

Committee Report

Environment Committee



Committee meeting date: September 23, 2025

For the Metropolitan Council: October 8, 2025

Business Item: 2025-214

Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP) with University of Minnesota, Interagency Agreement 14I007, Amendment Six

Proposed action

That the Metropolitan Council authorize its Regional Administrator to execute the contract amendment for the contract with the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP) at the University of Minnesota. This amendment will increase the contract value from \$1,062,500, by \$225,000, for a new total contract not-to-exceed value of \$1,287,500. Amendment 06 also extends the Interagency Agreement by two years, changing the end date from 12/31/2025 to 12/31/2027. The University of Minnesota's proposed funding request is attached to this memorandum.

Summary of Environment Committee discussion/questions

- CM Wulff asked: Is there any way to get an idea of what industries have done overtime? It would nice to know what has been implemented over the first year.
- Staff responded: We receive a quarterly report from the U of M that we can share with you.
- CM Jenkins asked: Have any of the interns worked for us or any of our partners in the region?

Motion by CM Jenkins, seconded by CM Morales. Motion carried.

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District(s), member(s): All
Policy/legal reference: Minnesota Legislature, Clean Water Funds
Staff prepared/presented: Greg Johnson, Principal Engineer, 651-602-1016
Division/department: Environmental Services/Water Resources

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Background

MnTAP is an outreach and assistance program that helps Minnesota's businesses develop and implement industry-tailored solutions that maximize efficient use of resources and reduce costs to improve public health and the environment. MnTAP has had a successful, supportive partnership with the Metropolitan Council, working together to address metro-area needs for industrial water efficiency. The launch of this industry-focused technical assistance project began in 2012 with MnTAP being tasked with analyzing metro-area private industrial well water use, identifying industry barriers and opportunities, conducting technical water conservation site assessments, and designing and implementing summer internships for engineering students focused on water efficiency. The first contract was for \$52,500 and was amended in 2015 for \$185,000, in 2017 for \$195,000, in 2020 for \$315,000, and in 2022 for \$315,000.

Our collaboration has grown to include site assessments by summer interns at many metro businesses since 2012. These businesses receive water and energy efficiency recommendations from MnTAP staff and student interns. MnTAP efforts have resulted in cumulative first year savings of over 188 million gallons from 2012 to 2024. In addition, this partnership has provided college students the opportunity to work with MnTAP's engineers to gain real-world experience in businesses around the metropolitan area.

Rationale

There is significant value in pursuing water efficiency at metro area businesses. Water savings reduce operational costs on both the water and energy sides of the water-energy nexus for businesses. For many businesses this also enables a reduction in wastewater generation, thereby

freeing existing wastewater capacity for additional future population growth. Our collaboration with MnTAP allows us to utilize the expertise of Minnesota's premier industrial efficiency organization to connect with those businesses that are interested in participating. MnTAP summer interns gain valuable experience, businesses can obtain their services at a low cost, and the region's water supplies reap the benefit. Over the next two years, ten additional summer interns will benefit from participating in the program.

Thrive lens analysis

On Feb. 12, 2025, the Council adopted Imagine 2050, which builds on policy direction in Thrive MSP 2040. Under the Thrive lens, this action advances the Thrive 2040 outcomes of Stewardship and Sustainability and the water sustainability goal of the Water Resources Policy Plan. Increased industrial water efficiency will help protect our aquifers and save money for our businesses. This project is also in alignment with the Metro Area Water Supply Plan with respect to water conservation.

Funding

MnTAP is funded by Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funds through the Minnesota Legislature. These funds are intended to implement projects that address emerging threats to the drinking water supply; provide cost effective regional solutions; leverage interjurisdictional coordination; support local implementation of water supply reliability projects; support the growing needs of community water suppliers facing challenges; and prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the metropolitan area.

Small business inclusion

The Office of Equity and Equal Opportunity did not establish a small business goal on the initial solicitation as this was an Interagency Agreement with Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP) at the University of Minnesota.



