist paint brushes
Growing seedlings
A cup
Craft supply holder
Craft item
Pen holder
Plasticine container
Dye/paint mixing
Sand play

The duration of the cup's useful life depends on maintenance and the overall frequency of use, but it has more than one possible use. Objectively, the cup has a higher potential value because of its duration. The milkshake has a higher subjective value because of its nature, and our use of language leans toward the personal.

This trend reverses somewhat when a takeaway chain offers limited edition or themed cups. The subjective value of the cup increases based on the associated marketing campaign it accompanies. However, it is still a cup, and its inherent qualities (its cup-like qualities) are the same, but the language change is noticeable.

Themed cups
Collectable
Special
Memorabilia
Keepsake
Gift
Special
Rare
Valuable

It is still a cup. And it is crucial to keep that in mind. As the language changes, its meaning and perceived value likewise change. Here we have a phenomenon so ingrained in our language and culture that we rarely notice its influence. The milkshake dilemma consists of three parts:

1. A highly accessible, desirable and positive language item;
2. Partnered with a highly accessible but low desire and low positive language item; which,
3. Results in high levels of avoidable waste generated by millions of people daily.

The milkshake dilemma extends beyond milkshakes. Its cultural foundation is the phenomenon where children may favour a large cardboard box as a play item instead of what the box contained. What the child values, or seems to value at that moment, is which item, the box, or its contents yields the better play experience. And you can see this with adults as they pop sections of bubble wrap, play with foam backing beads, or save wrapping, string, and wire for later use with other packages.

It is possible to summarise the *milkshake dilemma* as follows:

Language shapes our understanding of value, and value bestows meaning (or significance) onto an item. Value is a context function; some things transition between contexts better than others. People absorb language from multiple sources, and meaning varies between groups of language users. Simple language consistently applied has greater utility. To promote change, find the words relevant to your audience and build on their vocabulary. And if behaviour change is the goal, create links between language and opportunities to practice the desired behaviours.⁷

We discovered through the research a clear association between the word recycling and a series of positive behaviours, or at the very least, positive behaviour expectations.

If the language of recycling is well known and the associated behaviours are mainly positive, what factors impede better waste and recycling behaviours?

The breakdown between language, expectation, and behaviour had a series of common elements among our research participants, but chief among these was confusion. When we asked participants which five items belong in their yellow recycling bins, responses were as follows:

Item	Initial Response (no prompts)
Paper	100%
Cardboard	100%
Glass	30%
Tin/Cans	10%
Plastics	40%

Of the 40% response to the plastics questions, the accuracy regarding the type of plastics appropriate for the yellow bin was only 5%. The same was true for paper and cardboard and whether items belonged in the yellow bin, FOGO or general waste. It became apparent that while the term recycling is well known, it carries a range of possible definitions (or applications) depending on the item in question. The general notion of recyclable does not always connect with the specific opportunities or materials in question.

⁷ Armishaw, P, 2022, Outcomes from the GREAT with Purpose Research Report, ReMida Perth: Perth Western Australia.

Part 1. Words in Common Usage

Why start with language?

Because if we are to improve the community's waste and recycling outcomes, we must close the gap between desire, language, knowledge, opportunity and capacity.

Later in this section, we discuss the issue of poster-saturation or the instruction-without-context barrier to behaviour change. We tend to ignore words we don't understand. And this can be discouraging for the person, group, or committee trying to launch a behaviour change process.

The language of waste and recycling is present within our collective social vocabulary. But the application of the words and the behaviours attached to recycling varies between contexts. And it can be difficult for people to keep up with the changes at both the local and systemic levels.

Through the research, we discovered that participants had a rich and diverse vocabulary regarding waste and recycling. However, we found a cluster of words that appeared consistently across age groups and contexts.

The GREAT of the *GREAT with Purpose Toolkit* takes its inspiration from the acronym utilised by the *Be a GREAT Sort* program.⁸ The acronym provides five strategies or behaviours the community can apply to their waste and recycling habits. The project team asked each group of participants the same two questions; had they heard of the Be a GREAT Sort campaign; If GREAT is an acronym, what words did they think belonged to each letter?

GREAT acronym	Common associations
Give	Garbage Green General (general waste) Groundwater Grow
Recycle	Recycle Reduce Reuse Repurpose Rubbish
Earth-cycle	Environment Energy Ecosystem Ecology
Avoid	Attitude Addiction
Take	Terracycle Transform Transitions

⁸ Be a GREAT Sort | WasteSorted.

Regardless of age or context, each group of participants correctly associated R with recycling and the associated ideas of reducing, reusing, and repurposing.⁹

It then occurred to us that language has an optimal sphere of influence and that familiarity, proximity, usage and context each have a role in connecting language to meaning and meaning to action. The understanding can be generalised, with a person associating a word with a concept rather than a strict or technical definition of its meaning. For example, we found that people were confused about what plastics are suitable for kerbside recycling.

When we asked people to link words to the letters of the acronym, most of the word associations had a waste-centric focus, as in the properties of waste or its impact on the environment. Earth-cycle presented the most difficult until we connected the term to composting, written in sessions as Earth-cycling (compost).

Once the conversation moved to recycling and its associated behaviours, we found that participants readily adopted the rest of the GREAT language. The other factor was proximity or the familiarity the individuals and groups had with each idea. For example, participants actively using the containers for change scheme, taking their soft plastics to a collection point, or donating items to thrift shops had no difficulty remembering Give and Take. And everyone already had recycling locked into their vocabulary, even as a general concept.

Earth-cycle proved challenging for two reasons; firstly, most participants had less direct experience with earth-cycling; and secondly, the word most commonly linked with the action or behaviour was composting.

The research led us to the following observations:

1. Recycling is the key or foundation word that shapes people's waste and recycling vocabulary,
2. Familiarity with an action or behaviour increases language retention.
3. People associated the Give and Take ideas with personal effort.
4. The notion of Avoidance was commonly linked to that of loss (negatively) rather than prevention (active-positive).

Finding Ways to Listen

The first step in this process is to learn the waste and recycling vocabulary active in your context. For schools, community groups, and businesses, this may include:

- Existing policies and practices
- Labelling on bins
- Signs in kitchens, wet areas, and near recycling points
- Internal bans or restrictions on single-use items, such as cups or cutlery

⁹ The other, and still related word, was rubbish as something that needed the community's wider attention.

It is worth tracking any reminder emails circulated, such as please don't place x in the bin or remember to bring your reusable cup to work. Remember, you can listen to behaviour as effectively as you can language.

What may seem like a resistance to change can be a mixture of time, confusion and habit. Let's say that a staff member has a 30-minute lunch break; if they spend 5-10 minutes preparing their lunch (heating, assembling, finding cutlery and a place to sit), they have 15-minutes to eat and 5-minutes to pack up and get back to work. A new system that requires that you separate and dispose of multiple items in different bins is a big ask within a limited timeframe. If the language that supports a new disposal process, whether food, production items, or office waste, creates confusion rather than clarity (clarity and intent are the goals), problems will inevitably arise.

Find a way to ask the people in your context two or three basic questions, such as:

1. What does the word recycling mean to you?
2. Can you name the items we recycle?
3. Do you see terms around the (office, school, warehouse) with which you are unfamiliar?

What you are trying to determine at this stage is:

- People's general level of interest in this topic:
 - For example, if no one responds to your questions, you will need to do further investigations before launching a new or revised waste and recycling plan.
- Any common points of understanding or confusion already present within the space:
 - For example, if the wrong types of plastic are ending up in the recycling, which is ongoing, it gives you a clear and helpful place to start your waste initiative.
- The possible launch point for change:
 - For example, you may find something in the responses, as above, or a question may arise that sparks your thinking.

Also, don't negate the power of having in-person conversations with people. Emails and surveys are great tools, but a conversation over lunch can yield better data.

You will likely discover a general awareness of recycling as a concept linked to habits, which may or may not support your present and future goals. And before new signs or instructions appear throughout your context, you need to develop a consistent vocabulary that is simple, consistent and relevant to your Project.

DWER's Be a GREAT Sort program provides a range of excellent resources to help develop a consistent message within your context.¹⁰ But as we discovered, some preliminary steps may be needed before launching a brand-new set of posters around the office.

¹⁰ GREAT Sort toolkit - WasteSorted.

For example:

- A small business or community group may generate high volumes of single-use waste, such as coffee cups, water bottles, soft drink cans, and disposable cutlery, alongside paper and cardboard.

We have the following result if we run these items through the options within the GREAT acronym.

