

ST. EDWARDS UNIVERSITY

2024 CIVICS LAB



What's the problem?

water



Austin groundwater is being degraded by phosphorus load from fertilizer carried in stormwater runoff

fertilizer



The overapplication of nitrogen fertilizers can put too many nutrients in water systems, leading to harmful algal blooms.

plants



The current utilization of non-native plants/ grasses requires more inputs, creating a greater strain on ecosystems and local resources.

Get Fertilizer Wiser Initiative

Step I

Voucher Program

Implement a voucher program that provides homeowners who follow this process with a voucher to replace non-native plants with native ones.

Step II

Educational Video and Survey

An at home 30 min video for home-owners to educate on fertilizer use. It will further educate on native plants versus non-native plants. Pre-Program Survey would be administered on their planting, watering, and fertilizer habits.

Step III

\$100 Vouchers

These vouchers would be validated in local nurseries, supporting coverage of the expenses required for homeowners to make the switch to native and adaptive plants.

Get Fertilizer Wiser Initiative

Step IV

Use Vouchers at Local Nurseries

Vouchers will be redeemable at a variety of Austin's local nurseries. We would get in contact with these nurseries to ensure participants are getting the appropriate materials for the change!

Step V

6 Months Later Follow-Up Survey

A survey would be conducted with similar questions to the survey taken at the beginning of the program.

Step VI

1 Year Later Last Survey

This survey would truly evaluate the effects of Get Fertilizer Wiser and how people's habits change when educated and incentivized to act.

Get Fertilizer Wiser Campaign

Step I

Canvassing

Begin with St. Ed's neighborhoods, spread awareness of fertilizer overuse and the available rebates. Leave yard signs in their yards. Have them take a questionnaire.

Step II

Partnerships

Build partnerships with Local Business that are willing to support the campaign, and offer an incentive completing the educational content. Doing the same thing with Advocacy agencies, local city departments, and State departments.

Step III

Educational Content

Publish education content on Algal Bloom, water dependency due to over fertilisations, drought in lake travis, native and adaptive landscaping practices, and information on City of Austin incentives.

Get Fertilizer Wiser Campaign

Step IV

Roll out Partnership Incentives

Once a good educational structure is in place, and given some businesses have offered to partner and offer an incentive, we will reach out to initial homeowners with the opportunity to complete the education content on the website, and obtain the incentive.

Step V

Further Canvassing

At this point, we will begin targeting other neighborhoods, expanding the program, and gain more petitions.

Step VI

Homeowner Follow Up

We will follow up with the homeowners and see if they have taken any action due to the campaign.

Where we are now:

- Council Member José Velásquez intends to sponsor a resolution directing the city manager to implement the voucher program, or a similar pilot program.
- Our external relations team is working with local nurseries to build the network of partners where the voucher could be used.
- We are also working on expanding our current sponsor list, which currently includes:
 - Environment Texas
 - Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
 - Tillery Street Plant Company
 - The Watershed Association