A Proposal for Metropolitan Council
From Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP)

Metro Water Conservation Utilizing MnTAP Interns

*Priority area addressed:
Water Conservation in the Metro Area, Minnesota*

Regents of the University of Minnesota

On behalf of MnTAP
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Project funding period: January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2027

Total project funding: \$225,000

Abstract: Through this project, MnTAP interns will explore opportunities for water conservation in businesses and organizations within the metro area through a contract extension with the Metropolitan Council. Through this work, Metropolitan Council will promote water conservation at multiple industries and communities across the metro area. As part of this project, results will be summarized in executive summaries on water conservation resulting from 10 detailed intern project investigations and presented at public events. MnTAP staff will recruit host companies, scope the projects, hire, train, and supervise the student interns. MnTAP will also develop marketing materials which promote water conservation to businesses and area stakeholders.

Objective

MnTAP will define opportunities for water conservation for businesses and organizations in the metro area through the dedicated resources of 10 MnTAP interns. The interns will analyze water conservation opportunities through full time work over the summers of 2026 and 2027. The information gained on water conservation opportunities and strategies will be available as a public resource, through both MnTAP and the Metropolitan Council, as a way to further engage businesses in water conservation. MnTAP water conservation work will be assembled in reader-friendly materials for marketing water conservation strategies and results.

Background

Our region is fortunate to have an abundant clean water supply. In order to protect this resource and plan for its continued use in support of growth in the seven county area including Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties, the Metropolitan Council has been charged with planning for the sustainable development of the region's water supply.

MnTAP is an outreach and assistance program that helps Minnesota's businesses develop and implement industry-tailored solutions that prevent pollution at the source, maximize efficient use of resources, and reduce energy use and costs to improve public health and the environment. MnTAP, at the University of Minnesota, has been providing services for 41 years including site visits, student interns, web resources, and a materials exchange program. MnTAP has been offering interns to support pollution prevention, energy and process efficiency, and water conservation projects at Minnesota businesses and industries since the mid 1980s. Documentation in the form of final project presentations, project summaries, or other publications is available for all projects since 2013 and for select projects prior to 2013 at: <http://www.mntap.umn.edu/interns/pastprojects/>.

The Minnesota Technical Assistance Program has been funded by the Metropolitan Council through a grant from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to provide data and assist business with water conservation projects. During 2012 and 2013, an industry survey, seven industrial assessments and three water conservation intern projects were conducted. These companies have saved over 35,000,000 gallons of water per year. A final report was submitted at the completion of the project and is posted on the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services website.¹

During 2014 and 2015, MnTAP received additional funding to continue providing water conservation interns at metro businesses. Summaries of the five intern projects conducted over the course of this work have been published. These companies have implemented changes that save nearly 21,000,000 gallons of water per year. In fiscal year 2014, MnTAP was requested to evaluate industrial water use in the North and East Metro Ground Water Management Area along with providing industrial water conservation tips and assessments. This work was completed and is posted on the Metropolitan Council website.²

During 2016 and 2017, MnTAP received additional funding to provide water conservation interns at 10 metro businesses. By leveraging additional resources, MnTAP was able to support water efficiency evaluations at 12 businesses by MnTAP interns. These companies have implemented changes that save 40,000,000 gallons of water per year. Case studies for each project have been reported in MnTAP Solutions for 2016 and 2017.³

¹ <https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Publications-And-Resources/WATER-SUPPLY-PLANNING/Water-Conservation-by-Private-Well-Industries.aspx>

² <https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Publications-And-Resources/WATER-SUPPLY-PLANNING/Water-Saving-Opportunities-in-the-North-and-East-Met.aspx>
<https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Publications-And-Resources/WATER-SUPPLY-PLANNING/Industrial-Water-Conservation-North-East-Metro-G.aspx>
[https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Publications-And-Resources/WATER-SUPPLY-PLANNING/Industrial-Water-Conservation-North-East-Metro-\(1\).aspx](https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Publications-And-Resources/WATER-SUPPLY-PLANNING/Industrial-Water-Conservation-North-East-Metro-(1).aspx)
[https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Publications-And-Resources/WATER-SUPPLY-PLANNING/Industrial-Water-Conservation-North-East-Metro-\(2\).aspx](https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Publications-And-Resources/WATER-SUPPLY-PLANNING/Industrial-Water-Conservation-North-East-Metro-(2).aspx)

³ <http://www.mntap.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Publications/Solutions/2016-Solutions.pdf>

