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Go with the Flow: Adapting water conservation programs to new dynamics

WATERSMART INNOVATIONS

October 2, 2019

Speakers

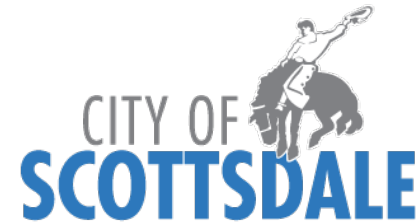
Leah Hubbard

Water Resource Specialist
City of Prescott, AZ



Jill Brumand

Water Conservation Specialist
City of Scottsdale, AZ



Meghan Bock

Senior Water-Energy Analyst
AIQUEOUS (Austin, TX)



Agenda

- **Context:** City Profiles + Day in the Life of the Water Conservation Specialist
- **Past:** Program History + Lessons Learned
- **Present:** 2019-2020 Water Conservation Program Planning & Implementation + Preliminary Insights

| City Profiles

| | City of Prescott | City of Scottsdale |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Population | 42,731 | 255,310 |
| Average Persons/Household | 2.03 | 2.21 |
| Median Age | 54.1 | 49 |
| Primary Demographic | Mostly retired residents | Many seasonal residents |
| Median household income | \$44,224 | \$85,755 |
| Rebate Program Budget (2018) | \$40k | \$190k (FY19 budget is \$240k) |
| Number of Conservation Staff | 1½ | 4 |
| Average number of rebates per year (since 2016) | 96 | 1136 |

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Day in the Life of the Water Conservation Specialist

