
Community Based Social Marketing

Working with people and communities to encourage sustainable behaviour

A Practical Guide by EOS-Eco Energy



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Why Community-Based Social Marketing?

Social Marketing aims to market a behaviour or enterprise that is beneficial to society. Making this approach community-based allows a more nuanced interrogation of the communities involved and means carefully considering what those communities want and need.

This practical guide pulls from Doug McKenzie-Mohr's *Fostering Sustainable Behaviour: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing* to illustrate how a well run community-based social marketing campaign might be created. It is meant to provide some concrete strategies and considerations to improve social marketing campaigns in our community.

McKenzie-Mohr's 5 main steps include "Selecting Behaviour; Identifying Barriers and Benefits;

Developing Strategies; Piloting; and Broad-scale Implementation and Evaluation." (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011, 8) This guide will explore and summarize these steps and consider how organizations might reach the public in a more meaningful and sustainable way.

Selecting Behaviours

Laying the ground work of your program or campaign is incredibly important; this could include planning, research and organizational work. Determining and specifying exactly the behaviour you are targeting as well as the audience is the first step to any project. Decide on an audience that is manageable and measurable and do your research to know exactly what it is they need and want. Next, determine the behaviours you plan on targeting. Be specific so you can plan concrete and accomplishable goals. Specific behaviour should make imprecise goals such as 'reduce waste,' 'lower emissions' or 'encourage storm weather preparedness' into concrete goals such as 'get people to compost,' 'install solar panels,' or 'create an emergency preparedness plan.' These unambiguous goals will make it easier to determine exactly the steps are needed to accomplish those actions.



Questions to consider when selecting behaviours (Mohr, 2011, 15)



1. How impactful is the behaviour? Will it produce substantial and lasting results?
2. How likely is my audience to engage in this behaviour? Is it interesting and feasible?
3. What portion of my audience is already participating in this behaviour? Is it worth targeting and if so, can pre-existing social networks be used?

Identifying Barriers and Benefits

Next, think about the behaviours you have chosen to target. This behaviour, as it requires a change from current behaviour, will have benefits but also challenges and barriers in its adoption. Read similar cases and talk to your audience about their concerns. You could pull ideas from other projects which have been

Terms and Definition:

Campaign - Any sort of project, plan, or strategy that will be presented to the public in hopes of achieving specific results.

Barriers - Factors that detract from adopting a certain behaviour, make it more difficult or unappealing.

Benefits - Advantages or profits that will be gained by adopting a behaviour.

Piloting - Testing a strategy with a small group, or focus group to gauge efficacy and reaction to a program.

Framing - How something is talked about, or the facets of an activity which are highlighted and promoted.

Communication - This could include any way that your message or project is brought to the public.

successful. Learning from other cases will give you a good idea of what hurdles might lie ahead and talking to your audience will direct you to specific challenges they see in adopting a new behaviour. Take these concerns seriously as this will benefit your campaign and make the community feel valued and involved. By identifying these barriers and benefits and investigating strategies to counter or encourage them, a plan forward should quickly emerge.

Common barriers and the tools to address them:

(table from Doug McKenzie-Mohr's *Fostering Sustainable Behaviour*, 2011, p.132)

Barriers	Tools
Lack of Motivation	Commitment, Social Norms and Incentives
Forgetting to Act	Prompts
Lack of Social Pressure	Social Norms
Lack of Knowledge	Communication and Social Diffusion
Structural Barriers	Convenience

Addressing Climate Change Uncertainty:

Lots can be said for improving climate change education, and there are those who do not believe climate change is an issue and who remain resistant to effort to decrease emissions for the sake of world climate. Some are uncertain about the science, or uncomfortable with a perceived political stance.

While it would be preferable to have communities on board to fight the underlying issues facing our world, other strategies can be used to address local issues of sustainability without polarizing potential audiences.

Use of language and campaigns that speaks to local, tangible and personal issues, as well as appeals to personal health and independence can help bridge this gap.



Campaign Ideas

- ▶ Phone calls
- ▶ Signing a pledge
- ▶ Getting a verbal or written commitment
- ▶ Vivid communication
- ▶ Stickers
- ▶ Examples of successful locals
- ▶ Local, personal, visible, and direct impacts
- ▶ Specific prompts
- ▶ Clear straightforward directions
- ▶ Concrete, visual information
- ▶ Personal contact with participants
- ▶ Providing necessary materials to facilitate a new behaviour
- ▶ Skill building opportunities



Developing Strategies

By identifying how to decrease the barriers and increase the benefits of adopting a new behaviour, a set of strategies should develop and be built on. These strategies will form a plan or program that can later be presented to the public. In *Fostering Sustainable Behaviour* McKenzie-Mohr lists several techniques used in CBSM strategies including: “Commitment, Social Norms, Social Diffusion, Prompts, Communication, Incentives and Convenience.” (Mohr, 2011, 41) Using a selection of these techniques a design can be created building learning from past successful programs.

