



PACE

People. Planet. Purpose.

Rusty Springs Mattress Recycling Program Guide

PACE's Guide to Starting a Mattress Recycling Program

Penticton and Area Cooperative Enterprises (PACE)

People • Planet • Purpose

About PACE

Penticton and Area Cooperative Enterprises (PACE) is a cooperative/social enterprise based in Penticton, British Columbia.

PACE creates meaningful employment opportunities for people living with barriers while promoting environmental responsibility and community well-being.

Through its **People • Planet • Purpose** philosophy, PACE develops programs that combine inclusive employment with practical sustainability — from recycling and waste diversion to electronics refurbishing and sales.

The **Rusty Springs Mattress Recycling Program** is one example of how PACE transforms local challenges into opportunities for renewal, demonstrating that environmental solutions and human potential grow strongest when they work together.

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Welcome

Purpose of This Guide

This guide is designed to help social enterprises, non-profits, and community organizations start and operate a local mattress recycling program — one that is practical, inclusive, and environmentally responsible.

It's based on the proven Rusty Springs model, developed by **Penticton and Area Cooperative Enterprises (PACE)** in British Columbia.

For more than a decade, PACE has demonstrated that on-site mattress disassembly can reduce landfill waste while creating meaningful work opportunities for people who face barriers to employment.

By sharing this model freely, we hope to make mattress recycling accessible to any community that wants to reduce waste and build local employment.

What's Inside

The guide is divided into seven easy-to-follow modules, plus templates and examples to help you put each concept into practice:

1. **Understanding Mattress Recycling** — Why this work matters, and how to know if your community is ready.
2. **Building Partnerships and Securing a Contract** — How to approach landfills, municipalities, and funders.
3. **Setting Up Operations** — Tools, site layout, vehicles, and safety.
4. **Staffing and Workforce Development** — Recruiting, training, and supporting your team.
5. **Financial Planning and Sustainability** — Building a budget and funding strategy.
6. **Running the Program** — Day-to-day operations, workflow, and reporting.

7. **Measuring Impact and Scaling Up** — Tracking your environmental and social outcomes and planning for growth.

Each module refers to a **Template Package** available separately, containing editable forms such as job descriptions, checklists, and worksheets.

Our Philosophy

The Rusty Springs model began with a simple belief:

That helping people and healing the planet are parts of the same work.

At PACE, we believe in the connection between **People, Planet, and Purpose** — that environmental renewal and human renewal are deeply intertwined.

Every mattress we recycle keeps valuable materials out of landfills and puts meaningful work into the hands of those who need it most.

This approach is **low-tech, low-cost, and high-impact**. With the right partnerships and preparation, it can succeed in almost any community.

How to Use This Guide

- Treat each module as a standalone toolkit. You can start at Module 1 and work through, or jump directly to the sections most relevant to your stage.
 - Use the editable templates to adapt examples to your region.
 - Share your successes — this guide is meant to grow through collaboration.
 - All templates are included in a separate, downloadable file
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A Note from PACE

“When we started, we had no blueprint — just determination and a couple of at a landfill.

Fifteen years later, our crews have recycled tens of thousands of mattresses and created steady jobs for people who once struggled to find work.

We hope this guide gives you the head start we wish we had.”
— *PACE Operations Team*

License and Acknowledgement

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Module 1: Understanding Mattress Recycling

Building the Case for a Local Mattress Recycling Program

1.1 Why Mattresses Matter

Every year, thousands of mattresses end up in landfills — bulky, awkward items that take up huge amounts of space and are difficult to compact. A single mattress can occupy up to 23 cubic feet of landfill volume and may take 80–120 years to decompose. The metal coils can damage landfill machinery, and are one of the most problematic items for landfill operators to deal with.

The good news: up to 95 percent of mattress materials *can* be recycled or repurposed when properly disassembled.

The recyclable components include:

- **Foam**
- **Fabric and textiles**
- **Metal springs**
- **Wooden frames**

By recycling mattresses locally, communities can reduce volume going into the landfill and create green jobs that provide inclusive opportunities for people with barriers to traditional work.

Note: In the Rusty Springs model, the landfill operator is responsible for managing all recovered materials (foam, metal, wood, and textiles). The service provider's role is to safely disassemble the units and track how many are recyclable vs. non-recyclable.

