



Pathways to Composting: Community Readiness Assessment for California Tribes

Produced Under Contract By:
Kauffman and Associates, Inc.



KAUFFMAN
AND ASSOCIATES INCORPORATED

Pathways to Composting: Community Readiness Assessment for California Tribes

This document was prepared by Resource Synergy and Kauffman and Associates Inc., in partnership with CalRecycle. This assessment tool is meant to assist Tribal communities in the beginning stages of developing a composting program.

Contents

- I. General 4
 - Introduction 4
 - How to Use This Tool..... 6
- II. Data Collection 7
 - Community Information 7
 - Community Knowledge and Goals 8
 - Community Education and Understanding 9
 - Community Awareness of Project..... 10
 - Site Readiness 12
 - Leadership Readiness..... 20
 - Community Climate 25
 - Resources and Capacity 29
- III. Community Readiness Scoring Guide 33
 - Scoring Methodology 33
 - What the Scores Represent..... 33
 - Scoring by Readiness Area 33
 - Site Readiness (0–30 points)..... 33
 - Leadership Readiness (0–30 points) 33
 - Community Climate (0–20 points) 34

Resources and Capacity (0–20 points)	34
Contextual Sections.....	35
Interpreting Readiness Scores.....	36
What Score Do Not Mean	36
IV. Action Planning Summary (Post-Assessment)	37
Summary of Key Readiness Findings.....	37
Recommended Readiness-Aligned Next Steps	37
Priority Action Summary	38

I. General

Introduction

This Community Readiness Assessment for California Tribes is an optional planning tool designed to support Tribes in evaluating readiness for composting initiatives of varying scales, including community-based, Tribal enterprise, industrial partnerships, and regional facility development. Applicable to small-, medium-, and large-scale composting efforts, the tool supports both Tribal member participation initiatives and Tribal enterprise or commercially oriented composting operations, without assuming a single model or approach. This assessment acknowledges and respects Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, recognizing that each Tribe has unique priorities, governance structures, land considerations, and cultural relationships to land and materials.

The purpose of this tool is to assess readiness for composting and related organic waste reduction efforts rather than technical feasibility. It helps identify whether foundational elements such as leadership support, site control, resources, and community context are in place or if gaps exist that warrant additional planning. Engineering design, regulatory compliance, and financial viability are intentionally outside the scope of this readiness assessment and are typically addressed in later planning phases, once priority sites, feedstocks, and community goals are more clearly defined.

This assessment is intended to be used alongside Phase I resources, which provide detailed technical and planning guidance, including economic feasibility, needs assessment, site selection, facility layout and design, and equipment needs.¹

The assessment is often led by a Tribal planner, environmental or solid waste program staff member, or community program lead, with input from other departments, leadership, and community stakeholders as appropriate.

Composting programs should only be pursued if they align with community goals, leadership priorities, and long-term capacity. Effective composting efforts are built upon existing solid waste practices, environmental values, and community knowledge.

This tool is intended to help Tribes identify strengths, gaps, and considerations related to leadership readiness, resources, and actionable pathways so informed decisions can be made about next steps. It may also serve as an early outreach strategy to raise awareness and connect

¹ California Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). Small/Medium Composting Project Permitting. 2024. Available at: <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/Docs/Publications/Details/1739>

with community members and interested parties in supporting composting efforts. It is meant to be a high-level, readiness scoring framework to support early planning and decision-making. The answers to develop the scores are used to identify strengths, gaps, and priority areas for next steps. Not all sections of this assessment are scored. See [III. Community Readiness Scoring Guide](#) for clarification.

How to Use This Tool

Responses should reflect the assessor's professional experience, knowledge, and direct working relationship with the community. This assessment is not intended to be a statistically representative community survey. Responses may be informed by lived experience, cultural knowledge, and community relationships, even where formal documentation is limited. The assessment lead is responsible for coordinating input, completing the scoring based on professional judgment, and sharing results with leadership.

1. **Identify Individual(s):** Identify who is best suited to provide insights into the current landscape and community attitude toward organic waste and composting. This can be a team effort.
2. **Work Through Each Section:** Answer questions and select responses that best reflect current conditions, not future aspirations.
3. **Use Scores as Guidance:** Scoring is meant to support discussion and planning. A high readiness response reflects conditions that are clearly in place. For example, leadership has identified a program lead and dedicated land or funding to composting efforts. A low readiness response reflects major unknowns or gaps.
 - For example, no site has been identified, or leadership has not yet engaged with composting as a priority. In both cases, scores point to where additional planning or support may be needed.
4. **Capture Local Context:** Use notes sections to document community specific considerations, constraints, known conditions, and emerging considerations that could affect planning.
5. **Review with Leadership:** Share results with Tribal leadership to support decision-making, prioritization, and next steps.
6. **Identify Next Actions:** Use assessment results to determine whether additional planning, technical assistance, or funding exploration is appropriate.

II. Data Collection

Community Information

This section should be completed by the assessment lead, drawing on available records, internal knowledge, and conversations with relevant staff or community members. It is not intended to be completed separately by each person consulted.

