



# Project Accelerator Findings and Summary: Santa Rosa Water Spanish Language Water Use Efficiency Program Enhancements

February 2022

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A note on language: This report uses the term Latinx when discussing Latin American or Hispanic identifying community members, to be inclusive of all genders, with the understanding that this label may not best fit all community members in this group. An exception to this is in the use of Census data, with the terms “Hispanic / Latin American by race” or “by origin”. We have retained the original Census terms when discussing Census data.

## Introduction

The City of Santa Rosa, California has a well-documented community commitment to water use efficiency. Santa Rosa Water, the City’s water and wastewater utility, offers a variety of indoor and outdoor water use efficiency information, programs, tips and rebates to help customers save water. The programs and rebates offered by Santa Rosa Water are universally branded under the “WaterSmart” label for the purpose of consistent promotion and recognition by customers and residents. Santa Rosa Water’s offerings are wide-ranging and include WaterSmart Checkups (in-home and business water use efficiency indoor and outdoor audits) as well as rebates that further incentivize a customer’s long-term investment in water use efficiency.

Approximately 32% of Santa Rosa residents identify as having Latinx heritage, and many speak Spanish as their primary language in the home. It is unclear whether water use efficiency programs<sup>1</sup> are being utilized by this important demographic at a proportionate level to the rest of the utility customer base. WaterNow Alliance (“WaterNow”) is working with Santa Rosa Water to assess whether water use efficiency (WUE) program activities have occurred at the same frequency and saturation levels in Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities as they have across the rest of the City.

Engaging Latinx and primarily Spanish-speaking communities will help Santa Rosa ensure equity within the city, enabling all of its residents to take advantage of water use efficiency programs and water and cost savings. This project will also support the increasing urgency of conserving water in the face of climate change, as well as Santa Rosa’s efforts to comply with California WUE legislative mandates (including AB 1668 and SB 606, which established community-wide WUE targets and objectives).<sup>2 3</sup>

The report below summarizes the key findings from each major scope of work in this project, including:

- Phase 1: Develop baseline understanding of Santa Rosa Water’s WUE programs and outreach processes
- Phase 2: Review and analyze data on customer participation in Santa Rosa Water’s WUE programs
- Phase 3: Research existing outreach to Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities throughout the United States

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<sup>1</sup> City of Santa Rosa Water. WaterSmart Center. <https://srcity.org/820/WaterSmart-Center>.

<sup>2</sup> California Legislative Information. (2018). Senate Bill No. 606, Water management planning. [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180SB606](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB606).

<sup>3</sup> California Legislative Information. (2018). Assembly Bill No. 1668, Water management planning. [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180AB1668](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB1668).

- Phase 4: Gather direct feedback on water efficiency programs in Santa Rosa from Latinx and Spanish-speaking community members
- Phase 5: Develop summary of project findings and recommendations

## Phase 1: Develop Baseline Understanding of Santa Rosa Water’s Water Use Efficiency Programs and Outreach Processes

In Phase 1, WaterNow focused on obtaining a better understanding of Santa Rosa Water’s current process of implementing its WUE initiatives, and how outreach to water customers is being conducted to promote participation in these initiatives. This phase of work also aimed to document and clarify any past attempts to target water use efficiency outreach towards Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities in Santa Rosa.

To meet these goals, WaterNow reviewed Santa Rosa Water’s online materials, 2015 and 2020 Urban Water Management Plans, 2020 Water Demand Analysis and Water Conservation Measure Update, and conducted informational interviews with members of Santa Rosa Water’s team.

The resulting Phase 1 memo provides an overview of Santa Rosa Water’s WUE initiatives targeting single- and multi-family residential customers (which can include both owners and renters), focusing in particular on the following programs: (1) WaterSmart Home Checkup, (2) Green Exchange (Cash for Grass) rebate, (3) Irrigation Efficiency rebate, (4) Clothes Washer rebate, (5) Rainwater Harvesting rebate, (6) Graywater rebate, and (7) Recirculating Hot Water Pump rebate.<sup>4</sup> It also shared an overview of current communication and outreach practices around these programs.

### *Overview of WUE Communications and Outreach*

Santa Rosa Water communicates its WUE initiatives through many different avenues and mediums, including:

#### *Print and Digital Outreach*

- Four WUE information distribution centers, located in City facilities that are open to the public during business hours
- Water bill inserts, provided in both English and Spanish
- A WUE “welcome” postcard sent to all new water accounts about three months after account establishment, informing them of the City’s WUE programs, in English and

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<sup>4</sup> Detailed descriptions of each program are available at: [www.srcity.org/rebates](http://www.srcity.org/rebates).

Spanish. This postcard goes to the account holder, so it may not reach individual renters or apartment units in multi-family residences.

- Santa Rosa Water’s WUE website
- An active social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and NextDoor, with posts in English and Spanish
- Digital and print ads
- City-Connections e-newsletter
- Radio ads in English and Spanish
- Santa Rosa Water’s membership in the Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership (SMSWP), which includes 13 water utilities<sup>5</sup> working collaboratively on water conservation and efficiency implementation, including WUE outreach and education. The SMSWP conducts regional media campaigns that encourage water conservation and WUE, through digital and print newspaper ads, radio ads, Facebook posts, “before the movie” ads, local cable channel videos, and a dedicated website.<sup>6</sup>

#### *In-person Outreach*

- Presence at community events to promote using water wisely and WUE programs
- Hosting technical workshops for customers Providing speakers to organizations upon request, or partnering with groups such as Master Gardeners or Daily Acts, to share information
- Launching outreach around the statewide Water Awareness Month campaign each May, with a variety WUE related activities
- Participating in the annual Fix A Leak Week<sup>7</sup>

#### *Educational Outreach*

- Classroom instructional presentations, including discussions of where the City’s water comes from, WUE, and water quality, via the school curriculum focused *Take it From the TAP!* Program<sup>8</sup>
- Field study opportunities, such as the Adopt-A-Creek program<sup>9</sup> offered through Sonoma Water to middle and high schoolers in their retail water agencies’ service areas
- Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) teacher trainings and workshops
- Free curriculum materials aligned with the California Next Generation Science Standards

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<sup>5</sup> These participants include: Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Sonoma, Cotati, Petaluma, Healdsburg, Cloverdale and the Town of Windsor, as well as California American Water, North Marin Water District, Marin Municipal Water District, Valley of the Moon Water District, and Sonoma County Water Agency.

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> City of Santa Rosa. 2020 Urban Water Management Plan. Chapter 9: Demand Management Measures.

<sup>8</sup> Santa Rosa. Take it from the Tap! <https://srcity.org/998/Take-it-From-the-Tap#:~:text=Choose%20Tap%20Water!-,Take%20it%20From%20the%20TAP!,benefits%20of%20choosing%20tap%20water>.

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://www.sonomawater.org/adopt-a-creek>

- A lending library of videos, interactive models, and printed materials<sup>10</sup>
- Endorsement, participation, and financial sponsorship of events, assemblies, and workshops
- Tours of the Laguna Wastewater Treatment Plant

Introductions to WUE programs can also start with a customer contacting water billing staff (e.g., with questions about high water use). Since most customers have Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), also called “smart” or digital water meters, these departments can usually provide detailed feedback about their water use. Other departments will also refer customers to the WUE team for more help (e.g., to set up a WaterSmart Home Check-up). Avenues for translation for Spanish-speakers calling these numbers include both one Spanish speaker who can take calls as available, as well as a paid translation line.

### *Engaging Spanish-speaking and Latinx Community Members*

Through conversations with City of Santa Rosa employees, several of Santa Rosa’s communication strategies emerged as particularly effective ways to engage Spanish-speaking and Latinx community members, including:

- Word of mouth – among the networks of participants, or the networks of people who work at the Water Department – was often particularly effective. In programs like the Cash for Grass Rebate, where the work is very visible, neighbors will often share information with nearby households.
- Radio ads and interviews with WUE staff, on Spanish-speaking stations
- Events based directly in neighborhoods with larger Spanish-speaking and Latinx populations, such as:
  - Booths at the Wednesday Night Markets and Caesar Chavez Health Fair.
  - Drought drive-throughs, which provided information, WaterSmart Home Kits, and water-saving devices (e.g., aerators, showerheads) at neighborhood locations like schools and shopping centers, and include bilingual staff to engage directly with residents.
  - For the *Take it to the Tap Program*, presentations conducted in Spanish at adult education classrooms, for Spanish-speakers learning English, generated a lot of interest and engagement from those who attended.
  - For a survey conducted by the Department of Economic Development, sharing a survey in the previews ahead of a drive-in movie helped generate participation in the survey.
- Opportunities to partner with local community leaders – e.g., the Chamber of Commerce, local Council members.

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<sup>10</sup> During the COVID-19 health emergency, Sonoma Water also developed free distance learning materials, including videos, activity sheets, and learning games for teachers of kindergarten through twelfth grade. All programs and materials are free to teachers in the service area, including Santa Rosa.

### *Interview Insights: Challenges and Suggestions*

Several key suggestions and challenges emerged around engaging Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities throughout these conversations with the City of Santa Rosa's team:

- Sometimes the logistics of translation can be challenging. Particularly during phone conversations, adding the pauses for the translation to occur may make the conversation feel less smooth for residents.
- Unless residents are very handy and have irrigation knowledge, the upfront costs of some programs can be very expensive, which may deter participants.
- There's a need to make sure the WUE team is equipped to meet any additional demand from Spanish-speaking customers – for instance, that it has the translation support needed to schedule and conduct WaterSmart Check-ups and rebate inspections.
- COVID and the elimination of events and indoor WaterSmart Checkups to single-family homes has been very challenging, as in-person interaction (through events and home WaterSmart Check-ups) stood out as one of the most effective outreach strategies. While attendance has been increasing for virtual workshops held in English (for instance, 70 people joined a virtual workshop that would typically draw about 20 people when held in person), participation in virtual workshops held in Spanish has remained relatively low (for instance, a drip irrigation 2020 virtual workshop conducted in Spanish drew 17 registrants and 10 attendees; the same workshop offered in English drew 169 registrants and 118 attendees). However, virtual workshops have also created the opportunity to record and post the workshops so that the public can re-watch content when convenient.

Additionally, these conversations highlighted challenges and considerations specific to renters. Many tenants pay the water bill instead of the property owners, and property owners often have limited engagement with tenants or live outside the area. This can make it challenging to engage and incentivize property owners to participate in WUE programs. Additionally, tenant participation in the Cash for Grass Rebate, graywater, and rainwater rebate programs is low. This is directly related to the fact that the ability to convert turf is typically outside of tenants' control, and permanent or semi-permanent installations or modifications to the property by tenants are not permitted. In Roseland, for instance, where many tenants live in rented multi-family housing units, it has been identified that these obstacles may contribute to lower participation in WUE programs. Tenants may be more likely to participate in WUE activities if they are living in single family home rentals (e.g., through the WaterSmart Home Check-up Program), if they are buying appliances (e.g., the clothes washer rebate), or if they are the main account holder.

## Phase 2: Review and analyze data on customer participation in Santa Rosa water use efficiency programs

To inform Santa Rosa Water’s outreach, WaterNow analyzed customer participation in five established WUE programs, to determine whether uptake of water use efficiency program activities have occurred at the same frequency and saturation level across all communities in Santa Rosa Water’s service area. Based on this data, WaterNow also identified the potential water savings if participation in water use efficiency program activities in Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities in Santa Rosa increased to match participation levels in water use efficiency to levels seen among primarily English-speaking communities. The key findings of this research are summarized below and described in greater detail in the Phase 2 memo.

### WUE Program Participation

WaterNow used data from the US Census Bureau, combined with data tracking participating in Santa Rosa Water’s WUE programs, to explore if and how participation varies according to demographic characteristics, such as community members’ preferred language, identification as Hispanic or Latino by race and/or by origin, home ownership status, median household income, and internet access, among other characteristics.

WaterNow reviewed Santa Rosa Water participation data for the five most utilized WUE programs from 2013 to 2021, including: the Commercial, industrial and institutional (CII) and multi-family residential (MFR) Cash for Grass Rebate, single family residential (SFR) Cash for Grass Rebate, CII and MFR high efficiency clothes washer programs, and SFR WaterSmart Checkups – indoor and outdoor. These programs were chosen specifically because they have existed for many years and participation has been robust, allowing for an analysis that would yield statistically significant results, and be indicative of broad advertising and uptake from the community as a whole.

