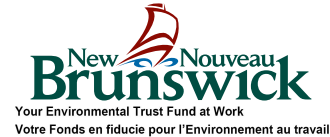


Best Practices Guide to Climate Change Awareness and Engagement

By Amanda Marlin
EOS Eco-Energy Inc.
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Introduction

EOS Eco-Energy engages the public and municipal governments in climate change issues, awareness and planning for adaptation. EOS is committed to informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering those it engages with. Successful engagement with the public is necessary not only to raise awareness of the issues but also to allow the public to have input and make decisions about the future of their communities. Successful engagement is also critical with municipal staff and councils as well as local partners and stakeholders because climate change and its impacts require a collaborated and co-ordinated approach in order for appropriate and meaningful adaptation to take place.

EOS has learned from its engagement experiences and put together the following list of best practices for raising awareness and engaging the public and partners. It provides a list of tools, approaches and processes that other communities can use and follow. It also provides some ideas for how to evaluate engagement events. In today's busy and media-filled world, engagement must be innovative, fun, exciting, eye catching, and make effective use of people's time.

Best Practice - Take Advantage of Community Events

If you want to reach the people, it is best to go to them. Have an event or information table, display or demonstration where an existing community event is taking place. Let's face it, climate change and especially mitigation measures, can be doom and gloom and no fun. People aren't going to go looking for information about what they should not be doing and for something they may not



believe is an immediate threat. But by going to events and chatting with people as they pass by, you can get your message across in a friendly and efficient way. It's important to be outgoing and friendly too. You have to almost think of yourself and your staff or volunteers as being sales people. You are selling important information. Often event organizers are happy to have more community groups involved in their events, creating a greater sense of community. Some of the types of community events to take part in and the types of activities to offer include:

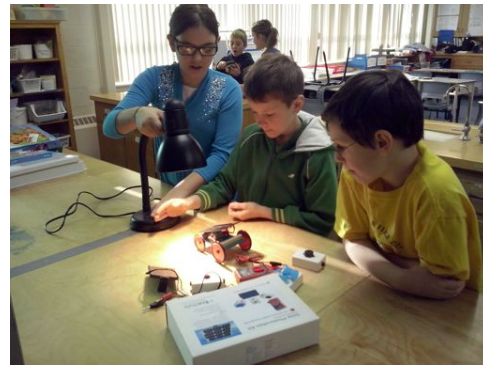
- Information table or presentation at community fundraising breakfasts (eg. Lions Club, Rotary Club, etc)
- Interactive, hands on display or booth at a summer or fall fair
- Offering eco-friendly gift wrapping services and information table at a Christmas craft show
- Setting up an information booth at a busy spot like a bank, library, post office, school or community centre

Best Practice - Engage Youth

It's a great practice to engage youth in fun and hands on activities. They will then go home and excitedly tell their parents what they did and they may influence their parents to learn more. It is also useful to offer something for children while their parents receive valuable information.

Children can be drawn to an activity or game such as a climate change scavenger

hunt, bingo game or solar toys. And their parents can be asked questions, asked for opinions or given information while the children are entertained.



Best Practice - Offer Something Back

Climate change affects all aspects of the community and requires all parts of the community to take part in a collaborative way. So it is key to be community minded when engaging in climate change awareness activities. While entry might be free to your event, you can ask for donations for the local food bank. Offer to wrap gifts at Christmas with eco-friendly wrapping. It is important to lead by example through offering something back to the community in true community spirit!

Best Practices - Prizes and Incentives

Who doesn't like the chance to win something? Incentives are one way of enticing folks to check out your display, join the conversation, engage in a meeting, etc.

