



# RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES

## Board Memorandum

**BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

**DATE: DECEMBER 13, 2021**

**GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

**SUBJECT: Customer Engagement Updates through October 2021**

Customer Engagement is funded by Assembly Bill (AB) 1890 that was adopted in 1996. The Bill requires publicly owned utilities to collect and spend Public Benefits Charge funds in four areas: low-income assistance, energy efficiency and conservation programs, renewable energy, and research, development, and demonstration projects.

The Customer Engagement Team has had maintained momentum, being mindful of the revised ways of working that have been in place as a direct result of the COVID pandemic. Outreach has continued and uptake of programs and rebates has remained steady. Education and STEM PULL programs have continued albeit in a new, virtual format, which have been well attended.

*Customer Engagement Highlights*

**Residential Highlights**

- A. Sharing Households Assist Riverside's Energy (SHARE) program assisted 1,301 customers July – October 2021 totaling \$401,240
- B. Emergency Recovery Assistance Program (ERAP) from July - October 2021, processed over 326 applications and \$130,268 in assistance
- C. RPU processed a total of 101 water rebates in collaboration with regional stakeholder Municipal Water District.
- D. New Electric Vehicle (EV) Rebate Program

**Commercial Highlights**

- A. July – October 2021 RPU processed 20 commercial electric rebates, totaling \$153,888.38
- B. Over \$100,000 commercial turf removal rebate
- C. Finalized California Air Resources Board Agreement
- D. Finalized University of California, Riverside Agreement

**Educational Highlights**

- A. School educational programs transitioned to non-traditional formats and converted to virtual classes
- B. Transition of STEM PULL program to virtual platform
- C. Earth Day celebration (RPU) recognition of this important day and increased awareness of RPU programs and benefits.

## Communications Highlights

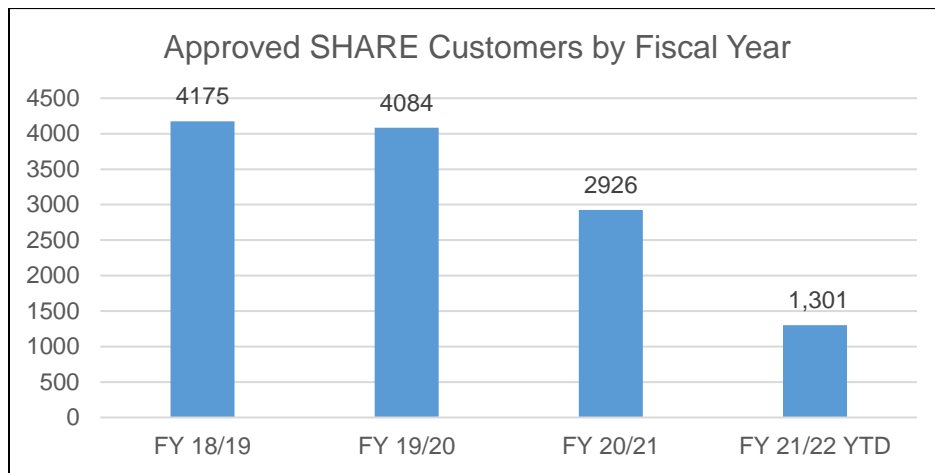
- A. Consistent in-person outreach efforts, despite lockdown and pandemic considerations
- B. Translation efforts underway to include all application forms and significant proportion of website in Spanish.
- C. Ongoing development of RPU website
- D. Move to sustainable promotional products and recycled materials for campaign and other collateral.