Tribal Community:

Name _____

Dept _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Tribal Enrollment: _____ On-Reservation Population: _____

of Households on Reservation: _____

Major Industries or Employers:

Relevant Community Considerations: (Examples may include geographic remoteness, seasonal access limitations, existing hauling or landfill contracts, cultural land use considerations, climate conditions, regulatory jurisdiction, workforce availability, or proximity to neighboring communities)

Community Knowledge and Goals

This section is considered contextual only and is not scored. The person leading this assessment should draw on their professional experience and working knowledge of the community. This helps provide a clearer picture of how interested the community may be in composting and what priorities, needs, and attitudes exist.

What primary outcomes does the community hope to achieve through composting? (Select all that apply)

- Support food sovereignty
- Reduce landfill disposal and waste costs
- Improve soil health and agricultural productivity
- Support education or youth engagement
- Create workforce development opportunities
- Reduce climate or emissions impacts
- Increase community self-reliance
- Other: _____

Note: See the CalRecycle Tribal Composting Needs Assessment for more information on composting and food sovereignty in California Tribal communities. ²

Which settings currently feel most aligned with potential composting activities?

- Community garden
- School or youth program
- Elder program or services
- Farm or agricultural operation
- Tribal facilities
- Multiple/undecided

Enter any additional ideas you want to share:

² California Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). Tribal Composting Needs Assessment Report. 2025. Available at: <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/Docs/Web/132294>

Community Education and Understanding

Based on your experience rate your community's level of familiarity, from "low" to "high," with the following criteria as they pertain to composting.

Criteria	Low	Medium	High
General familiarity with composting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding of composting benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental impacts of composting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural relevance or connection (cultural connections relate specifically to composting, food systems, and regenerative environmental practices e.g., cultural burning as a regenerative practice)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amount of organic waste generated locally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explain the selections, if helpful:

Are there existing efforts related to composting, waste reduction, food waste collection, soil programs, or similar initiatives? Yes No

If yes: Complete the next section, "Community Awareness of Project", for each project underway.

If no: Skip to "Site Readiness" section.

Community Awareness of Existing Projects

This section summarizes community awareness of each existing composting or organic waste reduction effort identified in the previous question. If more than one project is underway, duplicate this page and complete a separate copy for each project.

Project ___ of ___

(total # of projects to be summarized)

Project name and description:

Who leads or coordinates this project?

How long has this project been occurring?

Who does this project serve?

What materials are accepted?

Indicate the level that best applies.

How many community members:

Level of Awareness	None	Few	Some	Many	Most
Heard of it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understood its purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Know who it serves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Know how it works	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Know whether it is effective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why do you think community members have this level of knowledge about this project?

Are there any known misconceptions about this project?

How do community members typically learn about this project?

Obstacles to participating?

Strengths and or weaknesses of current project progress?

Are results being tracked and used to improve/expand project progress? Yes No

If yes, how?

Site Readiness

_____ POINTS OF 30 TOTAL

Site Name/Identifier:

The following three pages summarize readiness information for **one potential composting site**. If more than one site is being considered, this page may be **duplicated and completed separately for each site option**. Scoring references are for assessment purposes and may be totaled as identified on the right. There is a total of 30 points available for each site but only the top-rated site should be used in the overall readiness assessment. If the assessor adjusts scoring ranges to better reflect local context, adjustments should be applied consistently across all sites evaluated.

Overall Scoring Guidance:

- **0–8:** No site identified or major unknowns (land status, access, feedstocks)
- **9–16:** One or more potential sites identified; partial feasibility known
- **17–22:** Preferred site identified; most feasibility factors understood
- **23–30:** Site prioritized with clear authorization pathway and manageable constraints^{3,4}

1. Usable Space (0–5 points)

_____ Points

Scoring for this section should acknowledge a site is available for composting operations and is reasonably situated away from housing and other sensitive receptors such as schools, health clinics, or water sources. 5 points for a site that is available and appropriately distanced from sensitive receptors, and 0 points for a site that is unavailable or located immediately adjacent to sensitive uses, even if you want to consider it.

Total Site size (acres or square feet): _____

Estimated area available for composting activities (acres or square feet, if known): _____

Note: Either unit of measurement is acceptable. Use whichever is most familiar or available. If total site size or available composting area is not known, enter "Unknown".

³ Michigan Recycling Coalition. Compost Operator Guidebook, Chapter 4: Facility Siting and Site Design. Available at: <https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/egle/Documents/Programs/MMD/Compost/Operator-Guidebook.pdf?rev=e4ce05ba4145451994a753522a53bcb4>

⁴ Rynk, R. et al. The Composting Handbook, Chapter 8. Compost Research and Education Foundation. Available at: <https://compostfoundation.org/composting-handbook/>

2. Land Designation (0–5 points)

_____ Points

Scoring for this section should consider your understanding of land status and the complexity of applicable regulations. If located on Tribal trust land, composting activities are subject to federal U.S. EPA regulations and Tribal codes rather than state solid waste permitting. If located on fee land, composting activities are subject to state and local solid waste regulations, including CalRecycle composting and organics regulations.