Commitment:

People like to think of themselves as consistent and will attempt to maintain this perception. Therefore when asked for a commitment, written or verbal, public or in a group, people are more likely to stick to their commitments and continue the sustainable behaviour.

Social Norms:

Social Norms use the fact that other people have an impact on our behaviour, and “if we are to make the transition to a sustainable future, it is critical that we are able to develop a set of societal norms that support sustainability” (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011, 63)

Social Diffusion:

Hearing suggestions or counsel from those we respect, trust or perceive to be like us has more influence on us than an information campaign. Visible behaviours are likely to be diffused across social circles quicker spreading through neighbourhoods or communities.

Incentives:

Incentives, whether financial or otherwise, can be a motivating factor in adopting sustainable behaviour. Introducing an incentive can increase the benefits associated with changing behaviours.

Convenience:

Inconvenience can be a powerful barrier to adopting new behaviour. Making a sustainable habit more convenient by providing materials, knowledge, training or support can make your campaign attractive to more people by lowering this barrier.

Prompts:

It may seem simple but forgetting our sustainable habits can be a real hindrance. Prompts should be positive, simple, self-explanatory, close in time and space to the action and highly visual.

Communication:

Communication can refer to the content of a message, but also how and when it is delivered, to whom, and in what setting. Communication techniques can be helpful in avoiding the pitfall of information campaigns. See page 5 for more details.

Framing

The way a campaign is framed or worded can drastically change how it will be received.

- ▶ 'Climate change' can be polarizing, and is often not enough for broad appeal. Pairing climate change with other more personal, tangible, local issues can be more effective.
- ▶ When discussing renewable energy, moving away from fossil fuels can be persuasive, but alternatives could reference "energy independence, reducing dependence on foreign oil, pollution, and safe, natural forms of energy." (Sussman, 2009, 317)
- ▶ Focusing on the 'renewable' aspects, that the energy doesn't run out, and that it will create jobs.
- ▶ Debating weather is rarely a productive conversation.
- ▶ Health concerns for oneself, family and friends can be effective motivators.
- ▶ While saving money can be a benefit it is rarely an extremely convincing or persuasive point.
- ▶ Talk about impacts close is time and space (soon and geographically near) for a more understandable and impactful message.

The Township of Langley BC piloted a backyard composting program consisting of a medium and high intensity strategy in three distinct neighbourhoods. They identified barriers to composting adoption such as lack of knowledge, concerns about smells and pests, and concern about the amount of work or commitment especially from those who don't feel a need to compost or don't already garden.

The pilot program included door-to-door visits, gaining verbal commitment, follow-up feedback, and "We Compost" Stickers as visual prompts and social norms as they were visible to neighbours.

In this case Compost Bins were delivered in advance to participating houses, significantly lowering a major barrier to composting.



The pilot succeeded in lower household garbage output 13%-20%. The higher intensity strategy yielded much better result, although both were effective.

This CBSM campaign worked by targeting specifically identified barriers with personal communication, gaining commitment, providing tools to lower barriers, prompts and social norms.

Lura Consulting, *Township of Langley Backyard Composting Community-Based Social Marketing Study*. 2010.

Consider Your Volunteers!

Remember that those supporting non-profits, environmental groups and NGO's are often volunteers. Give them opportunities, thanks, and respect for donating their time, energy and effort! Food is always a good bet!



Accessibility

No matter the type of work, project, or workshop it is important that all community members feel welcome and considered.

Things to keep in mind:

- ▶ Transportation - how will people get to and from the event?
- ▶ Space - is your space easily navigable, well marked, and manoeuvrable?
- ▶ Language and communication - what languages or language barriers might you need to consider for this event? Will you need a translator, interpreter or extra printed material?
- ▶ Children - When is your event taking place? Are children welcome or is there child care available?
- ▶ Timing - does your event conflict with other common commitments? Can people be informed if they are not available?
- ▶ Time commitment - Make sure your event runs on time, is the length of your event a feasible time for people?
- ▶ Knowledge levels - is your information accessible to various levels of knowledge? Can you have explanation of technical jargon on hand?

There are also many accessibility guides available online.

Communication

(Adapted from Mackenzie-Mohr, 2011, 108)

▶ **Use Captivating Information**

Information should be clear and easy to understand. Use exciting and captivating visuals.

▶ **Know Your Audience**

Find out who will be most impacted by your proposed behaviour changes. Your strategies should take their concerns into account and target your efforts and messages toward them.

▶ **Use a Credible Source**

Consider who people would trust to deliver a message of sustainability; potentially a trusted and successful local, a respected organization or well-liked individuals.

▶ **Frame Your Message**

Decide whether your message will be better received through a positive or negative lens. Be cautious with extremely negative messaging and accompany such messages with positive ideas or strategies.

