

BLUE BOX P&E PLAN



Horton Township 08/03/2011

Introduction

This P&E template document is intended to provide you with high-level strategic direction, tactical implementation guidelines for promoting the recycling program in your community and best practice in communications information. Even though this document, and the recommendations within, have been customized based on your questionnaire answers, it is intended to be a starting foundation. It does require you to further customize to fully meet your needs.

Planning and executing consistent and professional Promotional and Education (P&E) activities is an important element, as well as a best practice, of any blue box program. With ongoing communications a community becomes more comfortable with recycling, the benefits it offers to the community and the impact it can have on the global environment. Furthermore, residents that are aware of their community's program are more likely to participate in the program, increasing diversion rates and helping the municipality meet program targets and objectives.

This document outlines the strategic and tactical direction for P&E activities for Horton Twp. The plan is broken down into the following sections:

P&E Strategy

- **Program Guiding Principles** – This section highlights key marketing principles that will be incorporated in every aspect of the program;
- **Goals** – Defines the overall objectives of the program;
- **Key Messages** – Outlines the main points the program will work to communicate;
- **Target Audiences** – Summarizes the main audiences you hope to influence and educate;
- **Resources** – Provides guidance as to the amount of staff time needed to successfully implement the program;

P&E Program Implementation

- **Tactics** – Defines the tools recommended for your program;
- **Tracking** – Provides information on how to monitor the success of the program.

P&E Program Guiding Principles

These are the over-arching principles for all Blue Box P&E programs. Feel free to delete those that do not apply to your community.

There are a number of recurring best practices in promotion and education that should be followed when determining and executing the P&E activities. These guiding principles include:

- Consistency – From design to messaging to the tools used, consistency creates a recognizable campaign with greater impact making audiences aware of the campaign and more likely to change their behaviours.
- Follow a schedule – Plan out P&E activities to meet the fluctuations of the year and the community, and then stick to this schedule. Recurring, regular activity will have a much greater impact than one big activity only one time.
- Tracking – There are ways to see if P&E activities are working. Tracking should be part of any program. This can include tonnage reports, website tracking, incoming call tracking, online surveys and more.
- Take advantage of valuable opportunities – Not all promotion or education must be instigated by the municipality. As opportunities arise such as community events or school presentations, take advantage of them.
- Allow for feedback loop – Community members are more likely to buy into, and participate if they feel their voices are heard. Make sure there is a 360° feedback mechanism in place to allow residents a way to express concerns, give suggestions or simply ask questions.
- Use methods that apply to the audience – No single P&E tactic is perfect for all communities. In fact, very rarely is one tactic perfect for an entire community so consider using a few tactics to meet the needs of all audiences.
- Keep it simple – Too many messages and too much information can be overwhelming. Keep it short and sweet.
- Make it about the audience – People are more receptive to information about them. Make sure the primary message is a personal one, to make it more meaningful.
- Demonstrate the outcome – It is motivating to know the effort is making a difference. Ensure people are aware they are doing a good job.
- Keep the brand pure and clean – The idea of recycling is to keep the environment (large and small) clean. This should be reflected in P&E activities as well as all the communications regarding the program.
- Be green – It is easier to be taken seriously when “walking the talk”. Be sure the whole community is recycling, including the municipal government.
- Seek partnerships – P&E can be time consuming and expensive. Look for ways to offset those costs by taking advantage of partnership opportunities.
- Match the message – There are two types of messaging: Educational and Motivational. The type of messaging that is most predominant will depend on the program’s goals. Ensure the type of message supports the end goal.

P&E Program Goals

Each community across Ontario is working to promote participation in their Blue Box recycling program. The general **goals** of the Promotion and Education Programs are:

- Increase awareness on why you should recycle – As part of the education portion of the program, residents should be made aware of the reasons for recycling and the benefits to the individual, community and the earth.
- Increase education on what is recyclable and how – Only specific items are recyclable and ensuring a clean collection makes the recycling process better, more efficient and easier to manage. Communicating with the community regarding what is and is not recyclable will help to increase tonnage in collection and create a better program overall.
- Increase participation and therefore tonnage – Once residents understand why they should recycle, and what is recyclable the goal becomes to increase the amount that is recycled in the community. This is diverting waste from landfill and increasing percentages which can be tied to funding.