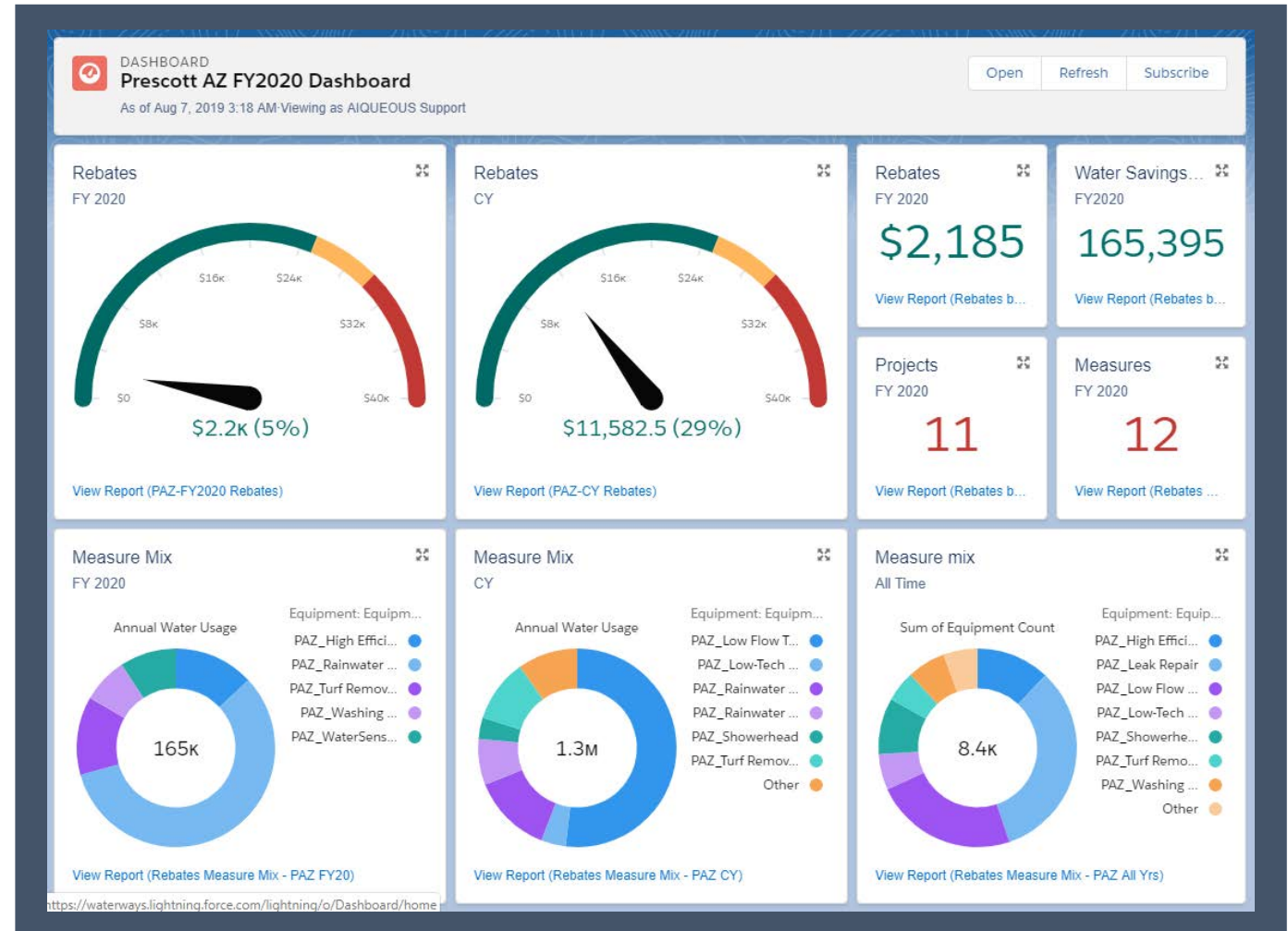
City of Prescott

Rebate Process

1. Receive Application
2. Check Internal Utility Billing System for eligibility
3. Check attachments- photos, receipts
4. Add rebate measure amount to project
5. Rebate credited to water account

* New passive rainwater harvesting rebate will require inspections

* All rebates can be inspected if necessary



10. Rebate credited to water account

Day in the Life of the Water Conservation Specialist

The screenshot shows the 'Rebate Submission' page on WaterRebates.com. The page has a blue header with the logo and navigation links. A breadcrumb trail reads 'Home Page / Water / Rebates / Rebate Submission'. The main heading is 'Rebate Submission'. Below it, a section titled 'SCOTTSDALE WATER CONSERVATION REBATE PROGRAMS' contains 'Program Requirements' (a link to the program requirements) and 'Rebate Offerings' (a link to submit an online rebate application). Two orange buttons are present: 'Program Requirements' and 'Submit an Online Rebate'. To the right, a 'Contact Information' box lists the City of Scottsdale's address, phone, fax, email, and office hours. At the bottom, a 'SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL' section (with a note to 'Apply below') features a table for 'WaterSense Installations'.

| Rebate Type | Customer Types | Rebate Amount | Limits |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Irrigation Controllers | Water | Cost, up to \$250 per | 1 per property |
| Showerheads | Water or Sewer | Cost, up to \$25 per | 2 per property |

City of Scottsdale

Removal Rebate Process

1. Receive Application
2. Check Internal Utility Billing System for eligibility
3. Check attachments- photos, receipts
4. Schedule and conduct in-person inspection, if necessary
5. Request Plant List
6. Add rebate measure amount to project
7. Send Notice to Proceed, once received
8. Receive completion photos
9. Send approval email
10. Rebate credited to water account

