

Question 82a – Behavior Change Campaign Strategy and Schedule

Regulatory Context

This document was prepared to meet part of the Education and Outreach (E&O) Program requirements of the 2024 Phase I Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit (Permit), under which the City of Seattle (City) has coverage (Permit # WAR044503). One of the goals of the E&O Program, which is a component of a broader Stormwater Management Program (SMWP), is to *effect behavior change to reduce or eliminate behaviors and practices that cause or contribute to adverse stormwater impacts*.

Special Conditions S5.C.11.a.ii(a-e) of the Permit require Permittees to develop (by July 1, 2025) and implement (by September 1, 2025) a strategy and schedule for a behavior change campaign targeting one audience and one best management practice (BMP). In accordance with S5.C.11.a.ii.b, Permittees can develop and implement either (i) the existing campaign, based on the chosen campaign implemented during the previous 2019 Permit and associated recommendations from the 2024 evaluation and report (option S5.C.11.a.ii.b.1), or (ii) expand the existing campaign from the 2019 Permit cycle to a new priority audience and BMP behavior (option S5.C.11.a.ii.b.2), or (iii) develop a campaign for a new priority audience and BMP behavior (option S5.C.11.a.ii.b.3). For the 2024 Permit cycle, the City is choosing to fulfill this Permit requirement by **developing a strategy and schedule to implement the City's existing Adopt-a-Drain (AAD) program to be more effective, based on the recommendations from our 2024 behavior change campaign report (i.e., option S5.C.11.a.ii.b.1)**.

Background to Seattle's Behavior Change Campaign

Seattle joined Adopt-A-Drain (AAD), a program developed by Hamline University based on social marketing research methods, in early 2021 and launched it in coordination with several Puget Sound jurisdictions in October of 2021. The AAD Program is intended and designed to change residents' behavior regarding storm drain care. Participants are asked to **remove debris** (leaves, litter, sediment, other debris) from their adopted storm drain inlets and **then report** the amount via a web-based portal. This action helps prevent or reduce pollutants (e.g., trash, sediments, organic matter) from entering the stormwater conveyance system and the downstream local waterways. By encouraging residents to adopt storm drains and commit to regular maintenance, the Program helps to instill a sense of responsibility among residents, raising awareness about the environmental impact of stormwater runoff on water quality.

Seattle's strategy during the 2019 MS4 Permit cycle was to modify the outreach tactics and supporting materials established by Hamline to focus our engagement on historically underserved communities in Seattle. Information about Seattle's AAD Program can be found here: [Adopt a Storm Drain - Utilities | seattle.gov](https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/adopt-a-storm-drain) Individuals and groups can sign up to adopt a storm drain here: <https://wa.adopt-a-drain.org/>.

The City's 2024 evaluation of our AAD program involved a participant survey and was designed to (i) measure changes in our target audience's **understanding** of stormwater and the impact of removing debris from storm drain inlets, (ii) measure the changes in our target audience's **adoption** of the target behavior, and (iii) **identify and recommend changes** to the City's AAD Program to be **more effective**. A few recommendations designed to improve campaign effectiveness were highlighted in the 2024 evaluation report, including:

1. Highlight water quality benefits and provide stormwater education

- Educate participants about the stormwater conveyance system and the impact of stormwater on receiving waterbodies.
- Emphasize the direct correlation between removing debris/maintaining storm drains and preventing downstream water quality impacts.

2. Engage a more diverse community

- Recruit and involve more Spanish speakers, using a culturally informed marketing campaign based on lessons learned from focus groups and surveys.

3. Build relationships and leverage partnerships

- Ask existing participants who identify as community organizations, schools, businesses to promote drain adoption across their network.
- Conduct targeted outreach/recruitment events at businesses and with programs/events (e.g., Adopt-A-Street) that already have an AAD-friendly/interested audience, with Fall cleanup organizations, and others.
- Collaborate with other jurisdictions to access resources, expertise, and support the 2024 regional recruitment goal.

4. Clear communication

- Continue to improve outreach materials and ensure clear, concise, and easily understandable messaging.

5. Enhance support and updates

- Encourage adopters to set up reminders for cleaning and/or reporting
- Send timely reminders to clean drains, such as a postcard just before leaf-drop season.
- Include a "pre" survey in Seattle's welcome email to learn basic information about the participant, their level of knowledge about stormwater, and their motivations so that we can provide better support (and develop a baseline for a future evaluation survey).

Strategy for 2025-2029 (2024 MS4 Permit)

Seattle will implement a sub-set of the above recommendations during the 2024-2029 Permit cycle, focusing on items that we believe will make the most impact on stormwater- and receiving-water quality, that can be accomplished with existing resource levels, and that align with the City's strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Goals for this permit cycle:

- Recruit 600 new participants to adopt 900 drains by 2029
- 30% reporting rate by participants annually
- Collect 40,000 lbs. of debris & garbage by 2029
- Attrition rate: less than 15% of participants annually

Over the next four years, our primary recruitment efforts will take place in the fall, when storm drains are more top-of-mind for the public. This timing aligns with increased rainfall and falling leaves, which can clog drains and create visible need for action. While fall will be our focus, we will also conduct outreach at select spring and summer events to maintain program visibility year-round.

