



# WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service  
www.washoecounty.gov

## STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: October 12, 2021

**DATE:** Wednesday, October 06, 2021

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Dana Searcy, Manager, Housing and Homeless Services  
(775) 328-2720, [dsearcy@washoecounty.gov](mailto:dsearcy@washoecounty.gov)

**THROUGH:** Kate Thomas, Assistant County Manager

**SUBJECT:** Recommendation to approve an Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and Karma Box Project to manage and operate the River Stewards Project to improve water quality by reducing the amount of pollution in the urban Truckee River corridor through river clean-ups, outreach, education, data collection, and maintenance/cleaning of Portland Loo bathroom facilities [not to exceed \$189,134.00]; authorize the Purchasing & Contracts Manager to execute the agreement. (All Commission Districts.)

---

### SUMMARY

Karma Box Project (KBP) is the proposed contractor to manage, operate and enhance the River Stewards Project into its second year. KBP will provide homelessness outreach and education, conduct data collection, lead river clean-up volunteer teams, and clean and maintain the Portland Loo bathroom facilities. The goal of the River Stewards project is to improve water quality by reducing the amount of pollution in the urban Truckee River corridor. This project fills the unique niche of bridging the gap between environmental concerns and homelessness.

A Truckee River Fund grant in the amount of \$219,164 with a County match of \$77,874.26 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 because 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 remaining grant balance of \$30,030 will be applied to costs associated with sharps disposal pick-ups associated with contractor Rynocare.

### PREVIOUS ACTION

On September 22, 2020 the Board of County Commissioners accepted a grant from the Community Foundation of Western Nevada Truckee River Fund in the amount of [\$179,932 with a Washoe County match of \$77,650] and approved the Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and Karma Box Project for work related

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

to the Built for Zero initiative, specifically River Clean Up and Homeless Encampment Data Project not to exceed \$152,169.60.

On October 11, 2020 the Board of County Commissioners approved the amended Professional Services Agreement between Washoe County and Karma Box Project for the River Clean Up and Homeless Encampment Data Project, amendments related to liability matters and an advance needed for the project, no change to scope or amount.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Housing and Homeless Services Division will provide overall project oversight, administrative support, and grant compliance. A Management Analyst and Data and Policy Specialist will work together to ensure overall program success. Washoe County's frontline partner, Karma Box Project, will execute the program on the ground.

**Karma Box Project (KBP)** is the proposed contractor to manage, operate and enhance the River Stewards Project into its second year. KBP will provide outreach and education to people experiencing homelessness, conduct data collection, lead river clean-up volunteer teams, and clean and maintain the Portland Loo bathroom facilities. Within the past year, Karma Box Project has successfully piloted and grown the River Stewards Project in coordination with Washoe County. For future services, Washoe County will prepare a request for proposal for such services.

The Karma Box Project will be using gift cards as incentives to those living along the river.

**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 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.

By coupling river clean-ups with better data collection 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 101-14 in IO 29013.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended to approve an Agreement for Professional Services between Washoe County and Karma Box Project to manage and operate the River Stewards Project to improve water quality by reducing the amount of pollution in the urban Truckee River corridor through river clean-ups, outreach, education, data collection, and maintenance/cleaning of Portland Loo bathroom facilities [not to exceed \$189,134.00]; authorize the Purchasing & Contracts 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 Karma Box Project to manage and operate the River Stewards Project to improve water quality by reducing the amount of pollution in the urban Truckee River corridor through river clean-ups, outreach, education, data collection, and maintenance/cleaning of Portland Loo bathroom facilities [not to exceed \$189,134.00]; authorize the Purchasing & Contracts Manager to execute the agreement.”*