MCES continued the grant with MnTAP to provide water conservation interns at 10 metro businesses during summer 2018 and 2019. By leveraging additional resources, MnTAP was able to support water efficiency evaluations at 11 businesses by MnTAP interns. These companies have implemented changes that save over 25,000,000 gallons of water each year. Case studies for each project have been reported in MnTAP Solutions for 2018 and 2019.⁴

During 2020-2022, MnTAP received additional funding to provide water conservation interns at 15 metro businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in challenges placing interns during the years 2020 and 2021. In 2020, MnTAP provided water conservation interns to four businesses and utilized a fifth intern to conduct a holistic study of water efficiency best management practices (BMPs). In 2021, MnTAP provided water conservation interns to three businesses. A fourth intern converted the data collected during the BMP study into a public tool that any business can use to decrease water use. The tool is hosted on the MnTAP website.⁵ In 2022, MnTAP leveraged additional resources to support water efficiency evaluations at seven businesses by MnTAP interns. These 14 companies have implemented changes that save over 43,000,000 gallons of water each year. Case studies for each project have been reported in MnTAP Solutions for 2020, 2021, and 2022.⁶

MCES continued the grant with MnTAP to provide water conversation interns at 15 metro businesses during the summers of 2023, 2024, and 2025. By leveraging additional resources, MnTAP was able to support water efficiency evaluations by MnTAP at over 18 facilities. These organizations have implemented changes that save over 25,000,000 gallons of water each year. Case studies for projects from 2023 and 2024 have been reported in MnTAP Solutions.⁷ Case studies for projects from 2025 are in progress.

MnTAP is well-qualified to lead this project due to a strong history of applying pollution prevention and conservation solutions to businesses across Minnesota, including industrial water efficiency. MnTAP efforts have resulted in a cumulative first year savings of over 188 million gallons of water from 2012 through 2024. MnTAP's technical assistance staff members hold degrees in engineering and science. They have many years of experience applying source reduction practices in industrial settings and have the understanding of business operations needed to offer customized solutions. Additionally, MnTAP is well known as the leading pollution prevention provider in the State of Minnesota. This reputation, as well as MnTAP's broad network of vendors, county and city government personnel, professional associations, and others will be leveraged throughout this project.

Project Overview

MnTAP proposes to identify opportunities for water users to improve water efficiency through the work of MnTAP interns. Interns working closely with a vetted facility can provide an opportunity to conduct a deeper analysis of site water use, identify water efficiency recommendations, and launch implementation projects. The MnTAP intern program has been widely regarded by participating companies as an excellent opportunity to have an engineering or sustainability student look deeply into options for improving aspects of facility operations. It is also an opportunity for students to gain valuable professional experience during their academic careers. Interns working closely with MnTAP staff can provide an opportunity to conduct a deeper analysis of current water consumption trends, sector needs, best management practices, barriers to implementation, and emerging technologies. Additionally, interns can create resources and outreach materials to promote and support metro businesses in water conservation work.

In this project, interns will identify solutions for a variety of water conservation opportunities at selected facilities. This approach provides detailed information on critical components of project implementation such as cost of

<http://www.mntap.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Publications/Solutions/2017-Solutions.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.mntap.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Publications/Solutions/2018-Solutions.pdf>

<http://www.mntap.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Publications/Solutions/2019-Solutions.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.mntap.umn.edu/resources/tools-calculators/water-tool/>

⁶ <http://www.mntap.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Publications/Solutions/2020-Solutions.pdf>

<http://www.mntap.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Publications/Solutions/2021-Solutions.pdf>

<http://www.mntap.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Publications/Solutions/2022-Solutions.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.mntap.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Publications/Solutions/Solutions-2023.pdf>

<http://www.mntap.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/Publications/Solutions/Solutions-2024.pdf>

implementation, payback, and timing, as well as other internal or external influences specific to each facility. As needed, interns may also perform literature reviews, research novel water conservation strategies, analyze historical data, create outreach and informational materials, or perform other work that supports the strategy and success of the water conservation program. One outcome of each intern project is the development of a published executive summary detailing the water conservation opportunity including both a technical and cost analysis, which helps share identified industrial water efficiency opportunities with other businesses for potential replication.

