



Best Practices: Tools to motivate environmental actions and lessons from past grantees

1. Ground your Efforts

- ✓ **Educate yourself.** To teach and organize others, you need to be familiar with the issues. Use reputable sources.
- ✓ **Build partnerships and a project team.** Developing partnerships helps you learn from others, leverage shared resources and tap existing efforts. Share the work by involving your organization's current staff, board and volunteers, who are more likely to run a successful program and be invested in the work than a temporary intern or staff person. Work through existing networks and organizations that people already trust, and get advice from opinion leaders.
- ✓ **Know your audience, and involve the whole community.** People trust those they know, so make sure your idea resonates with the people you work with. It's easier and more fun for people to jump into something new when they see others getting involved and have an opportunity to share experiences and ideas.
- ✓ **Don't ignore your self-interest, and stay focused.** Make sure your project fits your mission. Consider how an environmental project could help achieve your other goals too, like garnering media attention, attracting new funders, or drawing new participants, volunteers and partners. It's also tempting to plan a program that's chock-full of information and activities, but you'll be more effective if you focus on just a few things and do them well. Be careful not to drift too far from your organization's mission or your environmental efforts will be difficult to sustain.

2. Make a Plan

- ✓ **Identify the barriers.** You know your audience best, so consider what's stopping them from engaging in more sustainable behaviors. Is it distrust? Money? Language barriers? Lack of information – or information overload?
- ✓ **Make it easy.** Provide tangible tools and relevant information to enable first steps toward long-term behavior change.
- ✓ **Plan for evaluation.** Defining measurable quantitative and qualitative outcomes helps you avoid overemphasizing outputs. There are many ways to evaluate programs – whatever method you choose, effective coordinators make an evaluation plan upfront and stick to it. Logic models can be helpful for tying your activities to your hoped-for outcomes.
- ✓ **Design your project on multiple levels.** As environmental issues gain attention, more people are “going green,” so look beyond the usual suspects. Design your project to make it accessible to environmental novices and experts alike.

3. Run a Successful Program

- ✓ **Create effective incentives.** Incentives can encourage sustainable behaviors, particularly when motivation is initially low, but only if they're implemented well:
 - Closely match the incentive to the behavior. Incentives are most effective when they (a) directly relate to the behavior you're encouraging, (b) remove a barrier like cost or lack of information and (c) are offered close in time to the behavior, providing direct positive feedback.
 - Consider the size and necessity of the incentive, and the potential impacts of removing it. Incentives that are too small may not be taken seriously. If providing an incentive replaces a person's internal motivation, they may not continue participating once the incentive is removed.
 - Consider using non-monetary incentives. Social approval, public recognition and other non-monetary “rewards” have been shown to have a strong influence on behavior. Incentives such as buttons promoting specific actions can be used to demonstrate a norm and to prompt and encourage the action.
- ✓ **Use pledges, commitments and prompts.** Invite people to fill out a commitment form or make a public pledge. Then ask them to post a reminder of the commitment or pledge they made at home or work.
- ✓ **Communicate effectively, positively and accurately.** If your audience feels encouraged and respected, they'll be more likely to participate in your program.

4. Finish Strong

- ✓ **Track your efforts.** This will make evaluation easier, but it also helps your audience understand the impact they're making. Translate numbers into tangible images – a before-and-after junk mail stack for example.
- ✓ **Don't forget to celebrate your accomplishments!** Celebrate how your community is making changes. Invite individuals who have participated in your project to share their experience with others.

Many of these tips are based on the principles of community-based social marketing and the psychology of sustainable behavior. Learn more →

○ www.pca.state.mn.us/enzq7b6

○ www.cbsm.com

○ www.uwex.edu/erc/doc/ai/quickcbsm.pdf