

**Date:** July 17, 2024

**To:** Lauren Duncan and Kevin Reidy, Colorado Water Conservation Board

**From:** Cynthia Koehler and Victoria Arling, WaterNow Alliance

**Subject:** CWCB Water Plan Grant: Conservation and Land Use Planning, Final Report

**Title:** Advancing High Impact Water Efficiency Solutions in Colorado Communities

**Contract Period:** July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

**Period of Work:** July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Water Project Overview	
<b>Name of Grantee:</b>	Multiplier on behalf of its project WaterNow Alliance
<b>Name of Water Project:</b>	Advancing High Impact Water Efficiency Solutions in Colorado Communities
<b>Funding Source:</b>	Colorado Water Plan – Conservation and Land Use Planning
<b>Water Project Overview:</b>	
<p>WaterNow Alliance (WaterNow) received a CWCB Colorado Water Plan – Water Conservation and Land Use grant in July 2023 to build upon and expand three successful WaterNow initiatives that help Colorado communities develop, accelerate, and fund high impact water use efficiency projects—in particular, those that involve integrating water efficiency and land use planning.</p> <p>WaterNow has successfully fulfilled all grant deliverables and stated outcomes over the course of the grant period. This Final Report summarizes the project’s implementation, describes how the project tasks were completed, and shares key findings and lessons learned. This Final Report also describes obstacles encountered, and how they were overcome. It also confirms that all matching commitments have been fulfilled.</p> <p><b>Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator – 100% Complete</b>  <b>Task 2 -WaterSMART Program Outreach &amp; Application Assistance – 100% Complete</b>  <b>Task 3 – Conduct Outreach and Poll Colorado Municipal Water Leaders on State Revolving Loan Financing Opportunities – 100% Complete</b></p> <p>This project included three main objectives and tasks:</p> <p><b>Objective 1:</b> Advance the implementation of innovative, integrated water efficiency and conservation and land use planning projects and policies through direct project assistance to small-to-mid sized Colorado communities.</p> <p>Through this task, WaterNow provided 250 hours of pro bono technical program assistance and capacity to municipal water service providers statewide through our Project Accelerator. <b>(Task 1).</b> The Accelerator supports innovative, outcomes-oriented projects that advance sustainable</p>	

water management and the integration of water efficiency and land use planning. This component of the project included: (a) holding two Project Accelerator rounds during the grant period and selecting at least 4 Colorado communities; (b) providing a range of technical project support and assistance to those communities to plan, develop, and implement their programs; (c) sharing project successes, lessons learned, and associated project resources widely with the broader Colorado water sector to advance the implementation of high impact water efficiency projects throughout the state; and (d) developing a regional cohort of Colorado Accelerator communities to foster opportunities for engagement and a platform to share resources and learnings across communities.

**Objective 2:** Increase the level of federal funding for Colorado communities to scale-up adoption of robust local water efficiency programs through outreach and application support for the WaterSMART program.

WaterNow provided outreach and application support for Colorado cities and utilities in both to navigate and apply for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) WaterSMART grant program (**Task 2**). This component of the project included: (a) conducting outreach and promotional activities with Colorado communities as various WaterSMART funding opportunities became available; (b) providing direct assistance to cities, towns, and other municipal water providers in applying for WaterSMART grants; and (c) facilitating webinars and or presentations with past successful WaterSMART applicants in Colorado to amplify and encourage additional interest in the program.

**Objective 3:** Engage with Colorado communities to increase awareness of and assess the current interest and needs around efforts to apply for Colorado’s State Revolving Fund (SRF) program.

Through this task (**Task 3**), WaterNow: (a) conducted outreach and promotional activities to Colorado communities to make them aware of key deadlines in applying for the SRF program, including the annual SRF eligibility survey; and (b) developed a questionnaire and collaborated with a professional polling firm to conduct a survey examining roadblocks to, awareness of, and resources that could support applicants in leveraging SRF funds to support sustainable water projects. This extensive outreach and polling are informing the development of WaterNow’s ongoing SRF outreach and application assistance program.

## Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator

### Description of Task:

Through the [Project Accelerator](#), WaterNow provides technical program assistance and capacity to Colorado municipal water utilities to support innovative, outcomes-oriented initiatives that advance sustainable and affordable water management and the integration of water efficiency and

### Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator

land use planning. The Accelerator provides 250 hours of *pro bono* assistance to utilities seeking additional capacity and expertise to implement local sustainable water priorities. The Accelerator specifically prioritizes water initiatives designed to advance water equity and support underserved communities. Accelerator projects are driven by the individual communities' goals and can range from legal and policy review, to project design, to data analysis, to communications and outreach, among other forms of assistance.

#### **Deliverables:**

The primary deliverable pursuant to Task 1 is the selection of four Colorado Accelerator projects, including execution of Memoranda of Agreement and project scopes, and completion – or significant progress towards completion of each project – during the grant period. Each of the selected Accelerator Projects involves a set of unique deliverables. Final reports will be complete at the conclusion of each project and include a summary of activities, lessons learned, outcomes, and any supporting documents that were developed for the communities (e.g., ordinances, research memos, outreach materials, presentations, etc.).