Horton Twp Objectives

SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) **objectives** are a great way to focus program activities and planning. The specific Blue Box recycling program objectives for Horton Twp for the next three years are:

Increase diversion rates

Horton Township has instituted two measures to increase the diversion rates, namely curbside collection and 2 garbage bags per household. Rates of diversion increased with both measures. Rates of diversion must still higher and to accomplish this a Promotion and Educational program is required.

Increase promotion of blue box program

Horton's Waste Management Committee seeks to increase the diversion rates of blue box recycling to conducting a promotional and educational program.

Key Messages

Key messages enable a consistent and comprehensive direction for what a program is trying to communicate. Below is a list of key messages for the Blue Box recycling programs in Ontario. These key messages are reflected in the tactics provided. However, when creating other P&E materials and communications, use these to guide your writing and roll-out to ensure consistency across all your efforts.

- Recycling is smart and easy – Sorting your household’s garbage can be a quick and simple process that is part of your daily routine. By integrating recycling into your home, you can make the process easy, while doing your part to help the environment.
 - Recycling is the fastest way to positively impact the environment. It only requires sorting your waste.
 - Recycling only takes a moment ... just drop it in the blue box. Once you have enjoyed your item, be it a carton of milk or a can of pop, simply drop it into the blue box, rather than a garbage bag, and it is done.
 - Your local government has developed a program to make recycling as simple as possible for you. Contact them to find out how you can integrate recycling into everyday activities to make it as simple as possible.
- Recycling is good for you – Not only does recycling help the environment, it can have a positive impact on you and your family.
 - A cleaner environment means you and your family have a safe and healthy area in which to live and work. Recycling reduces the amount of waste in landfill, reducing the risks of water and air contamination.
 - By recycling at home, you help ensure your children, and future generations, will enjoy the clean and healthy world you have enjoyed. Children learn by example and when you recycle they will recycle too.
- Recycling is good for your community – Cleaner air and water, less waste in odorous landfill, improved funding from government groups and greener living for the whole planet, these are some benefits of recycling.
 - All communities need to carefully manage the waste they produce. Recycling helps to keep waste out of landfills that otherwise will grow and reduce the amount of community space available for residential development, parks or commercial uses.
 - When one person makes a change, it can encourage other members to follow. Your actions, and commitment to recycling, have a snowball effect. “Be the change you want to see in the world” – Ghandi
 - Your community is not only the municipality you live in. It is your province, your country and the entire earth. The changes and effort you make today can improve the lives of all members of our global community. Think globally, act locally.

Target Audiences

A target audience list reflects those primary audiences P&E activities work to reach. Typically they reflect the largest population groups in the community, and are therefore more highly catered to in communications so that P&E activities have the greatest impact possible. The target audience list reflects all possible audiences. The primary target audiences include a descriptive paragraph for your reference. All other listed audiences are secondary audiences to be kept in consideration. The target audiences for Horton Twp are:

Empty Nesters

The baby boom generation is becoming empty nesters and this group is enjoying their new found freedom. Recycling has long been a part of their lives and is often easily adopted. Use the message that it is simple and will make the world a better place for generations with this audience.

Families

Communities with a high representation of families must focus on not only the adults but also the children in the community. Integration of easy to use materials, use of icons and images for communication and keeping materials fun and light will ensure this group can easily participate in the recycling program.

Retirees

When dealing with retirees, there is often the time to recycle but the barrier is often lack of program understanding or a resistance to change. Communication can be an issue due to declining eyesight. Keep materials visual, simple and accessible, and ensure a phone number is available for questions or comments.

Single Adults

Double Income, No Kids

Resources (Budget and Staffing)

Having a plan is good. Getting it done can be another matter entirely. Resources for smaller municipalities are often stretched to the breaking point, and P&E activities are often put on the back burner. The intention of this plan is to make it easier to manage what needs to be done to keep the program on track.

Budget

To properly reach your community with P&E activities, and to implement the recommended tactics from this plan, budget must be allocated. Best practice indicates that for most communities a budget of \$1 per household is a level to meet the needs of a well executed P&E plan. However for smaller communities, this rule would leave a budget that is far too low to complete even the smallest P&E activities. In these cases a minimum threshold budget is recommended.