As Figures 1 and 2 show, participation in Santa Rosa’s WUE programs span nearly every neighborhood but is most densely concentrated in several sections of the city, shown in the darker red colors in Figure 2. These areas of particularly high participation include: the northeastern sections of the city; a band extending across east from the center of the city; and a few clusters of participation along the City’s western boundary.

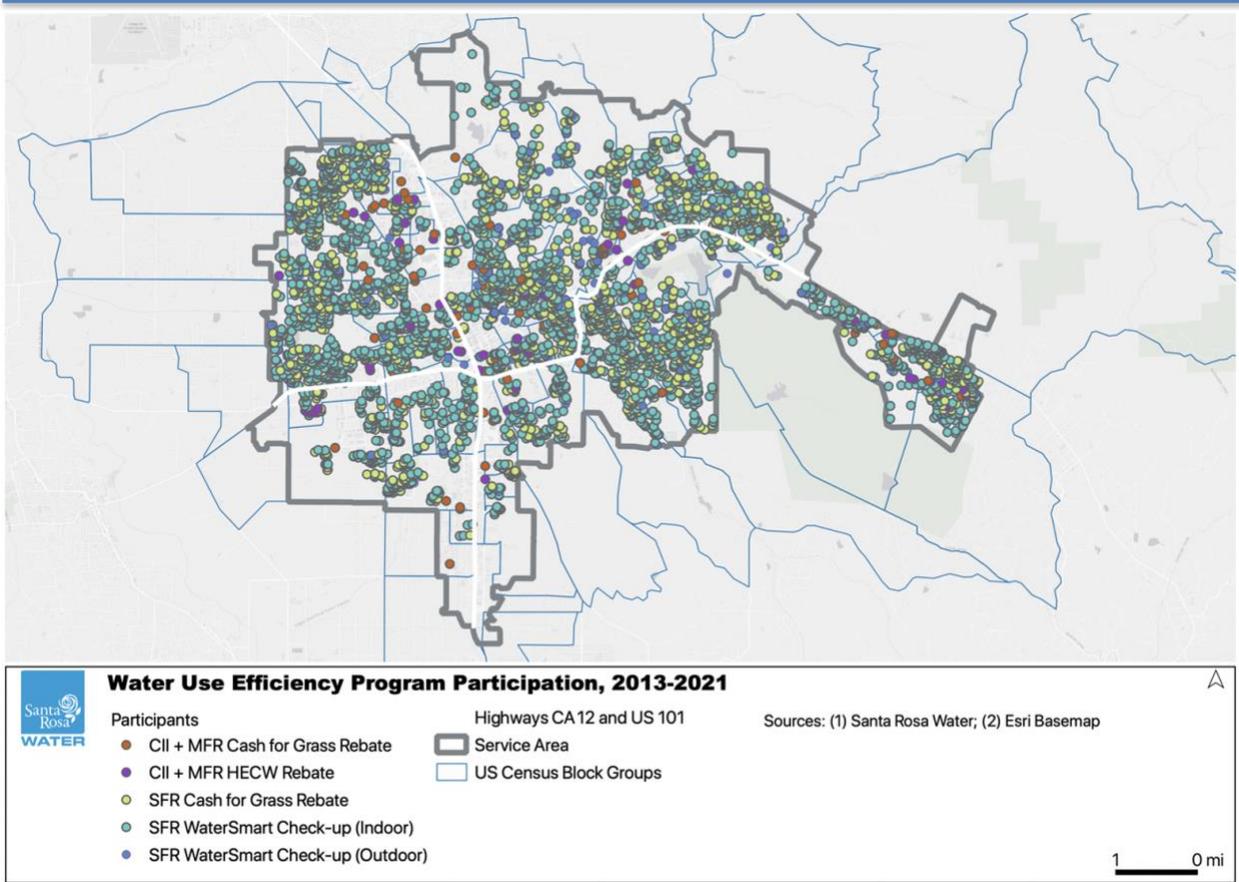


Figure 1. Participation in a selection of Santa Rosa Water’s WUE programs from 2013-2021.

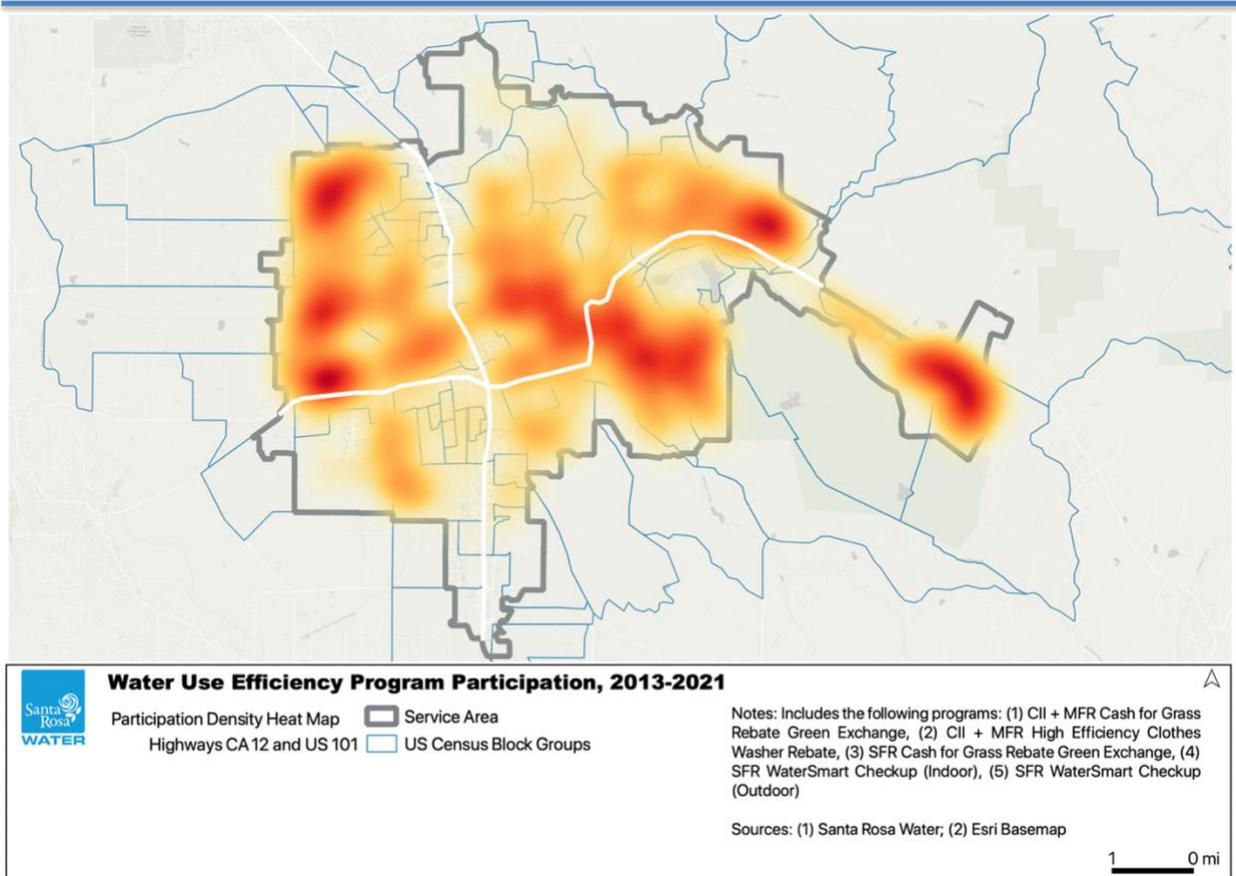


Figure 2. Density of participants in a selection of Santa Rosa Water’s WUE programs from 2013-2021. The darker areas on the map indicate areas with a greater density of participants.

As Figure 3 illustrates, participation in Santa Rosa’s 144 Census block groups ranges from zero to 157 participants in these WUE programs.<sup>11</sup> However, most block groups have between 16-52 participants, with a median participant count of 31. Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities – defined in this analysis as the 27 US Census block groups where 50 percent or more of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino by origin (see Figure 4) – have a smaller median of 17 participants per neighborhood. Most of these block groups have between 8-29 participants, though the full range extends from 1 to 60 participants.

<sup>11</sup> Block groups – statistical divisions of census tracts, generally defined to contain between 600 and 3,000 people – are the smallest geographical unit for which the US Census Bureau publishes sample data (data which is sampled from a portion of all households, rather than collected for each household). The project used block groups since they represented the most recent and most granular Census data available at the time of the analysis.

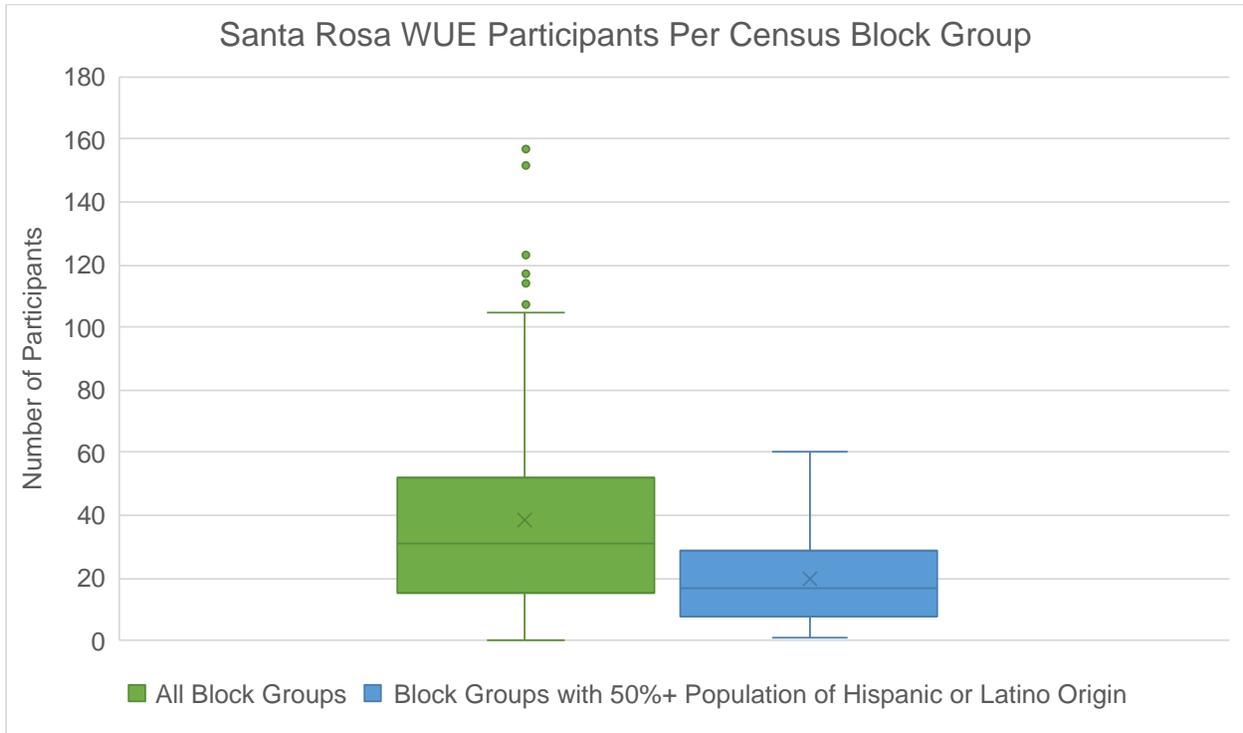


Figure 3. Box Plot illustrating the distribution of the selected WUE program participants in Santa Rosa’s US Census block groups, across all neighborhoods, and in neighborhoods where 50 percent or more the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino by origin. The vertical lines indicate the range of all data; the box shows the interquartile range, and the lines within the boxes indicates the median value.