1.2 Social and Economic Benefits

Mattress recycling is more than a waste diversion initiative — it's a community employment model.

A local recycling operation can:

- **Create meaningful work** for individuals who face barriers to employment.
- **Develop local capacity** for small-scale environmental projects.
- **Support municipal sustainability goals** by reducing landfill volume.
- **Demonstrate circular-economy principles** in action.

💬 *Case Example: The Rusty Springs program, operated by PACE in British Columbia, employs people with diverse abilities in on-site mattress disassembly. Over a decade, the program has recycled thousands of units annually while creating sustainable, inclusive employment.*

1.3 Is Your Community a Good Fit?

Before launching a recycling program, it's important to evaluate local conditions and capacity. Use the checklist below to gauge readiness.

Community Readiness Checklist

Area	Key Questions
Landfill Support	Does your local landfill currently separate mattresses? Are operators open to a partnership?
Volume	Are there enough discarded mattresses to justify the operation? <i>(Programs become viable around 1,500 units per year.)</i>
Organization	Is there an existing non-profit or social enterprise with staff, administration, and bookkeeping capacity?
Transportation	Is there access to a vehicle to move staff and equipment to and from the landfill?
Community Buy-In	Do local governments, agencies, or funders support employment and recycling initiatives?

Space and Infrastructure

Is there enough room at or near the landfill for a small work area and sorting space?

If most answers are “yes,” your community is a strong candidate.

If not, consider starting smaller — pilot one site, share resources with another organization, or run the program seasonally.

1.4 Tracking Units and Reporting

The service provider’s reporting responsibilities are simple and consistent:

- **Recyclable Units:** Mattresses and box springs successfully disassembled.
- **Non-Recyclable Units:** Contaminated, damaged, or pocket-coil mattresses that cannot be processed.

This data is shared with the landfill operator regularly (daily, weekly, or monthly, depending on your contract).

The landfill operator then manages the recovered materials and maintains disposal or recycling records.

1.5 Why Local Recycling Matters

- Reduces transportation costs and emissions by processing mattresses where they’re dropped off.
- Builds local skills and employment opportunities.
- Keeps valuable landfill airspace available for true waste.
- Promotes collaboration between municipalities, non-profits, and community partners.

When local people work together to solve local problems, communities grow stronger — environmentally and socially.

 **Templates:** Editable versions available in the companion resource folder.

Module 2: Building Partnerships and Securing a Contract

Laying the Foundation for Your Mattress Recycling Program

2.1 Identifying Key Partners

A successful mattress recycling initiative depends on collaboration. Before anything else, identify the organizations and individuals who can help bring the program to life.

Core Partners to Engage:

Partner	Why They Matter	Typical Role
Landfill or Waste Site Operator	Controls the flow of mattresses and provides the worksite.	Provides space, manages recovered materials, and may help transport them.
Regional District or Municipality	Oversees waste management and sustainability programs.	Authorizes partnerships, approves contracts, and may provide funding.
Social Service or Employment Agency	Connects people facing barriers to work opportunities.	Assists with recruitment, support, and wage subsidies.
Local Sponsors or Businesses	Can offer donations or in-kind support.	May provide PPE, materials, or vehicles at reduced or no cost.

Start by mapping out which agency or department manages solid waste in your area — it may be the regional district, city public works department, or a contracted operator. Once identified, reach out to the right contact with a clear, concise message about what your program offers.

2.2 Writing and Presenting Your Proposal

Your proposal should explain who you are, what problem you solve, and how your program benefits both the landfill and the community. Keep it simple and solution-focused.

Proposal Outline

Introduction

- Brief overview of your organization, its mission, and community role.
- Highlight your social and environmental focus.

The Problem

- Mattresses take up valuable landfill space and are expensive to manage.
- Many communities lack affordable local recycling options.

Your Solution

- A low-tech, on-site program that disassembles mattresses and box springs.
- The service provider tracks recyclable and non-recyclable units.
- The landfill manages recovered materials (metal, foam, fabric, wood).

Benefits to the Landfill

- Reduces landfill volume and equipment strain.
- Provides positive environmental and social outcomes.
- Offers a cost-effective, locally managed solution.

