

APPENDIX 2: PUBLIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH “BUILDING SUPPORT FOR YOUR PROGRAM”

Public education plays an important part in the process of any solid waste management program. Public education and community outreach are integral parts of any community’s solid waste management program. Well-planned education and outreach activities can help generate understanding and support for waste management issues in your community. They can also be used to teach community members how to comply with waste management and recycling activities to the overall benefit of your community. This appendix will explain what public education is, why it and community outreach are important, and how you can develop a public outreach and education program that suits the specific needs of your community.

WHAT IS PUBLIC EDUCATION?

Public education is a method of providing information to people in your community on issues of particular concern. In the case of solid waste management, public education provides information on where, when, why and how a solid waste management program will be implemented, and provides community members with simple instructions on how to participate in your solid waste management program.

Information developed and distributed as part of a public education program can take a number of different forms. Briefings and presentations, media coverage, newsletters, and special events can all be used to educate community members about solid waste management. The type of public education program that you develop will depend on the goals of your solid waste management program and other special considerations unique to your community.

WHY IS PUBLIC EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

“A successful solid waste management program requires widespread public participation. Such participation can best be obtained through early and effective public education programs, which must continue even after the program is in full swing.”

Source: *Decision Maker’s Guide to Solid Waste Management-Vol.II*, EPA.

Developing solutions to your community’s solid waste management problems requires public involvement. To economically and efficiently operate a solid waste management program requires significant cooperation from community members regardless of the strategies chosen – buying products in bulk, separating recyclables from non recyclables, dropping off food and animal waste at a compost site, removing batteries from waste sent

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to your landfill, or placing household hazardous waste in designated containers at your landfill. To maintain long-term program support, community members (commonly referred to as the “public”) need to know clearly what they need to do and why.

Involving people in the “how’s” and “why’s” of solid waste management requires significant educational effort by your community. Ineffective or half-hearted public education programs may confuse community members, reduce participation in a program, or cause people to ignore the program. Successful public education programs must be consistent and ongoing. You can’t do a program one week and then forget about it and do it again a year later for another week.

Public education creates community interest in how solid waste management decisions are made. And, when community members become interested in your community’s waste management programs, they frequently want to be involved in the planning and decision-making processes. Your community should anticipate such interest and develop procedures for involving the public. When community members are involved in planning and program design, it helps ensure that programs run smoothly and that there will be community support for implementing the program.

Public education plays an important part in solid waste management. It doesn’t just provide community members with important information; it also contributes to the development of an informed community that can actively participate in the development and implementation of an effective solid waste program for your community. By educating members of your community about solid waste management options and collecting feedback on these options, you can determine which options are most acceptable to local residents and businesses and develop your program accordingly.

Once your solid waste management program is established, a public education program can provide information describing the program and opportunities for community participation. Community participation is also an important part of your solid waste management program. Aspects of your program such as recycling, composting, and waste collection will not be successful without effective participation by members of your community. In addition, public participation may have the added benefit of building community support for your program. This is extremely important, since a program that has community support is more likely to be successful than one that faces public opposition.

Public education provides:

- An opportunity for community members to obtain information about your community’s solid waste management program;
- A way for community members to express opinions and for community decision-makers to take these opinions into consideration; and
- A source of information regarding opportunities for participation in your program.

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All of these aspects are critical to the success of your solid waste management program. The following section will provide you with the information you need to implement your own public education program.

DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Designing effective public education program requires both funding and expertise. You can often find creative, low-cost ways to accomplish your education goals, even if you have a small staff and budget. The main factors to consider in designing an effective education program are:

- Identifying your goals and audiences.
- Crafting a clear and useful message.
- Choosing an outreach method.
- Creating incentives and deterrents.

Working through these steps does not need to be time or resource intensive. In fact, you probably have considered some of these issues already. But thinking through these steps in a methodical way can help ensure that your resources are well spent and your solid waste management program has impact. For additional technical assistance, consider asking communities who have public education programs for their advice or contact agencies and organizations that also do this type of work.

