

COMPOST COACHES SUMMARY REPORT

PROGRAM: 2024 SERVICE LEVEL REVIEW SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Compost Coach program was designed to support the City of Saskatoon's (City) strategic goal of Environmental Leadership to divert 70% of waste from the landfill and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% of 2014 levels. Home composting was found to be an efficient method for diverting organics from landfills and research showed that there is significant value in involving residents in training their peers how to compost, which led to the development of the program. The program delivers education on the benefits and methods of home composting to the residents of Saskatoon through coaching, a compost hotline, and rebates.

Since 2005, the City has offered a limited number of rebates to Saskatoon residents who purchase a compost bin (or rain barrel) from a Saskatoon retailer. The SWRC started the Master Composters program in Saskatoon in 1993. Two years later, a partnership with the City began and in 2014, home visits were introduced into the program to help residents seeking advice on how to set up a new home composting system or improve an existing one. In 2015, the composting hotline was launched for Saskatoon residents who have composting questions.

In 2015, the Healthy Yards program was launched as a partnership between the City, the University of Saskatchewan's Master Gardeners, the Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre, and the SWRC Compost Coaches. These organizations came together to create free and regionally specific materials designed to educate the public on how to create a healthy yard and garden, with a focus on practices such as home composting, outdoor water conservation, pesticide reduction, and food production.

As part of the city-wide green cart program launch in 2023, the compost coach program scope expanded to include green cart education. Information regarding the green cart program was added to the Compost Coach volunteer guide, which helps train volunteers to provide direct support to residents on home composting and proper use of the green cart through the compost hotline or home visits. During visits, a Compost Coach volunteer can give advice on either getting started or troubleshooting a compost system or green cart.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The program is contracted to the Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council (SWRC) which is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that trains and organizes a large volunteer base that help deliver the program.

Coaching

Compost Coaches are a key resource for delivering compost education. Their one-on-one interactions help people adopt new behaviors. In addition, each volunteer adds

their own knowledge, experience, and community contacts to the program. Compost Coaches are trained through ~12 hours of lectures and hands-on practice.

Outreach

Workshops

Education workshops are primarily directed to school groups, community organizations, and the public.

Community gardens

The goal is to partner with five community gardens to establish working compost systems. This includes building high-capacity bins, supplying educational signs, and delivering outdoor workshops.

In addition, SWRC partners with the Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre's Garden Patch and support their compost operations. The Garden Patch has an extensive compost operation and hosts Saskatoon's compost demonstration garden.

Community Events

The Compost Coaches reach a large audience through staffing displays at community events such as Seedy Saturday and Gardenscape.

Social media and digital resources

The SWRC create and maintain digital content. This includes at least biweekly posts on the Compost Coaches' social media pages, with regular features such as "Fun Fact Fridays" and campaigns highlighting specific topics. Includes promotion of "Composting in 60 Seconds" video series, home compost style quiz, and share useful composting information on the SWRC website.

Programs

Compost hotline

The SWRC provides a dedicated phone line and email for composting inquiries. They also maintain a Compost Coach Facebook page and Instagram as additional forums for questions. Residents receive a response within one business day.

Home visits

Saskatoon residents who want one-on-one support can get a home visit from a Compost Coach to discuss best practices and answer any questions.