Roles and Responsibilities

6. Landfill Operator Provides

Worksite, space, and container management

Manages recovered materials

Service Provider Provides

Crew, tools, and daily supervision

Tracks and reports recyclable/non-recyclable units

Safety support and site access

Safety training and WorkSafe coverage

7. Implementation Plan

- Secure contract or pilot agreement.
- Hire and train crew.
- Launch and monitor initial operations.

8. Reporting

- The service provider reports mattress counts to the landfill.
- Landfill staff manage materials and disposal.

2.3 Presentation and Follow-Up

When presenting to landfill managers or municipal staff:

- Keep presentations short (5–10 slides).
- Use clear visuals of the worksite, tools, and process.
- Highlight community impact and cost savings.
- Prepare to answer questions about safety, insurance, and reporting.
- End with a clear call to action: a pilot project or meeting to draft a contract.

After your presentation:

- Send a thank-you email summarizing next steps.


- Follow up within a week to maintain momentum.
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2.4 Drafting the Contract

Once the landfill agrees in principle, draft a simple agreement outlining each party's role. This can be a formal contract or a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Typical Contract Elements

- **Purpose:** Outline of the program's environmental and employment goals.
- **Scope of Work:** Mattress and box spring disassembly only.
- **Responsibilities:** Landfill manages materials; provider manages labour and reporting.
- **Health & Safety:** Each party maintains its own insurance and safety coverage.
- **Reporting:** Regular unit count summaries from provider to landfill.
- **Compensation:** Per-unit fee or flat rate for services.
- **Duration:** Start date, end date, and renewal terms.


 *Tip:* A short pilot contract (3–6 months) allows both parties to evaluate performance before committing long-term.

2.5 Maintaining the Relationship

Once the contract is signed, keep communication open and positive:

- Provide regular reports on units processed.
- Share success stories, photos, and safety milestones.
- Ask for feedback to improve efficiency.
- Recognize the landfill operator's support in any public communications.

Strong, transparent relationships build trust and help renew contracts over time.

 **Templates:** Editable versions available in the companion resource folder.

- Partnership Proposal
- Introductory Email Example
- MOU Template

Module 3: Setting Up Operations

Equipping Your Team and Site for Safe, Efficient Work


3.1 Tools and Equipment

The tools needed to start a mattress recycling program are simple, durable, and low-cost. The goal is to create a safe, ergonomic workspace where staff can work efficiently without strain.

Below is a recommended starter setup for **one landfill site** operating with up to six crew members.

Essential Tools and Safety Gear

Item	Description	Purpose / Notes
Work Tables	6x8 ft plywood and 2x4 frame with lips on two edges	Provides stable surface for disassembly. Tables can be built with donated materials and/or labour.
Utility Knives and Blades	Used for cutting fabric and foam.	Keep spare blades; replace often for safety.
Hooks	Small metal hooks for pulling fabric and foam.	Can be made from bent hex keys or fabricated locally.
Pry Poles	For separating metal coils from wood frames.	Welded tools built to personal preference for length and curve.
Gloves	Medium-weight grip gloves for summer, insulated for winter.	Protect hands from cuts and blisters.
Safety Glasses and Vests	Essential PPE for all staff.	Required at all times on site.
Steel-Toed Boots	Personal safety footwear.	Worker-supplied or subsidized through community partners.
First Aid Kit	Stocked with bandages, wipes, and gloves.	Keep accessible at all times.


 *Tip:* Seek donations or sponsorships from local hardware stores or community businesses to offset costs for PPE and tables.

3.2 Site Setup

Each landfill site is unique. The key is to create a layout that supports clear movement, minimizes lifting, and keeps materials organized.

Typical Site Configuration

- **3–4 work tables**, spaced several metres apart.
- **Designated zones** for recyclable and non-recyclable mattresses.
- **Storage area** for unprocessed mattresses awaiting disassembly.
- **Vehicle parking** near the workspace.
- **Crew shelter** or shaded rest area (recommended).
- **Signage** indicating safety rules and work zones.

 *Tip:* Ask the landfill operator to help with grading the site or providing gravel if needed for stability.

Example Workflow

1. Crew arrives and sets up tools.
2. Landfill staff deliver mattresses to storage area.
3. Crew disassembles recyclable units, separates materials and sets aside non-recyclables.
4. Landfill operator collects materials for recycling or disposal.
5. Crew cleans the area and reports unit counts to landfill staff.

3.3 Vehicles and Transportation


Transportation is often a barrier for workers when landfills are outside town limits. To reduce this barrier, the program should provide crew transportation.

