



Environmental Action Project Planning Checklist

✓ Select target behaviors

Behaviors should:

- Be specific – Need to be able to identify specific steps to engaging in a behavior; if too vague, will struggle to identify the barriers and benefits
- Directly result in the desired environmental change
- Be impactful – impactful behaviors combine:
 - Environmental impact – What effect does the behavior have on the environment?
 - Probability – What is the probability your target audience will engage in the behavior?
 - Penetration – How many people in your target audience are already engaging in this behavior?

✓ Identify barriers and benefits

- Barriers – What prevents your target audience from engaging in this behavior? What do they find challenging about this behavior?
- Benefits – What does your target audience perceive as the benefit of engaging in this behavior?
- Ways to identify barriers and benefits (each has strengths and weaknesses; use a combination to get the best information):
 - Literature review – Review available research, case studies and articles
 - Observations – Effective if the behavior is visible and able to be observed unobtrusively
 - Focus groups – Good for getting rich, in-depth information; not very generalizable
 - Surveys – Verbal, written, interview, intercept (ask two quick questions: What do you find challenging about this behavior? What do you think the benefit of this behavior is?)

Specific Behavior	Barriers	Benefits
Encourage	↓	↑
Discourage	↑	↓

Develop strategies that decrease the barriers and increase the benefits of the behavior you are encouraging and increase the barriers and decrease the benefits of the behavior you are discouraging.

✓ **Develop strategy**

- Make it easy to act — remove external barriers, build competency and overcome social anxiety
 - Provide hands-on learning opportunities that let people try an activity
 - Provide the infrastructure, tools and supplies necessary to take action
- Build commitment — foster consistency, develop self-perception, enhance motivation
 - Consider written, verbal, public or group commitments
 - Use existing points of contact
 - Make connections to help people see themselves as environmentally concerned
 - Don't coerce or incentive
- Create social norms — “This is how we do things”
 - Noticeable and close in space and time to targeted behavior
 - Encourage positive behaviors
 - Don't use when norm is undesired behavior
 - Praise people when they are above average
- Encourage social diffusion — leverage leaders, provide knowledge and develop competency
 - Identify and train leaders/early adopters
 - Gain commitments from leaders to talk to others
- Use prompts — help people remember, create habits
 - Noticeable, self-explanatory and close in space and time to targeted behavior
 - Encourage positive behaviors
- Use effective communication and have effective conversations
 - Make it personal, concrete, local and easy to remember
 - Integrate goals and impact, focus on improvement
 - Use all your channels
 - Help people plan for how they will take action
- Capitalize on trigger and major life events (such as moving, becoming parents, Earth Day, holidays)
- Celebrate successes

Barrier	Strategy
Lack of motivation	Commitment Norms
Forget to act	Prompts
Lack of information	Social diffusion Communication
Lack skills; anxiety	Let people try an activity Social diffusion
External barriers	Convenience, infrastructure, tools, supplies

Use strategies that address the barriers you have identified.

✓ **Pilot, implement and evaluate**

- Pilot with a small group to test strategies before implementing broadly
- Evaluate by measuring:
 - Behavior change, change in resource use (less energy, more recycling), change in resource quality (improved water quality, less pollution)