

# LIVABLE NEIGHBORHOOD WATER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

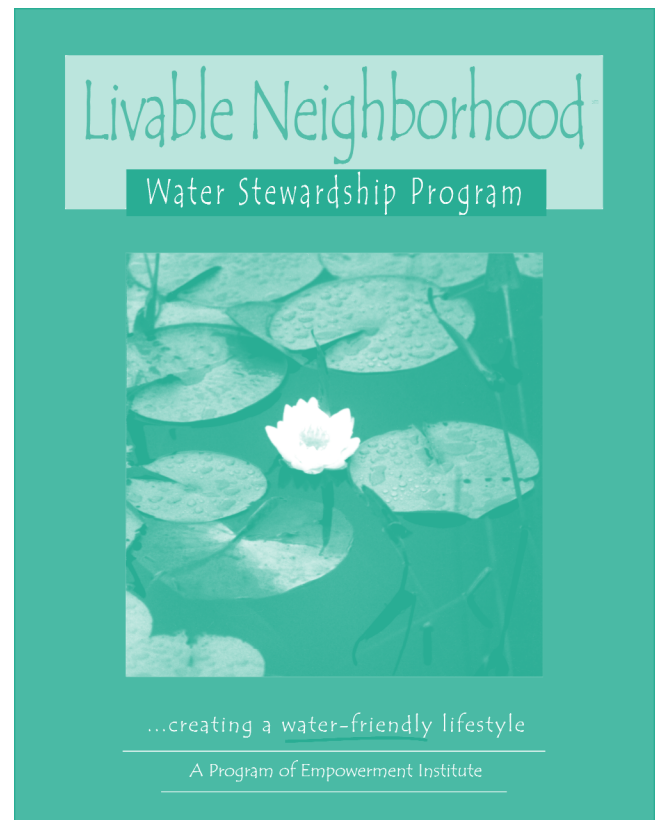
## A Non Point Source Residential Behavior Change and Public Participation Strategy

### OVERVIEW

A foundation for the success of any watershed organization or local government involved in watershed protection is reducing household non point source pollution. Indeed, having an effective residential non point source education and outreach program has now become a necessity for communities affected by US EPA's Phase II NPDES Storm Water Requirements. Watershed organizations and local governments need tools that move citizens beyond awareness to behavior change; and generate enough participation to make a measurable difference in non point source pollution in their watershed.

Empowerment Institute (EI) has a proven track record in community-based household behavior change programs, citizen recruitment strategies and management systems. These programs have successfully changed environmental behaviors of over 150,000 people in the US, Canada and Europe. Dozens of local government and non profit organizations have utilized these tools to achieve their program objectives. Studies indicate EI's programs are successful in achieving and sustaining significant behavior change. One major academic study stated these tools are "unsurpassed in changing behavior."

EI has applied this expertise to designing a residential non point source behavior change and outreach program. The long-term goal of this program is to strengthen the capacity of local governments and watershed organizations in implementing an effective residential non point source pollution strategy. The program may be used in a generic format or can be customized to meet the specific needs of the municipality or non profit organization. It is delivered by municipal or non profit staff who receive program materials, comprehensive training and coaching from EI.



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Aileen Winquist, Environmental Planner  
Department of Environmental Services, Arlington County, Virginia

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## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

"We enjoyed getting to know each other better. We all had a strong appreciation for the individualized nature of the program, which encouraged us to choose the actions each of us wanted. We found the workbook easy to use and take the actions because they were laid out step-by-step. At one of our meetings, we invited the City arborist as a guest speaker to help us implement some of our actions. One household on the team was awarded a small grant to transform their yard to a more water-friendly environment. They uncovered a stream, removed grass and added native plants."

**Laurie Huber: Team Leader  
Falls Church, VA**

"My team of neighbors joined for a wide variety of reasons. One teammate decided to join because 'the program was so well laid out and fun.' Another teammate was very interested in the individual actions that he could take. A third teammate said she wanted to take water stewardship actions, and that the support network would help her follow through. Our team rated getting to know each other better very highly."

**Stacey Churchill: Team Leader  
Fredericksburg, VA**

"Our team consisted of a condominium complex in the Falls Church, VA area. We all really enjoyed the program and thought it was very worthwhile. We got to know each other while learning about things we could do right now to have a positive impact on our watershed. As the head of the Grounds Keeping Committee, I was able to instruct the grounds keeping crew to discontinue using pesticides and herbicides, start composting, and cut the grass higher."

