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Tucson Water Awarded IBM Smarter Cities Challenge Grant

Mayor Jonathan Rothschild today announced that the City of Tucson and Tucson Water have been selected by IBM to receive a Smarter Cities Challenge Grant. The grant provides the City of Tucson with access to IBM's top experts to work on ways Tucson can engage its customers and deliver municipal services more efficiently. Responding to the news, Mayor Rothschild said, "As water provider to a desert community, Tucson Water has long been at the forefront of managing water resources. We are honored to be recognized by IBM for our commitment to conservation and continuous improvement in service delivery."

The IBM Smarter Cities Challenge is a competitive grant program. IBM is awarding a total of \$50 million worth of technology and services to 100 municipalities worldwide through 2013. Teams of specially-selected IBM experts will provide city leaders with analysis and recommendations to support sustainable growth, better delivery of municipal services, more citizen involvement, and improved efficiency.

The City of Tucson was selected for its proposal to merge two technology improvements designed to increase water reliability. One will allow customers to better monitor water use, and the other will improve the operating efficiencies of the utility.

Tucson Water currently replaces old water meters with Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) meters that can be read by electronic equipment carried by a meter reader walking or driving a route. This allows an individual to read many more meters in a day compared to having to physically read each meter. The new meters are also compatible with Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) technology, which will allow water use data to be collected remotely using wireless technology. Data collected through AMI systems is accessible by customers through web, smartphones, or other technologies, and allows for constant monitoring of water use on a regular basis.

Tucson Water delivers water to customers through a network that includes more than 4,000 miles of pipelines, 220 wells, 114 booster stations, and 55 storage facilities to over 225,000 customers. A System Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) program includes hardware and software that allows for the various elements to be monitored and controlled from a single point. Tucson Water is currently in the process of upgrading its existing SCADA system to increase operational efficiencies, including reducing the amount of energy required to deliver water to customers.



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Tucson Water has tremendous capital resources committed to implementing the AMI and SCADA projects. For instance, the AMI has an upcoming strategic plan effort worth about \$90,000, as well as \$5 million per year for implementation over a 10-year period. SCADA has \$20.6 million over 6 years in 21 separate tasks in the current Capital Improvement Plan. With support provided by IBM through the Smarter Cities Challenge grant, Tucson Water will be able to develop a plan to coordinate the implementation of these two technologies. The value of the assistance provided by IBM is approximately \$400,000.

“Having these two technologies – digital water meters and SCADA – communicate with each other will benefit customers by allowing them to actually monitor water use on a daily basis. In addition, Tucson Water will be able to provide customers with immediate notification of suspected leaks or anomalous levels of water use,” said Tucson Water Director Alan Forrest. “This will be complimented by the SCADA system’s ability to monitor water use at levels ranging from individual accounts to larger delivery zones, helping us move water around in a more efficient manner, while reducing our energy costs.”

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