

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Questions	Answers
<p>1. What if people want more data elements in the template than already exist?</p>	<p>There have been significant improvements and expansions with a consensus, consultative process since the national roll out with the 2014 Template. There have been some additions including plastics, construction and demolition (C&D) categories along with some helpful hints such as hover over definitions and improvements to data collection clarity. Contact Regional or HQ Program Managers about your suggestions which are reviewed annually.</p> <p>If States in a Region feel very strongly about adding new fields but a consensus is not reached with the rest of States involved in the process, an EPA Regional office with a paid subscription can request that Emerge add a separate reporting template that would only be available to States in that Region. A set number of hours to support this activity is included with each subscription fee. Complex projects requiring significant amounts of time to setup and implement, may require additional funds.</p>
<p>2. Can more detail be added to the template (e.g. breakdown of components within C&D)?</p>	<p>Yes, we anticipate there will be updates to the template that States agree upon. However with such a large and complex program, future additions will need a strong majority consensus with more than twenty states actively collecting data on the particular area of interest.</p>
<p>3.</p>	
<p>4. If Tribes and/or Tribal governments are interested in participating, can they enter data into the program?</p>	<p>Tribes and Tribal governments cannot participate in the State Data Measurement Sharing Program directly because they are not States. However, they can use the features available in the Free Re-TRAC Connect accounts for their own waste tracking purposes. The same holds for US Territories. Tribes can report to their State and then the State can fill out the template.</p>
<p>5. Can local governments fill out the State Data Measurement Sharing Program template(s)?</p>	<p>No, the template(s) are designed only for State government participation. The goal is to allow state-level data to be shared between States and the EPA.</p>

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	<p>Local governments can use the features available in the Free Re-TRAC Connect accounts for their own waste tracking purposes. A new Municipal Measurement Program will be released in 2018. Local governments can report to their States, who can fill out the template.</p>
<p>6. How does the template relate to the resource module?</p>	<p>The template is for measureable quantitative solid waste, recycling related data. The SMM Resource Module is for qualitative narrative about state programs and policies including planning, legislation, landfills bans, etc.</p>
<p>7. What are the long-term costs to the States and EPA?</p>	<p>FOR THE EPA The ongoing annual subscription is \$8,000 per year, per region (for a total cost of \$80,000 per year), which is far less than we pay for the Advanced SMM Facts and Figures Report.</p> <p>FOR STATES As long as the EPA is paying the annual subscription fee, there will never be any fee for State governments to participate in the State Measurement Program (SMP). State governments will always have access for free through their Re-TRAC accounts.</p> <p>If, however, a State government chooses to use Re-TRAC to collect data from reporting entities in their State, then a subscription fee will be required. These activities are not directly linked because State governments that collect data are doing so for their own internal purposes, not solely for the purpose of participating in the SMP.</p> <p>The long-term costs to the States that choose to use Re-TRAC are entirely dependent on their needs. For States that want to use Re-TRAC to collect the data and/or develop detailed reporting of their own, the subscription fee is population based. There is a higher (setup) fee the first year, and then a reduced annual subscription fee.</p>

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	<p>In 2016, 17 states subscribe separately to Re-TRAC, and have told us that they will continue using Re- TRAC to collect data from reporting entities in their state regardless of what EPA does.</p>
<p>8. What are the bottom line requirements for funds and responsibilities?</p>	<p>Please see the list of detailed costs (population based). As far as effort, it is an investment of time to get buy in from the States, showing them the free vs. customized options.</p>
<p>9. How does this compare to WasteWise?</p>	<p>WasteWise is another example of how Re-TRAC is being used to help program managers (in this case the EPA) collect and manage information being submitted by organizations participating in their “program”. In the WasteWise example, WasteWise is the “program” and the WasteWise participants are the organizations filling in the data and reporting to the EPA Program Managers.</p> <p>The State governments are inputting data into the SMP templates and reporting to each other. The EPA can then access all of the information submitted by the States through “admin level access” to the Program.</p> <p>Re-TRAC Connect is an integrated software system specifically designed to facilitate this type of data sharing and reporting between organizations.</p> <p>In regards to how the data fields in the SMP templates differ from the fields collected in the WasteWise templates, the WasteWise forms are limited to what the program already reported prior to being built into Re- TRAC, and further limited in the changes/improvements that could be made based on OMB restrictions. WasteWise was also designed years ago, with businesses as the main audience/user. This is different from the new system in several ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The SMP templates were developed by State governments in an effort to share data with each other without OMB restrictions. 2) Re-TRAC is not a government system, and therefore does not fall under OMB restrictions (allowing for much greater flexibility).