**Sandy Tarpinian: Team Leader  
Falls Church, VA**

"My neighbors responded very enthusiastically to the invitation to join a Water Stewardship Team and were ready to move into action immediately. Our team was very diverse, with renters and homeowners alike. Everyone on the team expressed an interest in installing rain barrels. Our team also enjoyed the community building aspect, and held a clean-up of the alley behind our row house in which all neighborhood households participated. We cleared debris, planted grass and herbs, and built communal gardens in the courtyards that had previously silted with storm water runoff. With all the chaos in the world right now, it's so nice that we can do something positive on our own."

**Kate Watters: Team Leader  
Alexandria, VA**

## THE PROGRAM TOOLS

1. *A 65-page workbook entitled: Livable Neighborhood Water Stewardship Program: Creating a Water Friendly Lifestyle.* This contains 32 behavior change actions and action plans for each of three topics: water quality, water conservation and community volunteering/advocacy. It can be customized to include a local introduction, community resources and statements from elected officials.
2. *A 43-page Team Leader Handbook.* This provides detailed scripts for neighbor-to-neighbor recruitment, and leadership of the 5 program meetings: neighborhood gathering, team-building, water quality, water conservation and community volunteering/advocacy. It also provides materials for team management.
3. *A 7-page water friendly lifestyle assessment.* This generates the pre- and post program household behavior change information. It provides households and funding partners quantifiable feedback on the behaviors taken and their environmental impacts.
4. *A one-day Team Leader training.* In the training, Team Leaders learn to apply Empowerment Institute's sophisticated, yet easy-to-use program tools of neighbor-to-neighbor recruitment, meeting facilitation and coaching.
5. *A capacity building program for local governments and watershed organizations.* This includes all of the above tools and management systems necessary to implement the program on a community or regional level.

## HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

1. The program's goal is to help individuals take the necessary actions to better steward their community's water resources.
  2. The program is done as part of a neighborhood team of 5 to 8 households. The team aspect provides the support and motivation to carry out the actions while establishing the relationships necessary to create a more livable neighborhood.
  3. The format consists of five meetings conducted every two weeks. The meetings last approximately 2 hours, followed by several hours between meetings to take the water stewardship actions.
  4. The team building meeting is the foundation for all the work that follows. Individuals prepare for the program, build a team, learn about their current environmental impact and discover opportunities to make improvements.
  5. Before each meeting, participants read the actions from the related workbook pages and decide which ones they wish to take. Then they enter
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the day and time they plan to do their actions in the Action Log, at the beginning of each section. They discuss their plan with the rest of their household to get their ideas and participation. They bring their Action Log to the meeting along with any requests they might have for team support.

6. At the meeting, they review the actions they have taken over the prior two weeks and share their action plan for the next two weeks. Their team helps them fine tune their plan and provides support and inspiration to carry it out.

## QUANTIFIABLE RESULTS

In its pilot phase, the program achieved the following results. These results will vary from community to community.

- ▷ 43% recruitment rate in neighbor-to-neighbor outreach
- ▷ 8 households per team
- ▷ 10 actions completed per team member
- ▷ 29% annualized water savings per household
- ▷ 32,000 annualized gallons of water saved per household

A less measurable feature was the social capital built. Program participants met their neighbors and began acting as a community, often for the first time, to build more socially cohesive, safer and healthier neighborhoods. They were transformed from residents to neighbors and from neighbors to engaged citizens.

## ABOUT EMPOWERMENT INSTITUTE

Empowerment Institute (EI) is an international consulting, training and project management company. It specializes in behavior change program design, organizational capacity building and implementation of large scale community and organizational transformation projects. Its clients consist of public sector agencies, non profits and corporations. The following represents its core competencies developed and tested over the past 25 years.

*Proven behavior change and participation tools:* EI has developed a highly effective set of tools for behavior change and voluntary participation. Working with over 150,000 people, these empowerment tools have produced significant and measurable behavior change and participation in a wide diversity of communities and organizations. These tools include behavior change program design, peer-to-peer recruitment, peer support group meetings, leadership training and empowerment coaching.

"All eight team members committed to accomplishing as many actions as we could. Between meetings we used the buddy system to increase our accountability. At our final meeting, we committed to address actions in the larger community context. Among the actions we plan to take are advocating in our municipality to reduce the amount of salt used by road crews in the wintertime."

**Elenor Hodges: Team Leader  
Arlington County, VA**

"Our team lives in a rural area where everyone is on wells. The big issue for our neighborhood is shallow wells that run dry under drought conditions. Our team was very interested in how we could use water wisely so we aren't left high and dry in the summertime. In addition, two of our team members were teenagers, who were very interested in experimenting with nontoxic cleaners in their homes. All of my team members reported that they enjoyed their team experience."

