

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: December 11, 2023

From: Jackie Teed
Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
File: Doc#2408033

Item #: 2023-795

Subject: **Multilingual Services for Energy Save New West: Outcomes and 2024 Initiatives**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct staff to operationalize the feedback received in the 2023 Empower Me program year, as outlined in the Next Steps section of this report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the Empower Me program, which delivers multilingual services to support Energy Save New West. The update includes program impacts since its initiation in 2021, and describes the 2024 initiatives that support:

- Bold Step 3: Carbon Free Homes and Buildings,
- Bold Step 4: Pollution Free Vehicles,
- Bold Step 5: Carbon Free Energy and
- Advancement of climate equity.

SUMMARY

Through the Energy Save New West (ESNW) program, the community is provided with information, rebates and incentives that support energy conservation, greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction and demand side management. To address climate equity related to access to information, the City launched multilingual services to support immigrant and newcomer residents through a partnership with Empower Me in the summer of 2021.

The Empower Me program delivers tailored education and support to underserved residents in the City to access and understand energy-focused topics such as energy literacy, energy conservation, information about ESNW, and how to read their utility bills. Up until now, within New Westminster, the community partner organizations have requested services in 5 immigrant languages.

As of November 2023, this partnership has supported 269 multilingual and multicultural families, distributed 51 energy savings kits and delivered 34 workshops. Through partnerships developed with 14 community organizations, the program was also able to quickly activate extreme heat preparedness programming in the summer of 2023 and successfully assisted 15 families navigate the eligibility criteria, and application process for the BC Hydro ECAP AC program, using the family's language of choice.

For the 2024 program year, in response to community feedback, the workshops will expand to deliver electric vehicle related education and the delivery of senior and renter specific workshops on understanding energy bills.

BACKGROUND

Through the Energy Save New West (ESNW) program, the community is provided with information, rebates and incentives that support energy conservation, greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction and demand side management. Additionally, information regarding other climate action initiatives the City is undertaking can be disseminated through this program.

In 2020 research was conducted to identify opportunities to improve the impact of the ESNW program. One key finding was a need to provide outreach services to a greater number of residents in the community. By applying an equity lens to the ESNW outreach services, in 2021 the City embarked on a partnership with Kambo Energy to deliver the Empower Me program to provide multilingual messaging support to immigrant and newcomer residents. This program further activates the community by recruiting community members to engage and educate their own community in their preferred language.

The City of New Westminster's and the Empower Me multilingual messaging program creates and offers tailored education and support to underserved residents in the City to access and understand energy-focused topics such as energy literacy, energy conservation, information about ESNW, and how to read their utility bills. In response to community organizations' requests, the program offers services in 6 languages: English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese Hokkien, Punjabi and Tagalog.

Key program elements include:

1. Delivering in-person and virtual workshops through community partner organizations in the language of choice, and attending community events.

2. Providing personalized support to community members who are navigating local, provincial and federal energy and emissions rebate and incentive programs.
3. Collecting feedback from the community on topics of interest and developing curricula to tailor the outreach materials to meet the needs of the community.

DISCUSSION

The Empower Me program is a key component of supporting climate equity as the City advances the 7 Bold Steps for climate action and strives to achieve greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set out through the City's Climate Emergency Declaration of March 2019. Providing multilingual service is an essential delivery agent that supports our community in its advancement of Bold Step 3: Carbon Free Homes and Buildings, Bold Step 4: Pollution Free Vehicles and Bold Step 5: Carbon Free Energy.

The following sections describe the impacts achieved since the initiation of the program in 2021, what we have learned, and a description of new initiatives we intend to pursue in 2024. A full program summary with detailed outcomes and community partnership listing is available in attachment 1.

Empower Me Outcome Summary

As of November 2023, this partnership has:

- Supported **269 multilingual and multicultural families** in New Westminster.
- Distributed **51 energy savings kits**.
- Delivered **34 workshops** to New Westminster households.
- **Partnered with 14 community organizations** that serve the City's newcomer and immigrant households.
- **Supported residents in 6 languages**.
- **Launched 3 new workshops** to support seniors, renters and residents interested in clean transportation.

Kambo Energy aims to have their programs delivered by members of the community, with the aim of fostering trust and accelerating recruitment of community partnerships. Through this approach, Kambo Energy has **trained and employed 2 local residents** into their consulting team to execute delivery of the Empower Me program in New Westminster.

Extreme Heat Preparedness Program Extension

Due to the existing presence of the Empower Me program and community partnerships that have been created over the past 2 years, Kambo Energy was able to quickly activate their local network to deliver additional support to the City's residents regarding

extreme heat and low-cost cooling this past summer. Through the short 6 week program window the following was achieved:

- Delivery of **extreme heat preparedness messaging with 10 community groups.**
- **Personalized support to individuals** on community cooling resources and navigating the Province's income and vulnerability qualified air conditioner program (BC Hydro ECAP AC Program).
- **Successfully assisted 15 families with language support** to fill out ECAP AC Program applications.

2023 Learnings

Future topics of interest has been collected by Empower Me informally through their workshop delivery to ensure the program continually responds to the needs of the community. The community has expressed interest in the following: Electric Vehicles and EV rebates, benefits and installation of weather stripping, heat pumps, smoke alarms, and energy efficiency and conservation tips for everyday living.

To augment program evaluation Empower Me has introduced impact questionnaires as a component of their in-person workshops. The following feedback was received to date (16 participants) regarding the value of the workshops:

- 78% are learning how to read their energy bills for the first time
- 89% feel they better understand their energy bills after the workshop
- 50% currently try to save energy in their daily life
- 44% plan to apply for programs they have learned about in the workshop
- 100% say the workshops are easy to understand
- 100% will take what they learned in the workshop and change their energy use at home

NEXT STEPS – 2024 INITIATIVES

As a response to these learnings, the Empower Me program will update their workshop curricula to include:

- 1) Education on electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging
- 2) Senior specific workshops on energy bill reading
- 3) Renter specific workshops on energy bill reading
- 4) Ongoing inclusion of information on energy efficiency and conservation tips for everyday living

Additionally, the City will continue to engage with Empower Me to identify service expansion related to extreme heat preparedness and other climate related hazards.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Climate Action Division has consulted with the Electrical Utility in the preparation for this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In 2023, the Empower Me program is allocated as a community incentive (capital budget item) through the ESNW program; the approved capital budget for the regular program is \$66,480, and the additional extreme heat preparedness program delivery budget was \$10,400.

To ensure ongoing delivery of multilingual services to the community through ESNW, the 2024 capital budget includes a request for \$77,000 to support the Empower Me program as part of implementing the community energy and emission plan (CEEP).

OPTIONS

There are 2 options for Council's consideration:

1. That Council direct staff to operationalize the feedback received in the 2023 Empower Me program year, as outlined in the Next Steps section of this report.
2. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends option 1.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Empower Me Program Impact Report

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
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