Volunteer Engagement

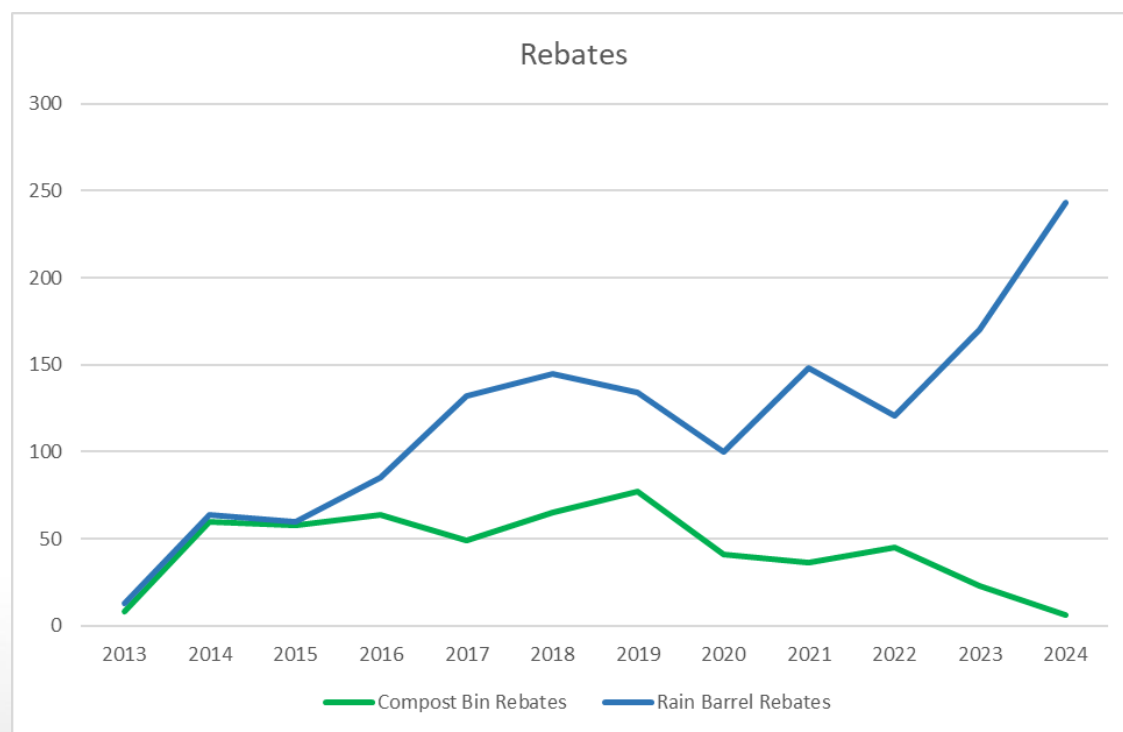
A bimonthly newsletter for Compost Coaches is sent to keep the volunteers informed and engaged. In addition, three "Compost Challenges" for volunteers are created. These involve a simple activity or question related to compost, rain barrels, or other healthy yard practices. Volunteers who participate in each challenge are entered into a draw to win a gift card to a local business. Volunteer appreciation events are provided each fall for active Compost Coaches.

