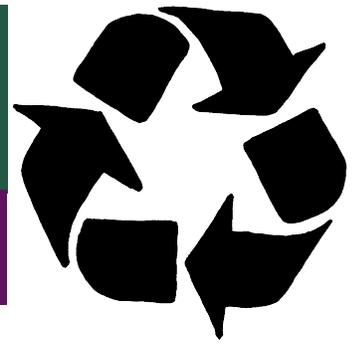


# Recycling Education and Awareness Planning Guide

Use this guide to generate discussion about how your committee can make a positive impact in your community



## Identify the specific problems so that you can communicate clear goals

- ◆ Is recycling convenient? Do people know where to recycle? Do long lines and confusion at the transfer station make people feel bitter about recycling? You need to first evaluate your infrastructure because it doesn't make any sense to educate people about recycling if doing so is inconvenient, unpleasant, or not available.
- ◆ Do people know what items are recyclable? Is there a location where people can get information about recycling?
- ◆ Do residents have an incentive to recycle? Are they rewarded financially or publicly recognized for their efforts?

## Enable those who already recycle to get involved

Reducing, reusing and recycling waste saves money by avoiding expensive disposal costs and maybe even earning revenue from selling materials. Since municipal solid waste management is typically funded through taxes, people who recycle are essentially paying the same amount for solid waste costs as those who don't. Imagine if electricity or water bills were paid for through the general tax fund rather than by consumption? People would find that unfair, and the same argument should be made for solid waste. Unless residents are paying for their own waste disposal, this is an unfair distribution of tax dollars and this distinction will likely generate concern among recyclers. People need to understand that reducing, reusing, and recycling their waste is something that saves tax dollars and lowers the solid waste budget. Those who are doing their part can encourage others to do the same.

## Encourage participation among young people and students

This is a great way to involve young people with their community and the benefits are three-fold. Residents who are not receptive to local government or anyone who they consider to be "environmental" types are often open to hearing from children or young people. Additionally, by increasing recycling education among young people they will bring their knowledge home and explain it to their families. Furthermore, they will become the next generation of good recyclers and instill these good habits among their children as well.

## Identify your audience— Not all recyclers do it for the same reason

- ◆ Some people reduce, reuse and recycle because they feel it is the right thing to do. They want to minimize their individual impact on the environment and leave resources for future generations.
- ◆ Others want to recycle because it makes economic sense and they want to avoid throwing their tax dollars out with the trash
- ◆ Most good recyclers see all the benefits of recycling, both economic and environmental. Be clear about which message you want to push and base it on the concerns of your community members.

## Develop action items

- ◆ Take your list of clear goals and assign committee members to then identify specific tasks to complete in order to reach those goals
- ◆ Develop your message and assign a committee member to write an article for the local newspaper. You may wish to submit articles on a regular basis.
- ◆ Initiate contact with local interest groups by calling or visiting schools, Boy/Girl Scouts, 4-H club, etc.
- ◆ Research interesting facts to get people interested in recycling (both environmental and economic) and develop materials that you can distribute to residents
- ◆ Contact neighboring towns who have been successful at increasing recycling to get ideas, there is no need to reinvent the wheel!
- ◆ Create a recycling page on your town website so that residents will have a centralized location to find information

*This material is based upon work supported under a grant by the Utilities Programs, United States Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Utilities Programs.*