Scoring Guidance:

- 0–1: No awareness of applicable regulations, regulating authorities, or possible permitting requirements for applicable land status; unsure on next steps
- 2–3: General awareness or working knowledge of regulations/permits and responsible authorities for applicable land status; some questions on next steps
- 4–5: Comprehensive and confident understanding of all applicable regulations, authorities, and permitting requirements for applicable land status; clear on next steps

Non-Tribally Owned Fee (0–3 points depending on access, lease terms, and regulatory complexity)

Tribally Owned Fee (3 points)

Trust (5 points)

Other (please explain):

Lower scores reflect limited control or complex authorization, while higher scores reflect clear access agreements and manageable regulatory conditions.

Applicable regulations, if known. Include any reference document(s) or online links you used to inform this section: (for example, see Section V: Permitting Pathways in the CalRecycle Small/Medium Composting Project Permitting Phase 1 Report:

www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/Publications/Details/1739)

3. Ownership or Authorizing Entity (0–5 points) _____ Points

Scoring for this section should take into consideration your relationship with the owner and whether the owner is apt to provide authorization to operate at the considered location. Use the full range of points to reflect increasing levels of clarity, control, and feasibility. Lower scores indicate major unknowns, limited control, or significant barriers. Mid-range scores indicate partial information or manageable constraints. Higher scores indicate clear understanding, reliable access or control, and few anticipated barriers.

Owner of this Location: _____

Relationship Status: _____

4. Basic Utilities and Site Access (0–8 points) _____ Points

Scoring for this section should consider the infrastructure available for a successful composting operation and or the complexity and costs to develop that infrastructure. For the purposes of this assessment, basic utilities and access should be evaluated relative to the anticipated scale and type of community composting being considered. Decentralized or low infrastructure approaches may require fewer utilities.

Scoring Guidance:

- **0–3:** Basic utilities or site access are not available, and significant infrastructure upgrades or high costs would be required to support composting operations
- **4–6:** Some utilities and site access are available, or can be developed with moderate effort, cost, or coordination
- **7–8:** Basic utilities and site access are available or easily achievable, with minimal infrastructure development required

Optional planning context (not scored)

To estimate processing volume, consider the amount of organic material generated on site per week or month, including food waste, yard waste, and other feedstocks. A waste audit is the most accurate method for estimating organic waste generation. For community-based programs, household waste generation averages may also be used as a starting point. For Tribal enterprise or commercial models, site-specific estimation based on actual waste generators is recommended.

For additional context on capacity thresholds and permitting implications, refer to the CalRecycle Small/Medium Composting Project Permitting Phase 1 Report:

www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/Publications/Details/1739

Estimated processing volume (cubic yards): _____

25 cubic yard threshold may apply

Definition: Estimated processing volume refers to the total amount of organic material expected to be received and actively composted at the site during a defined period. Unless otherwise specified, this value should reflect the maximum volume of material on site at any one time, not the cumulative annual amount processed.

Estimated annual throughput (tons per year): _____

100 tons per year threshold may apply

Based on current understanding, check any exemptions that may apply. Note that these exemptions only apply to fee lands. Final determination should be confirmed with regulators.

Small scale or on-site composting exemption

Agricultural or green material exemption

Other potential exemption (describe):

Note: Power may be needed for equipment such as turners, grinders, aeration systems, and lighting. Water is needed for moisture management and dust control during composting operations.

Available power: Yes No Unknown

Available water: Yes No Unknown

5. Feedstock Availability and Accessibility (0–5 points) _____ Points

Scoring for this section should consider the goal of having feedstock available nearby for ease of operations and lower transportation costs.

Scoring Guidance:

- **0–1:** Feedstocks are limited, poorly understood, or located far from the site, making reliable sourcing uncertain or cost-prohibitive
- **2–3:** Some feedstocks are available locally, but quantities, consistency, or access may be limited or require coordination with multiple sources
- **4–5:** Multiple feedstocks are available nearby, with reliable access and reasonable transportation distances to support composting operations

[Note: When identifying feedstock sources, a general guideline for community-scale composting is to maintain approximately a 2:1 ratio by volume of carbon to nitrogen feedstocks. Final ratios may vary based on feedstock type, composting method, and size of composting operations (e.g., community vs commercial scale). Use this as a guide when completing the following fields and list all nitrogen and carbon feedstock sources you are aware of in your area.]

Nitrogen and carbon feedstocks (check or describe as applicable):

List sources of known **nitrogen** feedstocks:

- Food waste generators (e.g., casinos, schools), : _____
- Manure sources: _____
- Biosolids: _____
- Grass clippings: _____
- Other nitrogen materials: _____

List sources of known **carbon** feedstocks:

- Wood waste: _____
- Lumber mills nearby: _____
- Arborists: _____
- Other carbon materials: _____

Nearby composting companies within 100 miles (if any):

Company name and location: _____

Materials accepted: _____

Notes: _____

Current organics haulers serving this site or area:

Hauler name: _____

Container availability: _____

Rate information (if known): _____

Destination facilities used (where material is hauled):

<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer station	<input type="checkbox"/> Recycling facility
<input type="checkbox"/> Landfill	<input type="checkbox"/> Out-of-county facility
<input type="checkbox"/> Composting facility	

6. General Site Constraints (2 points)

_____ Points

Scoring for this section should reflect the severity of site constraints and the extent to which those constraints are manageable within a realistic composting project.