#### **Progress Against Performance Measures:**

##### **(a) Hold two Project Accelerator rounds during the grant period to build on the Colorado Regional Accelerator.**

WaterNow held two Project Accelerator rounds over the grant period ([summer 2023](#) and [winter 2024](#)) with one specifically focused for Colorado communities. The Colorado Project Accelerator application round (announced through a [blog post](#), email outreach, and social media posts) was open between January 8 – February 9, 2024. This application cycle generated 13 applications which were almost uniformly strong, and we selected four projects. WaterNow announced the selection of these in March 2024 through a [blog post](#), e-newsletter, and social media materials. More information about the selected projects is available on WaterNow's [website](#).

For the application cycle, WaterNow executed widespread outreach for the Accelerator through email campaigns, social media, webinars, partner engagement, and one-on-one calls with utility and municipal partners to discuss specific project ideas. We utilized our extensive database of approximately 1,000 Colorado water utility contacts to support this outreach.

We anticipate launching an additional Colorado project in the late summer/early fall of 2024, as part of our upcoming 2024-2025 Water Plan Grant. WaterNow's next Colorado- focused Project Accelerator application cycle will also launch in winter 2025 with select projects launching later that spring.

##### **(b) Provide technical project support and assistance to at least 4 Colorado communities over the course of the grant period to implement their sustainable water priorities.**

### Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator

WaterNow successfully provided technical assistance to 4 communities to support sustainable water projects as detailed below.

- **Colorado Springs Utilities, CO: Landscape Industry Plan for Water Conservation**

WaterNow is collaborating with Colorado Springs Utilities to develop a landscape industry education plan for water conservation. This project will ultimately determine educational content, resources, and program requirements needed to implement a comprehensive landscape industry education program. Colorado Springs Utilities serves nearly half a million customers along the Front Range of Colorado drawing from diverse water resources, including the high mountain watersheds of the Colorado River. This project will establish regional and statewide stakeholder groups to develop training objectives for a Colorado landscape industry education program tailored to the needs of on-the-ground professionals. WaterNow will bring together cross-professional stakeholders from the landscape, water, and educational sectors for two full-day regional workshops. These workshops will be facilitated and aim to define outcomes, benefits, and unified objectives, recognizing the diverse perspectives and skills needed for effective water resource management and sustainable urban landscape solutions in Colorado. The workshops, subject matter expert meetings, and review of existing landscaper certification programs will all support our ability to pinpoint both gaps and strengths in landscaper education resources. By harnessing diverse perspectives and expertise, the project will produce a collective vision for water conservation and landscape sustainability, catalyzing positive change statewide. This project launched in May and is expected to be finalized by December 2025, and the project brief is available [here](#).

- **Commerce City and South Adams County Water & Sanitation District, CO: Aligning Water Management and Non-Functional Turf Replacement: A Collaborative Framework**

WaterNow is partnering with the City of Commerce City (C3) and South Adams County Water & Sanitation District (SACWSD) to develop a residential non-functional turf replacement incentive program. Effective water resource management and resiliency planning are of utmost importance to C3 and SACWSD, and findings ways to align their policies, programs, and water efficiency goals is key to safeguarding water supply in the community. C3 and SACWSD are working together to address future water challenges including the rapid growth of their customer base and equivalent residential units, increased temperatures, and unpredictable precipitation patterns. SACWSD provides essential potable, irrigation and augmentation water, and wastewater treatment services to over 68,000 customers in C3 and parts of unincorporated Adams County. The City is updating its Land Development Code this year, which includes land and xeriscaping design standards. To complement these code updates, and recognizing a growing local interest in waterwise landscaping, the City and SACWSD seek to collaborate on developing a non-functional turf replacement program and incentives for their residents. WaterNow will work with C3 and SACWSD

### Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator

on five foundational tasks: (1) evaluate existing water conservation programs and policies; (2) facilitate team meetings; (3) research viable non-functional turf replacement and demand-side management program options; (4) engage with partners and the community for input; and (5) develop a roadmap and communication plan to support program implementation. This project launched in June and is expected to be finalized by April 2025, and the project brief is available [here](#).

- **Town of Erie, CO: Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance Development Program**

WaterNow and Western Resource Advocates (WRA) are supporting Erie in creating a water efficient landscape ordinance to reduce outdoor water demand in new development and redevelopment while enhancing community aesthetics and environmental values. This ordinance will ensure that local water supply is more resilient in the face of drought, climate change, and population growth. Erie is a mid-sized community of 37,000 located north of Denver with escalating water demand due in part to rapid population growth (currently 5.7% annually). To address this challenge, the Town's 2021 Water Conservation Plan establishes a "10 in 10" goal to reduce overall water usage by 10% within ten years, with a target goal of 115 gallons per capita per day (gpcd). The Town has identified the development and adoption of a comprehensive water efficient landscaping ordinance as a crucial strategy to meet this goal and to ensure sustainable development in the face of environmental challenges. While Erie is already investing in replacing existing cool season turfgrass with drought resistant landscaping, it does not have robust code requirements related to water efficient landscaping. The Town is also motivated to establish landscaping standards that promote ecosystem diversity, enhance local community members' quality of life, and produce result in long-term cost savings. The project's timing is opportune as it will enable the Town to align its landscaping standards with new Colorado statute (SB24-005) that limits the installation of non-functional turf, artificial turf, and invasive plant species on non-residential properties. WaterNow and WRA will work with Erie to develop the ordinance based on our research on models and best practices from other communities. We will also conduct outreach and gather feedback from key stakeholders and community members on the draft ordinance, and support Erie throughout the town council approval process. This project is expected to be finalized by January 2025, and the project brief is available [here](#).