Prizes can also help people reach their personal climate change goals. Prizes could include power bars, LED lights, travel mugs and rechargeable batteries to help save

energy. Or they could include a free rain barrel to help manage storm water run off and water conservation efforts. It's important to lead by example, give back a little and help out with your choice of prizes. Other incentives could include free admission to workshops on topics such as permaculture, planting rain gardens, or facilitation skills. These incentives help both the recipient and their private properties but all help to move your group's mandate forward. In addition such incentives and prizes may attract new folks to be engaged in your work, which is key.

Best Practice – Make it Fun and Bring Food

Make things fun and interesting, engage people's competitive side with games and contests. Host a photo scavenger hunt (use the template at the end of this guide). Instead of a boring low-key community meeting, host a fun pizza party. Support local businesses at the same time when choosing your catering. Free food will often bring people out! Offer a wacky display like the one here that grabs people's attention and while this one is demonstrating flood levels, it gets the message across in a fun way.



Best Practice – Collaboration

A key process to engage multiple sectors, different community groups, and different kinds of people is collaboration, which is a fancy word for teamwork and cooperation. Climate change adaptation is a huge task and it can't be achieved by one group or one individual. So building a team that can work together is vital. Host workshops that involve all key players together, have meaningful, engaging conversations, listen to each other. When planning large community events such as climate change week, be sure to ask for participation from various community groups. This also makes the issues more mainstream and not an alternative movement. Climate change will impact all aspects of our communities so it makes sense for the municipal office as well as family resource centres, food security groups, schools, emergency measures organizations, other community groups, and businesses to be involved.

Best Practice – Include all Demographics and Sectors

Planning for climate change adaptation needs to be an inclusive process. Thus outreach should be offered to all demographics and sectors, tailored to meet their needs and comfort levels. Meet with municipal staff and councilors. Have workshops for all those working in the field of climate change adaptation. Offer environmental story times for children at the local library and start discussions. Offer climate

change and renewable energy experiences for school aged youth. Let them get hands on and experiment with technology and learn the impacts of their actions. Engage seniors and the elderly to talk about what the climate used to be like in their day and how they “survived” without things like cell phones, plastic bags, disposable coffee cups, etc. By including all sorts of people, you empower them to be part of the solution and to feel personal responsibility.

Best Practice – Use the Media

Local newspapers and community radio stations can be great allies for getting your message across. They are looking for the news you have to offer. But be sure you know the message you want to get across and stick to it. In today’s media and tech-savvy world, it’s important not to leave social media out. Messages, ideas and requests for input and discussion can take place really easily and quickly on Facebook or Twitter. Also take advantage of online community calendars and websites.

Best Practice – Keep Momentum

It’s important to maintain interest in the issues. It’s too easy for people to be interested one minute but then go back to their normal lives and routines the next. Keep at it. It takes a lot of energy and devotion. Don’t sound like a broken record though. It’s important to constantly present information and concerns about the future impacts of climate change in new and different ways. Build a time machine, have a magic show, be creative. Do regular events such as Solar Sundays, which promote solar power and alternative energy. Offer events and activities year round, tailored to the season. Have a picnic with a solar cooker in the summer. Talk about saving energy with insulation in the winter. Have an artistic display around flood risks leading up to hurricane season. Plant rain gardens in the spring.

Best Practice – Make it a Big Deal

If you want to make a big impact, then go all out. Have a big climate change festival, or organize a climate change week. Include many different groups and different kinds of outreach including films, talks by experts, gardening workshops, children’s story time, electric cars, contests to save energy, and more! Have fun with it and celebrate what can be done to mitigate and to adapt. Give people tools and resources and remind them why it’s important. Have people tell stories of impacts elsewhere such as the Calgary floods.



Best Practice – Remember it's a Process

Raising awareness and engaging the public and partner groups is an ongoing process and it's essential to remember that. It's key to set out engagement activities and make sure they compliment each other and advance your goals forward. For example, start by getting municipal leaders on side. Then work with key partner groups and eventually offer information and engagement sessions for the public. Sometimes, depending on the issues, it is better to start from the ground up and work with concerned members of the public and then approach municipal government. If you need everyone to be on the same page and have the same language before making decisions, then start with a workshop that gives them the right tools before jumping into a decision making process. If you are creating a local action plan, don't forget during the process to include indicators of success, timelines and who is committed to lead and complete the action.

