

Empowerment INSTITUTE

SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE CAMPAIGN

*A MUNICIPAL TOOL ENABLING CITIZENS TO CONSERVE THE COMMUNITY'S
NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROTECT ITS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY*

Environmental policy in the United States has run up against what many consider a stone wall -- individual behavior. Whereas many prior problems could be resolved or minimized by regulations on producers, today's problems, or the next steps in ongoing improvements, require some change on the part of consumers.

Willet Kempton, University of Delaware
Dorothy Holland, University of North Carolina
"The U.S. Environmental Movement
as a Context of Behavior Change"

Empowerment Institute's Sustainable Lifestyle Campaign is skillfully designed to be attractive to individuals, local governments, and businesses... (It) has demonstrated results...it can make a real difference. In our work with communities across America this is exactly the sort of tool for which they are searching.

Molly Olson, Executive Director
President's Council on Sustainable Development

Empowerment Institute's Sustainable Lifestyle Campaign is a highly effective new tool for environmental protection. We see it as a significant opportunity to achieve citizen behavior change which has been one of our most difficult challenges in advancing environmental protection. Your program couldn't be more timely.

Lang Marsh, Director,
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

We are all optimistic here. You have the entire household involved in a voluntary way instead of having a program that is mandated by the government. This is at the most grassroots level possible, and that makes it more effective.

Mike Lindberg, Commissioner of Public Utilities,
City of Portland, OR

The potential resource savings are tremendous...and what's truly exciting about the EcoTeam approach is that it can serve as a catalyst to creating a more sustainable community.

Ava Frisinger, Mayor, City of Issaquah, WA

THE NEED: STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES BY HOUSEHOLDS AND MUNICIPALITIES

Households play an essential role in the creation of more environmentally sustainable communities. Between 35% to 85% of a community's natural resources are used at the household level with up to 75% of these resources wasted through inefficiency and lack of awareness. Households are also a major source of a community's environmental pollution through auto emissions and toxic chemicals entering the ground water. In most communities, the financial burden of this inefficiency and environmental pollution falls upon municipalities as the primary accountable party responsible for providing services such as water, water treatment, landfills, roads and environmental quality.

"The [EI] approach opens up a new category of policy instruments having to do with voluntary change. The [EI] program is more sophisticated than information campaigns, since it gives people the personal support they need to change their ingrained habits of how they use resources."

Paul de Jongh, Deputy Director General for Environmental Protection, The Netherlands, Author, Dutch "Green Plan"

"I had thought about all the things I should do and talked about doing them before the EcoTeam Program; but it took the workbook and group support to turn my thinking and talking into specific and concrete actions. And the changes were relatively easy."

Pat Spindel,
EcoTeam Member
St. Louis, MO

"This program is the first step-by-step plan for turning environmental concern into action."

The Chicago Tribune

"I feel this program is superb, not only because of what it has done for me, but because it has the potential to do so much for the community."

Krista M. Schauer,
EcoTeam Member
Portland, OR

"A movement... of unquestionable zeal is challenging consumption at the grass roots...local support groups called EcoTeams are methodically helping members reduce the amount and kind of material that flows in and out of homes."

The New York Times

In today's fiscal climate, local governments have less money than ever before to provide these essential services to the community. Short of raising taxes or reducing services—not politically feasible in most communities—the only alternative is being more cost-effective. One of the major opportunities for cost containment is helping citizens better steward the community's natural resources. Developing a demand-side management approach is all the more critical in communities experiencing rapid population growth.

With these incentives, municipalities are motivated to help citizens develop lifestyle practices that conserve natural resources and protect the environment. Citizens are generally willing to cooperate, but have a hard time changing ingrained habits. Traditional methods used by municipalities—information and financial incentives—while achieving awareness and some behavior change, are not adequate for helping people change lifelong habits. And they are not tapping the enormous potential for resource savings that citizens are willing and able to achieve.¹ Municipalities need new tools to enable voluntary citizen behavior change.

THE SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE CAMPAIGN

Empowerment Institute (EI), over the past 13 years working with over 30,000 people in the U.S., has developed a program and delivery strategy that effectively responds to this need of local government agencies. Its Household EcoTeam Program empowers individuals to adopt environmentally sustainable lifestyle practices. EI's Sustainable Lifestyle Campaign brings the EcoTeam Program to municipalities through service contracts with local government agencies and utilities to help them achieve their resource conservation and environmental protection objectives. The Campaign is also attractive to municipalities because of its ability to create neighborhood social cohesiveness and an engaged citizenry.

Citizen participation is achieved by identifying motivated individuals in neighborhoods, and helping them reach out to other neighbors to start the initial EcoTeams. To promote steady growth in participation, EI has designed a dynamic recruitment process. Near the end of the EcoTeam Program participants are taught how to invite their neighbors to informational events hosted in one of their homes. At these gatherings, neighbors learn about the program and decide if they want to join a team. Using this process, EcoTeams consistently start new neighborhood teams.

The Campaigns are customized to meet the specific needs of each community and can either be delivered by municipal staff who receive comprehensive training and coaching or directly by EI.

¹ "A Study of the Market Potential for the EcoTeam Program" Elizabeth Denny, Market Street Research, Northampton, MA 1996. This independent market research study documents, through randomly selected phone surveys, the large market potential for the EcoTeam Program. This market potential is corroborated with other studies and surveys done in the past several years indicating significant willingness of Americans to develop resource-efficient lifestyle practices. It also documents that EcoTeams achieve large resource savings and sustain them over time.

