

# OCEAN BOUND PLASTIC

## CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

## OBP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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## **Revisions and Updates**

This document will be revised regularly and distributed after each revision to the Certification Bodies. Please send any questions and comments you have regarding the certification scheme to [contact\(at\)obpcert.org](mailto:contact(at)obpcert.org)

## **Revision history**

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8 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 2020	V1	Initial Release
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This document replaces the document FAQ for Certification Bodies (OBP-FAQCB-GUI)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Changes</b>
8 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 2021	V1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Initial Release. This release is based on the previous OBP-FAQCB-GUI V1.4 document with the removal of previous FAQ 2.4, 2.4, 2.6, 4.4 and 4.5 whose content has been incorporated into the OBP-DEF-GUI document.</li><li>Addition of the Introduction and Scope chapters (affecting chapter's numbering)</li><li>FAQ 3.2, 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6 and 6.1 have been adjusted to reflect the changes in the Standards.</li><li>FAQ 3.1 has been reformulated for clarity.</li></ul>
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>SCOPE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>GENERAL QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1.	WHAT IS THE RELATION OF ZERO PLASTIC OCEANS (ZPO) WITH CONTROL UNION CERTIFICATIONS (CUC)?.....	4
3.2.	IS IT POSSIBLE TO AUDIT GRS AND OBP TOGETHER? .....	4
3.3.	CAN ANY TYPE OF COMPANY APPLY FOR THIS CERTIFICATION SCHEME? .....	4
<b>4.</b>	<b>OBP COLLECTION ORGANIZATION STANDARD .....</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1.	HOW DOES THE CLIENT DEFINE COLLECTION SITES FOR THE PURCHASE TO INDEPENDENT COLLECTORS? DOES THE AUDITOR HAVE TO VISIT THE SITES IN THAT CASE? .....	5
4.2.	WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED TO IDENTIFY THE SITE LOCATION .....	5
4.3.	HOW CAN THE TIDE LIMITS FOR THE OBP CATEGORIES BE DETERMINED? .....	5
4.4.	REQUIREMENT 5.1 OF OBP-COL-STD STATES THAT WORKING CONDITIONS SHOULD BE FAIR AND MINIMUM WAGES PAID, HOW CAN THIS REQUIREMENT BE ASSESSED WITH INDEPENDENT COLLECTORS? .....	5
4.5.	DO COLLECTORS ALWAYS HAVE TO BE COMPANIES OR COOPERATIVES? .....	6
4.6.	CAN MACHINERY OR DEVICES BE USED FOR THE COLLECTION OF OBP ? .....	6
<b>5.</b>	<b>OBP RECYCLING ORGANIZATION STANDARD .....</b>	<b>7</b>
5.1.	CAN THE FINAL PRODUCT BE CERTIFIED? .....	7
5.2.	ARE ALL ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN ANY KIND OF PROCESS ALONG THE SUPPLY CHAIN CONSIDERED RECYCLING ORGANIZATIONS? .....	7
5.3.	IS THE RECYCLING ORGANIZATION THE OWNER OF THE OBP IT PROCESSES? .....	8
5.4.	DO TRADER OR MERCHANT ORGANIZATIONS THAT BUY AND SELL OBP CERTIFIED PRODUCTS NEED TO GET THEIR OWN ORGANIZATION CERTIFICATE? .....	8
5.5.	ARE TRADER OR MERCHANT ORGANIZATIONS ALLOWED TO SUBCONTRACT PART OF THEIR PROCESS FOR OBP CERTIFIED PRODUCTS? .....	8
5.6.	DOES THE RECYCLING ORGANIZATION HAVE TO USE THE OBP LOGO ON THE PRODUCT LABEL WHEN IT DELIVERS OBP PRODUCTS TO EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS/CLIENTS? IS THIS OBLIGATORY? .....	8
5.7.	CAN THE FINAL PRODUCT BE CONSIDERED CERTIFIED AS OBP AND AS ANOTHER RECYCLED MATERIAL STANDARD? .....	9
<b>6.</b>	<b>OBP NEUTRALIZATION SERVICES PROVIDER STANDARD .....</b>	<b>10</b>
6.1.	WHAT IS THE NEUTRALIZATION CERTIFICATE AND HOW IS IT USED? .....	10
6.2.	CAN A CERTIFIED OBP NEUTRALIZATION SERVICES PROVIDER SELL MORE OBP CREDITS THAN ITS TAOBPW? .....	11
6.3.	HOW SHALL FAIR PAYMENT WITH WASTE PICKERS BE EVALUATED FOR THE NEUTRALITY SUBPROGRAM? .....	11
6.4.	IS IT REQUIRED TO SEGREGATE DIFFERENT OBP CATEGORIES WHEN APPLYING FOR THE OBP-NEU-STD? .....	11
6.5.	HOW TO KNOW WHEN RECYCLING CAN BE CONSIDERED AN APPROVED TREATMENT OPTION FOR A PORTION OF THE NON-COMMERCIALY RECYCLABLE - NCR OBP COLLECTED? .....	12
6.6.	HOW SHOULD COLLECTION COSTS BE DETERMINED FOR THE MINIMUM THRESHOLD ESTABLISHED WHEN EVALUATING IF OBP IS NON-COMMERCIALY RECYCLABLE – NCR, OR COMMERCIALY RECYCLABLE - CR? .....	12



