

## "Measuring Success"

It's hard to tell if you're successful if you don't have a way to measure success. To put it another way - if you don't have a destination, it is hard to tell when you have finished the trip.

The goal of Keep Iowa Beautiful is to reduce litter levels by 50% within the next three years. The question becomes - 50% of what level. There is not a statewide base of information statewide indicating the current level of litter. One of the first objectives of the organization became the development a strategy for obtaining a statewide litter survey.

With help from staff of the Iowa Department of Transportation a detailed strategy was developed. The strategy consisted of three elements:

1. Finding out Iowan' attitudes toward litter, the degree that they litter, type of litter and who they feel is doing the littering.
2. Determining the public costs of litter cleanup and disposal by surveying city, county, state and federal governments along with the major event centers all within Iowa i.e. background information.
3. Physically sampling sites around Iowa to determine the amount of litter, where it is located and what type of litter is present.

The idea is that with this information in hand, detailed public awareness and education efforts can be developed that target the specific people that are littering and in the areas of the State where litter levels are the highest. In essence, it will serve to guide the implementation of a very effective and efficient program for developing the right approach and materials causing changes in the behavior patterns of those that are littering.

The strategy was further developed in detail and a special review committee of government officials and representatives from the private sector established to review and refine the approach. The group was also used to help select appropriate researchers to conduct the work.

The committee did their work! The Iowa Department of Transportation developed and initiated the attitudinal survey - it was mailed to 5,000 Iowans. The response rate or rate of return of the surveys was a resounding 46.7%. An unheard of survey return (normally success would be considered good with a 2 to 5% return). Evidence that Iowan's have an exceedingly strong feeling about keeping their State clean. Results from the survey are being analyzed with the report ready in mid-2002.

Funding was required for the remaining two elements and again with support from the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources research firms were retained to complete the work.

The background survey to find out the cost of littering was awarded to the firm of Franklin and Associates. The survey results will also be available later in the fall of 2002. The sampling of 150 sites around Iowa along major and secondary roads (also based on rural / urban characteristics) was awarded to the firm of Barker Lemar. The results will also be available in late 2002.

With the results of these three surveys in hand, Keep Iowa Beautiful will analyze the findings and develop a single report combining the information. This comprehensive report will help guide not only public education and awareness efforts but will be made available to government, the general public and the legislature for potential policy implications for those entities.

This research effort will also provide baseline information that Keep Iowa Beautiful can use to measure success at reducing litter in the state. It is the benchmark information required to determine the organization's effectiveness in helping to make Iowa a "litter free" State.

To obtain additional information on the organization please contact:

Gerald F. Schnepf, Executive Director  
Keep Iowa Beautiful  
300 East Locust - Suite 100  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Phone: 515-323-6507  
E-mail: [gschnepf@keepiowabeautiful.com](mailto:gschnepf@keepiowabeautiful.com)  
Web Page: [www.keepiowabeautiful.com](http://www.keepiowabeautiful.com)

See you in the next column featuring the "Measuring Success".

*Helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful*

Gerald F. Schnepf, Executive Director