

# Utah Growing Water Smart



Utah Growing Water Smart creates resources and conducts workshops for communities to integrate water and land use planning and support decision making for building a more sustainable water future.

## Pilot program

Between 2020 and 2021, the Legislature appropriated **\$300,000** to develop the Utah Growing Water Smart program. This is a collaborative effort between state and county agencies, higher education and private organizations. **Matching funds were leveraged to build the successful program.**

## Workshops

Each workshop is a three-day immersive experience. Participants work in teams to develop action plans to integrate land and water planning for their communities. Teams include elected officials, water professionals, planners and more.

## Progress

So far, three workshops have been held, reaching **45 cities, five counties and two water conservancy districts**. Five additional water conservancy districts participated on teams. These focused on northern and southern Utah communities, **reaching where more than 40% of Utah's population lives**. A fourth workshop is scheduled for May 2024.

## Appropriation request

Additional funding will allow the successful program to continue. More workshops could be conducted to **reach another 20-25% of Utah's population**. Also, funding is needed to **expand the participant network statewide and respond to needs identified by participants**, such as increasing the number of qualified water efficient landscaping professionals.

## Utah Growing Water Smart program partners



Center for Water-Efficient Landscaping  
UtahStateUniversity.



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## Program comments

“Growing Water Smart is an invaluable resource for communities to learn how to be deliberate in integrating growth and water resource decisions. Water providers and planning departments often reside in different legal and subject matter frameworks and are often at capacity in conducting their respective work. This makes it difficult to meaningfully develop shared goals around water and growth. Growing water smart [sic] provided Salt Lake City staff with a facilitated, intensive multi-day workshop, and required an action plan as an outcome. We were removed from our everyday work and interruptions to focus solely on the purpose of being water smart while we grow. We were also given important tools to bring back with us. Our planning, Mayor’s Office and Public Utilities staff left the workshop extremely inspired and ready to ‘grow water smart.’

“Our team has since received enthusiastic support from our elected officials and is embarking on a facilitated 12-month policy development process that includes all city departments and community stakeholders. Of particular interest is our goal of protecting Great Salt Lake and of being a more resilient community. We are excited to see how this unfolds. Growing Water Smart helps communities break down often established silos associated with growth and water, which is an important step in the state’s overall prosperity and health.”

LAURA BRIEFER, MPA

Director, Department of Public Utilities | Salt Lake City Corporation

“Washington County is Utah’s driest and fastest-growing region. With only one, fully developed water source (the Virgin River basin), water supply planning is the top priority for our region.

We were fortunate to recently partner with Utah State University and Utah Division of Water Resources to host a Growing Water Smart Workshop for our seven municipal customers and the county. The workshop was a collaborative exercise in discussing how to best integrate water and land use planning to allow for continued growth while protecting our natural resources and preserving our economic prosperity. The workshop involved elected officials, water managers, land use planners and other key staff members who are instrumental in identifying and implementing strategies to create a more sustainable water future – it was an effective, consensus-building process. We support additional funding needed for our communities to have the resources and expertise required to develop community masterplans that incorporate thoughtful consideration to water resources. “

ZACH RENSTROM

General Manager, Washington County Water Conservancy District