

Case study

Reducing plastic waste in Greenhaven

Greenhaven's plastic waste problem requires a strategic approach supported by a well-prepared business case. The success of any initiative will depend on clear objectives, stakeholder buy-in and a thorough analysis of the financial and environmental impacts.

This case study is a foundation for training participants in developing a business case to address environmental challenges.

Background

The city of Greenhaven, with a population of 150,000, faces a growing environmental challenge due to plastic waste. Over the past five years, the city's landfill has seen a 20% increase in plastic waste, leading to environmental concerns and higher waste management costs. The local government is under pressure from environmental groups and the community to address the issue.

Problem statement

Greenhaven's waste management system is struggling to cope with the rising volume of plastic waste. Single-use plastics, such as bags, bottles, and packaging, comprise a significant portion of the waste. The city council is considering various strategies to reduce plastic waste but needs a solid business case to justify the investment in any proposed solution.

Objective

The city aims to reduce plastic waste by 30% over the next three years. To achieve this, the city council is exploring introducing a plastic waste reduction program that could include measures such as banning single-use plastics, implementing a recycling incentive program, and launching an educational campaign to encourage reusable alternatives.

Key stakeholders

- City Council: Decision-makers who must be convinced of the program's feasibility and cost-effectiveness.
- Residents: Community members who would be directly affected by any new regulations or programs.
- Local Businesses: Retail and food service businesses might need to adjust their operations.
- Environmental Groups: Advocates pushing for immediate and significant action to reduce plastic waste.

Proposed solutions

1. Ban on Single-Use Plastics: Prohibiting the sale and distribution of single-use plastic items within the city.
2. Recycling Incentive Program: Offering financial incentives to residents and businesses participating in recycling efforts.
3. Public Education Campaign: This campaign aims to raise awareness about plastic waste's environmental impact and promote the use of reusable products.

Potential benefits

- **Environmental Impact:** Significant reduction in plastic waste, leading to a cleaner environment and less strain on the landfill.
- **Cost Savings:** Long-term savings in waste management and landfill costs.
- **Community Engagement:** Increased awareness and community involvement in environmental sustainability.

Challenges

- **Cost:** Initial investment required to implement the programs, including funding for the incentive scheme and educational campaigns.
- **Resistance to Change:** Potential pushback from businesses and residents accustomed to using single-use plastics.
- **Implementation Complexity:** Coordinating the program across different sectors and ensuring compliance.

Next steps

The city council needs a business case that evaluates each proposed solution's costs, benefits, and risks. The business case should also explore potential funding sources, such as state government grants or partnerships with environmental organisations.