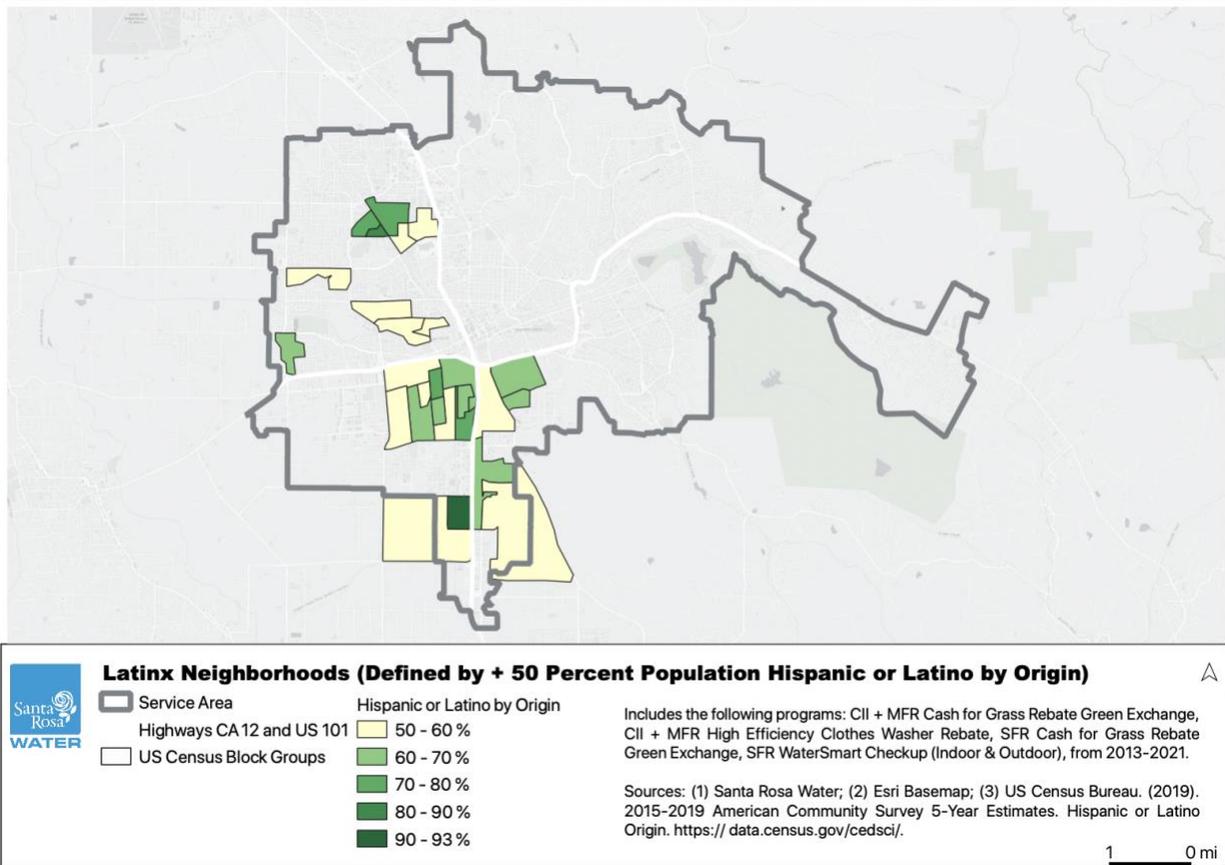


Figure 4. Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities in Santa Rosa, defined as block groups where 50 percent or more of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino by origin.

Figure 5 illustrates how participation in Santa Rosa Water WUE programs from 2013-2021 is distributed across block groups according to: percentage of community members who identify as Hispanic or Latino by origin; community members who identify as Hispanic or Latino by race; community members who speak Spanish (and may also speak other languages, such as English); and community members who speak Spanish and have limited English language fluency. Participation in WUE programs declines as the percentage of each of these demographic characteristics increases within a block group. The most pronounced drop in WUE participants occurs as the percentage of Spanish-speakers with limited English in a block group increases.

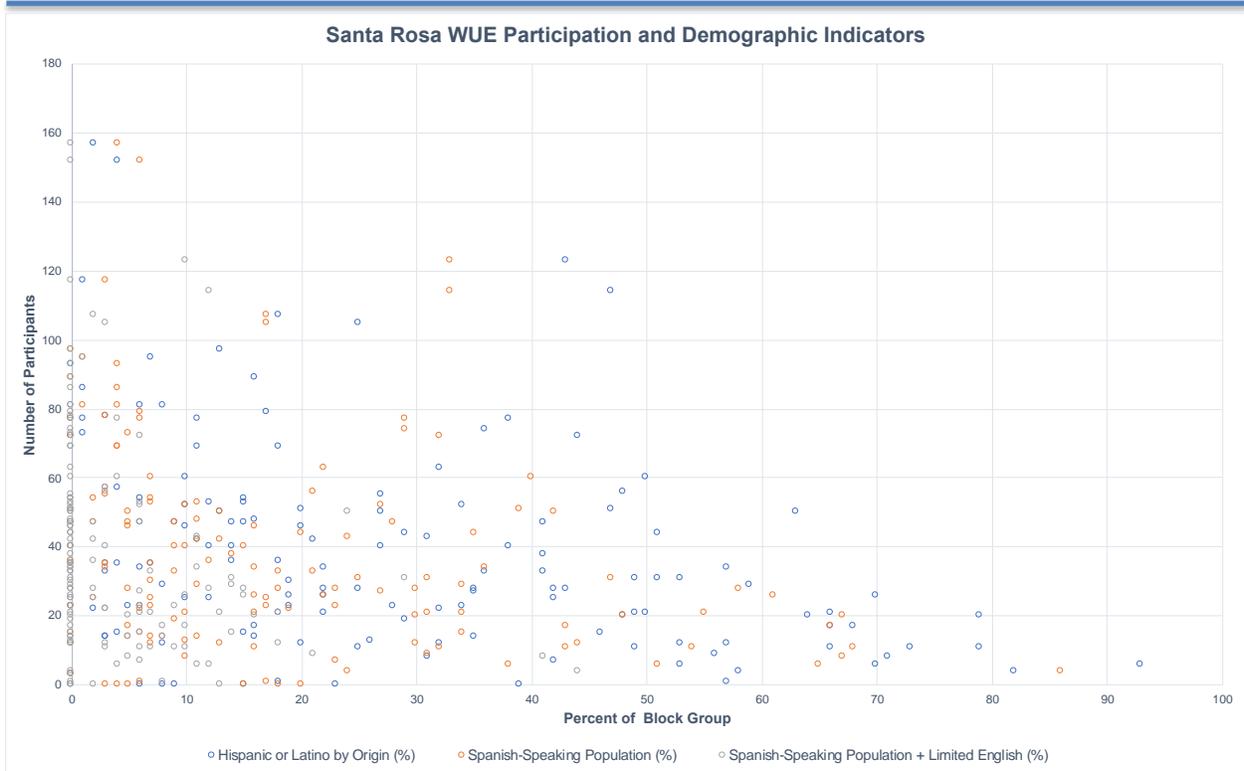


Figure 5. Scatter plot illustrating how participation in Santa Rosa Water WUE programs from 2013-2021 is distributed across US Census block groups according to: each block’s group percentage of: community members who identify as Hispanic or Latino by origin; community members who speak Spanish (and may also speak other languages, such as English); and community members who Spanish and have limited fluency in English.

Figures 6 and 7 offer a visual view of how these trends in participation play out across different regions of the city. In both figures, darker green neighborhoods – indicated higher percentages of the population who identify as Hispanic or Latino or who speak Spanish and have limited English skills – often show fewer participants, though it is important to note that participation varies even within each Census block and between demographically similar regions.

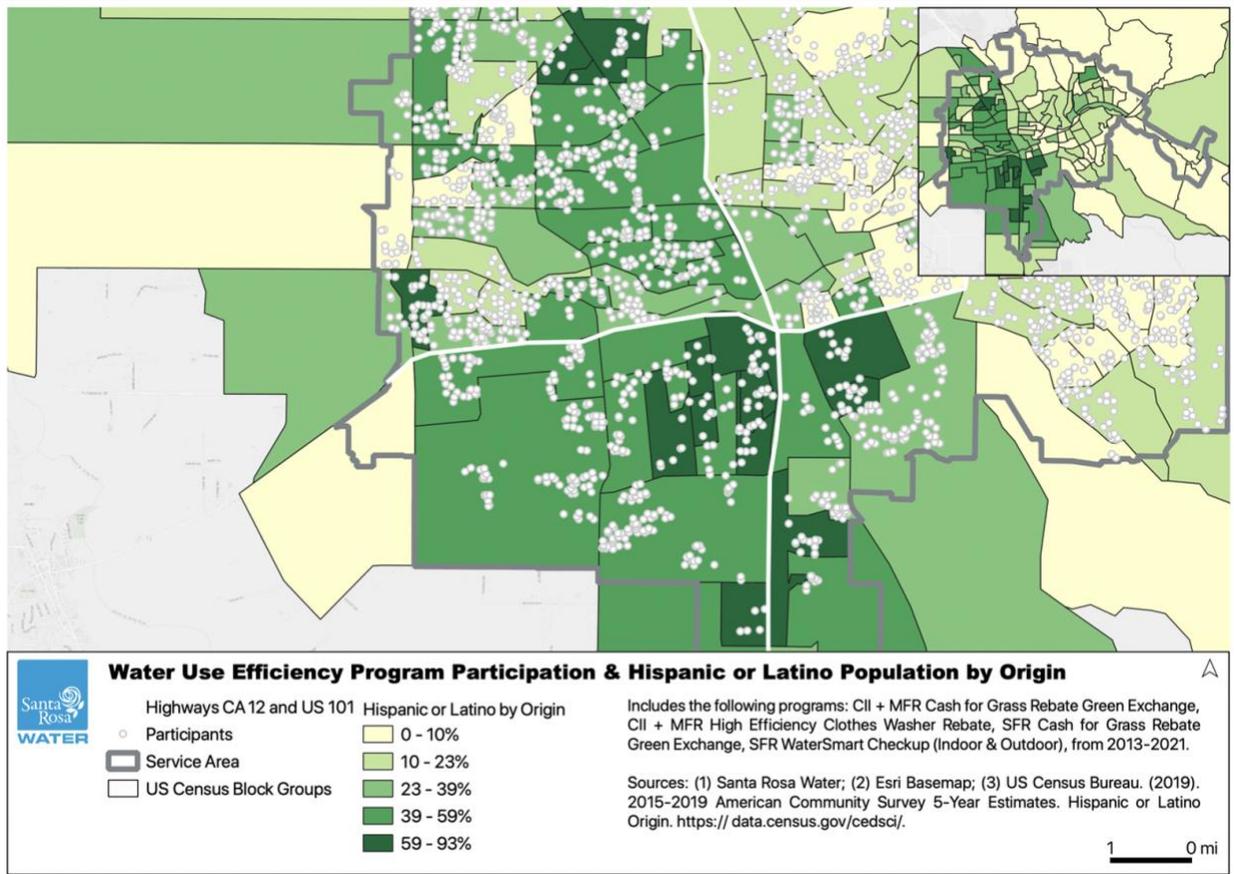


Figure 6. Participation in Santa Rosa Water WUE programs from 2013-2021, compared with the percentage of a population identifying as Hispanic or Latino by origin within each US Census block group.

