



The Policy Studies Organization

DUPONT SUMMIT 2012

..... Pressing Issues Amid the Political Maelstrom

December 7, 2012 * Carnegie Institution for Science, Washington, DC
Sponsored by the American Public University and the George Mason University

Panel Speakers

Ed Maibach, PhD, *George Mason University*
Andrew Pyle, *George Mason University*
Neil Ransom, *George Mason University*
Ian Stanford, *George Mason University*
Neil Stenhouse, *George Mason University*

Topic

"Strengthening Sustainability Design Program Design: A Checklist Approach"

Organizations – in the public, private, and NGO sectors – seeking to reduce fossil fuel consumption and enhance sustainability associated with their operations will typically implement new policies and seek to influence the behavior of employees, customers, and citizens in a variety of ways. Regrettably, both organizational and population behavior change initiatives – including those focused on enhancing sustainability – are notoriously prone to failure: people’s behavior is not easily influenced; new policies may be resisted or ignored; and even popular policies may not be as effective as intended due to difficulties inherent in implementing them. Some failures will be unavoidable when conducting behavior change initiatives. However, failures also result from poor program selection or from failure to consider options previously proven to be effective. We propose that simple checklists can minimize the rate of avoidable errors. (continued on next page)



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(continued from previous page) The checklist is an easily enacted policy that has a remarkable record of success in improving program outcomes (Gawande, 2010). Checklists can serve as a highly effective behavior management tool to organize large sets of complex information and help practitioners systematically perform all important steps in a process without omitting any (Gawande 2010). Requiring employees to use a checklist before making complex decisions (e.g., deciding to make a business acquisition) and/or taking complex actions (e.g., flying an airplane, or conducting a surgical procedure) has been shown to improve outcomes in settings as diverse as corporations, hospitals, and commercial airlines. There is ample opportunity for organizations (and their employees) to use a properly constructed checklist to improve their sustainability programs and achieve better outcomes.

We have developed a checklist to enhance the behavior change potential – and impact – of sustainability-related initiatives in public, private, and NGO sector organizations. Based on the People & Places Framework (Maibach, Abrams, & Marotsis, 2007) – a previously published model for population behavior management – the checklist is intended to help sustainability program planners and managers easily apply a wide range of insights from the social and behavioral sciences in their efforts to modify people's behavior. (continued on next page)



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(continued from previous page) The social and behavioral science literature is admittedly vast. Even trained experts have difficulty applying a full range of evidence-based behavior change strategies in the development of sustainability initiatives. The checklist is a heuristic device intended to help solve this problem by ensuring that planners and managers consider the applicability of a full range of scientifically supported behavior change strategies when they develop and manage programs.

We propose presenting our research as an individual talk or poster session. During our session, we will present our proposed checklist and the basis on which it was developed, and we hope to solicit constructive critiques and suggestions for the future direction of this research from an audience of fellow scholars and policy experts.