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	<p>3) The SMP was developed proactively with several stakeholder groups (gov't, business, etc.) and therefore may have greater applicability to a larger audience.</p> <p>4) This system was developed knowing that modifications would occur, and therefore can adapt to changing needs, whereas WasteWise is limited in its ability to be adapted.</p>
<p>10. What if another State just chooses to use the State Measurement Template for its own data collection purposes?</p>	<p>The State Measurement Template is designed for State-level data and would not lend itself to replication and use for collecting data from local governments, landfills, and other types of organizations within a State.</p>
<p>11. What are the different benefits/selling points for:</p> <p>a) a State that doesn't have a measurement system at all</p> <p>vs.</p> <p>b) a State that has a measurement system they are happy with?</p>	<p>For a State with no measurement system, this gives them a template to start with (that they can later adjust if they choose).</p> <p>For a State that already has an established data collection process, participating in the SMP does not preclude them from continuing their own system. North Carolina has a data collection system they are happy with, but saw the benefit of collaboration and data sharing. Therefore, they are able to transmit their data into the SMP system, while still utilizing their own system, allowing them to compare and contrast with other states.</p>
<p>12. We need more specifics on the "Why it's good for States and local Governments?"</p>	<p>Perhaps the most important benefit is that all 50 States would voluntarily report consistent data into one measurement template, allowing EPA, States, ASTSWMO, industry, NGO's and various sectors to compare how recycling, reuse and source reduction is progressing across the country, as well as detailed information on their local programs, budgets, funding sources, grants, etc.</p> <p>This current benchmarking data could be transformed into a series of "best practice" publications or workshops to help recycling officials maximize the amount of material that their programs divert. The measurement program could also be used to map/inventory recycling operations across the US, and connect supply (sources of recycled material) with demand (from Material Recovery Facilities - MRFs - and industries). Connecting supply and demand for recyclables will create jobs, increase tax revenues, and expand recycling options in communities across each Region. For example, the 2013 Template data indicated that 21 States (43% of the US population) generated over 88 million tons of recycling,</p>

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	<p>saving \$3.1 Billion in landfill avoidance costs, generating \$8.8 billion revenue, and created 147,945 jobs, further demonstrating the power of this measurement program. States in R4 have used these reports to quantify the economic impact of recycling, thus demonstrating to local leaders the negative impact if they cut/reduce recycling programs. It has also encouraged additional State studies attempting to link supply and demand (as well as helping drive economic development/industry moving into the State). In addition to the economic reports, States can see how they compare to others around them, both on tonnage collected, tipping fees, staffing, how programs are funded, etc, and can access these comparisons online, versus contacting each individual State.</p>
<p>13. Some Regions are concerned because only a few states in their region collect any data. They are concerned about the majority being N/A with no data. There is concern that EPA would have to convince each county within the state to report (if the state doesn't already mandate reporting).</p>	<p>We anticipate that in the beginning there may be several areas without data in the Re-TRAC system. Region 4 had a similar situation with some of the States. What has happened is that those states who aren't reporting are using their "blanks" to show their legislators that their State is the only one in the region not doing it as an incentive to push for better reporting. Also, EPA doesn't have to convince the counties to report. For Region 4, the State Recycling Organization (SRO) for Georgia is encouraging local governments to report to the State and provide presentations on the system during their meetings. This is a long-term process.</p>
<p>14. What are States that are using the template using the data for/How are they using the free accounts?</p>	<p>Mississippi (who collects some data, but isn't allowed to "report" any of it) is using the regional reports to inform their legislators that MS is the only state in the region not sharing data and trying to use that to encourage better reporting.</p> <p>Several States are using the economic data (landfill cost avoidance/recycling revenue) to quantify for policy makers the true impact if they cut/reduce recycling programs in their local areas. For Region 4, the economic impact of recycling (for what's currently reported) is about \$2 billion. Without this data, many elected leaders looking to reduce budget deficits would not realize the magnitude of benefits that recycling has.</p> <p>During budget deliberations, several States request comparative data (eg. staffing levels, tipping fees, etc). Previously, States would have to contact each other individually for this information. Now, the State can access this information online, and see how they compare to other States, saving time and effort.</p>

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3. What do you get for free vs. customized accounts?