As you work to implement your public education program, it is important to remember that not all programs are the same. The type of program that you choose will depend on the components of your solid waste management program. Make sure that you are realistic in developing your plan and in setting your goals. Be sure to keep in mind your resource constraints or other relevant factors. Finally, remember that the most successful public education programs are those that encourage public involvement early in the process and continue to encourage participation even after your solid waste management program is in place.

Tips for Building Community Support

- ★ Start your community outreach and education plan early.
- ★ Involve your community in making important decisions.
- ★ Use your community's or village's local traditions and culture to increase the impact of your message.
- ★ Keep your community involved through public meetings, newsletters, and public announcement.

Source:

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There are four major steps involved in implementing a public education program:

- Understanding different audiences that exist within your community and how they receive information;
- Preparing a formal public education plan;
- Establishing your community education program; and
- Evaluating your public education program activities to determine if they are working.

These four steps are described below.

STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCES

Effective public education and community outreach begins with identifying your target audience. This allows you to customize your public education and outreach activities to meet situation-specific needs. Your community, no matter how large or small, probably has several different “audiences” or groups made up of different people. Community groups will vary from community to community, but in general may include children not in school and students in school; business people, social groups, church groups, adults and elders, visitors to your community, and any other groups that can be targeted for public education.

Understanding these groups and how they receive information is an important part of developing an effective public education program. By focusing your efforts on specific groups and identifying the information best suited to their needs, you can develop a program that maximizes effectiveness while minimizing unnecessary efforts and costs. In some cases, you also might need to direct your public education efforts to your staff responsible for implementing your community’s waste management program. Educating them will ensure that they fully understand their role and what is being asked of community members under your program.

The following list provides some questions you might want to ask as you are developing your public education program?

- What different age groups can be identified as target audiences (e.g., schoolchildren, high school students or elders)?
- What solid waste management issues are people in these groups most concerned about?
- To what extent are people already educated about solid waste and other environmental issues?

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- Are community members responsive to newsletters and public notices?
- Are community members interested in participating in informational events such as workshops, community dinners and other special events?
- Are there groups within your community that are interested in becoming actively involved in implementing your public education process? For example, would your high school teachers and students develop a recycling campaign for your community?

After identifying who is your target audience, then expand your efforts to include community members who are respected and will be listened to by other community members. Be sure to educate people who can pass your information on and maximize the impact of your message.

Building broad community support through outreach and education can help sustain program funding and momentum. For these reasons, your target audience might include your entire community.

STEP 2: PREPARING YOUR PUBLIC EDUCATION PLAN

Once you have collected information on your audience and the types of information best suited to each audience, the next step is to develop a formal plan for implementing your public education program and community outreach. Your plan, no matter how simple or complex, should include the following components:

➤ Identify Issues and Challenges to Address

To be effective, your public education plan must clearly identify specific issues that public education will address. The issues that you choose to focus on can be determined from the results of your community survey on solid waste management or input from community meetings. For example, if your solid waste management plan includes building a new landfill and community members have expressed concern about possible health effects from your old dumpsite, you might make safe disposal of garbage a focus of your public education program. The issues that you address will vary depending on the type of solid waste management program that you are considering, and may change over time as your program progresses.

Your public education plan should also outline any challenges that must be overcome to effectively implement your solid waste management program. Common challenges include successfully delivering educational messages, maintaining program participation, and providing adequate funding for activities. Identifying these challenges at the beginning of your public education plan and making sure that they are considered as you develop other parts of the plan is crucial to the success of your program.

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➤ Identify Goals for Your Program

Before you begin your public education program, it is useful to clearly identify your outreach goals, while keeping in mind your overall solid waste management program objectives. For example, if one of your primary goals of your solid waste management program is to reduce household hazardous waste from going into your landfill, the objective of your outreach might be to: 1) educate community members about the hazards of dumping certain types of household waste in the landfill; 2) encourage community members to reduce their use of these products; and 3) encourage community members to use safe disposal methods.

