



**DATE:** October 19, 2015

**TO:** Alameda County Waste Management Authority Board

**FROM:** Gary Wolff, Executive Director

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**SUBJECT:** Business Assistance Project – Fiscal Year 2014-15 Highlights

**BACKGROUND**

The StopWaste Business Assistance project (formerly “The StopWaste Partnership”) has provided individualized waste reduction and diversion assistance to Alameda County businesses since 1998. Until 2010, the program primarily served large businesses with 10 or more cubic yards of garbage service per week. Some of the largest and most high-profile businesses in the county have received assistance from this program, including Ghirardelli Chocolate, Tesla Motors, and Kaiser Permanente.

The Business Assistance project has evolved over the last several years to address the changing needs of businesses as they seek to comply with ACWMA’s Mandatory Recycling Ordinance 2012-01, effective July 1, 2012. To align with the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance (MRO), beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011-12 the StopWaste Business Assistance team has focused its efforts on building awareness and compliance with the Ordinance. To do this, the Business Assistance team has significantly expanded its reach to include all businesses covered by the Ordinance, not just those with 10 or more cubic yards of weekly garbage service.

**DISCUSSION**

This memo serves to provide a summary of the Business Assistance project and highlight some of the achievements as detailed in the StopWaste Business Assistance Program Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15 Annual Report. A full copy of the report is available at: [MRO-TA-FY14-15-Report.pdf](#). Staff will also share a brief presentation at the October 28, 2015 Alameda County Waste Management Authority Board meeting.

**Overview of Contractors and Services**

As a result of a competitive RFP process in Spring 2014, Cascadia Consulting Group (Cascadia) was contracted to offer assistance and implement new or increased recycling and organics services at businesses located in jurisdictions participating in the MRO. Phase 2 of the MRO makes recycling mandatory for all businesses and added organics separation requirements for food-generating businesses, effective July 1, 2014, in participating jurisdictions.

Businesses were targeted in two ways: through enforcement referrals such as official notification or warning letters and the Ordinance Help Line, and through proactive targeting of businesses with little or no recycling service, coordinated with City staff. On-site waste assessments, customized

recommendation reports with recommended service levels and cost savings estimates, communication with service providers to initiate new recycling or organics collection, staff training, and follow-up implementation assistance were offered free of charge to participating businesses. Cascadia business assistance representatives are assigned to specific member agencies in order to foster continuity within a jurisdiction, maintain knowledge of local rates and services and relationships with hauler and member agency staff.

While technical assistance to multi-family properties has historically been provided by member agency staff or franchised service providers, in FY 2014-15, the Business Assistance Program implemented a small pilot program to explore organics technical assistance activities at multi-family properties. Environmental Science Associates (ESA) was on sub-contract with Cascadia to provide the in-field direct assistance to help multi-family property owners and managers start or improve organics collection programs.

#### Technical Assistance Highlights from the Past Year

- 1,264 commercial and 61 multi-family accounts were reached in FY 2014-15.
- Of the businesses reached, 320 received waste assessments and nearly 1,000 implementation activities were provided (more than one implementation activity can be provided to one account).
- A total of 305 services changes were implemented to begin new recycling and/or organics collection programs at businesses reached.
- These service changes resulted in an estimated 16,391 cubic yards or 1,547 tons of new diversion in FY 2014-15. By volume, 55% of the new diversion was single stream recycling and 45% was from food scraps/organics collection. However, since organics weigh significantly more than single stream recyclables, the new diversion was 88% organics and 12% recycling by weight.
- 68% of the businesses reached were contacted after they received an enforcement letter indicating MRO violations, and 32% were reached proactively based on service levels and member agency staff requests. The amount of enforcement letter referrals is up from FY 2013-14 and is expected to be the primary source of businesses reached in FY 2015-16.
- 41% of the businesses reached out to did not utilize our assistance. Of those 41%, approximately 22% informed the assistance representative that they initiated compliance measures on their own and/or directly with their service provider as a result of receiving an enforcement letter. The remaining 19% simply declined our assistance or did not respond to the representative's contact attempts.
- Of the 61 multi-family accounts reached, 26 multi-family properties added new organics and/or recycling service. While the reach to multi-family properties was small compared to business assistance efforts, the pilot helped the Program better understand how to play a role in helping multi-family properties comply with the MRO requirements.
- In collaboration with the Agency's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) team, the technical assistance management and tracking component of the system was restructured to improve efficiency of data entry and to prepare for the use of tablets in the field, which was implemented in Quarter 1 of FY 2015-16.

#### Free Indoor Food Scraps Bin Program

In addition to technical assistance, the StopWaste Business Assistance project offered financial support to businesses by way of indoor organics collection containers valued up to \$500. The Free Indoor Food Scraps Bin Program was implemented in December 2014 in place of the Business Mini-Grant Program

that had been offered since 1997. The previous Business Mini-Grant Program offered grants of \$500 to \$5,000 and historically gave out 10 to 30 mini-grants a year.

The newly-launched Free Food Scraps Bin Program was designed to expand the Agency's reach to businesses in need of indoor organics bins. Businesses complete a simple web-based application at [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/containers](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/containers), and if approved, are given a list of containers to choose from three different partner vendors. StopWaste covers the cost of the order up to \$500, including taxes and shipping costs. These containers are often placed in break rooms, manufacturing floors, or kitchens for staff to effectively separate food scraps and food-soiled paper.

A total of 334 business sites were approved in FY 2014-15 to receive free organics bins. Of the approved applications, 217 businesses ordered equipment prior to their 1 month purchasing deadline. The total value of orders placed is approximately \$75,000 for FY 2014/15. The business assistance representatives reported that this program was an efficient way for them to connect with willing candidates for organics program set-up assistance, as well as for businesses to more comprehensively set up their internal collection infrastructure.

#### Looking Ahead

In FY 2015-16, with nearly a 400% increase in business accounts covered under the Ordinance compared to the prior year, the Business Assistance team will focus almost exclusively on compliance assistance to support businesses that have received enforcement letters or directly requested assistance. Multi-family organics assistance will also be provided to property owners/managers that request implementation assistance. We will continue to offer organics collection equipment to businesses through our Free Indoor Food Scraps Bin Program.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

This report is for information only.