# 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of Zero Plastic Oceans is to protect oceans from the continuous leakage of Plastic waste from land-based activity by developing incentives and models that promote the collection of Ocean Bound Plastic<sup>1</sup> (OBP).

The **OBP Certification Program** was designed to encourage the removal of OBP from the environment by adding value in effectively collecting and treating it before it reaches oceans. The scheme is composed of two subprograms; the **OBP Recycling Subprogram**, and the **OBP Neutrality Subprogram**.

When OBP is commercially recyclable<sup>2</sup>, its collection and Recycling can be encouraged by certifying its origin and traceability, giving it a higher market value with the OBP Recycling Subprogram. This chain of custody is certified using the OBP Collection Organization Standard, the OBP Recycling Organization Standard and the OBP Brand Standard depending on which step on the chain an organization is.

When OBP is not commercially recyclable<sup>3</sup>, its collection and final treatment can be encouraged by certifying the process with the OBP Neutrality Subprogram. In this model, Plastic producers or users can contribute to a better environment by removing a determined volume of plastic waste from nature through the acquisition of OBP Credits. This model is certified using the OBP Neutralization Services Provider Standard and the OBP Plastic Producers & Users Standard.

Organizations may certify themselves for one or both subprograms as they are complementary solutions. Working with both subprograms makes sense in terms of economic efficiency, given all OBP is collected and marketed at once. It also makes sense from the environmental perspective, since it is only by addressing both, Commercially and Non-Commercially Recyclable OBP, that we will be able to make a real impact.

Organizations collecting OBP willing to provide enhanced social benefits to their employees and informal collectors (Independent Collectors), may additionally certify to the Social+ OBP Component.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ocean Bound Plastic, is, as defined in OBP-DEF-GUI, Plastic litter that will be carried away to oceans in particular by the effects of currents, winds, river flows or tides.*

<sup>2</sup> *Commercially recyclable OBP as defined in OBP-DEF-GUI, means that OBP is technically recyclable and that it can be sold locally to recyclers for a price that renders its collection attractive to waste pickers or collection organizations. Currently, especially in countries where OBP is leaking into the oceans, a significant portion of technically recyclable OBP is unfortunately not commercially recyclable.*

<sup>3</sup> *Not commercially recyclable OBP as defined in OBP-DEF-GUI, means that OBP cannot be sold for an attractive price but also includes products or packaging which are technically not recyclable (because of the resin used, the mix of different materials or because they are too damaged).*



## 2. SCOPE

This document gathers frequently asked questions by Certification Bodies, certification applicants, and certified Organizations, and the clarifications and replies by Zero Plastic Oceans. It shall be used as interpretation guidelines for the Standards of the OBP Program.

## 3. GENERAL QUESTIONS

### 3.1. WHAT IS THE RELATION OF ZERO PLASTIC OCEANS (ZPO) WITH CONTROL UNION CERTIFICATIONS (CUC)?

ZPO is the NGO that has developed the OBP certification scheme in collaboration with the Certification Body CUC from early 2019. The scheme was launched officially on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2020.