Example: a GREAT Approach to Sorting Waste

GREAT	Items	Outcome
Gift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-use containers • Disposable cutlery • Paper and cardboard. 	Difficult to gift items, but not impossible if they are in good condition as they make excellent craft items.
Recycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-use containers • Disposable cutlery • Paper and cardboard. 	Yes, many items can be recycled, but not all; you may need to double-check some things.
Earth-cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-use containers • Disposable cutlery • Paper and cardboard. 	There is potential for Earth-cycling, but this may rely on people taking items home; unless a school or community group has a worm farm or similar.
Avoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-use containers • Disposable cutlery • Paper and cardboard. 	Yes, there are some great avoidance items here, and people can be encouraged in that direction.
Take	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-use containers • Disposable cutlery • Paper and cardboard. 	Yes, there are some takeable items on the list. But this may rely on the voluntary efforts of staff to be successful.

The language to promote is *Avoid* and *Recycle*, as these are steps the individual can take at their own pace. *Take*, and *Earth-cycle* may become a volunteer request, as people have capacity. *Give* is possible, item-dependent, but it may have a reduced focus compared to *Avoid* and *Recycle*.

The aim is to encourage the words and phrases that support avoidance and recycling-based activities. Some additional points to consider:

- Be patient; change takes time.
 - If difficulties in paper and cardboard recycling persist, you may want to start from that point rather than introducing something new immediately.
- Invest in the language. If the GREAT acronym is new in your context, make sure people have exposure to the language, the words and their meaning to accelerate the process.
- Acknowledge the good. Yes, there will be frustration along the way; our motto is to *Build on the good towards the better and the best*, and recognising the good is always the place to start.

Other Investigations: Education Settings

We encourage a play and curriculum-based approach to exploring children's waste and recycling vocabulary in education settings. Firstly, you can weave the language explorations into the student's day and make it a fun part of their overall learning experience. Secondly, pedagogies like loose parts play can encourage the use of non-traditional play items. The same applies to the Reggio Emilia, Montessori and Walker learning approaches and their focus on loose parts and sustainability.

Children will happily engage and reengage with various materials, like cardboard tubes, tube end caps, pool covers and artificial turf offcuts, fabric and cardboard boxes. Additionally, it can be a great way to repurpose items and keep them away from landfills. Safety is paramount; not all items can transition into a play or educational context, but many can. You also have an opportunity for a two-pronged approach, working as a staff group to reduce waste across your service or campus and finding more sustainable ways to resource your activities.

The data we gathered while at schools regarding students' default waste vocabulary was identical to that of the adults we surveyed. Recycle was the foundational word, with Avoidance and Earth-cycle requiring the most explanation. Interestingly, we only needed to repeat the GREAT acronym twice for the students to absorb the concepts and apply them in different scenarios.

The process works best when students and educators harmonise their vocabulary and efforts. Avoidance and waste-reduction targets are good starting points and explore the difference between disposable and experience-based education, craft and art activities. Disposable arts tend to be items with a high glue, paint and glitter content where the base material degrades, or the volume of the works produced encourages the disposable of the old to make way for new pieces. In contrast, experiential activities minimise the damage to the materials allowing them to be used and reused.

Other Investigations: Business and Industry

For larger organisations, it is helpful to divide your waste generation habits into a series of pods, such as:

- **Office-based** waste like stationery, inks, paper, and cardboard.
- **E-waste** such as printer cartridges, batteries, keyboards, and IT upgrades.
- **Food waste**, the scale of which varies if your organisation operates a café or canteen.
- **Outdated** marketing and promotional materials.
- **PPE** and hygiene waste.
- **Production waste** focuses on items that cannot be reclaimed through your manufacturing or production systems.
- **General waste**, disposable items used by employees or visitors.
 - Note that visitor waste can be an unseen element within your best-constructed plans.

Some common reasons why businesses donate large volumes of items to ReMida for use in its education and arts programs include:

- Changes to branding that invalidates large amounts of stationery.
- IT upgrades, including phone systems.
- Production overruns and defects.
- The phasing out of colour, tile and carpet samples.
- Reoccurring waste tied to a product or material, such as cardboard tubes, end caps, sturdy packaging, and material offcuts.

There will be limits to how much change an organisation can make, in what areas, within any given time. Production-based waste, even of desirable materials like untreated wood offcuts, can be challenging to handle when the volume may exceed several hundred tonnes daily.

The first step is to know where you want to start; if we return to the language of the GREAT acronym for a moment, this will also help sharpen our focus.

GREAT	Options
Gift	Depending on the industry or context, you may have items that can be re-gifted to other parties. However, those processes will likely allocate discarded items with a commercial or production value.
Recycle	<p>Hopefully, the basics of paper and cardboard recycling and plastics are well in hand. If not, this is the place to start.</p> <p>There may be logistical limitations to what you can recycle and what volumes. And if this is true at a production level, there may still be other areas where steps can be taken.</p> <p>Remember, this is a great place to start if you see frequent emails about contamination in your recycling bins.</p>
Earth-cycle	Food waste is another possible launch point for organisations that operate a canteen, café or similar. If these services are contracted to a third party, they will hopefully have a sustainably geared disposal plan.
Avoid	<p>One place to start is the waste generated by staff, for example, single-use coffee cups, takeaway containers, plastic cutlery, and the like.</p> <p>Other strategies include items like branded stationery, note pads, and minimising document printing.</p> <p>Never underestimate the value of taking a step back and asking why this thing is used or the disposal process exists</p>
Take	<p>For smaller organisations, staff may volunteer to take items like soft plastics, cans, and the like to local recycling points.</p> <p>If you view this idea of <i>Take</i> as your annual waste disposal fees, the aim is to minimise your spending through implementing the G-R-E and A of the GREAT acronym.</p>

Larger entities have the same launch point as individuals and small groups, language. The initial challenge is effective data collection for companies with more than one hundred employees or employees spread over multiple locations.

The crucial first step is ensuring there is more than one waste advocate to help support the process.

You can use a few different approaches to explore the organisation's waste and recycling vocabulary.

- Collect data from a pool of twenty to thirty employees and examine its points of connection and divergence.
 - For example, if the responses are virtually identical, it may be possible to treat this first group as indicative of the entire group.
- If the commonality and divergence are 50%, you could double the survey group and evaluate the responses.
- Listen to your rubbish. The volume of general waste and recycling generated by a company, business, or organisation, not including production discards, provides valuable insight into people's waste and recycling attitudes and behaviours.

If you start within a specific department, branch, office or service, make the results visible within the rest of the organisation. Ideally, any existing mechanism that collects staff feedback is adaptable to this process.

Something to avoid is poster-saturation; information without context generates confusion for your audience and frustration for the person or group supervising the initiative. We start with language to build on a common framework of understanding. People are more likely to self-regulate their behaviour when they understand the expectations. We cover the issue of resistance and refusal in the next section, and yes, communication will only take you so far, but it is still the place to start.

The difference between the individual, small group or large corporation is the visible connection between language and behaviour. An office of ten people that eliminates disposable coffee cups will see the change in response to changes in people's actions. An office with two or three hundred employees may see this in glimpses, but the scale makes visibility difficult, and change occurs slowly. Language is crucial at this point because it helps move the change forward by gradually catching everyone into the process.

Points to Remember

What language do people already use?

Do you have a well defined place to start?

What is your GREAT focus?

Remember, the *Toolkit's* motto is to *build on the good towards the better and the best*. Things may not always go to plan, but remember to celebrate your wins. Otherwise, the time people invest in this process will exhaust rather than invigorate their efforts.

What's Next?

Next, we examine the relationship between language and behaviour through the language-value-meaning framework. We also take time to step through a hypothetical behaviour change scenario as a guide to implementing these strategies in your context.

Part 2. Language and Behaviour Change

How do we move from language to action?

Our initial focus on language ensures people understand the why behind the proposed changes. The next step is finding a current activity or behaviour that aligns with the proposed changes.

For example, people regularly place cans and bottles into the containers for change bins; while contamination still occurs in paper recycling, the bottles and cans are always on point. The next step is to map the current behaviours using the following guide.

Example 1. Current Waste and Recycling Success Measures

Material	Process	Success Rate Low-Med-High
Paper	Recycling bin	Low – frequent contamination
Cardboard	Recycling bin	Med – some contamination on most weeks.
Glass	Recycling bin	High – contamination is rare. (note, it's also a lower volume item)
Plastics	Split between different plastic types.	Med – there is ongoing confusion about what plastics we can/can't recycle.
Tins	Recycling	High – contamination is rare. (note, it's also a lower volume item)
E-waste	Special collection point	Med – some general waste appears, but this is easily removed.
Food/organic waste	Special collection point	Note – this is currently not used as most food waste is still being placed in the kitchen bins.
Containers for change	Special collection point	High – virtually no contamination.
Soft plastics	Collected upstairs and taken at the end of each week.	Med – the volunteer roster for taking the plastics doesn't always work.