We believe that reporting is closely tied to ongoing engagement and will promote it as a core part of participation through targeted messaging. Reporting helps reinforce the value of their actions and contributes important data to the program. To increase reporting rates, we will continue to email reminders. In addition, Hamline University, the program owner, will send out a year-end postcard reminder to adopters who have not yet submitted a report, encouraging them to share their efforts in keeping drains clear.

We want to foster ongoing participation and create a sense of community through regular communications. We will provide educational opportunities around how storm drains connect to local waterways and how upstream behaviors, such as gardening practices or car maintenance, can affect water quality. Where possible, we will connect participants with other relevant programs and stewardship opportunities that align with their interests to enhance neighborhoods and protect local waterways.

In our ongoing effort to make the program inclusive and culturally relevant, we will continue to adapt materials for Spanish-speaking communities by providing translated outreach and support resources. In 2025, we will expand this work to Chinese/Mandarin-speaking communities, using the same framework we developed for Spanish-language adaptation, including appropriate language and imagery. We plan to partner with community-based organizations to reach residents in-language and support them to adopt a drain.

Finally, we are partnering with Hamline University to administer a pre-survey to all new adopters in Seattle. This will help us better understand their motivations and expectations from the start. We will follow up with a post-survey of new participants approximately a year after they sign up. This will be done on a rolling basis, to gather ongoing feedback from participants about their experiences, potential barriers to changing behavior, and identify opportunities for program improvement.

Evaluation Metrics

1. Participation

Metrics:

- Number of new adopters
- Attrition rate of existing adopters
- Number of storm drains adopted

2. Reporting Behavior

Metrics:

- Percent of adopters who submit at least one report annually
- Comparison of reporting rates before/after year-end postcard reminders
- Qualitative feedback from post-surveys on ease of reporting

4. Impact

Metrics:

- Pounds of debris collected
- Pre/post knowledge questions in adopter surveys

5. Language Access

Metrics:

- Number of adopters who request materials in Spanish and Mandarin
- Number partnerships with in-language community-based organizations

6. Improvement & Feedback

Metrics:

- Pre-survey completion rate among new adopters
- Post-survey response rate and satisfaction scores
- Identified themes or suggestions for improvement

Schedule of Activities

Highlight Water Quality Benefits & Provide Stormwater Education Create awareness through education and regular communications.		
Activity Overview	Milestones	Timeframe
Quarterly E-Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop content connecting water systems to storm drains Highlight seasonal reminders (e.g., leaf cleanup in fall, spring clean) Feature adopter stories and practical tips. 	Quarterly
Education Driven Volunteer Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer activities like stenciling, drain marking, watershed tours Table with pollution prevention materials 	Ongoing; focus on Spring/Summer
Engage a More Diverse Community Expand accessibility through language, cultural relevance, and partnerships.		
Activity Overview	Milestones	Timeframe
Spanish Language Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster relationships with community organizations Co-create fall outreach materials Maintain year-round in-language support 	Annually; major push in fall; ongoing support
Chinese/Mandarin Language Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transcreate materials with language/cultural consultants Launch with outreach in fall 2025 Build new partnerships with trusted community orgs 	Launch in 2025; support ongoing
Build Relationships & Leverage Partnerships Provide opportunities to engage volunteers in aligned activities that prevent water pollution.		
Activity Overview	Milestones	Timeframe
Community Clean-ups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate spring stenciling and fall leaf cleanups Host 2 seasonal events per year (min) 	Spring and Fall annually
Cross-Program Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer pathways to other stormwater-related programs (e.g., Trees for Neighborhoods, RainWise, Natural Yard Care Workshops) 	Annually as Opportunities Arise
Regional Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop shared messages Shared social media Shared regional event (1x per year) 	Ongoing with Annual Review

Foster Continued Participation & Enhance Support
Recruit new volunteers while continuing to improve their experience.

Activity Overview	Milestones	Timeframe
Recruit New Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and implement a fall recruitment communications plan • Use seasonal data to inform adjustments 	Annually in Fall
New Participant Follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome kit/email sent in week 1 • Follow-up email within 2 months from preventpollution@seattle.gov to reinforce guidance 	Ongoing, automated where possible
Reporting Reminders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer customizable reminder options (email or text) • Include reminders in welcome kits and quarterly newsletters • Send year-end postcard to non-reporters 	Ongoing
Pre / Post Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up automatic pre-survey for new adopters via Hamline University • Conduct post-survey on a rolling basis approx. one year after pre-survey • Use insights to refine programming 	Pre-survey launch 2025; post-surveys ongoing
Show Appreciation & Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send annual joint message with Adopt-a-Street • Include key impact stats (e.g., total trash collected, participation rates) 	Annually - Winter