ZPO remains the public standard setter and owner, responsible for public consultation and revision processes, for assessing and approving different Certification Bodies that want to offer the OBP program, and for posting the certified companies in the official website to conclude the certification. ZPO is not involved in the certification process.

### 3.2. IS IT POSSIBLE TO AUDIT GRS AND OBP TOGETHER?

Yes, but it is important to keep in mind which certification module the client has applied for. In OBP, we also cover upstream traceability in the OBP Collection Organization Standard, and this is not covered by GRS, but OBP is similar to GRS regarding downstream traceability, in the OBP Recycling Organization Standard.

There is a benchmark between the schemes, and Organizations can refer to the document OBP-ROS-GUI to review which audit results of GRS can be used for an OBP certification. The use of both checklists is still necessary, but the supply chain model information will probably overlap.

In the end, the benefit from generated synergies during the Audit of both programs can be transferred to the client making certifications more affordable.

### 3.3. CAN ANY TYPE OF COMPANY APPLY FOR THIS CERTIFICATION SCHEME?

There is no limitation to the type, size, or location of Organizations that can apply for this certification scheme. Any active Legal Entity, involved in the collection, and/or Recycling and/or distribution and/or Approved Treatment of Ocean Bound Plastic or Ocean Bound Plastic made products can apply for certification of their corresponding activity.



## 4. OBP COLLECTION ORGANIZATION STANDARD

### 4.1. HOW DOES THE CLIENT DEFINE COLLECTION SITES FOR THE PURCHASE TO INDEPENDENT COLLECTORS? DOES THE AUDITOR HAVE TO VISIT THE SITES IN THAT CASE?

Collection sites for purchasing to Independent Collectors is indicative and can be as broad as defining the municipalities/districts, or whichever local administrative division exists for assigning waste collection and management responsibilities. It is important for Auditors to verify that Independent Collectors are working within the 50km zone from shore, and in areas with Inadequate Waste Collection. Site visits are not necessary unless the Auditor is unfamiliar or unsure of the waste collection practices in the specific areas where collection occurs.

### 4.2. WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED TO IDENTIFY THE SITE LOCATION

Regarding requirement 5.3 a) Sites can be identified by the Organization providing clear address, drawn location on a local map or GPS coordinates. The supply of GPS coordinates is not an obligation.

### 4.3. HOW CAN THE TIDE LIMITS FOR THE OBP CATEGORIES BE DETERMINED?

To determine the highest and lowest tide limits, please refer to the detailed, extended definitions section of the OBP-DEF-GUI document for Ocean Bound Plastic. There is a 50-meter tolerance given this determination is approximative. Additionally, there is flexibility in the limits as explained in the OBP definition. A larger distance than 200m can be accepted by the Auditor if the site configuration can allow Plastic waste to be carried away from a greater distance. Typically, this will happen if the site is a hill, if the river is at the bottom of a small valley, or if it rains very heavily.

### 4.4. REQUIREMENT 5.1 OF OBP-COL-STD STATES THAT WORKING CONDITIONS SHOULD BE FAIR AND MINIMUM WAGES PAID, HOW CAN THIS REQUIREMENT BE ASSESSED WITH INDEPENDENT COLLECTORS?

Since Independent Collectors are not dependent workers of the Organization, fair working conditions with them can be assessed by checking that the price they are paid for the OBP is within or above local market prices and that payment conditions are reasonable. Auditors should do a preliminary desk research to find out local market prices for Recyclable plastic waste and verify payment processes of the Organization. During interviews with Independent Collectors, Auditor should also seek to understand if there are any irregularities in the buying process or abuse of power from the Organization.



#### **4.5. DO COLLECTORS ALWAYS HAVE TO BE COMPANIES OR COOPERATIVES?**

No. Third party collectors (outside of the collection Organization itself) can be Independent Collectors or Small Collectors:

Independent Collectors are expected to be individuals, or small groups of individuals, collecting less than 200 Kg/day of OBP on a monthly average. It is not expected, nor required, that they form a company or a cooperative.

Small Collectors are expected to be small companies or cooperatives but can be any other type of Legal Entity as defined in OBP-DEF-GUI. They need to collect less than 1500 metric tons per year, and they must be part of a Supplier Group Certification system.

