

Circular Arizona Long Range Plan

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1. Introduction

Background on Circular Arizona (previously Arizona Recycling Coalition)

The Arizona Recycling Coalition (AzRC) was created in the late 1980s as the state affiliate of the National Recycling Coalition. Arizona was known for innovative ideas to address solid waste management, with the cities of Phoenix and Mesa as leaders of the “new” concept of commingled — or single-stream — recycling. After receiving monies from a class action lawsuit involving paint, the AzRC was able to create and sustain an organization to bring together representatives of public, private, and non-profit groups for advocacy of a special piece of solid waste management: recycling.

AzRC’s initial mission was to establish a network of these representatives to focus on the challenges of recycling implementation. Some of the challenges included marketing and messaging, partnerships in processing, and outreach to all recycling stakeholders and participants.

In the early 2000s, the National Recycling Coalition suffered financial difficulties, and the AzRC was forced to continue its efforts alone. During the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, the State of Arizona stopped any financial support for recycling. In response, the AzRC created its grant, scholarship, and awards programs to fill in until state funding could be restored. The AzRC became financially sound thanks to its multi-year relationships with the Phoenix Open, Thunderbird Charities, and Waste Management.

Through the years, AzRC’s mission has expanded to address such topics as the challenges of rural recycling, illegal dumping on Native Nations in Arizona, composting, hazardous waste, climate change, and more. As recycling and circular economy priorities have changed in Arizona, AzRC is ready to shift its priorities to reinvigorate its membership and grow as a vibrant, innovative, and self-sufficient organization to address the sustainability needs of the state.

This strategic plan describes the new way our organization — now “Circular Arizona” — will face these future challenges. We hope you, the reader, will join us in our journey to address Arizona’s sustainability needs in the areas of solid waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and fostering an equitable circular economy.

Strategic Plan, Process, and Future Adaptations

Circular Arizona’s Board of Directors hired [Southwest Decision Resources](#) (SDR) to facilitate the development of a Long-range Plan (Plan). This process, led by a Steering Committee of current and former board members, concluded in October 2023. The Plan includes co-developed guidance for Circular Arizona such as the mission, vision, goals, specific objectives, and prioritized next steps.

Planning began with scoping conversations in April 2023 and the development of a planning framework in May. In the **assessment** phase, SDR and the Steering Committee conducted research including Board Member interviews, a [market scan](#), and member engagement via a [comment form](#) and [survey](#). The assessment results can be viewed [here](#).

In the second phase, the Board refined its **mission, vision, and goals**. SDR facilitated virtual brainstorming via “chat waterfall” and [Jam Board](#). After SDR synthesized results, Board members provided input via a virtual survey and finalized this phase at an [in-person facilitated discussion](#). Once finalized, the Board began the third phase by brainstorming specific **objectives and actions**. Using a [matrix](#) with decision-making criteria, Board members prioritized these objectives.



In the fourth phase, SDR assisted Circular Arizona in drafting a Plan for **approval** in October 2023. This includes prioritized objectives and tools to conduct action planning on immediate priorities. SDR suggests that Circular Arizona utilize a [simple table](#) to plan and **track progress** on the priority objectives for each goal. A [roadmap](#) will be developed that lays out the sequence and timing of key objectives for the next 1-2 years.

This Long Range Plan is intended to be a living document. On a regular basis (e.g. quarterly), Circular Arizona can evaluate its progress using the roadmap or a similar tool. The organization can celebrate accomplishments, troubleshoot where progress has stalled, and update this plan with emerging priorities.

2. Circular Arizona Vision

We envision an equitable circular economy for a sustainable Arizona.

3. Circular Arizona Mission

We foster an equitable circular economy and connect Arizonans through innovation, education, and collaboration.

4. High-level Goals

Ensure Organizational Sustainability

Ensure the organization's financial stability. Add staff capacity. Improve board recruitment and continuity through terms and transitions.

Build Membership

Grow a diverse membership that is representative of all relevant sectors of a circular economy.

Connect and Empower Members

Foster, engage, and support the critical network of circular economy stakeholders.

Enhance Awards Programs

Continue and expand scholarships, grants, and other awards. Increase engagement with awardees.

Educate on and Engage with Policy Issues

Provide education on existing policies and potential policy efforts. Participate in the development of innovative policies that foster a circular economy in Arizona at the state and local levels.

