

# A Tale of Twin Cities

## State of Residential Organics Collection in MN

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10/14/2025 - Illinois Circularity Conference



# AGENDA

- Overview of current TCMA Region policy
- Status of Established Programs
  - Minneapolis
  - St. Paul area
- Selection of a Strategy



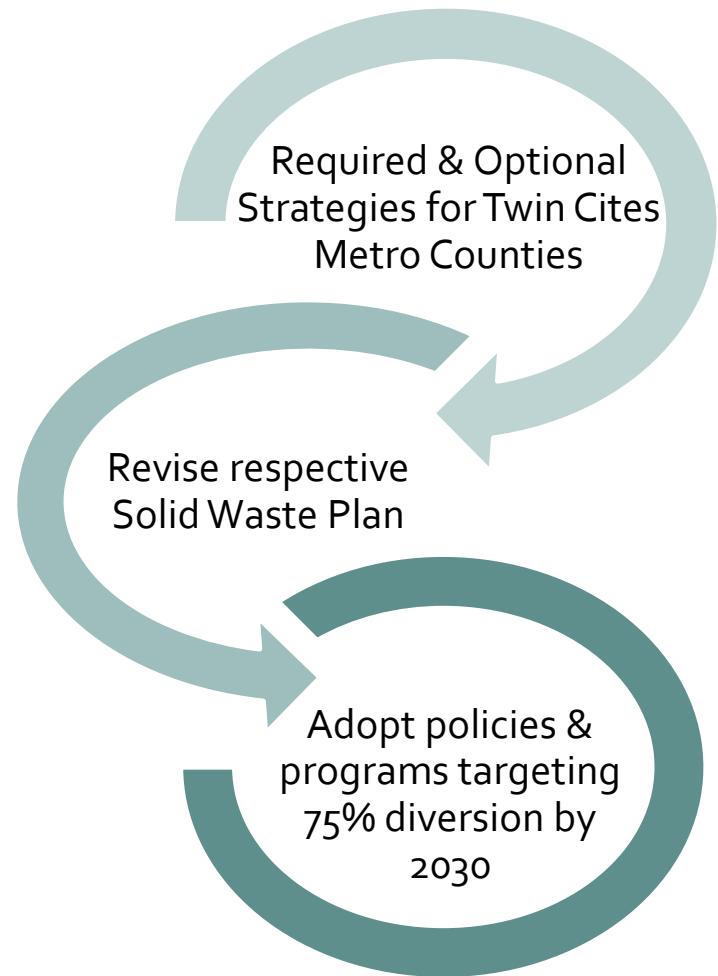
January 2024

## Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan 2022-2042

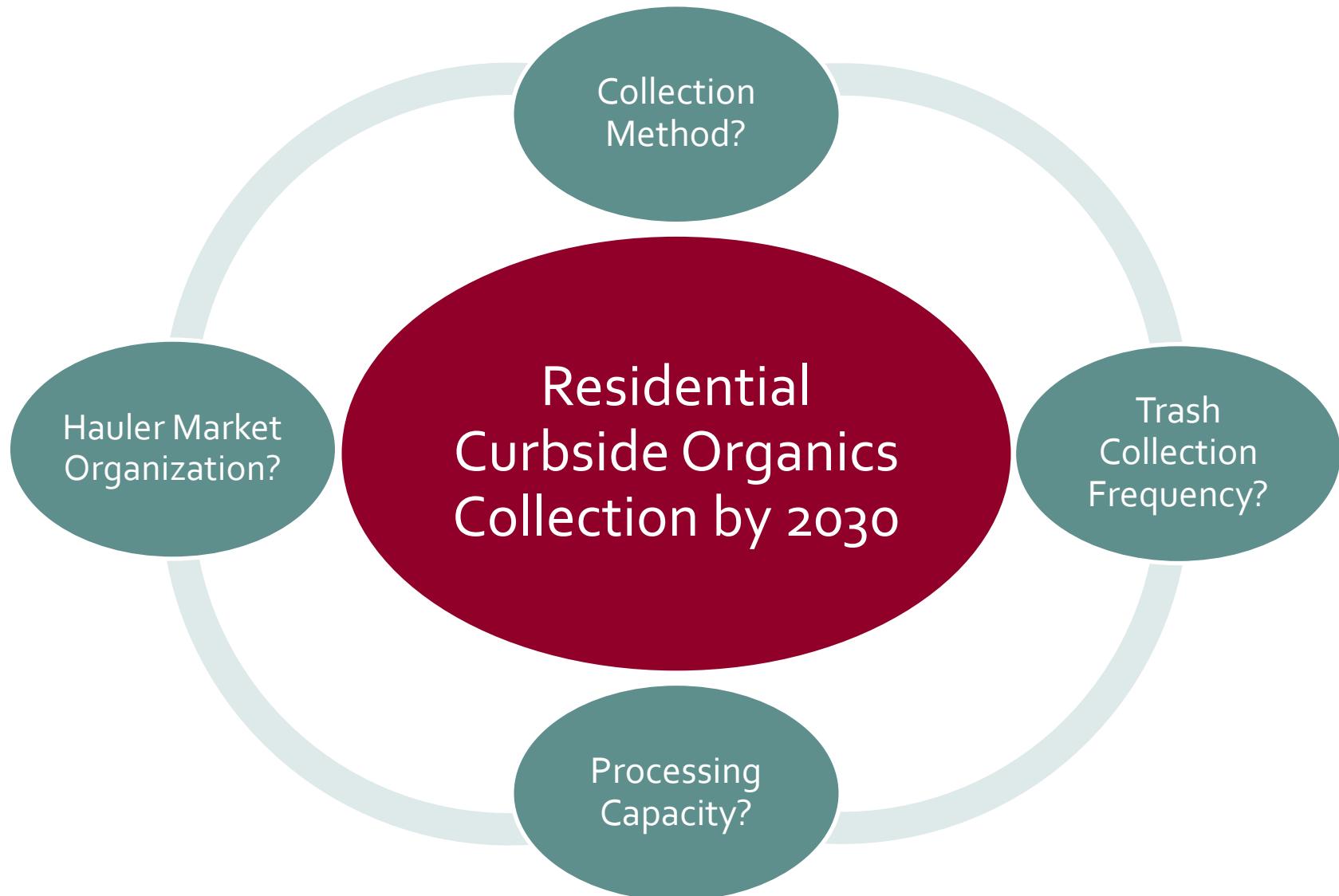
A 20-year policy plan for solid waste management that sets goals and policy for the metropolitan solid waste system.

**mn** MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

# MPCA Waste Policies & Goals



# MPCA Required Strategy #40





# Existing Programs

Minneapolis & St. Paul area

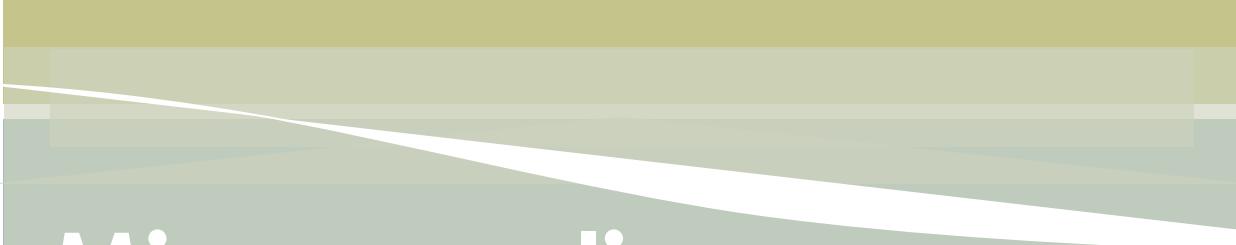
# Twin Cities | Minneapolis/St. Paul

- **Minneapolis** – west side of river
- **St. Paul** – capital, east side of river
- 16<sup>th</sup> largest metro area in US (3.7M)



# Food Scrap Collection Programs

- Both have implemented curbside residential food scraps collection programs
- Approach for each is different
  - Minneapolis: Separate cart collection
  - St. Paul: Co-collected with trash



# Minneapolis Food Scrap Program

**SCS ENGINEERS**

# Collection Process



- **Curbside Cart:** A green organics cart, collected weekly, collected separately
- **Accepted Materials:** All food scraps, non-recyclable paper, BPI-certified compostable products

# Program History and Development



- Pilot 2008
- Began phased rollout around 2015
- Citywide curbside organics collection for residents who opt-in
- All solid waste and recycling customers pay but opt in or sign up to participate

