



Profitable, in-house 'green' disposal

By DANI MOLNAR | The Municipal

IT DOESN'T HAPPEN EVERY TIME, but occasionally, going green can also mean saving money.

The State Electronics Challenge was designed by the Northeast Recycling Council in Brattleboro, Vt., as a way to teach municipal leaders green electronic disposal techniques. Since 2007, 117 agencies in 36 states have become involved with the program, learning to recycle, buy green and preserve resources.

The program is designed to parallel the lifespan of a piece of equipment from purchase to usage and eventual disposal. Users are taught green methodology at each step.

"One of the purposes of the challenge is to help educate state, local and regional governments about the impact of products and give them guidance on what they can do to reduce their environmental footprint," said Patty Dillon, program manager for the SEC.

As a partner, municipal leaders are offered services, information and webinars, which teach them the techniques. While much of the information is available through the website, technical support, sustainability reports and recognition awards are only provided to those who choose to partner.

"I think it helps us think of new ways to incorporate that stuff because we don't have the time for research and development," explained Hilary Pasch, IT project manager for the borough of State College, Pa. "To be honest, the biggest challenge is time, we don't have enough time in the day to get everything done that we want to do."

Any entity that falls under a state, regional or local government can participate in the challenge, including schools, utility crews and county officials. Partnership is completely free, and there are no repercussions if that participation later ceases. ▶



At the offices of the borough of State College, Pa., a storage room is designated for end-of-life management of technology. Hilary Pasch, borough IT project manager, is shown sorting through the discarded electronics. (Photo provided)

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Partners begin by learning about the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool and how to buy green products. The second phase teaches energy usage and preservation.

"While on your desktop and in your office, it means managing to reduce the footprint," said Dillon.

The third phase covers the end-of-life management of technology, including recycling or donating old materials.

Pasch believes that the SEC serves as a complement to programs the borough has already implemented.

"We definitely have the mentality, in general, about sustainable work place. The challenge really fit with us," she said.

Because some of their programs already fall in line with SEC standards, it was easier for State College to win awards. Awards come from following through with each phase of the challenge from purchase to usage and the eventual disposal of electronics. The more phases a municipality completes, the higher level of award it can receive.

"My biggest advice would be that they make an effort to jump an award step," said Pasch. After one phase is completed, participants

receive a bronze award; if they complete two phases in a year, they receive a silver. If all three life cycle phases are completed for the year, the gold award is handed out.

State College Borough has been working with the SEC for five years. According to Pasch, it wasn't very difficult at all.

"People need to take a quick glance at what they're already doing. You'd be surprised how many of these organizations are already doing what it takes to win an award. It was just kind of recording that throughout the year and pinpointing it. We uncovered more and more things that we were already doing."

Power management policies were already in place for the district's nearly 400 computers, which lock down after 15 minutes of inactivity. All computers are EPEAT certified and at the end of their usefulness are donated to Skills of Central Pennsylvania, an organization that helps disabled residents develop job skills.

At the end of each year, the State Electronics Challenge offers customized annual reports to show each partner how its green efforts have helped their communities. ■

On the Web

For information about the State
Electronics Challenge, visit
www.stateelectronicschallenge.net
or call (802) 254-3636

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