

Practice Name:**Date Created:** 26-May-09**Author:****Last Updated:****Abstract:****GENERAL INFORMATION**

Name of Practice	Get with the Green Routine, a new waste collection service
Date	26-June-08
Name of Municipality	Strathcona County
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THE ISSUE**Abstract:**

What is the practice you developed or are developing (brief abstract)?

Please briefly describe the final practice developed. (e.g. if you developed a new Council agenda, list the agenda items, or if a new communications plan was created, provide a summary of the plan's goals, objectives and highlights.)

Strathcona County has developed a new and improved waste collection service. This new service includes curbside pick up of recyclable materials (paper, containers, plastics, etc.), organic materials and waste. By asking our residents to sort their recyclables and their organics from their waste, there is a potential to divert up to 89 per cent of waste from landfill.

Only 11 per cent of household waste needs to go to the landfill. The rest can be recycled (which accounts for 37 per cent of waste) or composted (organics account for 52 per cent of waste).

During the months of May and June 2008, each household that subscribes to County waste services received two roll-out carts (one for organics and one for waste). Starting the week of June 16, households were asked to sort their waste into four streams. The green cart collects organics and the black cart collects waste. Paper and paper product recyclables such as newspaper, corrugated cardboard, cereal and tissue boxes are placed in one reusable container. Recyclable containers such as glass, metal cans, plastic bags and Styrofoam are placed in a blue bag.

The organics cart and the waste cart are collected on a rotating schedule every week and the paper and container recyclables are picked up weekly. A truck with an automated arm collects the organics and waste. A split stream manual truck collects both the paper and container recyclables.

The new waste collection system also introduced a fixed day collection schedule and a total of 12 Enviroservice events (May to October). Enviroservice events collect household hazardous waste and replaces the semi-annual Household Hazardous Waste Round-Up. More items can now be transferred at Enviroservice events.

Need:

Please describe (just a couple of sentences or bullet points) why you needed to create this practice (policy or

process).

What issue made it necessary? (e.g. “We needed a comprehensive plan to deal with...”, or “We needed an annual forecasting tool because...”)

Strathcona County will no longer be able to take waste to the Clover Bar Landfill after December 2008. Residential waste collected by the County will have to be transported to a facility further away which would increase the cost of waste collection to the residents.

Prior to June 16, 2008, Strathcona County was diverting about one-third of recyclables from landfill.

Alberta Environment has set a target of 500 kilograms maximum of waste per year per person to be taken to the landfill. Strathcona County is currently at 900 kilograms per capita.

In order to reduce the number of work related injuries sustained by hauling garbage and increasing the labour pool, an automated system of collecting waste was required.

CREATING YOUR PRACTICE

Research:

How did you obtain information to help design your practice (including consultation with stakeholders, formal and informal research)?

Please include any research documentation you can share, or give us a source reference (e.g. Web site, literature, “We reviewed the bylaws from other municipalities in the area...”).

Research into the project was exhaustive including:

In 2006, a business plan initiative was approved to review the Waste Management Services Plan (1999) prior to the expiration of collection and landfill contracts in 2008. The audit Strathcona County Residential Waste Audit for Single-Family and Multi-Family Dwellings was completed. A supplement to the original Waste Management Services Plan was published and the Waste and Recycling Public Opinion Study was completed.

In 2007, another supplement to the original Waste Management Services Plan was published and a pilot project for using the cart system was conducted from April to June. A survey that measured the participating residents' experiences was conducted in June. A Recycling Survey (Banister) was conducted with 400 residents, measuring their current and future recycling needs and practices. In the later part of 2007, Ever Green Ecological Services was successful in winning the tendering process for the new waste collection service.

In addition to the above mentioned audits and surveys, staff researched how other municipalities were diverting waste and what services local suppliers could provide. As well, two focus groups critiqued the communication pieces to ensure user understandability.