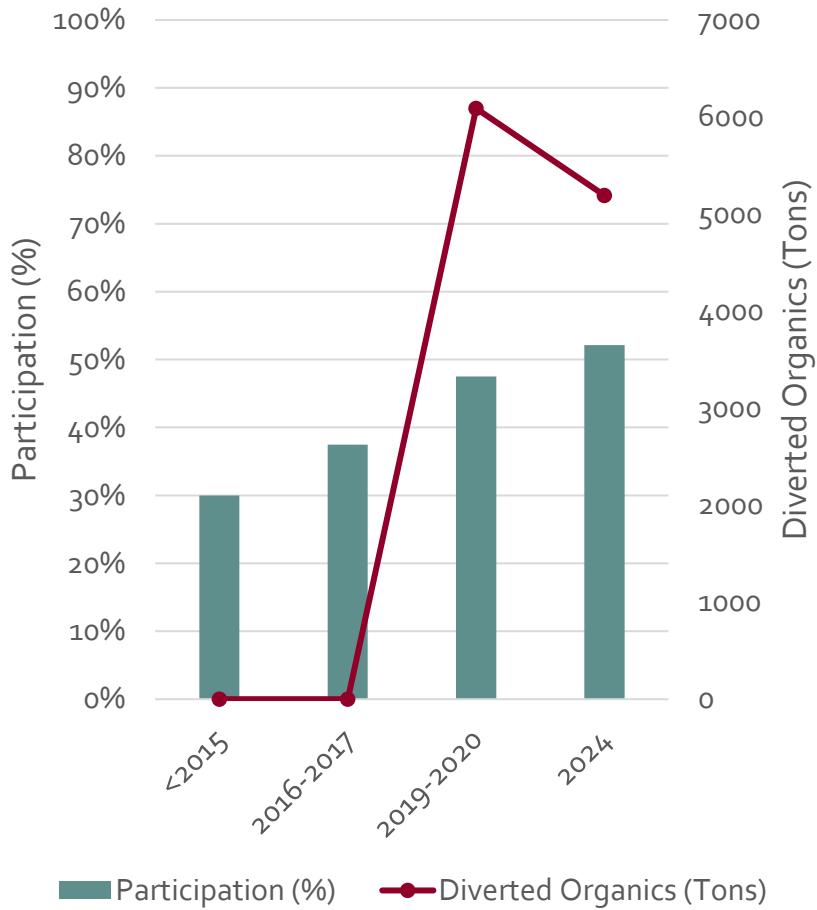
# Education Process



- **Resident Education:** Ongoing campaigns to promote the program
  - BPI-certified compostable or paper bags
  - Acceptable materials
  - On going cart tagging (notifying of contamination; cart not serviced)
  - City programs, neighborhood associations, and volunteer “Block Leaders” help educate neighbors

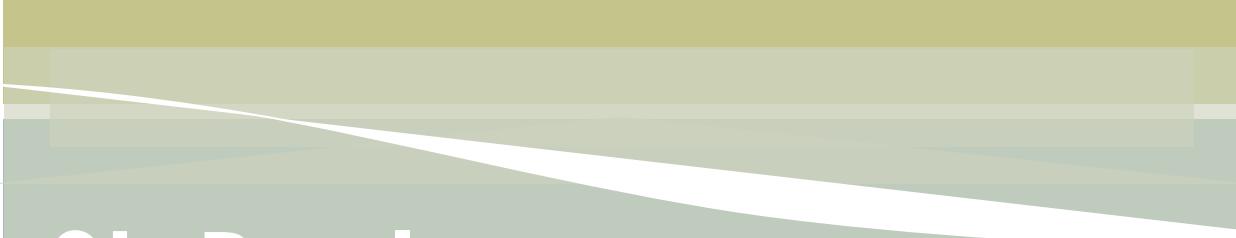
# Successes

- **Effective Education Program**
  - Welcome kit after sign up
  - Low contamination rates
- **Participation**
  - Opt-in structure is challenging for participation
- **Diverted Organics**



# Challenges

- **Program Costs**
  - Additional trucks, staff, carts, and educational materials require consistent funding
- **Sustained Participation**
  - Encouraging households to remain active after initial sign-up
- **Starting a New Program**
  - Logistics associated with that



**St. Paul**

# Food Scrap Program

**SCS ENGINEERS**

# Collection Process

## How It Works



**Order** your free annual supply of food scrap bags.



Once a week or when the bag is full, **tie a single knot** at the top to close the bag.