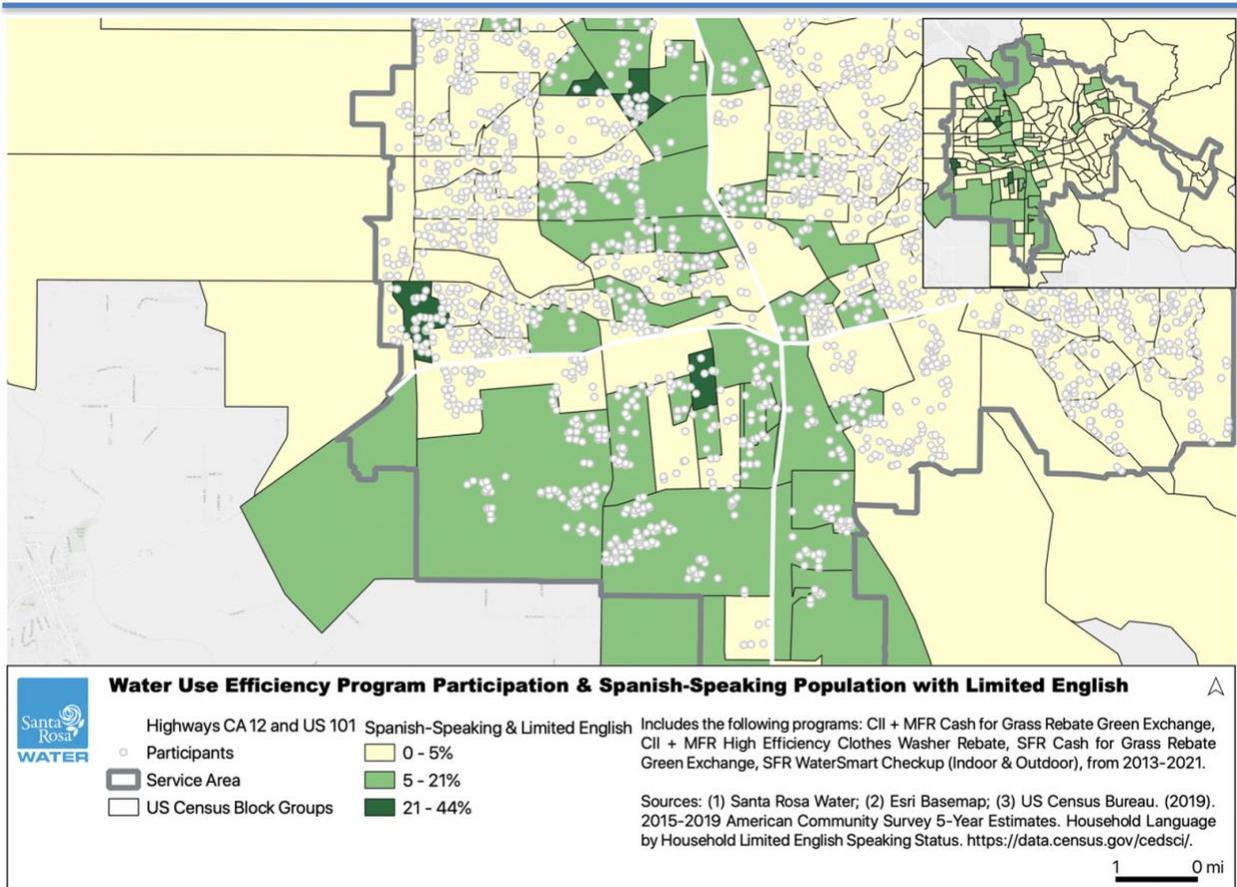


Figure 7. Participation in Santa Rosa Water WUE programs from 2013-2021, compared with the percentage of a population that speaks Spanish and has limited English fluency within each US Census block group.

Many other demographic characteristics may also have the potential to influence participation in WUE programs. Figure 8 illustrates how the number of participants in WUE programs is distributed across block groups according to their poverty status, renter-occupied housing, and internet access. Block groups with high percentages of their population renting their households, living below poverty status, and lacking Internet access see lower numbers of participants. Figure 9 compares a block group's WUE participants with its median household income. Most WUE participants reside in neighborhoods where the median income is between \$50,000-\$99,000, followed by neighborhoods where the median income range is \$100,000 - \$150,000 and where it is less than \$50,000. Figures 10 – 12 overlay participation in WUE programs with these characteristics, revealing that many of these demographic traits align across neighborhoods (e.g., many neighborhoods with high poverty status also have low internet access). Participation in WUE programs is particularly low in areas where larger percentages of the population do not have Internet access.

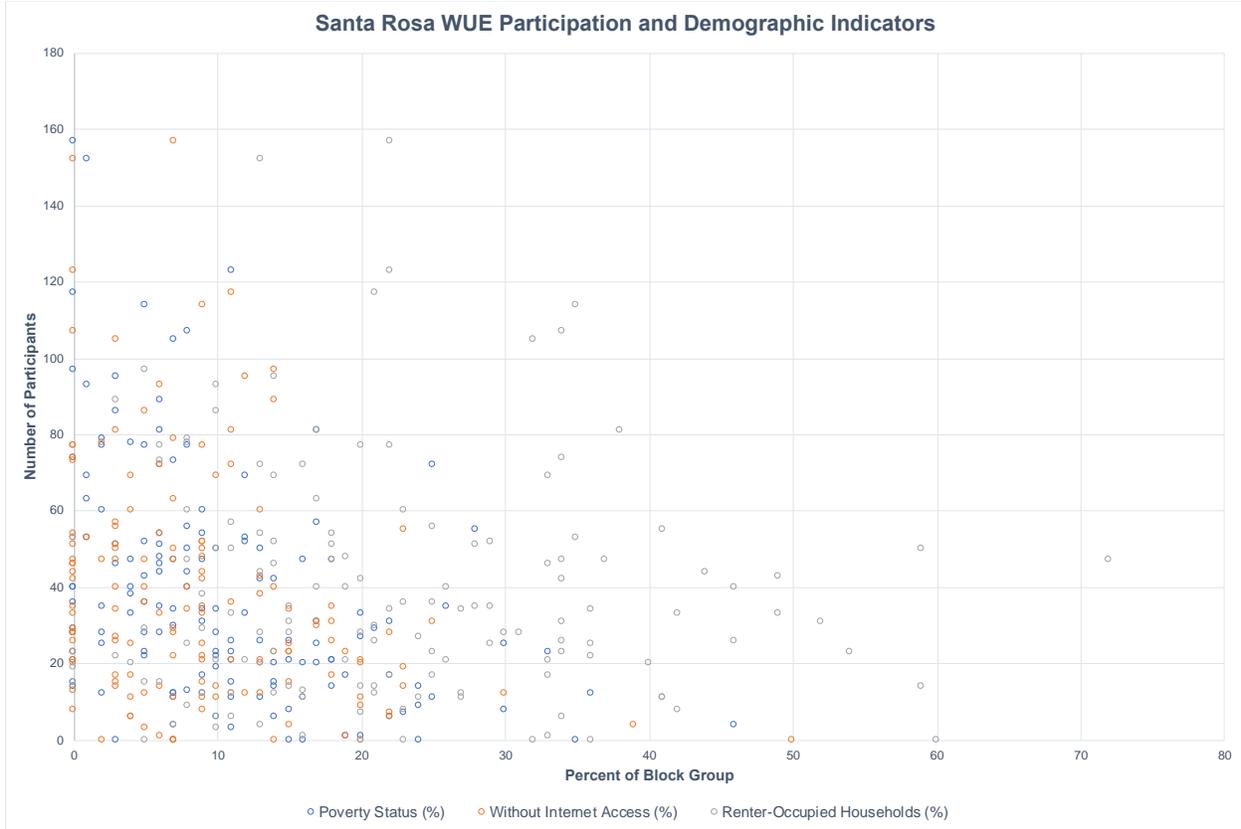


Figure 8. Scatter plot illustrating how participation in Santa Rosa Water WUE programs from 2013-2021 is distributed across US Census block groups according to: percentage of residents in poverty status, percentage of residents lacking Internet access, and percentage of renter-occupied housing within a block group.

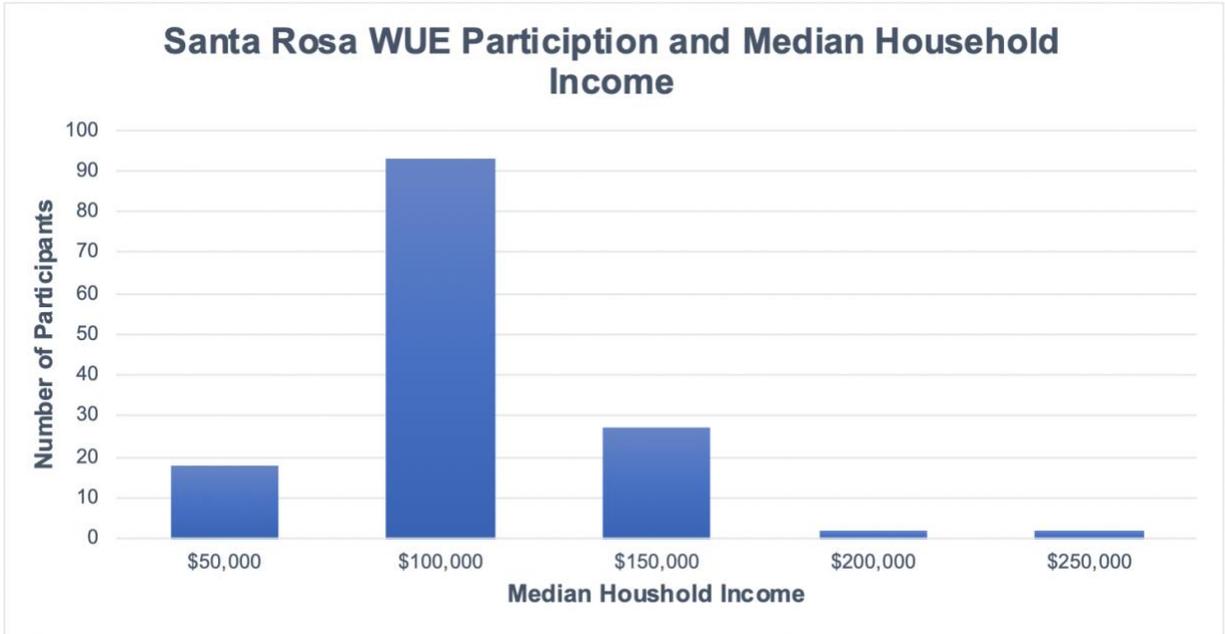


Figure 9. This figure compares the number of block groups participants in WUE programs with a block group’s median household income.

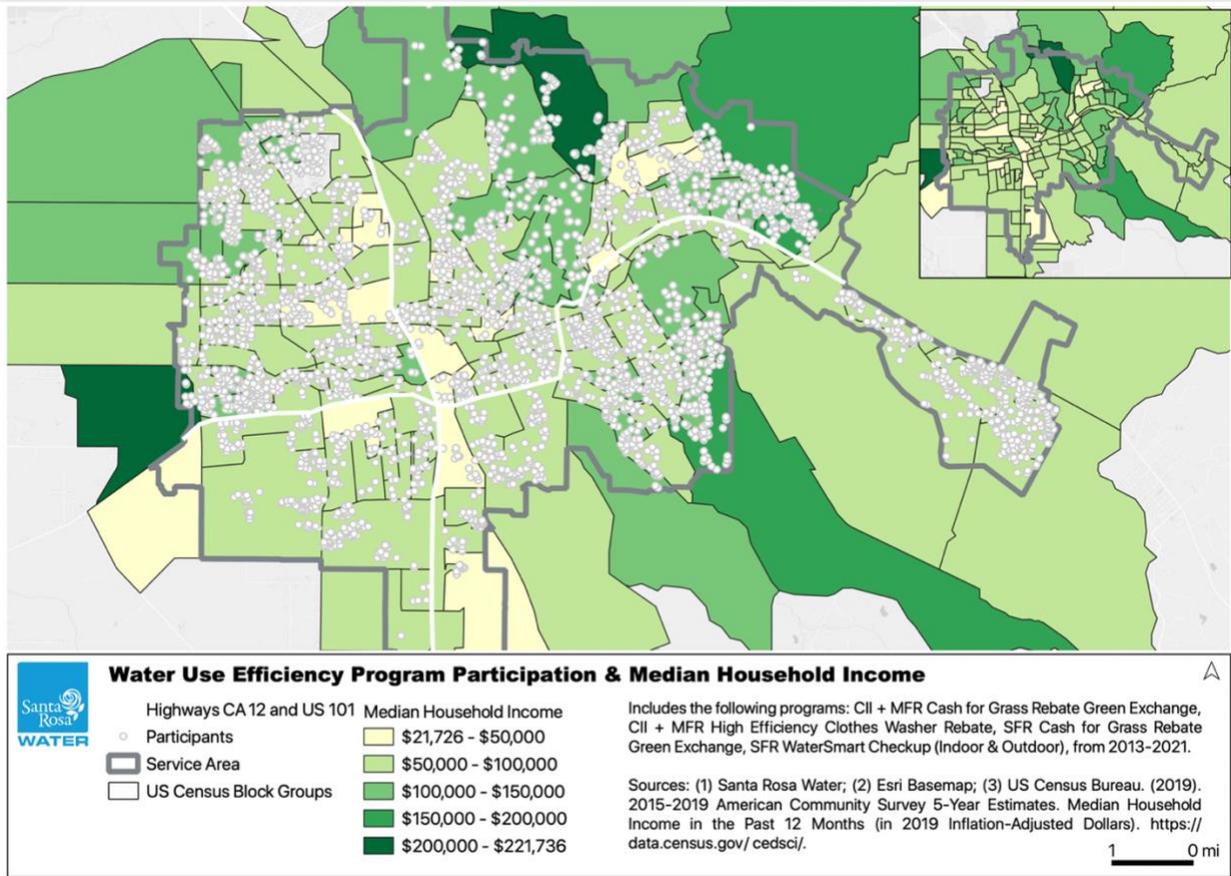


Figure 10. Participation in Santa Rosa Water WUE programs from 2013-2021, compared with median household income, for US Census Block groups.