Process:

How did you go about designing your practice? For instance, did you create a team, hire a consultant, borrow something ready-made from another jurisdiction?

Describe briefly who did the design work and what process they followed.

The new waste collection service was created in part from the outcome of the research and how other municipalities handle their waste. In particular, Olds, Alberta, Halifax, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

As well, Sonnevera International Group reviewed the pre-existing plan and made recommendations.

GETTING APPROVAL FOR YOUR PRACTICE

Authority:

Whose/what approval did you need to create and implement the practice?

Strathcona County Utilities received positive feedback based on the various surveys, pilot project and audits completed with residents.

Council ultimately approved the new waste collection service in 2008.

Reporting:

How did you inform the decision-maker(s) about the practice and your need for their approval?

Presentations were made to the Executive Team and Council on a number of occasions, introducing them to the concept of sorting waste, to a status update, to a request for final budget and program approval.

Please note the name of any documents provided to the decision-makers that you would be willing to share.

Consultation:

Did you consult with stakeholders as part of your approval process?

Public consultation has been extensive:
1) A solid waste management plan was developed in 1999 by KC Environmental Group Ltd. There have been three supplemental reports to this initial plan, released in July 2002, September 2006 and March 2007. The supplements were written by Sonnevera International Group.

If so, how? If possible, attach a copy of templates, surveys or other documents you used as part of your consultation.

2) In 2006, the Strathcona County Residential Waste Audit for Single-Family and Multi-Family Dwellings was conducted by CSR/McConnell Weaver Communication Management.

3) In 2006, the Waste and Recycling Public Opinion Survey was prepared by Phil Kreisel, Ph.D., Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs, Strathcona County.

4) A Recycling Survey, conducted by Banister Research and Consulting Inc., was also completed in 2007 with 400 residents, measuring their current and future recycling needs and practices.

5) A pilot project for using the roll-out cart was conducted from April to June 2007. A focus group to discuss the benefits and concerns about all facets of recycling including a schedule for pick up was conducted in June 2007.

IMPLEMENTING YOUR PRACTICE

Plan:

Describe the process you went through to implement the practice. If you used an implementation plan, please note it here.

The Get with the Green Routine was implemented the following way:

In 2007, Ever Green Ecological Services was successful in winning the tendering process to collect residential waste, organics and recycling.

In 2008, Rehrig Pacific Company was successful in winning the tendering process for the roll-out carts. Fifty-thousand carts were ordered, to be delivered in May.

An intense communications plan was developed and implemented, starting in January 2008. This communications plan was focused mostly on educating residents on the new system, Get with the Green Routine.

Two carts and a green catcher (small pail for under the sink to collect organics) were delivered to each household in May and June 2008. Included in the cart delivery was a start up package that included a compostable bag, a blue bag, a collection schedule and an information guide. The Street Team (summer students) followed up with each household (25,000) to answer questions.

School presentations targeted at elementary-aged children were conducted. Two community information sessions were held, and the Street Team participated in three local trade shows. Displays were also set up in the local mall, greenhouses, County facilities and recreation complexes.

A variety of presentations were made at local community group meetings such as the Rotary Clubs, senior clubs and the Chamber of Commerce.

Constant updates to the website, ads in the local paper, truck decaling, bus signs, billboards and phone calls have rounded out the implementation plan.

The Enviroservice events have started as well.

Policy:

What changes to bylaws, regulations or procedures were needed to implement this practice and how did you deal with them?

A change in the bylaw was required to support the new service. Please see attached bylaw 11-2008.

Please attach a copy of the change in bylaw, policy or procedure.

When:

When did your municipality begin to use the practice? Was it implemented all at once or in stages?

The official launch date of the Get with the Green Routine program was June 16, 2008. This includes all components of the new waste collection services.

Who:

Who was responsible for implementing the practice?

The Utilities department, headed up by Jeff Hutton (Manager) and Leah Seabrook (Coordinator Waste Management/Community Energy Systems) were responsible for implementing the Green Routine.