Once you are familiar with the issues and challenges of concern, you should set goals and address these issues and challenges. Identifying specific goals will help you to develop a more focused and effective program. In addition, determining later on whether these goals have been met provides an easy way to evaluate the success of your program.

Remember to set your goals carefully, making sure to choose goals that are achievable given your available resources, timeframes and other constraints. When formulating your goals keep in mind that setting goals for each year, rather than the entire course of your public education program, will make your goals more manageable.

Your outreach goals are closely linked, and often define, your target audience. Depending on your goals, you might be directing your message to all or only part of your community. In some, cases you might even need to educate people who do not live in your community, but come into it for business or other purposes. For example, if you have tourist activities in your area, special efforts may need to be made to educate tour operators and tourists using local facilities and services.

➤ Create and Deliver a Powerful Message

Once you have defined your goals and target audience, consider the specific messages you want to get across so you can achieve your objectives. Messages are simply the ideas or information you want to communicate to your community members. Communities have found it is useful to develop a clear, simple message to which your target audience can relate. Your message can be as simple as “No dumping except at the landfill: or “Keep Our Community Clean.” Generally, you do not want to overwhelm people with too much information. It is best to limit yourself to three or four simple messages, using language that people can easily understand. For example, a message might say “Keep our community clean by putting garbage in its proper place.”

To develop effective messages, you might ask yourself the following questions:

- Why are you interested in educating your community?
- What do community members need to know about your program?
- What would community members like to do or be willing to do?

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- What other information can you provide that might act as an incentive or deterrent that will encourage community members to do what you would like them to do?

As you develop your messages, keep in mind who you will be sharing your message with and how they will understand and respond to your messages. Consider such factors as:

- What are their beliefs?
- How do they absorb and understand information?
- What motivates them to take action?

In addition, consider any other factors that could influence how easily your audience will accept your message. For example, is your community particularly sensitive about things surrounding the issue? Are there higher priorities or other sources of information that could take away or weaken your message?

Keep in mind that different groups of people typically require different messages or approaches; methods that work for educating business owners will most likely not work with small schoolchildren. Be sure to adapt your message so it appeals to each group you are trying to educate. Effective messages relate to people on their own terms and in their own language. For example, you will need to keep your message simple if you want children to understand it, or you may need to deliver it in culturally appropriate manner if you want to reach elders.

**“Increase message potency: get support from community leaders...
Community leaders deliver powerful outreach messages.”**

Source: *“Prevent Illegal Dumping,” Tribal Waste Journal.*

As you are developing messages, remember that it is important to teach community members why new programs and policies are in place and why they need to handle and dispose of their waste in a particular way. When community members understand why certain management wastes practices are bad for public health, the environment, and wildlife, they may be more likely to handle and dispose of their waste following your program’s guidelines and requirements.

Without a reasonable explanation of why waste must be disposed of using new methods, community members may not be willing to change the way they do things. For example, people may be more willing to stop using their burn barrels if they understand that the smoke from burning household garbage can affect their breathing and cause other health problems. Furthermore, they might be more likely to stop dumping waste in your sewage lagoon if they understand that certain wastes can leak into the ground and contaminate their drinking water or seep into nearby rivers, streams and lakes and kill or contaminate fish they catch and eat from these places.

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➤ Choose an Outreach Method

The next step is to determine the best way to get your message out to your community members. You might already have a clear sense of the best way to get information out in your community. For example, making announcements over the CB radio or posting notices at the post office gets the message out to everyone. An excellent way to get messages out to children is through the school and teachers.

You should consider using more than one way to get your message out. Your outreach and educational messages are likely to have more impact if they are heard more than once. It is good to do an initial announcement and then follow up a month later with another message, such as an article in a community newsletter.

