This presentation premiered at WaterSmart Innovations

watersmartinnovations.com
Go with the Flow: Adapting water conservation programs to new dynamics
Speakers

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City of Prescott, AZ

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*Water Conservation Specialist*
City of Scottsdale, AZ

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*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

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>City of Prescott</th>
<th>City of Scottsdale</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
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<td>Average Persons/Household</td>
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<td>Median Age</td>
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<td>Primary Demographic</td>
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| Average number of rebates per year (since 2016) | 96                        | 1136                       |
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

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
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Installation Rebate Process
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Past Program History
& Lessons Learned
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
City of Prescott

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City of Scottsdale

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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
City of Prescott

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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)
City of Prescott

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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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