Of the many initiatives in place, the containers for change collections are on track, several areas need work, and recycling paper and food is the most problematic.

There is a principle we call the Law of Reminders, which states:

"That after three emails, your chances of behaviour change exponentially decrease for every subsequent email on the same topic."¹¹

The same holds for notes placed on fridges, recycling bins, notice boards, and so forth. Entrenched non-compliance is rare. Three common barriers to behaviour change are:

1. **Confusion**; the instruction is unclear or conflicts with another accepted rule or practice.
2. **Time**; complying with the instruction takes too long or interferes with a preferred task, such as leaving work on time or having lunch.
3. **Effort**; the instruction requires people to invest time and energy beyond the instructions' perceived value.

Questions that often arise at this point:

- How hard is it to put the correct item in the right bin?
- Can't I enforce the instruction?
- How many times do I have to explain this to people?
- Why wouldn't people want to do the right thing?

If we tackle these in order:

- The underlying issue is rarely one of difficulty; time and inattention are usually the culprits behind persistent mistakes of this type.
- Yes. But, inspired cooperation is better than enforced compliance.
- At least one more time, it seems. If you eliminate time and effort as barriers to compliance, then confusion may be the underlying cause. Persistent issues are rarely confusion-based unless the process itself is unnecessarily complex.
- Generally, we find that people want to do the right thing as quickly or conveniently as possible. The more time and effort the instruction takes, the faster a person's motivation or desire will decrease.

We know from our discussion in the last section that the recycling language is well established and familiar to most people; this is often why paper and cardboard recycling works well and new initiative struggles. So, before starting the behaviour change process, we need to:

1. Understand the language people associate with waste and recycling (see part one for a refresher).
2. Map what is or is not working.
3. Map the relationship between confusion, time and effort and their impact on the preferred behaviours.
4. Identify an opportunity for improvement.

¹¹ Armishaw, P, 2022, Outcomes from the GREAT with Purpose Research Report, ReMida Perth: Perth Western Australia.

Our process thus far looks like this.



An Important Distinction

Difficulty and effort are not the same. In this context, the idea of effort is value-based, or how do I understand the connection between my actions and their personal, social and environmental benefits. For example, a person who composts for their garden or chickens is more likely to see the value in an office-based composting or FOGO¹² setup because of their direct experience.

Another way to look at this is the relationship between effort, intention and benefit; what are we trying to achieve as an office, business, school or company?

Here, you want to relate the higher, aspirational targets with the individual's willingness to invest time sorting their lunch waste into the correct bins. Let's say that an organisation has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals¹³ as the foundation for its push towards better waste and recycling practices.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The Be a GREAT Sort campaign sits below this as a guide to the types of behaviours the organisation hopes to foster. We can already see a lot of information for people to digest. From a strategic level, the management team may clearly understand the rationale behind these frameworks. However, the person you need to reach is the staff member wondering what bin is suitable for their pizza box.

¹² FOGO – Food organics and garden organics, see FOGO - Food Organics and Garden Organics » Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council (emrc.org.au)

¹³ Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme (undp.org)

The Steps Toward Change

The first task is to evaluate people's reactions to a clear and achievable call to action. Remember that *poster saturation* or high volumes of information without context works against you. Start with a current process that works but can be improved; you should have this from your review of your current waste and recycling practices.

Next, communicate the need for change, ask for feedback, and do not circulate instructions, judgements or reprimands. For example:

Dear Team, any thoughts on how we can improve our paper recycling? Let me know if there's a way to make it easier for everyone.

If no one responds, investigate the source of the silence. The responses don't have to be positive. If the bulk of reactions are:

- Not sure;
- It's not my area;
- Everything's fine; or,
- A surprised; we recycle paper?

There is at least some willingness to engage with the idea. With a bit of encouragement, you will be surprised how far even a small amount of willingness will take the process.

Once you have the feedback, look at the responses and the current process that's in place. Do any of them relate to the Confusion, Time, and Effort barriers we discussed on page 16? If we partner the barriers with solutions, we get:

- Barrier: confusion Solution: improve clarity
- Barrier: time Solution: Simplify the process
- Barrier: effort Solution: contextualise the value

For example, you have an office of forty people and a kitchen area accommodating five people at once. On any given break, fifteen people use the space within a twenty to thirty-minute period.

- The current recycling process involves four separate bins for people's food, plastic, paper, glass and general waste.
- Most food waste ends up in the bins at people's desks because that's where they eat.
 - The paper recycling bin is becoming contaminated with general waste.
 - People note that the bins are placed closely together and look identical if the lids are left raised.
- Everyone acknowledges that slowing down and disposing of their food waste back in the kitchen would help, but they don't feel they have the time or physical space for the effort to feel worthwhile.

We can then reframe our barriers:

- Confusion: No, people understand the expectations, or they seem to.
- Time: Yes, that and the amount of space in the kitchen.
- Effort: Yes, people are reluctant to revisit the kitchen due to the chaos.

There are quite a few issues here but remember our starting point is to reduce contamination in paper recycling, which is our first step.

You may have already thought,

- *'Well, they can just take the paper recycling out of the kitchen and place it somewhere else that is visible and easy to access.'*

And we would say, that's perfect. Let people know why you are moving the paper recycling, its new location, and the benefits of the change, such as more space in the kitchen and more accessibility.

Finally, track the levels of contamination and celebrate people's efforts in making the change and its positive impacts. The steps we have taken up to this point are:

1. Identifying a current waste and recycling practice requires improvement.
2. Evaluate people's responses to a call for action.
3. Work through any barriers relating to Confusion, Effort and Time.
4. Communicate and implement a proposed strategy, then track its progress.
5. Celebrate the improvements with your colleagues.

Hold on, what if it doesn't work?

That's an excellent question, and we already have the makings of an answer. You may find a burst of enthusiasm, but once the energy wanes, bad habits return. And if you work in an office with frequent staff changes, introducing new people to your processes takes time. The destination is not perfection; we look for sustained gradual improvements over time. As you review your waste and recycling practices, see page 15, the changes you've made will start to bear fruit. But a steady decline in your success measures is likely tied to one of our three barriers of confusion, time and effort.

Rapid, systemic change is the hardest to manage because it generates confusion and is both time and effort heavy. The reason that *poster saturation* counteracts change is the visual fatigue of tracking too much information as you walk into a room or down a hallway. Direct communication that is straightforward and leads to a simple action, or actions, is much more accessible for people to absorb.

When we asked people what motivated them more, convenience or financial rewards (like containers for change, for example), most people opted for convenience each time. Suppose you work in a fixed location, such as a school, community group, or office. In that case, there is an opportunity to structure the environment to maximise its waste and recycling potential.

Here are some lessons ReMida has learnt over the years:

- You need more than one waste advocate to make this work. If your champion leaves, then you lose the knowledge and enthusiasm at the same time.
 - But, a committee is not always the answer. Ideally, you are creating a culture that encourages action by example through its language and attitudes towards waste and recycling.
- Make your successes visible, and make sure you can articulate how the changes have improved your outcomes.
- Know your rubbish. People are often surprised by the amount of paper, staples, sticky labels and folders their organisation disposes of each year. ReMida is offered thousands of lever-arch folders, document holders, desk trays, pen holders, and folder dividers, which are still new and do not belong in a landfill.
 - Yes, things break. But do you know how much waste that is truly wasteful your organisation generates in a week, month or year?

Looking Forward: Practising Purposeful Purchases

Everything we purchase has the potential to become a waste item. Some materials are inherently disposable; others will break or be superseded, and we likely discard any number of things because we no longer see them as valuable or worthwhile.

The aim of practising purpose purchases is intentionality or having mechanisms to ask a series of why questions behind our disposal practices.

Mobile phones fit these criteria, with most people having a phone less than two years old. There are many ways to recycle, re-gift and repurpose a phone, which is good news. But let's look at some numbers, CellPhoneDeal ¹⁴ estimates:

- 1.5 billion mobile phones are sold each year.
- There are currently 6.5 billion mobile phone subscriptions globally.

The Earth's population is estimated to be over 7.75 billion people.¹⁵

Every five years, on average, we manufacture enough mobile phones for everyone alive to have a phone. Mobile devices are not necessarily disposable, nor is longevity factored into their value. The same is true for any number of home, school and office-based devices; they progressively diminish in value once purchased.