As you are considering the many options for distributing your message, you will need to take your budget, availability of staff, and technical requirements into consideration when deciding on a method. When possible, consider ways to use existing community outreach programs and tools to get your messages out into your community. For example, EPA and ADEC have educational materials on recycling, household hazardous waste and many other aspects of solid waste management that you can get for free and distribute to households and businesses in your community. Usually these materials can be used as-is or easily modified to fit your community's needs and situation.

If you do need to create educational outreach materials, consider using low-cost creative ways of producing these items. For example, if you want a poster, you can have your school sponsor a poster contest and have schoolchildren design and produce the poster. If you need flyers, you might be able to have your Village Corporation or regional non-profit produce the flyer for you. When designing any outreach products for your public education and outreach program, always consider ways to incorporate elements of your local culture and traditional knowledge. This will help local people feel a connection to your program.

Public Education and Community Outreach Methods

Public education and community outreach can take a variety of forms, including written materials (fact sheets, newsletters, articles, flyer, inserts in newspapers and newsletters, booklets, and brochures); visual materials (signs, posters, charts, and pictures); and events (community meetings, community dinners, workshops, school events and programs, public briefings and presentations, media events, and special gatherings). The following list provides ideas on the types of tools, activities and events that you can use to educate and reach-out to your community. Remember that this is just a list of ideas. It is not a comprehensive list of things you should do. The number of possible activities and events is only limited by your imagination.

- *Signage.* Signs placed in strategic locations are a low-cost, low-effort way of educating community members about various waste management options or regulations. They are particularly useful for “No Dumping” and anti-litter

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- campaigns. They are also effective when posted at landfills/dumpsites and recycling facilities to clearly explain what materials are accepted.
- *Community Newsletters.* Newsletters provide community members and businesses with specific information about the development and implementation of your solid waste management program. Because they focus specifically on your community's solid waste issues, they usually provide more specific information than you can put in a news article or advertisement in a local or regional newspaper. Newsletters are also relatively inexpensive to produce and distribute. Keep the information needs of your community members in mind as you develop your newsletters.
 - *Inserts, Flyers, Articles and Other Written Materials.* Inserts and flyers are another low-cost method of spreading information. By developing a simple message and distributing to households and businesses in your community, you can quickly and easily inform everyone living in your community about your solid waste management program. In addition, putting certain information in writing (e.g., household hazardous waste collection dates, guidelines for recycling, etc.) is useful because community members can keep and refer to the information when needed.
 - *Door-to-Door Campaigns.* Door-to-door campaigns are beneficial because outreach workers/volunteers can directly to people living in your community. A door-to-door campaign can be more time-consuming and labor-intensive than other public education programs, but it can be invaluable in reaching people, especially in situations where rules and ordinances have changed, or where you anticipate resistance to a new program. A door-to-door campaign also lets you hear directly what issues are important to community members and what questions or concerns they have regarding your program. It also has an added benefit of enabling you to track every individual that you contact, which it makes it easier to estimate the effectiveness of your program.
 - *Briefings and Presentations.* Briefings and presentations can be used throughout your planning and public education process to keep local officials, agencies, and other interested groups informed about your solid waste program. These public education tools not only provide information, but also provide a way for these groups to express opinions and concerns regarding your program.
 - *Media Coverage.* Media coverage of your solid waste management program and relevant issues can take a number of different forms. Feature stories in a local or regional newspaper provide the most visible media coverage. This form of outreach can be achieved by sending a news release or making personal contact with a reporter who has an interest in your community or that you know covers community news. News conferences, radio talk shows, and public service announcements are also effective methods of providing local residents and businesses with information about your program and community activities.

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- *Workshops and Training.* Workshops and training sessions are valuable ways to educate members of your community about a new program, policy, or waste management method. These sessions can provide a hands-on learning experience for participants, as well as provide an opportunity to ask questions and try out new techniques.
- *School Activities and Events.* Educating students about solid waste management issues and practices helps develop a positive attitude among both students and parents regarding these issues. It encourages community involvement that will contribute to the success of your solid waste management program. Some communities specifically focus their outreach programs on schools. Their programs teach children about solid waste, why it is an important issue, and how to safely and effectively manage waste. These programs are conducted with the hope that the children will teach their family what they learn in school, take personal responsibility for the waste they generate, and continue to manage waste properly when they become adults. Since children will ultimately be the decision makers for your community, teaching personal responsibility for solid waste early on can only benefit your community in later years.

