

OUTREACH

Promoting Program Awareness

One of the biggest challenges faced by the SBO/SBEAPs is gaining wide-spread program awareness. While the nationwide program reaches just under one million small businesses each year, this represents only a small percentage of the approximately 25 million small businesses in the U.S.

Traditionally, awareness has been achieved through meetings, web sites, publications, public speaking, business/industry journals, and appearances at regional trade shows or business fairs.

As part of a public information campaign, the SBO also funded the development of a logo or unifying image that will help the program become more recognizable. This is important to establishing public awareness and reaching the largest number of people. Using that logo, several promotional pieces have been designed which will hopefully increase program visibility – print ads, a brochure, a shellsheet, pocket folders, etc.

Promoting Compliance

Generally, businesses want to comply with environmental regulations; however, they may be afraid to ask for assistance. When a non-threatening assistance program, such as the SBEAP, is available, small businesses typically are most anxious to take advantage of the services, especially as trust in the program increases. One-on-one contacts can provide valuable information to businesses that were previously unaware of their compliance requirements. Businesses need to understand:

- The need to have operating permits and how to obtain and complete them
- The need to maintain records
- Information on available compliance options such as reformulation, pollution prevention or control equipment
- Grant or loan information to finance equipment purchases or modifications to bring a business into compliance

To facilitate greater understanding and awareness of the regulations, some SBEAPs have:

- Increased on-site visits
- Increased registration and permitting of existing sources
- Encouraged pollution prevention practices
- Targeted their outreach efforts to specific industry sectors

A large part of the success of any outreach assistance is a continued interest in and delivery of a non-regulatory assistance message to the affected source population. This includes:

- Disseminating concise, understandable materials
- Recognizing the minimal available time for a small business to participate in outside activities beyond daily business
- Providing compliance options

All these are critical to the success of a compliance assistance effort. Results of compliance assistance activity will not necessarily yield verifiable results immediately. Compliance assistance activities should be viewed as a support system that will yield incremental results and eventually arrive at full compliance. Other compliance assistance efforts can include:

- **Amnesty programs**

In some states, amnesty programs have been introduced to encourage compliance in the small business community. Typically, businesses are given a grace period in which to correct deficiencies, obtain permits, etc. without penalty (unless imminent threat to human health or the environment exists). The SBEAPs often assist businesses in identifying and correcting their problems during an amnesty program.

- **Incentive and award programs**

Incentive or award programs have proven to be effective in encouraging compliance. Business owners usually enjoy receiving an award, plaque, certificate or other token of recognition for their efforts. An award may be given for going above and beyond compliance requirements, implementing pollution prevention practices, or meeting a certain set of criteria as defined by the SBEAP. Some states have designed recognition programs to focus on a particular industry sector.

- **Opportunities for one-on-one guidance from non-regulatory personnel**

Some states offer mentoring programs, which are volunteer programs that match environmental professionals with small businesses in need of assistance. Volunteers, often with environmental, legal, business, or consulting backgrounds, meet the needs of small businesses by providing free, confidential assistance with environmental compliance issues. Such mentoring programs ensure that a greater number of businesses receive personal attention, which is not only an excellent benefit to the business, but positively promotes the SBEAP.

- **On-site visits, workshops, and speaking engagements targeted to specific industry groups**

An SBEAP may identify one particular industry sector in its state that is heavily impacted by the CAA or other federal law or regulation, has a particular compliance problem (such as a high number of unpermitted facilities), or has some other specific need. The SBEAP can concentrate its outreach efforts towards that sector using a variety of methods to reach the widest audience.

Partnering

Promoting cooperative efforts within your CAP's state or territory will maximize program effectiveness. The following are some groups that the CAP can look to for possible partnerships or benefits:

- State resources (SBO/SBEAP)
- Regional air groups
- Trade/industry associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Non-profit organizations
- Universities
- Engineering organizations
- Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
- Small business development centers
- EPA regional offices.

Cooperative efforts often are realized through CAP member contacts. For example, the Pennsylvania CAP has a good working relationship with EPA Region III Small Business Assistance Center via former and current members being on the CAP.

Generally, CAPs find that all three components of their SBEAPs recognize the efficiency and value of coordinating their efforts with each other and with other environmental departments, state agencies, and organizations.

Effective Mechanisms

Listed below are proven examples of CAP activities that help small business owners become aware of SBEAP services. Many of these activities have been accomplished through the support and coordination of other state associations and small business groups.

- One-on-one guidance from non-regulatory personnel
- On-site visits to small business
- Training seminars and workshops
- Presentations to local civic and business groups and trade associations
- Fact sheets, case studies, and brochures
- Articles for business publications and trade association newsletters
- Targeted letters to industry sectors
- Confidential exchange to assist small businesses before penalties may be incurred
- Web sites
- Early involvement in the regulatory agency's rulemaking process
- Public hearing participation
- Participation in regulatory agency's advisory groups for rulemakings or policy changes
- Commenting on proposed state or federal regulations
- Informational brochures, news releases, public service announcements, etc. about availability of services