Have you ever persevered with a barely functioning stapler, a difficult-to-open filing cabinet or a thirty-year-old hole punch? Despite society's passion for the short-lived and expensive, there are still items we see as highly useful but of low value that we fight to keep out of the trash.

¹⁴ Phones By The Numbers: 22 Surprising Smartphone Statistics (cellphonedea.com)

¹⁵ Earth - Place Explorer - Data Commons

The challenge is finding ways to impart value to the unexpected or recover value in something we would otherwise discard.

What does it mean to find value in the unexpected?

Items end up in the bin when we no longer attach value to their form or function. When facing safety or contamination issues, the only place for some items is their relevant disposal point. But, much like our thirty-year-old hole punch, an item's usefulness can extend beyond its looks.

If we return to the Give and Take of the GREAT acronym, see page 10 for a refresher, then you begin to look at potential waste items in the following way:

- Does it still work, but it seems a little worse for wear?
- Does it no longer fulfil its primary function but still have some use left?
 - Think of a cracked mug, which may no longer hold fluids but may hold a plant.
 - Paper with printing on one side of non-confidential information can be used for notes.
 - Old merchandising or promotional items, like tote bags, key chains and the like, are no longer needed but are still inherently valuable.
- Do you have an upgrade or stock renewal systems that result in large quantities of e-waste, furniture, banners, sample chips, fabric samples, and the like being discarded?

People often approach ReMida¹⁶ and say, *"these items seem too good for landfill, but we don't have a use for them,"* or *"We throw these out each year, and it seems like such a waste."* The challenge many groups face is the time needed to take a step back and ask questions like:

- Why do we throw this (or these things) away?
- Do the items have value to someone else?
- How would we find people who may want these items?
- Can we reduce the number of materials with value-potentiality we discard?¹⁷

Value-potentiality is an object's life beyond its original intent. The key to determining any item's value-potentiality is often a function of whom, not what. The axiom one person's trash is another person's treasure is valid, providing you can connect the garbage with the treasure seeker. Undertaking a value-potentiality audit¹⁸ is a matter of asking four questions at regular intervals:

1. What do we throw away?
2. Why is it thrown away?
3. Does the item have a potential value to someone else?
4. Do we have the time to find alternate homes for those/these items?

¹⁶ www.remidawa.com.

¹⁷ Armishaw, P, 2022, Outcomes from the GREAT with Purpose Research Report, ReMida Perth: Perth Western Australia.

¹⁸ A value-potentiality audit tool is included with the resources at the back of the toolkit.

For larger organisations or businesses, you may need to do the audit by departments or operational domains. You can make this process as complicated or elaborate as you need for your context, but simplicity will take you a fair distance.

What our process looks like thus far.



What's Next?

Next, we look at reuse and disposal pathways to avoid waste and improve our disposal practices and strategies for applying the GREAT acronym in your context.

Part 3. Reuse and Disposal Pathways

Reuse is a well-known word tied to recycling (reduce, reuse, recycle), but its scope is often limited to items like shopping bags, plastic containers and scrap paper. A core focus for ReMida is extending this idea of reuse towards a great range of materials. General waste and recycling have something in common; they distance a person from the waste they produce. Recycling paper, glass, tin, cardboard and (some plastics) is a practical and necessary step, but once the item is in the correct bin, their responsibility ends. So the urgency to reduce consumption is dampened because it feels like there's a system that offsets the waste.

A reuse approach to waste creates a closer relationship between the individual and the item in question. For example, I have a bookcase I can Gift to someone; for the Gift(ing) process to be successful:

- The item needs to be in a condition where the recipient will welcome the Gift.
 - I may need to apply a certain amount of effort to ensure that is the case.
- I may need to store the item for longer than I originally intended.
- The intended recipient may reject the Gift.
- Given the number of free bookcases available, the demand for even a high-quality item may simply be lacking.

And suppose you have multiple items suitable for Gift(ing) but corresponding time pressures, such as moving house and new furniture delivery. In that case, some form of disposal is understandably appealing.

The related statistics for furniture waste in Australia are staggering.¹⁹ If we set aside the build quality issues, the more significant problem is one of the items per capita; there is more furniture in circulation than can be re-homed at a local, State or National level. And the same can be said for any number of high-quality items suitable for reuse.²⁰

There is a sense that the language of individual effort must reconnect with our models of waste mitigation behaviours. Throughout the research phase of the GREAT with Purpose project, we discovered that what seems like a lack or reluctance to make an effort is often a function of habit rather than motivation or knowledge.

Think of something you do each day. Have you ever struggled to remember whether you turned off the lights, locked the door, what you had for breakfast, or if you turned the sprinklers off? It is easy for mundane, daily tasks to fade into our mental background. The same is true for signs we drive past every day. Can you remember the last ten street or business signs you passed on your way to work, home, school or the shops?

¹⁹ Landfill: Australia's Underground Furniture Movement (handcrafted.com)

²⁰ Annual waste and recycling data | Waste Authority WA

The term we use to describe this phenomenon is the visibly-invisible. We know we have seen something a thousand times, but it no longer grabs our attention. The same happens with our habits and routines; we unconsciously gravitate towards the familiar.

Within current theorising, habits are automated response dispositions that are cued by aspects of the performance context (i.e., environment, preceding actions). They are learned through a process in which repetition incrementally tunes cognitive processors in procedural memory (i.e., the memory system that supports the minimally conscious control of skilled action).²¹

ReMida advocates that waste generation is a behaviour (tied to habits) and that behaviours can change. As we covered in the previous section, being intentionally aware of what we throw away and why is a crucial step towards finding the value-potentiality of waste materials.

Remember that the *milkshake dilemma* consists of three parts:

1. A highly accessible, desirable and positive language item;
2. Partnered with a highly accessible but low desire and low positive language item; which,
3. Results in high levels of avoidable waste generated by millions of people daily.

With a milkshake, it is the cup that is visibly-invisible. If your habit is to discard the cup without thinking (an absence of intentionality), you will likely repeat this action as a function of habit rather than reflecting your waste and recycling values.

Have you ever noticed a co-worker, family member, or fellow student scrunch a piece of paper and then throw it into the general waste bin? Even though the paper and cardboard recycling is close at hand. The chain of events playing out here are:

- ❖ You have an item to discard with a low value-potentiality and a nearby bin, which provides high convenience.

The result is a function of habit; I throw unwanted items into the nearest bin rather than laziness, or I can't be bothered going to the recycling for one piece of paper.

Let's say that in an organisation of three hundred people, it is likely that each person will throw one piece of paper into general waste each day.

- ❖ One piece of paper times three hundred people = 300 sheets of paper.
- ❖ Average working format of five days per week, over a forty-eight-week year.
 - Which results in the loss of 72,000 thousand pieces of paper.
- ❖ A standard box of A4 paper holds five hundred sheets.
 - Or the equivalent of 36 boxes of A4 paper entering a landfill rather than recycling.

²¹ Neal DT, Wood W, Quinn JM. Habits—A Repeat Performance. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 2006;15(4):198-202. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8721.2006.00435.x

It is likely that in an organisation of that size (300), at least 5% of employees buy their lunch daily, which they eat at their desks.

- ❖ Fifteen employees per day, over 48 weeks, equals 3,600 instances of bought lunch with associated waste.
- ❖ We estimate that of those 3,600 instances, at least 50% of the associated packing is currently non-recyclable or requires a dedicated FOGO disposal point.
- ❖ You then have at least 1,800 separate waste events, not including regular or special events held across the year.
 - Suppose an organisation of that size has no FOGO option for its organic waste. In that case, you potentially have 72,000 food-based waste events each year (at least one per person per day) going to landfills, which you can double if you estimate two or more daily breaks.

So when we talk of reuse and disposal pathways, several factors come into play.

1. Each person's habits as they relate to waste and reuse behaviours.
2. The infrastructure that is available for people to use at the location.
3. People's awareness of the organisation's waste and reuse infrastructure.
4. How successfully the waste and reuse processes are utilised? For example, are there high contamination levels in your recycling each week?
5. The overarching targets you have set for your waste and reuse behaviours.

