

2015 Michigan Community Pollution Prevention Grant Program
Southfield Outreach Project

Results and Evaluation

1. Project Description

i. Statement of Environmental Concerns

In his 2012 special message on energy and the environment and through his 2014 Recycling Initiative, Governor Snyder has recognized both the economic and environmental importance of recycling. The City of Southfield has a curbside recycling program that is consistent with the goals of the Governor's Initiative. However, the City's recycling rate and program participation has stagnated in recent years and is underperforming relative to other communities that are members of the Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County (RRRASOC).

ii. Project Approach

RRRASOC deployed a two-pronged outreach and education effort designed to increase curbside participation and recycling rates. The approach included a direct mail educational postcard that provided information on the following:

- a. The importance of recycling, including its positive economic and environmental impact;
- b. How to recycle, including where to get a bin or cart and information on recyclable materials;
- c. How to get more information.

RRRASOC also made direct presentations to seven neighborhood associations throughout the City, sharing the information contained in the direct mail postcard and answering questions that residents may have.

The mailing and presentations were completed between 4/1/16 and 6/30/16 (Q5 of the project timeline).



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iii. Data

RRRASOC tracked the deployment of new recycling carts that became available as of July 1, 2016 and the distribution of requested recycling bins. The tracking period began July 1, 2016, which coincided with a new contractor taking over curbside collection services for the City of Southfield.

During July and August, twenty (20) new recycling bins were picked up by residents at City Hall. Also, during the period, the City's contractor, Rizzo Environmental Services, distributed 4,036 64-gallon recycling carts upon requests by homeowners. It is not known how many of those homeowners previously had recycling bins and/or how many of them used them.

During the period, the "set out" rate (the percentage of homes setting out recycling container for collection) was 44.5%. The average for the same period for the prior six (6) years was 36.6%.

During the period, the recycling rate, exclusive of yard waste, was 10.51%. The average for the same period for the prior six (6) years was 10.50%.

During the period, the average pounds-per-household of recyclable material was 35.3. The average for the same period for the prior six (6) years was 34.8.

iv. Evaluation

The total number of carts and bins requested was consistent with expectations and is expected to increase over time as homeowners see them used in their neighborhood and throughout the city.

The increased set out rate was a positive result. The increase from 36.6% to 44.5% is a 21.5% increase.

The increases in the recycling rate and the pounds-per-household were smaller than expected.

At this time, it is difficult to reach any conclusions about the long term impact of the effort. While it fully expected, based on prior experience in other communities, that increased outreach and education and the availability of recycling carts will lead to an increase in program participation and recycling volumes, the data for the current project is less than robust. This is due to the following three factors:

1. The sample size is too small to be determinative. Using a two-month timeframe is insufficient to adequately evaluate the impact. Ongoing evaluation is necessary and will take place.
2. The new bins and carts were delivered during the period in question. Most recipients did not have their new recycling receptacle at the beginning of the period, so the impact would be muted.
3. A new solid waste hauling contractor began servicing the city as of July 1, 2016. As such, complete confidence in the load reporting and recording is yet to be established.

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v. Next Steps and Continued Effort

RRRASOC will continue to closely track the program performance and metrics discussed in this report. Monthly data will continued to be gathered , reviewed and evaluated on a monthly and quarterly basis, and reported on an annual basis.

The results of the annual evaluation will be made available to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Governor’s Recycling Council, and the Michigan Recycling Coalition, as well as other interested parties upon request.