

IMPACT IN PROGRESS

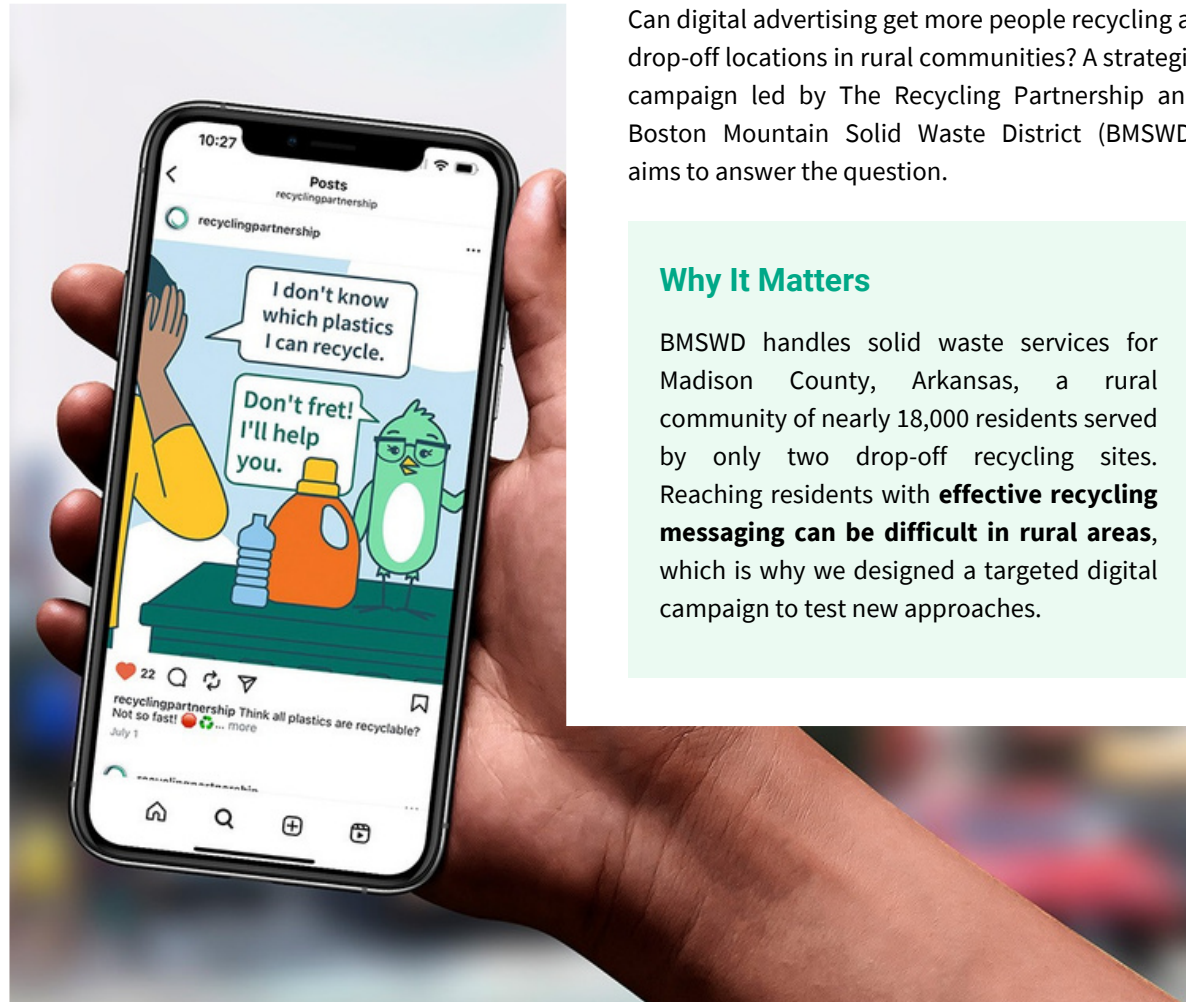
CASE STUDY



Testing What Works: Digital Ads for Rural Recycling Participation in Madison County, Arkansas

A combination of digital and real-world metrics tested whether online messaging can draw residents to drop-off recycling centers.