EPA, ADEC and numerous non-profit organizations have developed teaching materials covering recycling, litter control, and waste management. Using such ready-made materials can help you to minimize costs of developing and implementing an environmental education program in your school. Other activities involving your school and its students include recycling drives, poster contests, clean-up days, science projects, and field trips.

- *Meetings and Special Events.* Another way of getting your message out is through meetings and community events. You might decide to organize a special meeting to present your information to the entire community or you can do a presentation as part of a regularly scheduled city or tribal council meeting. Meetings enable you to talk directly with your target audience and get immediate feedback. Meetings are a good way to get your message and information out, while also hearing from community members about their issues and concerns.

High-profile events quickly and dramatically increase community awareness. Community gatherings provide outreach opportunities even if they are not related to your solid waste program. For example, community festivals, village corporation events, and other events draw large crowds and can often accommodate a booth or presentation.

You can also hold an event, such as a community clean-up day, a household hazardous waste collection day, or a contest to see who can collect the most recyclables. Your special events should be fun and interesting. It is useful to turn a one-day event, such as a collection day or clean-up day into a monthly or annual event to continually promote your message. Special events provide an effective

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way of educating community members, encouraging participation, and promoting positive feelings toward your solid waste management program. The activities that you choose will depend upon the aspects of your solid waste management program. Getting community groups and organizations involved in your special events will make them more successful and encourage more participation.

Your public education plan and community outreach program should include several different activities and events. Because different forms of information are more effective with some audiences than others, a plan that combines several activities and events as part of a comprehensive program will reach more people and is more likely to be more effective. Different activities and events can also be used to complement one another. For example, public service announcements and newsletters can be used to publicize special events. As you develop your list of activities and events, keep in mind the information needs of your community, your established goals, and any resource or time constraints.

➤ **Create Incentives and Deterrents**

In addition to using specific outreach tools to convey your message, consider other methods for delivering your message that are likely to create incentives (reason to do something) and deterrents (reason not to do something) for action. For example, many communities hold contests and they publicly recognized the winners in front of the entire community and provide them with a prize. This type of incentive works well with both children and adults. Another good form of incentive is an endorsement for your program from well-respected community leaders or elders. They can have a powerful influence on community members, creating an incentive for people to listen to your message. The “wisdom” and support of elders is highly respected, so their support of your program or an activity will often motivate other members in the community to do the same.

In traditional communities, another good incentive is to remind community members of the values and ethics that are important to Native life. For example, values, such as protecting subsistence resources and taking care of future generations, can encourage community members to manage waste properly.

Creating deterrents helps discourage activities that can harm public health and the environment. One of the most common deterrents is enforcement of local ordinances. If your community does not have a solid waste ordinance it might want to consider adopting one. Publicizing new community ordinances and assessing violators with fines or other punishment can deter illegal dumping and uncontrolled burning and other unwanted behaviors and activities.

