



DATE: July 14, 2016

TO: Planning & Organization Committee/Recycling Board

FROM: Wendy Sommer, Executive Director

BY: Jeff Becerra, Communications Manager; Judi Ettlinger, Senior Program Manager

SUBJECT: Outreach Strategies for Programmatic Success

SUMMARY

Our success in achieving Agency goals requires effective outreach to our primary audiences and project partners—the employers, schools, residents and governments of Alameda County. At the July 14 Planning & Organization Committee/Recycling Board, staff will review the outreach strategies we utilize for the residential sector and the rationale behind them, with the purpose of providing background for the programmatic prioritization the Board will undertake in the fall.

DISCUSSION

This fall the Board will undergo a process of setting priorities for the next two years. One anticipated outcome is clarification to staff on the level of emphasis we give to outreach based projects that target residents and their role in achieving Agency goals. Based on the 2008 Waste Characterization Study, approximately 44 percent of landfill tonnages come from the residential sector.

To be successful and provide significant benefits to the region, our work needs to result in changing habits and routines, which can be difficult to do. What does it take to both reach and engage diverse audiences in effective ways? We develop our campaigns to stand out, be relevant, and communicate with people leveraging the channels that they use. We work to foster and capitalize on individual and community motivation, creating and supporting their ability to take action. If people are going to change, they have to have a reason to do something and it needs to feel easy.

We address these challenges for our projects targeting residential audiences by using a diverse array of outreach strategies that work together to maximize effectiveness.

- Media campaigns (advertising)

Broad media campaigns, typically through advertising, provide “air cover” and awareness of the issues and opportunities we’re addressing. We typically use this approach with our initiatives on food scrap composting, converting lawns to gardens, and reducing food waste.

- Includes transit (BART, buses, other out-of-home), online ads and videos, Pandora, etc. Where possible, we look to include media that can be targeted to a specific audience.
- These campaigns are most effective when combined with other types of outreach.

- Community outreach

On-the-ground community level engagement allows us to go deeper than media campaigns, and tailor messages to specific audiences. Community group grantees take this a step further by conducting their own outreach to their constituents.

- Community outreach grants and presentations
- K-12 school initiatives
- Tabling at community events

- Engagement tactics (triggers)

These provide or tap into motivations needed for people to create new habits.

- Commitment – Pledges can help people overcome procrastination and take on bigger commitments down the road.
- Norming – Pledge boards, murals and lawn signage show that the activities we’re promoting are acceptable and the norm, increasing the likelihood of further traction for a given community.
- Prompts – Signage or instructions at the point of action, or physical objects like a small food scrap container in the kitchen, act as reminders and reinforcements for the habits we’re looking for residents to create.
- Liking – People better respond to messengers they like, such as community members, family, children and friends.

- Partnerships

Partnering with other groups allows us to reach and engage audiences that value the partner organization.

- Cal Athletics
- Member Agencies
- Nonprofits
- Local networks such as Used Oil and BayROC
- National networks such as the EPA and NRDC for Save the Food

- Evaluation

We continually review our outreach campaigns to understand their effectiveness and make modifications as appropriate.

- Garbage cart sorts provide a data baseline and mark trends of how much recyclable and compostable material is in the trash.
- Phone surveys allow us to better understand the motivations and knowledge residents have relevant to increasing engagement in our initiatives.
- We are conducting pilot tests in Fremont for Ready Set Recycle, using control and test groups to evaluate various engagements to prompt improvement in the rates of food scrap composting.
- When we embark on a new initiative at the Agency, we have an internal evaluation process that includes development of a project brief to identify the appropriate mix of outreach tactics and opportunities for coordination with other projects or partners.

Creating successful campaigns for waste reduction projects requires the right mix of strategies and tactics, message consistency and appropriate timelines. Campaigns often grow and change over time building on what we learn along the way. Thoughtful, regular evaluation and adjustments are key elements for increasing impact and participation.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.