



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

**TO:** Elizabeth A. Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Preston Peck, Senior Sustainability Analyst, Environmental Services  
Michael P. Slevin III, Director, Environmental Services  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution - Environmental Protection Agency Recycling Education and Outreach Grant  
Acceptance - March 5, 2024  
**DATE:** January 30, 2024

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### **SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

A resolution authorizing the execution of an agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency in the amount of \$1,999,806, budgeted from Fund 4200, for the Recycling Education and Outreach Grant from May 1, 2024 to May 1, 2027.

### **BACKGROUND:**

This Department's Recommendation is Based On: A \$1,999,806 grant was awarded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to City of Tacoma's Environmental Services Department (ES) through its Recycling Education and Outreach Grant Program, a key initiative under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This grant will support the City of Tacoma's expansion of its nationally award-winning Community Ambassador Program, installation of cameras on collection trucks that utilize artificial intelligence to identify contamination in the residential recycling stream, and an on-going waste characterization of the residential recycling stream for the duration of the grant period.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

The funds from the EPA will partially be used to expand ES's nationally award-winning Community Ambassador Program to include a waste reduction and youth ambassador track in addition to the current tracks (residential recycling, multifamily recycling, and food/yard waste). ES has five partner organizations/people (Safe Streets, Latinx Run USA, Tahoma Indian Center, Salishan Association, and a Slavic language lead) committed to support with outreach to their communities. The program will continue to develop and deliver trainings in partnership with these organizations/people in languages that meet the needs of their communities. ES currently anticipates trainings in Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Khmer, Vietnamese, Korean, and English. Additionally, ES anticipates holding 60 trainings over three years, with at least 20 in a language other than English, and train at least an additional 600 community ambassadors.

ES staff will work with the City's Media and Communications Office as well as the contracted vendor to develop information regarding the artificial intelligence cameras that will be installed on some recycling collection vehicles to identify contamination. The information will include a press release prior to deploying the cameras that will describe that no personal information will be collected, and no fines will be associated with contamination within an individual's recycling container.

### **2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

#### **Equity and Accessibility:**

The Community Ambassador Program continues to build trust between the City and partner organizations by developing the budget and programming alongside partners. Additionally, one of the primary goals of the program



is to increase access to proper recycling and waste reduction information by delivering trainings and creating materials that are culturally competent and delivered in languages that reflect the audience’s community.

Additionally, ES staff will work with the vendor that creates the artificial intelligence cameras and associated postcards that will be mailed to customers to ensure that those postcards are delivered in languages that are spoken at the resident’s home.

**Civic Engagement:** *Equity Index Score:* Select Index Score.

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

Representation at public meetings will reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community.

Staff will continue to build trust with community members through direct partnerships with five community-based organizations that already serve the communities that are the focus of the grant. These organizations, and the communities they serve, will continue to have direct input into the shaping of the trainings and will be compensated for their time and efforts in developing trainings, recruiting attendees, and delivering trainings. Since the focus of the program is on language access, and trainings are offered in multiple venues as well as languages, attendees at trainings will reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community.

**Livability:** *Equity Index Score:* Select Index Score.

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

In offering trainings about current services and how to appropriately utilize those services, residents will gain a stronger understanding of how to access curbside garbage/recycling/food and yard waste services, as well as become more familiar with other related infrastructure (e.g., Recycle Center and Household Hazardous Waste Facility). This information can help to shape behaviors that can reduce negative impacts on the environment and increase awareness about the benefits of recycling, waste reduction, and minimizing carbon emissions.

**Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

**Civic Engagement:** The EPA funds will be used, in part, to expand ES’s Community Ambassador Program. This program continues to build trust within the community by partnering with organizations and community members to develop trainings regarding access to the City’s Solid Waste services. Through focusing on language access in training and materials, the program inherently draws diverse representation at trainings that reflect the Tacoma community.

**Livability:** Through partnerships with community-based organizations who primarily serve community members who have limited English proficiency, ES is able to increase awareness of Solid Waste services and how to access those services. By increasing awareness and access to recycling, food/yard waste, and waste reduction services, ES can help reduce the environmental impacts of improperly managed waste while promoting waste reduction among community members.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Do not accept EPA funds	More staff time for other work	No funding for 3 employees to support the Community



		Ambassador Program and waste reduction programming
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**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

EPA requires quarterly reporting, and ES staff will present to Council at the midpoint of the grant cycle in late 2025/early 2026, then again at the end of the grant in late 2027. See attachment of table with specific deliverables.

**STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that Council adopts a resolution authorizing the acceptance of the grant funds from the EPA. Staff anticipates that funds will be available starting May 1, 2024.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Fund Number & Name	COST (CC/WBS/ORDER)	OBJECT	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. ES Solid Waste Fund 4200	512005		Various	\$1,999,806
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>\$1,999,806</b>

**What Funding is being used to support the expense?**

Environmental Services Solid Waste Fund 4200 cash balance will be used to supplement the partially funded grant position.

**Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?**

NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN BELOW

We anticipate it being included in our 2025-2026 budget pending Council approval.

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

YES

We would not be able to receive the grant dollars.

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

NO

These are project and one-time costs for the duration of the grant.

**Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?**

YES, PLEASE EXPLAIN BELOW

Four project positions for a three-year duration to support the grant efforts.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Table of deliverables from EPA grant proposal
- Gantt chart of timeline for grant deliverables