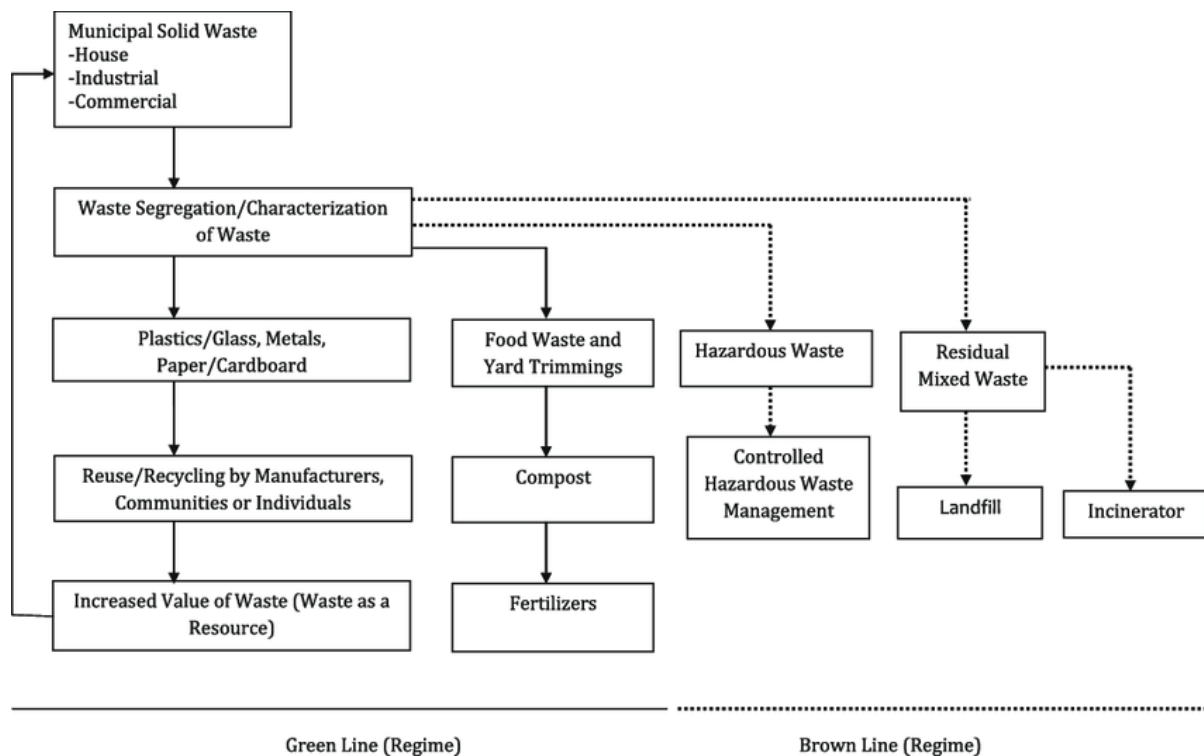
As we mentioned in the previous section, before you launch into something new, there needs to be an honest assessment of your present achievements. No matter how practical the solution appears, reacting to a need is less likely to succeed if you pile the process onto a series of poorly followed procedures.

- ❖ If you haven't completed the success measures checklist from page 15, review that step before proceeding.

The pathways that we have at present are; general waste (landfill), recycling (including e-waste, soft plastics and containers for change), FOGO (food organics/garden organics), and industry-specific practices (where offcuts are reclaimed into a production process).

The following diagram from an article on the transformation of household waste into a resource²² provides a valuable snapshot of conventional approaches to waste:

²² Martin Oten-Ababio: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289890549_Rethinking_Waste_as_a_Resource_Insights_from_a_Low-Income_Community_in_Accra_Ghana.



Martin Oten-Abaio proposes:

Conventional solid waste management protocols and thinking generally tend to assume that waste already exists and therefore needs to be managed. Consequently, most models of solid waste management, especially in the developing countries including Ghana, are simply reactions to the presence of something that needs to be disposed of or discarded.²³

There are genuine limitations to the global waste and reuse infrastructure. And there are many items that, for legitimate safety reasons, are discarded each year. So we are looking for ways to maximise the opportunities we can access within our contexts.

Another way to approach this issue is to ask three pre-disposal and pre-reuse questions:

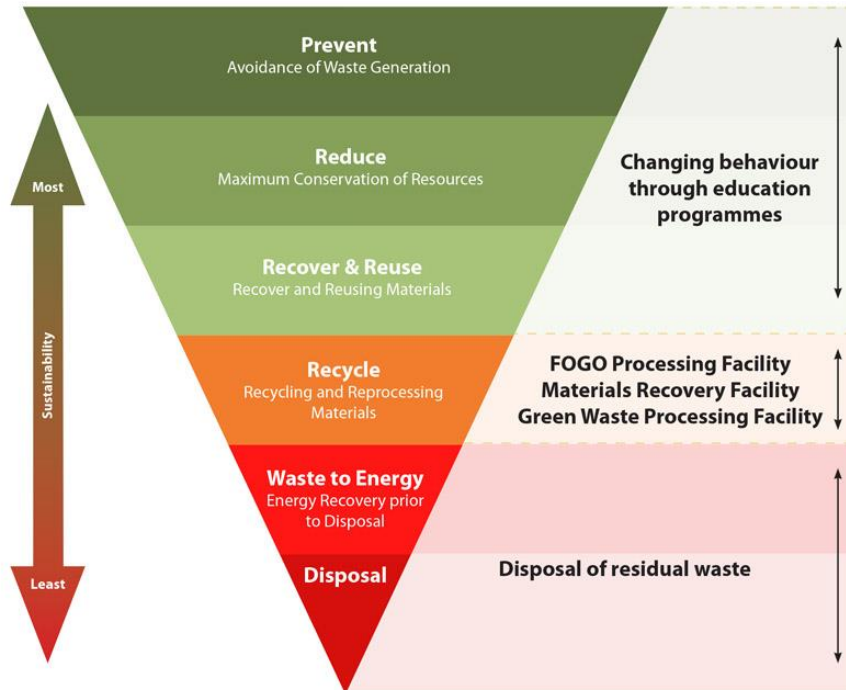
1. How much is general waste unavoidable in our context?
2. What is the ideal disposal or reuse pathway for what remains?
3. To what extent can we close the practical and ideal gap?

Once you have the data, it is then a matter of determining whether disposal, reuse, or a blended disposal-reuse approach is viable in your context. For organisations, schools, groups and individuals with space limitations, then disposal may be your best and only option. And if this is the case, waste mitigation through Avoidance becomes your highest priority, which we will discuss in a moment. Where reuse is an option, it is a matter of the time, space and effort you can apply to re-homing or

²³ Ibid.

repurposing the materials in question. Remember, you don't have to go it alone; organisations like ReMida²⁴ can help guide your reuse efforts.

The Be a GREAT Sort program proposes a series of five sorting behaviours mapped to the waste hierarchy.



Regarding our disposal and reuse pathways, Avoidance (the A of the GREAT acronym, see page 12 for a refresher or jump to the website²⁵) is always the preferred approach. In your context, disposal pathways may have a range of surprising options; for example, who can best dispose of food waste, the individual or the organisation?

For example:

- You encourage people to bring their lunch in reusable containers and then take their food scraps home for:
 - Their FOGO bins
 - Worm farms
 - Chickens
 - Compost
- Over time you reduce the amount of food waste discarded at your location.

The initial reaction may be, and this is valid, that our staff, students, or volunteers would never make that change. And what you can do is start further back in the process; for example:

²⁴ Discover | REmida WA

²⁵ GREAT Sort toolkit - WasteSorted

- You encourage people to bring their lunch, whether from home or takeaways, in reusable containers.
- Over time, you see a reduction in single-use containers in your general waste.
- From there, you ask people what the next step could be in making further improvements.

If you have a café, food truck or canteen at your location, you may be able to work with them on sharing a FOGO bin or collaborating with a school or community garden looking to bolster their supply of compost.

As we mentioned in the opening of this section, a degree of effort is required to spark change. The appeal of a disposal-based approach is the shift of action onto someone else. Remember, this tendency comes from habit, not laziness. Our default waste strategy is disposal rather than reuse, which is a tough habit to amend.

The GREAT acronym provides five alternative sorting or dynamic behaviours to improve our waste generation and disposal habits. Some behaviours, like GIFT(ing), are potentially easier for an individual than a group, whereas both individuals and groups can actively AVOID and RECYCLE waste. EARTH-CYCLE is interesting as it depends on an individual or group's access to a viable compost or FOGO arrangement. And TAKE(ing) has an implied degree of effort for an individual or group.

We are looking for the GREAT launch point for your context and to Be a GREAT Sort (with Purpose). For example, the easiest way to approach this system for many groups is to rearrange the letters from most achievable to most significant difficulty. From the research sessions, we found the following order naturally arose for groups:

- ❖ **RECYCLE** – a process that is (usually) already happening that can be improved.
- ❖ **AVOID** – steps that both the individual and the organisation can take.
- ❖ **TAKE** – requires some volunteer effort or process changes, but small steps are possible.
- ❖ **EARTH-CYCLE** – this is challenging, but a mix of volunteer support, education and time can lead to change.
- ❖ **GIFT** – this can be quite difficult for businesses and individuals as issues of time, space, effort and are factors.

