



Community Outreach: Gaining Support for Smart Investments

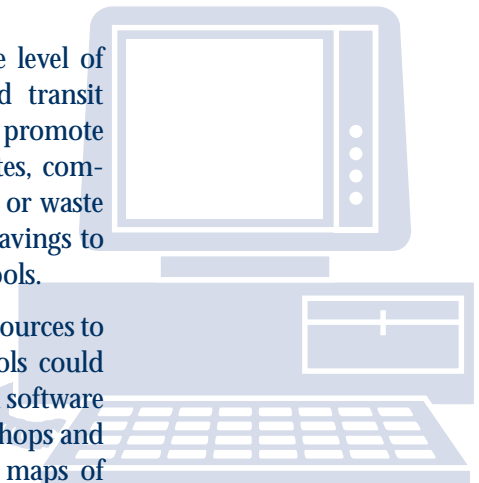
■ THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SUPPORT

Many Smart Investments highlighted in this guide require the active involvement and support of local residents and community leaders. Some may require voters to support policy changes or authorize bond measures to finance initial costs. Others may succeed only if residents or local business people are won over to making changes in their lifestyles, habits or market preferences. Expanded and improved transit systems, for example, are of little value if residents and local business employees do not use them. Conserving municipal water supplies to save operating costs for water treatment and distribution systems ultimately depends on the willingness and ability of residents, businesses, and industries to reduce their water consumption. In addition, some services, such as solid waste disposal, may be perceived in the community as “free,” making it difficult for residents to understand the need for “new” pricing systems or changes in the nature and level of service. Community outreach and education efforts that ensure support for changes in the ways local governments provide basic services are thus a critical component of any Smart Investment plan.

■ COMMUNITY OUTREACH TOOLS

Effective community outreach strategies generally draw on some combination of four basic tools: education, motivation, facilitation and direct implementation.

- **Education** tools inform the public about programs and include bill inserts, mass mailings, videos, media campaigns, telephone hotlines, Internet sites and other ways of raising public awareness.
- **Motivation** tools employ incentives and techniques to raise the level of community participation. Motivation tools include discounted transit passes, free showers and bicycle lockers in downtown buildings to promote bicycle commuting, business challenges to increase recycling rates, community events, and billboards tallying cumulative energy savings or waste reductions. Economic incentives, such as returning energy cost savings to the responsible departments, can be very effective motivational tools.
- **Facilitation** tools disseminate technical information and other resources to assist the community in carrying out programs. Facilitation tools could include a wide range of materials — everything from manuals and software for calculating energy savings, waste minimization training workshops and water conservation audits, to directories of local recyclers and maps of



bicycle commuting routes. The Global Action Plan (GAP) is gaining support in many communities as a grassroots facilitation tool (see sidebar).

- **Implementation** strategies are hands-on programs that utilize local government resources to make new practices a reality. They include direct installation of low-flow plumbing fixtures by local government crews, construction of telecommuting centers and implementation of curbside recycling programs.

DEVELOPING AN OUTREACH STRATEGY

City and county managers should draw on all of the tools described above in developing community outreach strategies for making Smart Investments. The appropriate strategy and combination of tools for ensuring maximum effectiveness of a particular investment will depend on the nature and objective of the investment as well as on the character and interests of the targeted groups.

The development of an outreach strategy that will effectively change the behavior of the targeted groups entails the following steps.

1. Identify the audience. The groups involved in change may be local government departments, local businesses and/or citizens. Identifying the groups critical to ensuring success will provide the basis for the outreach strategy.
2. Identify the factors that will make change attractive to different groups. Understanding how different groups perceive the change and its benefits for them will help determine the message necessary to gain their support.
3. Evaluate any actual or perceived barriers to change. Perceived barriers can often be overcome with information and education tools, while actual barriers may require local government involvement in the form of facilitation and implementation.
4. Determine the type of information and assistance critical to bringing about the change, based on the understanding of the factors and barriers identified in the previous steps.
5. Identify the best tools for motivating change among each of the interest groups.

