

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Effective Practices for Implementing Local Climate and Energy Programs:

Effective Messaging

Lessons Learned *by Communities for Communities*

The views expressed in this document are those of the Climate Showcase Communities grant recipients. U.S. EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned.

WHAT IS IT?

Effective messaging is a skill that programs use to reach potential program participants and communities. It relies on understanding your audience and identifying what messages appeal most to the audiences that you are trying to reach.

WHY DO IT?

- Targeting key audiences allows you to use your resources more efficiently.
- Different audiences will be moved by different messages. Tailoring your outreach can be key to achieving program goals among different groups.

WHAT WORKS?

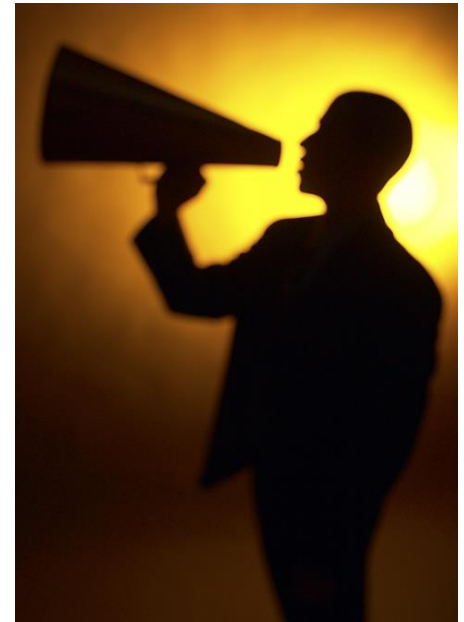
- Find out your audiences' bottom line and tailor your message to it. Their motivations may include cost-savings, comfort, reputation and status, and efficiency and waste prevention, among others.
- Work with community leaders and entities that have a membership base (for example, homeowners associations). They know what messages resonate with their members and can help promote programs.
- Translate program benefits into metrics that are meaningful to your audience.
- Tell stories from the audience's point of view.
- Test messages on pilot groups. Do not be afraid to vary the message.
- Deliver messages through familiar sources, such as neighbors, business partners, or employers.
- Categorize your email and mailing lists by audience and message to enable the evaluation of relative campaign effectiveness.

WHAT SHOULD YOU WATCH OUT FOR?

- Preconceptions often prove to be false. Make sure that your messaging strategies are based on knowledge of your audience and not assumptions.
- Try not to get mired in research on audiences and messages. You can lose valuable chances to take action.
- Professionally run focus groups can be expensive, so test multiple messaging options. You can also make use of key stakeholder groups. Although less representative at times, these can be a quick source of useful ideas about audiences and messaging.
- If you present an overly complex message, you risk losing your audience. Keep it simple.

WHAT RESOURCES HAVE PROJECTS FOUND TO BE USEFUL?

- Constant Contact—Email, survey, and marketing tool: www.constantcontact.com
- Survey Monkey—Survey tool: www.surveymonkey.com
- Hosted Survey—Survey tool: www.hostedsurvey.com



“If an audience is interested in food, don’t sell them on water!”

*Dan, Mpower ChaMpions,
Madison, Wisconsin*