Reviewers should evaluate the number, type, and complexity of constraints identified, and whether feasible solutions appear available without significant cost, delay, or regulatory barriers.

0 points - Highly constrained site. Significant physical, environmental, regulatory, or access limitations are present that would substantially hinder or prevent composting activities. Examples may include severe space limitations, incompatible zoning, major access barriers, proximity to sensitive receptors with no mitigation options, significant stormwater or environmental compliance challenges, or lack of utility access with no feasible workaround. Constraints appear difficult or impractical to resolve.

1 point - Moderately constrained site. Some limitations are present that would require planning, mitigation, or moderate investment to address. Examples may include limited space that could be reconfigured, manageable stormwater improvements, access modifications, seasonal

limitations, or nearby sensitive uses that could be mitigated through operational controls. Constraints are identifiable and solvable but may affect cost, timeline, or design complexity.

2 points - Manageable site. Few significant constraints are identified. Site conditions appear suitable for composting with standard planning considerations. Any limitations present are minor and can be addressed through routine design, layout adjustments, or operational practices. No major regulatory, environmental, or physical barriers are evident.

Reviewer Considerations

Reviewers should base scoring on documented constraints rather than the presence or absence of a diagram. A sketch may help illustrate feasibility but is not required for scoring. If multiple sites are evaluated, scoring should reflect the highest scoring, most feasible site proposed for further consideration. Other notes or observations could include observations such as seasonal, storage, safety considerations, or anticipated changes in staff or feedstocks.

For guidance on site layout considerations, refer to Section III: Siting Considerations in the CalRecycle Small/Medium Composting Project Permitting Phase 1 Report:

www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/Publications/Details/1739.

Comment on known constraints:

Workforce and Technical Expertise:

Costs:

Site issues (e.g., accessibility, utilities):

Regulatory barriers:

Environmental concerns:

Other constraints:

Please total your points and enter at the top of this section for easy reference.

Leadership Readiness

_____ POINTS OF 30 TOTAL

This section covers factors contributing to leadership readiness for community composting. Leadership readiness includes leadership priority, engagement in decision-making, willingness to allocate resources, and clarity around program ownership or accountability. Leadership readiness can provide a high score when considering dedication of land and funding to a program. For the purposes of this section, “Tribal leaders” or “leadership” pertains to the group identified in Question 1.

Overall Scoring Guidance:

- **0–6:** Composting is a low priority for leadership; engagement is limited or opposition is unresolved
- **7–13:** Leadership interest exists but engagement or support is limited
- **14–21:** Leadership engaged and generally supportive; some constraints remain
- **22–30:** Leadership prioritizes composting and supports implementation

1. Leadership Priority and Support (1–10 points) _____ Points

Scoring for this section should consider leaderships concern for how community waste is handled.

Scoring Guidance:

- **0–3:** Leadership has not identified composting or organic waste management as a current priority.
- **4–6:** Leadership recognizes composting as a potential priority but has competing priorities or unresolved concerns.
- **7–10:** Leadership considers composting as a clear priority and prioritizes composting and organic waste reduction as part of Tribal environmental or operational goals.

Which leadership groups are being considered in this assessment? *Select all that apply.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Tribal council	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental department
<input type="checkbox"/> Tribal administrator or executive director	<input type="checkbox"/> Human resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Department directors or managers	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilities
<input type="checkbox"/> Program managers or coordinators	<input type="checkbox"/> Grant personnel
<input type="checkbox"/> Finance department	<input type="checkbox"/> Other decision makers:

How much of a priority is composting to Tribal leadership? If helpful, briefly explain what drives this level of priority (e.g., landfill costs, environmental values, regulatory pressure):

2. Leadership Engagement (1–5 points)

_____ Points

Scoring for this section should consider leaderships level of attention to the planning and decision making in solid waste and compost programs and developments.

Select the one option that best describes leadership engagement overall.

- Level 1 – Passive awareness:** Leadership is generally aware of composting but not actively involved.
- Level 2 – Supportive but limited involvement:** Leadership supports composting conceptually but does not regularly participate in planning or decision-making.
- Level 3 – Participates in planning:** Leadership participates in planning, discussions, or program improvement efforts.
- Level 4 – Enables implementation:** Leadership supports dedicating funding, land, staffing, or equipment to composting efforts.
- Level 5 – Actively leads and sustains the program:** Leadership plays a key role in program development, decision-making, and long-term viability.

Explain why this level was selected:

3. Leadership Delegation (1–10 points)

_____ Points

Scoring for this section is solely based on whether leadership has delegated a person or department to the task of overseeing the development of a composting program. Lower scores reflect passive awareness, mid-range scores reflect intermittent engagement, and higher scores reflect active leadership and sustained involvement.

Scoring Guidance:

- **0–3:** Leadership has not delegated composting activities
- **4–6:** Leadership is open to delegating composting activities
- **7–10:** Leadership has delegated composting activities

Has Tribal leadership identified or endorsed a department, program, or entity to lead composting or organic waste reduction efforts?