## RESIDENTIAL

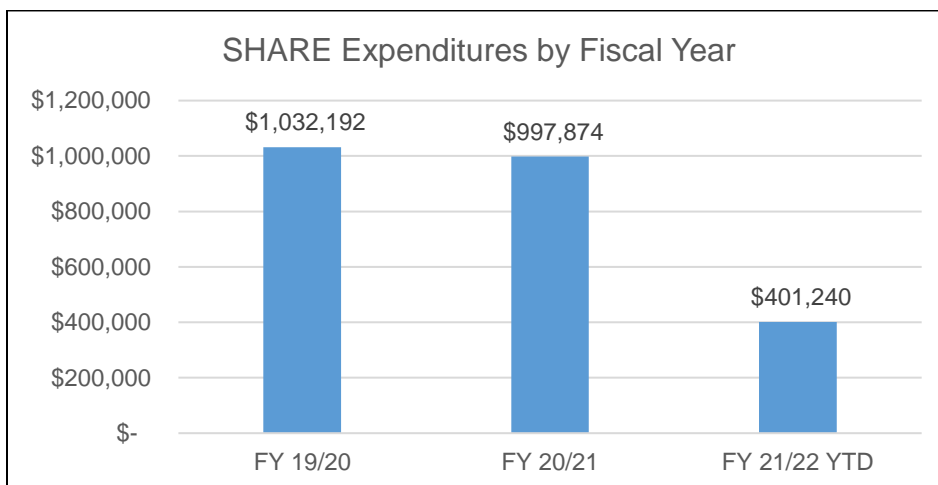
---

### Sharing Households Assist Riverside's Energy - SHARE PROGRAM

The Sharing Households Assist Riverside's Energy (SHARE) program assisted 1,301 customers July through October 2021.

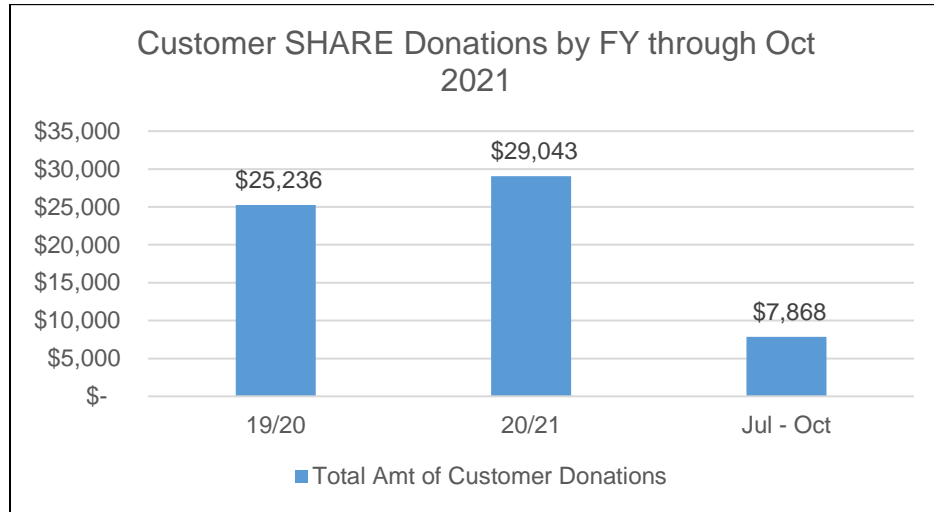


On March 8, 2021, RPU Board approved an increase to the emergency/deposit assistance from \$150 to \$250. Approximately 1,548 customers that received the \$150 from March 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 received a retroactive \$100 credit. On August 3, 2021, the City Council approved the third SHARE monthly electric increase from \$15.00 to \$15.50 and the monthly water increase from \$2.75 to \$3.00.