**Jane Bailey: Team Leader  
Fredericksburg, VA**

"Our team consisted of 5 condo dwellers. They enthusiastically embraced the concept that there were things they could do individually and collectively to protect our watershed. We applied for a mini-grant to plant trees around our building. We also made a long-term plan to install a rain barrel and consult with our grounds crew on creating a rain garden."

**Scott Knudsen: Team Leader  
Alexandria, VA**

## GOVERNMENT AND WATERSHED ORGANIZATION PARTNERS FEEDBACK

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"Our river conservation group has struggled for years to develop an effective way to engage and motivate citizens in NPS control activities. The Livable Neighborhood Water Stewardship Program is the first tool we have found that really works. The Program's focus on neighbor-to-neighbor interaction, along with its highly structured approach are what makes it much more than just another book with good ideas. We believe this program holds great promise for helping communities develop concrete programs for achieving quantitative NPS reductions. In particular, communities seeking to respond to Phase II Stormwater requirements should be able to use this approach both to meet educational goals, and to secure additional pollutant reductions."

**John Tippett, Executive Director  
Friends of the Rappahannock  
Fredericksburg, Virginia**

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"Measuring the impact of outreach about NPS pollution is a challenge, especially for local governments whose budgets for education/outreach are often limited. And even if we can measure how many people have seen or heard our message, how do we know if they have made any concrete behavioral changes as a result? Empowerment Institute's Water Stewardship Program has allowed us to track exactly what changes people made in their lifestyle, and estimate the pollution reduction that results from those changes. It's definitely an exciting new tool for behavioral change. And one of its unique features is how much fun people have getting together with their neighbors while working on these issues."

**Aileen Winquist, Environmental Planner  
Department of Environmental Services  
Arlington County, Virginia**

"Creating watershed stewardship teams has been a powerful outreach tool for our community. It has been exciting to observe the teams in action as they complete projects in their homes, yards, and neighborhoods. In addition, I was struck by the program's ability to successfully attract Team Leaders. Team Leaders, in turn, indicated the program provided them multiple benefits including the leadership skills of coaching, group facilitation, project management and community organizing."

**Elenor Hodges, Executive Director  
Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment  
Arlington County, Virginia**

"The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is excited about Empowerment Institute's Water Stewardship Program. Our tributary strategies workgroup, which I co-chair, recognizes the critical role of behavior change in both meeting our nutrient and sediment goals, and in maintaining them over time. This program will help us quantify the water quality impacts of behavior change, which has been so elusive up to now. We will inform local governments of this program and how they can apply it to fulfill their watershed management and NPDES objectives. This program can serve as an essential component of their watershed plan."

**Lauren Wenzel, Deputy Director Education,  
Bay Policy, and Growth Management Unit  
Maryland Department of Natural Resources**

"We, at the National Park Service, are pleased to be working with the Empowerment Institute. We are using the Institute's excellent community engagement and behavior change tools to further our work with watershed organizations and neighborhood groups in several regions of the country."

**Robert Potter, Program Manager  
Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance  
Northeast Region, National Park Service**

These empowerment tools have been continually refined over many years and at this point are considered by many the state-of-the-art. One major academic research study reported that this model "is unsurpassed in changing behavior."

*A replicable community or organizational large scale system transformation model:* EI has developed a proven, replicable and customizable system for implementing a community-wide, regional, national or organizational transformation process. It includes design of the social architecture for large scale system change; social diffusion strategy for taking the behavior change program to scale; and design and transfer of replicable project management systems. Depending on the client's choice, EI either develops the behavior change project and then transfers it to them, or implements the project directly.

*Public sector, non profit and corporate experience:* EI has over two decades of experience working with public sector organizations, non profits and corporations in the area of behavior change and voluntary participation strategies. It has consulted, designed and delivered programs addressing a diversity of topics including environment, safety, health, education, neighborhood revitalization, leadership development and organizational transformation. EI has also designed measurement and assessment tools that help organizations increase their effectiveness in program implementation.

*Knowledgeable and experienced organizational leadership:* A final asset is the experience of Empowerment Institute's founder and CEO, David Gershon. He is considered a leading authority on behavior change and large scale community and organizational system change. He has designed and managed several high profile initiatives including the Lake Placid Olympic Torch Relay and, in partnership with ABC Television and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the First Earth Run, involving 62 countries, 45 heads-of-state and 25 million people. This event raised many millions of dollars for UNICEF and was broadcast by ABC TV every week over its three-month duration.

His book, *Empowerment*, has become a classic on the subject. He is the architect of Empowerment Institute's behavior change programs that are being utilized by dozens of cities and organizations around the world. Considered a master trainer, he co-leads the Empowerment Institute certification program and lectures widely. He has served on White House, United Nations and various international advisory committees addressing empowerment and large scale change issues. His work has received considerable media attention and many honors.

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