

## **Overview**

This document presents an overview and summary of a capstone project titled, "Reducing Chemical Footprints in the Front Range". The project was conducted on behalf of IES to help find ways to engage individuals in the Front Range of Colorado and to encourage them to reduce their use of household products containing Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs). The purpose of the project was to improve on IES' previous community-based social marketing (CBSM) strategies to engage the target audience by providing realistic recommendations. IES has had difficulty engaging with the community, even through using CBSM strategies. The long term goal for the project is to create opportunities for public administration officials to put CEC prevention on their policy agendas. To address the issue, the author researched (1) who IES' target population should be; (2) potential barriers to engage these populations; (3) strategies to overcome these barriers; and (4) different organizations IES can partner with.

The literature review in the project addresses the research questions from the introduction. The literature review concentrated on social marketing's role in public administration, social marketing's background, the lessons learned from past social marketing efforts, and frameworks for cross-collaborative partnerships. The author involved two research methodologies to answer the research questions as well. The first method was to conduct secondary research to identify a target audience for IES's community-based social marketing strategy. The second method was to collect qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders; specifically, college education, parental figures and potential cross-collaborative partners. The goal through these two research methods was to gain additional knowledge about who, when, where, and how IES can motivate individuals to reduce their chemical footprints.

## **Findings**

In the findings of the project, the research questions are answered through designed analysis. From the interviews conducted, the analysis detected three main barriers that IES faces when engaging with the target audience (i.e. Front Range): lack of knowledge of CECs, time constraints, and interest level. Solutions to overcome these barriers are to provide more convenient in-person interactions and to promote word-of-mouth interactions through social media. The identified potential partners that IES could partner with in the community are environmentally conscious companies and outdoor companies that are concerned with water quality issues like fly-fishing shops.

The author consulted with a non-profit founder and found that there is more engagement with the community when it is in a public setting rather than traditional means (e.g. meeting). Additionally, from an interview with a local parent, time was considered the biggest barrier since they are working and taking care of a child; thus, have miniscule capacity to attend in-person consultations.

## **Recommendations**

The author developed recommendations for before and after Covid-19 to help better engage the target population with IES. During the pandemic, the author suggested engaging individuals through social media efforts and to work on collaborations with potential partners. The findings suggest that IES should utilize all social media platforms to increase word-of-mouth and engage community members about CECs. It was also proposed that IES joins parenting groups on social media to discuss the dangers of CECs. Another recommendation is that IES should host small virtual projects with local and environmentally conscious businesses who are concerned with water quality. After the pandemic, it was suggested that IES provides more convenient in-person interactions like attending weekend markets. This will allow for the IES to foster more engagement through moving away from traditional meetings. IES can adapt CBSM tools to engage the community with these workshops at weekend market booths.

### **Limitations**

The project has several limitations that could affect the outcome like the lack of generalizability, sampling issues, and target audience. This project is limited to the front range population and cannot be generalized to the Denver area because of qualitative research and low population sample. The second limitation is that the sampling technique was unable to reach referrals for potential participants. Lastly, demographics of the target population is not a reliable variable.