

COMMUNITY POWER

Partners on Waste Education & Reduction
Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board
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Sustainability Follow-Up Report Round 8 2008-09 Grantees

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The information in this report was gathered from follow-up interviews with Round 8 grantees whose projects ended in August of 2009. Follow-up was conducted with 15 of the 23 grantees including: Chain of Lakes YMCA, Great River School, YWCA Downtown & Midtown, Hands On Twin Cities, Dakota County 4-H, Honoring the Earth/MEP, Carver County Libraries, Community Technology Empowerment Program, Forest Lake Community Education, Mahtomedi ECFE, Lincoln Center Elementary, Southeast Seniors Block Nurse, Minnesota Children's Museum/Glacier Hills Elementary, Guardian Angels Church, and St. Matthew's Episcopal Church.

The purpose of the follow-up interviews is to determine the lasting impact of the grant on the organization. The results are similar to findings from follow-ups with groups from the four previous years. As previously found, a high number of groups continue to offer some waste reduction education beyond the end of their contract with SWMCB.

Replicable products or programs

67% of the groups interviewed created replicable products or programs.

Any product or program that is developed as part of a grant project that can be accessed and implemented by a different community group with little or no cost. These products will continue to be included, when possible, in the grantee resources section on www.rethinkrecycling.com.

Examples

- At Hands On Twin Cities, Hennepin County, the online quiz and PowerPoint training are both replicable. They also create packaging waste demonstration materials, which member organizations can check out for training volunteers.
- The Community Technology Empowerment Project, Hennepin and Ramsey, are using the electronics waste curriculum.
- The Children's Museum and Glacier Hill Elementary, Dakota County, created the curriculum, Wise about Waste, for third and fourth grade students.

Continue Waste Reduction Programming

87% of groups continue to offer waste reduction information and/or programming past the grant period, reaching over 22,961 additional people. As in past years, nearly all of the groups interviewed continue to educate and engage their audiences in waste and toxicity reduction after their grant ends. Round 8 grantees report they have actively engaged an additional 4,459 new people with waste reduction messages since their Community POWER grants ended in August of 2009.

Examples

- For the past two years at the Chain of Lakes YMCA, Anoka County, staff at their child drop-in care (Kid Stuff) teach waste reduction. Staff are trained on the programming and given a flip-book filled with waste reduction and recycling activities to do with the children.
- At the YWCA Downtown and Midtown, Hennepin County, they train new staff as part of their orientation about reducing waste and teach Earth Month activities for the drop-in kid care.
- At the Dakota County 4-H, waste reduction and recycling has been incorporated into the organization and has become a bigger priority. They have expanded programs developed as part of the grant.
- At the Forest Lake Community Education, Washington County, they work with the children and families involved in the before- and after-school care on waste reduction activities such as collecting and recycling bottle caps for Aveda. At one

of the sites, staff have been recognized by the district for their efforts in this area.

- Staff at Hands On Twin Cities, Hennepin County, have moved the waste quiz to a more visible spot as part of a new website design. They plan to train new staff on the program. In addition, one of their parent organization's goals is environment. Toward that goal, AmeriCorps volunteers will work on projects with an environmental focus such as park clean ups, painting sewer drains, landscape. They partner with Friends of the Mississippi and are looking for other partners in this area. In all other projects, they pay attention to environmental impact.
- At Honoring the Earth/MEP, they continue recycling efforts and use the signage from RethinkRecycling.
- At the Carver County Libraries, the Earth Day story time continues and is now lead by staff.
- At the Mahtomedi ECFE, they use the some lessons and books bought through the grant. Dan Schoepke from Washington County participates at their preschool carnival with a button maker.
- At Glacier Hills Elementary, Dakota County, they have repeated the program twice however this year they don't have the grant funds for a visual artist. They are still using Wise about Waste as a base curriculum.
- The Southeast Senior Block Nurse program, Hennepin County, continues to educate about toxics, make non-toxic cleaners, and educate about junk mail.
- At the Great River School, Ramsey County, recycling and waste reduction education occurs at the beginning of each school year with a focus on reducing printing waste, an explanation on why they don't use bleach, use of reusable cleaning cloths, composting, and recycling.

Internal Waste Management

Waste reduction and internal waste management practices became a larger priority for all of the interviewed grantees. Many grantees report that waste reduction became a larger priority for their organization after participating in the grant. Most groups made changes to reduce waste in their office or building. Common changes include starting to recycle, using both sides of office paper, starting to compost, and using mugs and glassware instead of paper or Styrofoam.

Examples

- At the Chain of Lakes YMCA, Anoka County, they added recycling bins throughout the facility in visible areas. In the YMCA headquarters in Minneapolis, they've eliminated disposable kitchenware. Additionally, they are moving their fitness schedules online—at all locations—no paper copies will be available after June.