Remember, the needs and capacity of your context determine how much and what type of change you can introduce. A sudden increase in posters outlining the Sustainable Development Goals, the Waste Hierarchy, or even the Be a GREAT Sort program may work against what you hope to achieve.

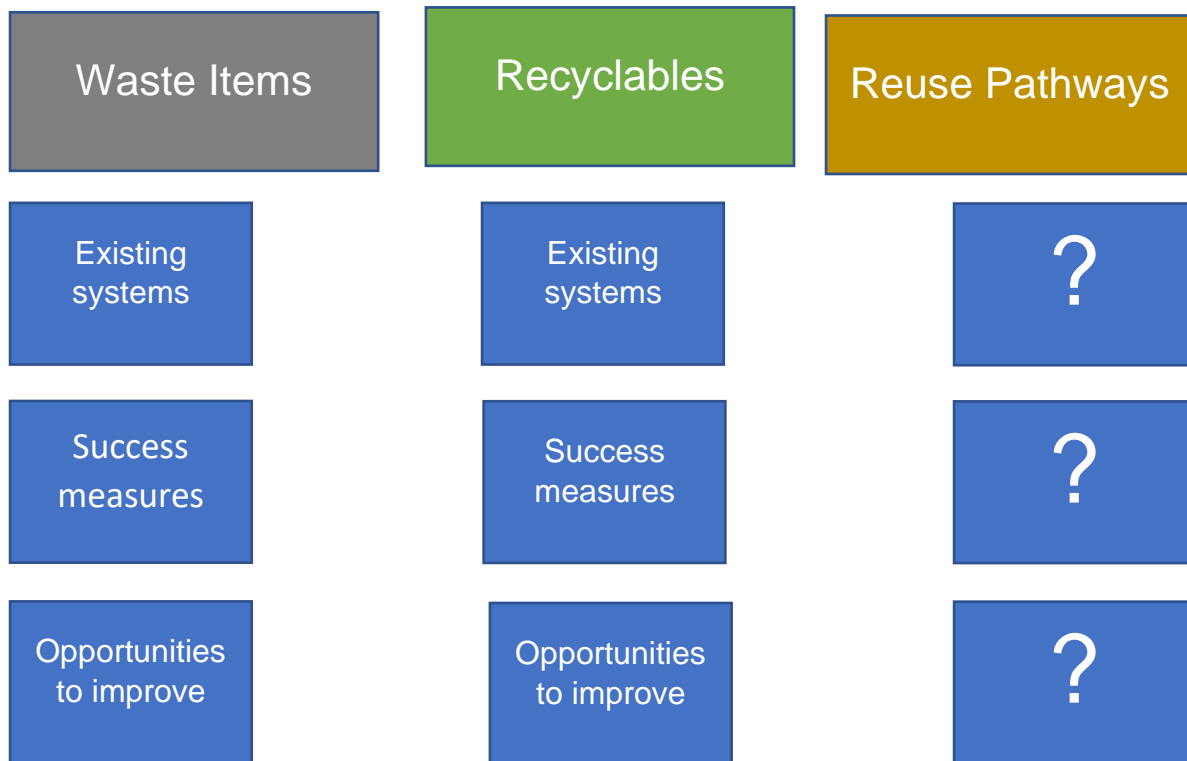
A point of qualification. Necessity is a powerful motivator, and the waste, reuse and disposal landscape is facing several changes over the next few years.²⁶ There are

²⁶ Landfill Australia – What You Should Know About Australian Waste (waster.com.au)

also advantages to fostering proactive disposal and reuse culture. Firstly, you can absorb systemic changes more easily; secondly, you may find opportunities for reducing your annual waste disposal fees. But perhaps most importantly, the people within your setting can relate language to behaviour and behaviour to the changes that have unfolded in their context.

While reuse and disposal pathways will vary between contexts, there are points of similarity that hold true nonetheless.

Disposal and Reuse Map



Generally speaking, you can take the Waste Items category and extend its map to cover general waste, e-waste, and maybe FOGO (depending on the context). For our purposes here, Waste Items and Recyclables are disposal pathways because the discarded items are predominantly removed from the site and dealt with elsewhere. Manufacturing or production groups that recycle waste or discarded items back into their processes are a related category as there are often more widespread environmental and waste issues to consider.

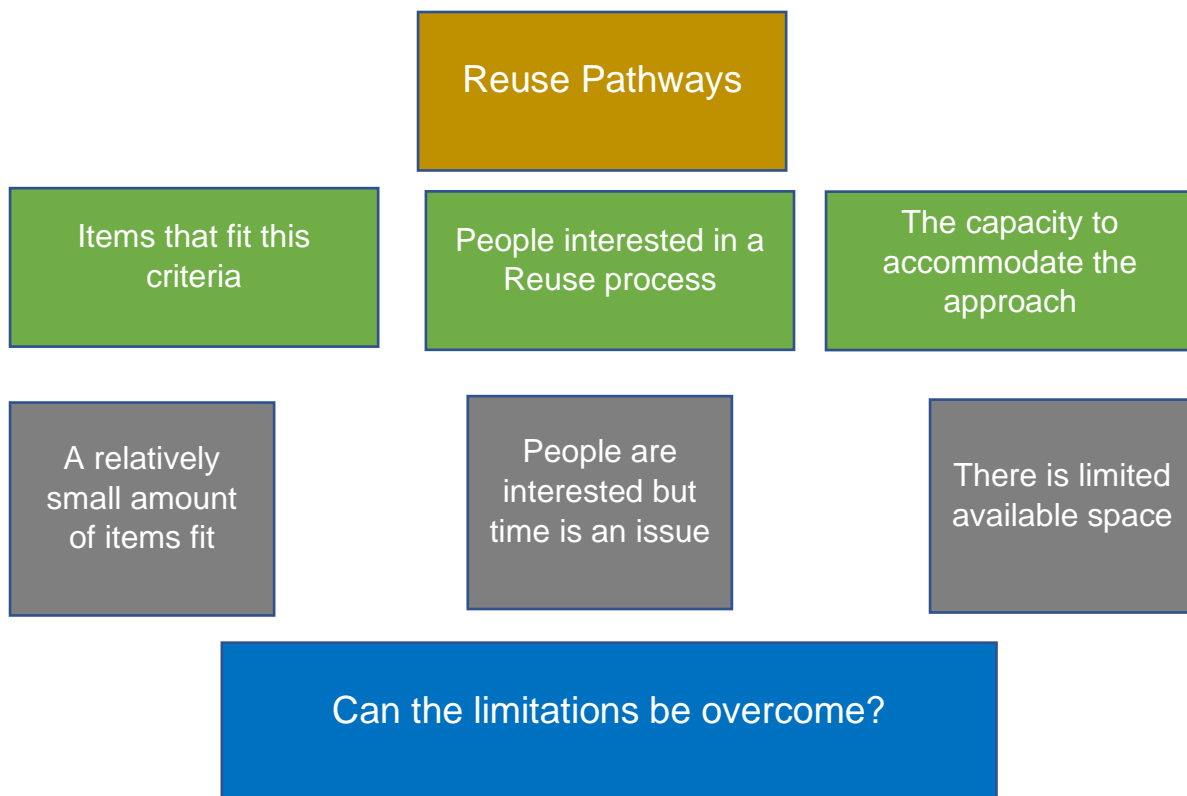
It can be harder to capture Reuse Strategies because:

1. They may not be something you have previously explored.
2. The instances of reuse may be limited and not tracked.
3. The cases of reuse may relate to individual staff behaviours.
4. The number of items suitable for reuse may be restricted.

Alongside this idea of Reuse is the question of Repair. For example, have you ever had a hole punch or stapler repaired? Is it cheaper to fix a printer or have it replaced, and is the same true for keyboards and mice?

If we look at the Reuse pathway more closely, we see the following considerations emerge.

Reuse Pathway



It is worth noting that some venues, like education settings, community groups and families, have a greater capacity for Reuse and Repair, although time and effort are universal considerations. The question to ask yourself is whether anyone has investigated what items may be suitable for reuse? And if items are ideal for reuse, where are they best utilised?

For example, your office may produce large amounts of non-confidential, one-sided printing on what is otherwise still a great piece of paper. You may have limited or no use for note (scrap) paper, so it lands in the recycling bin.

