
To: **Keep America Beautiful**
Brenda Pulley

From: **Action Research**
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Subject: Proposal for enhancement of Fort Worth recycling strategies.

Background

Staff at the Fort Worth solid waste services division have expressed a desire to utilize Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) techniques to improve their current recycling program. The current program in Fort Worth is a pay as you throw program, with households paying by size of trash bins. Households have access to a single stream recycling program as an alternative to throwing their waste in the garbage. As it stands, there is an 18% diversion rate in Fort Worth. However, 30% of the recycling is contaminated with nonrecyclable materials. In an effort to increase recycling rates, the city has partnered with Recyclebank. While the recycling program has been successful to date, Community-Based Social Marketing techniques can help increase the quantity and quality of recycling in Fort Worth.

The City of Fort Worth has a “Blue Crew” that was formed to audit the contents of recycling bins. Depending on the scope of the CBSM campaign, these Blue Crew members may be able to assist in carrying out proposed interventions and evaluations on behalf of the city.

There are a number of ways in which the lessons of social science can aid Fort Worth in improving their recycling program. For instance, principles of influence gleaned from social psychology can inform messaging that helps foster community norms of ‘doing the right thing’ or showing citizens that most people are responsible environmental stewards. Additionally, CBSM can be used to identify the barriers and benefits to getting Fort Worth residents to divert more waste and recycling materials correctly.

Experience

Since its establishment in 2001, the mission of Action Research has been to blend traditional marketing activities with effective strategies of behavior change to promote, clean, healthy, and sustainable communities. Action Research is an international leader in community-based social marketing and we specialize in using state-of-the-art survey and research methodology to inform the development and evaluation of effective environmental, conservation, transit, and health programs. Our emphasis is on creating, implementing, and evaluating programs and campaigns aimed at changing behavior.

Recently, Action Research consulted on a project that aimed to increase food-scrap recycling among City of Oakland, CA residents. Using the principles of community-based social marketing, we provided methods for conducting foundational research, strategies for encouraging behavior change, and guidance on implementing the behavior change strategies.

Currently, Action Research is working on a project using the community-based social marketing approach to assist Waste Management in increasing recycling behaviors among single-family residents in King and Snohomish Counties in Washington State. Results from a waste characterization study of garbage bins and an in-person survey of households will be linked in order to identify barriers and benefits to recycling behaviors. The results will be used to design an effective pilot program to increase recycling behaviors.

Project Design

Step 1: Behavior Selection

The first step of the proposed project is to prioritize target behaviors. To do this we are proposing a controlled bin audit of 400 randomly selected households. Both the garbage and recycling bins will be characterized, for a total of 800 bin audits. If it is possible, the City of Fort Worth can leverage its Blue Crew to conduct these bin characterizations. If the Blue Crew is unavailable or unable, Action Research can secure a vendor to carry out the bin audits. Recurring bin sorts could provide an ongoing source of data about the program, and highlight places to target through campaign activities.

Step 2: Barrier and Benefit Research

The second step of the program helps us to better understand the factors that influence people in Fort Worth to recycle. To carry out this step we are proposing conducting in-person interviews with households that participated in the bin audits. We propose using local Keep America Beautiful affiliate members to conduct these interviews. Interview training will be conducted by Action Research. If affiliate members are unavailable or unable, Action Research will hire and train local staff to conduct the interviews. Results from these interviews will inform what behaviors we need to target in the next step, strategy development.

This survey data is an important part of understanding information we gathered from the bin sorts. Interviews can be focused on specific items that were frequently found in the incorrect bin. The interviews can help identify any widespread misunderstanding of whether or not certain items are recyclable. If the City of Fort Worth has any specific questions they would like asked, the interviews offer an excellent opportunity to do so. For example, participants can be asked if they saw or heard of a specific advertising campaign the city publicized related to waste management. Any information that comes out of the interviews can be used to help target certain behaviors or tailor messages to achieve the most change.

Step 3: Develop Strategies

Using results from the barrier and benefit interviews, Action Research will work with the city to select behavior change tools that directly address the barriers to the target behaviors. We will recommend strategies that will be tailored to the characteristics of the target audience. Behavior change tools such as social norms and commitment will be selected based on their fit with the identified barriers and benefits. Which tools and how they will be used depends on the information gathered, but an example of a social norms appeal would be, “87% of households in Fort Worth recycle their soda cans.”

Step 4: Pilot Test Strategies

We will design a pilot program to test the effectiveness of the proposed strategies. We will develop a methodology for randomly assigning target audience members to treatment or control groups. Roughly 200 houses will be targeted for the pilot test, but this number will depend on what the needs of the project are. Pilot testing allows us to determine the effectiveness of specific programs and highlights areas where changes need to be made before widespread implementation. Furthermore, testing several strategies on a small scale is a useful way of identifying the most cost-effective way of achieving behavior change. Strategies can be refined following the pilot.

Step 5: Evaluation and Final Report

Once data collection is complete, Action Research will analyze the data and evaluate the program for its effectiveness at increasing residential recycling and reducing contamination in the City of Fort Worth. Action Research will prepare a final report summarizing the findings. The report will include recommendations for ongoing evaluations of the program. This project can then be evaluated for integration into a comprehensive solid waste management plan.

Proposed Budget

Step	Cost
1: Behavior Selection	\$11,300
2: Barrier & Benefit Research	\$23,600
2a: Conduct in-person interviews with households that participated in bin audits.	\$59,800
3: Develop Strategies	\$16,280
4: Pilot Test	\$9,800
5: Evaluation and Report	\$14,200
Total	\$134,980