- Yes – clear program lead identified
- Partial – potential departments identified but not confirmed
- No – no program ownership identified
- Unknown

If yes, please identify any leads or partial/potential leads:

Are there leaders who actively participate in composting related planning or improvement?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown

If yes, how many? _____

Has leadership indicated willingness to dedicate Tribal land or facilities for composting activities?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown

If yes, describe the type of site (existing facility, undeveloped land, transfer station, other):

Describe any known land-use, zoning, cultural, or environmental considerations that leadership has raised as concerns:

4. Resource Support (1–5 points)

_____ Points

Scoring for this section should consider leadership’s level of willingness to authorize capital investment, dedicate staff time, approved land or facilities, and support long-term operations for composting efforts. Scores should reflect demonstrated willingness to authorize resources based on current decisions or commitments, not future intentions.

Scoring Guidance:

- **0–2:** Leadership is not willing to authorize funding, staff time, land, or equipment for composting
- **3–4:** Leadership is willing to support limited planning, pilots, or conditional resource use. This may include leveraging existing grant writing or administrative capacity or identifying external partnerships and technical assistance to support implementation.
- **5:** Leadership has committed funding, staffing, and land or facilities and supports long-term operations

Has Tribal leadership demonstrated willingness to allocate or approve funding and Tribal resources for composting related planning or implementation?

- Yes No Unknown

If yes, describe the type of funding (planning, capital, operations, match for grants):

Does the Tribe have internal grant writing and grant management capacity to pursue and administer composting related funding?

- Yes, internal staff have grant writing and management experience
 Limited capacity, may require technical assistance or external support
 No current capacity
 Unknown

Has the Tribe secured or applied for grant funding to support composting related planning, capital investment, equipment, staffing, or operations?

- Yes
- No
- In Progress
- Unknown

If yes, describe the type of funding (planning, capital, operations, match for grants):

What is the feasibility of selling composting products:

- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Unknown

If high, describe the composting products and target markets (if available):

How would you rate Tribal leadership's awareness of potential cost savings that could occur from composting:

- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Unknown

Where do you estimate the largest potential savings would occur, as a result of composting:

- Reduced tipping fees at landfills and transfer stations
- Lower waste hauling costs (e.g., lower volume or weight, less frequent pickups)
- Reduced purchases of soil amendments and fertilizers
- Operational efficiencies (e.g., improved food purchasing and inventory management)
- Other:

Please total your points and enter at the top of this section for easy reference.

Community Climate

_____ POINTS OF 20 TOTAL

This section identifies how the community currently feels about composting based on your experience and perspective. “Community members” may include Tribal members living on or near the reservation, Tribal staff, and others who regularly participate in or are served by Tribal programs, as defined by the assessor. If available, please attach any existing documents that help provide context for your responses, such as community surveys, meeting summaries, resolutions, or other relevant materials.

Overall Scoring Guidance:

- **0–7:** Low awareness or support; misconceptions common
- **8–14:** Mixed awareness and support; some engagement present
- **15–20:** Broad support, participation, or advocacy for composting

1. Community Priority (1 – 7 points)

_____ Points

Scoring for this section should consider the current programs (volunteer or paid), level of participation, commentary from media, and any internal requests or experiences had with the community regarding composting and organic waste.

Scoring Guidance:

- **1 point:** Composting is not viewed as a priority by most community members, and there is little to no expressed interest or discussion.
- **2 points:** Composting is a low priority, with limited or occasional interest expressed by a small number of community members.
- **3 points:** Composting is a moderately low priority, with minimal community interest, informal discussion, or limited program activity.
- **4 points:** Composting is a moderate or emerging priority, with some community interest, informal discussion, or limited program activity.
- **5 points:** Composting is a clear priority for many community members, with recurring interest, participation, or requests for expanded efforts.
- **6 points:** Composting is a high priority across the community, with broad support, visible participation, or active advocacy for composting or organic waste reduction.
- **7 points:** Composting is a very high priority across the community, with enthusiastic support, participation, or advocacy for composting or organic waste reduction.

On a scale of 1–7, how much of a priority is composting to community members? _____

Explain why this level was selected:

2. Community Engagement (1–7 points)

_____ Points

Scoring for this section should consider community engagement, including volunteer participation, informal conversations or requests, existing programs, and advocacy related to composting or organic waste reduction.

For the community overall, indicate which option best describes participation or support levels. Identify the level of support, percentage of community members, who engage with each activity:

Score	Description of Community Engagement
1	Very limited engagement. Little to no awareness, participation, or expressed interest in composting activities.
2	Minimal engagement. Some informal conversations or interest expressed, but no organized activity or participation.
3	Emerging engagement. Limited participation in small activities or pilot efforts. Some individuals show interest or support.
4	Moderate engagement. Active participation from a defined group. Some volunteer involvement or informal advocacy is present.
5	Strong engagement. Consistent participation in composting activities. Volunteers or champions help promote efforts. Community members express willingness to contribute time or resources.
6	Very strong engagement. Broad participation across multiple groups. Leadership or organized advocacy efforts are visible. Composting efforts are recognized within the community.
7	Highly embedded engagement. Composting or organic waste reduction is widely supported. Community members lead, advocate, volunteer, and contribute resources. Engagement is sustained and culturally integrated.

Briefly describe existing programs, volunteer participation, advocacy efforts, informal requests, or other evidence supporting the selected score:

3. Community Support for Expansion (1–6 points)

_____ Points

Scoring for this section should consider current programs and your experience in the community's use of the programs/resources and whether you feel the community would appreciate an expanded effort.