### SHARE Customer Donations

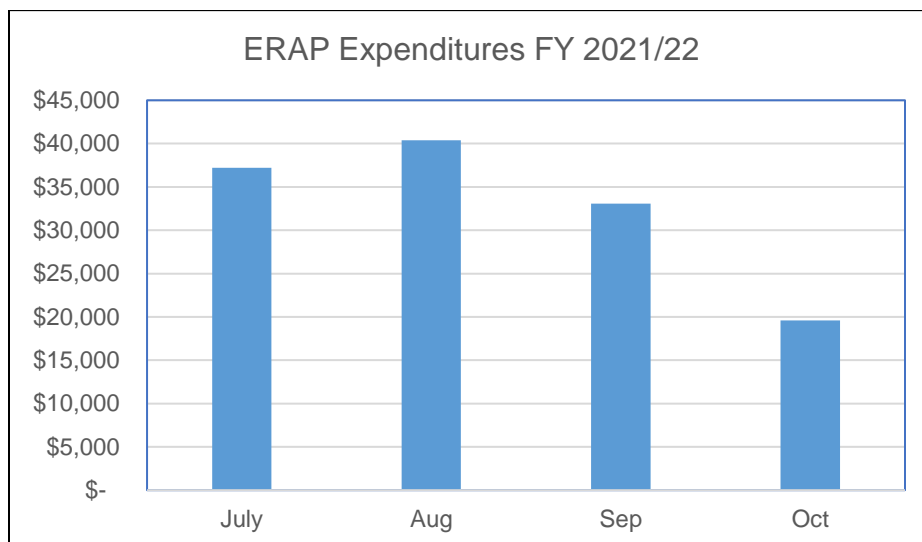
RPU customers can donate to the SHARE program and the average customer donation is \$28.00 per year. Customer donations are promoted through back of utility bill, social media, and customer outreach. From July 1, 2021 through October 31, 2021, customers have donated a total of \$7,868 and have provided emergency/deposit assistance to 31 customers.



### Emergency Recovery Assistance Program – ERAP Program

The Emergency Recovery Assistance Program (ERAP) was created to assist residential electric customers who have been unemployed, furloughed or experienced a reduction in work hours due to COVID-19. ERAP launched on May 20, 2020.

From July 2021 through October 2021, 326 applications have been approved and \$130,268 has been expended.



### Residential Rebates

From July 2021 through October 2021, a total of 1,055 residential energy rebates were processed for a total payout of \$239,565.33.

Residential Devices	Participation	RPU Expenditures
Air Conditioning	207	\$152,450.00
Energy Star	496	\$39,200.00
Pool Pump	33	\$6,600.00
Tree Power	102	\$8,613.24
Weatherization	108	\$19,052.09
Recycling	109	\$13,650.00
<b>Energy Rebate Total</b>	<b>1055</b>	<b>\$239,565.33</b>

The Electric Vehicle Rebate Program was approved by the Board of Public Utilities on August 9, 2021 and by the City Council October 12, 2021 and has had great participation, with 21 rebates being submitted in the first month of the program launch.

RPU's water rebate programs are currently processed through SoCalWaterSmart.com, Metropolitan Water District's (MWD) rebate portal. All rebates issued to RPU water customers are paid out of the MWD budget unless RPU elects to add additional funding to certain water conservation measures.

Currently, RPU pays an additional rebate for weather-based irrigation controllers, high efficiency sprinkler nozzles and turf removal projects. From the beginning of the fiscal year to October 2021, a total of 101 residential water rebates were processed with total payout of \$85,694.

Residential Devices	Participation	RPU Expenditures	MWD Expenditures
High Efficiency Clothes Washer (HECW)	28	\$0.00	\$2,380.00
Residential Cistern Medium	1	\$0.00	\$300.00
Residential Premium HET (from 1.6 gpf toilet)	3	\$0.00	\$120.00
Residential Turf Removal (per square foot)	9	\$13,703.00	\$27,406.00
Rotating Nozzle	2	\$303.00	\$202.00
Weather Based Irrigation Controller (WBIC) (each < acre)	58	\$6,960.00	\$34,320.00
<b>Water Conservation Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>\$20,966.00</b>	<b>\$64,728.00</b>