- But many of your staff have children in school or know of early years centres that love paper for their drawing and painting activities.
- Similarly, there is a local Men's Shed that dismantles old computers for parts.
- And there is a community garden willing to collect small amounts of food scraps for compost.

You may be thinking, won't the paper end up in recycling eventually, and you are correct. Paper has a finite useful life; once it exists as paper, then some form of disposal process is inevitable. Hopefully, it stays out of a landfill and becomes a new sheet of paper. What we can do, however, is delay its entry into these processes by extending its *value-potentiality* as long as possible.

And this process of extension is habit-forming (see page 24) and hopefully sparks interest in expanding these ideas into other areas.

But isn't this a lot of work? Yes, but without effort, change is impossible.

The key is finding a possible entry point and building upwards from there; as we saw on page 28, the GREAT acronym works just as well if we change the order.

- ❖ **RECYCLE** – a process that is (usually) already happening that can be improved.
- ❖ **AVOID** – steps that both the individual and the organisation can take.
- ❖ **TAKE** – requires some volunteer effort or process changes, but small steps are possible.
- ❖ **EARTH-CYCLE** – this is challenging, but a mix of volunteer support, education and time can lead to change.
- ❖ **GIFT** – this can be quite difficult for businesses as time, space, and effort are factors.

Some things to avoid at this point are:

- *Poster-saturation*, keep the instruction as simple as possible.
- Making too many changes at once.
- Relying on one person to lead the change process without help.
- The expectation of perfection.
- Implementing change without a way to measure its effectiveness over time.

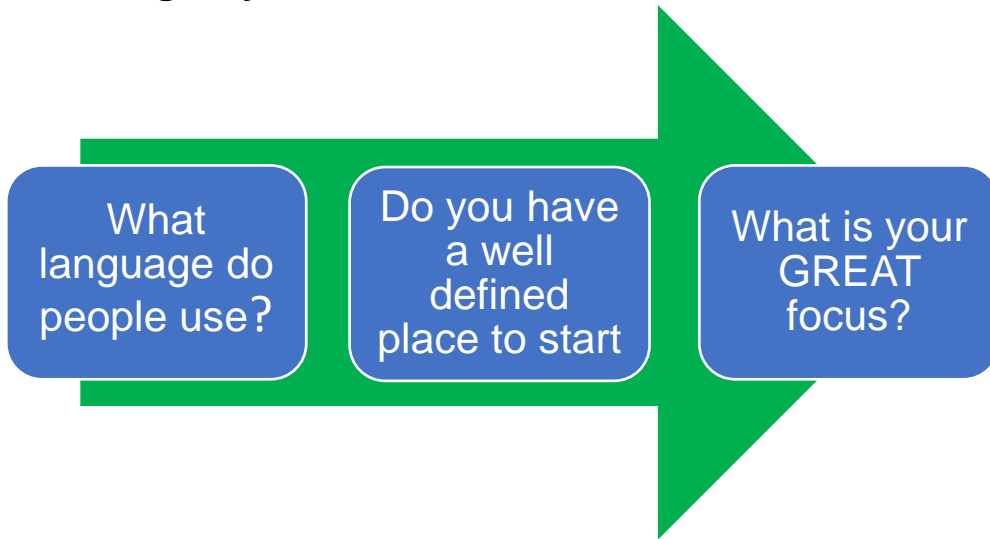
Remember, you identified either a problem or an opportunity for improvement based on observation, feedback, research, or a mix of all three. The best way to celebrate change is to show people the relationship between their efforts and positive outcomes.

But what if it's not all sunshine and roses?

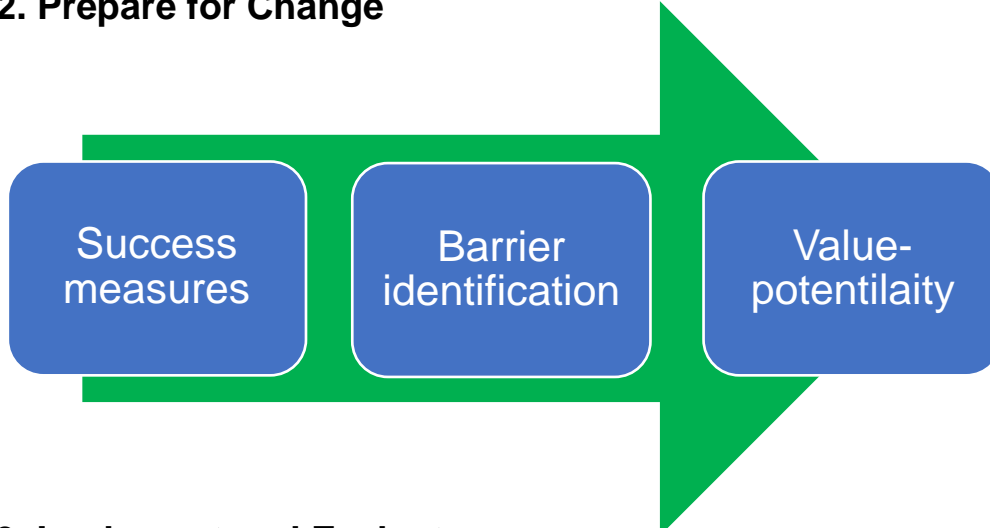
If nothing changes or things get worse, go back to the first step of listening to people's behaviours. Yes, this can be frustrating, especially if people had agreed to the changes before you launched the initiative. Remember, it takes time to learn new habits, which only form with time.

As we put everything together, we have the following pathways emerge.