Project Tasks

Task: Intern Projects

MnTAP will coordinate ten (10) intern projects focused on water conservation improvement at metro facilities. A target of five (5) projects will be executed in each summer in 2026 and 2027. The intern process is summarized below:

- Recruit companies and partners
- Develop and scope projects
- Select companies/projects
- Finalize company agreements
- Hire student interns
- Train interns
- Supervise the project/intern
- Coordinate a public presentation
- Present findings to companies and/or partners (private)
- Ensure a final report is written for companies and/or partners(private)
- Publish project executive summaries in *Solutions*

Intern reports will be completed at the end of the project and delivered to the companies and relevant partners at the conclusion of the work. This work will be conducted under an agreement between the companies and/or partners and the University of Minnesota and is considered confidential company information. Each intern will present an approved summary of the results of the work at a public meeting, and an executive summary will be published.

Promotional and Outreach Communications

MnTAP utilizes a multi-pronged approach to recruiting host companies. For example, MnTAP performs a biannual analysis of water permitting data to target sectors and businesses with significant opportunity for reduction. Indications of significant opportunity include an overall consumption higher than average for the business sector, a large percentage sewered, and/or an increase in year-over-year usage. MnTAP also makes a point of connecting with companies located in areas with water stress or usage restrictions.

Additionally, MnTAP will refer pre-existing clients to the intern program when an opportunity for water reduction is observed during the course of standard technical assistance work. Furthermore, MnTAP staff present about the program at conferences and symposiums hosted by industry organizations and leverage their professional networks to identify host companies.

Project results and recommendations will be presented in compelling formats to create awareness and promote water conservation impact potential. Recommended, planned, and implemented results will be clearly reported in a variety of formats.

Project Deliverables

MnTAP staff members and interns will track facility water conservation recommendations, estimate conservation potential by site, and document implemented recommendations with actual water savings. MnTAP will also update the Metropolitan Council on project status through e-mail communications as requested by the sponsor.

MnTAP will complete the following as part of this project:

- Outreach to businesses and organizations in the seven-county metro area to promote water conservation and the intern program.
- Coordinate 10 MnTAP intern projects to identify water efficiency opportunities and implement solutions.
- Host public presentations on the results of the intern work at public meetings.
- Publish executive summaries of the water conservation approaches and impact potential.
- Develop stories and visual materials designed to inform and motivate stakeholders toward water efficiency.
- Keep the Metropolitan Council project manager updated on results with quarterly summary reports.

Schedule

All project tasks will be completed by MnTAP staff members. The intern projects will be conducted by interns hired through MnTAP and supervised by MnTAP engineering/science staff members. The interns will work on the projects from mid-May through August in 2026 and 2027. The executive summaries will be completed by the interns and MnTAP staff, reviewed by the project companies and/or partners, and published prior to the end of December of each project year. The project follow-up will continue throughout the grant period with a summary report before the end of 2027.

Budget Narrative

MnTAP intern costs are calculated at a net rate of \$21 per hour for up to 500 hours. The intern receives a portion of their compensation from the site company contribution to the program. MnTAP staff effort on this project has been calculated using a charge rate of \$100 per hour which includes salary, fringe, rent and administrative support costs. Staff effort for each intern includes host company project target scoping, project work plan development, intern supervision, and company follow up. Administrative support includes activities that facilitate the company, intern, and University interface including student recruiting, training, and salary administration as well as company contracting and relationship management. Reporting includes activities focused on sponsor reporting and budget management.

Promotional outreach includes researching business sectors with high water use for targeted outreach, compiling contact information, outreaching to businesses, generating case studies for publication from each intern project, posting these to the MnTAP website, and compiling them into the annual Solutions publication. Additional staff effort new for this renewal includes promotional outreach to engage companies in the program through newsletters, targeted publication of case studies, event participation and targeted company engagement activities,

Budget Overview 2026-2027 MnTAP Water Efficiency Interns

Activity	Resources Allocated	Sub-Total	Total
Intern			
Intern salary (per intern)	500 hours	\$10,500 (x 10)	\$105,000
Staff support (per intern)	25 hours administrative 80 hours technical	\$2,500 (x 10) \$8,000 (x 10)	\$25,000 \$80,000
Reporting Quarterly and Final	25 hours	\$2,500 (x 2)	\$5,000

Promotional/ Outreach Case Studies (per intern)	10 hours	\$1,000 (x 10)	\$10,000
Total			\$225,000