

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

TO: BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
FROM: CLAIRE NORDLIE, SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR
WATER DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: FINAL REPORT AND FINDINGS FOR THE SPANISH LANGUAGE
WATER USE EFFICIENCY PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS
PROJECT

AGENDA ACTION: REPORT ITEM

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by Santa Rosa Water that the Board of Public Utilities, by motion, accept the WaterNow Alliance Spanish Language Water Use Efficiency Enhancements Project Final Report, and further support the key findings and recommendations contained in the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2021, Santa Rosa Water was awarded a grant which included 250 hours of technical support from WaterNow Alliance's Project Accelerator program to conduct research into Water Use Efficiency program frequency and saturation in the City of Santa Rosa. The proposed project to be completed by the WaterNow Alliance has now concluded, and a comprehensive report has been finalized. WaterNow Alliance and Santa Rosa Water staff will present the findings and recommendations included in the final report with a focus on opportunities for increasing Latinx and Spanish-speaking community members' participation in Santa Rosa's Water Use Efficiency programs. Santa Rosa Water staff are requesting that the Board of Public Utilities accept the final report, and further support the proposed findings and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

In January 2021, Santa Rosa Water was awarded a grant which included 250 hours of technical support from WaterNow Alliance's Project Accelerator program. Santa Rosa Water staff proposed to utilize the WaterNow Alliance's specialized expertise to conduct research into Water Use Efficiency program frequency and saturation in the City of Santa Rosa. Further, it was requested that WaterNow Alliance identify opportunities or strategies that foster equitable distribution of program services throughout the city. The

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WaterNow Alliance is a forum for local water leaders who champion sustainable water strategies, and their Project Accelerator program provides a competitive process to receive free technical assistance benefiting from their experience. Santa Rosa Water is one of 15 other projects nationally since 2017 to receive the Project Accelerator technical support.

In the first project phase, WaterNow Alliance collected and analyzed demographic data for the City of Santa Rosa and combined this with available data from Santa Rosa's Water Use Efficiency programs to determine the coverage of Santa Rosa's Water Use Efficiency programs among Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities. In the next phases, WaterNow Alliance conducted research including a customer survey to identify best practices, lessons learned, and potential outreach and engagement strategies from similar programs conducting outreach to Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities. Santa Rosa Water staff are providing the final report which summarizes key findings and recommendations for increasing Latinx and Spanish-speaking community members participation in Santa Rosa's Water Use Efficiency programs for the Board of Public Utilities review.

PRIOR BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES REVIEW

On January 21, 2021, the Board, by motion, approved the Memorandum of Understanding for the Spanish Language Water Use Efficiency Program Enhancements Project assistance between WaterNow Alliance and the City of Santa Rosa, and authorized the Chair to sign the agreement.

ANALYSIS

Staff are providing the final report developed by WaterNow Alliance for Santa Rosa Water summarizing their work on the Spanish Language Water Use Efficiency (WUE) Enhancements Project. The goal of this project is to research water use efficiency frequency and saturation levels across Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities in Santa Rosa and to identify best practices to enhance outreach and increase water use efficiency program uptake in this underserved community. WaterNow Alliance's work was conducted in five phases including 1) conducting baseline research of Santa Rosa's WUE programs and existing outreach mechanisms, 2) analyzing WUE customer participation data, 3) researching best practices implemented in local and national organizations, 4) conducting a survey to gather community feedback and 5) reporting on project findings and recommendations.

The WaterNow Alliance's analysis and research found that Santa Rosa's WUE program participation is lower in neighborhoods with higher percentages of Spanish-speaking populations, populations who identify as Hispanic or Latino by race or origin in the U.S. Census, those with a lack of internet access, populations living in poverty status, and populations with a high percentage of renter-occupied housing. This report by the WaterNow Alliance and its findings offer an opportunity for Santa Rosa Water to identify

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opportunities to implement several best practices to increase the uptake of WUE programs across Santa Rosa Water's service area. The report includes recommendations for improving the ongoing implementation of the following best practices:

- investment in long-term marketing campaigns,
- tracking of outreach campaign metrics,
- diversifying outreach approaches,
- seeking cultural relevancy,
- developing strategic partnerships in the Latinx community and using trusted messengers,
- simplifying messaging around clear and concrete actions,
- focusing on in-person outreach and meeting people where they are in the community, and
- providing simple education about how to get started with a Water Use Efficiency project, and more.

Many of these best practices are part of Santa Rosa Water's existing outreach strategies. However, the report includes recommendations in several areas where the existing campaigns can make targeted improvements while deepening our capacity to better connect with all community members in Santa Rosa. Water Use Efficiency Section staff have recently started exploring innovative opportunities with community based non-profit organizations that could bridge this identified capacity need.

FISCAL IMPACT

Not applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline Section 15378.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On January 12, 2021, the Board of Public Utilities Contract Review Subcommittee reviewed and recommended approval of the Memorandum of Understanding and accompanying scope of work for the project.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Memorandum of Understanding

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- Attachment 2 – Final Report

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