#### **4.6 CAN MACHINERY OR DEVICES BE USED FOR THE COLLECTION OF OBP?**

The Organization may use machinery or devices (for example automated plastic traps, river barriers, robots etc...) for collection rather than participating collectors. In these cases, the projects still need to keep collection records for measuring collected, sorted (eventually) and transported volumes of plastic waste. The frequency of issuance of the reports and information collected will vary depending on the type of machinery or device used.



# 5. OBP RECYCLING ORGANIZATION STANDARD

## 5.1. CAN THE FINAL PRODUCT BE CERTIFIED?

Yes, as long as all the supply chain is certified, and the traceability can be checked through transaction declarations.

## 5.2. ARE ALL ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN ANY KIND OF PROCESS ALONG THE SUPPLY CHAIN CONSIDERED RECYCLING ORGANIZATIONS?

Recycling Organizations are defined as:

Organizations of the Plastic Recycling value chain, starting from purchase of OBP to an Organization certified against the OBP Collection Organization Standard, to the incorporation of recycled OBP into final business to business (B2B) or business to consumers (B2C) products.

For example, it can be for:

- i. Trader/merchant Organizations, or Organizations that concentrate and/or transport recyclable OBP without or with little transformation (washing, baling, shredding),
- ii. Recycled polymer production Organizations,
- iii. Recycled Plastic packaging or recycled good production Organizations,
- iv. Final user of products of packaging containing recycled OBP.
- v. Trader/merchant Organizations that buy and sell any product containing recycled OBP.

At the beginning of the supply chain are the collection Organizations which are defined as follows:

Any Organization (for profit, not for profit, governmental or non-governmental) who is involved or wants to be involved in collecting Ocean Bound Plastic.

The scope covers activities related to ownership of collected OBP until sale or disposal. Depending on each Organization, these activities may additionally include storage, cleaning, washing, removal of stickers, packing in bales or similar preparation for transport/sale.

At the end of the supply chain are the Brands which are defined as follows:

Any Organization that handles the design, production, marketing, purchase and distribution of products sold under its private name/label. The Brand may be represented by several legal entities, eventually in several different countries.

The Brand may sell to wholesalers, retailers or directly to consumers.





### **5.3. IS THE RECYCLING ORGANIZATION THE OWNER OF THE OBP IT PROCESSES?**

Yes and this needs to remain so throughout the OBP transformation, in particular if subcontracting is involved. Subcontractors cannot become owners of the OBP. If an organization reclaims ownership of certified OBP, and it is not certified as an OBP recycling Organization, it cannot sell certified OBP. If, however, an organization is hired for subcontracting a part of a process, but it does not reclaim ownership of the product, it does not need to be certified.

### **5.4. DO TRADER OR MERCHANT ORGANIZATIONS THAT BUY AND SELL OBP CERTIFIED PRODUCTS NEED TO GET THEIR OWN ORGANIZATION CERTIFICATE?**

Whenever an organization takes ownership of OBP certified products, and they want to make certification claims to their customers, they need to have their own Organization certified. The only exception to that rule is when the product containing OBP is a Final Product as per OBP Program's definition and the organization does not make claims (for example a distributor or a shop selling certified OBP products do not need to be certified because they only buy and resell Final Products and do not make claims about them).

Additionally in the case where the seller of the Final Product (already OBP labelled by the supplier) wishes to make Promotional Claims using OBP logos, it can do so applying certification under the OBP Brand Standard (OBP-BRA-STD).

### **5.5. ARE TRADER OR MERCHANT ORGANIZATIONS ALLOWED TO SUBCONTRACT PART OF THEIR PROCESS FOR OBP CERTIFIED PRODUCTS?**

Yes, like all Organizations certified under the OBP Recycling Organization Standard a Trader or merchant Organization may subcontract all needed activities. For example, a Trader could purchase certified OBP from a certified Organization and then have it transformed by one or several Subcontractor(s) into a Final Product.

### **5.6. DOES THE RECYCLING ORGANIZATION HAVE TO USE THE OBP LOGO ON THE PRODUCT LABEL WHEN IT DELIVERS OBP PRODUCTS TO EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS/CLIENTS? IS THIS OBLIGATORY?**

Yes, this is a requirement stated in Item 5.10 of the OBP-REC-STD Standard and also covered in the Logo Uses and Claims Guidelines. Exceptions exist for intermediate products or B2B transactions where the use of the logo may not be required. For labelling products, the On-Product Labels predefined formats should be used as detailed in the Logo Uses and Claim Guidelines document.