▶ **Make Your Message Specific**

When possible be as specific as can be. This could mean providing explicit instructions instead of just suggestions. Make sure your message is well articulated and provides only the essential information.

▶ **Make Your Message Easy to Remember**

By using a prompt, simple heuristic, or clever slogan you can make your message easy to recall. This can be powerful by giving your message staying power.



▶ **Provide Personal or Community Goals**

Providing goals in the form of targets can be extremely motivating. People's competitiveness and goal-orientation can help propel campaigns forward.

Oberlin College in Ohio reduced energy usage in student residences by installing 36 glowing orbs which reflect the amount of energy being used. The orbs glow green, yellow and then red as a means of providing energy usage “feedback close in time and space to resource consumption.” (Kassirer, 2013)



This installation was popular among students and encouraged lower shower usage and unplugging of computers when not in use.

These orbs addressed a common barrier of not realizing when or how energy is being used, or not knowing the appropriate timing of a shower.

This visual prompt provides visually interesting feedback immediately. The orbs are a great example of vivid communication and addressing misconceptions about energy usage.

Kassirer, Jay, Cullbridge Marketing and Communications. *UBC Campus Sustainability Engagement and Social Marketing Strategy: Review of Related Research and Similar Programs*. 2013

► Emphasize Personal Contact

Make a personal connection and commitment to your community. Personal connections are very important, whether it's between you and your community or amongst community members.

► Model Sustainable Behaviour

Displaying sustainable behaviour can make behaviour change much more accomplishable. Instructional videos can lower knowledge barriers as well as demonstrating exactly how a behaviour can be adopted.

► Community Block Leaders

'Block leaders' or a similar concept can use modelling, social diffusion, and norms to development habits within their communities.

► Provide Feedback

Providing feedback especially in real time and in close proximity to the activity can encourage sustainable behaviour. Providing feedback can act as an interactive campaign which changes as behaviour changes. In this way it is adaptive and involved.

Piloting

Piloting can be extremely valuable if you have the time and resources. *Fostering Sustainable Behaviour* says that “the point of a pilot is to identify and address problems before launching a campaign throughout the community.” (McKenize-Mohr, 2011, 137) This period of research can allow you to make adjustments in your program and determine what strategies will produce the desired behaviour changes. A typical pilot program should be run as many times as necessary until it is functional and it should be run as though it is the actual program to be implemented. It is also suggested that a pilot program be taken up in a very organized, scientific way to attempt to determine the most accurate extent of the behavioural change.



This said, piloting can be difficult and a substantial undertaking. It can be difficult to expend time and resources on if they are not in abundance and piloting projects might have to be adjusted to suit your needs and resources. Alternatively, consider a set of focus groups or community consultations to address and discuss your program.

Broad-Scale Implementation and Evaluation

Broad-Scale Implementation and Evaluation are the final steps! You've made it this far, researched your audience, worked through the barriers and benefits, developed a strategy and piloted your program; it's finally time to put it into action. Once the program has begun to be used "begin to collect data to ascertain its impact. Keep in mind that you will want to conduct these evaluations at different time intervals in order to assess whether your behavioural change strategy is having a long-term impact." (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011, 143)



In the end, you will want to summarize your findings. This will be helpful when reporting back to funders, getting the word out to the wider community and reflecting on the results of your campaign.

Community-Based Social Marketing has been carefully crafted to use common social marketing techniques to their full potential while encouraging a grass-roots, community-conscious focus. While many of the ideas and strategies seem common sense and simple, put together and done well, they have the potential to make social campaigns much more effective.



References:

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Community-Based Social Marketing Planning

Project: _____ Timeline: _____

Who is your project targeting?

What behaviour is being targeted? What behaviour would you like to encourage?

Are there any special considerations to remember?

Barriers	Benefits	Solutions

Where can you access your community?

Community events (Fairs, markets, and exhibitions)

Schools and children's programs

Organization facilitated workshops

Clubs, recreational groups, societies

Posters

Social Media

Radio, Newspaper, Community Calendars

Word of mouth

Communication Checklist (Adapted from Mackenzie-Mohr 108)

Is your message vivid and personal?

Have you provided a productive suggestion?

Is your message clear and specific?

Is your message easy to remember?

Does your message apply specifically to your community?

Is contact information clear and accessible?

Can your message be delivered personally?

Checklist for Prompts (Adapted from Mackenzie-Mohr 87)

Is the prompt noticeable?

Is it specific, simple, and self-explanatory?

Is it close in time and space to the behaviour?

Is it positive and encouraging the alternate behaviour?

Evaluation:

If possible create and distribute an evaluation sheet for review and funding purposes.

Number of participants: _____

What went well?

What could work better?

Follow up

What question will you ask?

How will you follow up? _____ How often? _____

Be sure to ask for permission and contact info.