



A Guide to Modern Deposit Return Systems: 10 Essential Practices



Executive Summary

Shaping a more sustainable world requires collaboration, informed decision making, and action.

Modern deposit return systems (DRSs) are a potent tool not only for waste reduction, but also resource conservation and carbon emissions reduction.

Despite their effectiveness, when there's legislation to initiate or modernize a DRS in a state — “bottle bills” have been introduced in 12 states along with talks of a federal bill — opinions fly in all directions. Too often, advocates propose, industry opposes, legislation stalls, and progress stops. Meanwhile, every minute worldwide, more than 2.5 million beverage containers are buried, burned, or littered.¹

A Guide to Modern DRS: 10 Essential Practices brings these elements together for policymakers, advocates, and producers seeking the best public policy solutions to the massive problem of beverage container waste.

The practices described in the Guide have proven to be key for successful DRS implementation. The path to transforming them into actionable policies is daunting. The Guide aims to serve as a compass, informing each step and keeping all parties on track when competing interests intervene, and to:

1. Equip policymakers with experiential insights, practical advice, and useful language.
2. Empower advocates and researchers with tangible examples of where and why DRS is working well.

Through well curated case studies from different corners of the world, the Guide offers insights that are universally applicable, transcend geographical boundaries, and create a bridge between theory and action.

¹ Calculations based on Wilcox, Jason and James MacKenzie (2021) What We Waste. reloopplatform.org/resources/what-we-waste

10 Essential Practices for a Modern Deposit Return System

Practice 1

Meaningful Targets and Penalties

The foundation of a successful DRS lies in achieving meaningful targets which drives proactive participation from all the stakeholders involved. Complementing such targets are enforceable penalties, whose importance and application are detailed in this section.

Practice 2

Point-of-Return

Recycling success hinges on public participation. This practice underscores the value of informed and engaged consumers, catalyzing their active involvement in the DRS. Centering DRS on equity and access can lead to higher return volumes compared with examples of when these elements aren't included. This section expands on the legislative requirements for high performance and accessibility.

Practice 3

Compliance and Official Reporting

Transparency and accountability serve as the cornerstones of an effective DRS. This practice showcases the importance of well-structured reporting mechanisms, binding legal frameworks, and robust compliance protocols.

Practice 4

Oversight and Enforcement

Effective DRS implementation demands vigilant oversight and rigorous enforcement. Practice 4 navigates through the intricacies of monitoring, addressing fraudulent activities, and ensuring system integrity.

Regulations

Lay the foundation to build a strong system.



Practice 5

Design, Marking, and Registration for Containers

This practice delves into the significance of standardized container design, universally recognizable markings, and rigorous registration systems. These measures not only enhance sorting accuracy but also enable consumers to recycle easily.

Practice 6

Collection

Access to convenient collection points is pivotal in motivating consumer participation. This practice explores the role of retailers and highlights the minimum standards and operating requirements as well as the technological needs of an efficient DRS.

Practice 7

Infrastructure for Large-Volume Returns

This practice focuses on the pivotal role of optimized logistics in orchestrating large-volume returns. By explaining the various methods of collection, this practice highlights the specific operational requirements that ensure successful DRS implementation and financial viability.

Practice 8

Optimized Logistics

To enable a DRS to recycle efficiently, efficient logistics are paramount. This section delves into optimizing logistical operations, balancing flexibility with performance requirements.

Practice 9

Material Processing and Service Fees

This practice unpacks the intricacies of handling and processing fees, emphasizing transparency and accuracy in financial transactions to show how these mechanisms maintain DRS momentum.

Practice 10

Management of Material Flow and Financial Data

This practice elaborates on the roles of regulatory agencies, producers, and distributors in maintaining transparent transactions.

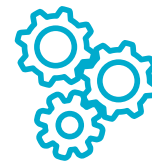
Standards

Serve as a frame to run the system effectively.



Operations

Define the functions to maintain the system over time.



A Call to Action

A modern DRS offers hope for a sustainable tomorrow. Its potential for reducing waste, conserving resources, and curbing emissions has far-reaching implications. The DRS practices highlighted in this Guide are not mere suggestions; they are the essentials that give force to a rallying cry for stakeholders at all levels.

- Governments and policymakers must make sure there is sound legislative support for modern DRSs, providing the framework that empowers systemic change.
- Advocates must continue to push for aspirational yet practical solutions and hold those who develop and run DRSs accountable for implementing them year in year out.
- Industry, from beverage producers to retailers to waste management companies, must be prepared to collaborate, embracing technological innovation and transparent financial practices that echo their public commitment to environmental stewardship.
- Citizens, too, play an indispensable role by being advocates at the local level and actively participating in DRSs, demonstrating that responsible choices ripple outward, impacting the broader ecosystem.

As the world grapples with extreme weather events and natural calamities attributable to rising emissions, the circular economy for waste and emissions reduction, including a DRS, provides a pragmatic solution and achievable goal. Let the Guide be your companion on this journey – a roadmap, a reference, and an inspiration.

Reloop is an international nonprofit organization, whose vision is a world free of waste, where natural resources remain resources. Leading the global transition to a circular economy, Reloop provides evidence-based research and analysis to governments, industry, and NGOs.



www.reloopplatform.org
www.bottlebillreimagined.org

