



# WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service  
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## STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: September 22, 2020

**DATE:** Thursday, September 17, 2020

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Dana Searcy, Special Projects Manager  
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**THROUGH:** Dave Solaro, Assistant County Manager

**SUBJECT:** Recommendation to approve an Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and the Karma Box Project for work related to the Built For Zero initiative, specifically River Clean Up and Homeless Encampment Data Project [not to exceed \$152,169.60]; authorize the Purchasing Manager to execute the agreement. (All Commission Districts)

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### SUMMARY

Through Washoe County's work on the Built For Zero initiative, an opportunity to partner with the Karma Box Project presented itself. A Truckee River Fund grant in the amount of \$179,932, with a County match of \$77,650 from the Community Foundation of Western Nevada was awarded to Washoe County. The funding would be used to improve Truckee River water quality by reducing the amount of pollution in the River as a result of encampments along and near the Truckee River with the eventual goal of drastically reducing the number of people camping along the River and providing those vulnerable populations with resources. The project is a partnership between the Washoe County Built for Zero team, local non-profits and government partners and a consists of four components:

1. Establishing an outreach team to build relationships and collect basic information on unsheltered individuals living within 0.75 miles of the Truckee River.
2. Establishing and maintaining a By-Name List (BNL) of unsheltered individuals living within 0.75 miles of the Truckee River.
3. Empowering unsheltered individuals to participate in clean-ups along the River to reduce waste, becoming River Stewards.
4. Installing sharps containers and weekly pick up and disposal of the contents.

The Karma Box Project Professional Services Agreement supports (1) river clean up through the River Stewards Project and (2) homeless encampment data entry through the Built For Zero By-Name List Project.

AGENDA ITEM # \_\_\_\_\_

**Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item:** Vulnerable Populations

**PREVIOUS ACTION**

No previous action.

**BACKGROUND**

**Built For Zero:** Built for Zero is an initiative of Community Solutions which works to achieve a lasting end to homelessness that leaves no one behind. Single programs, no matter how successful don't get us to Zero – whole communities do. Washoe County and our community partners are working together to utilize our valuable and limited resources efficiently. There are Key differences in Built for Zero communities that are experiencing success and they all revolve around working as a community.

- An integrated command team – this is the regional core team.
- Community level measurement – focused not on the success of individual programs, but on our system as a whole.
- Comprehensive real time, by name data – allowing for a tailored solution and a clear line of sight.
- Strategic, Data-Driven Housing Investments

**The Karma Box Project:** Founded in 2019, The Karma Box Project started out as a community initiative that allows people to give non-perishable food, hygiene products, toiletries, and other useful items to those in need. This work has expanded in late summer of 2020 to include work to clean up the Truckee River while engaging people living in encampments near the Truckee River to keep their environment free of trash and dispose of any waste appropriately.

To support the work of keeping the Truckee River free of trash and debris and to engage people living in encampments along the Truckee River, the recent work of the Karma Box Project will be expanded upon to include providing volunteers with gift cards as a means of incentivizing participation and collecting data on where encampments are located and basic information on the demographics of encampment residents.

**The Truckee River Fund Grant Proposal:** The goal of the Washoe County project is to improve Truckee River water quality by reducing the amount of pollution in the River as a result of encampments along and near the Truckee River with the eventual goal of drastically reducing the number of people camping along the River and providing those vulnerable populations with resources. Encampments result in the production of human waste, trash, medical waste and sharps (devices with sharp points or edges which are often also biohazards) being disposed in or near the Truckee River, instead of in an appropriate fashion that would keep waste out of the Truckee River. By creating relationships with unsheltered individuals, empowering them to participate in river-clean

ups, and engaging them with the goal of moving into housing, the utilization of encampments along the Truckee River will be diminished.

The project, in partnership with established local non-profit and government partners, will create a database of unsheltered individuals to better connect them to housing resources, with the eventual goal of drastically reducing the number of people camping along the River. Additionally, the project's River Stewards Program will work directly with unsheltered individuals to clean up areas along the Truckee River during regularly scheduled river clean-ups. Finally, three sharps collection receptacles will be placed along the river to encourage safe, non-polluting disposal of these items.

By coupling river clean-ups with better data collection and a safe way to dispose of sharps, Washoe County will be addressing multiple challenges affecting water quality and will lead to the eventual decrease of encampments along the River as unsheltered individuals are connected to housing resources.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

With the acceptance by the Board of County Commissioners of the Truckee River Fund Grant Award, budget authority for this Professional Services Agreement exists within Special Projects Fund IO 29013.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners approve an Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and the Karma Box Project for work related to the Built For Zero initiative, specifically River Clean Up and Homeless Encampment Data Project [not to exceed \$152,169.60]; authorize the Purchasing Manager to execute the agreement.

### **POSSIBLE MOTION**

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be:  
*“Move to approve an Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and the Karma Box Project for work related to the Built For Zero initiative, specifically River Clean Up and Homeless Encampment Data Project [not to exceed \$152,169.60]; authorize the Purchasing Manager to execute the agreement.”*