## COMMERCIAL

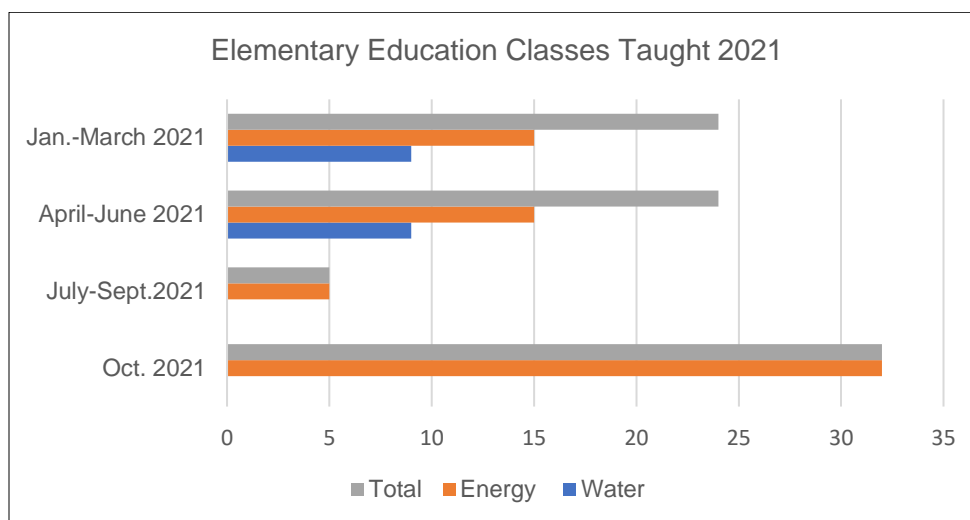
From July 2021 through October 2021, 20 commercial energy rebates (1 weatherization, 13 HVAC, 6 energy star) were processed for a total rebate payout of \$153,888.38 and an energy savings of 1,561,284 kWh. One commercial turf removal rebate was processed for a total of customer rebate of \$100,698 (\$33,566 paid by RPU and \$67,132.00 paid was Metropolitan Water District)

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) Net Energy Metering (NEM) agreement was approved by the Board of Public Utilities on September 13, 2021. Currently, work is underway with CARB on the Economic Development rate contract and new construction incentives.

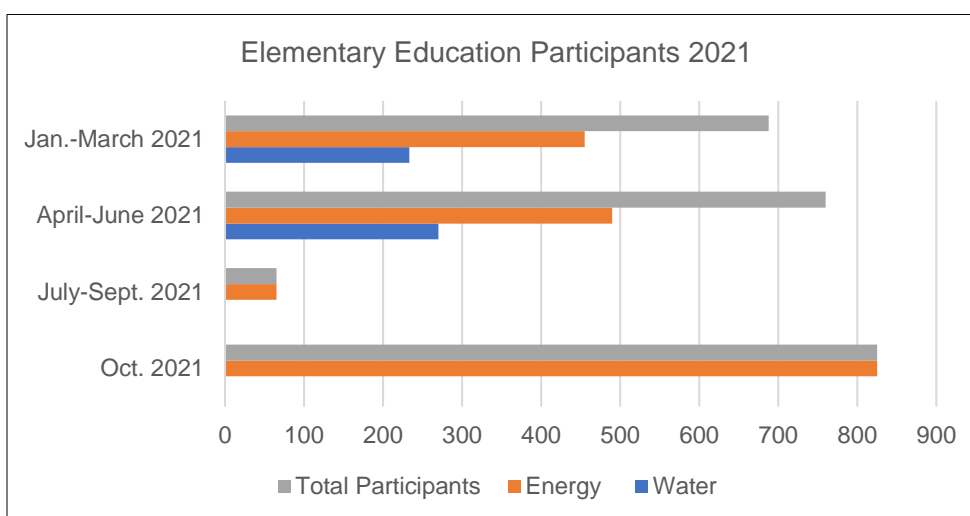
Negotiations are ongoing with University of California Riverside (UCR) and Customer Engineering to acquire the UCR owned portion of the University substation.

## EDUCATION

In Fall 2021, the school education program launched a campaign in which 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers across the RPU service area, were contacted with invitations to sign up for energy science classes for their students. In all, RPU staff reached out to 44 elementary schools and provided information on the new virtual energy education program. It is anticipated that this program will be extended to other grade levels in the coming year. The number of classes taught virtually has increased over the year from 24 in the first quarter (January – March 2021) to 32 in October.