The budget covers all implementation costs for a P&E program such as outsourcing design and copywriting, printing, media buy and distribution. Budget does not include staff salaries.

While the minimum recommended budget for a recycling program is \$1 per household, this is not realistic for very small communities. It is recommended you use resources to their full extent and work to increase your current budget of \$2,000 to a budget as close as possible to \$5,000.

Staffing Resources

Having municipal staff that are tasked with the management of a P&E program allows for centralized responsibility for the execution of this plan. For smaller communities, it may not be feasible to have a single person in this role. It is therefore recommended the role be spread over more than one staffer, with one project prime overseeing all activities.

The recommended staff resource allocation for Horton Twp is .25 FTE (Full Time Equivalent).

The time devoted to P&E activities can include:

- Media relations
- Media buy for advertising
- Coordination with outsource agency (as needed)
- Copy writing
- Program tracking
- Project management
- Website updates and management
- Community liaison

The following chart can help you divide the various tasks of your P&E program. Modify as necessary to meet your specific needs.

Task	Description	Person Responsible	Timeline

Tactics

Below is a recommended list of tactics for your three year P&E program. Any current initiatives that have a uniquely high-effectiveness in your community should be continued at your discretion, even though they do not appear in the list below. The following list should be modified as necessary as budget and resources may change, tracking initiatives may show certain tactics to be more effective than others, etc.

It is recommended that year two tactics be added to year one tactics and year three tactics be added to year two tactics. In this way, ideally, over a three year period, ten different tactics will be used in the P&E program to promote recycling in your community.

Year One

- Media Relations
- General Information Piece
- Webpage
- Brochure
- Fridge Magnet
- Newspaper Advertising

Year Two

- Letters
- Rink Boards

Year Three

- Newsletter/E-newsletter
- School Programs

Budget Work Sheet

The following worksheet can be used to plan out your budget for your P&E tactics. Contact local suppliers for quotes and estimates then fill in the table below to create a detailed budget for your P&E program for the coming three years. Blank spaces are included under each year to accommodate any additional activities you have going on.

Year One Tactics	Budget	Year Two Tactics	Budget	Year Three Tactics	Budget
Media Relations		Letters		Newsletter/E-newsletter	
General Information Piece		Rink Boards		School Programs	
Webpage					
Brochure					
Fridge Magnet					
Newspaper Advertising					
Total Budget Year One:		Total Budget Year Two:		Total Budget Year Three:	

Year One Tactics

Media relations

Description

Ongoing communications and building a relationship with the local media is a critical element to keeping your community informed. Foster good working relationships then use them to spread the word on your blue box program.

General Use

News Releases must be sent for any significant change, event, accomplishment or other news about your blue box program. These simple updates are often a single page of information on an item of interest to the community, and therefore a news story for the media.

Production Hints and Tips

When creating a release keep in mind that there must be a potential news story, or hook, that increases the value to the reader and the chance of it being picked up as a story.

Releases often follow a simple formula which makes them easy to create. Here is one suggestion:

- Intro paragraph: answers the 5 w's (who, what, where, when, why) and includes the hook and key message for the story
- 2nd paragraph: offers a quote from a high-profile participant or stakeholder
- 3rd paragraph: provides more information on the story or issue
- 4th paragraph: elaborates on the effect on the community (could be through another quote)
- 5th paragraph: gives some boilerplate information on the program and municipality
- Close the release with a - 30 -
- Provide a contact for more information

Ideally there would be a release sent every two months, to keep you top-of-mind in the media and community. However, sending out a release that does not provide value to the community is a waste of time and can negatively impact your credibility. To make media relations as simple as possible keep a media cheat sheet handy which includes:

- Key messages for your blue box program

- Contacts of municipal resource people
- Contact list of all local media including release submission preferences

Media relations also includes making your staff a resource to the media when a related story comes up from another source, or an interview is needed. Ensure the media knows who to contact, and has a variety of contact methods (such as office phone, cell phone and email) to ensure your perspectives are included in any story related to recycling and waste management.

General Information piece

Description

A program overview piece, which provides high level information on the program and details for sorting, is a critical element that ensures all residents are aware of your Blue Box program specifications. A single resource can provide important details and information to assist with compliance and participation in the program.