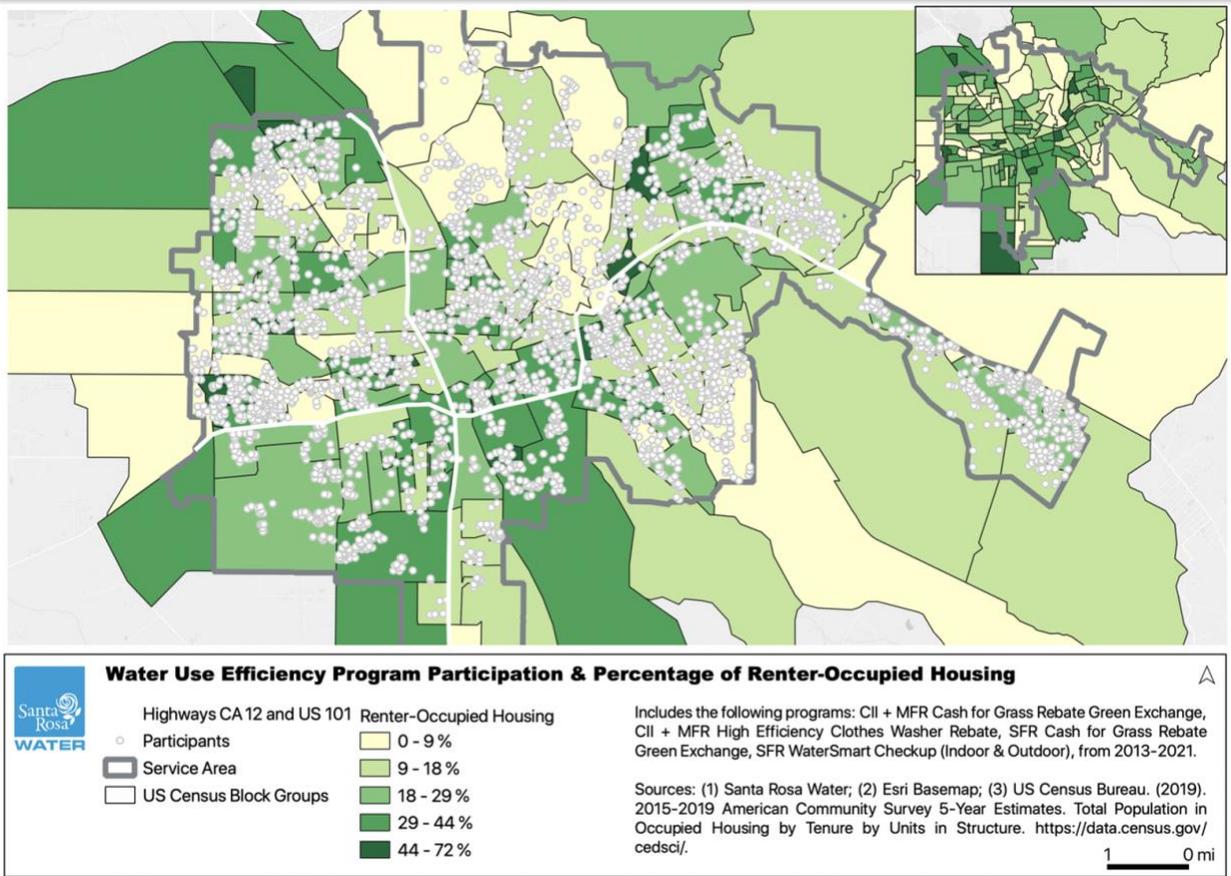


Figure 11. Participation in Santa Rosa Water WUE programs from 2013-2021, compared with the percentage of total housing occupied by renters (as opposed, for instance, to homeowners), within US Census Block groups.

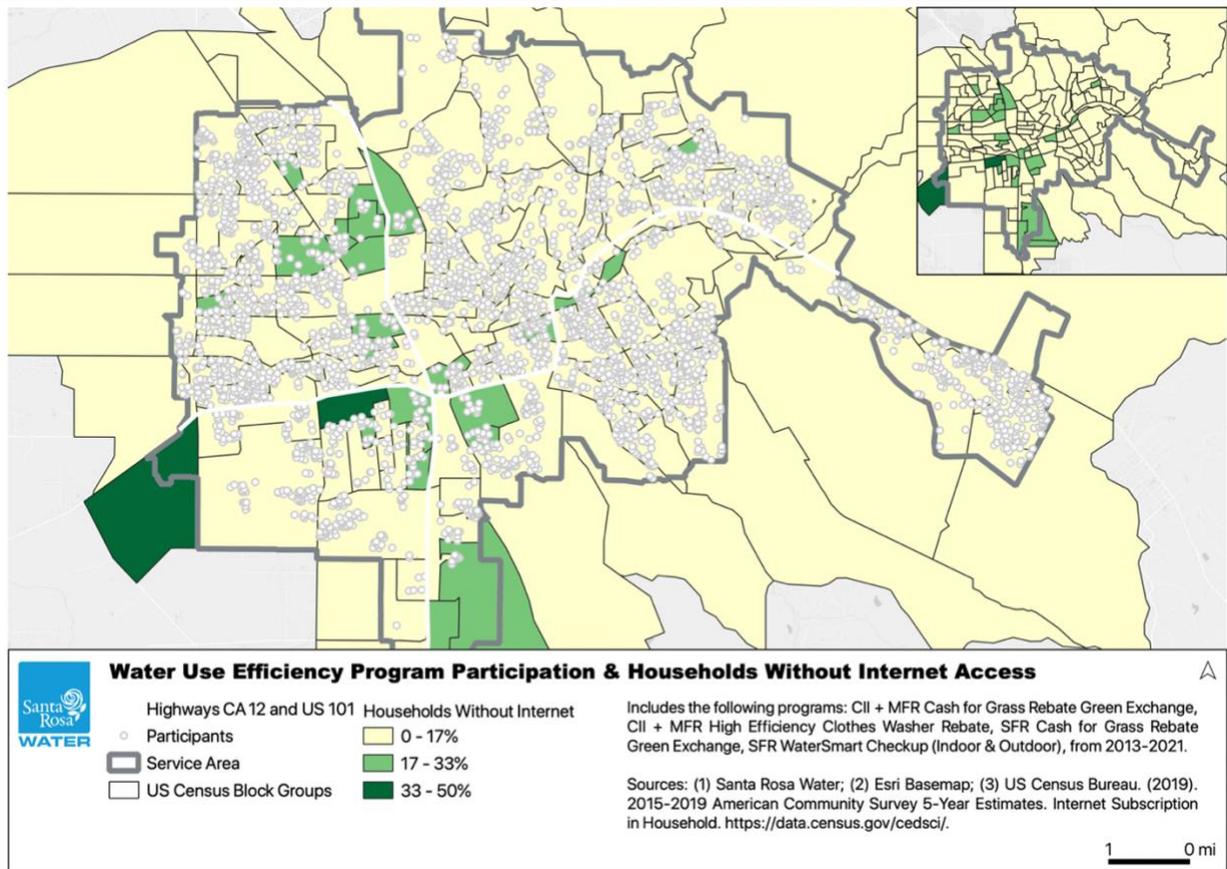


Figure 12. Participation in Santa Rosa Water WUE programs from 2013-2021, compared with the percentage of households without Internet access within US Census Block groups.

## Potential Water Savings from Expanded Participation

In addition to understanding current trends in participation, this phase of work aimed to understand the water savings that could be achieved if program activities occurred at the same frequency and saturation levels in Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities as in the rest of the City.

Table 1 summarizes the results of this analysis. The greatest potential gains in water savings occur through programs focused on single-family residential accounts, including: the SFR WaterSmart Outdoor Checkup, the SFR WaterSmart Indoor Checkup, and the SFR Cash for

Grass Rebate. In total, applying expanding participation rates would have led to over 800 additional participants over 2013-2021 – or more than 90 additional participants each year.<sup>12</sup>

Conservation Program	Actual Participants (2013-2021)	Estimated Additional Participants (2013-2021)*	Water Program Savings (gallons/account/year)**	Estimated Additional Total Water Savings (Acre-Feet, 2013-2021)***	Estimated Additional Annual Water Savings (Acre-Feet/Year, 2013-2021)
CII and MFR Cash For Grass Rebate	9	19	23,746	6.9	0.8
CII and MFR High Efficiency Clothes Washer Rebate	14	5	42,123	3.2	0.4
SFR Cash For Grass Rebate	76	224	8,840	30.4	3.4
SFR WaterSmart Checkup (Indoor)	353	351	9,945	27.4	3.0
SFR WaterSmart Checkup (Outdoor)	70	240	15,867	29.9	3.3

\*Estimated additional participants is defined as number of participations that would be expected according to the average citywide ratio of participants:population, minus the actual number of participants.

\*\*The average estimated water savings achieved by selected conservation programs are taken from the 2020 Water Demand Analysis and Water Conservation Measure Update, prepared by EKI Environment & Water, Inc. and accessed via the City of Santa Rosa’s 2020 Urban Water Management Plan (2021).

\*\*\*Consistent with the 2020 Water Demand Analysis and Water Conservation Measure Update, the analysis assumes a 10-15 year life span and 0 percent annual rate of decay in water savings for the first

<sup>12</sup> These additional participants were calculated by: (1) determining the average ratio of WUE participants/population for US Census block groups included in Santa Rosa Water’s service area; (2) multiplying the population in each Latinx block groups by this ratio, to calculate the number of people who would be expected to participate in WUE programs according to citywide trends (3) calculating the difference between this calculated rate of participation (based on) the citywide average and the total observed number of participants. For example, if a Latinx block group included 10 WUE participants, and multiplying its population by the city-wide ratio of WUE participations/population yielded 30 WUE participants, there would be an expected 20 additional WUE participants.

3 projects listed, and a 5-year life span and 20% annual rate of decay in water savings for the Indoor and Outdoor SFR WaterSmart Checkup program.

Table 1. Summary of potential additional participation and resulting water savings if participants in Latinx and Spanish-speaking neighborhoods participated in WUE programs at the same (average) rate as all Santa Rosa block groups.

## Potential Target Neighborhoods and Implications for Outreach

To determine neighborhoods where future outreach may be most impactful, we focused on block groups with:

- (1) The lowest rates of Internet access (defined as block groups where 10% or more of the population lacks Internet access)
- (2) High rates of Spanish-speaking community members (defined as block groups where 20% or more of the population speaks Spanish)
- (3) Low rates of participation in WUE programs (defined as block groups with the lowest ratios of participants/population)<sup>13</sup>

Figure 13 illustrates the neighborhoods that meet all three of these criteria, where residents may have been more likely to have missed current communications and outreach materials and strategies around WUE programs. This map aims to provide a starting point for discussions about strategies for targeting different types of outreach messaging and the use of different communication strategies to help reach community members across different neighborhoods in Santa Rosa.

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<sup>13</sup> This includes all ratios in the first quintile of these results (e.g., the lowest 20 percent of all these values), which includes any block group with a ratio of 0.017 participants/population or less.