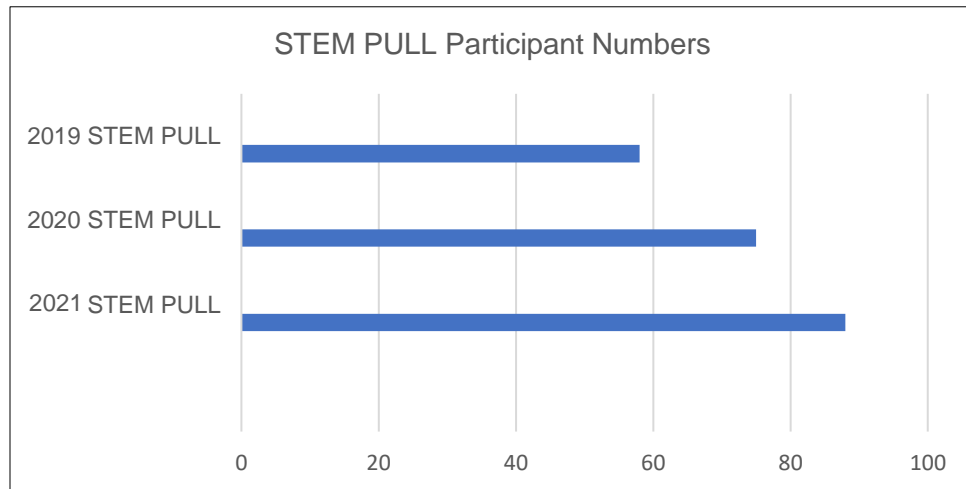


The number of participants has increased over the year, corresponding with the increased classes being taught. In October 2021, 825 students participated in education programs.



The transition to virtual learning saw a 32% increase between the number of students taught in 2019 (traditional format) compared to 2020 (virtual format) and in comparing data from 2019 and 2021 (virtual format), a 54% increase in participation was achieved. As this format was so successful, the virtual platform was used to host summer STEM Public Utilities Learning Labs.

These week-long, virtual high school learning labs increased the number of students engaged, enabled easier collaboration with other utility agencies, and reached students across inland area counties and even other states. It is anticipated that this achievement can be extended next year, yielding increases in educational reach across the region and beyond.



The Education team also worked collaboratively to celebrate Earth Day and hosted a variety of online information, classes, video messaging and other materials throughout April 2021. This was acknowledged in a proclamation from the Mayor and its success has set the tone for future Earth Day celebrations, which are currently being planned for 2022.

## COMMUNICATIONS

---

During this year, the CE Team has participated in several outreach activities and events. The pandemic has had an impact on the amount of in-person outreach that the team could participate in. However, as things are beginning to open, so are the opportunities for the team to get back out and engage with the community. The following is a list of activities and events attended by the team between June and October 2021:

- Riverwalk Movie Night – Water Conservation Demonstration (6/25/21)
- Grand Opening for Riverside Main Library (6/26/21)
- National Night Out at Villegas Park (8/3/21)
- Greater Riverside Chamber of Commerce (GRCC) commercial/small business rebates and programs presentation (9/1/21)
- 18th Annual Chili Cook-Off & Car/Cycle Show (9/4/2021)
- Coffee with Council member Plascencia at Snowberry Village and Tyler Springs senior centers (9/14/21 & 9/16/21)
- Riverside Ready Public Safety Preparedness Expo 9/18/21
- Good Morning Riverside - GRCC annual event 10/14/21

The CE Team has been working on improving accessibility and has been translating a range of materials and application forms. Our application forms have been or are in the process of being translated to Spanish. The following are presently available bilingually:

- RPU E-blasts (English/Spanish)
- Webpage content (English/Spanish)

- Bill Inserts (English/Spanish)
- Social Media (English/Spanish)
- Videos (increased Spanish availability)
- Citywide Postcard Mailer (English/Spanish)
- Citywide Door Hanger (English/Spanish)
- Refrigerator Magnets (English/Spanish)
- Flyers distributed (English/Spanish)
- Payment Centers: (English/Spanish)
- Events/Booths: (English/Spanish)

With the launch of the new RPU website in the coming weeks, translation options will be available that mirror those on the City's web platform, which currently allows users to convert the webpage into over 109 languages. The CE team will be looking at ways to incorporate other languages and formats, and will consider ASL, larger font, braille and browse aloud and how to best incorporate these kinds of tools as we move forward in the provision of an inclusive engagement process.

Customer Engagement is committed to procuring future promotional and collateral materials that will be sustainability sourced using environmentally friendly materials.