General Use

As research has shown that the complexity of recycling programs can be a deterrent to participation, this piece must be simple, easy to follow and valuable enough to retain for reference over time. To this end, it is recommended that the piece be as clear as possible, as few words as possible and be printed inexpensively on environmentally-responsible paper to allow households to have multiple copies. You may also consider offering the piece electronically, to be even more environmentally-responsible!

Production Hints and Tips

Content for this piece should include:

- Collection schedule (for curb side)
- Depot locations and hours (for depot)
- Acceptable recycling containers (blue boxes, bags, etc.)
- Applicable recyclables
- Specifics including labels to be removed, etc.
- Where to get more information.

A template for this general information piece is available through CIF which will help with the design and creation expense. Should the inexpensive printing option be chosen, it is recommended that the piece be mass-distributed at

least yearly to every household (which allows for changes in the program) as well as having easy access to additional copies in key locations around the community. These could include:

- Recreation centres
- Municipal offices
- Libraries
- Waste depot (if applicable)
- Waste collection staff

A single page format is recommended, no larger than 8.5" x 11". This standard size will make the piece easier to retain for reference.

Webpage

Offering information online is not only a quick and simple way to share information, it is an environmentally-conscious choice which fits with the messaging around recycling. Hosted as a subpage on the municipality's website, this page will be referenced in all P&E activities bringing higher profile to the site, and potentially reducing the number of callers phoning to ask questions. This leaves more time for your team to complete other activities.

Every municipality must have at least one page communicating the details of their Blue Box program in the community. A single, quick resource, the minimum required information includes:

- Collection schedule (for curb side)
- Depot locations and hours (for depot)
- Acceptable recycling containers (blue boxes, bags, etc.)
- Applicable recyclables
- Specifics including labels to be removed, etc.
- Where to get more information.

Design for the webpage can reflect the design for your existing municipal website however integration of elements from the province-wide blue box program is encouraged.

Should you have the resources available to include more information or additional pages on recycling into your municipal website consider adding these items:

- Frequently asked questions page

- Downloadable versions of your P&E materials
- Community recycling statistics
- Recycling tips and tricks to make it easier
- Examples of what things are recycled into
- Tips to increase recycling in your home
- How to shop recycle friendly (what to buy and not buy)
- Links to other recycling resources

Content for the website can be pulled from existing P&E materials and supplemented by municipal staff. Programming for the site should be completed by the webmaster for your existing website. Keep in mind that for Search Engine Optimization purposes the content for the site should be rich in appropriate key words. To help determine keywords, you can use the free Google Keyword tool at <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>.

The webpage should have Google Analytics, or another analytics tool. This allows you to get information on who is visiting your site, how long they spend, what pages they visit, how they found the site and where they go when they are done. Having this free tool installed will help with program tracking. More information about Google Analytics can be found at <http://www.google.com/analytics/>.

Brochure

The program brochure serves as a motivational piece to encourage residents to recycle. It features tips and tricks to make it easier, profiles incredible products made from recyclables and explains why recycling is good for the community and the environment.

The intention is that the brochure works in partnership with the General Information Piece to create a full educational and promotional package providing all the necessary information. Both pieces also refer to the webpage to provide more information, and the municipality contact numbers for specific questions.

The brochure can be distributed in an organic way, through events, conversations, in correspondence with audiences and as requested.

Should motivation to recycle be a specific issue, large scale distribution may be considered.

Fridge Magnet

Providing residents and businesses with an easy to understand, long-term sorting guide just makes sense. Typically significant changes to a recycling program do not occur on a regular basis, as such, it is imperative to effectively communicate changes when they do happen.

A large size magnet, with sorting lists is a resource that most people will appreciate, and keep posted where most of the recycling happens at home, in the kitchen.

Using graphics rather than words, this resource will allow residents to quickly and easily reference what is recyclable. The use of images will make it accessible to those for whom literacy or visibility may be an issue including; children, the elderly and those for whom English or French is not their first language.

The recommended size for these magnets is 6" wide x 4" high. In order to keep images large enough to be easily seen it is recommended that only the top 8 items which are most often recycled be included.

