# Compostable Products Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

## Meeting #9: Tuesday June 4th, 2024 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: Zoom

## Attendance

Members of the Advisory Council, Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), Cascadia Consulting Group (Cascadia), and the public attended the meeting.

19 out of 27 Advisory Committee members attended (those who attended are marked with *):

| Name | Affiliation |
|---|---|
| **Alex Truelove*** | BPI |
| **Amy Clow** | WSDA |
| **Patti Stacey** | Kittitas County |
| **Jill Reeves*** | City of Spokane |
| **Dan Corum** | City of Tacoma |
| **Gena Jain*** | City of Kirkland |
| **Heather Trim*** | Zero Waste Washington |
| **Janet Thoman*** | CMA |
| **Jay Blazey*** | Cedar Grove |
| **Jenny Slepian** | Eco Products |
| **Kate Kurtz*** | City of Seattle |
| **Liv Johansson*** | WORC |
| **Lewis Griffith*** | City of Tacoma |
| **Ryan Dicks** | Pierce County |

| Name | Affiliation |
|---|---|
| **Mark Chidester*** | City of Richland |
| **Reingard Rieger** | Tilth Alliance |
| **Ron Jones** | City of Olympia |
| **Samantha Louderback*** | Washington Hospitality Association |
| **Samantha Winkle*** | Waste Connections |
| **Scott Deatherage*** | Barr-Tech |
| **Shannon Pinc*** | NatureWorks |
| **Alli Kingfisher*** | Ecology |
| **Wendy Weiker*** | Republic Services |
| **Peter Godlewski*** | Association of WA Businesses |
| **Zonell Tateishi** | Yakima County |
| **Rod Whittaker*** | WRRA |
| **Brandon Housekeeper*** | NW Grocers Association |

3 Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) members attended, but did not participate as Advisory Committee members:

- Cullen Naumoff
- Chery Sullivan
- Patrick Merscher

3 staff from Cascadia Consulting Group (Cascadia) attended as meeting facilitators and support:

- Maddie Seibert
- Hannah Swee
- Taylor Magee

3 members of the public attended.

## Meeting goals

- Generate solutions for remaining four challenge themes
- Consider full set of solutions generated
- Prepare for MURAL voting exercise between June and July meetings

## Agenda

| Duration | Agenda Item |
|---|---|
| **10 min** | Welcome, agenda, & objectives |
| **5 min** | Where we've been and where we're headed |
| **45 min** | Solutions discussion |
| **10 min** | Break |
| **30 min** | Discuss full set of solutions |
| **5 min** | Public comment |
| **5 min** | Closing remarks and preview next steps |

## Where We've Been & Where We're Headed

- Maddie oriented the group to where we are in the AC process, noting that we will be finish identifying potential solutions in this meeting. Between the June and July AC meetings, AC members will be asked to review the list of draft strategies and solutions before the final vote in July.
- Hannah presented the identified gaps and opportunities for future research – both those gaps identified though research and those identified by the Committee:
    - Gaps and opportunities for future research:
        - Food waste diversion: Data on impact of compostable products and amount of food waste diverted at city, county, or statewide level – including diversion impact by type of product.
        - Commercial sector organics composition: Lack of detail by generator type in commercial organics characterization data.
        - Statewide capture rates: Percentage of amount and types of compostable products generated statewide recovered by organic materials management facilities.
        - Labeling laws impact: Statewide labeling laws are new, and data is not yet available on the impact on reducing contamination.
        - Microplastics: Facilities do not measure or report the amount of microplastics or presence of toxic chemicals in finished compost.
    - Gaps and opportunities identified by the AC:
        - Additional opportunities to understand impacts to the business community, rural communities, and others.
        - Do compostable products encourage food waste diversion?
            - Does refusing compostable products hinder diversion?
            - Do certain products encourage more food waste diversion than others?
        - Better understanding of the costs to facilities that accept compostable products
        - More research needed on reusables.

- Microplastics associated with reusables.
- Reusables vs. compostables.
- Impacts to the recycling stream from contamination of compostable products.