FOR THE EPA

Both free and customized subscription-based accounts are available that will allow all Regions and States to participate in the SMP. Because funding is available to cover the subscription fees for all EPA regions for the 3 year roll out, each Region will be able to have access to all reports including tonnage data (waste and recycling), descriptions of the types of waste/recycling programs in the State, and financial summaries of how the programs are staffed and funded, tonnage data on a per capita & per household basis, as well as economic benefits reports (\$ saved on landfill cost avoidance, recycling revenue, jobs estimation, etc) for all States in the country.

FOR STATES

Both free and customized subscription-based accounts are available that will allow all States and communities to participate in the SMP. A free account assumes a State is collecting the data on their own, and then manually transfers the relevant information into the 15 question template. The free account allows States to run select analysis/reports for their State and compare themselves to other States across the nation. The available data includes tonnage data (waste and recycling), descriptions of the types of waste/recycling programs in the State, and financial summaries of how the programs are staffed and funded. However, if a State wants to use Re-TRAC to collect the data from their reporting entities (e.g. replace a paper-based reporting system), then that requires a subscription. With a subscription, States can also develop their own reporting form to comply with whatever reporting requirements they have for the State (e.g. Florida has a subscription and a specialized Annual Solid Waste Form that all counties are mandated to complete. This replaces their previous paper-based form).

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<p>16. Can a company use the information from the template to help site an industry?</p>	<p>Some States are beginning to use the data to help encourage industries to move into the State (e.g. an industry that needs specific recyclables as inputs into their own products can determine a general idea of quantities available).</p> <p>As in the example above, it is possible that the data could help determine the optimum location for a specific industry that requires specific materials (e.g. siting an anaerobic digester based on estimates of food waste). Likely, some additional analysis (outside of the template’s capability) would be required for a full siting decision.</p>
<p>17. Does a State government have to purchase a Re-TRAC subscription to access theSMP and built-in analytical reports comparing state-level data?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>18. Does a State government have to use Re-TRAC to collect data from their reporting entities when participating in the State Data Measurement Sharing Program?</p>	<p>No, a State government can use any system they want to collect data from the reporting entities in their state (e.g. paper surveys, spreadsheet files, etc.). The State would simply need to transfer the information from their system into the appropriate areas to complete the 15 question template. Using Re-TRAC Connect is only one option to consider.</p>
<p>19. If a State government decides to use Re-TRAC Connect as the system they use to collect data from their reporting entities, do they have to pay a subscription?</p>	<p>Yes. To embed custom surveys and to take advantage of the survey administration tools available in Re-TRAC Connect, a State government needs to purchase a subscription (State governments that collect data from reporting entities always incur costs to do this work regardless of whether it’s a paper-based system or an online system like Re-TRAC Connect. The Re-TRAC system is just an efficient and cost-effective option to help them manage the process).</p>
<p>20. How do we know that paid subscribing States will input their data into the national template?</p>	<p>Both free and subscription States can share their data into the State Measurement template. To ensure a quality control step, the States manually transfer their data into the template (there is no software-controlled automatic rollout of the data from their data into the template). There is no “mandate” that states participate/input data, so effectively, we cannot ensure it. However, as States and Regions have been approached with the idea of the template, the majority have been interested/favorable. As we move forward, part of the Regions’ roles will be to explain the benefits of participation to their States and to encourage that they share the data.</p>