- **City of Fountain, CO: CII Turf Conversion Incentive Program (TCIP)**

WaterNow is partnering with the City of Fountain to develop a CII Turf Conversion Incentive Program (CII TCIP). This program will encourage the conversion of high-water turf commercial, industrial and institutional (CII) properties across the City to low water landscaping. The program is designed to advance water conservation in Fountain and also foster inclusivity by tailoring support to low-income and hard-to-reach commercial customers, specifically multi-family properties and mobile home park residents (who are classified as commercial accounts in Fountain's CII billing

### Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator

database). The City estimates that approximately 40% of its potable water supply is used outdoors and that a CII program can help to alleviate pressure on supplies. WaterNow will explore CII turf conversion programs in Colorado and the Western US to identify best practices, success stories, lessons learned and gather data to inform development of the Fountain program proposal. The project will include a substantial outreach element to ensure participation and feedback from local stakeholders. The ultimate deliverables will be development of a pilot program and recommendations to track program success. We will also identify external funding avenues to sustain the CII TCIP program into the future. This is expected to be finalized by January 2025, and the project brief is available [here](#).

In addition to the 4 Colorado Accelerator projects described above, WaterNow completed the following Colorado Accelerator projects over the grant period. These include:

- [City and County of Broomfield, CO](#): Development of a Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance
- [Eagle River Coalition and Eagle County Conservation District](#): Beyond Lawn Water Efficient Landscape Conversion Program

Additionally, by the end of this summer, the following two projects will be completed, and public-facing resources will be added to the Project Accelerator Library shortly thereafter.

- [The City of Thornton, CO](#): Commercial Water Usage Benchmark Development
- [The City of Longmont, CO](#): Impact Analysis and Goal Development of a Non-Functional Turf Conversion Program

Project deliverables, including project summary case studies, are available on our [website](#).

**(c) Share successes, lessons learned, and associated project resources widely with the Colorado water community to advance implementation of high impact water efficiency projects throughout the State.**

WaterNow has successfully completed this task. We have amplified and shared the successful outcomes, lessons and resources developed through the Colorado Accelerator projects through a concerted program of outreach through blogs, final project report postings, news articles, webinars, one-on-one engagements, conferences, meetings, and other presentation opportunities.

- Findings from the Project Accelerator Library, including from past Colorado Accelerator projects – were shared to demonstrate the role water efficiency can help in enhancing affordability, as part of a WaterNow Webinar on “Making the Case for Affordability: Tools for Fiscal Health and Keeping Rates Affordable” (the presentation slides are available [here](#) and the recording is available [here](#)).



### Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator

- Findings from the Steamboat Springs Funding and Financing Roadmap and WaterNow's WaterSMART Grant Support program were shared at a presentation at the Colorado WaterWise Symposium (October 22, 2023) (slides from the presentation are available [here](#)).
- A presentation on "A Tale of Two Toilet Rebate Programs" at the Alliance for Water Efficiency's 2023 Water Efficiency & Conservation Symposium, in August 2023. The presentation drew on findings from two Accelerator projects, including the *Direct Install Program for Income-Qualified Residents and Indoor Water Efficiency Audits* project in Evans, Colorado, and focused on existing practices, common barriers, and innovative approaches found across utilities offering toilet rebates. Slides from the presentation are available [here](#).
- A panel discussion, in partnership with Western Resource Advocates, on the topic of "Outdoor Water Use & Landscapes: Dive into the Issues & Policies," also at the Alliance for Water Efficiency's 2023 Water Efficiency & Conservation Symposium, in August 2023. The panel facilitated a discussion around innovative approaches to transform non-functional, high-water-use turf grass landscapes into vibrant and thriving water wise landscapes in communities across the Western US.
- A presentation on "A Model for Reducing Outdoor Water Demand in the Intermountain West: Two Community Case Studies," at the 2023 WaterSmart Innovations Conference in October 2023. The presentation shared key take-aways from two Accelerator projects with the City of Moab, Utah and with the Ruedi Water and Power Authority (RWAPA) in Colorado, regarding their water wise code development efforts. Slides from the presentation are available [here](#).
- WaterNow is a key partner on the [Water Wise Development Coalition](#), a group led by the Urban Land Institute that convenes land use and real estate professionals with policymakers to advance water-smart real estate development and supportive policies. WaterNow organizes and participates in quarterly meetings with the coalition.

WaterNow is also planning to hold webinars / participate in presentations, that both share out the lessons of past projects and create opportunities for interested communities to discuss these topics in greater detail, during the winter and spring of 2024. We were accepted to present at these upcoming events:

- A presentation on "*CII Water Use Benchmarking in Thornton, CO: An Approachable Blueprint for Replication in Utilities*" at the Alliance for Water Efficiency's 2024 Water Conservation Symposium in August 2024. The presentation will provide step-by-step details

## Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator

about our process to develop CII water use benchmarks to best fit Thornton’s unique local context, and share project findings and key strategies that other utilities can replicate and adopt in similar efforts. The accepted abstract is available [here](#).

- A presentation on “*A Tale of Two Turf Replacement Initiatives: Insights and Success Stories from Longmont and Eagle County, CO*” at the Water Smart Innovations Conference in September 2024. This presentation will share key findings and outcomes from both the Longmont and Eagle County Project Accelerators, focused on non-functional turf removal programs. The accepted abstract is available [here](#).