- Questions:
  - Alex Truelove commented that there is a study from Chicago that demonstrates increased diversion outside of a closed loop system.
  - Shannon Pinc commented that most composters aren't measuring for microplastics because that technology is not widely available. When testing is done, methodologies are showing only fossil-based microplastics and not bio-based.
  - Alex Truelove commented that he hasn't heard of compostable products increasing volume or creating volume concerns, would like to know how that's measured.
  - Lewis Griffith commented that the goal of including compostable products in the compost stream is to increase volumes that are diverted to compost.
  - Kate Kurtz commented (in the chat): FYI: WORC will be hosting a webinar on microplastics and compost on August 27th. Markus Flury from WSU has done some excellent work on this topic, and he will be presenting. I see now that we need to get the date on the website, but registration information is on the WORC website: https://www.compostwashington.org/2024-webinars-1

## Solutions Discussion

- **Presentation:** Maddie reminded the group of the scope of recommendation for HB 1033. She then presented the list of challenges and draft strategies and actions for discussion. The AC committee reviewed the remaining four challenge themes and initial solutions:

| Challenge | Solution Statement | Initial Solutions |
|---|---|---|
| **2. Existing facilities may not have capacity to accept compostable products and food waste.** Adding new feedstock will increase the volumes of material at facilities, compostable products increase processing times, and it is difficult to site new facilities. | 2. Increase facility capacity to accept compostable products and food waste. | • Give facilities more control over what they receive<br>• Add funding to increase capacity |
| **3. It is not clear how well compostable products increase food diversion rates.** | 3. Increase understanding of how compostable products impact food diversion rates. | • Conduct commercial and residential outreach<br>• Provide technical assistance<br>• Conduct further research in a municipal setting. Do some compostables support diversion more than others? |
| **5. Compostable products do not break down in all facilities and processing types.** Standards for compostable products not | 5. Better align accepted compostable products with facility conditions and processing types. | • Conduct testing in a wide variety of compost processes<br>• Align compostable standards with WA compost facilities |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| inclusive of all processing types and facility conditions. | | • Ensure definition of compostable products reflects products that work in Washington's system |
| **7. Some areas in the state lack access to local compost programs.** Collection inefficiency in some jurisdictions and inaccessibility of programs in rural areas. | 7. Improve statewide access to local compost programs | • *No initial solutions identified.* |

### MURAL Discussion: Solutions

- The Committee transitioned to MURAL to discuss these remaining four challenges and solutions, building out strategies and actions. The AC had a robust conversation and suggested many changes/alterations to the initial strategies. The Facilitation team used these edits to revise the set of strategies and actions in a separate document sent to the AC prior to the first round of voting. ***Please see Appendix A for the complete list of revised strategies and actions, and see Appendix B for the MURAL exercise with Committee responses and solutions generated.***

## Discuss Full set of Solutions

- **Presentation:** Maddie introduced the next discussion item, where AC members reviewed the full list of initial strategies and actions that they had identified.
- Questions:
    - Heather Trim raised concerns about bin colors/bin labeling not being related to the management of compostable products.
    - Shannon Pinc pointed to a misconception on the MURAL which noted compostable products made from corn and soy being separated as food at compost facilities, noting these items are not food. The corn and soy used for the production of compostable products is different.

### MURAL Discussion: Solutions

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## Preview MURAL Voting Exercise

- Maddie provided a preview to the MURAL voting, which will be used for the initial round of voting on draft solutions and the round of voting on final solutions.
- Questions:
    - Heather Trim asked for space provided to comment on each solution during the voting process.

- Kate Kurtz asked if the list of solutions and strategies will be edited/ refined before voting on the draft solutions. She noted that the current list is more of a brainstorm, with some strategies mis-categorized.
  - Maddie replied that the list will be edited and refined, also noting that the language is not as refined as we would like for the legislature.
- Heather asked what the next steps were after voting.
  - Maddie replied that voting on the draft solutions between the June and July meetings will provide the project team with an idea of how to adjust the solutions before the July meeting. The project team will follow up with AC members if appropriate. Then the AC will vote on the final set of solutions during the July meeting.

## Public Comment

- No public comments.

## Next Steps

**The May AC meeting will take place on July 2, from 10:00am-12:00pm**.

## Appendix A. Draft Strategies and Actions Presented for Feedback Before Initial Round of Voting.

These draft strategies and actions, organized by theme, were further revised before the first round of voting based on feedback received from the Committee and Department of Ecology.

