



INTEROFFICE MEMO

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD
EMPLOYEE, CUSTOMER & COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION

Rely on us.

TO: Commissioners Brown, Cunningham, Cassidy, Ernst and Farmer
FROM: Wendi K. Schultz-Kerns, Cash Accounting Supervisor
Mark Freeman, Customer Service Manager
DATE: February 18, 2010
SUBJECT: Customer Care Programs – Service Evaluation Committee

Issue Statement

On January 5, 2010, the Board approved a three-year Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Lane County Human Services Commission (HSC) for their coordination and execution of EWEB's assistance programs. The Board also requested staff to outline an action plan to evaluate the benefits of administering these programs in-house in lieu of continuing to contract these services outside.

Background

EWEB staff best describes our Customer Care Programs in two categories; one is an assistance program; EWEB Customer Care (ECC), and the other is an education program; EWEB Customer Care Plus (ECCP). Both programs are funded annually by the Board approved budget and voluntary public donations.

ECC is an income eligible assistance program which currently offers \$300 assistance once during the Program Year, Oct. 1st through Sept. 30th. Intake appointments are conducted by HSC and their sub-agents located throughout the community; Saint Vincent DePaul, Catholic Community Services of Springfield, and Celeste Campbell Senior Center. EWEB serves approximately 3500-4500 households annually with ECC.

ECCP is an income eligible education program which contains a "menu of services" designed to meet the varied needs of our customers. Intakes are conducted by HSC. EWEB serves up to 1,000 households annually. Upon enrollment, customers are assigned a HSC Energy Advocate who works directly with the household throughout the annual enrollment period to help them achieve energy conservation and improved payment behavior. The program offers budget counseling, energy conservation kits, appliances, and educational activities that the customer can complete to receive credit toward their EWEB bills. Each household can receive up to \$350 of incentives during their annual enrollment period in addition to any ECC assistance they may receive.

Discussion

Customer Service Supervisory Staff has discussed how to establish a committee that brings a diverse set of perspectives together from inside and outside of customer service to review the current contract work. Staff recommends that we convene a group this summer and have a series of discussions to define the scope of the project and resources required for successful completion.

Some key drivers for consideration will include:

- Staffing
 - Intake
 - Energy educators
 - Administration
 - Bi-lingual customer services
- Customer Access / Intake Process
 - Appointment setting; 3rd party vendors, or in-house appointments.
 - One stop shop convenience
 - Social service leveraging
 - Home visits
- Intake Eligibility
 - Access to OPUS (OR State computer system used for income eligibility and customer tracking)
- EWEB to gain full understanding of ECCP Program operations from HSC Contractor, including 3rd party vendors.
- Political / Community impacts
- Office space

Some commissioners have expressed an interest in participating in that committee work. In looking at EWEB project protocols the following options have been identified:

Option A:

Staff does the work and reports to a steering committee, including senior management, EMT and possibly the General Manager.

Option B:

Staff does the work and reports to a steering committee similar to Option A, including Board member(s).

We anticipate to have report and final recommendations complete by June 2011.

Recommendation

Staff is neutral to the above options and will be available to discuss with the Board on April 20, 2010. If you need additional information please contact Mark Freeman via email or at 541-685-7061.