For additional information, it is recommended that your webpage and contact phone number be given. Your community logo will also be used on this magnet.

Should you have neighbouring communities that have a very similar recycling program, this is an ideal option for partnering and co-production as the cost per piece will decrease significantly with larger numbers being produced.

Newspaper Advertising

Local papers are often well read, as they feature the information that is of specific interest to local residents.

Newspapers should be used for:

- Promoting recycling in the community
- Changes to the recycling program
- Updates on program progress
- Special events or days
- Ongoing recycling awareness

For those communities that share the local paper with other communities, consider doing these ads in partnership with your neighbouring communities to save budget or have greater impact with a larger ad.

When planning budget for your newspaper advertising keep in mind that you may have CNA/OCNA lines available that will help off-set the cost. To see what your line allotment is, visit our website at <http://www.wdo.ca/content/?path=page80+item86507>.

Year Two Tactics

Letters

When there is significant news to share about recycling in Horton Twp consider sending out personalized letters to all that are affected.

Using a mail-merge strategy allows you to personalize letters and provide the affect of one-on-one communications quickly and efficiently. This can help to increase support and participation in the program since the recipient feels 'special' for having received a personalized letter speaking directly to them.

Letters should be written in the following format:

- Paragraph one: overview of purpose/news answering the 5 W's (who, what, where, when, why)
- Paragraph two: give information on what the recipient should do
- Paragraph three: give reasons that should compel action or the "What's in It For Me" factor
- Paragraph four: where to get more information
- Paragraph five: thank you and call to action

Letters should be sent out as stand alone items, or can be placed in other vehicles such as inserted into local newspapers.

Rink Boards

For many communities the skating rink is a central meeting place for events such as hockey games, figure skating shows and free skating. Use this central community resource as a way to remind residents and visitors alike that you are a recycling community and that recycling is not just something you do at home.

As many skating rinks are municipally-owned, this is an easy, inexpensive option for community building, and should be on the list of locations for placement of blue boxes beyond in the homes of residents. Be sure there are blue boxes in all municipally-owned properties, with special attention to those that are used to promote recycling.

The message on a rink board should simply be awareness building. Rather than trying to include lots of information, keep copy low, refer to the webpage and encourage recycling. Ideally the primary message will be no more than 7 words on each rink board.

Should space be available, consider more than one board, possibly in a row, for greater impact overall.

Year Three Tactics

Newsletter/E-newsletter

Ongoing updates about recycling in Horton Twp are appropriate to communicate to residents proactively. A newsletter or e-newsletter is a simple and effective way to make sure all stakeholders are up to date on the program, its developments and upcoming events or changes.

Delivered no more than four times per year, this newsletter does not necessarily need to be just about recycling. Consider expanding it to information from the entire Environmental Services team to address topics such as:

- Snow removal
- Waste pick up
- Parks and programs
- Road work around town
- Water and waste water

Initiate this kind of ongoing communication through this team to relieve some of the burden for its development and make the newsletter more valuable to residents overall.

The newsletter can either be printed and delivered to residents in paper format, and/or, should an email distribution list be available, via email. The email option is recommended and a sign up form can be placed on your website. This not only makes the development less expensive (through eliminating printing and mailing/distribution costs), it also is environmentally appropriate since it creates less waste.

School Programs

Schools are often including information on the natural world and the effect human's have on their environment. This information, as well as tips on how to live green, is an important part of modern education and children are comfortable with these concepts, often more than their parents or grandparents. The knowledge of students is often taken home and can effect the household's choices and participation in programs such as a Blue Box Recycling Program.

Use this vehicle to promote what your community is doing in the area of recycling. This can include:

- Providing resource information to teachers
- Hosting school trips
- Doing classroom presentations

- Assisting with science projects (fairs or entire class items)

If this becomes an effective tool, consider creating materials targeted to this group, such as one page information sheets, colouring pages, etc. keeping in mind the age of the students and making materials relevant to their level of understanding.

As some smaller schools draw students from many communities, this is an ideal project to be undertaken in partnership with neighbouring communities.

Tactics Roll-Out Schedule

The table below is your opportunity to plan out the execution of your P&E program tactics. By scheduling these activities pro-actively, you not only have an easy, quick reference to keep the program rolling, it also helps when more than one person is responsible for the Blue Box P&E program. Blank space is provided for you to add to your schedule any additional items that are part of your program.