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<p>21. What if only local governments are interested in collaborating? How is that different from when a State takes the lead?</p>	<p>Local governments cannot participate in the SMP which, by definition, has been designed to allow State-level data to be shared between States and with the EPA.</p> <p>Local governments can, however, use both free and paid Re-TRAC Connect accounts (tracker upgrade) for a wide range of data sharing and information management activities. See a complete list at the Re-TRAC website accessible here: http://www.emergeknowledge.com/re-trac/features.html. These accounts do not relate/correspond to the SMP. A new Municipal Measurement Program (MMP) is scheduled for 2018.</p>
<p>22. Did initial discussions with Region 4 States require a formal agreement that States would input the data? Lower #</p>	<p>No, Region 4 States wanted to share data, and as such there was only a verbal agreement/consensus. Perhaps going forward, setting up a work plan would be better than a formal agreement (due to the legal implications of a formal agreement).</p>
<p>23. There have been several questions about definitions.</p>	<p>Common definitions can be found in the definitions page linked within Re-TRAC and on the State Measurement Website. In most cases, the States either used the definitions from the Advanced SMM Fact and Figures Report, or their definitions were legislatively mandated (and therefore not changeable). Individual definitions shared by the States are in the reports and records. Each state is asked to approximate their data to reflect the consensus definitions as best they can or specifically note any major differences.</p>
<p>24. How do we account for differences in how States calculate their info? E.g. NJ counts scrap cars vs NY does not. Also, how does waste to energy get counted? Are we going to count this under disposal or allow it to count as recycling?</p>	<p>Providing a better but not perfect data comparison system.</p> <p>The different ways of calculating recycling rates is addressed through an agreement between States on how they report different waste streams and materials. A field to track scrap cars was added to the reporting form, but those weights could be excluded from any reports generating recycling rates. It would still be useful to know how many tons of scrap cars were collected in any State that tracks that data. In the future, States may want to re-evaluate how they calculate rates, so having that material reported now is still a good idea.</p> <p>WTE is counted under energy recovery, and is separated out from incineration and/or landfilling, etc. So they can differentiate exactly where the tonnage is going if that data is available to them.</p>

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<p>25. Since the template uses the SC jobs calculator to estimate jobs created there needs to be more effort to determine the level of confidence/reliability/repeatability of this calculation for other parts of the country.</p>	<p>These calculations for 2015 and beyond are based upon the most recent Recycling Economic Information (REI) national jobs study.</p>
<p>26. Do the reports allow you to calculate the GHG emissions from the WARM model (like WasteWise)?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>27. Who enters the data into the measurement system?</p>	<p>Only State governments and their designees can access the State Data Measurement Sharing Program templates and share data with other States.</p> <p>If by “the measurement system” you mean the Re-TRAC software, many different types of organizations are reporting to many different agencies through Re-TRAC Connect.</p> <p>Re-TRAC Connect is an integrated, web-based information management platform that has been designed to help any type of organization collect, organize and analyze waste management and recycling information. It is used by local, state, and national governments throughout North America for a wide range of data management and reporting programs. As such, many local governments, landfills, businesses, etc. are using Re-TRAC to access reporting forms and submit data but these activities are completely independent of the State Data Measurement Sharing Program.</p> <p>One of the main reasons that the Re-TRAC software was selected for the State Data Measurement Sharing Program is because many State governments were already using the system to collect data from reporting entities in their states and were familiar with how efficient and effective the software is.</p>
<p>28. If a State government collects data from reporting entities using Re-TRAC do they still need to manually input the data into the State Measurement Template? Double check on previous box.</p>	<p>Yes. The States manually transfer their data into the template (there is no software-controlled automatic rollup of the data from their data into the template). This is intentional, as it provides a quality control step that not only allows the State to confirm they want to share the data, but also to confirm the data is accurate.</p>