Day in the Life of the Water Conservation Specialist

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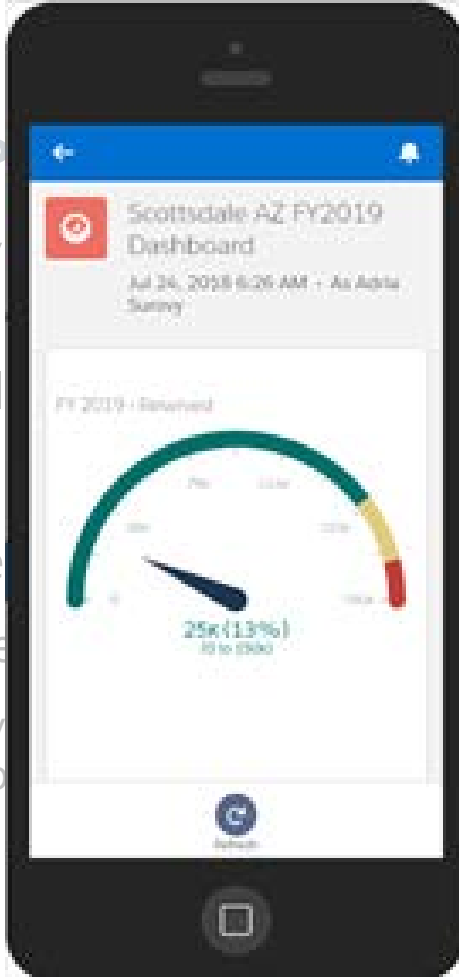
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City of Scottsdale

Installation Rebate Process

1. Receive Application
2. Check Internal Utility Billing System for eligibility
3. Check attachments- photos, receipts
4. Schedule and conduct in-person inspection, if necessary
5. Add rebate measure amount to project
6. Send email to approval project
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Past Program History & Lessons Learned

History of Water Conservation Programs

City of Prescott

- Early 1900's – first outdoor watering restrictions implemented
- 1992 – first incentive program established for new construction
- 2004 – current rebate program established
- 2006-2009 – one full-time conservation person
- 2009-present – dropped to half-time conservation person

City of Scottsdale

- 1980's – first water conservation goals established
- 1992 – first rebate program established
- 2016 – current rebate program launched



History of Water Conservation Programs

City of Prescott

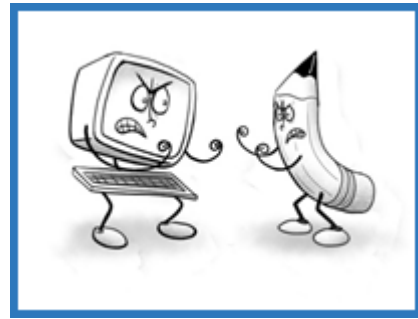
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Rebate Program – Transition from Paper to Digital



City of Prescott

Major changes in water conservation department due to recession (2009 - 2010):

- Dropped to half-time staff
- Monetary rebates severely decreased
- Washing machines & hot water recirculation systems removed
- Landscape irrigation audit added along with rainwater harvesting

Program Enhancements (2016 – Present):

- Transition to digital tracking & retirement of cumbersome Excel spreadsheets
- Full overhaul of rebate program in 2019

City of Scottsdale

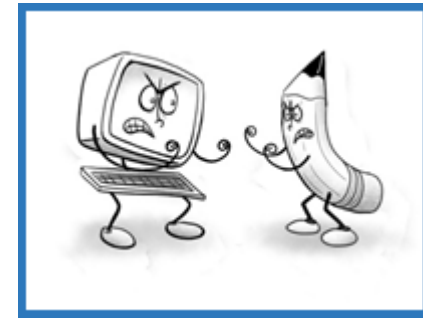
Old System (1992 - 2016):

- Written/Excel spreadsheet
- Paper record
- Cumbersome
- Hand-type information
- Prone to error

New System (2016 - Present):

- Data easily and securely stored and accessed
- E-mail templates for customer notification
- Automation of processes and reports