If someone else is responsible for ongoing management, who is it?

Jennifer Tames (Communications and Marketing Specialist) was responsible for marketing the program with the assistance of Karen Tomnuk (Marketing Assistant).

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Budget:

How much did it cost you to design and implement your practice (i.e. We saved/spent \$XX per year)?

It cost \$28,000 to conduct the research necessary for the new waste collection service.

What are your ongoing operational and capital costs, if any?

The initial purchase of the carts, having them delivered to each household, educating residents on how to use them and inventory of the carts will cost approximately \$4 million.

The operational costs of the Green Routine will cost \$4.5 million a year.

A debenture and annual fee will be paid for by user-fees collected by the Utilities department which will cost each household \$18 per month.

Staff:

What human resources did you need to design, implement and manage your practice? (e.g. "It took X staff member (s) X months on this" or "This is part of normal staff duties.")

Strathcona County Utilities hired four consultants to conduct the above-mentioned surveys and audits. One survey and one focus group was conducted internally.

Five full-time staff members and one part-time staff were responsible for implementing the program, upkeep and communicating with the key stakeholders and media. This has been ongoing since 2007.

Six full-time Street Team members (summer students) and 12 temporary staff were hired to help answer phones, make public presentations, follow-up with residents and prepare carts for 25,000 households.

Three full-time staff members answered public inquiries on the telephone about the Green Routine.

Ever Green Ecological Services was hired to collect the waste. They are also responsible for providing the appropriate automated collection trucks and staffing them.

Infrastructure:

What “capital costs” (such as information technology, other equipment or building assets) did you need to design, implement, manage, and/or evaluate your practice?

It cost \$4 million to purchase the carts and educate residents on how to use the new system.

\$120,000 was allocated from the 2008 Utilities budget to operate a temporary location for Enviroservice. In the 2010 budget, \$1.1 million has been earmarked to make the Enviroservice area permanent.

EVALUATING YOUR PRACTICE

Formal:

If you did a formal evaluation (e.g. user satisfaction survey, analysis of annual expenditures or number of rate payers served) for your practice, please describe the evaluation tool and the process used.

Tell us who was involved.

We will be evaluating the Green Routine the following ways:

- a full comprehensive survey in the fall of 2008
- on-line survey
- spot-checks of residential waste to ensure that proper sorting is taking place
- responding to various emails and phone messages
- visits to individual homes

Strathcona County residents will be involved in this process.

Informal:

If you did an informal evaluation, describe what you did (such as discussing the practice with people in the office or on the street, or letters/comments received).

Informal evaluation of the new service is continuous. In June 2008, we logged 6,000 calls from residents, mostly asking sorting-related questions.

Monitoring the media has proven a cost-effective way of evaluating how people are responding to the new program through letters to the editor, articles, etc.

Emails, letters and personal encounters account for most of our information evaluation to date. Many Strathcona County staff live within the County, so personal reflection and staff input is constant.

Performance measures:

Please list the performance measures for this practice (i.e. reduced number of complaints, money saved, or change in equipment life expectancy.)

1. Strathcona County Utilities can monitor how much waste is being sent to landfill on a weekly basis. The amount of recyclables and organics collected can be measured as well.

Please list the process you used for measuring performance, (i.e. We do annual surveys on...) examples include:

- collecting data
- establishing a baseline
- applying the measures
- results
- follow up

2. A formal survey of residents is planned for the fall of 2008, asking for their feedback about the program and how it is working in their home.

Changes:

(a) Based on the evaluation (formal or informal), describe any changes you have made, or would like to make, to your practice as a result. (e.g. "After implementing this practice, we decided that it would be better if...")

-or-

(b) Has your practice met your expectations and if so, how?