### **(d) Develop a regional cohort of Accelerator communities.**

WaterNow has grown the regional cohort of Colorado water leaders working to implement water use efficiency and integrated planning strategies. Resources generated from completed Accelerator projects in Colorado, including case studies, reports, data tracking tools, outreach and communication collateral, and example ordinances, have been made freely available on WaterNow’s [Project Accelerator website](#). This growing “Project Accelerator Library” now supports communities in advancing water use efficiency and integrated planning strategies from many different angles, from crafting water efficient landscape conversion programs to developing water efficient landscape ordinances or coordinated regional outdoor watering standard resources. More details on these resources are listed below:

- Resources from the Eagle County project to develop the Beyond Land water efficient landscape conversion program, including: a project summary, the Beyond Lawn website with a plethora of resources developed in partnership with the Eagle River Coalition and Eagle County Conservation District, and a benefits of turf conversion database (available [here](#)).
- Resources from the City and County of Broomfield project to develop a water efficient landscape ordinance and associated community and stakeholder outreach, including: a project summary, a Landscape Ordinance Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet, and a Landscape Code Explainer for developers (available [here](#)).
- A toolkit for comprehensive water efficiency communications in Wellington, CO (available [here](#)), along with a project summary.
- Unified outdoor watering standard resources, including a project summary and proposed outdoor watering standards for the Roaring Fork Watershed (available [here](#)).
- Resources from a project with Steamboat Springs, CO, to support Colorado communities navigating federal funding and financing opportunities, including guidance on prioritizing and pairing water projects with federal dollars. Available resources include: a project summary, a short explainer on aligning federal funding with water projects, a robust



### Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator

template of community projects and funding opportunities, and a detailed report on funding and financing opportunities for Colorado communities (available [here](#)).

- Resources and updates to past projects included a new project summary, describing how the City of Centennial has incorporated recommend updates to the City’s Land Development Code, with a goal of increasing community resilience related to water supply and stormwater management (available [here](#)); as well as resources related to scoping an incentive program to improve water use efficiency in newly constructed homes in [Thornton, CO](#) (available [here](#)). New resources related to Exploring Options to Improve Water Efficiency Standards in Utah’s Jordan Valley Water Conservation District (available [here](#)), and to develop a new landscape ordinance in Moab, Utah (available [here](#)), may also be useful to water conservation efforts in Colorado communities.
- Regular newsletters sharing these and other resources with WaterNow’s Colorado contacts were sent in August 2023 ([here](#)), December 2023 ([here](#)), and April 2024 ([here](#)).

Additional resources will continue to be added to the Project Accelerator Library on our [website](#) and [Community Case Study Map](#) over the coming months, and on a rolling basis as projects are completed.

### Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance

#### Description of Task:

WaterNow’s outreach and application support for the federal WaterSMART program provides outreach and related capacity to help at least 15 -20 Colorado communities apply for federal funding for water efficiency solutions including, but not limited to: advanced metering infrastructure (AMI), turf replacement rebates, irrigation efficiency incentives, graywater and rainwater reuse programs, innovative efficiency pilot programs, water efficiency plans, drought contingency plans, conservation-oriented water budgets, among other strategies. WaterNow has been expanding our WaterSMART outreach and application support initiative in Colorado with an emphasis to serving small-to-mid sized or under-resourced communities with limited resources to submit grant applications.

#### WaterNow Deliverables:

WaterNow’s primary deliverables pursuant to Task 2 included: (1) provision of outreach and promotional activities regarding WaterSMART funding opportunities with over 200 Colorado communities/organizations; (2) engagement with 53 cities, towns, and other municipal water providers or organizations in Colorado interested in applying for WaterSMART funding, 40 of which received direct technical assistance; and (3) completion of two informational webinars on

## Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance

WaterSMART support and with past successful WaterSMART applicants during the CWCB grant period. We have identified below our activities and lessons learned, including key metrics, for this Task. This report includes relevant outreach and application support materials such as: PowerPoint slides and recordings, blog entries, website updates, research conducted on behalf of applicants, and links to full grant applications we provided in-depth support on (if available, Table 3).

In sum, the WaterSMART Outreach and Application Assistance program exceeded its goals. WaterNow conducted 23 outreach campaigns, paired with 7 WaterSMART funding opportunities, reaching nearly 1,000 water leaders, managers, and staff across approximately 200 Colorado communities. We engaged in various forms with 53 of these communities and provided direct technical assistance to 40 communities by holding meetings to discuss projects and grant options, sharing templates, answering questions via email, and more. Of the 40 Colorado communities we assisted, we provided in-depth support (application reviews and letters of support) to 10 communities (11 applications), 5 of which were successful and 3 of which are pending.

With support from WaterNow, those 5 successful Colorado communities leveraged a total of **\$3,969,055** in funding, securing **\$2,294,068** in WaterSMART funding (funding details enumerated below in Table 3). These projects will increase water use efficiency, reduce overall water demand locally and regionally, restore fish passage and provide additional water for agricultural, recreational, and ecological needs, showcase water efficient landscaping, increase water supply resiliency, build capacity and outreach, locate and develop priority watershed projects and mitigate wildfire hazards. The projects will save over 730 acre-feet of water per year (AFY).