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<p>29. I would like more robust knowledge of how the system works so we can effectively advocate it to our States/local governments.</p>	<p>There is a high degree of sophistication and complexity of the Re-TRAC system and at first use, it is not easy to understand how it functions. Detailed training webinars are available by request.</p> <p>The Measurement Implementation Team can also provide power-points and FAQ documents to supplement user needs.</p>
<p>30. How would an organization become familiar with using the Re-TRAC system?</p>	<p>For users of the EPA and State level accounts, Emerge is available to conduct webinars upon request.</p> <p>Emerge hosts free webinars every Tuesday for local government and other users. In addition, Emerge has been holding training workshops at several related conferences, and provides training to their clients directly as well.</p>
<p>31. Can third-party organizations get access to the State Data Measurement Sharing Program data?</p>	<p>State governments and the EPA can decide who they would like to share the data with. In those instances a read-only account can be set up. This will allow a user to view the analytical reports that are available for the free State accounts. Third-party organizations will not be allowed to enter data into the system unless a State designates a third party to be authorized to place information in Re-TRAC. Aggregated data is shared through the RecycleSearch website and as requested.</p>
<p>32. Could an organization like New England Waste Management Association (NEWMOA) or Southeast Recycling Development Council (SERDC) or American Plastics Recyclers access the data?</p>	<p>EPA can provide them access to the data. See #31 above.</p>
<p>33. What analytical/comparative reports do State governments get access to if they complete and submit the State Data Measurement Sharing Program template(s)?</p>	<p>See Appendix A for more details and the Recycle Search website.</p>

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<p>35. How many States are currently paid subscribers?</p>	<p>Seventeen state agencies currently (July 2016) use Re-TRAC Connect to collect information for their own State-required reporting.</p> <p>The sixteen current State clients include: Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas (Texas Recycling Data Initiative) and Vermont.</p> <p>State governments using the measurement system have reported significant savings in the cost of managing their reporting programs. The many robust, integrated features available can significantly reduce the amount of time and money required to collect, manage, and analyze waste management and recycling data while improving the efficiency of the process for both the organization collecting the data and their reporting entities. For example, the State of Tennessee has saved significant time and money since implementing this system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$75,000 per year on Annual Reports (staff time, paper, storage costs, etc) • \$500,000 on reporting Tire Manifests (postage, paper, FTEs, reduced complaints) • \$20,000 on Recycling Markets Directory (eliminated another contract) <p>Florida has indicated that the use of a commercial system with shared definitions of reporting elements has saved staff time and many hours of data entry and management. South Carolina noted that the system is core to their reporting operations, while industry and trade association groups along with organizations like The Recycling Partnership (formerly, Curbside Value Partnership), Keep America Beautiful and others support this effort and see partnership opportunities.</p>

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Pricing

There have been numerous questions about pricing, and this can be a bit confusing. We have included an overview and some scenarios to assist in better understanding this:

Originally developed by the eight states of EPA Region 4, the State Data Measurement Sharing Program is being rolled out nationwide with a Measurement Template of 15 questions and a SMM Resource Module of state programmatic information. These data collection and information exchange tools were designed for State governments to fill out the template and update the module annually.

State governments can participate in the State Data Measurement Sharing Program with a Free Re-TRAC Connect account. State governments can also use Re-TRAC to collect data from their reporting entities if they choose, but a subscription fee is required for them to use this additional functionality.

The main distinction between a free account and a paid account for State governments is that the free account is used for reporting state level data and participating in the State Data Measurement Sharing Program and the paid account is used if a State has reporting requirements in place and wants to collect this information on-line using Re-TRAC Connect.

Some examples include:

- a. North Carolina collects data from their reporting entities through their own paper-based reporting system, but saw the benefit of sharing information across the region. Therefore, NC takes the data they have that pertains to the 15 question template and manually inputs that into the Re-TRAC system. This is FREE for them. This allows NC to share their data and to view the 15 question results from other States using the template, but still utilize their own reporting system.
- b. Florida has a state mandate that counties in Florida report their waste and recycling information. Before using Re-TRAC Connect to collect this data, FL used a paper based reporting system to collect this information. The paper forms were filled out by the counties and mailed in to FL DEP. This information was then manually entered into a database program. Now they have a paid Re-TRAC Connect subscription and are collecting annual reports from their counties on-line using Re-TRAC Connect. The counties who are mandated to report into Florida's system have access to the FL Annual Solid Waste Report on-line form for FREE and fill out and submit the information electronically. There is no data re-entry required at the state level and a wide range of analytical reports are available instantly. The State of Florida pays for the subscription as it is now the system used as their data collection system.