The Green Routine officially launched on June 16, 2008 so at time of submission, the program has only been running it for two weeks. Feedback from residents is constant, but it would be premature at this point to change the program. We continually monitor feedback and have dealt with any immediate issues. A formal survey is planned for fall of 2008.

The Green Routine has met our expectations so far - in fact, during the first week of the program, we sent 268 tonnes less of waste to landfill than the week before the program started! That's a 51 per cent reduction. During the weeks (every other week) that organics are collected, no waste will be sent to the landfill.

LESSONS LEARNED / BENEFITS RECEIVED

Benefits:

What are the benefits of this practice to your municipality? (eg. Preparation of Council agenda packages now requires less time, etc.)

The Green Routine's benefits are both economical and environmental.

Strathcona County will no longer be able to send their waste to the Clover Bar Landfill after December 2008. Residential waste collected by the County will have to be transported further away, which means higher costs.

It costs less to compost organic materials than it does to send them to the landfill.

By moving to a system that recycles and composts a large amount of waste, we will be able to minimize rate increases as transportation costs rise.

The Green Routine has the potential to divert up to 89 per cent of waste from landfill. Less waste going to landfill further away means lower emissions from trucks.

Key Lessons:

What key lessons have you/your municipality learned through the process of:

- designing;
- obtaining approval;
- implementing; and
- evaluating your practice?

Include any problems, surprises, and unanticipated benefits. (e.g. "We realized that we needed to spend more time...")

Key lessons we have learned include:

- ensure there is more than adequate staff resources available to answer telephone inquiries
- start developing communication pieces earlier
- have a pilot project that includes the whole proposed system, not just parts of it
- ensure there is a built in timing buffer for delivery of key components of the program

Advice to Municipal Peers:

What advice would you give to another municipality that is considering adopting your practice? Is there anything you might have done differently?

The Green Routine is a necessary step to reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill by municipalities. Our advice would be to ensure:

- 1) extensive research and public consultation has been conducted in order to back up decisions
- 2) ensure that communication with residents and Council is clear and has adequate timelines
- 3) when working with contractors, ensure that timelines are understood and that they will be met
- 4) expect residents to be vocal in their feedback and prepare staff for this influx of communication

PRACTICE UPDATES

New Information:

n/a

There may be some new information to add since this practice was first posted. This is especially true if:

- a new process has been implemented in your municipality;
- there are new practice evaluation results; or
- there has been a change affecting organizational direction. For example, explain how new economic conditions or a new vision/strategy affect the practice.

Please indicate those changes here. Don't forget to list any new documents that may be useful to your peers. Then go to "Other Information" to attach the new documents.

OTHER INFORMATION

Suggestions:

Please list relevant information sources that others might use or you would be willing to share (courses, Web sites, literature, experts).

- 1) Seek the opinions and experiences from other municipalities that offer a program similar to what is desired.
- 2) consult with the Capital Region Waste Minimization Advisory Committee (for Edmonton region municipalities)

Documents & Attachments:

Please attach (using the "Browse" button below) any documents you would be willing to share with others interested in your practice (e.g. a bylaw, a policy, approval documents, templates).

* Note: If you do not have an electronic copy of a document, please send Municipal Excellence a paper copy for scanning to:

Alberta Municipal Affairs
Municipal Excellence Network
17th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5J 4L4

Nominations:

Do you have any suggestions of other individuals or municipalities with municipal practices that we should add to the Municipal Excellence network? Please list their practice, municipality, and contact information.

Or, e-mail menet@gov.ab.ca and let us know about a municipal colleague that has a really good way of doing things.

2006 Strathcona Public Opinion Survey
Bannister Research Recycling Survey
Bylaw 11-2008
green routine brochure
June bill stuffer
Residential Waste Audit 2006
Static copy of 2007reportupdate
Strathcona County Green routine launch communications plan
Strathcona Cnty Green Routine Report SR2002

COMMENTS

Have we missed something; anything you'd like to add to the areas we have touched on, or an area we have not mentioned?