



# Effective Practices for Implementing Local Climate and Energy Programs: *Community-Based Social Marketing*

## Lessons Learned *by Communities for Communities*

*The views expressed in this document are those of the Climate Showcase Communities grant recipients. U.S. EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned.*

### WHAT IS IT?

Community-based social marketing (CBSM) uses direct neighbor-to-neighbor communication and influence to promote behavior change. In-person communications are often complemented by electronic social media tools.

### WHY DO IT?

- Using existing, trusted community networks and relationships can inspire cost-effective “viral propagation” of messages.
- CBSM encourages and rewards peer advocates.
- A focus on small steps leading to bigger steps can create sustained behavior change over time.

### WHAT WORKS?

- Choose one action that you would like community members to take and focus the CBSM campaign on this action.
- Identify community members who are already taking the action. Learn about their challenges and tell the stories about how they overcame them.
- Develop a message that is appropriate for the community by working with neighborhood organizations, using stakeholder groups, or conducting pilot projects.
- Ask community leaders and volunteers to spread the word.
- Create “buzz” in the community through neighborhood events; friendly competitions; and free resources, such as events and materials.
- Show what others are doing through testimonials, yard signs, and other highly visible illustrations of community members taking action.
- Use personal pledges and be persistent with reminders (for example, send postcards).
- Make participation in your program easy and accessible.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU WATCH OUT FOR?

- Beware of not fully implementing your strategy (for example, not keeping current with online posts and using static content instead of dynamic content).
- Avoid losing control of the content if your methods allow “open source” communication.

### WHAT RESOURCES HAVE PROJECTS FOUND TO BE USEFUL?

- *Fostering Sustainable Behavior*, website and book by Doug McKenzie-Mohr:  
[www.cbsm.com](http://www.cbsm.com)



*“Keep them accountable: Leverage the ‘social contract’ and peer pressure.”*

*Lindsay, Eugene SmartTrips, Oregon*

*“Too many items communicated means that nothing is communicated. Focus your message.”*

*Randy, New Jersey Sustainable Energy Efficiency Demonstration Projects, Cherry Hill*