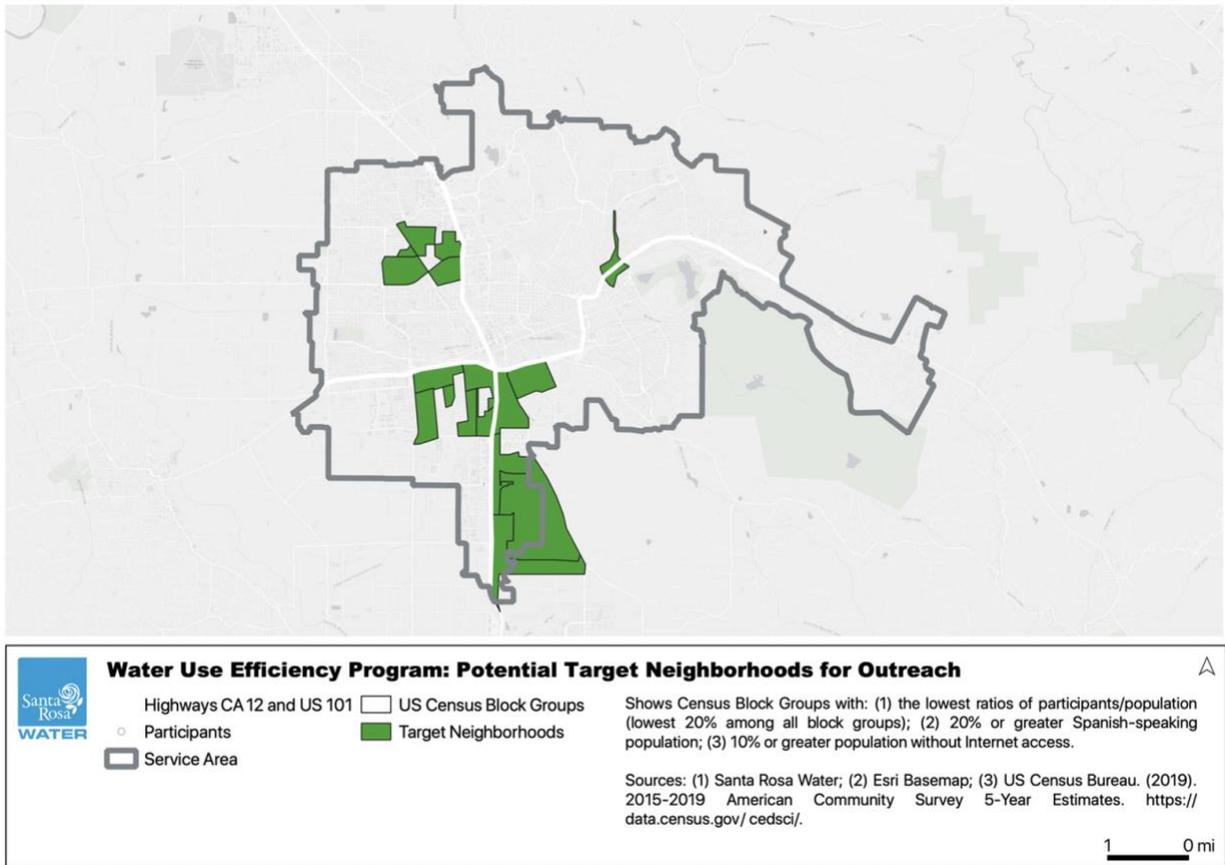


Figure 13. Potential neighborhoods for additional outreach around WUE programs, based on: low participation in WUE programs; high levels of Spanish-speaking residents; and high levels of population without Internet access.

While comparing participation in Latinx and Spanish-speaking neighborhoods was typically lower than the citywide average, this is not always the case. In particular, in several neighborhoods on the western section of Santa Rosa (shown in Figure 14), participation in WUE programs is higher than median values in other demographically similar neighborhoods and across the city (these neighborhoods include at least 50 participants; in Latinx and Spanish-speaking neighborhoods, the median number of participants is 17, while across all city neighborhoods, the median number of participants is 31). Understanding what factors may have helped drive higher levels of participation in this neighborhood could offer clues to strategies and outreach partners that could help increase participation across the city, and particularly in the target neighborhoods above.

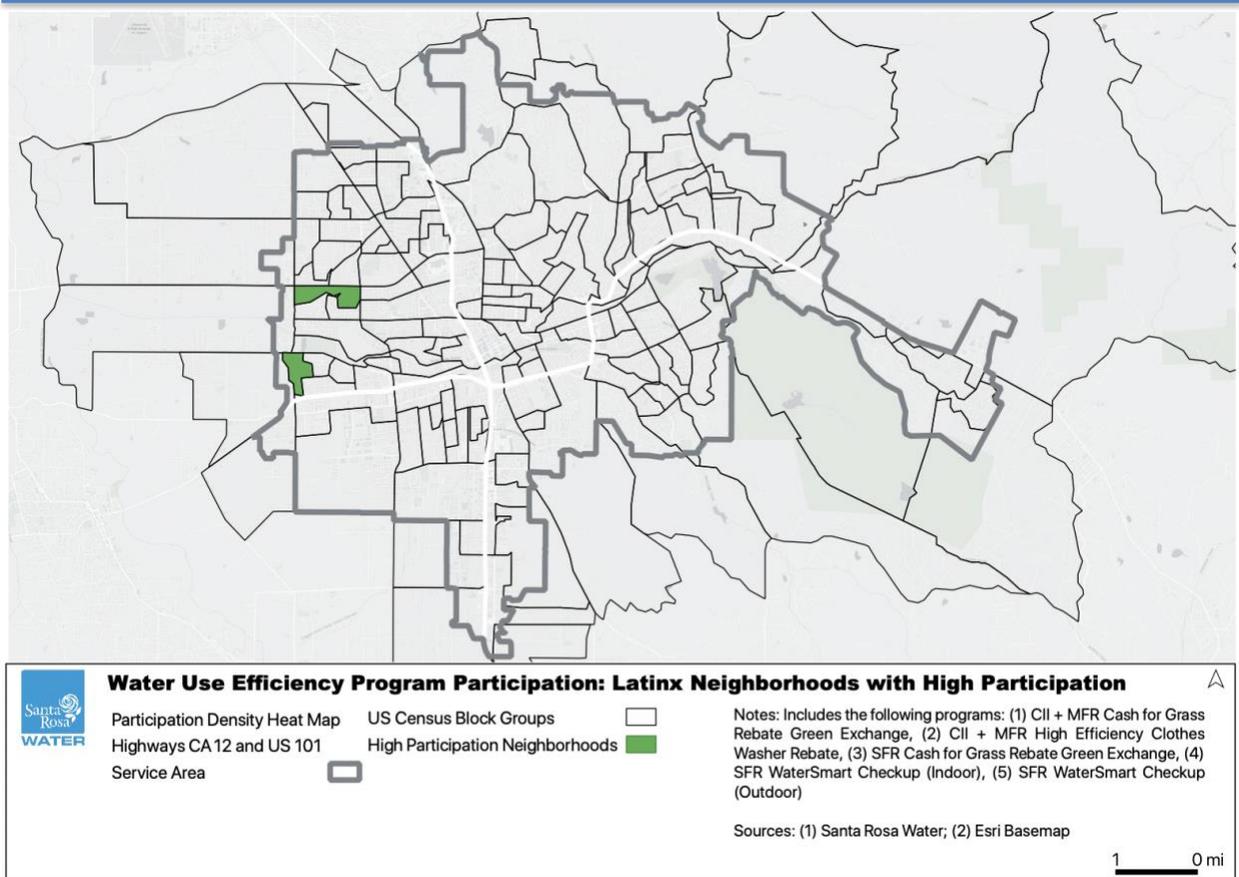


Figure 14. Latinx neighborhoods with high participation (at least 50 participants) in Santa Rosa’s WUE program from 2013-2021.

## Phase 3: Research Existing Outreach to Latinx and Spanish-speaking Communities Throughout the US

In Phase 3, WaterNow conducted research to identify best practices, lessons learned, and potential outreach and engagement strategies employed by similar utility programs conducting outreach to Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities. Through desk research, we identified 9 national programs that exhibited strong community outreach to their Spanish-speaking residents, relating to their water use efficiency programs. From this list, Santa Rosa Water then selected both the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (LADWP) and the City of Sacramento for more in-depth informational interviews to learn about their outreach program implementation strategies and glean best practices.

Additionally, WaterNow drew on recommendations made through interviews conducted in Phase 1 with City of Santa Rosa staff members, as well as through further desk research, to compose a list of 19 organizations working with the Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities within the City's service area. From this list, Santa Rosa selected a few organizations, including Los Cien and the Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County (CAP), to contact for interviews, in order to gather their suggestions for engaging with Latinx and Spanish-speaking community members and increasing participation in Santa Rosa's water use efficiency programs.

### *Key Insights and Take-Aways*

These conversations highlighted a number of overarching suggestions and insights, summarized below and described in greater detail in the Phase 3 memo.

- Reaching Spanish-speaking audiences:
  - When it comes to reaching those who may primarily speak Spanish, it is fundamentally important for utilities to engage with these residents in Spanish, such as through the utility's conservation webpage and when performing outreach. That may mean having multiple languages present on one webpage – for instance, by having the option to toggle to another language; by providing brochures in multiple language; or by sending targeted hardcopy outreach materials to Spanish-speaking homes.
  - For any materials mailed directly to participants, including an indication that the materials inside are in Spanish on the outside of the envelope can help increase open rates (otherwise, recipients may assume the envelope's contents are in English).
  - For in-person outreach, it is also crucial to have Spanish-speaking, bilingual staff present, including at events that reach the general population.
- The messenger matters:
  - Several organizations found success by partnering with local organizations (including schools, faith-based institutions, community organizations, and local community representatives) and publications to share their messaging.
  - Outreach campaigns that included images and examples that reflected the communities they were trying to engage also helped increase participation.
  - Many respondents suggested harnessing a range of different types of outreach methods, in particular Spanish-speaking publications, newsletters, and radio stations. While the success of social media strategies was mixed, creating outreach kits that partners could share on their platforms may increase their impact in the community.
- Several core themes emerged around messaging:

- Several interviews recommended focusing on basic and clear information on water conservation and actions that individuals can take to save water and money.
- Several examples and interviews emphasized presenting this information in creative, fun, and culturally relevant ways (e.g., a radio message presented as though listeners were eavesdropping on a conversation, or Telenovelas, replete with numerous plot twists and dramatic exchanges).
- Connecting messaging strategies with data analysis can help outreach to target communities with lower participation rates.
- In many interviews, the conversations focused on meeting people where they are, by:
  - Holding events and partnering with organizations working in communities the City is trying to reach (e.g., including informational flyers in backpack giveaways).
  - Sharing information in spaces the community engages with in their day-to-day lives (e.g., going to grocery stores that serve Mexican, Central and South-American style foods to set up informational tables, post flyers, or play pre-taped music or videos).
  - Using students and youth groups as an avenue to share information with families.
- Multiple conversations highlighted the importance of allocating a consistent and dedicated budget to conducting outreach to the Latinx community.

## Phase 4: Gather direct feedback on water efficiency programs in Santa Rosa from Latinx Spanish-speaking community members

In Phase 4, WaterNow and Santa Rosa developed a survey to distribute to community members, and in particular Latinx and Spanish-speaking community members, to gather additional information about their existing awareness of water use efficiency programs; their motivations for participating in water use efficiency programs; and their preferences for outreach about opportunities to participate in water use efficiency programs.

The survey's key findings are summarized below and described in greater detail in the Phase 4 Memo.

### *Key Findings*

*Awareness of WUE programs:* Overall, most survey respondents (nearly 90 percent) are familiar with at least one WUE program, though levels of awareness are slightly lower among the respondents of the Spanish language survey. The Cash for Grass program, WaterSmart Home

Kit, and WaterSmart Home Check-up are the most well-known programs among all respondents.

*Participation in WUE programs:* Approximately 60 percent of survey respondents have participated in WUE programs, and participation is highest in the Cash for Grass program, WaterSmart Home Kit, and WaterSmart Home Check-up programs (see Figure 15). These are also the programs which most respondents report being aware of. Respondents to the Spanish language version of the survey indicated slightly lower participation rates than the overall total rates of participation, though for most programs, these differences in participation are small – ranging from one to four percent.

Among survey respondents who had completed a WUE program, many shared notes of thanks, with comments like: “I’m very pleased with the cash for grass program... It’s a delight how many neighbors watched with interest and like how my new non-lawn looks.” Others noted that they had first learned about these programs from taking the survey, but were now considering participating, sharing comments like: “Excellent programs! I’m new to the area and still on the learning curve, but hope to pursue more of the water-saving opportunities as time and finances permit.”