**Place your bag** inside your trash cart or dumpster for collection.



**Done!** The food scraps will be composted.

# Collection Process

- **Accepted Materials:** All food scraps, compostable paper, BPI compostable, no pizza boxes

## Accepted items:



Coffee grounds,  
filters & tea leaves



Dairy  
products



Eggs &  
eggshells



Fruits &  
vegetables



Meat, seafood  
& bones



Moldy or  
rotten food



Nuts &  
shells



Rice, bread,  
pasta & beans

# Program History and Development



**RAMSEY/WASHINGTON  
RECYCLING & ENERGY**  
CONNECTING VALUE TO WASTE

- **Ramsey and Washington Counties Working Together**

- Own and operate the Recycling & Energy Center (R&E Center) in Newport, MN
- All MSW in both counties goes through R&E Center
- Rolling out curbside collection program

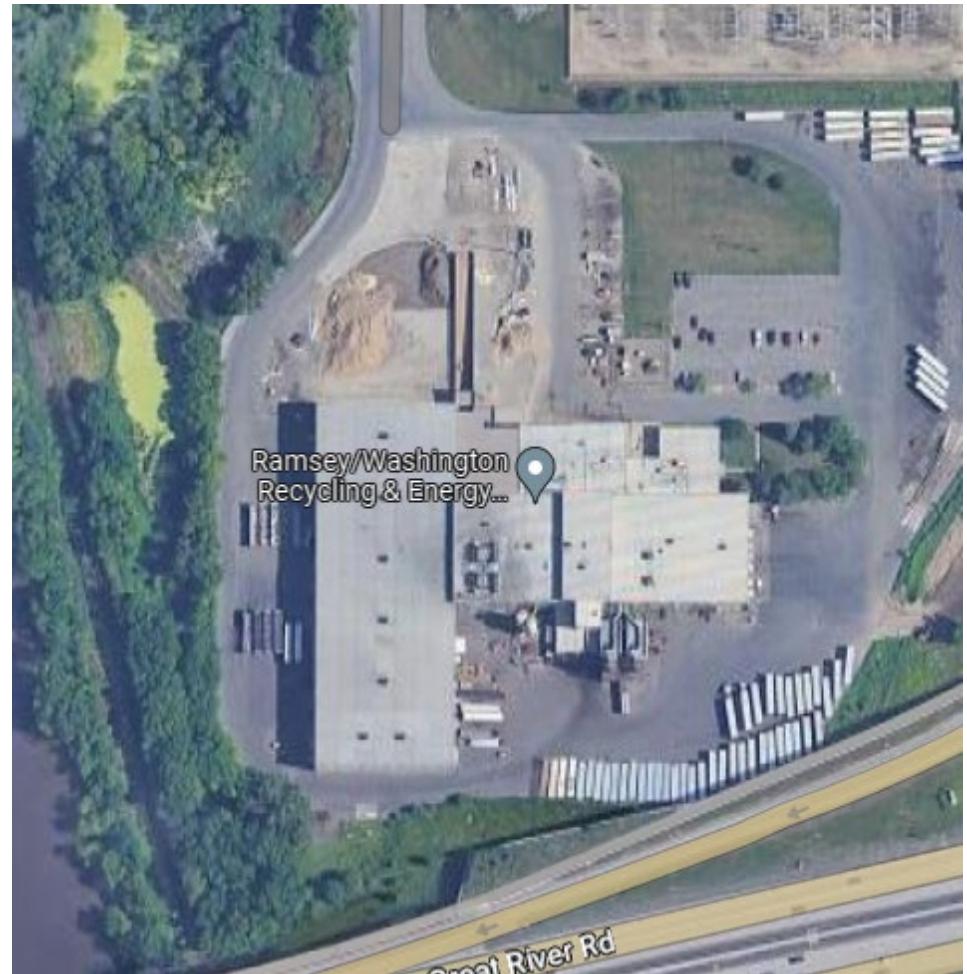
# Program History and Development

- **R&E Center Processes MSW**

- Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF)
- Ferrous/Nonferrous
- Bulky waste
- Residue

- **Recent Upgrades**

- Food scrap bag processing line
- Recyclables recovery line



# Program History and Development



- **Pilot - April 2023**

- 2,200 households were eligible to participate

- **Formal Program Rollout – October 2023**

- Continuing to roll out to more communities in County
- Goal to achieve 40% participation

# Education Process

- **Community Engagement**

- Program website
- E-newsletters with programmatic updates
- Customer service (phone line, chat, and contact form)
- Direct mail, social media
- Traditional marketing campaigns
- Community events
- In-person engagements and partnerships with municipalities

# Successes

- **Significant Landfill Diversion**
  - Goal is to divert 30,000 tons per year
- **Participation and Continued Rollout**
  - At the end of 2023, 7.8% participation rate, with 2,861 households enrolled.
  - At the end of 2024, 11% participation rate with 12,394 households enrolled.
- **Effective Education Program**
  - Low contamination rate
- **Expanded Availability of Program**
  - Multifamily
  - Senior living facilities (apartment-type living)



# Challenges

- **Contamination**

- Capturing bags in the system (robot recognition)
- In-bag contamination is low



- **Starting a New Program**

- Logistics associated with that



- **Program Costs**

- Investment in equipment, staff, and educational materials require consistent funding



