



Water Loss Control Collaborative: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Water Loss Control Collaborative, briefly?

Following an exploratory conference call in February 2015, the California-Nevada Section of AWWA pulled together a diverse group of stakeholders committed to dissemination of the principles and practice of economically sound water loss control throughout California. From several meetings of a steering committee, the Collaborative was born. The Collaborative has now developed a comprehensive plan of training, technical review and assistance, and validation for the approximately 460 urban water systems to attain a basic level of competency with the water balance and audit concepts, and the Free AWWA Water Audit Software (on which SB 555 is based). The 30-month plan includes multiple “touch points” for reinforced understanding, converging tracks for “Early Adopters” and “New Learners,” and will cost \$3.25 million to implement.

Urban water utilities are required by SB 555 to submit validated water audits, so why should the State fund this program?

Three compelling reasons call for a coordinated, statewide program and that can only happen with state funding and encouragement.

- 1. Water Audit Quality and Consistency. By funding the Water Loss Control Collaborative, utilities will receive multiple touch points of training, review, and technical assistance to produce an audit with higher validity. With coordinated guidance along the way, audit results will be comparable and the quality of work will be more assured.*
- 2. Program Effectiveness. Consistency of audit results from a single, coordinated program allows for metrics to be developed for pre- and post-validation, to prove the benefit and identify successes. A single, statewide program will also streamline the work flow for both utility participants and DWR, for both the validation process and evaluation of audit results. This will save a great deal of “results processing” resources for the State.*
- 3. Utility Buy-In. Utility responses to a new mandate range from enthusiastic embrace, to grudging acceptance or even passive resistance. Proper completion of a water audit depends on considerable investment of staff resources (see below) for reviewing audit requirements, field and administrative data collection and data entry, quality assurance, and so forth. State support of SB 555 with a comprehensive program of training and technical assistance will lessen opposition to an “unfunded mandate” and greatly improve utility compliance.*



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At \$3.25 million, isn't that a pretty high amount for a program like this?

*Not really. The investment of this much by the state will actually leverage approximately **four times** that amount from the water utilities. In learning and then correctly applying the water audit process and software, all urban water agencies have to invest substantial staff resources to comply with the new audit mandate. In-kind utility investment will vary by the number and level of staff involved and the time they commit to the project, but we estimate that amount to come to \$10,000 per small utility, \$30,000 for a midsized utility, and \$50,000 for large utilities. With nearly 460 community water systems subject SB 555 requirements, this would come to around **\$12 – 14 million** in the aggregate commitment of the water systems. Work to address immediate deficiencies identified in an audit would be additional, and could range from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of dollars.*

What assurance does the State have that program sponsors won't come back for more money, since training is an on-going need?

The Collaborative sees State funding as the necessary catalyst to start a groundbreaking new wave of effective utility management, but not an on-going need. Several pieces are already set in place, or part of the Collaborative's plan, to continue momentum without an on-going subsidy for training and technical assistance. These include:

- CA-NV AWWA established a Water Loss Control Committee in October 2015, has a robust education program for future, less intensive training, and envisions creating a "Train the Trainer" program in 2018-19;
- DWR has developed (by WSO, Inc. under contract) a California specific water loss control manual to simplify the AWWA M-36 manual;
- A Water Loss Auditor Technical Expert Certification program is intended by CA-NV AWWA as a follow-on activity (2018-19);
- CA-NV AWWA also desires to create a "Partnership for Saving Water" program to highlight and reward utilities for excellence in surpassing water loss control benchmarks.

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