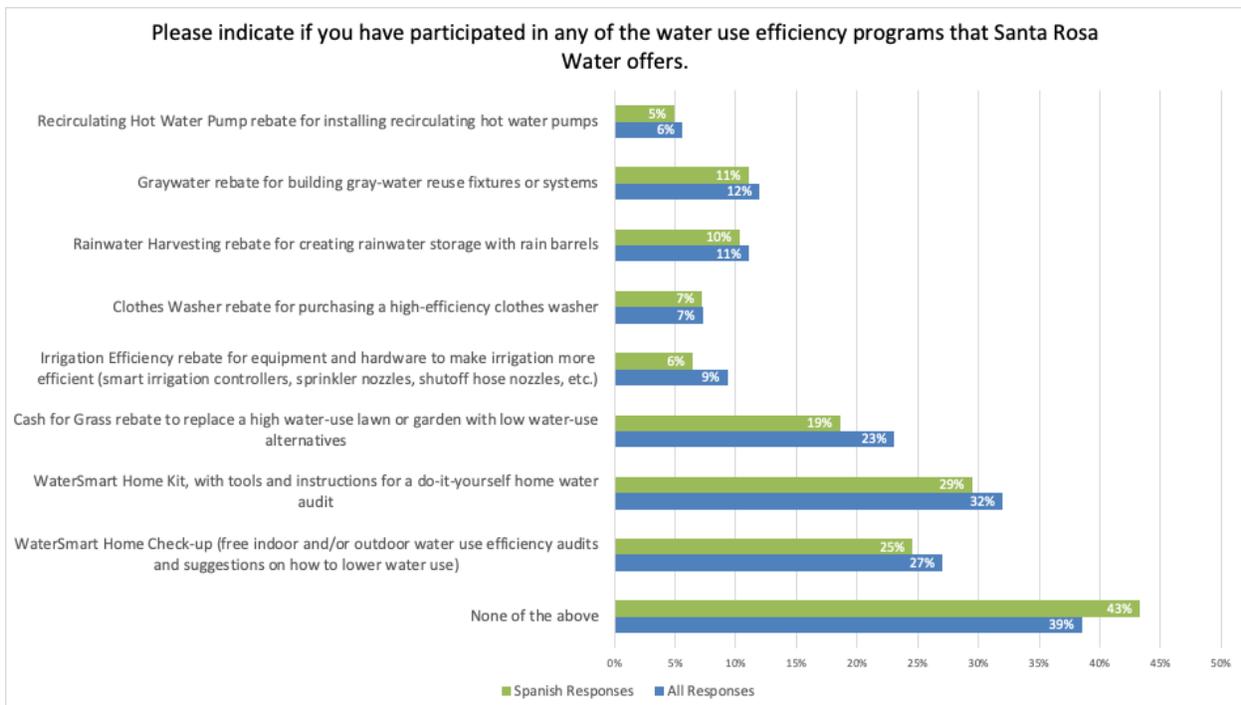


Figure 15. Participant’s participation in Santa Rosa’s existing WUE programs. Participants selected all programs that applied.

**Learning about WUE programs:** The Santa Rosa Water website is a crucial and common source of information about WUE programs for all participants, including Spanish-speaking residents. Some communication mediums – including email updates and monthly newsletters and especially water bill inserts – are important for all participants but seem to be less common paths to learning about WUE programs for Spanish-speaking residents. Other avenues – including visits and calls to Santa Rosa Water, local newspaper articles and advertisements, social media, and direct mail to home or businesses – are important sources of information for all participants, but are more commonly used by Spanish-speaking residents.

**Communication preferences:** There is a strong preference for receiving information through the Santa Rosa Water website and from email updates and newsletters from all residents, including respondents to the Spanish version of the survey (see Figure 16). Water bill inserts are a popular choice overall (37 percent), though less popular with Spanish-speaking respondents (18 percent). Outreach methods including social media and local newspapers and advertisements are particularly popular with Spanish-speaking respondents (both at approximately 30 percent), though slightly less popular (near 20 percent) among the overall responses.

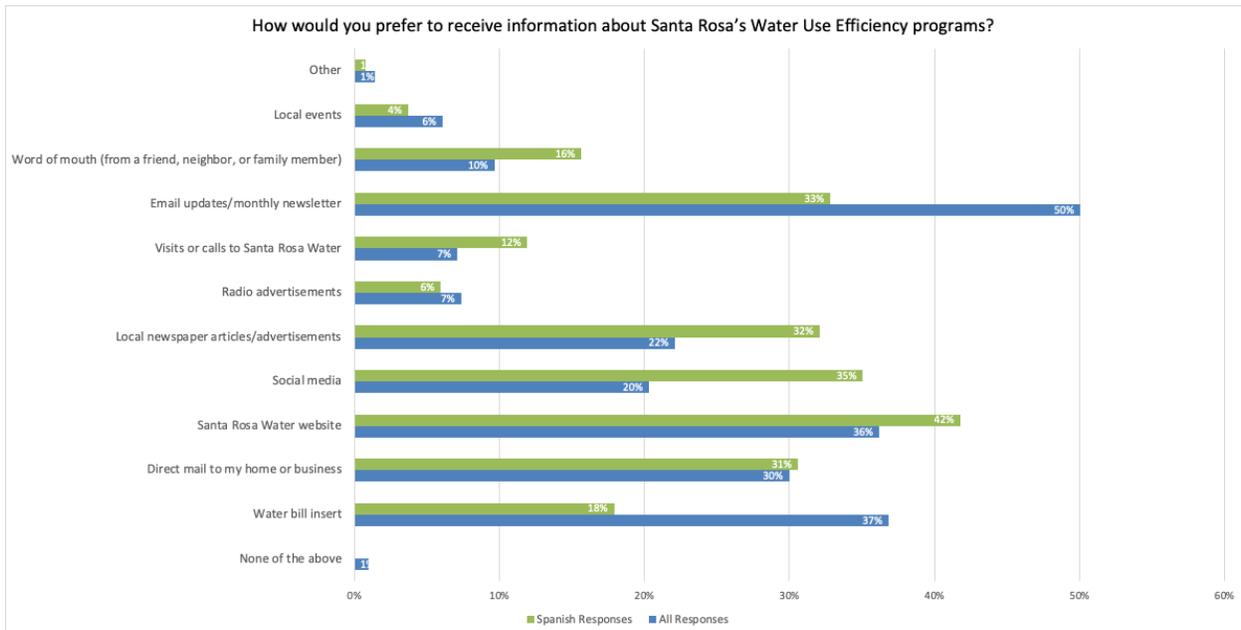


Figure 16. A summary of the ways survey respondents would like to learn about Santa Rosa’s WUE programs. Participants selected all methods that applied.

**Motivations for participating in WUE programs:** The most common motivating factors reported include: reducing personal water use, protecting limited water resources, saving money on water bills, protecting the local environment, and paying to replace a fixture or appliance (see Figure 17). Among the Spanish-language version of the survey, the most common motivating

factors include: paying to replace a fixture or appliance, reducing personal water use, saving money on water bills, and protecting the local environment.

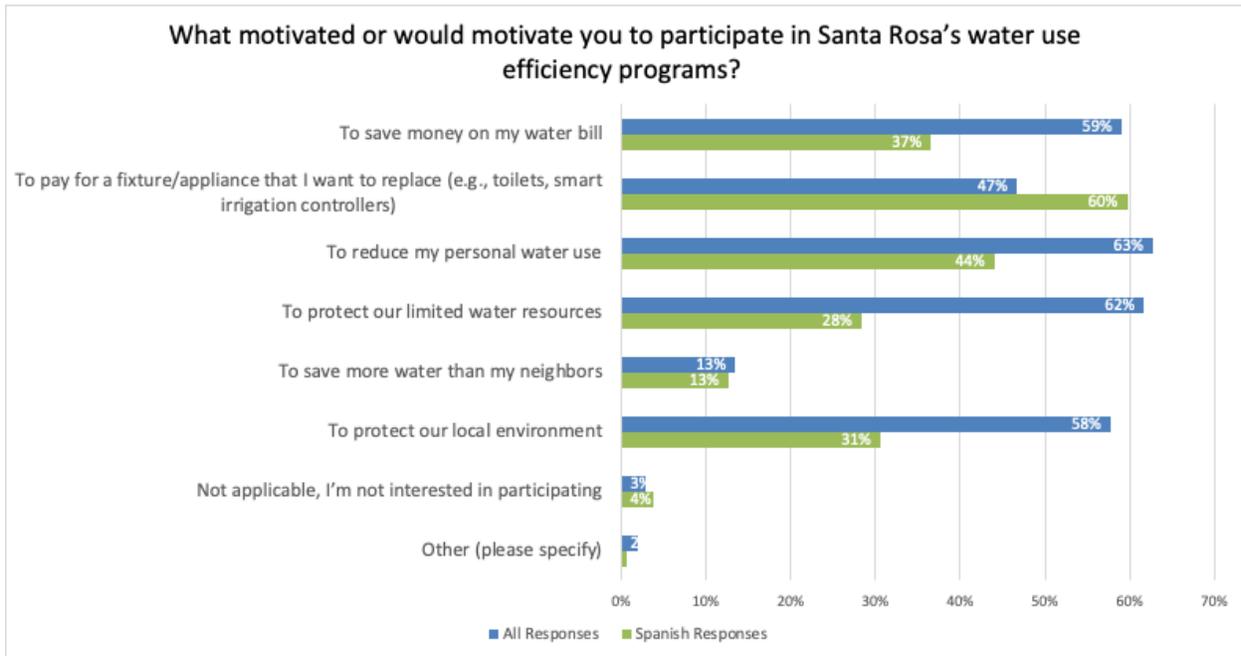


Figure 17. A summary of survey respondents' reported motivations for participating in Santa Rosa's WUE programs. Participants selected all options that applied.

*Obstacles to participating in WUE programs:* The most commonly reported obstacles to participation include the knowledge or expertise involved, which was the most-frequently chosen hurdle both overall and for Spanish-speaking respondents. Several respondents shared that they did not “know who to contact or how to apply;” “I would like to participate in the larger home efficiency programs--gray water, etc.--but am not sure how to start, who to hire, etc.,” and that “not knowing where to find the information is biggest obstacle.” : A number of responses requested “a list of recommended licensed vendors who have been vetted for residents for projects such as rainwater/greywater systems, lawn replacement, low-water landscaping contractors, etc.” or noted that it “would be nice if SR City had recommended contractors or a range of prices for an average project.”

Concerns about the expense of the program, the physical labor that may be involved, and questions about qualifications were also frequently cited both overall and for Spanish-speaking respondents (see Figure 18). Respondents to the Spanish version of the survey cited preferences towards their existing landscapes and appliances more frequently, while citing concerns about the time the projects would take to implement less frequently than the overall respondents.

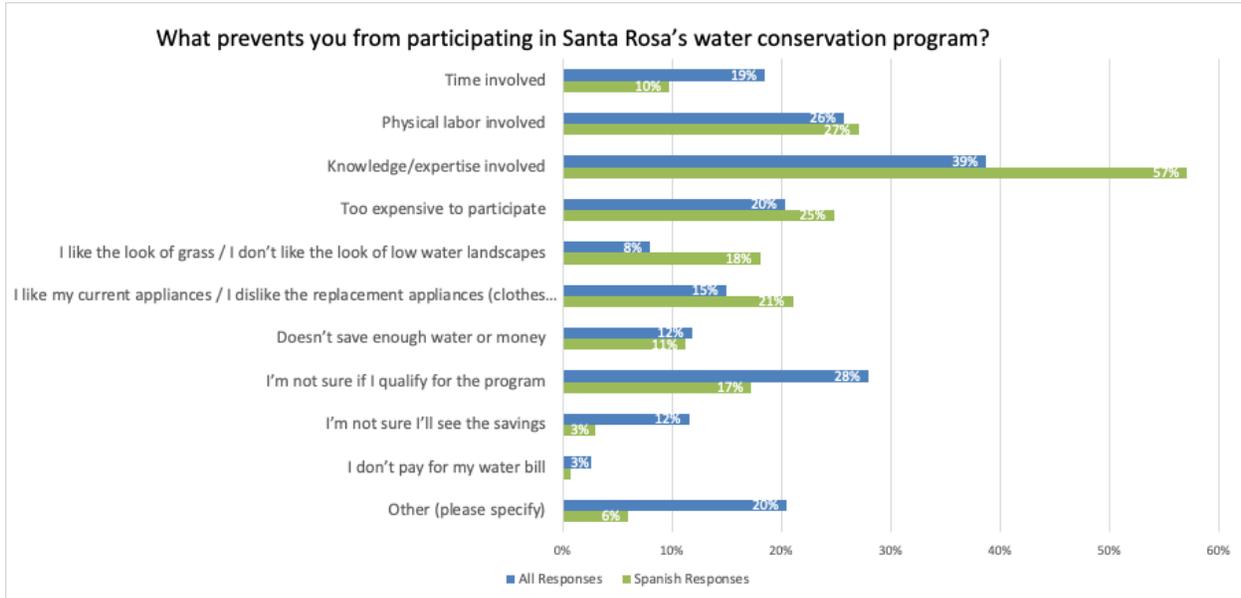


Figure 18. A summary of survey respondents' reported obstacles to participating in Santa Rosa Water's WUE programs. Participants selected all options that applied.

