LOS ANGELES COUNTY ISD INTERNAL SERVICES

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To enrich lives through effective and caring service.

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To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Tom Tindall
Director

Subject: **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE CENTERS (RESPONSE TO ITEM 15, AGENDA OF OCTOBER 13, 2009)**

On May 12, 2009, Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Antonovich requested the creation of an Environmental Service Centers (ESC) strategy and its inclusion in the County's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant application. On June 23, 2009, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) provided a more detailed description of the ESC proposal, including possible locations, cost estimates and funding opportunities, potential partnerships, and recommendations on staffing, implementation, and management of the Centers.

On October 13, 2009, your Board instructed the Director of Internal Services to report back on the County's ESC strategy with respect to sustainability outreach, advancement of energy efficiency, and conservation programs.

Role of the Environmental Service Centers

The ESCs will play an integral role in connecting the County's constituents to the wealth of information related to energy and water conservation and other environmental programs. The ESC public outreach strategy has three components: a web portal providing information and linkages to useful websites; "booths in the box" to provide materials at County-sponsored and community events; and "brick and mortar" centers to provide face-to-face interactions and counseling. Each approach will be tailored to specific audiences, while creating a comprehensive approach to sustainability outreach.

The County now manages several environmental and energy and water conservation programs through the Departments of Public Works, Regional Planning, Internal Services, and Parks and Recreation. Consolidating information about these programs in one place will provide more effective access to constituents. Conducting outreach through different media, including web-based resources and written materials, will also broaden the County's audience and access to diverse populations.

The ESCs will provide guidance on existing County conservation programs, including the Green Building Program, Public Works' 888-Clean LA Programs, and the County Water Conservation Programs. Other programs, including those implemented by Parks and Recreation and the County Libraries, will be featured at the ESCs and may play a pivotal role if ESCs are located at those facilities.

The ESCs will serve as hubs of information and counseling related to the AB 811 Municipal Energy Retrofit Financing Program, which is now in development. The ESCs will be used as a primary venue for advertising the AB 811 program and counseling constituents through the application process. The ESCs will also provide connections to green job training programs and resources that are overseen by the County Workforce Investment Boards and the Los Angeles Community Colleges.

Although the ESCs will focus on programs and services offered by the County, another goal is to connect constituents to programs implemented by other agencies. Local utilities, including electricity, gas, and water purveyors, provide their customers with rebates, incentives, and conservation strategies. These efforts will be particularly valuable to unincorporated residents as the County's AB 811 program develops, because rebates and incentives can be combined with AB 811 financing to provide constituents with more buying power and choice in the market.

The ESCs will also provide information from local transit agencies, including the Metropolitan Transit Authority, encouraging the use of public and alternative modes of transportation. To provide constituents with the most comprehensive set of sustainable resources, County staff will continue to build additional partnerships within the community.

Funding

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant application, as approved by the Department of Energy, included approximately $3 million to develop outreach materials and implement a County-wide ESC strategy.

Block grant funds have been allocated for outreach and public education efforts to be coordinated with the overall ESC strategy. For example, funds reserved for Green Building Program outreach will be used to augment web-based and written materials to be made available to the public through the ESCs. Block grant funds to augment the County's Solar Map will support the ESCs by providing site-specific data and quick links to available resources. Block grant funds identified for outreach for the AB 811 program may be deployed through the ESCs to provide program information and counseling to constituents.

ESC Oversight and Control

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), requires intensive grant reporting to ensure the funds are spent appropriately. The County will be required to provide quarterly updates on the use of funds as required by the approved allocation plans and budgets. Any major diversions from those plans will require prior approval from the DOE.

In addition to the oversight outlined above, the use of these block grant funds by contractors requires approval from the DOE, with contracts over $1 million requiring additional review. Staff is currently working to secure a contract and receive approval from the DOE before moving forward in implementing the ESC proposal.

Next Steps in ESC Design and Development

Now that the block grant funds have been received, we are working to develop more specific details of the ESC strategy. As outlined in the June 23, 2009, report to the Board, various departments have convened to discuss strategy, but a detailed work program has yet to be prepared. Although the Board has provided overall direction for this proposal, staff will be working with the CEO and Board offices to elicit input on program details, such as the locations of ESCs and the types of services to be provided.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (323) 267-2101 or Howard Choy at (323) 267-2006.

TT:JJ:HC:LR

c: ISD Board Deputies
Chief Executive Officer
Ellen Sandt, DCEO