"The Environmental Services Department has researched multiple programs and approaches to provide the desired proactive waste prevention education. EcoTeams were the only program that successfully produced measurable resource savings and sustained behavior change."

Alisa Wade, Environmental Services Department
City of San Jose, CA

"This is no frivolous undertaking. It's not just a matter of getting new information... A lot of citizens already know things they could do to reduce the toll they take on the environment, but [EI's] structured group meetings help people put that knowledge to work and actually change their lifestyles."

The Chattanooga Times

"I've lived in the neighborhood for 21 years, but getting to know my neighbors started three years ago with an EcoTeam. We knew a lot of people by sight, but now we know them much better. There is a lot more friendliness on the streets now. It's given us the feeling of being embedded in the community and having roots. I highly recommend the neighborhood EcoTeam process."

Sarah Conn,
EcoTeam member,
West Newton, MA

"One of the most enlightening and useful programs that I have had the privilege to encounter... (It) provides a starting point for America's citizens and communities to begin the journey of becoming more sustainable."

Michele Perrault, Past
President The Sierra Club

"The program offers a common sense approach to environmentalism. [One participant says] 'I love our neighborhood and this is an opportunity for us to make it an even nicer place to live together'."

The Boston Globe

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The Household EcoTeam Program is simple and strategic. Five or six neighborhood households—an EcoTeam—meet eight times over a four-month period, with the help of a step-by-step workbook and trained volunteer coach. Choosing from a series of practical actions, the team supports one another to reduce waste, use less water and energy, buy “eco-wise” products, reduce air and water pollution, and encourage other neighbors to get involved. More than increasing awareness, the EcoTeam Program enables people to change the way they live—measurably.

Depending upon the community, participants in the Household EcoTeam Program achieve the following average resource savings per year:

35% - 51% less garbage sent into the waste stream
25% - 34% less water used
9% - 17% less energy used
16% - 20% less fuel used for transportation
\$227 - \$389 saved through more efficient use of resources

All while improving the quality of life right where they live!

A less measurable feature of the campaign is the community and social capital building dimension of the neighborhood campaigns. People meet their neighbors and begin acting as a community, often for the first time.

THE BENEFITS

The benefits of EI's Sustainable Lifestyle Campaign go well beyond the percentage reductions in resource use and waste. While local circumstances influence the nature of these benefits, municipalities can look forward to:

- ◆ **Direct financial savings.** By serving more people and serving them longer before new landfills, roads and utilities have to be built and operated, substantial financial savings are possible.
- ◆ **Enhancing community environmental quality.** From reduced air and water pollution to fewer problems with toxic and hazardous substances to less traffic congestion, communities will be cleaner, safer, and higher quality places to live.
- ◆ **Promoting existing environmental programs.** Many communities have invested substantially in environmental programs. The EcoTeam program can contribute to making these investments more productive through increasing participation and awareness.
- ◆ **Strengthening the fabric of the community** by reinforcing neighborhood relationships and enhancing the capacity of citizens to take responsibility for helping themselves and each other.
- ◆ **Expanding environmental literacy** and building a citizenry that is environmentally motivated.
- ◆ **Increasing local government revenues.** As Mayor Donald Fraser of Minneapolis observed, "The EcoTeam program demonstrates success... (It) can help change behavior so that the buses and trains are full of paying passengers..."

"The process works even for those who consider themselves hard-core environmentalists...[A senior sales executive and an EcoTeam member says] 'As a result of the awareness the group has brought us, we all have changed our consumption habits and our lifestyles, in the products we purchase, [and] the utilities we use'."

The Philadelphia Inquirer

"The EcoTeam program is the most practical and well implemented program to help people create environmentally sustainable lifestyles."

Daphne Gemmill,
Exec. Dir., Project
Earthlink, NOAA
U.S. Dept. of Commerce

"When you put things in small, workable chunks as [EI] has done here, it's easier for people to accomplish things and follow through."

Maria Sichel,
EcoTeam Coach
Medway, MA

"[EI] provides a unique approach to help every component of the city, from citizens to industry, deal with these issues... We have to change the attitudes and values of every citizen, in every aspect of their lives, to the point where they automatically think sustainably."

David Crockett,
City Councillor
City of Chattanooga, TN

"Unique and effective... [Empowerment Institute] is a model organization in its agenda and its leadership... responsible and enlightened."

Honorable
Maurice Hinchey,
Committee on
Natural Resources,
Congress of the
United States

◆ **Retaining dollars in the local economy** that would, without the EcoTeam Program, leave the community. This adds to employment, business and personal earnings and tax revenues.

◆ **Achieving more effective, economical, and equitable compliance** with state and federal environmental regulations and requirements.

◆ **Improving the relationship between local government and its citizens.** By building active working partnerships with citizens to recycle, rideshare, and conserve resources, the EcoTeam Program can be a powerful force to strengthen the relationship between local government and the community.

◆ **Building consumer demand** for environmentally sustainable products and services so that it is economically profitable for businesses to meet this demand.

◆ **Starting a process that catalyzes citizen participation in creating a sustainable community**—where progress toward the interdependent goals of prosperity, social equity, environmental protection, governmental efficiency and a higher quality of life can be sustained for the generations to come.

ABOUT EMPOWERMENT INSTITUTE

Empowerment Institute is the world's premiere consulting and training organization specializing in the methodology of empowerment. Its state-of-the-art empowerment tools have been applied over the past three decades to achieve significant and measurable behavior change at the community and organizational level. Its clients consist of public sector agencies, non profits and corporations.

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