

Reusable Packaging System Design Standard



Part 4: Return incentives

Summary of Requirements

The [Reusable Packaging System Design Standard](#) provides a foundation to align reuse systems globally so they can share infrastructure and become interoperable. This systemic approach is necessary for reuse to become affordable, efficient, and convenient, and scale across sectors and global regions in a way that provides a solution to both the climate and plastic crises.

This document summarizes the component of the standard that focuses on *return incentives*. Return incentives are designed to encourage consumers to return used containers and are typically financial in nature. They can include deposits, vouchers or coupons for discounts on future purchases, donations to charity, or fees for unreturned containers. This standard is meant to establish consistent protocols so that manufacturers, retailers, and logistics providers can appropriately administer incentives that vary by type and value.

For detailed requirements and guidance, see the document: [Part 4: Return incentives](#).

Incentive general requirements

- In general, return incentive should be assigned to containers when necessary to achieve a container return rate of 90% or higher.
- In open settings, such as restaurants that sell take-away food and beverages and retailers that sell consumer goods to be consumed off-site, incentives should be assigned to containers, otherwise it may be difficult or impossible to achieve a 90% return rate.
- In closed settings, such as theaters and arenas where food and beverages are consumer onsite, incentives might not be required to achieve a 90% return rate.
- If a container does not achieve a return rate of 90% or higher, increasing the value of the return incentive is one option for boosting the return rate.

Digital requirements

Certain data elements must be assigned to each container that has a return incentive. The data can either be directly embedded in a digital tag or accessible through an online database. These data elements include:

- The jurisdiction(s) where return incentives are in place
- The type of incentive for each jurisdiction, e.g. Deposit, Reward, Fee or None.
- The value of the incentive for each jurisdiction and type, e.g., a currency amount, text string or image for discounts/rewards, etc.

More details on digital tagging are provided in [Part 3: Digital](#).

- Where deposits exist, the deposit value should be returned in full where possible, as this typically leads to higher return rates. In general, the deposit value should be optimized to the smallest value that achieves a 90% or higher return rate. In some jurisdictions, however, the deposit and return values are regulated.
- Where reward incentives such as discounts exist, the reward value should be optimized to achieve a 90% or higher return rate.
- Where fees exist for containers that are not returned within a certain period of time, the container must have a unique ID. A reuse service provider must manage fees in these systems. The fee value should be adjusted, when appropriate, to meet the requirement of 90% or higher container return rate.

Labeling requirements

Labeling the incentive type and value on both the container and receipt informs the consumer that the container has value and should be returned, it also helps ensure a certain value is paid to the person who returns the container, limiting variable and unfair payments.

- The incentive type and value must be incorporated into container labeling and should be adjacent to or near the reuse logo so that the association with reuse is easily comprehended.
- The incentive type and value must also be printed on the consumer's sales receipt.

More detailed instructions for container labeling are provided in [Part 5: Labeling and education](#).

Administration requirements

A system administrator(s) must be designated to manage system data and clear incentive payments and service fees between jurisdictions.

Additional details related to these requirements are provided in the full [Part 4: Return incentives](#).