

Memorandum

To: TJPDC Commissioners
From: Isabella O'Brien, Planner I
Date: October 2023
Topic: Virginia Department of Health Septic and Well Assistance Program Direct to Partner Initiative Agreement

Purpose:

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) contacted the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission to discuss the potential for partnership to complete five septic, well, and sewer connection projects in the region.

The Virginia Department of Health – Division of Water and Wastewater Services received funding through the American Rescue Plan Act to assist homeowners at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines with septic and well repair and replacements. VDH accepted homeowner applications for the Septic and Well Assistance Program (SWAP) from January 1 through September 2, 2022. After receiving a high number of SWAP applications, VDH experienced difficulty getting a few projects out for bid and construction due a variety of factors, including the volume of projects and the limited number of qualified septic installers and well drillers available on eVA, Virginia's State Electronic Procurement System. To expedite the installation of the stalled projects, the SWAP Direct to Partner Initiative (D2PI) was developed, providing funds to local partners that may be better suited to get local contractors to bid on the projects.

After reviewing the scope of the agreement, reporting requirements, and meeting with the George Washington Regional Commission, the TJPDC requested a partnership agreement from VDH for review.

Securing and completing the terms of the D2PI would support public health and provide TJPDC with greater experience implementing and reporting best management practices, further advancing the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan.

Background:

The Septic and Well Assistance Program is in place to protect public health, improve water quality, and reduce disparities in environmental health. Low-income homeowners are more likely to have failing septic systems and private wells, which are costly to repair or replace. Failing septic systems pollute groundwater and surface water, leading to illness and disease, while unmaintained wells can become contaminated making water unsafe to consume.

The Virginia Department of Health is looking to planning district commissions as partners to advance the SWAP Direct to Partner Initiative (D2PI). Three PDC's have executed their SWAP agreements, two PDC's are actively developing agreements, and VDH plans to contact three more PDCs regarding the agreement.

If the TJPDC agrees to the terms of the D2PI, the TJPDC will get 5 "shovel-ready" projects out for vendor contracts and oversee the contractors while they install the systems, with the support of VDH and the local health district. VDH will provide full packages to TJPDC that could be put out for competitive bids. These packages include VDH Permits, contractual Scope of Work (SOW) templates, signed landowner

agreements and other supporting documentation. Ten to fifteen percent of the cost of construction will be directed to the PDC for the administration of the agreement.

The TJPDC will then seek competitive bids from a pool of prequalified and certified local contractors. Projects will be awarded to the lowest qualified bidder and TJPDC will enter into a contract with the low bidder to complete the project in a specified timeframe. The TJPDC will monitor construction and ensure activities align with the necessary permits. Upon completion, inspection, and written approval from the BRHD and local health departments, the Program will issue payment to the contractor, notify the beneficiary of completion, and document the BMP. Documentation of all beneficiary outcomes, construction completion, and expenditures will be conducted for the purposes of reporting and to ensure the orderly function of Program activities.

I. General Program Administration

- i. Work with local health departments and properly licensed service providers to obtain private well and septic system repair/installation permits, as necessary, at no expense to eligible homeowners.
- ii. Work with local health departments and properly licensed service providers to install private well and septic system repairs/replacement at no expense to eligible homeowners.
- iii. Work with local public water and sewer authority to complete eligible water and sewer connections at no expense to eligible homeowners.
- iv. Ensure that all project expenditures are associated with approved deliverables and in compliance with this Agreement, Terms and Conditions, and standard federal cost-principles.
- v. Track financial and programmatic deliverables and report accomplishments back to VDH on a timely basis.
- vi. Complete and submit quarterly reports to VDH in accordance with the specified deliverable schedule in the Agreement.
- vii. All project must have contractors selected within 6 months of award, and then the grantee would have the rest of 2024 to complete installation for the projects. VDH has committed to the Department of Treasury and the ARPA program the all funds be obligated by 12/31/2024.

II. Geographic Description of Projects

- i. There are 5 projects at 4 sites across the region.
 - Albemarle County: 1 Sewer Design and 1 Sewer Connection Project at the same site
 - Fluvanna County: 1 Well and 1 Septic Repair Project
 - City of Charlottesville: 1 Alternative on Site Sewage System Project

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends a motion to authorize the Executive Director to pursue the D2PI agreement through the Virginia Department of Health and take any actions necessary to execute an agreement and administer the program.