### Progress Against Performance Measures:

#### **(a) Conduct outreach and promotional activities with Colorado communities as WaterSMART funding opportunities become available.**

Over the course of the grant period, WaterNow successfully conducted extensive outreach to promote the USBR WaterSMART funding opportunities through email campaigns (14), social media posts (16), informational webinars (2), blog posts (2), and partner outreach. Specifically, WaterNow promoted seven separate USBR WaterSMART funding opportunities: Water and Energy Efficiency Grants (WEEG), Environmental Water Resources Projects (EWRP), the new Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects (AERP), Drought Resiliency Projects (DRP), Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects (SWEP), Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP), and Planning and Project Design Grants (PPDG) (see

Table 1).

## Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance

WaterNow's outreach campaigns targeted nearly 1,000 water leaders, managers, and staff representing approximately 200 communities throughout the state of Colorado. Through these efforts, WaterNow further engaged with 53 cities, water districts, organizations with water or power delivery authority, or consultants/non-profits that expressed interest in one or more WaterSMART grant opportunities and WaterNow's support services.

As shown in

Table 1, WaterNow developed and updated our website content and corresponding fact sheets for each of the funding opportunity announcements included below. Additionally, WaterNow posted two blogs (September blog on open WaterSMART grants [here](#), and June blog recapping our May WaterSMART webinar [here](#)), and made extensive updates to our [website](#) about our Grant Application Assistance & Help Desk Program. Additionally, WaterNow promoted our program through numerous social media posts on both LinkedIn (see examples [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) and Twitter. Additionally, WaterNow conducted 14 email campaigns to our Colorado member base to promote these WaterSMART opportunities and share about our support services. WaterNow also hosted two informational webinars (more details below under Task 2.3) and featured WaterSMART funding support opportunities in our [monthly newsletter](#).

*Table 1. WaterSMART Grants that WaterNow Supported During the CWCB Grant Period*

WaterSMART Program	Opportunity	Fiscal Year	Post Date	Close Date	Link to Funding Opportunity	WNA Developed Content
WaterSMART Grants	Water and Energy Efficiency Grants	FY24 / FY25	11/14/23	10/30/24	<a href="#">WEEG</a>	<a href="#">Website Fact Sheet</a>
	Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects	FY23/ FY24	3/14/23	1/24/24	<a href="#">AERP</a>	<a href="#">Website Fact Sheet</a>
	Environmental Water Resources Projects	FY24/ FY25	4/18/24	3/28/23	<a href="#">EWRP</a>	<a href="#">Website Fact Sheet</a>
	Cooperative Watershed Management Program	FY23/ FY24	8/3/23	9/3/24	<a href="#">CWMP</a>	<a href="#">Website Fact Sheet</a>

## Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance

	Planning and Project Design Grants	FY23/ FY24	8/7/23	5/23/24	<a href="#">PPDG</a>	<a href="#">Website Fact Sheet</a>
	Drought Resiliency Program	FY24	8/7/23	11/7/23	<a href="#">DRP</a>	<a href="#">Website Fact Sheet</a>
	Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects	FY24/ FY25	11/2/23	7/8/25	<a href="#">SWEP</a>	<a href="#">Website Fact Sheet</a>

In addition to specific WaterSMART funding opportunity outreach, we [conducted a survey](#) with Colorado communities to gather feedback on our WaterSMART Grant Application Support & Help Desk services. The survey was designed to gather information on local perceptions about which modes of assistance have been most constructive, and what additions to our scope of work, if any, would be most helpful to expand upon in the future. The survey was widely disseminated by various means. For example, we included the survey link in our regularly scheduled WaterSMART outreach emails (for various funding opportunities), in a LinkedIn social media post, promoted through a webinar, and through direct outreach to Colorado communities we've recently supported with WaterSMART applications.

We developed a [survey report](#) that summarizes the results of the survey, which was completed by 21 people (1 of which was from Texas and did not respond to the questions and was thus excluded from the analysis). Overall, the respondents are happy with the program (92% of respondents who had received our support in the past were satisfied with the overall program, and 80% of respondents would share the program with other water providers in their region).

The survey results reveal several key insights into the challenges faced by communities, the effectiveness of WaterNow's support services, and opportunities for improvement. A significant portion of respondents, particularly from small or under-resourced communities, cited numerous barriers in applying for WaterSMART grants. These include difficulties in securing matching funds, limited staffing for grant management, and challenges with grant writing capacity and time constraints. Specific issues like eligibility discrepancies and the complexity of calculating savings further complicate the application process for these organizations.

The most helpful aspects of WaterNow's Grant Application Support & Help Desk were highlighted as personalized one-on-one calls, detailed application reviews, and the provision of application templates. Respondents appreciated the guidance tailored to their organizational needs, timely

## Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance

assistance in navigating the application process, and clear communication from the support team. Despite positive feedback, areas for program improvement were identified, such as enhancing timeliness in support services, providing additional grant writing assistance, and offering webinars featuring successful applicants to share insights. WaterNow will focus on the following improvements over the next year to enhance the program based on feedback directly from Colorado communities:

- Improve timeliness of support services (i.e., be even more transparent about the amount of time it takes for our team to review WaterSMART grant applications).
- Provide additional assistance in grant writing (i.e., develop and continuously update a list of grant writers to direct communities to).
- Offer educational webinars and panels (i.e., continue offering webinars that are geared towards sharing success stories and tips, like our most recent webinar in May).
- Ensure clarity and completeness of application materials when reviewing applications, including page limit warnings and referencing application checklists.
- Increase website usage (i.e., determine methods to increase awareness and use of our WaterSMART Grant Application Support & Help Desk website).
- Assistance with grant management (i.e., determine ways in which this program could potentially support communities post-application in the implementation and administering funds stages of their project).