Activity	Year One				Year Two				Year Three			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Media Relations												
General Information Piece												
Webpage												
Brochure												
Fridge Magnet												
Newspaper Advertising												
Letters												
Rink Boards												
Newsletter/E-newsletter												
School Programs												

Tracking Options

Tracking the effectiveness of your P&E activities allows for a clear Return On Investment (ROI) calculation on the funds and hours invested in the program. Best practices indicate that this is an important part of the project and integration into your P&E program can make it a simple and easy process.

There are a number of low to no cost ways to track your activities and the number of impressions they made or actions they inspired. However, it is important to keep in mind that it takes an average of seven impressions before the message or brand is remembered by the audience. That means that even though there were six previous ads or activities undertaken, only the seventh will be properly remembered by the audience. Keep this in mind with your program tracking to put results into perspective.

A number of different tracking options for all P&E programs are recommended. These methods allow for a wide range of inputs to feed into the results which indicate the overall effectiveness of your program. These options include:

- Hits on website – load an analytics program onto your website to allow for tracking the traffic to your site. Google Analytics is a free program that can be loaded onto your website and will give you information such as number of visitors, which pages they visit, how long they visit, etc. This information can be useful in tracking how effective the site is, or how effective other P&E activities, that direct audiences to your site, have been.
- Tonnage changes – it is already required that tonnage is tracked for the MOE. Use this information to look for trends in your recycling program. Does it increase or decrease during certain times of the year? Why is that? Have diversion rates been increasing or decreasing? When you launch a new P&E activity, is there any change in the coming months? All of these can help you see the affect your P&E activities are having.
- Incoming calls or inquiries – any changes to your program, be it P&E or otherwise, often drives more inquiries. Track the incoming inquiries to help determine what is happening in your community. Consider including the following information in your tracking:
 - Number of inquiries
 - Method of contact: email or phone
 - Subject of the inquiry
 - Response speed
- Event participation – keep track of how many people visit events you host/participate in. For events you are hosting yourself, keep track of attendees at the door. When you are participating in an event, this can be a clear indication of the effectiveness of the P&E initiatives that were used to promote the event. This can be more easily done when there is a contest or draw at the event. Consider the following options:
 - Kids contest (colouring, creative writing, etc.)
 - Draw for a recycling centre (from a local hardware store)
 - Give away promo items (one per household)
 - Draw for a gift basket of recycled items
 - Draw for a family oriented outdoor activity in your area

- o Litterless grocery and lunch kits
- Community surveys – it is important to get the opinions of your community on a regular basis. Conducting community surveys is an effective way to get this done. Surveys should be conducted in a variety of ways to ensure a diverse section of the population is reached. Some options include:
 - o Online surveys sent out via email and posted to your webpage
 - o Short survey for all incoming calls
 - o Survey cards at events
 - o Outbound telephone surveys completed by administrative staff
 - o Focus groups

Touching base with your audience will be an important measure of your P&E activity and will guide changes to your plan to ensure it is more effective going forward.

Program Analysis

Use this table to track the effectiveness of your program. Once each tactic has been rolled-out, allow some time for it to reach audiences, and then record how well it worked.

Completing this table as you go will help with planning upcoming P&E activities in the years to come.

Activity	Date Executed	Effective	Not Effective	Unsure	Notes
Media Relations					
General Information Piece					
Webpage					
Brochure					
Fridge Magnet					
Newspaper Advertising					
Letters					
Rink Boards					
Newsletter/E-newsletter					
School Programs					

Appendix A: Other P&E Activity Options

Calendars

Calendars are a good way to keep recycling top-of-mind. Consider including tips, tricks and fun facts in addition to important information such as a contact phone number and website.

<http://www.custombuiltcalendars.com/Municipal.html> or a similar tool is a simple and quick way to build a custom calendar for your community.

E-marketing

E-marketing is an important part of the modern marketing mix and should be considered for integration into your P&E plan. While many audiences are becoming more and more comfortable with online communications, offering more than one option to obtain that information is pivotal to the success of any program.