Rebate Program – Transition from Paper to Digital



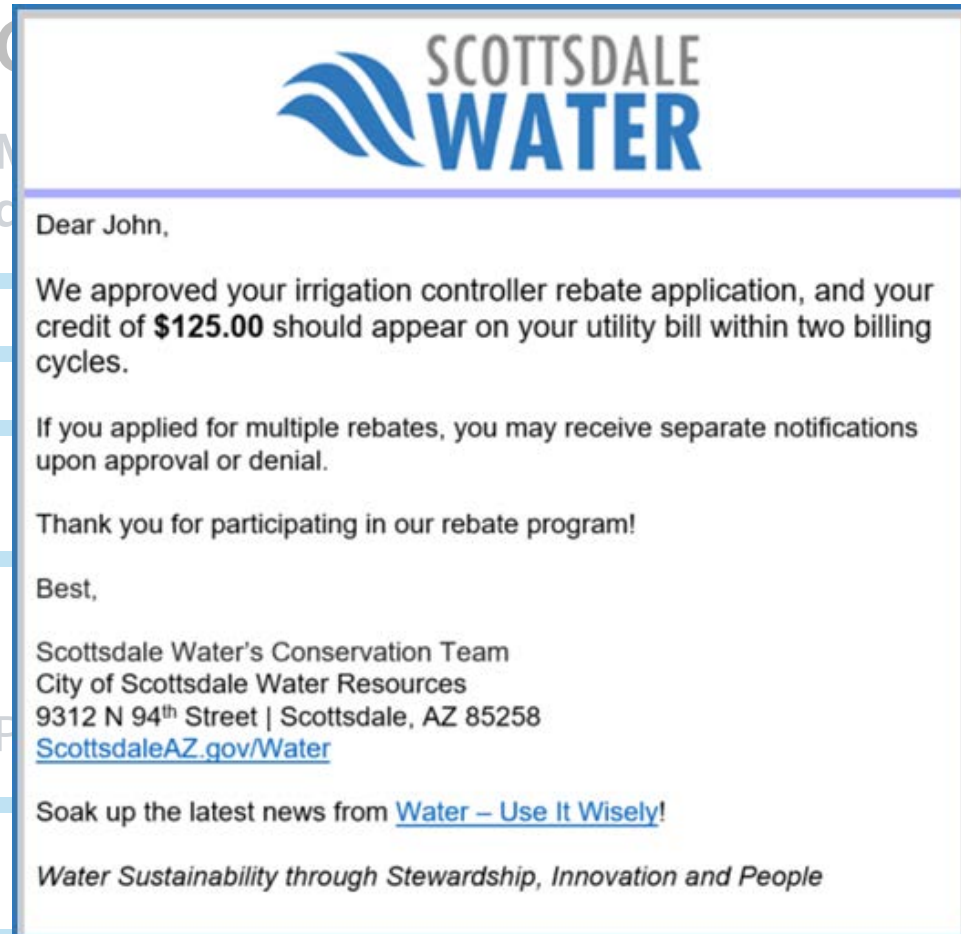
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New Challenges & Lessons Learned



City of Prescott

- Economic downturn had huge impact on rebate monies & participation
- Lack of marketing = lack of rebate program awareness
- 1.6 gpf toilets kept available for too long, no proof of replacement required
- High retiree demographic, difficult transition to digital
- Low prevalence of yards due to dramatic increase of native landscaping
- Unhappy customers who can not retroactively receive rebates they installed before the ordinance.

City of Scottsdale

- Make program rules firm, but don't write for all exceptions!
- Water savings studies are vital, but difficult to quantify!
- Marketing materials- now only feature website, no program specifics
- Legacy information is hard to battle.
- Make words work for you – customers respond differently to different program wording

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2019-2020 Water Conservation Program: Planning & Execution