SUCCESSFUL LOCAL INITIATIVES

Many local government programs profiled in this guide have successfully developed outreach strategies that employ a wide variety of outreach tools to gain community support for Smart Investments. Highlighted below are the outreach tools that have made four such programs especially successful.

GO BOULDER — TRANSIT AND COMMUTING ALTERNATIVES

GO Boulder is a comprehensive program to promote various forms of alternative commuting in Boulder, Colorado, including bicycling, public transit and car-



THE GLOBAL ACTION PLAN: TURNING AWARENESS INTO ACTION

The Global Action Plan (GAP) is an innovative facilitation tool for building grassroots support and commitment.

- Household EcoTeams of friends, family members, neighbors, or co-workers undertake behavior changes that foster sustainable lifestyles.
- The Household EcoTeam Workbook provides detailed guidance for a six-step plan of environmental action:
 - reduce garbage;
 - improve home water efficiency;
 - improve home energy efficiency;
 - improve transportation efficiency;
 - be an eco-wise consumer;
 - empower others.

pooling. Its success results from extensive use of education, motivation and facilitation tools. Go Boulder can be reached at (303) 413-7304, or on the Internet at <http://bcn.boulder.co.us/transportation/go-boulder/center.htm>.

► EDUCATION TOOLS

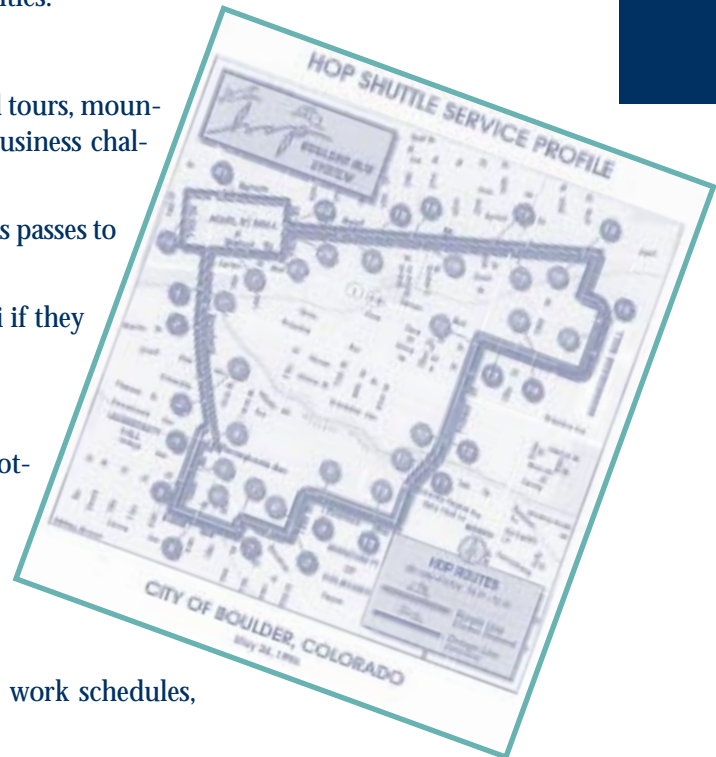
- Telephone hotline for information on transportation alternatives.
- Internet site providing information on GO Boulder activities.

► MOTIVATION TOOLS

- Bike Week. This community event includes bike races and tours, mountain biking, bike to work day, bike safety clinics and a business challenge.
- ECO Pass allows employers to offer discounted annual bus passes to employees.
- ECO Pass holders are guaranteed a free ride home by taxi if they have to work late unexpectedly or have an emergency.

► FACILITATION TOOLS

- Bicycle safety tips available by calling the GO Boulder hotline.
- Bike and bus maps.
- Boulder Ride Arrangers. This is a free computerized service that matches compatible commuters.
- Information for businesses about flex time, compressed work schedules, variable work hours and telecommuting.
- Transportation planning services for local businesses. On request, GO Boulder will develop and recommend a plan for more efficient and economical employee transportation alternatives.
- Employee Transportation Coordinator training. GO Boulder trains representatives of local businesses to provide in-house support and information on commuting alternatives. Coordinators hold monthly breakfast meetings to share ideas.