Madison County, Arkansas



Can digital advertising get more people recycling at drop-off locations in rural communities? A strategic campaign led by The Recycling Partnership and Boston Mountain Solid Waste District (BMSWD) aims to answer the question.

Why It Matters

BMSWD handles solid waste services for Madison County, Arkansas, a rural community of nearly 18,000 residents served by only two drop-off recycling sites. Reaching residents with **effective recycling messaging can be difficult in rural areas**, which is why we designed a targeted digital campaign to test new approaches.

What We Tested

Advertisements on Facebook, YouTube, and other platforms directed users to a [custom website](#) where they could interact with a chatbot, explore program information, and get practical tips for recycling locally. The campaign leaned on empathetic messaging, building on previous research from The Partnership that shows approachable, supportive content outperforms straightforward informational displays.

Residents saw multiple advertisement variations to test which messaging, calls-to-action, and creative approaches elicited the strongest engagement and awareness. While digital metrics measured reach and interaction, the campaign's ultimate goal remained clear: increase participation at drop-off sites.

"The Partnership has given us a huge opportunity to educate residents on recycling with different types of messaging, helping us learn overall what is most effective," said Taylor Osburn, BMSWD's sustainability coordinator. "This opportunity allowed us to zoom in on specific recycling education, like batteries and plastic bottles, while also welcoming new recyclers by providing tips on how to get started."

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What We Found

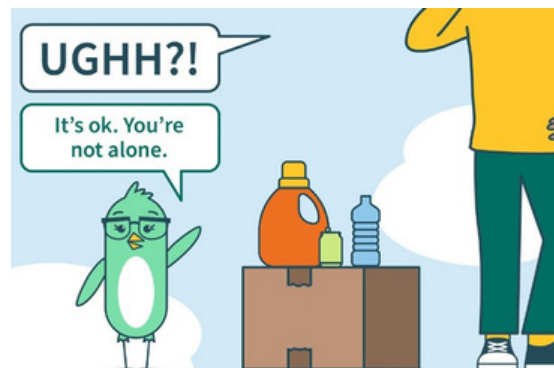
The digital campaign **exceeded expectations, achieving strong reach and engagement in a rural community** where recycling messaging can be difficult to deliver. Across platforms, performance was consistent and robust, confirming that approachable, empathetic messaging resonates with residents who may feel uncertain about recycling and need clear guidance to participate.



Results at a Glance

- Paid advertisements on Meta, Google, and programmatic platforms **outperformed the industry benchmarks**
 - 6.7+ million impressions
 - 1.1+ million video views
 - 29,000+ clicks
- Strongest engagement from **older audiences and the “Discouraged Self-Doubters” segment**—most likely to feel overwhelmed or uncertain about what’s recyclable
- Landing page **data showed increased confidence and intent to recycle**, while also surfacing practical access barriers for the County to address

These findings provide valuable insight into which messaging and platforms perform best, providing guiding strategies for future campaigns and helping rural communities better connect residents with recycling resources.



What's Next

The next step is turning insight into impact. Boston Mountain Solid Waste District will continue to track tonnage at both drop-off sites to assess how digital engagement translates to real-world participation. A follow-up analysis will measure visits and new users of the drop-off centers, providing another layer of performance validation.



THE PARTNERSHIP HAS GIVEN US A HUGE OPPORTUNITY TO EDUCATE RESIDENTS ON RECYCLING...HELPING US LEARN OVERALL WHAT IS MOST EFFECTIVE FOR REACHING PEOPLE.

Taylor Osburn

Sustainability Coordinator, BMSWD

We don't guess what drives engagement.
We test.
We refine.
And we turn insight into action.

PARTNER WITH US. LET'S SOLVE RECYCLING'S
TOUGHEST CHALLENGES, TOGETHER.