Overall, while satisfaction with WaterNow's support is generally positive among those who have engaged with it, there remains a need for targeted improvements to better assist small communities and streamline the grant application process. Continued efforts in these areas will further enhance accessibility and effectiveness, potentially increasing the success rate of grant applications and fostering broader participation in water conservation initiatives. To learn more about the survey results, see the report [here](#).

### **(b) Provide direct assistance to at least 15-20 cities, towns, and other municipal water providers interested in applying for WaterSMART funding.**

WaterNow exceeded the goal set forth in the 2022 proposal of providing direct assistance to 15 – 20 communities applying for WaterSMART funding. Over the course of the grant period, WaterNow directly engaged with 53 communities or organizations and provided direct assistance to 40 Colorado communities (see Table 2). Such support included, but was not limited to: researching applicant questions and compiling research on applicable successful relevant projects (see example [here](#)), strategizing a competitive application, providing data support on quantifying projected water savings (see example [here](#)), connecting applicants with USBR staff, developing and providing application templates (see example [here](#)), and more.

## Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance

Over the course of the grant period, WaterNow has supported Colorado communities leverage \$2,294,068 in USBR funds for projects totaling \$3,969,055. The awarded Colorado projects from this grant period are expected to save over 730 acre-feet of water per year and replace up to 20,000 square of turf per year with drought tolerant landscaping. Over the lift of this program, WaterNow has supported dozens of Colorado communities navigating the WaterSMART application process resulting in 18 successful applications with over \$9 million in USBR funding, totaling to over \$26 million in total project cost for sustainable water projects and over 6,000 acre-feet of water saved annually.

*Table 2. CO Communities Supported During the CWCB Grant Period*

Community/Entity	Community/Entity
City and County of Broomfield	Pueblo West Metropolitan District
City of Aspen	Region 10*
City of Fruita	Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project
City of Greeley	The Fairways at Pole Creek, HOA Community
City of Greeley Water and Sewer	Town of Berthoud
City of Gunnison	Town of Breckenridge
City of Longmont	Town of Eagle (Yearout Energy*)
City of Loveland	Town of Erie
Clearfield City	Town of Firestone
Colorado Water Conservation Board	Town of Frederick
Costilla County Conservation District	Town of Grand Lake
Dominion Water & Sanitation District	Town of Hudson
Friends of the River Uncompahgre (ForU)	Town of Kremmling
Highlands Lake Water District	Town of Palisade
Highpointe Vista Metropolitan District	Town of Ridgway
JVA, Inc.*	Town of Superior
Lefthand Watershed Oversight Group* (DBA The Watershed Center)	Town of Telluride
Mesa Conservation District	Town of Windsor
Middle Park Water Conservancy District	Town of Wellington
Pueblo Area Council of Governments	University of Northern Colorado

\* We've included consulting agencies WaterNow engaged with who wrote WaterSMART grant applications on behalf of Colorado communities.



## Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance

Additionally, of those 40 communities, we supported 10 Colorado communities (11 applications) by providing an in-depth and detailed review of their respective grant applications or a detailed [letter of support](#) (see Table 3). One community was awarded the Environmental Water Resources Projects grant in January of 2023, two communities were awarded the Planning and Project Design Grants in April 2024, one community was selected for Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects grants in May 2024, and one community was awarded the Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant in July 2024 (see Table 3). These successful EWRP, PPDG, SWEP, and CWMP projects support the goals contained in Colorado's Water Plan and will provide multiple benefits including, but not limited to increase water use efficiency, reduce overall water demand locally and regionally, restore fish passage and provide additional water for agricultural, recreational, and ecological needs, increase outreach and locate watershed projects, showcase water efficient landscaping, increase water supply resiliency, and mitigate wildfire hazards.

Awards for 3 of the above WaterSMART grant applications we've supported will not be announced until mid-late 2024. One community did not end up applying, but will apply in a future round (see Table 3).

*Table 3. CO Communities That Received In-Depth Application Support From WaterNow*

Applicant	Project Title	Funding Opportunity	Reclamation Funding	Total Project Cost	Link to USBR Announcement
Rio Grande Headwaters*	Farmers Union Multi-Benefit Diversion Infrastructure Improvement Project	FY23 EWRP	\$1,274,625	\$2,214,625	<a href="#">FY23 EWRP</a>
Mesa Conservation District	Grand Valley Water Committee: Watershed Group Outreach and Education, Prioritizing, Locating and Developing Watershed Projects	FY23 CWMP	\$300,000	\$300,000	<a href="#">FY23 CWMP</a>
Dominion Water & Sanitation District	Sterling Gulch Regional Rainwater Harvesting Project	FY24 DRP	\$1,248,497	\$2,496,993	Not awarded
City of Gunnison	City of Gunnison Water Treatment Plant Design	FY23 PPDG	\$400,000	\$800,000	<a href="#">FY23 PPDG</a>
Town of Paonia	Watershed and Water System Strategy Plans for Resiliency in the Face of Change	FY23 PPDG	\$250,000	\$500,113	<a href="#">FY23 PPDG</a>

### Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance

Town of Telluride	Raw Water Protection and Distribution System Management	FY24 PPDG	\$275,587	\$275,587	Not awarded
Town of Erie	Lawrence A. Wurl Service Center Turf Replacement Project	FY24 SWEP	\$69,443	\$154,317	<a href="#">FY24 SWEP</a>
Rio Grande Headwaters	Rio Grande 'Teacup' River and Flood Irrigation Restoration Project – Planning and Design	FY24 PPDG	\$339,366	\$481,866	<i>Announcement Expected October 2024</i>
Middle Park Water Conservancy District	Ron Jones Project	FY24 PPDG	<i>TBD</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>Waiting for next application cycle</i>
Town of Grand Lake	Town of Grand Lake Stormwater Management Project Implementation	FY24 EWRP	\$3,695,025.45	\$4,926,700	<i>Announcement Expected November 2024</i>
City of Longmont	Implementing a Nature-Based Solution for Temperature Treatment of Wastewater Effluent	FY24 EWRP	\$2,348,447.25	\$3,131,263	<i>Announcement Expected November 2024</i>

\*Support occurred during the previous grant period, with award announcement under the most recent grant period.

#### (c) Facilitate 2 follow-up webinars or presentations with past successful WaterSMART applicants in Colorado.

In October, WaterNow organized and participated in a panel presentation at Colorado WaterWise 2023 Water Conservation Symposium in Denver, Colorado. The presentation featured communities that have received local, state, or federal funding to support their water projects and resources for communities looking to pursue those types of funds. WaterNow presented on both the [Steamboat Springs Project Accelerator](#) – which included resources on how communities can match their water infrastructure projects with federal funding opportunities – and [WaterNow's WaterSMART Grant Support and Help Desk](#) – which includes a suite of pro-bono offerings available to Colorado communities to help them navigate and apply for WaterSMART grants. The panel presentation also featured Justin Montes of Aurora Water who spoke to their recently awarded WaterSMART Drought Resiliency Projects (DRP) grant, which expands capacity at their Prairie Waters project. Over 130 participants attended the presentation (slides are available [here](#)).

WaterNow hosted a Webinar, “Unlocking WaterSMART Funding: Insights and Success Stories from Colorado Communities”, on May 29, 2024 focused on sharing feedback from Colorado communities who have successfully received funding from U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)

## Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance

WaterSMART program. Panelists from three western slope communities/organizations shared about their projects, experiences applying for the grant, and lessons learned when implementing their projects.

- City of Aspen shared about their [2021 SWEF project](#)
- Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project shared about their [2023 EWRP project](#)
- City of Alamosa shared about their [2023 WEEG project](#)

WaterNow worked with each community through the WaterSMART Grant Application Support & Help Desk. The panelists shared critical tips and advice to participants interested in applying for WaterSMART funding, and WaterNow shared details our support. You can read a blog post summarizing the webinar [here](#), and access the recording/slides [here](#).

Additionally, WaterNow presented about our WaterSMART Grant Application Support & Help Desk program at the following external webinars and/or meetings:

- [Colorado Regional Grant Navigator](#) monthly meeting on February 27, 2024
- [Colorado Region 10 Regional Grant Navigator](#) monthly meeting on March 29, 2024
- [Department of Local Affairs Pathways to Recovery & Resiliency Funding](#) webinar on April 17, 2024

## Task 3 – Conduct Outreach and Poll Colorado Municipal Water Leaders on State Revolving Fund Loan Financing Opportunities

### Description of Task:

WaterNow worked with a professional polling firm to conduct a survey of city and utility leader respondents that explores how to most effectively connect Colorado communities with State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan opportunities and related resources for financing distributed water infrastructure. This exercise provides a more complete picture of what Colorado's utility and municipal leaders know (and don't know) about the SRF program, and their attitudes towards SRF funding, and perceived and actual barriers to pursuing project funding through Colorado's SRFs. The survey is intended to support a next phase of support for Colorado communities in accessing federal/state financial support for water projects through the Colorado SRF, similar to WaterNow's ongoing work on the WaterSMART grant portfolio.

### Deliverables:

WaterNow's primary deliverable is the survey itself as well as a full analysis of the results. The survey is intended ultimately inform WaterNow's future SRF application outreach and assistance support programming. WaterNow will also share a written summary that describes all relevant outreach and application support materials, including but not limited to: email content, blog entries, and research conducted on behalf of applicants (if available).

### Task 3 – Conduct Outreach and Poll Colorado Municipal Water Leaders on State Revolving Fund Loan Financing Opportunities

#### Progress Against Performance Measures:

##### **(a) Conduct outreach and promotional activities with Colorado ahead of the SRF eligibility survey.**

WaterNow has completed this task successfully. The survey was provided to just over 1000 Colorado entities eligible for support from the state’s Drinking Water Revolving Fund (DWRF) and/or Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund (WPCRF). Outreach included numerous email campaigns, social media posts, website updates, and direct communications regarding key deadlines in applying for the SRF program (including the annual Colorado SRF eligibility survey) and the WaterNow developed survey (described in Task 3b, below). In addition to general program information, outreach content was tailored to disadvantaged communities (DACs) to highlight unique SRF components such as reduced interest rates, principal forgiveness, design and engineering grants, extended loan terms, and/or additional subsidies.