Scoring Guidance:

- **1 point:** No expressed support for expansion or active opposition from most community members.
- **2 points:** Very limited support, with only isolated interest or informal mentions.
- **3 points:** Moderate support, with some community members expressing interest or openness to expansion.
- **4 points:** Strong support from many community members, with recurring interest or informal advocacy.
- **5 points:** Broad and visible support from most community members, including active encouragement or requests to expand composting or organic waste reduction efforts.
- **6 points:** Enthusiastic support from numerous community members, including strong advocates for composting or organic waste reduction efforts across the community.

How many community members would support expanding composting or organic waste reduction efforts?

- None Very few Some Many Most

Explain your selection:

Please total your points and enter at the top of this section for easy reference.

Resources and Capacity

_____ POINTS OF 20 TOTAL

This section asks about the resources currently available within your community that would potentially benefit your composting program, and what resources are missing that would be extremely beneficial to your community and how realistic they would be to attain.

Overall Scoring Guidance:

- **0–7:** Few current resources; no clear path to secure needed resources
- **8–14:** Multiple resources identified; barriers appear manageable
- **15–20:** Key resources are available or realistically attainable

1. Current Resources (1–7 points)

_____ Points

This section should identify the resources already available to a community composting program. For scoring, a high point means there are plentiful resources to use when development a composting facility or program; a low point means resources are few and or far away. Points should be assigned based on the overall availability and usefulness of resources relative to a potential community composting program. This is not a checklist tally. The assessor should consider whether the combination of available resources is sufficient to support planning or early implementation at an appropriate scale.

Scoring Guidance:

- **1 point:** No relevant resources are available locally, and most would need to be developed or acquired.
- **2 points:** Very few relevant resources are available locally, and most would need to be developed or acquired.
- **3 points:** Some resources are available, but major gaps exist that would significantly limit progress.
- **4 points:** A moderate set of resources is available, with gaps that appear manageable through coordination or planning.
- **5 points:** Many key resources are already available and accessible, with few gaps remaining.
- **6 points:** Most key resources needed for community composting are already available within the community.
- **7 points:** All key resources needed for community composting are already available within the community.

Identify resources currently available to your community composting program. Check all that apply:

<p>Existing Infrastructure & Physical Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Transfer station, landfill, or solid waste facility <input type="checkbox"/> Yard waste, brush, or wood waste collection or processing area <input type="checkbox"/> Available Tribal land suitable for composting or material staging <input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouses, community gardens, agricultural fields <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance shops, equipment yards, or storage facilities <input type="checkbox"/> Water access (hydrant, well, irrigation) near potential sites <p>Additional information and or concerns:</p>	<p>Staffing & Workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Solid waste or environmental program staff <input type="checkbox"/> Public works or facilities staff <input type="checkbox"/> Natural resources or agriculture staff <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce development or job training programs <input type="checkbox"/> Youth, intern, or seasonal worker programs <input type="checkbox"/> Community service or volunteer programs <p>Additional information and or concerns:</p>
<p>Equipment & Vehicles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Dump trucks, flatbeds, or roll-off trucks <input type="checkbox"/> Loaders, skid steers, or excavators <input type="checkbox"/> Chippers, grinders, or brush processing equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Scales or weighing systems <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometers <input type="checkbox"/> Containers, bins, carts, or totes suitable for organics <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment operators already on staff <input type="checkbox"/> Hand equipment (e.g., shovels, rakes) <input type="checkbox"/> Screeners and sifting tools <p>Additional information and or concerns:</p>	<p>Community Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tribal government offices <input type="checkbox"/> Schools, Head Start, or early learning programs <input type="checkbox"/> Health clinics or elder centers <input type="checkbox"/> Community kitchens or food distribution programs <input type="checkbox"/> Community gardens or farms <input type="checkbox"/> Powwows, festivals, or large gatherings <p>Additional information and or concerns:</p>

2. Needed and or Potential Resources (1–7 points)

_____ Points

This section is intended to capture known or anticipated resource gaps at a planning level and may evolve as composting goals and scale become clearer. Using the checklists on the preceding page, identify available resources and gaps related to the community’s composting vision. Higher points indicate that gap-filling resources are available or planned; lower points indicate that gaps remain unaddressed.

Scoring Guidance:

- **1 point:** Almost no resources exist with no clear path to obtain them.
- **2 points:** Significant resource gaps exist with no clear path to obtain them.
- **3 points:** Multiple gaps exist and barriers to obtaining resources appear substantial.
- **4 points:** Some key gaps exist, but there are realistic pathways to address them.
- **5 points:** Most needed resources are identified and appear attainable with reasonable effort.
- **6 points:** Needed resources are minimal or already planned for through existing commitments or partnerships.
- **7 points:** All required resources are available or planned for.

Use the prior checklists to identify potential resources that are missing but needed, and or could become available:

Are there any barriers to obtaining needed resources?

3. Capacity and Resources Considerations (1–6 points)

_____ Points

For this section, capacity refers to staffing availability, administrative support, interdepartmental coordination, and the ability to manage or oversee composting related activities. This section should identify the capacity and resources available to a community composting program. Assign higher points for a high amount of capacity and lower points for little or no capacity available. For larger-scale facilities, also consider whether capacity exists to monitor community impacts such as air quality.