Vehicle Guidelines

- A van, SUV, or large car with trunk space is sufficient.
- Vehicles can be purchased, shared, or donated.
- Each driver must be insured and provide a clean driver's abstract.

Best Practices


- Keep a simple fuel and maintenance log.
- Perform regular inspections (oil, tires, brakes).
- Use a prepaid fuel card or account to reduce paperwork.

 *Tip:* When expanding to multiple sites, consider sharing one vehicle between programs.

3.4 Equipment Care and Storage

A clean, organized system prevents lost tools and extends equipment life.

- Crew leaves all tools and PPE (except gloves) on-site or in the vehicle at shift end.
- The crew manager checks supplies weekly.
- Keep replacement blades, gloves, and safety gear stocked.
- Report damaged tools immediately for repair or replacement.

 *Tip:* A dedicated lockable bin or small shed at the landfill helps secure gear and keeps shifts efficient.

3.5 Accessibility and Safety


Safety and accessibility should be reviewed carefully before operations begin.

A well-prepared site protects workers, keeps equipment in good condition, and prevents unnecessary downtime caused by weather or poor setup.

Checklist for Site Readiness

- The work area has flat, stable ground with minimal trip hazards.
- There is adequate space for vehicle parking and mattress handling.
- Clear signage marks work zones and no-entry areas.
- PPE (gloves, safety glasses, vests, and boots) is worn at all times.
- A first aid kit is accessible and checked weekly.
- The site is kept **free of debris and clutter** to reduce risks.

Weather and Comfort Considerations

- In hot conditions, provide shade and regular water breaks to prevent heat stress.
 - For cold or wet weather, request that the landfill provide or position a sea can (storage container) or other covered area for storing unprocessed mattresses. This prevents them from becoming soaked, frozen, or unsafe to handle.
 - Avoid working with frozen or waterlogged mattresses — they are heavy, difficult to cut, and can cause strain or injury.
 -  *Tip:* Seasonal weather can affect productivity. Plan your schedules and crew hours with conditions in mind, and always prioritize health and safety over daily output.
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3.6 Coordination with Landfill Staff

Establish clear communication with landfill staff before operations start.

- Confirm daily start and end times.
- Identify where recyclable and non-recyclable mattresses should be placed.
- Clarify how often landfill staff will remove recovered materials.
- Provide weekly updates on unit counts and crew attendance.

This coordination helps the landfill manage its workflow while allowing your crew to operate smoothly.

 **Template:** Editable spreadsheet available in the companion resource folder.

- Sheet 1 – Equipment & Tool Checklist
- Sheet 2 – Site Readiness Inspection Form
- Sheet 3 – Vehicle Log

Module 4: Staffing and Workforce Development

Building a Safe, Inclusive, and Motivated Recycling Crew

4.1 Recruiting for Inclusion


Mattress recycling programs work best when they create employment opportunities for people who face barriers to traditional work. The Rusty Springs model is built around inclusion, flexibility, and supportive supervision.

Core Principles

- **Low-barrier hiring:** No formal education or prior experience required.
- **Supported employment:** Workers receive training, coaching, and peer support.
- **Respect and flexibility:** Schedules and shifts are adapted to individual capacity.

Potential Recruitment Partners

- Local *WorkBC* or other employment service agencies.
- *YMCA*, *Neil Squire Society*, and community support organizations.
- Health authorities or mental health agencies.
- Non-profit housing or disability support programs.


 *Tip:* Employment agencies often provide wage subsidies, training resources, or help sourcing PPE and transportation supports.

4.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Each site operates best with a small, flexible crew structure.

Role	Key Duties	Employment Type
Crew Manager	Leads crew on site, trains new members, ensures safety, submitting reports and paperwork, drives crew vehicle, communicates with operations manager and landfill staff	Part-time (permanent)
Disassembly Crew Member	Disassembles mattresses, clean and organize work area, senior members help with training new crew.	Part-time (permanent and seasonal)
Sorter/Table Assistant	Sorts mattresses, stacks non recyclable mattresses, organize work area, assist on tables and assist in cleanup.	Part-time (permanent or casual/seasonal)

The crew manager communicates directly with the scalehouse and landfill staff, while the organization’s supervisor or program coordinator provides administrative support and communicates with the landfill managers and municipal managers.