Adapting to changing dynamics

City of Prescott

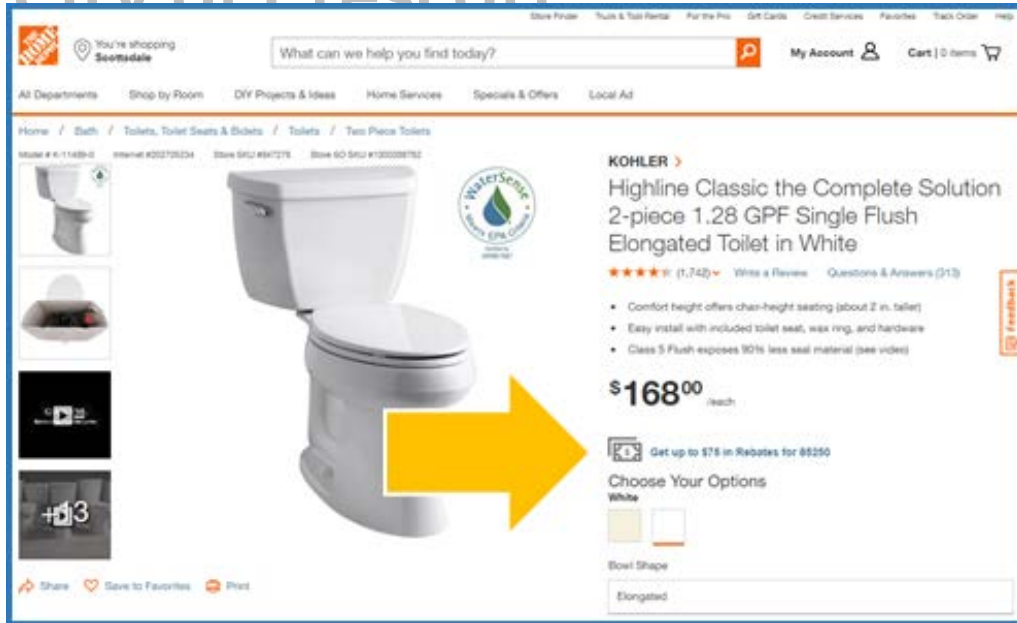
- Re-evaluate monetary rebates that are rarely utilized
- Explore multi-benefit measures, example: incentive for septic customers (to help decrease water sent to septic users, helps limit water not returned to the recharge facility)
- Seek new ways to promote rebate programs
- Make the most impact possible with a half-time conservation person.

City of Scottsdale

- Keep list of common questions & concerns, communicate with coworkers
- Dedicate time to honing more precise language on website, applications, and marketing
- Offer in-person customer Q&A sessions
- Start re-evaluating rebates for “underperforming” options (like 2nd toilet)

Adapting to changing dynamics

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Responding to customer needs & preferences

City of Prescott

- New program offerings this year: 1.0 gpf toilets, smart timers, passive rainwater harvesting systems, HE washing machines, increased turf removal rebates
- Promote the use of all rebate monies. For the past 8 years less than half of monies were used
- Future ideas: low income toilet installs, commercial awards, & conservation talks

City of Scottsdale

- Tailor programs to better service commercial customers (irrigation controllers, flushometer valve toilet rebates)
- Focus on incorporating an educational component into rebate programs (e.g., workshops & outdoor water efficiency checks)
- Increased FY20 program budget; depleted each of the last 3 years
- Future ideas: add labor to flushometer valve toilet rebates, remove minimum sq. ft. for turf removal if all grass is removed.

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Barriers to Implementation

City of Prescott

- Explaining complex water resource information to the general public
- Explaining the water-energy nexus as it relates to hot water circulation systems
- Guiding users to the electronic submittal process
- Customer service to those who feel they should retroactively receive a rebate prior to ordinance

City of Scottsdale

- Best ways to market programs- by zip code, time of year, by mail/online, etc.
- Encourage commercial customer to also go online for information and to fill out app
- Staff time considerations
 - Process changes – ensuring greater oversight of rebate disbursement, website layout
 - Programmatic changes – requiring 25% plant coverage for turf removal landscaping replacement coverage

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Preliminary Insights from 2019-2020 Program Implementation

City of Prescott

- Lots of people excited about the new program & increased rebates
- Utilizing program management software has made it easier to convey complex information in meaningful way
- Increased use of online submittals

City of Scottsdale

- Customers find website layout for rebate information easier to follow
- Newly formatted online application form makes it easier to collect documentation
- So far, fewer people confused about what attachments they need to include (W-9s especially- required check box)
- First year using online system for commercial customers, they are hesitant to submit online and would rather submit paper application

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Keys to going with the flow

- Be flexible, be creative
- Leverage data + reporting
- Create channels for customer feedback
- Maintain positive customer touchpoints

QUESTIONS

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