## 5.7. CAN THE FINAL PRODUCT BE CONSIDERED CERTIFIED AS OBP AND AS ANOTHER RECYCLED MATERIAL STANDARD?

Certified OBP collected and recycled under the Recycling Subprogram can also be considered as post-consumer recycled plastic waste, and hence, be a valid input for another recycling certification program.

Therefore, Organizations certified with the OBP Recycling Organization Standard (OBP-REC-STD) and another recycled material certification program, purchasing certified OBP, may be able to claim their production lots as certified under OBP, and another recycled plastic program.

This means that the processing facility may have four claim options for a given production lot:

1. Claiming the lot as certified OBP only,
2. Claiming the lot as certified with the other recycling program only,
3. Claiming the lot as certified with both OBP and the other recycling program,
4. Making no certified claim at all.

ZPO considers that making claims under both OBP and another recycling program for a given lot is acceptable, as long as the Organization makes a reference to the other program claim in the Transaction Declaration (TD) issued. This reference shall be made in the “comment” field of the Transaction Declaration. Depending on the other recycling program requirements, this reference may be the number of the equivalent document to the OBP TD, or simply mention that this lot is also certified under the other recycling program.



## 6. OBP NEUTRALIZATION SERVICES PROVIDER STANDARD

FAQ 4.1 up to 4.5 included, referring to the OBP Collection Organization Standard also apply to the OBP Neutralization Services Provider Standard.

### 6.1. WHAT IS THE NEUTRALIZATION CERTIFICATE AND HOW IS IT USED?

Organizations that want to sell OBP Credits need to have an annual Scope Certificate specifying they are certified as an OBP Neutralization services provider. This guarantees their certified status as an Organization allowed to offer such services and specifies their maximum annual service capacity (TAOBPW).

Each OBP Neutralization Certificate, however, is an instrument used as proof for the work done. It certifies the performance of an already carried out specific service within that year, for a determined volume of OBP Neutralization, and as support for the issuance of OBP Credits' sale invoices. This procedure allows for the maximum service capacity control of each Organization, and for a global registry of the total volume of OBP being collected and prevented from polluting oceans. This is the procedure for issuing Neutralization Certificates:

1. OBP Neutralization services provider carries out collection and Approved Treatment of a determined volume of OBP (for example 100 tons, in compliance with requirements of the OBP-NEU-STD Standard).
2. OBP Neutralization services provider sends evidence of the service performed along with the information required in the Neutralization Certificate to the CB. (Evidence are daily records, transport documents and summaries with receipt of Approved Treatment).
3. CB assesses information received. If all is ok, CB discounts 100 tons from the Organization's TAOBPW, requests from ZPO the OBP Credits serial numbers, issues and signs a Neutralization Certificate, and notifies ZPO, who will log it and publish it along with the OBP Credits in a public registry on [www.obpcert.org](http://www.obpcert.org).
4. CB sends issued Neutralization Certificate to OBP Neutralization services provider.
5. OBP Neutralization services provider will invoice its client attaching the Neutralization Certificate. (In some cases, the Neutralization services provider may make financial arrangements to receive advanced payments, but the corresponding OBP Credits are only issued once the work is performed and validated by the CB)



## **6.2.CAN A CERTIFIED OBP NEUTRALIZATION SERVICES PROVIDER SELL MORE OBP CREDITS THAN ITS TAOBPW?**

OBP Neutralization services provider make an annual estimate of their maximum service capacity - TAOBPW. This amount can be adjusted yearly in each certification Audit. If within one same year, the Organization sees that it has a greater demand and capacity for OBP Credits, it can apply to the CB for a revision and extension of its TAOBPW. However, if this adjustment has not been requested or approved, the Organization cannot sell more OBP Credits than its TAOBPW because it could not support the services with the Neutralization Certificates, given these would not be issued by CB if there is no credit in its TAOBPW.