Additionally, WaterNow presented about our upcoming pro-bono SRF technical assistance support program at the following external webinars and/or meetings:

- [Colorado Region 10 Regional Grant Navigator](#) monthly meeting on March 29, 2024
- [Department of Local Affairs Pathways to Recovery & Resiliency Funding](#) webinar on April 17, 2024
- [WaterNow Alliance Water Webinar Wednesday](#) on May 29, 2024.

##### **(b) Create and administer a polling questionnaire that will be developed by WaterNow, in partnership with a subcontracted professional polling firm, and with input from Colorado State Revolving Fund (SRF) administrators.**

This task was completed successfully. As indicated above, WaterNow engaged with professional polling firm FM3 to conduct the survey in Fall 2023. WaterNow and FM3 collaborated on developing the poll questions in order to survey Colorado city and utility leaders regarding their awareness of the SRF opportunities, their views on roadblocks to applying for these funds, and the resources they would ideally need through a support program, as SRF applicants.

The survey was conducted online (via email and phone notifications) from September 12 – October 19, 2023, and collected 52 responses, which FM3 determined were statistically significant. The survey included 20 questions and was designed to take about 15 – 20 minutes to complete. Key takeaways from the poll include the following:

### Task 3 – Conduct Outreach and Poll Colorado Municipal Water Leaders on State Revolving Fund Loan Financing Opportunities

- **Respondents:** Survey respondents primarily consisted of utility staff, city council members, public works directors, general managers and CEOs, engineers, environmental compliance managers, and more (i.e., stormwater managers, board members, planners, and other).
  - Respondents worked on projects including water conservation initiatives, drinking water infrastructure, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management.
- **Inclusion of green or water conservation elements in projects:** Priority water projects of respondents included outdoor water use efficiency, indoor water use efficiency, green stormwater infrastructure, and onsite water reuse.
- **Familiarity with the SRF Program:** Few survey respondents were “very familiar” with the SRF program, and almost half were not familiar with the SRF program.
  - Respondents recall hearing about the SRF program primarily through emails, newsletters, and press releases.
- **Participation in SRF Program:** Less than 25% of survey respondents have worked on a project funded through the SRF program.
- **Interest in Applying for SRF Funds:** Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they were “very interested” in applying for SRF funds to support water projects.
- **Obstacles to Applying:** Respondents reported facing multiple barriers, including lack of staff time needed to plan and apply, lack of knowledge about the program, and lack of information about the benefits.
- **Needed Tools and Resources:** The most helpful forms of support identified are precisely the type of technical assistance that WaterNow specializes in providing:
  - Personalized step-by-step guidance;
  - Tailored feedback on proposed projects and application materials;
  - Ongoing support beyond initial application; and
  - Application checklists.
- **Preferred information channels:** Respondents would most likely participate in webinars or in-person events (i.e., workshops or presentations) to learn about SRF program requirements and avenues of support.

More details on the survey questions and responses are available in the document [here](#) and presentation [here](#).

The results of this survey were used to design and launch WaterNow’s new pro-bono SRF application assistance program, awarded under our new 2024 – 2025 CWCB Grant.

## Obstacles and How Obstacles Were Overcome

### **Task 1 – Project Accelerator / Colorado Regional Accelerator**

WaterNow’s Project Accelerator has gained significant popularity over the last four years resulting in many qualified applicants during the application cycles. This success has also presented challenges as we are unable to select all deserving projects each round due to limited staff capacity to implement the projects. We are addressing this by: (1) seeking to raise additional financial resources to bring on more staff and partner capacity; and (2) working with applicants who were not initially selected by the Accelerator on project timing and rollout to provide the requested support within resource availability. In this regard, WaterNow was able to bring on an additional program manager in June 2024 to support on the initiatives supported by this grant and our new CWCB grant for 2024-2025. This will bolster our capacity to manage and support our expanding portfolio of projects, ensuring we can continue to meet the growing needs and sustain the momentum of our initiatives in Colorado.

### **Task 2 - WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance**

The WaterSMART Program Outreach & Application Assistance initiative has been crucial in helping Colorado communities learn about and apply for WaterSMART grants. However, some of the communities we work with have trouble getting their grant application drafts to WaterNow at an early enough point in the process, which can lead to a more rushed effort than ideal for us to review and provide feedback prior to the submission deadline. This situation puts pressure on both our team and the applicants, potentially compromising the quality of the final submissions. To mitigate this, we have enhanced our communications on the importance of early submission and will be implementing stricter guidelines to ensure compliance with our agreed upon schedules.

### **Task 3– Conduct Outreach and Poll Colorado Municipal Water Leaders on State Revolving Fund Loan Financing Opportunities**

Our initial goal in conducting the survey was to collect 200 responses, but as is often the case, we encountered challenges engaging municipal leaders who have demanding schedules and limited time to participate in surveys. To address this, we made special efforts to update and expand our initial contact list and also introduced an incentive (i.e., \$5 Starbucks Gift Card) to encourage participation in the survey, which resulted in an increase in responses. Despite these considerable efforts, we ultimately received 52 responses, which, although below our target, were determined to be statistically significant by FM3. Moving forward in future polling efforts, we plan to enhance our engagement strategies, including optimizing survey length and timing, and exploring additional incentives to achieve higher response rates.

## Matching Commitments

WaterNow has met its matching commitment. Staff time valued at \$184,720.00, and funded from other sources, was devoted to the project in excess of billed services.



## Summary

WaterNow successfully fulfilled all grant deliverables and stated outcomes over the course of the grant.