# Address consumer confusion around compostable products

### DRAFT SOLUTIONS

**Education and outreach**

1. State-wide or regional campaigns teaching the public how to identify compostable products
2. Need funding for education campaigns
3. Simplify the system- use visuals/graphics
4. Consider supporting EPR as a funding source

**Consistent cart and bin colors**

1. Bin colors will not help with compostables; residents are confused on what products go in compost vs. Recycling, better targeted with education
2. Cost considerations for adoption
3. Rather than bin colors, consider bin labels on what is accepted
4. Green or brown for organics only; blue for recycling; black or grey for garbage

**Stronger labeling standards**

1. Address lookalikes and their labeling/coloring
2. Advocate at a federal level on this issue

**Consistent enforcement to reduce contamination**

1. Who will pay for enforcement?
2. Clear process to report bad actors
3. Notification of widely distributed reported products
4. Incorporate feedback from haulers and compost facilities
5. Active enforcement (beyond complaint-based)
6. Clearly define where the responsibility lies, whether that's producer, broker, etc.

**Ban lookalikes**

1. Ban single-use plastic foodware, with cups as possible exception
2. Focus on deliberately misleading products
3. Need to further define this as a solution

# Increase facility capacity to accept compostable products and food waste

## DRAFT SOLUTIONS

**Add funding to increase capacity**

1. Fund improved screening equipment. Focus on equipment that doesn't generate microplastics
2. Fund facility upgrades
3. Support EPR to include funding for composters
4. Funding without mandates
5. Need markets
6. Costs for composting is higher than landfill disposal is some jurisdictions, additional facility capacity costs will need to be subsidized as there is not a market incentive to invest in this

**Fund research**

1. Fund research to better understand which processing conditions best break down compostable products
2. Consolidate research

**Allow facilities to maintain control over what they receive**

1. Require facilities to set contamination thresholds and reject loads.
2. Ban compostable products that facilities can't accept
3. Ban lookalikes statewide
4. Understand the costs and logistics associated with allowing/requiring facilities to reject loads
5. Provide facilities with data about which products have more lookalikes

**Streamline/expedite permitting**

1. Expedite permit modifications
2. Streamline permitting generally

# Increase understanding of how compostable products impact food diversion rates

## DRAFT SOLUTIONS

**Specified commercial and residential outreach**

1. Funding from the state
2. Fund outreach campaign to educate consumers on labeling law and how to report noncompliant products
3. Statewide campaign research (Similar to Use Food Well)
4. Statewide toolkit customized for different stakeholders (commercial to in-house, jurisdictions to residents, etc.)
5. Comprehensive enforcement mechanisms for businesses and residents
6. Uniformity in food packaging requirements and policies

**Technical assistance**

1. Education for the general public of what compostable means and what it doesn't mean

**Further research about compostable products' impacts on food waste diversion and overall environmental benefit**

1. Does the lack of some products being compostable inhibit food waste composting (e.g., produce stickers, collection bags)?
2. Anecdotally, Cedar Grove finds that education helps people divert food waste using compostables.
3. Evaluate if certain compostable products are more effective in different streams – residential, commercial
4. Is research needed? Seems intuitive that compostables divert food waste.
5. Study: What are the real life cycle benefits of compostable products? Does including them in organics collection improve overall environmental outcomes?

**Conduct research about alternatives to compostable products.**

1. Understand the risks of alternatives (conventional plastic, etc.)
2. Understand risk of depackaging equipment generating microplastics if products are conventional
3. Understand the role of reusables – whether preferable to or complementary to compostable products.
4. Explore bans on single-use plastics at grocery stores.

# Clarify enforcement of compostable product labeling and/or use of products

### DRAFT SOLUTIONS

**Provide technical assistance and tools to jurisdictions for enforcement.**

1. Create and publish comprehensive lists of acceptable products.
2. Model enforcement or standards for local jurisdictions to adopt, produced by DOE.
3. Allocate additional funds for staff enforcement at local and state levels.

4. Provide education tools to local jurisdictions to better understand requirements.
5. Create an easy reporting form that is easily accessible to those intended to use it.
6. Define who is responsible for enforcement.
7. Clarify the role of local/municipal ordinances and laws.

**Funding for jurisdictions' enforcement**

1. Fund overs testing to help accelerate identification
2. Consider prioritizing funding for jurisdictions that accept compostable products.
3. Ensure that state and local governments have enough capacity for enforcement; consider providing funding for this capacity.