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As it relates to the national template, Florida takes the data collected from their counties through Re-TRAC Connect, reviews it for accuracy, and then manually transfers the data that is relevant to the 15 question template. This “transfer” is not automated because we wanted to ensure it as a quality control step, and a chance for the State to confirm that “yes this is the information I want to share with others on the national template.”

Tennessee has a similar subscription but has expanded even more. Their customized report includes several categories, and has replaced their tire manifesting system (for collection/recycling of tires), with e-manifesting. The subscription allows for greater flexibility and filtering, and the ability to email respondents (or a subset of respondents).

- c. Local governments can set up a Re-TRAC Connect account for free with the **Tracker Light** tool. In addition to accessing available reporting forms (like in Florida), counties can also make information about their programs available to the public, manage a directory of drop off locations, and post recycling events to a calendar. It also provides a tonnage tracking tool that helps them manage and analyze materials collected in their waste management programs and tallies how their efforts impact GHG emissions. However, they cannot access the national template, as the “profile questions” for local governments are not the same as the State Measurement template.
- d. There is a paid-for version at the county or local government level (called the Tracker upgrade). With the free version, you can only track tonnage data for one organization (e.g the county). But if a county wanted to track the cities within their county, they could get the Tracker upgrade (roughly \$1,750). For example, Indiana purchased the tracker upgrade and developed their list of questions from a list of pre-determined options. Now, all Solid Waste Districts use that one form to input their data by district. Now the entire group can run analytics to compare themselves to other solid waste districts in Indiana. This does NOT share data with the State Data Measurement Sharing Program.
- e. Regardless of which option the entities choose, all States/territories in the US can choose to start with a free account, where they collect the data necessary to respond to the 15 question national template (to the best of their ability). They can then choose whether they want to use Re-TRAC Connect to help with the collection of the data and/or want to develop a more extensive list of questions for their own use.

Appendix A

Free Account Reports

The following report module is available with a Free account. Note that these analytical comparisons are available for only those States within the jurisdiction of an EPA Regional Office (not for all State data).

State Data Measurement Summary Reports Available with the Free Account

The following summary reports are available based on the data being submitted by each state participating in the survey:

- Disposal by State
- Disposal Characteristics
- Municipal Solid Waste Disposal Facility Information
- Recycling
- Other Diversion Activities
- Recycling Collection Systems
- Recycling System Types
- Pay As You Throw Systems
- Organic Materials Management Systems
- Disposal System Types
- Hauler Information Statistics
- Landfill Capacity
- State by State Qualitative Information
- State Staffing
- State Program Funding
- Local Government Funding (or total programs using systems)
- Tipping Fee Gate Charges
- Recycling and Diversion Rate
- Pounds/Person By Activity
- Landfill Cost Avoidance
- Economic Benefit of Recycling

A partial list of other analytical reports available include:

- Questions 1 to15
- Per Capita
- Per Household
- Economic Benefits
- Environmental Benefits
- Diversion Components
- Materials Analysis
- MAPS - Solid Waste Import/Export



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SMM Module: Key Drivers

- Key Drivers of State Programs
- Zero Waste Goals
- Overall Waste Diversion Goals
- Recycling Goals
- Composting Goals
- Other Goals
- Solid Waste Management Hierarchy
- Mandatory Recycling Programs
- Other Drivers

SMM Module: Planning Reports

- Statewide SMM Planning
- Other Planning Mechanisms and Plan Funding
- Local Government Planning and Roles
- Climate Action Plans

SMM Module: Strategies

- Current SMM Strategies
- Source Reduction Programs
- Life-cycle Based Approaches
- Product Stewardship Programs
- Market Development Programs
- Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Programs
- Pay as you Throw Programs

SMM: Material Specific Strategies

- Materials/Products Targeted with Specific Strategies
- Organics Management - Composting Programs
- Organics Management - Anaerobic Digestion Programs
- Organics Management - Landfill Ban Programs
- Construction & Demolition Debris Programs
- Scrap Tire Management Programs
- Electronics Management Programs
- Packaging Programs

Shared Analytics

- Data Export
- Program Analysis
- Comparative Analysis (NEW)