Executive Summary

Arizona State University had established a set of institutional sustainability goals of which Circular Resources or zero waste is one. The Zero Waste department of Arizona State University “aims to create and implement programs to reach the university's circular resources goal and strengthen overall institutional sustainability by designing lasting, universal models that support ASU as a global leader in sustainable solid-waste management”. This project addressed the need for a new engagement strategy to help the university meet the institutional goal around waste.

Problem

The university diversion rate for fiscal year 2018 was 43.2% well below the 90% by 2025 goal. Results of a waste characterization highlighted that nearly 33% of the overall commingled recycling stream was contaminated while roughly 26% of the landfilled material was found to be recyclable. While the university has an established department and subsequent programs and initiatives to drive success towards university wide zero waste, the growth of the university and changing recycling markets have challenged the department's engagement resources. A new model for deploying training to the university population was identified as a need to help meet the 2025 goal deadline.

Strategy

In an effort to help the department reach the university goal, a new online engagement strategy was proposed. The strategy leverages an online learning management tool the university was already utilizing. The primary focus was on the creation of a short video lesson and knowledge quiz for the ASU community to access. The platform allows the department to scale and add in additional training for the deployment of future programs, like composting. The project identified staff as a test audience and worked with a small group to test the efficacy of the training.

Solution
Leveraging Knowledge for Zero Waste at ASU

The test group proved the training platform would work as a way to rapidly deploy information to the university staff and in addition support professional development and for staff members. In addition, the creation of a new engagement model highlighted the importance of leveraging technology as a communication and education tool to advance university sustainability.