 *Tip:* Hiring managers with lived experience builds trust and strengthens team culture.

4.3 Training and Onboarding

Training should be hands-on and paced according to each worker’s comfort level.

Training Process

1. **Orientation:** Overview of the program, roles, and expectations.
2. **Safety Instruction:** Proper use of PPE, safe lifting, and tool handling.
3. **Demonstration:** Crew manager/senior crew member demonstrates mattress and box spring disassembly.
4. **Practice:** New worker disassembles mattresses first with the crew manager/senior crew member, then under supervision.
5. **Review:** Feedback, questions, and safety checks.

Recommended Training Hours

- Crew Managers: 10–12 hours
- Crew Members: 6–8 hours


Training is ongoing; supervisors should use regular check-ins to reinforce safety and quality standards.

4.4 Health and Safety

Safety is central to every shift. The work involves sharp tools, lifting, and repetitive motion, so clear protocols protect everyone.

Minimum Safety Practices

- PPE (gloves, safety glasses, vests) required at all times.
- Dull blades are replaced immediately.
- First aid kit available and inspected weekly.
- Crew stretches before work and takes short hydration breaks.
- Report all injuries.
- Confirm WorkSafe or equivalent coverage before starting operations.

 *Tip:* Building a safety culture improves morale and shows partners your professionalism.

4.5 Scheduling and Flexibility


Short, consistent shifts are ideal. The work is physical, so shorter hours prevent injuries and allow more workers to participate.

Recommended Guidelines

- Shift length: 2–4 hours maximum.
- Frequency: 2–5 shifts per week, depending on landfill volume.

- Crew size: 3–5 workers per shift.

Seasonal adjustments may be required. In winter, shifts can be reduced due to weather or slower landfill activity.

 *Tip:* A shared scheduling list or rotating call system can help balance shifts fairly among workers.


4.6 Pay and Incentives

The standard pay model combines an hourly wage with an optional **piece-rate incentive**. This rewards productivity while guaranteeing fair pay.

Pay Structure Example

- **Hourly Wage:** Guaranteed base rate above minimum wage; living wage for your area is ideal.
- **Unit Rate (optional):** Additional pay per mattress processed above a set target.

Use simple, transparent reporting to calculate pay and avoid confusion.

 *Tip:* If working with employment agencies, explore wage subsidies that can help cover training or onboarding periods.

4.7 Workforce Support and Retention

Supportive supervision helps workers succeed. Encourage stability and confidence through:

- Regular check-ins and encouragement.
- Clear communication and achievable goals.
- Flexibility for health or personal needs.
- Recognition for effort and safety milestones.
- Opportunities to mentor others as skills grow.


PACE's experience shows that a supportive environment leads to high retention, improved confidence, and stronger teamwork.

4.8 Administration and Reporting

Administrative support includes:

- Managing payroll and attendance.
- Collecting timesheets and unit count reports.
- Scheduling and communication with landfill staff.
- Coordinating vehicle and tool maintenance.

The Crew Manager records daily hours and recyclable/non-recyclable unit counts for submission to both the landfill and the organization's administrator.

 **Template:** Editable versions available in the companion resource folder.

- Job Descriptions (Crew Manager Disassembler and Sorter)
- Health and Safety Checklist
- Payroll and Reporting Summary
- Worker Feedback Form

Module 5: Financial Planning and Sustainability

Creating a Realistic Budget and Long-Term Funding Plan

5.1 Building Your Budget


A strong financial plan is essential for long-term sustainability.

Your budget should include both start-up costs (one-time expenses) and ongoing costs (recurring operational expenses).

Because pricing changes over time, use categories and ranges instead of fixed numbers so the guide remains current.

Start-Up Costs

Category	Description	Example Notes
Vehicle	Used van or SUV for crew transportation.	Explore purchase, donation, or shared use.
Tools and Equipment	Tables, knives, pry poles, hooks, safety gear.	Seek sponsorships or in-kind donations.
Training and Orientation	Paid training for crew and managers.	Estimate 10–12 hours per staff member.
Administrative Setup	Insurance, accounting, and initial outreach.	Use existing systems where possible.
Site Preparation	Tables and bins at landfill site.	Coordinate with landfill staff for support.

 *Tip:* Keep a small contingency fund for unexpected start-up needs such as tool replacement or vehicle repairs.