*Respondent demographics:* In interpreting these results, it may be helpful to note that most respondents are homeowners, living in either a single-family home or an apartment, condo, or townhouse, paying their water bill directly (rather than through their rent). Respondents span every income bracket, with the highest number of all respondents reporting an income of: \$25,000-\$49,000 (17 percent), \$50,000-\$75,000 (15 percent), or \$100,000-\$149,000 (16 percent). The demographics look slightly different for respondents to the Spanish version of the survey, who are more likely to live in an apartment, condo, or townhouse (50 percent of respondents to the Spanish version of the survey, compared to 29 percent of all respondents) and to be renting their home (36 percent of respondents to the Spanish version of the survey, compared to 24 percent of all respondents). Among the responses to the Spanish version of the survey, the \$25,000-\$49,000 income bracket is particularly highly represented (32 percent), followed by the \$50,000-\$75,000 (19 percent) and under \$25,000 (17 percent) brackets.

## Phase 5: Summary of project findings and recommendations

Based on Phases 1-4, a number of key project findings and potential next steps are highlighted below:

1. **Existing Best Practices Currently Used by Santa Rosa:** The project highlighted many of the best practices already employed by Santa Rosa, which would be beneficial to continue and perhaps enhance further. These include:

- a. *Using a diverse range of outreach and communication mediums to engage residents.* Through a mixture of interviews and the results of the survey, we learned about the mediums for outreach and engagement that came recommended by Santa Rosa staff, community organizations dedicated to the Latinx community, and those identified by survey respondents. Resultantly, it is clear that multiple mediums of outreach are successful strategies for continued engagement, including the Santa Rosa website, water bill inserts and other direct mailers, email updates, the City Connections internal newsletter, social media, local newspaper articles and advertisements, radio ads, and events or a consistent presence focused on areas with higher proportions of Latinx community members. Not surprisingly, word of mouth was also cited as an important way that survey respondents wanted to learn about water conservation programs.

There are a number of ways to potentially amplify this work. For instance, to take full advantage of space on the outside of envelopes for water bills or other mailers, messaging and graphics can be included on the envelopes themselves, and include both English and Spanish; this will give residents that are primarily Spanish-speaking an indication of the contents also being available in Spanish.

Many interviews also highlighted the value of face-to-face engagement through community events. Particularly in neighborhoods with low WUE program participation rates, low Internet access, and high percentages of Spanish speakers, these events could continue to offer a way to introduce residents to WUE resources.

- b. *Conducting Outreach and Engagement in Spanish.* Multiple interviewees highlighted the work that Santa Rosa continues to build on by providing a growing number of resources, such as outreach and presentations, in Spanish. The maps generated as part of Phase 2 of this work could be a starting point for identifying events or opportunities to share information in Spanish in neighborhoods where a high percentage of the population uses this as their primary language.
- c. *Partnerships with Local Community Organizations and Leaders.* Santa Rosa Water has already developed a strong network of outreach and implementation partners, including those that serve the Latinx community, and further fostering

these relationships and adding to this network will only continue to benefit water conservation efforts. In particular, we heard about the potential benefits of working more with schools and faith-based institutions in order to connect with the Latinx community.

To facilitate an easier process for outreach partners, particularly when it comes to social media, it may be helpful to provide them with outreach toolkits they can quickly share through their platforms.

- d. *Virtual Programming.* It may be beneficial to continue to offer some programming virtually to capitalize on the increasing participation as the community has adjusted to more reliance on virtual programming and resources. The recordings of these classes also help to build Santa Rosa Water’s digital resource library.
- e. *Allocating an Outreach Budget.* Another practice already in use by Santa Rosa was emphasized as a best practice through multiple conversations – the importance of allocating a consistent and dedicated budget to conducting outreach to the Latinx community.

## 2. Building on Santa Rosa Water Website Resources

- a. *Highlighting Existing Resources.* As gleaned from responses to the survey, the website is a key source of information for residents regarding water conservation programs. Responses to the survey revealed that some respondents could benefit from additional resources or updates to the site which could make it more intuitive to use and easier to find existing resources if they are more prominently displayed.
  - For example, a number of survey respondents requested a list of licensed vendors/contractors that could implement projects like greywater systems, and landscape conversion. While this is an existing resource on the Santa Rosa website ([srcity.org/WaterSmart](http://srcity.org/WaterSmart)), it might be possible to make this list easier to find and more directly tied to the rebate program. Additionally, some respondents shared that they would benefit from supplemental information, particularly a clearer sense of the range of anticipated costs for implementing water saving strategies. Adding an easily visible pop-up “contact us” feature on WUE pages was suggested so that visitors could easily message customer service their queries (providing their preferred contact details, such as an email address and/or phone number), enabling them to stay on the conservation pages rather than having to leave the site and use their email service.

- Survey results revealed some hesitation and expressions of uncertainty as to what the process of completing some WUE programs entails. To help address these roadblocks, it might be helpful to consider collateral that illuminates the entire process of implementing the conservation strategies. For instance, short case studies could be created (maybe in video format or a pdf with an infographic design) that detail each step, highlighting how to use resources on the site, picking out a vendor, installation of the strategy, submitting your rebate, things to expect in terms of cost, time, and labor, etc.

### **3. Messaging**

- a. The survey indicated that some Spanish-language respondents are reluctant to convert their existing landscaping because they find it attractive, which might suggest that they also don't find other landscapes as appealing. This is a common sentiment and came up in multiple discussions during the course of this project, with Santa Rosa Water already working to socialize the aesthetic appeal of climate appropriate landscaping with their customers.
- b. We also heard about a best practice in Sacramento, which ensures that campaigns include images and examples that reflect the communities they are targeting for engagement. Using strategies – such as featuring successful projects in Latinx neighborhoods on social media or in e-newsletters (from Santa Rosa Water and/or from other community groups) – could help highlight the existing participation in these neighborhoods, as well as help to socialize the different aesthetic options available around low-water landscapes.
- c. Several examples and interviews emphasized presenting educational information in creative, fun, and culturally relevant ways (e.g., a radio message presented as though listeners were eavesdropping on a conversation, or Telenovelas, replete with numerous plot twists and dramatic exchanges). One interviewee noted the success of a “preview” shown at a drive-in movie theater to encourage the completion of a survey – this strategy could also offer opportunities to re-share and re-purpose this type of content.
- d. Additionally, it might be helpful for Santa Rosa Water to work with their partners to build out their bilingual resources as well.
- e. We heard from one interviewee that more can be done to convey the benefits and safety of drinking tap water, as many residents may draw on their experiences in other water systems and believe that tap water cannot be trusted.

- 4. Meeting People Where They Are:** Many interviews and much of the community feedback emphasized the importance of meeting community members in their own communities. Specific strategies and suggested included:
  - a. Continuing to hold events and partner with organizations working in communities Santa Rosa Water is trying to reach (e.g., including informational flyers in backpack giveaways).
  - b. Sharing information in spaces the community engages with in their day-to-day lives (e.g., going to grocery stores that serve Mexican, Central and South-American style foods to set up informational tables, post flyers, or play pre-taped music or videos).
  - c. Using students and youth groups as an avenue to share information with families.
  - d. From the survey results and through interviews, it is clear that peer-to-peer knowledge sharing is an effective way that information circulates in the community. Some respondents who participated in the Cash for Grass program shared that neighbors are intrigued and often become interested in what is going on and may perhaps want to participate themselves. If not already a strategy used by Santa Rosa Water, consider asking participants if they are interested in displaying a small yard sign that promotes the program, with messaging in both English and Spanish.
- 5. Documenting Outreach and Engagement Processes**
  - a. The survey generated a large number of responses, in large part due to the outreach network the City engaged to disseminate the survey. Additionally, survey responses show that many first heard about WUE programs through the survey. It may be useful to carefully document the process and partners that supported outreach for the survey for future outreach. Did any new outreach partners emerge from the process, and could these relationships be developed further? Furthermore, conducting surveys or similar periodically (perhaps every few years) could also be a helpful strategy to engage community members, requesting their input while also contributing to awareness of these programs, and updating Santa Rosa Water's understanding of community perspectives over time.
- 6. Building on Outreach for Lesser-Known Programs**
  - a. Survey results indicate that some programs are less well known and that there may be opportunities to increase outreach and build awareness regarding these programs. For example, when looking specifically at Spanish language

responses, the clothes washer, recirculating hot water pump, and even irrigation efficiency rebates are less well known among the respondents. Though it is helpful to keep in mind that the programs listed above do skew more towards homeowners, and the Census data reveals that neighborhoods where 50 percent or more of community members identify as Hispanic or Latin-American by origin in Santa Rosa have a higher percentage of renters than overall in the City.

## **7. Considering Existing Relationships and Local Organizations that Serve the Latinx Community**

- a. Given Santa Rosa Water's existing partnership with Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County on the Help2Others Water Program, this relationship may be a good place to explore for any future program that focuses on providing a consistent and targeted outreach and engagement role within the community.
- b. Additionally, we heard from multiple interviewees throughout the project the importance of engaging youth. For example, the existing Youth Promotores program was referred to during this project as a program which could potentially help share outreach materials or encourage community members to participate in water conservation programs.
  - i. [Youth Promotores](#) is an internship offered by Latino Services Providers, a community-based NGO network organization which acts as a bridge across generations for the Latinx community focusing on health, culture, and social issues. The Youth Promotores program is a one-year paid internship for youth that are bilingual and bicultural, aged 16-25 in Sonoma County. The program includes multiple tracks, including [Promotores Verdes](#), which focuses on providing environmental education and climate science resources to the Latinx community, with a goal to raise awareness and increase the number of members of the Latinx community who take steps to address climate change.

## **8. Community Ambassador Program**

- a. Ambassador programs associated with utility services are often created to perform grassroots outreach and engagement initiatives that disseminate information, listen to the needs of residents, and connect residents with utility resources, such as rebate and affordability programs. Often these programs are done in partnership with a local nonprofit that already serves the community and perhaps focuses on a specific demographic within the larger community, for instance low-income residents. Other types of ambassador programs are administered directly by a utility. Programs come in many forms and may be

voluntary, full-time or part-time paid positions, or utilize a stipend model. However, it is recommended that ambassador programs engage in meaningful reciprocity with the Ambassadors to ensure that all parties are receiving a benefit and to promote equity within the community.

This type of program could be an option to help meet Latinx residents where they are and help ensure that they have access to education and support to participate in conservation programs – elements of this program could also be blended with or integrated into the existing Help2Others (H2O) Water Program.

Examples of these types of programs include the [Water Champions Program](#), Climate Ambassadors Program, and Good Neighbor Ambassadors Program (all in Cleveland, OH); Grassroots Green Homes (Pittsburgh, PA); Tompkins Energy Navigator (Ithaca, NY); and Energy Masters (Arlington County and Alexandria, VA).

## Conclusion

The Project Accelerator program identified a number of existing best practices for engaging the entirety of Santa Rosa Water’s customers, along with additional strategies, potential community partners, and insights into common challenges and opportunities to strengthen awareness and engagement in WUE programs. WaterNow will stay in close contact with Santa Rosa Water as it determines how to continue and extend its engagement with the City’s Latinx and Spanish-speaking community members.