Provide Educational Resources

Develop educational resources on emerging issues surrounding the circular economy and provide opportunities for members to learn from each other.

5. Priority Objectives, Key Actions, Co-leads and Next Steps

The Circular Arizona Board outlined many [objectives and possible actions](#) to achieve their goals. Then, the Board prioritized objectives based on: relevance to the mission and vision, perceived priority, timeliness and urgency, and perceived high value. After discussions with the Steering Committee, the highest priority objectives – with key actions to implement them – are detailed below.

Board member roles are paired with each objective in the tables below. Though co-leads are suggested based on Board Member positions, all Board Members are welcome to support the implementation of all objectives and actions.

Because Circular AZ is currently staffed by a volunteer board, it is expected new staff will need to be hired first before action on many of these objectives can begin. Also, timing for priority objectives should be established through implementation planning. Therefore, immediate next steps related to hiring and implementation are suggested below the objectives and actions tables.

Priority Objectives, Possible Actions, and Roles

Organizational Sustainability:

Priority Objective	Key Actions	Board Co-leads
Develop new funding streams	a. Identify and apply for grants b. Develop a corporate sponsorship program	Vice Chair, Treasurer
Increase capacity via contractor	a. Determine what staff position(s) are needed and in what sequence b. Determine budget for staff positions and staff expectations for fundraising c. Research potential funding sources to support contractor positions d. Identify appropriate wage offerings and appropriate position expectations through market research f. Recruit staff member	Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer
Improve board recruitment, onboarding, and transition planning	a. Develop a board recruitment plan: - Develop marketing with benefits and clearly defined roles - Determine what specific skills/positions are needed and identify current gaps - Recruit board members, with focus on students b. Document and implement a clear path to board membership -board position shadowing -onboarding -succession plan for leadership) c. Update by-laws to document changes to onboarding process, staggered Board terms, ideal number of Board members, specific skills/roles	Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer

Build Membership:

Priority Objective	Key Actions	Board Co-leads
Increase member diversity	a. Identify gaps in current membership with CE framing. - Develop directory of businesses or groups engaged in sustainability -Look statewide for members b. Target new members to increase diversity of membership (e.g. industries and businesses) -Create regional subcommittees -Tap into other organization's networks through collaborative partnership c. Focus on Native American Nations -Connect with the Intertribal Council specifically to ensure unique needs are considered	Membership Chair, Marketing Chair

Connect and Empower Members:

Priority Objective	Possible Actions	Board Co-leads
Provide for increased networking opportunities between flagship events	a. Create a member contact list with a stakeholder map b. Connect members in same class (students, rural, small business, cities, regional) through events and email lists c. Create a member listserv and/or community forum d. Host more in-person networking (e.g., happy hours) e. Amplify members' events and programs	Events Chair, Marketing Chair, Membership Chair
Improve and develop new events	a. Review feedback from membership survey and comment form from Tucson meeting b. Host the conference c. Host more regular virtual member meetings d. Host tours (new recycling efforts)	Events Chair, Marketing Chair

Provide Educational Resources:

Priority Objective	Key Actions	Board Co-leads
Provide/promote learning opportunities	a. Provide educational resources/events on various platforms (tours, webinars, trainings, meetings, presentations, conferences, breakout rooms, panels, videos, podcasts, etc.) b. Collaborate with other experts/industry leaders on development of educational resources c. Expand industry-wide training opportunities d. Monitor and promote training opportunities (report them to members)	Marketing Chair, Events Chair
Connect members through peer learning opportunities	a. Utilize member listservs for idea sharing b. Empower members as educational resources (showcase members via videos, podcast, interviews, presentations, website, etc.)	Marketing Chair, Membership Chair

Enhance Awards Program:

Priority Objective	Key Actions	Board Co-leads
Partner with ADEQ on Grant Program	a. Partner with ADEQ to act as grant managers (oversee, assist with implementation) b. Support members' applications to ADEQ grants, including facilitating collaborative grant applications	Awards Chair, Treasurer
Identify new funds for grant and scholarship programs	a. Source funding dollars from more and larger companies b. Get grant sponsors (named grants)	Awards Chair, Treasurer

Educate on and Engage with Relevant Policy:

Priority Objective	Key Actions	Board Co-leads
Provide policy education to members	a. Assist members in navigating relevant local, state, and national policies, current bills, and best practices b. Educate members on innovative policy solutions	Policy Chair

Key Next Steps for Pursuing Priority Objectives

1. Build capacity

In order to achieve desired goals, objectives, and actions, the Board recognized that it will need to immediately build additional capacity in the form of staff and financial resources. Key steps moving forward will be to hire contracted staff positions: 1) a grant writer and 2) executive director and/or administrative support. New staff can support increasing revenue and building the membership. This [summary of the capacity discussion](#) highlights the next steps for hiring and potential skills and tasks for positions. Previous position announcements ([marketing assistant](#), [executive assistant](#)) can be updated with current needs.