Ongoing Operating Costs

Category	Description	Example Notes
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Staffing and Payroll	Crew wages, manager salary, payroll deductions.	Budget for consistent year-round operation.
Transportation	Fuel, insurance, and vehicle maintenance.	Average 10–15% of total operating cost.
Tools and Supplies	Replacement gloves, blades, and PPE.	Restock quarterly.
Administration	Payroll, bookkeeping, and communication.	Allocate 5–10 hours per week.
Insurance and Safety	Liability and WorkSafe coverage.	Required for all contracts.
Program Overhead	Office, printing, signage, or marketing.	Keep minimal through shared resources.

5.2 Estimating Revenue

Income for mattress recycling programs typically comes from:

1. Service Fees from Landfills


- The landfill pays the service provider a per-unit or flat rate for each mattress processed.
- Rates vary based on contract and local conditions.

2. Grants and Subsidies

- Environmental or social enterprise funding programs.
- Employment grants for training and inclusion.
- Community foundation support.

3. Sponsorships and Donations

- Local businesses may contribute funds, vehicles, or supplies.

 *Tip:* Treat the landfill as your “anchor client.” The contract should cover the majority of ongoing costs, while grants and sponsorships support growth and innovation.

5.3 Managing Cash Flow

Even small recycling programs have variable monthly expenses — fuel, insurance, and payroll. Monitoring cash flow helps ensure stability year-round.

Best Practices

- Track revenue and expenses monthly.
- Keep a small emergency fund (5–10% of annual revenue).
- Submit landfill invoices consistently (weekly or biweekly).
- Review your budget quarterly with management or the board.


Simple tools like Google Sheets, Excel, or basic accounting software can handle these tasks effectively.

5.4 Tracking and Reporting

Financial tracking should align with your reporting to the landfill. Each month, record:

- **Recyclable Units Processed**
- **Non-Recyclable Units Processed**
- **Revenue Invoiced to Landfill**
- **Labour and Operational Costs**

This keeps your records accurate and makes contract renewals easier.


 *Tip:* Combine your financial reports with short success summaries (mattresses recycled, hours worked, or employment milestones). These are valuable for funders and community partners.

5.5 Building Long-Term Sustainability

Once your program is established, look for ways to strengthen financial stability:

- Develop multi-year contracts with landfill partners.
- Seek local or regional sponsorships to support expansion.
- Train key crew members for leadership roles to reduce turnover.
- Build partnerships with local governments and community organizations.

PACE's experience shows that social enterprise recycling programs can become financially self-sustaining within the first two years when managed carefully.

 **Template:** Editable versions available in the companion resource folder.

- Budget and Revenue Projection Spreadsheet
- Revenue Projection Sheet
- Quarterly Financial and Impact Report

Module 6: Running the Program

Day-to-Day Operations, Safety, and Reporting

6.1 Overview

Once the site, crew, and contract are in place, the focus shifts to daily operations.

This module outlines how to manage the work efficiently, maintain safety, and ensure clear reporting.

Each crew should follow consistent procedures to build trust with landfill staff and to make reporting simple and reliable.

6.2 Daily Workflow

A clear daily routine helps the crew stay organized and productive.

Step 1: Sorting

:

1. The landfill operator or attendant drops mattresses in a designated area.
2. Sorter visually inspects each mattress.
3. Mattresses that can be safely recycled are set aside as recyclable units.
4. Contaminated, pocket-coil, or heavily damaged items are marked as non-recyclable units and stacked separately.

The landfill operator later disposes of non-recyclables and manages recyclable materials after disassembly.

Step 2: Allocating Units

The mattresses are distributed to each crew member; the sorter can help by bringing mattresses ready for disassembly over to the tables.

Each crew member works at their own table, following safe lifting practices.

- Crew manager can rotate between tables to help anyone who needs it.
 - Pair up a table worker and table assistant (if available) for heavier or complex units.
 - Track who processed each unit for accurate counts and payroll; if 2 workers are partnered on a table, split the number of units between them.
-

Step 3: Disassembly

Mattress and box spring disassembly is the main activity.

The process is simple but must be performed safely and consistently.

Mattress Disassembly Process

1. Lift one side onto the worktable.
2. Cut the fabric along the edges using a sharp utility knife.
3. Peel back and remove fabric and foam layers.
4. Pull remaining fabric using hooks as needed.
5. Expose metal springs or wooden base frame.