TRI-MET — TRANSIT CHOICES FOR LIVABILITY

Tri-Met's aggressive plan to develop light rail and other public transit systems that support community growth in Portland, Oregon includes significant outreach and public involvement efforts drawing on a full range of education, motivation, facilitation and implementation tools. Information on the Transit Choices program is available at Tri-Met's Internet site at <http://www.tri-met.org>.

► EDUCATION TOOLS

- Telephone lines for information on employer commuting programs, handicapped access and park and ride services.
- Internet site includes schedule and route information.

► **MOTIVATION TOOLS**

- Free parking at nearly 60 park and ride lots.
- Bicycle racks on Tri-Met buses let cyclists with permits (\$5) use public transit.
- Reduced downtown parking rates for carpoolers.
- Reduced transit fares for seniors and disabled passengers.

► **FACILITATION TOOLS**

- On-site transportation promotions for local businesses and training for company representatives on the “how-to” of using Tri-Met and carpooling.
- “Do-it-yourself” guide for planning and implementing alternative employee commuting programs.
- Transit Choices for Livability — a series of community workshops held in Portland’s fastest growing suburbs to identify neighborhood transit needs and solicit residents’ input in the design and location of new bus and light rail routes.

► **IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS**

- Door-to-door ride service for disabled customers unable to use regular public transit.
- The 750 ideas generated in the Transit Choices for Livability workshops are the basis for pilot projects, including new bus routes, more frequent service and bus stop upgrades for the communities of Beaverton, Gresham, Hillsboro and Oregon City.

SANTA MONICA’S BAY SAVER PROGRAM

Santa Monica’s Bay Saver program promotes the use of low-flow plumbing fixtures and other water conservation measures, using education, motivation, facilitation and implementation tools. More information on the Bay Saver Program may be obtained by contacting Dean Kubani in the City of Santa Monica Environmental Programs Division, at (310) 458-2227, or by accessing the Division’s Internet site at <http://pen.ci.santa-monica.ca.us/environment>.

► **EDUCATION TOOLS**

- Water bill inserts promoting conservation.
- Displays at plumbing stores and home improvement centers.
- Media campaign; newspaper, radio and TV public service ads and announcements.
- Information packets distributed on request.
- Water conservation educational programs for local schools.

► MOTIVATION TOOLS

- Demonstration of sustainable gardens at City Hall and the Civic Auditorium.

► FACILITATION TOOLS

- On-site residential, commercial, and industrial water use surveys to identify conservation opportunities.
- Annual sustainable landscape workshops for residents and landscape professionals.

► IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

- 1,000 ultra low-flow toilets distributed free of charge to property owners at a special “kick-off” ceremony.
- City-funded water efficiency revolving loan fund provides interest-free loans to institutional, commercial and residential water customers to pay for plumbing fixture retrofits, irrigation system upgrades and other conservation measures.

AUSTIN'S GREEN BUILDER PROGRAM

Austin's Green Builder Program has received awards and widespread recognition for its accomplishments in promoting energy conservation, water conservation and other sustainable practices in residential construction. The program's success is due in part to extensive community outreach efforts utilizing education, motivation and facilitation tools. Information on the Green Builder Program, as well as links to the city's [Green Builder News](#) and a variety of articles on green building practices, can be found on the program's Internet site at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/greenbuilder>.

► EDUCATION TOOLS

- Information for prospective buyers on the value and availability of green homes.
- Customer service telephone number.
- Newsletter, fact sheets and brochures.
- Informational newspaper advertisements.

► MOTIVATION TOOLS

- Partnerships with building associations, environmental organizations, businesses, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and other organizations.

► FACILITATION TOOLS

- Technical guidance and marketing assistance for building professionals using and promoting green building practices.
- Program provides buyer referrals and a directory of participating building professionals.
- Detailed technical guide to green building practices.