

Composting Champions Pilot Program



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Community Project Champions

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Composting Champions and supporters posing with compost bins on campus. From left: Carlos Figueira, Helena Teng, Madalyn Morrison, Heidi Bruins, Ryan Rexworthy, John Hemmer, Eesha Rehman, Noa Lichtenshtein Serebro, Dr. Kate Whalen.
Photo credit: Georgia Kirkos

Overview

Organic waste that ends up in landfill produces more greenhouse gases than if it were composted. When organic material begins decomposing in landfills, it releases methane, a gas that is estimated to be about 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 100-year span.¹

A study showed that Ontario alone generated roughly 3.7 million tonnes of food and organic waste.² Of this waste, 60% was sent to landfill rather than composting facilities.³ At McMaster, an audit conducted in 2018 showed that McMaster diverts approximately 54% of waste from landfill through recycling and compost programs.⁴ Our project aimed to increase composting by successfully piloting a composting champion program at McMaster.

Objectives

1. Engage at least 10 individuals to champion composting in their area
2. Foster opportunities for information sharing, feedback, and program enhancement
3. Ensure operation and continuation of the program beyond the pilot

Reporting

To achieve our first objective, we contacted 20 groups and departments on campus that focused on food and/or sustainability and were located near one of the existing central compost bins on campus. We hand-delivered the composting champions starter kits that included a compost bin, liners, and educational posters to the 15 individuals who signed up to pilot the Composting Champions program.

To achieve our second objective, we sent feedback forms and weekly emails to our champions and encouraged them to share questions and comments about their experiences. Once feedback was collected, we addressed questions and comments to all champions through the following week's email communication to ensure our responsiveness, foster information sharing, and build community within the group.

To achieve our final objective, ensuring the continuity of the program beyond the pilot, we created a Composting Champions section on the Facility Services webpage that provides information about the program, resources for composting on campus, and a link to sign up to become a composting champion. As an exciting conclusion, our project was featured in a McMaster [Daily News](#) story, which highlighted the composting champions who were instrumental to the program, the custodial team members running the program following the pilot, and an invitation to all staff, students, and faculty to take part by championing composting and contributing to a more sustainable McMaster.

Collaborators

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See a full list of references [here](#).