In 2004, the Los Angeles Regional Agency (LARA) was approved by the California Integrated Waste Management Board, now known as CalRecycle, to promote environmental responsibility through the state-mandated reduce, reuse, and recycle philosophy of State Assembly Bill 939 (AB 939). LARA members work collectively to interpret, create plans, and implement the requirements of AB 939, which set forth waste mandates requiring all cities and counties to achieve a 25% solid waste diversion rate by 1995 and 50% diversion rate by 2000. LARA achieved an official diversion rate of 57% in 2003 and 61% in 2004. The City of Los Angeles alone has achieved 76.4% diversion as of 2012 and has committed to achieving Zero Waste by 2025. LARA’s mission is “to enhance the quality of living in member communities through conscious means of promoting environmental sustainability and responsibility.” LARA members continually improve and implement a total of 55 Source Reduction and Recycling Element (SRRE) Programs to increase diversion and protect our environment.

LARA was formed with 14 charter Cities that signed a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA). Since then, Hermosa Beach and Palos Verdes Estates were added in 2005 and the City of Bradbury in 2011. Through a unanimous vote in June 2014, the City of Downey became the newest member of LARA, bringing the total to 18 member Cities. LARA Bylaws were adopted in 2004 following approval from CalRecycle, and established an Executive Board that consists of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary, with Karen Coca from City of Los Angeles serving as the Executive Director. Per the JPA, the City of Los Angeles is the administrator of LARA funds. LARA revenue primarily comes from annual dues paid by the Cities. Dues are calculated at $0.15 per disposal ton for each City using the most recent available State Disposal Reporting System (DRS) data. Annual fees are due at the beginning of the fiscal year in July. LARA meets quarterly, usually on the third Thursday of March, June, and September, and the first Thursday in December. Meetings, which were formerly held at the City of Lynwood’s Bateman Hall, will now be held at different host Cities throughout the year.

As a Regional Agency, LARA submits its AB 939 Annual Report together as one entity, rather than by individual cities or jurisdictions. This saves the jurisdictions time and money, which can then be used for implementing or improving their diversion programs. Since the annual per capita disposal rate is reported and measured jointly, any fluctuations due to jurisdictional boundaries or changes in the disposal reporting system are leveled out. The annual per capita disposal rate must not be higher than the 50% per capita disposal target to be in compliance with AB 939. This also allows Cities to focus on their program implementation rather than numerical compliance. The City of Los Angeles uses the Compliance Online Worksheet (COW) within LA Sanitation’s Recycling Data Management System (RDMS) online database, into which all Cities enter information on their diversion programs and diversion tonnages. The City of Los Angeles consolidates all of the information into the Electric Annual Report (EAR) to CalRecycle.

The Regional Agency is an effective platform for networking, peer sharing, and speaking with one united voice to advocate issues and/or concerns. LARA maintains a website (www.laregionalagency.us) as well as a Facebook page.
to share news, events, and recycling information. Community events sponsored by the different Cities are promoted and shared as well. LARA works closely with the CalRecycle Office of Local Assistance and Market Development (LAMD) located in Long Beach. The LAMD team informs LARA of any available grants and their requirements. A representative from the LAMD team is usually present at LARA quarterly meetings and provides updates or any guidance necessary. LARA also provides assistance and support to the Cities during CalRecycle’s reviews and site audits, which are done on a four-year cycle.

In previous years, LARA conducted face-to-face interviews to fully understand each City’s diversion program activities. With staffing limitations, LARA has now moved to an automated process (COW data entry) that has made reporting more efficient, but has also decreased the connection and the true “feel” for these programs. The dialogue in the face-to-face interviews increased insight into each City’s recycling programs and direction. Reviving these interviews will allow Cities to examine their programs more closely. For programs that have been ongoing during the last few years, Cities have not been entering any information other than the fact that they are “ongoing.” CalRecycle recently instructed members to stop listing programs as only “ongoing” and instead to provide more details so information is readily available without accessing research data from previous years. A return to in-person interviews will allow the Cities to examine their programs in greater depth and will also allow Cities to prepare for CalRecycle’s phone interviews and site audits.

LARA continues to accept new member Cities. Interested Cities must complete an approval process that is illustrated in the flow chart on page 3. If a City is approved by the LARA Board, LARA then informs CalRecycle of this. An amendment letter is submitted along with the City’s council resolution, the JPA signed by its City Manager, and an amendment page signed by LARA’s Executive Director.
LARA Approval Process

This is the process a City must go through to become a LARA member.

1. Applicant requests information package from LARA Lead Administrator at (213) 485-2968
2. LARA Lead Administrator sends information including sample staff reports, JPA, and Bylaws
3. Applicant prepares Staff Report, presents JPA to its City Council/City Manager for approval and signatures
4. Applicant sends letter of intent to LARA Administrator
5. LARA Staff prepares agenda item
6. LARA Board takes a vote
   - Approved: LARA informs CalRecycle of approval of newest member
   - Denied: Letter to applicant citing reasons for denial of application