- At the Great River School, Ramsey County, they use compostable cups for meetings and strive to make meetings green. They've recently purchased a new printer which makes it easier to make double-sided copies and reduce paper waste through a cue system. As a result of the grant, they have more recycling bins available throughout the school and students are more conscientious about using them.
- At the Downtown and Midtown YWCA, Hennepin County, the grant activities sparked interest with staff who asked how they can reduce waste. They use real dishes or compostable dishes at events. In the children's center, they have reduced paper use and continue to compost.
- At Dakota County 4-H, they changed the way they secure supplies for programs. In addition, they use washable dishes internally and at meetings, double-side copy, purchase recycled ink cartridges. Staff training is indirect but implied. They are being asked by other 4-H staff to consult on curriculum ideas on how to incorporate reducing waste and recycling into other programs.
- In the office at Hands On Twin Cities, Hennepin County, they use washable dishes and double sided copying. At events, they make sure that recycling is available and at larger events, they use water coolers to reduce bottle waste. In the building, only paper recycling is offered, so they've increased education among staff to expand the type of paper that can be recycled. In the kitchen, they set up recycling containers for bottles, cans and plastic bags. Staff take turns bringing home to recycle.
- Since the grant, Community Technology Empowerment Project, Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, strives to be a zero waste organization. They use reusable dishes, print less paper, communicate electronically when possible, and train incoming staff.
- The Carver County Library staff use washable dishes, compost coffee grounds (staff take home), and purchased a new copy machine that makes it easier to photocopy double-sided. They are promoting the summer reading program electronically to school children/families as much as possible.
- Forest Lake Community Education, Washington County, recycles more, such as cans, bottle caps, paper, and ink cartridges. They use less paper, although maybe for budget reasons, and staff bring own mugs to meetings.
- The Mahtomedi ECFE staff have reduced packaging waste with bulk purchasing, use washable dishes, double-sided copying, and recycling ink cartridges. Last year, the district hired a Green Corps volunteer to help with energy reduction such as turning off lights and computer monitors.

- At Lincoln Center Elementary, Dakota County, they now use washable dishes, copy double-sided, recycle more, and use less paper with electronic communication.
- At Guardian Angels Church, Washington County, they hold green meetings and use ceramic mugs. The organizers of the fall festival have been challenged to make it a green event.
- At St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Ramsey County, they use ceramic mugs, hold green meetings, and have taught people how to use the dishwasher to wash reusable dishes. They've extended this to a program called, Project Home, where they feed the homeless. They now use reusable dishes when it is their church's turn to host. They have started using the website more to reduce printing.

Require Additional Funding

27% of groups required additional funding to continue their projects.

Several groups used their own operating budgets to continue their projects, while others have sought and received resources from other funders. Some groups report they would need additional funds for materials to continue their projects while others mentioned that they need more staff capacity to continue pieces of their projects. The following are additional barriers experienced by grantees to continuing their projects:

- At the Chain of Lakes YMCA, Anoka County, the standardized curriculum does not include recycling, so staff have push it by tying into the part of the mission that states creating healthy bodies. Additionally, the YMCA went through a big reorganization. As a result, it has been a challenge to fit environmental activities into their new job descriptions.
- At the Downtown and Midtown YWCA, the program is dependent on one staff person to continue efforts.
- A barrier for the Dakota County 4-H is their lack of storage. They have a challenge of getting supplies just in time for their programs, which can sometimes be stressful when planning for 300 kids. Since they procure materials through finding them used or through donations, which can be somewhat unpredictable, they need a place to store the materials for when they need them. They also have to work to make the activities work for kindergarteners and 5th graders, which can be challenging.
- At Honoring the Earth/MEP, there is a large and frequent turnover with the women and families living in the housing who were educated as part of the grant. There has also been a high turnover in staff since the grant.

- Staff at Community Technology Empowerment Project, Hennepin and Ramsey, find there is not much interest from those seeking help from the public computer centers. They are much more concerned with find a job than electronic waste.

Feedback on Community POWER Program

When asked what was most helpful about the way Community POWER is structured (in terms of what helps the grantees to be successful in their projects), the most common response was technical support provided by project managers and county staff, followed by resource materials, grantee meetings, and funding.

Comments included:

- All of the support was useful. Wanted to buy recycling bins but that was not allowed as well as a compost bin for the church.
- The grantees meetings offered good networking and education opportunities. We received great support from Carolyn Smith.
- Tara was very supportive and helpful, commenting on the script.
- The grantee meetings were helpful for administrative and meeting contacts.
- Did not find the networking useful because our project was so different than the others.
- Resource materials were really great.
- The grantee meetings, technical support from staff and resource materials were most useful.
- Grantee meetings and breakout sessions were very helpful as was the networking.
- The funding was a help to make it a priority in the organization.
- Mike from Dakota County was helpful and activity helped their grant activities by speaking and making connections.
- The resource materials were less helpful because most of them were not geared toward children K-7.
- The grant meetings were energizing and they had great support from Washington and Anoka counties.
- The reporting required for Community POWER was time intensive.
- Grantee meetings were fabulous.
- Liked the email communication about resource materials.
- The website was a useful resource to research what past grantees have done.
- Funding was most important then the resources from grantee meetings.
- All of the support was useful especially resource materials were most helpful along with support from Dan Schoepke.

More Environmental Behavior Changes

Community POWER serves as a catalyst for additional beneficial environmental changes. Often, once a person or organization begins to make changes to benefit the environment, like instituting waste reduction and recycling, other changes

follow. Eight of the 15 responding grantees responded to questions regarding additional changes.

75% of the organizations have instituted things like energy and water conservation measures, and as a result of being involved with the Community POWER program.

In addition, 100% of the responding project managers stated that they have made personal changes in their own life, such as increasing waste reduction, recycling and other measures as a direct result of involvement in Community POWER.

Future Recommendations

Grantees were asked how Community POWER can continue to assist them in their waste reduction efforts. Many groups said they would like to be included on any relevant tips, resources, or training opportunities in the future. Responses appear below:

87% of the respondents wanted to receive the E-Partner News.

93% of the respondents were already receiving or were going to sign up to receive the RethinkRecycling.com e-newsletter.

80% of the respondents were interested in receiving additional event notices and opportunities.

40% of the respondents wanted another follow-up in a year or so.

60% of the respondents were interested in being invited to future Community POWER grantee training meetings, even if a fee were charged.