Box Spring Disassembly

1. Place box spring coil-side up on the table.
2. Remove bottom fabric.
3. Use a pry pole to detach springs from the wooden frame.
4. Stack remaining components neatly in the designated area.

At the end of each unit, the worker sets aside the stripped frame for landfill staff to handle. Ensure all stacks are accessible to the landfill machinery required to move them

Step 4: Cleanup

Each shift ends with a cleanup period.

Crew members:

- Sweep around tables and clear debris.
- Stack non-recyclable units in the assigned zone after crew manager has counted each crew member's completed units
- Return all tools to storage or vehicle.
- Ensure PPE and first aid kits are ready for the next shift.


A clean work area maintains safety and shows professionalism to landfill staff.

Step 5: Reporting and Administration

At the end of every shift, the crew manager records:

- Total mattresses and total box springs for each crew member (for PACE records), and total recyclable units
- Total non-recyclable units identified.
- Crew hours worked.

Total of recyclable and non recyclable units is submitted to the scalehouse upon departure. Crew totals, hours and recyclable/non recyclable totals are submitted to the program administrator once a week

 *Tip:* Keep reporting simple — a single page or digital form is enough. Consistency matters more than detail.

6.3 Productivity and Quality Control

Track efficiency without rushing. The goal is steady, safe, and consistent output.

Average Targets:

- 4–5 mattresses per hour per worker once trained.
- 3–4 crew members per shift for best balance of pace and supervision.

Quality Checks

- Springs completely free of fabric.
- No tools left on tables or in debris.
- All unit counts recorded accurately.

Encourage open communication — if a worker is struggling with certain mattresses, pair them with an experienced teammate or rotate tasks.

6.4 Safety Practices

Safety must remain part of daily routines.

Common risks include cuts, repetitive strain, and exposure to dirty materials.

Safety Guidelines

- Always wear PPE (gloves, glasses, vests, and steel-toed boots).
- Replace dull blades immediately.
- Take short stretch and hydration breaks every hour.
- Stop work if mattresses are frozen, waterlogged, or unsafe to handle.
- Keep first aid supplies stocked and accessible.
- Report all incidents, no matter how minor.


The Crew Manager should lead short safety check-ins before each shift.

6.5 Coordination with Landfill Operators

Successful programs rely on communication.

Before operations begin, agree on:

- Drop-off procedures for mattresses.
- Material management responsibilities — landfill staff move and recycle all recovered materials.
- Reporting frequency for unit counts.
- Safety protocols for visitors or contractors.

 *Tip:* Treat landfill staff as key partners. Their support ensures efficiency and long-term collaboration.

6.6 Equipment and Site Maintenance

The Crew Manager ensures tables, tools, and PPE remain in safe working condition.

- Check tools weekly and replace damaged items.
 - Keep spare gloves and blades in stock.
 - Ask landfill staff to assist with heavy equipment (bins, tables) as needed.
 - Record maintenance and supply restocks in a simple log.
-

6.7 Administration and Documentation

The service provider should maintain organized records for payroll, reporting, and quality assurance.

Keep On File:

- Crew schedules and attendance sheets.
- Weekly unit count reports.
- Incident and safety checklists.
- Vehicle and tool maintenance logs.


Digital copies can simplify sharing with funders or municipal partners.

6.8 Continuous Improvement

Encourage staff to share feedback and suggest improvements.

- Hold short team meetings every month.
- Review safety and efficiency together.
- Celebrate milestones (e.g., “1,000 mattresses processed”).
- Adjust processes based on experience.

 *Tip:* PACE’s success has shown that programs evolve best when crew input is valued.

 **Template:** Editable versions available in the companion resource folder.

- Timesheet Summary
- Safety Incident Form

Module 7: Measuring Impact and Scaling Up


Tracking Results, Sharing Success, and Planning for Growth

7.1 Why Measuring Impact Matters

Your mattress recycling program creates both environmental and social value.

Tracking these outcomes helps you:

- Demonstrate results to funders, partners, and municipalities.
- Improve operations over time.
- Build credibility and secure long-term support.
- Celebrate the achievements of your crew and community.

 *Tip:* Start with simple data. Even a one-page summary of units processed, hours worked, and people employed shows real impact.

