Organization
Seattle Public Utilities, City of Seattle

Project Title
Implementing Progressive Leadership Policies to Reduce Plastic Pollution in Seattle

Organizational Background
Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) is one of the most progressive and innovative utilities in the U.S. and has garnered international attention for its programs and policies. With one of the highest recycling rates in the nation and a strong emphasis on waste prevention, SPU has tackled areas that others are just now beginning to address. We intend to continue to provide strong leadership for waste prevention and the elimination of single-use plastics through progressive policies, thoughtful implementation, and monitoring progress. SPU’s strategic role is to solve problems at their source. We have strong support from customers, elected leaders, and management to implement progressive, impactful services and programs.

Project Description
Seattle Public Utilities seeks assistance from an Evans School consulting team to help us take next steps towards successfully implementing existing policies to address single-use plastic pollution prevention, setting the stage for new policies, and informing the Seattle City Council and others of our progress and new opportunities. This will involve researching "next step" policies as well as surveying businesses for compliance with existing rules and their accidental use of "greenwashed" products.

Travel Required?
No

Deliverables
Following enactment of the new rules banning non-compostable plastic straws and utensils as of July 1, 2018, SPU has focused efforts on education, outreach and technical assistance, rather than enforcement. We are interested in learning more about the level of compliance with existing rules, as well as documenting current practices to establish a baseline and inform next-step policies, outreach,
and technical assistance. We want to also document the use of non-compliant products such as non-compostable service ware made in part from plant starches. This will help inform us of the impacts of greenwashing and the sources of those items so we can work to intervene.

What is the desired deliverable?

• Report that summarizes the survey and other activities, including findings and possibly recommendations.

• Survey of food service businesses as described below.

Key Tasks for Consultants

• Visual survey of food service businesses regarding types of bags being provided to customers, types of food service products currently being used (compliant, non-compliant, greenwashed, etc.), use of durable service ware, use of dispensers, etc. Document what kind of compostable products are being used, such as molded fiber products or PLA-lined box board.

• If possible, determine if the types of products being provided conform with not only City of Seattle ordinances and rules, but also recently passed Washington state legislation regarding product degradability - labeling, ESHB 1569.

• If possible, collect samples of greenwashed products or assumed compostable products that are not labeled as compostable. If possible, determine the brand and market source of those products (distributor, source of purchase).

• Potentially distribute SPU outreach and education materials to businesses visited.

• Research implementation of Berkeley’s Single Use Foodware and Litter Reduction ordinance, including strategies to address challenges, implementation outreach, and successes.

• Research how we would determine if a food service business has the capacity to wash durable service ware at their location and options for addressing businesses that do not have that ability.

• Provide recommendations regarding next steps.

• Attend scheduled coordination meetings with SPU staff.

• Present findings to SPU staff, through written report and oral presentation.