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Computer Power Management by Municipal Employees: A Multi-Agency Community-Based Social Marketing Pilot

As agencies work toward sustainability goals, program planners are faced with the difficult challenge of motivating individuals within their organizations to adopt or modify specific behaviors. Often these behavior change challenges must be met with limited staff time and resources devoted to the task. To help address these challenges, a group of Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) members embarked on a collaborative community-based social marketing pilot with the goal of developing a turnkey outreach strategy that could be scalable across a wide range of cities. This presentation highlights the process and results from the multi-agency pilot focused on reducing energy use at municipal employee workstations. Technical research has suggested that approximately half of the power from the plug to a desktop PC is wasted. Given the large number of desktop computers that exist within government offices, an effective program targeting this behavior has the potential for large energy savings. The pilot follows the traditional community-based social marketing model and focuses on motivating employees to implement power management settings and shut down components when not in use. Activities include focus groups and web survey research to identify perceived barriers and benefits, incorporation of behavior change tools from the social sciences, in-person communication, and pilot testing with a control group. Four USDN member cities and counties, representing diverse regions across the United States, participated in the development and piloting of the program. In addition to identifying successful strategies, the project allows local governments to compare outcomes and inform large scale implementation decisions.