Scoring Guidance:

- **1 point:** No staff time or administrative capacity is available to support composting efforts.
- **2 point:** Little to no staff time or administrative capacity is available to support composting efforts
- **3 points:** Limited capacity exists, with significant competing priorities
- **4 points:** Moderate capacity exists, with some staff or departments able to contribute
- **5 points:** Strong capacity exists, with multiple departments or staff able to support planning or operations
- **6 points:** Dedicated or well-aligned capacity exists to support composting as an ongoing program

Are there departments that could contribute staffing, land, equipment, or administrative support?

Yes No Unknown

If yes, describe potential contributions:

Additional notes or context:

Please total your points and enter at the top of this section for easy reference.

III. Community Readiness Scoring Guide

This assessment includes a high-level, pre-community survey, readiness scoring framework intended to support early planning and decision-making. Scores are used to identify strengths, gaps, and priority areas for next steps and can be a base for community surveying. Not all sections of this assessment are scored.

Scoring Methodology

This section summarizes how information collected throughout an assessment is translated into a high-level community readiness score. Scoring is intended to support planning, prioritization, and identification of next steps; it is not a regulatory determination, funding decision, or requirement to proceed. Only selected sections of this assessment are scored. Informational and contextual sections inform recommendations but do not directly affect readiness scores.

What the Scores Represent

Scores reflect the presence of readiness conditions, not project quality or likelihood of success. A higher score indicates that more foundational conditions for composting are in place; a lower score indicates that additional planning, coordination, or information is needed before moving forward.

Scoring by Readiness Area

This section describes how scores are assigned and interpreted for each readiness area.

Site Readiness (0–30 points)

This section evaluates which potential sites are realistically positioned to support composting activities at a planning level. Scoring focuses on site identification and prioritization, land status clarity, ownership or authorization, availability of basic utilities and access, feedstock proximity, and compatibility with surrounding land uses. Operational design, engineering detail, or permitting approval is not required for scoring.

Higher scores indicate a preferred site has been identified and that major feasibility considerations, such as land control, access, utilities, and surrounding uses, are generally understood and appear manageable. Lower scores indicate sites not identified or that significant unknowns need to be addressed before implementation planning can proceed.

Leadership Readiness (0–30 points)

This section assesses the degree to which Tribal leadership prioritizes composting or organic waste reduction and is prepared to support program development through engagement, delegation, and allocation of resources. Scoring considers leadership awareness of waste issues,

participation in planning or decision-making, clarity around program ownership, and willingness to support implementation.

Higher scores reflect leadership that supports composting conceptually and demonstrates readiness to enable progress through decisions, coordination, or resource commitments. Lower scores indicate limited engagement, unclear accountability, or unresolved opposition. The presence of questions or concerns does not reduce readiness unless those concerns significantly impede decision-making or action.

Community Climate (0–20 points)

This section captures the general level of community support, participation, and openness to composting or organic waste reduction based on the surveyor’s experience and available information. Considerations could include expressed interest, participation in existing efforts, willingness to engage, and overall receptiveness to expanded programs.

This section is intentionally weighted lower than structural feasibility factors such as site control and leadership readiness. Higher scores indicate broad community support or engagement, while lower scores reflect mixed awareness or limited participation. Community interest alone does not offset gaps in site readiness, leadership support, or available resources, but it helps inform appropriate outreach strategies and program scale.

Community Climate is weighted lower than Site and Leadership Readiness because community support alone cannot overcome constraints related to land control, authorization, or resource availability. This weighting reflects the importance of foundational feasibility while still recognizing the value of community interest in shaping outreach and program design.

Resources and Capacity (0–20 points)

This section evaluates whether the Tribe has, or could realistically obtain, resources to support composting program development and operation. Scoring considers staffing capacity, departmental participation, availability of land or equipment, partnerships, and administrative or grant-management capacity.

Higher scores indicate key resources are available or that clear, achievable pathways exist to secure them. Lower scores reflect limited resources or unclear capacity to obtain needed support. This section focuses on feasibility and sustainability rather than the size or sophistication of a future program.

The Resources and Capacity section is weighted to reflect the practical ability of a Tribe to support composting activities over time. While leadership support and site control are foundational requirements, available staffing, equipment, partnerships, and administrative

capacity influence whether a program can be sustained beyond early planning. This section is weighted lower than Site and Leadership Readiness to recognize that some resource gaps can be addressed through phased planning, partnerships, or technical assistance once foundational conditions are in place.

Score Calculation

Enter your scores from each section; the previous sections provide additional detail on the scored readiness areas listed within this table.

Readiness Area	Self-Assessed Score	Maximum Points
Site Readiness		30
Leadership Readiness		30
Community Climate		20
Resources and Capacity		20
Overall Community Readiness Score		100

Readiness Stage Definitions

Readiness Stage (1–5): _____ *Use the overall score to identify the readiness stage*

Stage	Community Readiness Score	Stage Description
1	0–20	Exploration stage; early planning conditions
2	21–40	Early readiness; significant gaps remain
3	41–60	Moderate readiness; targeted planning needed
4	61–80	High readiness; implementation planning feasible
5	81–100	Implementation ready or near ready

Contextual Sections

Contextual sections, such as Community Knowledge and Goals, inform recommendations and technical assistance needs but do not affect readiness scores or eligibility determinations. This section is used to provide context for interpreting readiness results and identifying appropriate next steps. Information collected supports understanding of community priorities, awareness levels, cultural considerations, and existing efforts related to composting or organic waste reduction.