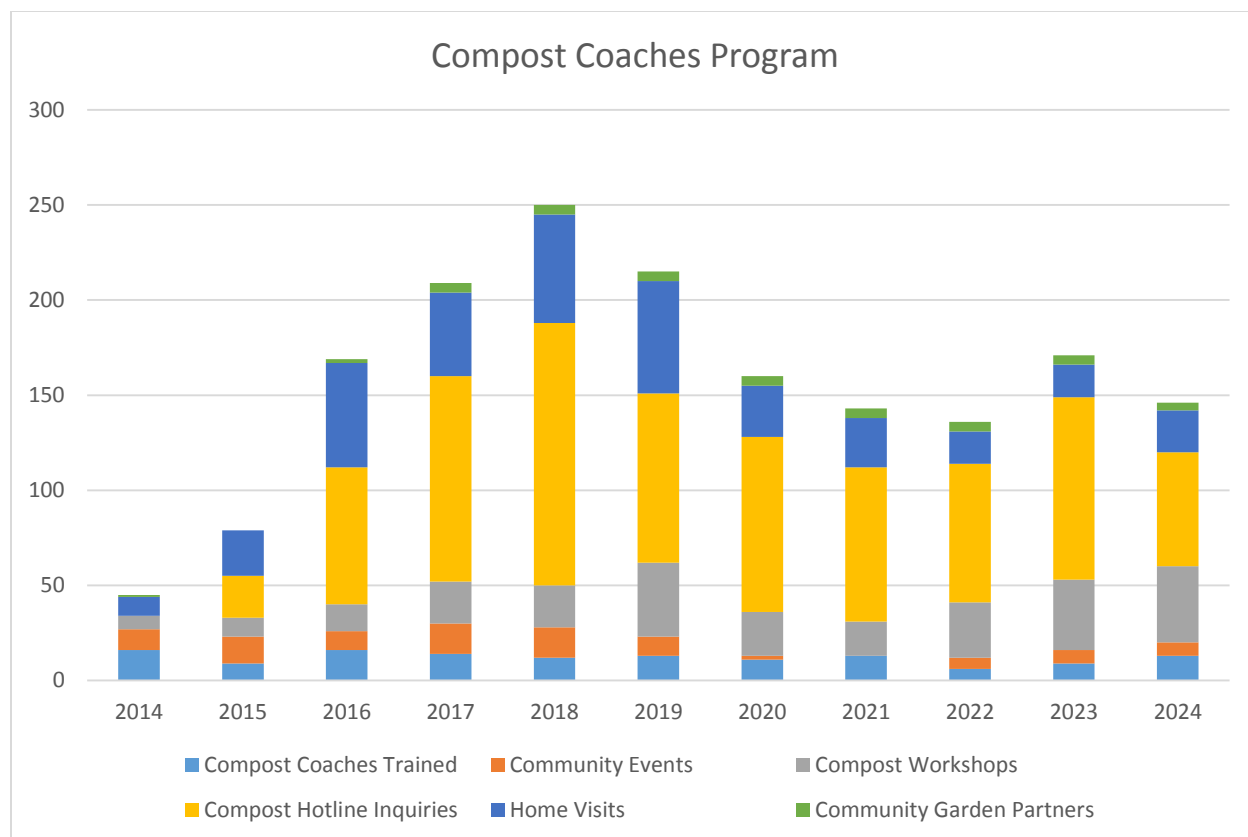
PROGRAM COST AND PERFORMANCE

Throughout the contract history, the program has been funded through a combination of the following budgets:

- Environmental Awareness (01-5500-777/ 100302);
- Water Initiatives 100386/610000;
- Water Conservation Capital Project P.02197.01/610000 (2022);
- Organics Project P.02599.02.002 (2023);and
- Green Cart Utility 100415/630210 (2024).

As indicated by the program performance data below, program usage increased steadily to a peak in 2018, when it began to decline. The decline can be attributed to the reduction in community events and home visits due to COVID restrictions. The compost hotline inquiries stayed consistent, while the compost workshops continued as they were available in a virtual format. There was an increase in usage during 2023, which could be attributed to the launch of the green cart program and compost workshops increasing to pre-COVID numbers. The interest in rain barrel rebates has increased, while the interest in compost barrels has decreased over time.





SERVICE LEVEL SUMMARY

The following table outlined the Levels of Service for Healthy Yards and the Compost Coaches for 2024-2025 as approved in the multi-year budget, as well as the adjusted levels of service proposed following a phase-out of the Compost Coaches program.

Service	Sub-Service	Service Levels		
		2024	Current 2025	New 2025
Healthy Yards and Compost Coaches	In-person education (events, classes, workshops) on composting, water conservation, pesticide-free, and other environmentally friendly yard and garden maintenance	80 events per year	80 events per year	30 events per year
Healthy Yards and Compost Coaches	Rain Barrels and Compost Bin Rebates	200 rebates available per year	200 rebates available per year	250 Rain Barrels Exclusively
Healthy Yards and Compost Coaches	Compost coach home visits/inquiries	200 visits/inquiries per year	200 visits/inquiries per year	Discontinued

RATIONALE

The review recommends the elimination of Compost Coaches events and workshops as a level of service for Healthy Yards. Most of the activities in previous years have been school-based education, with greater emphasis on green cart use instead of on-site composting since 2023. School-based education is proposed to continue in 2025 as part of green cart education and can be done within existing budget. The revised service level of 30 events per year reflects the current level of service for all other components of Healthy Yards once Compost Coaches has been eliminated.

The review recommends the elimination of the compost bin rebate and the expansion of the rain barrel rebate. As demonstrated by the chart above, there has been a steep decline in the uptake of compost bin rebates at the same time as demand for rain barrel rebates has increased. With SAP, administration can now easily administer the rain barrel rebates instead of contracting this service, which allows for the expansion with existing budget.

The review recommends the elimination of Compost Coach home visits and inquiries as a level of service. With the introduction of the green cart, the business diversion regulations, and the multi-unit organics forthcoming regulations, combined with the decrease in new home composters as indicated by the reduction of compost bin rebates, there is no longer community demand or significant environmental benefit of continuing to offer these services.

As part of the phase-out, this review recommends a short-term extension to the community garden support program for on-site composting for up to 5 gardens in 2025. This is recommended since at the time this review was completed the delivery and funding model for green cart collections at community garden was being assessed. This temporary extension will be reviewed following the end of the 2025 garden season.