## **6.3.HOW SHALL FAIR PAYMENT WITH WASTE PICKERS BE EVALUATED FOR THE NEUTRALITY SUBPROGRAM?**

The Auditor shall use a local benchmark of prices paid to waste pickers for OBP Recyclable material. The price paid for Non-Commercially Recyclable OBP material in the framework of the Neutrality Subprogram should at least be above the minimum price in the local benchmark. For example, if PET is purchased at 2 cts a kilo and flexible films at 1 ct a kilo, price for Non-Commercially Recyclable OBP should be greater or equal than 1ct a kilo. Additionally, during Auditor-waste picker interviews, they should be asked whether collecting Non-commercially Recyclable OBP material represents an economic opportunity for them. The economic opportunity is expected to be generated by the possibility of collecting and selling greater volumes of Plastic waste thanks to the inclusion of Non-Commercially Recyclable Plastic among the waste they can sell.

## **6.4.IS IT REQUIRED TO SEGREGATE DIFFERENT OBP CATEGORIES WHEN APPLYING FOR THE OBP-NEU-STD?**

When an Organization wants to sell different categories of OBP Credits, it should segregate the NCR OBP at least at collection and registration steps. Further segregation during storage, pretreatment and transport is not necessary if all the NCR OBP will be treated at the same Approved Treatment Facility.

Organizations shall reconcile the weight of OBP collected per OBP Category with the OBP Credits sold. The same principles as detailed in the third paragraph of chapter 6.1.3 of the OBP-DEF-GUI shall be followed for that reconciliation.



## **6.5. HOW TO KNOW WHEN RECYCLING CAN BE CONSIDERED AN APPROVED TREATMENT OPTION FOR A PORTION OF THE NON-COMMERCIALY RECYCLABLE - NCR OBP COLLECTED?**

In the OBP-NEU-STD revision dated 8 Sep 2021, the possibility to use recycling<sup>4</sup> as an Approved Treatment option within certain conditions was introduced. This was done within certain cost threshold conditions to avoid existing profitable projects based on a collection-recycling value chain to suddenly become allowed to generate OBP Credits without bringing any additional environmental and social benefits.

Costs and prices are highly variable, especially for recycled plastics, therefore the mechanism of cost threshold may not be sufficient in some cases to prevent the former from happening. Additionally, to the minimum established cost threshold for using Recycling as an Approved Treatment option for a portion of the NCR OBP collected, projects need to demonstrate they are collecting all types of plastic waste and not focusing only on OBP for recycling. The portion of NCR OBP sold to Recycling as an Approved Treatment should be coherent with the OBP material type distribution encountered at the collection site.

## **6.6. HOW SHOULD COLLECTION COSTS BE DETERMINED FOR THE MINIMUM THRESHOLD ESTABLISHED WHEN EVALUATING IF OBP IS NON-COMMERCIALY RECYCLABLE - NCR, OR COMMERCIALY RECYCLABLE - CR?**

When a Neutralization Services Provider Organization wants to demonstrate they exceed the minimum established threshold Collection Costs to be able to use Recycling as an Approved Treatment option for a portion of the collected NCR OBP, they need to show how they have calculated these Collection Costs.

Collection Costs can only include the following 2 components:

- 1) Direct wages of collection workers. No other cost (like cleaning, sorting, baling, storage, non-collection workers' wages...) should be accounted for here. Cost of purchasing to Independent Collectors or to Small Collectors shall also be excluded from the equation.

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<sup>4</sup> Previously recycling was simply forbidden as Approved Treatment. This exclusion was done to ensure that OBP Credits would only be issued by truly additional projects, based on Non-Commercially Recyclable OBP. But this exclusion could have had the negative impact of favoring energy recovery or landfilling and preventing some OBP to be recycled, which is against the waste management hierarchy.



- 2) Transport cost to the nearest available sale point (whether to a recycler, a trader, or an aggregator for example), and not transport cost to the Organization's chosen sale point. For eg. Organizations can send their OBP to be recycled in another country while local options are available if they want, but the transport cost considered for the analysis should be to local options.

Notes:

When the same company is collecting and recycling the OBP, the Collection Costs calculation developed by the Organization should identify the transaction point between both activities making sure it is realistic when compared with scenarios of two separate companies.

In the occasional cases where the Organization receives a payment for the OBP collection, handling or treatment, this payment shall be deducted from the Collection Costs.