7.2 Tracking Environmental Impact

Environmental impact is measured primarily through the number of mattresses diverted from landfill.

Since the landfill operator manages recovered materials, the service provider's role is to report how many mattresses were recyclable or non-recyclable.

Key Metrics

Metric	Description	Data Source
Recyclable Units	Mattresses and box springs successfully disassembled.	Crew manager's daily report.

Non-Recyclable Units	Contaminated, pocket-coil, or damaged units set aside for disposal.	Crew manager's daily report.
Diversion Rate (%)	$\text{Recyclable units} \div \text{total units processed} \times 100.$	Monthly summary.

Example:

If your crew processed 4,000 mattresses this year and 3,700 were recyclable, your diversion rate is **92.5%**.


7.3 Tracking Social Impact

Social outcomes are the heart of the Rusty Springs model.

You can track and share how your program supports people and strengthens communities.

Key Metrics

Metric	Description	Data Source
People Employed	Number of individuals who worked during the year.	Payroll or attendance logs.
Hours Worked	Total hours across all crew members.	Timesheets.
Training Hours	Time spent on orientation and safety instruction.	Training logs.
Retention Rate	Percentage of workers returning each season.	HR records.
Participant Feedback	Workers' sense of confidence, safety, and satisfaction.	Feedback forms or interviews.

 *Tip:* Quotes and stories from workers can powerfully illustrate your impact — pair them with data in reports or presentations.


7.4 Reporting Your Results

Clear and simple reporting keeps funders and partners engaged.

Each quarter or season, summarize:

- Total recyclable and non-recyclable units.
- Total employment hours.
- Any safety incidents or highlights.
- A short paragraph about successes or challenges.

A single-page “Impact Snapshot” is often all you need — attach it to your invoice or send it to the landfill operator and funders.

 *Tip:* Use visuals like bar charts or icons when sharing results publicly — they make your story easy to understand at a glance.

7.5 Reviewing and Improving the Program

At least once per year, hold a short review with your team and landfill partner.

Review Questions

- Are we meeting contract and safety requirements?
- Is the landfill satisfied with reporting and communication?
- Are the crew’s hours and shifts manageable?
- Do tools, transportation, or space need improvements?
- Are there new funding or training opportunities?

Document your answers and key actions in a “Program Review Worksheet.” Continuous improvement shows professionalism and helps secure renewals.


7.6 Planning for Growth

Once your first site runs smoothly, expansion may be possible. Before adding a new site or service, consider:

Area

Key Question

Capacity	Do you have enough trained staff and equipment?
Partnership	Are other landfills or municipalities interested?
Logistics	Can you manage travel and supervision between sites?
Financials	Will new contracts cover costs?
Training	Who will lead onboarding for new crews?
Evaluation	How will you track performance at new sites?

 *Tip:* Grow gradually — ensure existing operations stay strong before expanding.

7.7 Sharing Your Success

Promoting results builds awareness and attracts new support. Share your story with pride and transparency.

Ways to Share:

- Annual summary report or infographic.
- Presentations to local councils or funders.
- Posts on social media highlighting worker achievements.
- Tours or open houses at the landfill (with partner approval).

Always acknowledge your landfill and funding partners publicly — it strengthens relationships and community trust.

 **Template:** Editable versions available in the companion resource folder.

- Social and Environmental Impact Report
- Program Review Worksheet
- Expansion Planning Worksheet

Conclusion

Working Together Toward a Cleaner, More Inclusive Future

Every community deserves access to sustainable waste solutions and meaningful work.

The **Rusty Springs Mattress Recycling Program** was built to make both possible — turning a landfill challenge into an opportunity for environmental renewal and social inclusion.

By following this model, your organization can create a local recycling program that reduces waste, provides employment, and builds partnerships between people, governments, and communities.

Whether you use the entire guide or adapt just a few modules, each step contributes to a stronger circular economy.

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PACE recognizes the many social enterprises and non-profits across Canada that continue to lead the way in combining environmental stewardship with inclusive employment.

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For editable templates, sample forms, and checklists, please refer to the **companion resource folder** provided with this guide.

Final Thoughts

The Rusty Springs model proves that environmental and social change can work hand-in-hand. By empowering local organizations to lead recycling programs, we reduce waste, build skills, and strengthen communities — one mattress, one person, at a time.



PACE

People. Planet. Purpose.