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| COMPARING COMMUNITY OUTREACH METHODS | | | |
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| Outreach Method | Investment of Time and Labor | Financial Cost | Effectiveness |
| Signage | Low. Develop message for sign and drop off signs at sites. | Low-Medium. Dependent on the quality of the signs (temporary or permanent and attractiveness) | Low-Medium. Community members will have to read and respond to signs. People tend to ignore signs after awhile. |
| Inserts/Flyers/Articles & Other Written Materials | Low. Develop message for flyer and distribute | Low. Paper, photocopying and labor. | Low-Medium. Message must be compelling to community members so they read and remember it. |
| Media Coverage (Radio, TV, Public Service Announcements) | Low. Develop message & contact media to publicize it for your community. | Low. Time and labor to do press releases. | Low. Depends on availability of media service in your community. Most people will not hear your message. |
| Newsletters | Low-Medium. Write, edit, publish & distribute to community members | Low-Medium. Depends on cost of printing, distributing & labor. | Low-Medium. Articles must be interesting so people read them. |
| Door-to-Door Campaigns | Medium. People doing campaign must dedicate time to go to each household. | Low-Medium. If volunteers agree to go door-to-door, costs will stay low. | Medium-High. Talk to residents one-on-one to address their concerns. |
| Briefings and Presentations | Low-Medium. Many people do not like to give public talks. Time to prepare depends on type of presentation & audience. | Low-Medium. Depends on materials needed and type of handouts. Paper, photocopying, and labor. | High. Potentially large audience; reaches community members, agency staff, & community leaders. |
| Outreach to Schools | Medium-High. Depends on size of event(s), activities planned & number of students. | Medium-High. Depends on size and type of event(s) and activities planned, and materials needed. | High. Potentially large audience; reaches children & their families. Fun events can help community members accept your message & proposed actions. |
| Meetings & Community Events | Medium-High. Depends on size of events and/or activities planned. | Medium-High. Depends on size of events, activities planned, materials needed. | High. Potentially large/diverse audience. Fun or memorable activities can draw community members in to your program and help spread your message. |
| Workshops & Training | Medium-High. Depends on size of workshop, training activities planned. | Medium-High. Depends on size of workshop, training activities planned, materials needed. | High. Provide specific training to community members, address their questions and concerns. Helpful when introducing new programs. |

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➤ Identify Available Resources

The type of public education program that you choose will depend largely upon available resources. Communities with minimal funds for public education will need to rely on activities that require more “people” than financial resources. Remember that public education activities do not have to be costly to be effective. Understanding who you are trying to reach will help you use limited resources more effectively.

Examining the public education activities of other communities and organizations can save a significant amount of time and money. Do not look at just programs that focus on the environment; education activities and materials used to deal with public health, resource management, and other related issues can also provide you with valuable ideas. There are already a number of already developed materials available from various sources that you may use in implementing our program. The environmental education materials developed for and used in schools are an example of such materials.

➤ Establish a Timeline

Finally, include a timeline in your public education plan. Your timeline should coordinate your schedule for implementing public education activities with the implementation schedule for your solid waste management program. It should also take into account any seasonal activities and events.

STEP 3: ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM

Public education and community outreach programs are never fully completed. They should become a regular part of your community and should evolve to meet the needs of your community members. Just because you had a poster contest or held a community clean-up day doesn’t mean you are done promoting and educating community members about solid waste management. Most solid waste programs are long term so they require on-going public education and outreach.

As you are implementing your solid waste management program, community members will likely have questions about new programs and policies that may not be completely addressed during initial public education campaigns or community outreach activities. In addition, most solid waste programs need to go through adjustment process before they run smoothly. Public education will be needed to help guide community members through these changes.

Once you have an outreach program in place, it is important to take steps to:

- Create partnerships.
- Address comments and complaints.
- Adjust and maintain your education and outreach programs.
- Carry out program measurement activities.

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➤ Partnerships and Outreach Campaigns Go Hand-in-Hand

Partnerships and outreach activities complement one another. Outreach is required to generate support and create partnerships. In turn, partnerships are crucial to conducting further outreach and sustaining your program. For example, if you want community leaders to promote your program, it is important to convince them that it is worth promoting. So you need to start your outreach program by educating your potential partners. Solid partnerships often open the door to new funding and an expanded resource base. Communities have also found it useful to build partnerships and outline outreach strategies with other communities, regional conferences and workshops.

➤ Address Community Comments and Complaints

When developing your community outreach strategy, it is important to anticipate questions that community members will have so that they can be addressed early on. Sometime it is impossible to anticipate every question or complaint community members will have about a new program or policy.

