



Effective Practices for Implementing Local Climate and Energy Programs: *Working with Early Adopters*

Lessons Learned *by Communities for Communities*

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WHAT IS IT?

“Early adopters” are businesses or individuals who participate in a program early on in its development and whose candid feedback help improve program delivery. They can be effective messengers to their peers and help your program build a track record of success.

WHY DO IT?

- Data from tracking the progress of early adopters can be useful when the majority of your audience is ready to engage.
- Working with early adopters provides an opportunity to identify and solve issues before a larger program roll-out.
- Early adopters offer credible, visible examples for others to follow. For example, business owners trust that an idea has merit if they see other businesses doing it.
- They can become mentors to others, and they can be a source of success stories.

WHAT WORKS?

- Provide lots of exposure and public relations opportunities for businesses and individuals acting as early adopters.
- Hold regular check-in meetings to give early adopters time to talk about any challenges that they are experiencing and to allow your program to help solve them.
- For commercial participants, ask them to “sell your program” by calling three non-participating businesses and encouraging them to participate.
- Become familiar with the staff in charge of implementing and doing the work (not just management).

WHAT SHOULD YOU WATCH OUT FOR?

- It may not be as easy to engage the majority of your audience, compared with early adopters.
- Do not use early adopters as “program ambassadors” if the rest of your audience cannot relate to them.
- Focus on ambassadors who can stay on message and represent the program well. You do not need to accept ALL offers of help.

WHAT RESOURCES HAVE PROJECTS FOUND TO BE USEFUL?

- *Driving Demand for Home Energy Improvements*—Report from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory: drivingdemand.lbl.gov



“It helps get programs off the ground! It provides initial data and an opportunity to learn what works.”

Lisa, Green Homes Challenge, Frederick County, Maryland

“Early adopters won’t quit at the first snag that comes up.”

Juliette, Maximizing GHG Reductions Through Food Waste Diversion, Humboldt County, California