The assessment is designed to follow a structured sequence consistent with CalRecycle planning tools:

1. Assemble a planning team
2. Gather baseline information, including contextual sections that inform scoring
3. Score readiness factors related to feasibility and implementation capacity
4. Tally scores to identify readiness stage and
5. Develop an action plan informed by both scored results and unscored context

Interpreting Readiness Scores

Scores reflect planning-level readiness and guide next steps. They do not evaluate program quality or predict outcomes. Higher scores indicate that foundational conditions for composting are in place, while lower scores identify areas where additional information, coordination, or capacity-building may be needed before moving forward.

- **Higher Site Readiness scores** suggest one or more sites are viable candidates for composting at a planning level and that major feasibility questions appear manageable.
- **Higher Leadership Readiness scores** indicate leadership priority, engagement, and accountability sufficient to support program development or implementation.
- **Higher Community Climate scores** reflect broad community support or openness that can facilitate outreach and participation but are not substitute for site control or leadership support.
- **Higher Resources and Capacity scores** suggest that staffing, equipment, partnerships, and administrative capacity are available or realistically attainable.

Lower scores do not indicate a lack of interest or value. Instead, they highlight where additional planning, engagement, or technical assistance may be most helpful. Scores should be considered alongside unscored contextual sections when determining appropriate next steps.

What Scores Do Not Mean

- **Determination of funding eligibility:** Scores are not used to approve, deny, or rank communities for grants or other funding opportunities.
- **The value or importance of composting of the community:** Lower scores often indicate early-stage planning conditions, not lack of interest, commitment, or cultural relevance.
- **Program quality or performance:** The assessment evaluates readiness conditions, not the effectiveness or success of any existing or future composting efforts.
- **Regulatory review or technical analysis:** Scores are based on high-level information and do not substitute for site-specific studies, permitting determinations, or engineering design.
- **Comparison or ranking of Tribes:** Results are intended for internal planning and discussion and should not be used to compare communities or programs.

IV. Action Planning Summary (Post-Assessment)

This page is intended to capture **high-level next steps** informed by the readiness scores and contextual information gathered in this assessment. It is not intended to serve as a detailed implementation plan. Responses should focus on reasonable near-term actions given current capacity and readiness. This page can be completed collaboratively or facilitated during a working group discussion.

Summary of Key Readiness Findings

Based on readiness scores and supporting context, the following areas represent the most significant **constraints or gaps** to address before advancing composting or organic waste reduction efforts:

- Site identification or feasibility
- Leadership engagement or decision-making
- Resource availability or staffing capacity
- Community outreach or education
- Regulatory clarity or coordination
- Other (briefly describe): _____

Brief explanation (optional):

Recommended Readiness-Aligned Next Steps

Select **up to three** priority actions that best align with the community's current readiness stage. These actions should be achievable within the next 6–18 months.

- Leadership Readiness** – Conduct leadership briefings or decision-making discussions
- Leadership Readiness** – Clarify program ownership or departmental roles
- Community** – Develop/expand community education and outreach
- Community** – Identify and recruit composting champions in the community
- Site Readiness** – Perform site screening or high-level feasibility review
- Resources and Capacity** – Explore funding or grant opportunities
- Resources and Capacity** – Pursue technical assistance support
- General** – Conduct high level estimates of organic waste generation and potential compost uses
- General** – Implement a small pilot or demonstration project
- General** – Revisit the readiness assessment after completing key actions

Priority Action Summary

Priority Action	Lead or Responsible Entity	Estimated Timing

(Actions should reflect readiness-appropriate steps, not full implementation unless readiness scores support it.)

Key Partners to Engage (Optional)

List internal departments, community groups, neighboring jurisdictions, Tribes, or technical assistance providers that could help advance priority actions.

V. Additional Resources

The following resources may be helpful for Tribal communities exploring or developing composting programs. Topics include community composting program development, facility siting and design, and technical operations.

Community Composting Program Development

Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) – Neighborhood Soil Rebuilders Program. Available at: <https://ilsr.org/composting/neighborhood-soil-rebuilders/>

Tribal Composting Resources

California Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). *Tribal Composting Needs Assessment Report*. 2025. Available at: <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/Docs/Web/132294>

Facility Siting and Design

Michigan Recycling Coalition. Compost Operator Guidebook, Chapter 4: Facility Siting and Site Design. Available at: <https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/egle/Documents/Programs/MMD/Compost/Operator-Guidebook.pdf>

Permitting and Regulatory Guidance

California Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). Small/Medium Composting Project Permitting. 2024. Available at: <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/Docs/Publications/Details/1739>

Technical Operations

Rynk, R. et al. The Composting Handbook, Chapter 8. Compost Research and Education Foundation. Available at: <https://compostfoundation.org/composting-handbook/> (Note: This resource requires purchase.)