You might need to develop additional educational materials after your initial outreach to address unanswered community concerns. You also might need to establish additional or ongoing avenues for communication. One strategy is to designate someone who has been involved in your waste management program to answer questions and respond to comments during implementation of your program and after the program starts. Community members will become more informed and better able to follow waste management rules and practices when they have a person to turn to with their questions. Ultimately, by answering these questions and perhaps refining your waste management program in response to complaints, your community will help make sure that your solid waste management program is as successful as it can be.

➤ Adjust and Maintain Your Education Program to Fit Your Needs

It is important to note that both your solid waste management program and your educational initiatives might go through adjustments as they are implemented. For example, you might find that procedures for collecting cans for the Flying Cans Program needs to change to make it more efficient, or that you need to revise your plan to close your open dump and build a new landfill. As changes like these are made to a program, additional communication with community members will be necessary.

You might also find that your educational program needs fine tuning. Sometimes messages do not get through to the people you are trying to reach. As a result, your education program is not as successful as anticipated in achieving the desired response from community members. This same thing can happen with the type of outreach method you are using. For example, using a brochure might not be the best way to get information to elders in your community. When educating community members be sure to use educational materials and outreach methods that are appropriate for the people you

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are trying to reach. Whenever possible, use culturally appropriate methods of communicating and sharing information.

STEP 4: EVALUATE YOUR PUBLIC EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Sometimes it is difficult to tell whether your community's education program is working and reaching people. The final step in implementing your public education program is to develop a method for evaluating each of your public education activities.

To determine the effectiveness of community education efforts, you can carry out measurement activities. First, consider what would be helpful to measure. For example, you community might want to measure:

- Have illegal dumping activities decreased?
- Are more community members recycling pop cans now?
- How much trash, by weight and volume, are you collecting now?
- What do community members think and say about your community's education program?

By measuring the effects of your community's waste management program, you will be better able to decide whether you need to carry out more education efforts or change your education and outreach approaches. Your evaluation of each activity will be determined by comparing results from each activity with your established goals. For example, if your community is implementing a recycling program and your public education program includes activities to educate community members about recycling, you may set goals for the amount of recyclable material you want to collect. You can evaluate the success of your program based on whether or not your goal is met (i.e., your goal is to collect 1000 aluminum cans each month for recycling). By keeping track of the number of cans collected each month you will know whether or not businesses and local residents are recycling their aluminum cans.

The information that you receive as part of your evaluation efforts will assist you in modifying your public education program to increase its effectiveness. As you work through the evaluation process, remember that sharing the results of your evaluations with community members is important. Positive results will encourage people to continue their involvement. In turn, disappointing results may motivate community members to work harder to reach established goals.

Measurement is important because it can help you get to the bottom of persistent problems. For example, if your measurement efforts show that public education about the effects of illegal dumping have not been effective (i.e., people are still dumping trash illegally around your community), you might ask community members

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why they keep dumping their trash illegally. They might tell you something important. Based on the information you get from measuring your program's success rate, you can adjust your waste management program accordingly to make it more effective. For example, you might provide community members with fact sheets that outline the effects of illegal dumping on public health and the environment.

Measuring the success of your outreach and educational program can be difficult by extremely useful as an assessment and planning tool. Measurement also can help you identify the most effective outreach and education methods to help you plan future activities.

OUTREACH TIPS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

- ❖ **Identify your target audience.**
- ❖ **Create a clear and simple message.**
- ❖ **Incorporate culture and traditional values when Appropriate.**
- ❖ **Be creative and explore a variety of outreach options.**
- ❖ **Obtain support from community leaders and respected members of your community.**
- ❖ **Perform outreach to build partnerships.**
- ❖ **Use partnerships to increase the success of your outreach efforts.**
- ❖ **Take advantage of high-profile events, such as community dinners and school programs.**

Source: "Prevent Illegal Dumping," *Tribal Waste Journal*. Reprint from EPA website for Tribes.