

Best practices for Green Partners projects

Suggestions and lessons learned

The information provided in this document was compiled from input received from past Green Partners about how they define success and their advice for other project managers.

What does success look like?

- Participants are enthusiastic and share interesting and empowering stories from the project.
- Staff and leadership model positive environmental behaviors and act as environmental stewards.
- Community members take on leadership roles and sustain the work in the community.
- Measurable goals established at the beginning of the project are reached.
- Survey responses show that participants are interested and feel positively about their ability to make a difference in protecting the earth.
- Opportunities arise to build connections across issues and develop new partnerships.

Advice from past project managers

Build a solid project team and gain leadership support

Build a solid project team and establish a core group of leaders or champions. Be sure to have a backup plan for staffing changes as team members may move on or be reassigned. Find partners who have complementary expertise and resources and a clear understanding about roles and expectations. Work to gain leadership support early – in some cases leadership support is needed to approve the project or sustain programming.

Focus and have a clear plan from the beginning

Develop a plan with clear, realistic goals. Stay focused – for behavior change projects it is especially important to focus on motivating your participants to take one or two actions so you and your participants can be successful. Have a plan to get any materials you need before your project begins.

Make time to build relationships with your participants

Make time to get to know your participants, build trust, and understand their interests, challenges, and values. Provide many opportunities for people to engage and make your activities fun and relatable. Provide information in ways that participants want to receive it, whether it be through art, translated materials, personal storytelling, or something else. Lead by example and help people troubleshoot.

Support and develop leadership within your audience

Engage your stakeholders and empower them to be decision makers and leaders in your project. This helps you make project plans that work for the community, uses your stakeholders' knowledge in who and how to recruit, honors the wisdom that exists in the community, and helps build momentum for long-term sustainability of the project.

Build in time for activities, reporting, and evaluation

Plan enough time to complete project activities, tracking project expenses, and reporting. Build in time to collect information from participants or collect data to report on project outcomes.

Be flexible and expect change to be slow

Behavior change takes time. People need to contemplate change, try things to find what works for them, and finally make real changes. Be flexible and adjust the project to participants' interests and where they are experiencing challenges. Anticipate changes in participation during different times of year. For example, school gardens can be a challenge to maintain in the summer. Always have a backup weather plan for outdoor activities.

Communicate milestones and celebrate successes!

Build in time to communicate, reinforce education, and follow up with people. Communicate to your audience about your project goals and plans, track and share your progress, announce events and educational opportunities with plenty of notice, and post photos and videos to show all the fun people are having participating in your project. Celebrate with your community to reinforce that what you accomplished is important!