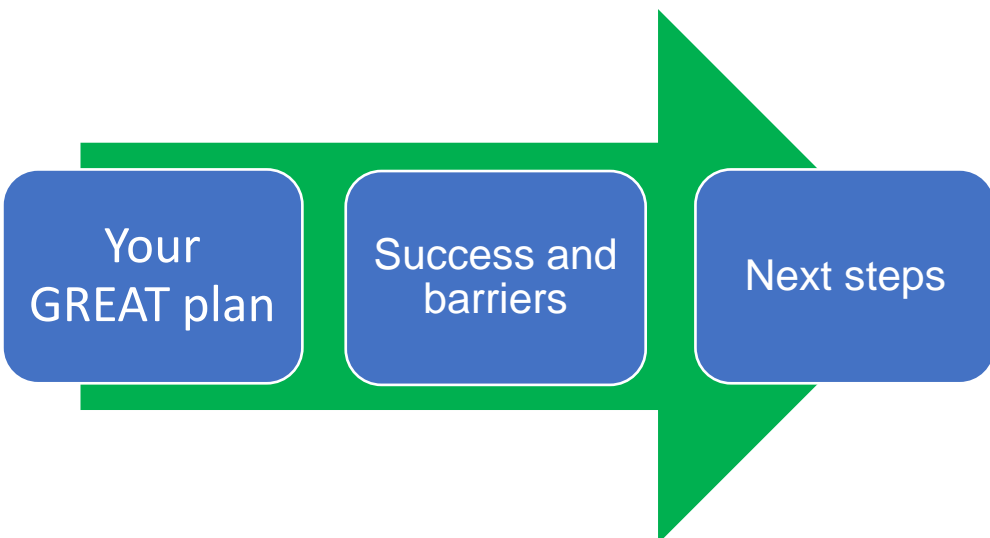
Step 1. Investigate your Context



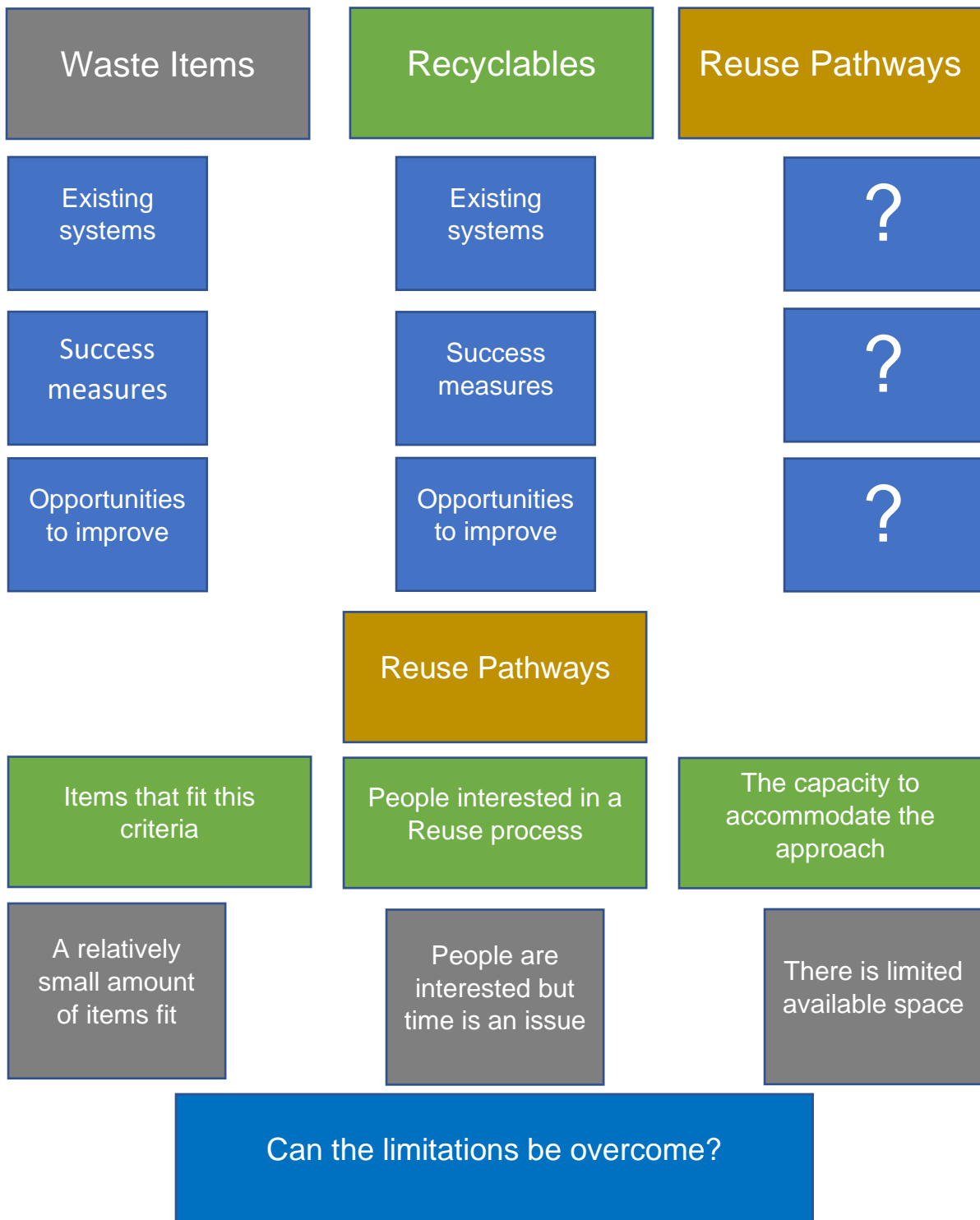
Step 2. Prepare for Change



Step 3. Implement and Evaluate



Remember, the disposal and reuse pathways work together to guide your thinking in new directions, with a clear focus on reuse as a new option to consider.



Key Points to Remember:

- Find ways to listen to the language and behaviours of the people in your context.
- Take small steps forward in an area you already have momentum.
- Collaborate, and find three or more waste advocates to guide the process forward.
- There may be new ways to look at things that regularly end up in the bin; how can you keep things from landfills?
- Are there Reuse and Repair options you can try?
- Don't forget to celebrate your successes; even minor improvements can spark further changes.

Another way to launch this process is to ask two questions; firstly, is waste inevitable and secondly, how does the belief in the inevitability (or not) of waste impact our Reuse and Disposal pathways? To make this more practical, answer the following series of questions; when did you last:

- ❖ Put paper and cardboard into the general waste bins?
- ❖ Purchased a disposable, non-recyclable cup?
- ❖ Forget your reusable bags?
- ❖ Accidentally contaminate your recycling?
- ❖ Not follow through on a plan to start composting your food scraps?

There is a causal link between language, habit and change. Our internal dialogue reflects our desire for change alongside our preexisting habits. Have you ever said to yourself:

- ❖ No more disposable coffee cups for me, and then:
 - Forgotten your keep-cup, bought the coffee anyway and said, I'll do better next time?

Life is busy, and most people find themselves in a similar position one or more times a day. Remember, the destination is not perfection; we look for sustained gradual improvements over time.

Yes, on some level, waste is unavoidable as most living, breathing creatures produce waste to some level. However, as a species, we make things in such volumes that waste on an industrial scale is, for the moment at least, inevitable. Systemic or legislative change, why necessary, still requires individual effort to be successful. So amid the ideas, strategies and programs, there is still just you and the changes you are willing to make.

You will likely have specific, established pathways for much of your waste for larger businesses and industries, including EPA or other legislative requirements. However, we find that the larger the organisation or industry, the more people (employees, contractors, visitors) waste it produces. For example, an office, warehouse or site with 700 plus employees or a school with 900 plus students generates high volumes of what you may see as incidental waste, food, packaging, single-use containers, and the like.

The Be a GREAT Sort program gives people five options for sorting waste and keeping it from landfills. The purposeful aspect of this GREAT with Purpose Toolkit is supporting individuals, families, groups, communities and organisations of all types and sizes to move from waste-positive language to equally positive behaviours. And the more people you can bring along with you on this journey, the more successful it will be.



What's next?

In what sometimes feels like an ever-changing landscape, we look at the importance of staying updated with waste, recycling and reuse practices to minimise instances of wish-cycling in your context.

Part 4. The Importance of Staying Updated

There have been many changes to the waste and recycling landscape in recent years. Some have been highly visible, like supermarkets' ban on single-use plastic bags. Others, like the forthcoming ban on e-waste entering landfills by 2024, are being rolled out.²⁷

There are two points to consider; firstly, a proactive approach to waste generation behaviours includes staying updated with waste and recycling trends (although this is not always on our radar. And secondly, an emphasis on Avoidance as a motivated response to waste generation behaviours (habits) means we are actively looking for ways to reduce our waste footprint.

Does this mean I need to track multiple websites, newsletters, e-news releases and Facebook groups to stay updated?

Yes and no. Depending on your circumstances, staying updated with what's happening in your local area may be enough. Council newsletters, meeting minutes, and updates from schools or your local club may be enough to keep updated. A broader systemic change, something at the State or National level, will generally filter through as it will invariably have a local impact. In most cases, an e-newsletter will have links to press releases and other resources to keep you updated. Larger organisations and businesses will often have compliance officers and committees who track these changes, filter the information, and circulate it as needed.

It can be difficult for smaller, volunteer or part-time groups and organisations that may already struggle to get everything done weekly. And if this is the case, pick a source of information that keeps you updated without adding unnecessary difficulty to your day.

For most people, the important thing will be making sure your kerbside disposals are on track.

Wishcycling

You stand in front of your newly implemented waste and reuse setup. But the container in your hand may not be suitable for your current recycling practices. The container has a recycling symbol, but it seems different from what you usually recycle. We are now in the realm of wishcycling, hoping rather than knowing you're on the right track.²⁸ But, rather than dispose of something in a landfill, you take a chance and hope that your recycling instincts are on point.

It may take some effort, but you can typically answer your recycling questions without difficulty. Locally relevant apps, like RecycleMate, can help point you in the

²⁷ Electrical and electronic waste (e-waste) | Waste Authority WA

²⁸ What Is Wishcycling? Aspirational Recycling Hurts the Recycling Process (greenmatters.com)

right direction, and many local councils will have both online and print resources to help.

The earlier caution against poster saturation comes from the fact that you will need instructions of some type to make this work. Ideally, you want the smallest number of signs, posters and instructions that yield the most helpful information. Along with the signs, you will need a process to check how well people follow the instructions.

At ReMida, we've found that images work better than texts, and real-world photos work better than diagrams.

Please note, be careful of recycling rumours. Like wishcycling, a recycling rumour is a piece of information adopted without fact-checking the source. During the GREAT with Purpose research sessions, most people were confused about which plastics can (or cannot) be included with your kerbside waste and recycling.

Remember, our destination is a gradual improvement, not perfection. Mistakes will occur, and providing you have a way to evaluate the direction of your progress; it will work itself out in time. The benefit of developing multiple waste advocates in your context is the capacity to share ideas and work through barriers to change as they arrive.

A Final Word on Effort

Everyone will have a different launch point for the GREAT with Purpose journey. We can say from experience that time, effort and energy are crucial requirements for change. The recourse contained and referenced in this Toolkit will support your efforts, but someone has to take the first step.

You don't have to resolve everything on your first attempt. The GREAT acronym provides five potential starting points; make sure to pick one that's right for your context.



What's Next?

Now it's time to put everything into action. If you would like further advice or support, please get in touch with the team at ReMida, admin@remidawa.com, who'll be able to point you in the right direction. You can also download a copy of the Toolkit and find links to the resources at www.remidawa.com via the GREAT with Purpose resource page. And Remember...

...Build on the good towards the better and the best.



