



DATE: October 24, 2018
TO: Waste Management Authority Board
FROM: Wendy Sommer, Executive Director
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SUBJECT: Communications and Outreach Approach

SUMMARY

At the October 24 WMA meeting, staff will provide an overview of its communications and outreach approach, and present results of a recently completed phone/mail survey of Alameda County residents. The purpose of the presentation is to provide background for the Board in advance of its November Priority Setting discussion.

DISCUSSION

Most of StopWaste's programs include a public outreach component to residents, schools or businesses with a desired action in mind. The broader approach is on waste prevention/reduction education and helping to create new positive habits through motivation and applying principles of behavioral economics.

The agency uses a multi-layered outreach approach designed to maximize reach and effectiveness while using resources efficiently. Specific tactics vary by project, but can include:

- Paid advertising (outdoor and online)
- Distributed outreach (expanding reach by tapping into existing networks and building new ones - the "ripple effect")
 - Schools
 - Nonprofit partners and grantees
 - StopWaste Environmental Educator Training (SWEET)
 - Member Agencies
 - Board members (e.g. social media content)
- In Person
 - Presentation and event staffing
 - On-site technical assistance for businesses

- Electronic
 - Website
 - Social Media
 - RecycleWhere Search Tool
 - Electronic Newsletters

Customer Survey Results

In September 2018, StopWaste commissioned FM3 to conduct a phone and online survey of Alameda County residents that gauged perception and participation in a variety of waste prevention and recycling topics. FM3 staff will present survey findings at the October 24 WMA meeting. Highlights include:

- Two in five residents say they are “extremely” or “very” concerned about food waste at home.
 - Those who are not concerned about food waste largely feel like they are not wasting food currently and/or are composting their waste.
- Seven in ten residents say they are likely to take steps to prevent food waste.
- A majority of residents say that when they are unsure of what to do with an item, they recycle it, potentially contaminating the recycling. Food-soiled products and pizza boxes tend to cause the most confusion when it comes to disposal.
- About 30 percent of residents have heard about the Stop Food Waste campaign.

Insight for Priority Setting

The agency faces a variety of challenges in its efforts to instill long-term habits among county residents and businesses. These include the ability to reach a large and incredibly diverse county (language, ethnicity, income, urban/rural) on limited budgets, the long time window and continual messaging/motivation needed to create lasting habits, an influx of new residents from other locations not used to our waste reduction infrastructure, and coordination of StopWaste messaging on multiple topics.

Feedback from residents via staff interactions and the commissioned survey show steady progress in consumer awareness, and reinforce the need to continue focusing on the prevention of organic waste in particular in the county. And our experience with implementing decades of consumer-facing programs show us that consistency, patience and persistence pay off in the long term.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.