For a Blue Box Recycling Program, this is even more critical, as the medium reflects the message. This is a waste neutral communication tool and will allow for real time updates on your blue box program. More than a website, e-marketing can include:

- Blogging – an ongoing conversation posted on a website
- Facebook/My Space – building a community of those who are interested in, and passionate about recycling in your municipality
- Twitter – short, concise and timely updates posted in 140 characters or less
- Online customer service chat – website based communication option allowing for the posing and answering of questions, real time in a method similar to other online chat facilities
- Email blasts/newsletter – sending out information directly to audience’s inboxes regarding your program
- Footprint calculator – website based calculator that allows residents and businesses to estimate their environmental impact and get some suggestions for improvement based on activity
- Feedback form – create a 360° feedback loop on your program using an online comments platform

Integration of some of these options will allow you to create an ongoing conversation with stakeholders in a budget friendly manner. While funds are required for the development of many of these options, once they are in place using them is very low cost, quick and simple.

Events

Opening the doors of your recycling facilities and offices can not only attract residents who want to learn more, it can help to build buy-in for recycling throughout the community. Research has shown that for some residents not understanding how recycling works, and the benefits it brings to the community, is a major hurdle in program participation. Hosting open house events and other community events can work to overcome this issue.

Timed to coincide with a significant change or accomplishment, a special collection day or other logical event, events can be a source of community building.

For example, use Earth Day to promote recycling, invite other “green” community groups to display at your event and bring everyone together to find ways to live a more eco-friendly life.

Events do not necessarily have to be created by the municipality. You can also participate in events being run by other organizations. If there is a fall fair, winterfest, music festival or other big event in your community, take advantage of these events. They bring together many of your stakeholders and audiences and are a great opportunity to do some P&E activities.

For event participation you could consider the following:

- Create a display – this could be professionally created or homemade, just be sure it works with the rest of your P&E materials and looks professional
- Have literature on hand – bring information packages or other items that educate and motivate the event attendees
- Bring a giveaway – a recycling themed promotional item is a great way to keep you top-of-mind. Not only can these giveaways be used at events but also distributed through schools and other groups. Items should be environmentally-responsible. Consider the following:
 - Reusable shopping bags
 - Crank flashlights
 - Seed packages
 - Compostable pens
 - Small size blue boxes
- Run a contest – have a contest that is tied into the event and that will encourage visitors to your booth. This could be as simple as a colouring contest (with pages printed on recycled paper of course) that are distributed through the local school and then dropped off at your booth. You could even use them on the display.

- Use your webpage – whenever possible use your webpage as a source of information at the event and to promote visitors to the site. Bring a laptop and use the local Wi-Fi to get access.
- Staff the display – make sure you have friendly, approachable and knowledgeable staff at the display at all times to talk to the community, and encourage awareness and participation in the program.

Events are a quick and easy way to build awareness and community support for your recycling program.

Partnerships

With smaller communities there are often fewer resources to execute programs to their full potential. Research has shown that best practices include using partnering to meet the goals of a blue box P&E program. Partnerships allow each municipality to reach beyond their limited resources to create and deliver more from their investment.

There are two types of possible partnerships: inter-community and intra-community.

Inter-community partnerships – these partnerships see more than one community coming together to create P&E program materials that meet the needs of both communities. It is often the case that recycling programs in neighbouring communities are very similar, if not identical. Further, the aims of the programs are the same: to increase participation, awareness and acceptance of recycling by a larger portion of the population. It therefore makes sense that some P&E activities can be completed together.

Even when the recycling program is not exactly the same, there are awareness activities that can be done in partnership. Some activities that could be done in partnership with other communities:

- Advertising
- Billboards
- Rink boards
- Events
- Direct mail
- Local cable or community TV
- Contests

For programs that are the same, or very similar, consider creating then customizing these items:

- Fridge magnet

- School programs
- Flyers
- Newsletter

There are economies achievable through higher numbers in printing and distribution.

Intra-community partnerships – these partnerships use resources within a community to cooperatively spread shared messages. Partners can include community and service groups, government agencies, schools, faith groups, etc. These organizations will often help with spreading the word, and promoting events, contests, etc, as it is to the benefit of their group and community.

Consider using these partners when planning your P&E activities such as:

- School programs
- Events
- Newsletter distribution

Print and radio advertising