- **Sustained Participation**

- Encouraging households to remain active after initial sign-up



# Selecting The Right Approach



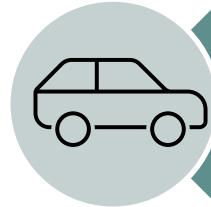
Separate Cart



Co-collection with Trash



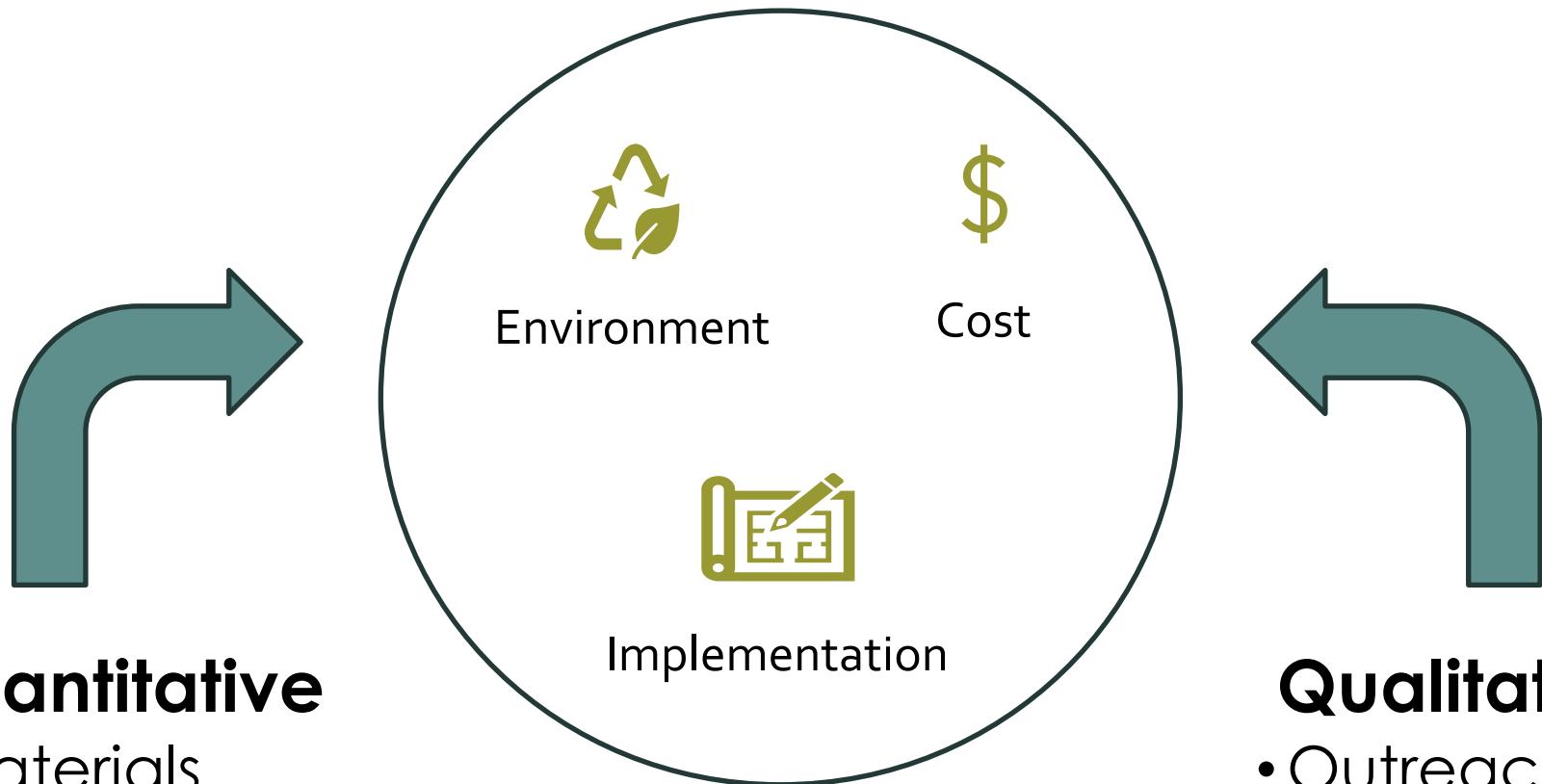
Commingled with Yard  
Waste



Drop-off Sites

Which  
makes most  
sense for the  
region?

# Evaluation Approaches



## Quantitative

- Materials
- Geography
- Demographics

## Qualitative

- Outreach
- Regulations
- Case studies

Thank You For  
Attending!



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