



Application for 2009 Outstanding County Program Awards

County (if multi-county entry, list all): Polk County

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The Association encourages electronic submissions. E-mail the application and project/program description to Todd McGee at todd.mcgee@ncacc.org. You can also fax your entry to (919) 733-1065 (attn. Todd McGee), or mail it to: NCACC, 215 N. Dawson St., Raleigh, NC 27603. Applications must be postmarked by **Friday, Feb. 26, 2010**.

Projects/programs must have been implemented between Jan. 1, 2008, and Dec. 31, 2009. For additional information and category criteria, visit www.ncacc.org/awards/ocpa/about.html.

Project title: Polk County Mobile Recycling Service

Category (you may check more than one):

General Government Human Services Public Information/Participation

Address each of the following questions in a typed program/project summary in a separate Word document attached to this application form. Limit your responses to two pages. Use single-spaced lines and 12-point, Times New Roman font. Supporting materials may be submitted, but due to time constraints, judges may not review the materials.

1. What are the purpose, history, timeline and budget of the program/project? Will the county realize any projected cost savings? (For public information/participation programs, please try to estimate participation levels).
2. What makes the program/project unique? How does it differ from similar projects in your county or in other counties?
3. How well did the program use available resources, given the limitations on such resources?
4. Can this project be duplicated in other counties? If another county wanted to do a similar project, what advice would you give them to minimize obstacles and problems?
5. How did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, jurisdictions, nonprofits, businesses, etc.? How well did this collaboration work and is it on-going?

Program Summary- Application for 2009 Outstanding County Program Awards
Polk County Mobile Recycling Service

1. What are the purpose, history, timeline and budget of the program/project? Will the county realize any projected cost savings? (For public information/participation programs, please try to estimate participation levels).

In 2007, the Polk County Recycling Advisory Board began researching cost effective and convenient ways to increase recycling participation. While the county's stationary recycling center, located at the Transfer Station on Highway 9 North, is an efficient operation, it is not convenient to many areas of the county. Costs to establish other convenience centers that would be accessible to a large number of citizens would be prohibitive. Therefore, a plan was developed (1) to avoid additional costs; (2) to avert the public debate of "not in my backyard;" and (3) to increase public convenience countywide. Under this new concept, a publicly used mobile recycling trailer is regularly placed along well-established travel corridors in Polk County. It was projected that the convenient locations would reduce citizens' needs to travel long distances to voluntarily participate in recycling. Further expected benefits of this program include the reduction of fuel and time needed by citizens as they drive shorter distances to recycle their materials. Convenience increases participation. Increased recycling rates will avert reusable waste from the landfill thus reducing tipping fee charges while creating feedstock and jobs for the marketing and manufacturing sector. Increased recycling opportunities will allow citizens to: actively engage in the waste aversion process, readily abide by the recently passed legislation that bans aluminum cans and plastic bottles from the landfill, and take part in community driven "good stewardship" which reduces natural resource consumption.

Using the concept and plan described above, Polk County applied for and was awarded two grants partially covering costs of the truck, trailer, recycling containers and associated equipment, as well as promotional materials. From state funding, the county received \$15,000 from the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance. From local funding, the county received \$11,000 from the Polk County Community Foundation. Polk County Government allocated funds for maintenance, operation, and part-time wages for a recycling driver/attendant. The total budget commitment for 2009 was \$18,905.00 (\$43,905.00 less the grant funding reimbursement of \$25,000.00).

The resulting program, the Mobile Recycling Service (MRS) was designed to reach citizens via mobile recycling stations, strategically located near their communities. To further boost participation and to address public need, Polk County collaborated with the Polk County School System in order to include the local elementary, middle, and high schools in the mobile service schedule and athletic event schedules.

Prior to launching MRS, we completed a three-week collection experiment at Polk County Middle School, using boxes placed there for the collection of paper, cardboard, and drink containers. From this trial, we estimated that at least 18,000 additional pounds of paper and 7,200 pounds of co-mingled containers will be diverted from the landfill with the placement of the trailers through MRS. This will save Polk County School System a portion of the solid waste and recycling fees that they paid prior to MRS.

Our first MRS pickups began Monday, December 7, 2009, with staffed mobile units stationed in three locations from 7 am until noon according to this schedule: Mondays, Harmon Field/Tryon;

Tuesdays Ozone and Hwy 176/Saluda; Wednesdays, Hwy 9 South Fire Department/Green Creek.

The first three weeks of collection yielded 8540 pounds of recycled material. In the following weeks the numbers grew as the public became aware of the drop off locations and the school collection process began. Based on preliminary numbers, of a very new program, it is projected that the collection rate of the community sites, schools, senior centers, and government offices will exceed 300,000 pounds of diverted material

2. What makes the program/project unique? How does it differ from similar projects in your county or in other counties?

Polk County is a rural county with three small towns. Those towns are Saluda, Columbus and Tryon, with Tryon being the largest of the three. During our research, we did not find other public mobile services. Polk County MRS is unique in that it establishes mobile rather than stationary drop-off locations that are also staffed. The mobile nature allows flexibility in scheduling should experience indicate that certain areas need more or less frequent service pick-ups. Prior to MRS, recycling locations in Polk were reduced when the town of Tryon closed their recycling center in favor of their continued curbside pickup. MRS may be perceived as an amelioration of this public service reduction. The Town of Columbus operates a stationary recycling drop off. The Town of Saluda does not have a recycling center.

The benefits of MRS include: Convenience, which increases participation and economic efficiency; Efficiency, as one driver/attendant facilitates three collection opportunities, in addition to collections from schools and government offices; Environmental education in the schools and for the public is enhanced; Results improvement is more likely when there is increased participation by an environmentally aware public; Service and public relations can be enhanced by the presence of staff in communities.

3. How well did the program use available resources, given the limitation on such resources?

Resources were sought from state and local funders, allowing Polk County to focus on staffing and operational needs. In efforts to boost the local economy, the truck, trailer, boxes and signage were purchased from local vendors within a seventy-mile radius of Polk County.

4. Can this project be duplicated in other counties? If another county wanted to do a similar project, what advice would you give them to minimize obstacles and problems?

This project can serve as a model. State government technical assistance and consulting support were engaged early in the problem identification process. To minimize obstacles, we recommend the inclusion of key stakeholders to establish support and collaboration. Remember to consult with teachers, school cafeteria and athletic staff, as well as civic organizations and neighborhood leaders. All equipment and techniques used in any new mobile recycling program should be compatible in all respects with existing systems.

5. How did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, jurisdictions, nonprofits, businesses, etc? How well did this collaboration work and is it on-going?

From the very beginning of our research, we consulted local, state, and regional recycling experts, including volunteers on the Polk County Recycling Advisory Board, the Land of Sky Regional Council, state and local grant funders, and numerous civic groups. Relationship with the press was especially helpful as we receive continued support from the Tryon Daily Bulletin, including significant news coverage and editorials. Teacher and student “recycling champions” and “green teams” were also very active and involved. These on-going relationships have been critical supports to help us gain clarity of the issues; understand how the issues affect people’s lives, opinions, and recycling behavior; and how we can serve all “the publics” better.



Polk County Mobile Recycling Service parked at Harm on Field



Directional Sign



Recycler Arrives



Working Together



Polk County High School (PCHS) Green Team



PCHS Principal Aaron Greene, County Manager Ryan Whitson and PC School Superintendent Bill Miller with new trailer.



PCHS Green Team leaders interviewed