**Enforcement of non-compliant products sold in WA state**

1. Identify examples of non-compliant items for education purposes.
2. Work with other states with similar guidelines to help create a multi-state enforcement effort.
3. Work to achieve active enforcement; find/report products sold in WA that do not meet standards and contact sellers.
4. Provide ECY with tools to be proactive.

**Equity analysis**

1. Understand: Who is bearing the burden of potential enforcement solutions? Which communities are negatively impacted?

# Clarify enforcement of compostable product labeling and/or use of products

## DRAFT SOLUTIONS

**Testing in a wide variety of compost processes**

1. Continued emphasis on field testing
2. Do research and/or collect data on items that are problematic to break down at facilities
3. Conduct research to better understand the processing conditions that promote breakdown of these products

**Align compostable standards with WA compost facilities**

1. Develop a statewide list of compostable products that are accepted by 50% of facilities
2. Setting up rules now may present unintended consequences later
3. Update statewide list periodically
4. Set standards for compost facilities

5. Ban specific compostable products (such as products not widely accepted at all facilities)
6. Ban lookalike products
7. When evaluating if certain products are not accepted by a percentage of compost facilities, only include facilities that are accepting compostable products in that evaluation.
8. Create a WA compostable standard that is more stringent than industry standards, that for example requires compostable products to fully break down in 45 days
9. Develop & adhere to a set of ideal processing conditions for facilities in WA

# Support marketability of compost that has food waste and compostable products as feedstocks

### DRAFT SOLUTIONS

**Assurance of end markets**

1. Update finished compost standards
2. State/local budget for compost procurement
3. Clarification is needed about how much anticipated supply in excess of demand there will be.
4. Encouraging use in appropriate applications
5. Ensure compliance of CPOs, grow those overtime

**Details/data on end markets**

1. What is the demand for compost? Supply/demand data
2. What are the barriers to expanding compost markets?
3. Clarification/assurance about farmer incentives for compost use
4. Access to affordable compost spreading/transportation equipment

**Data about how much compost is clean and marketable**

1. Clearer insight into consumer/end user standards for “clean” compost- may be different for different applications.
2. Provide funding for contamination reduction equipment

