

Social Marketing may be a Way Past Food Scraps Program Perceptions and Behavioral Barriers - Results from a Detailed Social Marketing Project

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Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) is not social media- but it is a “buzz” in outreach circles. CBSM is the process of using tested and tailored marketing techniques and sociology to positively change behavior. CBSM uses tools such as prompts, social norms, and incentives to encourage target audiences to “purchase” certain behaviors. Unlike traditional marketing, CBSM does not sell a good but instead sells a behavior. This presentation will share the results of a groundbreaking experiment in Colorado to test the costs and impacts of various CBSM outreach methods. Although there have been scores of studies on CBSM, this is one of the first published studies that actually tests the costs, impacts, and behavior retention of various outreach treatments.

The experimental design includes a control route and two tests routes in which social marketing’s impact on residential tonnages and diversion was analyzed over two years. The results will allow communities to see what education expenditures are the most cost effective and which are most costly. Is it better to invest money in Facebook and new web sites or to spend money on less sexy and more time intensive activities such as mailers and door-to-door outreach? How long after conducting outreach will a target audience continue to undertake a behavior? Does door-to-door show cost-effective potential for getting residents past perceptual and behavioral barriers on food scraps programs?

We compare the costs, impacts, and cost-effectiveness per diverted ton (and cost per MTCE) for outreach, CBSM, recycling, yard waste (with and without food scraps) and other program alternatives for diverting tonnage from landfills. Additionally, the presentation will review the steps a community can take to design and conduct a Community Based Social Marketing Campaign on their own to help them get to that next level of diversion, and the tradeoffs involved, to help communities develop their own CBSM programs for yard waste, food scraps (and other) programs.