Best Practice – Evaluation

Evaluating the true benefits of outreach activities goes beyond measuring results such as the number of people at events, the number of hits on a website or the number of workshops you hosted. How do you really know if people got the message? Often before and after surveys are used. These are fine if they are quick and easy for people to fill in. You can also use stickers (see below) or pompoms. Get people to put their sticker on a scale of how much they learned, or how much they liked the session or the booth or the activity. Or throw a pompom into the bowl that best represents their opinion. Make the evaluation just as interactive and engaging as the outreach activity itself. Evaluation forms can be done at the end of workshops and events as well. But how do you know if people are making changes in their daily lives to live more sustainably and to take steps to prepare for and adapt to climate change? Counting heads at meetings is easy and writing up surveys and evaluation sheets isn't too hard either, but evaluating actions and changes in behavior requires some detective skills and a full awareness of your community. Have you noticed that new bylaws or flood risk maps were passed quite easily, and you know there would have been more opposition in the past? Are you noticing more rain barrels on the sides of homes? Has a new carpooling notice board gone up and you had nothing to do with? Are more people asking about solar hot water? Is there a new hybrid vehicle in town? Has it become easier to get more people out to climate change awareness events? Are new people engaged in community discussions now? Is the local town council taking actions to become more sustainable? In order to engage the community and to evaluate the effectiveness of that engagement, outreach practitioners must also be engaged in their communities.





EOS Eco-Energy's Holiday Climate Change Scavenger Hunt

Grab your smart phone or digital camera and hunt for things that are helping to address climate change in locally. Prizes to be won!

Got it	Scavenger hunt item	Explanation
	1. A hybrid vehicle	Hybrid vehicles help reduce reliance on fossil fuels and decrease carbon monoxide (CO ₂) emissions, which cause global warming.
	2. Locally farmed food or a locally made Christmas gift	Buying local decreases transportation, which decreases fossil fuel use and reliance. Buying local also helps the local economy and improves self-sufficiency.
	3. LED Christmas lights	LED Christmas lights use a fraction of the energy that regular lights do! A strand of 50 regular lights uses 300 watts but 50 LED lights use only 4 watts!
	4. A solar panel	Solar panels use no fossil fuels to create energy and heat water. Renewable solar power is getting more affordable too!
	5. A bicycle	Use your own energy to get around town instead of gas.
	6. Logo of a group in town that works on climate change projects.	The Tantramar area has a lot of local expertise on climate change and how to adapt.
	7. A wetland or wooded area	Wetlands are carbon sinks and trees take in carbon dioxide – they help combat the greenhouse effect.
	8. A street sign of a street that is at risk of flooding	Many areas in Tantramar are low-lying and at risk of flooding from climate change and increasing intensity and frequency of storms and storm surges.
	9. A local resident who is addressing the climate change challenge	Many residents across Tantramar are doing their part to slow climate change impacts and adapt.
	10. Energy Star appliance	Energy Star appliances use the least amount of energy. Reducing energy also reduces the use fossil fuels, and greenhouse gas emissions.
	11. A rain garden or a rain barrel	Rain gardens are a natural way to deal with storm water runoff. We will see more intense storms more often with climate change. Rain barrels help conserve water. Climate change research predicts higher yearly precipitation but in fewer more intense storms. So rain barrels can help conserve water for periods of drought.
	12. Visible remains of past flooding	The Tantramar region has experienced flooding in the past and the risk of future flooding is increasing.
	13. Eco-friendly gift wrapping	Think green this holiday season and choose eco-friendly gift wrapping options to save energy and save garbage.

Group contact person: _____

Number of people in your group: _____

Phone number: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