# Improve statewide access to local compost programs

### DRAFT SOLUTIONS

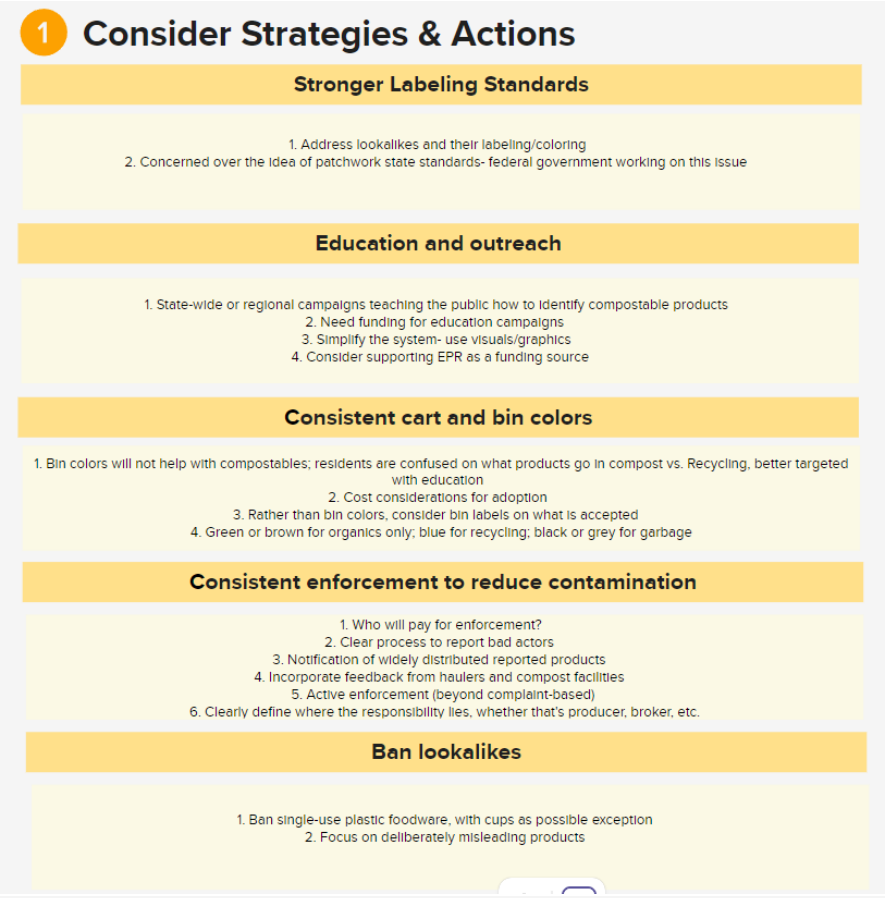
Local implementation/phase-in

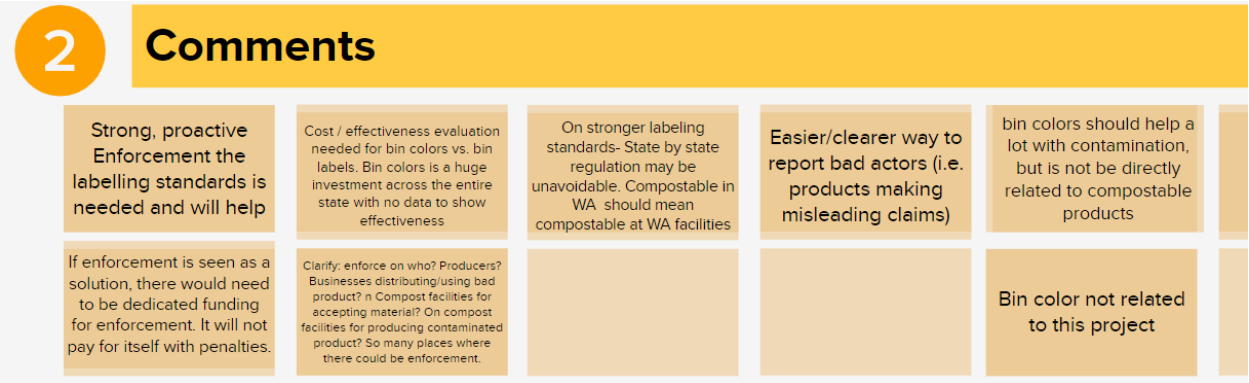
1. Allow local govt to phase in services to allow for maximum education, preparation, and participation. Start with education.
2. Multi-family is particularly challenging and requires time window for education/start up
3. Statewide goals / local implementation
4. Provide funding for new and expanding compost facilities
5. Require local governments without access to a compost facility to put out an RFI/RFQ/RFP every x years to inquire about potential new programs or facilities.