2. Conduct implementation planning

Leads who are interested in moving priority objectives forward can develop detailed plans for the implementation of key actions and include other Board members or Circular AZ members in their efforts. These teams can utilize tools such as this simple [implementation planning template](#) to identify roles, timelines, and resources and to track status.

3. Utilize a roadmap to track sequencing and programming

Individual implementation plans for high-priority objectives can be rolled up and sequenced in order to track progress on objectives and actions. Circular Arizona can utilize a [roadmap](#) to solidify the timing for priority objectives. Status can be regularly updated and reviewed at board meetings. A [similar roadmap](#) was used for the long-range planning process and can be referenced as an example for future efforts.

6. What Circular Arizona Offers its Members

- ★ Affordable membership
- ★ Leadership opportunities on board and committees
- ★ Grants and scholarships
- ★ Award nominations
- ★ Monthly newsletter:
 - Arizona circular economy updates
 - External grant opportunities shared
 - Circular economy job and internship opportunities shared
- ★ Conferences and other networking events:
 - Network across industries
 - Collaboration among stakeholders across the state/region. For example, we:
 - Find recycling solutions for a specific material
 - Collaborate on regional marketing campaigns
 - Facility tours
 - Webinars/speaking engagements from industry experts
- ★ Policy education
- ★ Educational/social media toolkits/glossary — coming soon
- ★ New members showcased in our monthly emails

7. Glossary

Circular/Circular Economy/Circularity:

“Circular” defines waste as a resource, in contrast to the 'take-make-waste' linear model; a circular economy is regenerative by design and aims to gradually decouple growth from the consumption of finite resources. A circular economy includes the reuse, reduction, recycling, rethinking, regeneration, and repair of resources.

Sustainability:

“Sustainability” is the concept of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of others, our ecological systems, or future generations, to meet their own needs.

Equitable/Equity/Equitability:

Equity recognizes that individuals do not all start from the same place and require different needs and resources to address imbalances. The process is ongoing, requiring us to identify and overcome intentional and unintentional barriers arising from bias or systemic structures.

This is in contrast to the term “equality” which means to provide the same to all, regardless of imbalances due to bias or systemic structures.

Inclusive:

“Inclusivity” is the act of including all parts of a system, all members of a group.

For example, we are transitioning from “Arizona Recycling Coalition” to “Circular Arizona” in an effort to be a more inclusive model that includes a more expansive community of food recovery, composting, and organizations focused on the reduction of waste. This does not displace the recycling industry in our efforts or goals but expands the community, resources, and problem-solving capabilities of the organization.

Stakeholder:

Anyone — or any organization — impacted by the project at hand or that has an interest in the project's success. Sometimes this is inherently known, and sometimes stakeholders emerge over time.

Innovation:

Innovation is to make changes to something established, especially by introducing new methods or ideas.

8. Resources

1. [Board assessment](#)
2. Market scan
 - a. [Market scan reflections](#)
 - b. [Market scan spreadsheet](#)
3. Member input
 - a. [2023 Member survey results](#)
 - b. [Member comments from 2023 Tucson meeting](#)
4. SWOT analysis
 - a. [2021 SWOT Analysis](#)
 - b. [2022 SWOT Analysis](#)
 - c. [2023 SWOT Analysis](#)
5. [Board Member Roles](#)
6. [Objectives and Actions Synthesis + Prioritization Results](#)
7. Planning documents and meeting notes
 - a. [Roadmap](#)
 - b. [Simplified roadmap](#)
 - c. [Jamboard on Vision and Goals](#)
 - d. [Survey on Vision, Mission, and Goals](#) Presentation
 - e. [8/23 Long Range Planning Workshop Summary](#)
 - f. [Steering Committee meeting notes](#)
 - g. [Long-Range Planning Google Folder](#)