# Appendix B. MURAL from June 4th Committee Meeting

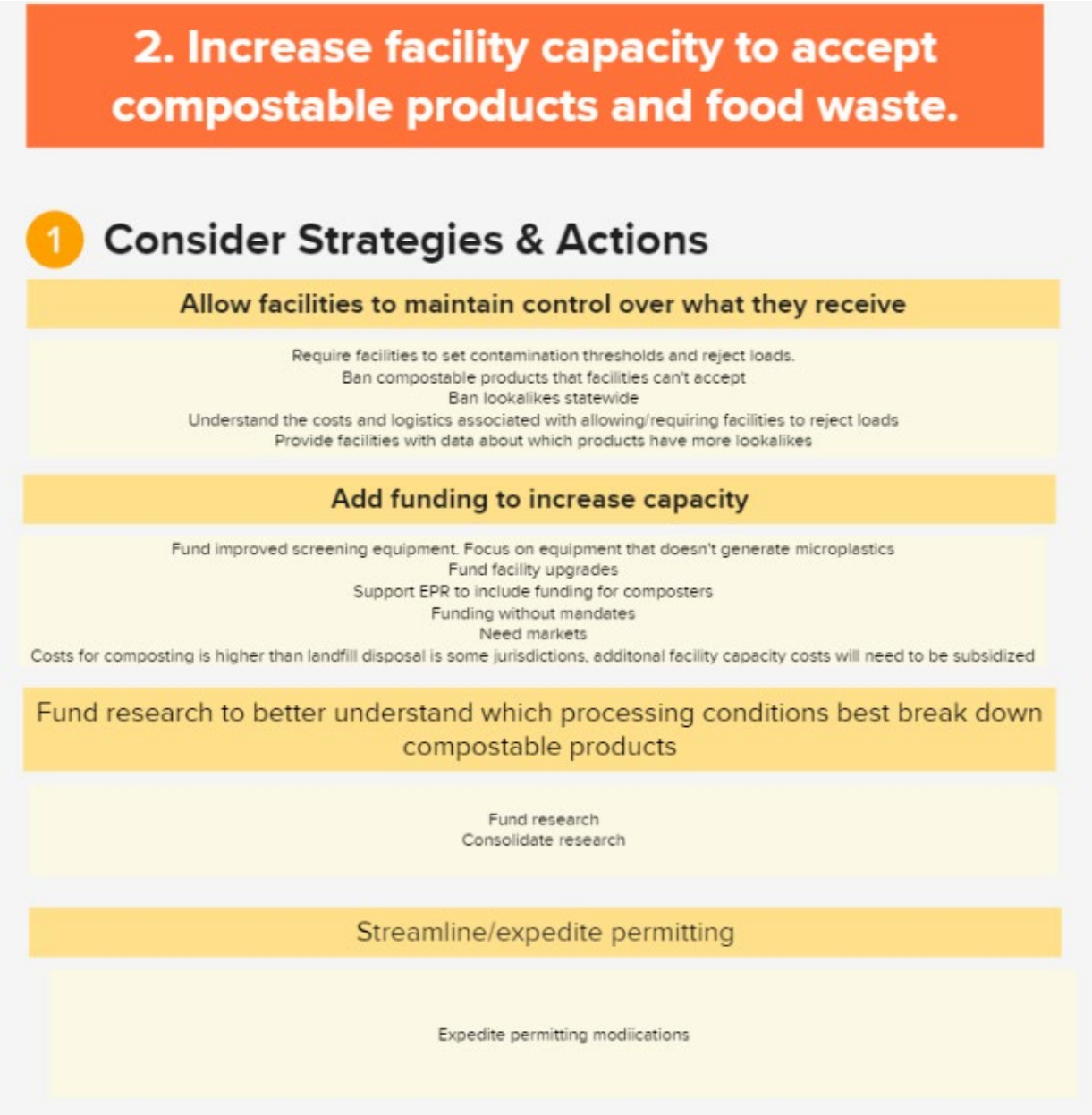
Committee members considered the full set of solutions generated by theme and provided comments to inform revisions.

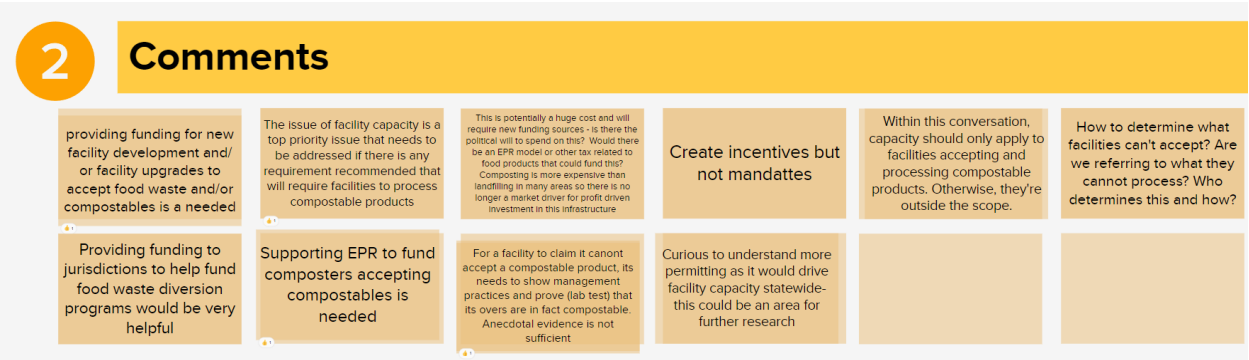
1. Address consumer confusion around compostable products



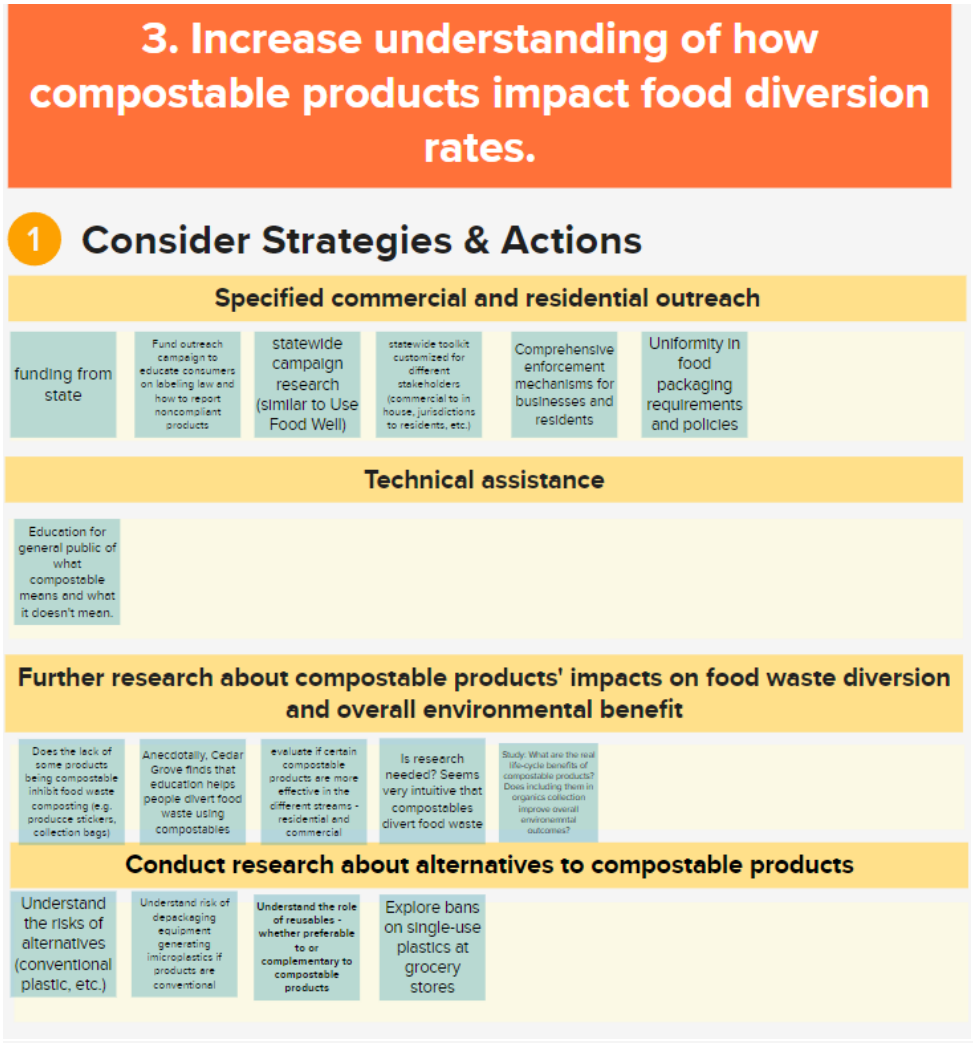



**2. Increase facility capacity to accept compostable products and food waste.**

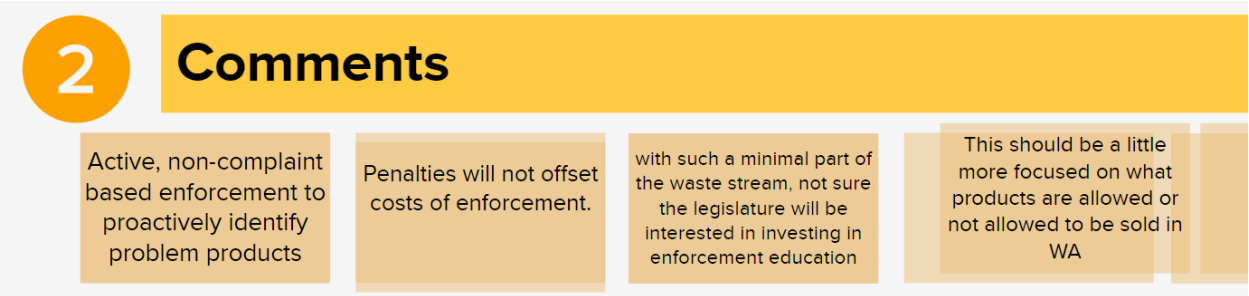


**3. Increase understanding of how compostable products impact food diversion rates.**




**4. Clarify enforcement of compostable products labeling and/or use of products.**

**5. Better align accepted compostable products with facility conditions and processing types.**

**6.Support marketability of compost that has food waste and compostable products as feedstocks.**

**7. Improve statewide access to local compost programs**

[insert revised strategy/actions list]