DATE: 10/17/2023 TIME: 9:00 a.m. LOCATION: Executive Boardroom

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Janet Howard, Chair | Tamika Duplessis | Maurice Sholas | Joseph Peychaud |

Operations Committee Meeting Agenda

I. Roll Call

II. Presentation Items

A. Presentation on AMI Implementation – Rebecca Johnsey, Principal Engineer
B. People Plan Update – Kaitlin Tymrak, Business Services Program Manager

III. Public Comment

IV. Adjournment

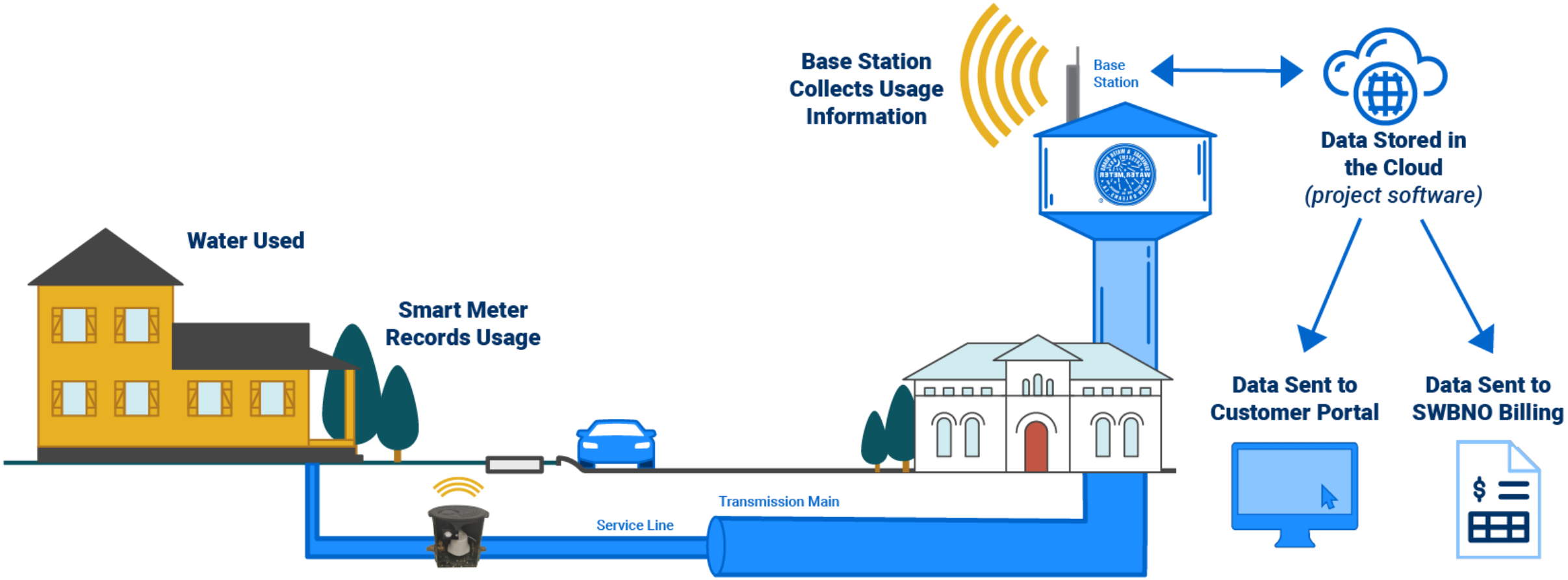
SWBNO SMART METERING PROGRAM

October 11, 2023

Agenda

- Smart Metering Overview
- Roll Out
  - Customer Notifications
  - Technical Interfaces
  - Navigating Challenges
- Billing
- Operations

How Smart Meters Work



The Benefits

Responds to customer needs and concerns

Nearly eliminates estimated bills

More accurate, frequent water use readings

Available meter diagnostics

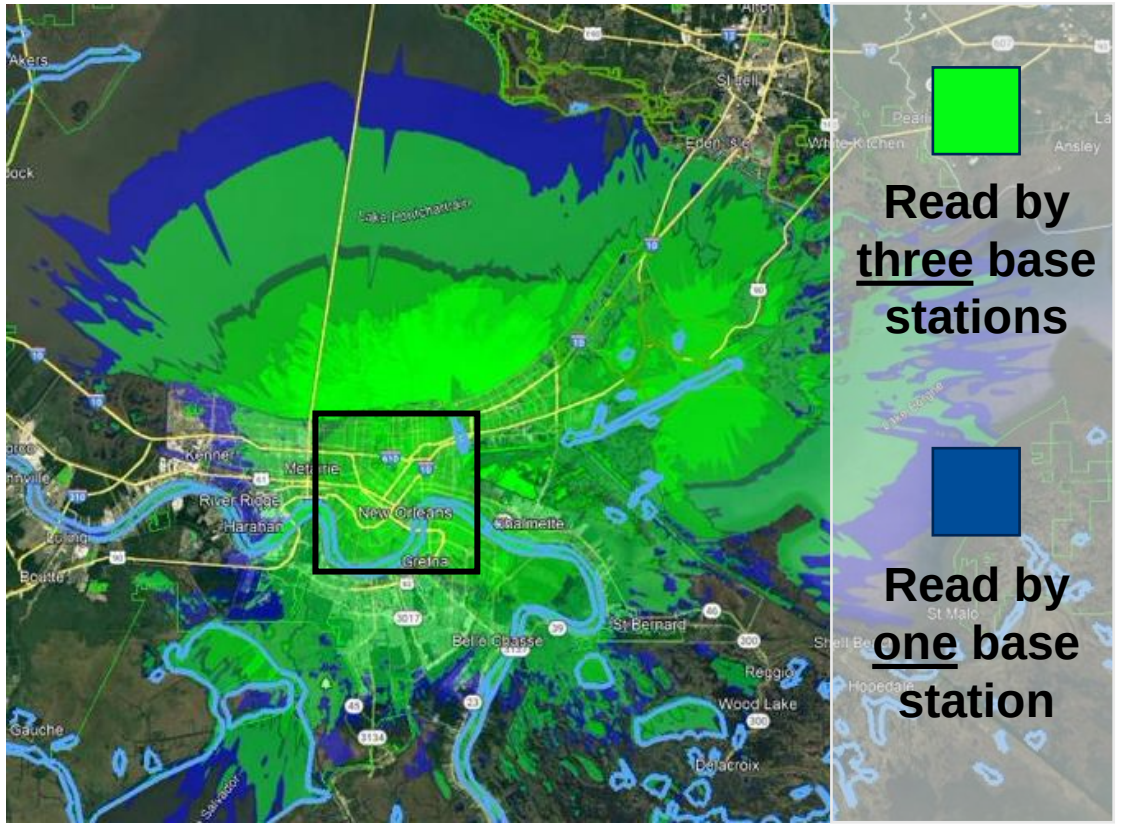
Near real-time leak detection

Customized alerts

24/7 access to an online customer portal

Water Data Collection Redundancy

- Over 95% of meters will be read by at least three base stations
  - If one base station goes down, we will have backup collection points
  - There are data storage capabilities that will hold and backfill data in the case of an outage
  - We can also drive by to get readings or manually read the meter



Network coverage map

AMI Benefits Nationwide*

2021 survey by American Water Works Association (AWWA)

Surveyed 322 U.S. utilities to understand experiences with AMI implementation

79%

The overwhelming majority of surveyed utilities are strongly confident about the benefits of AMI for both utilities and customers.

68%

Over two-thirds of the utilities are now rolling out the AMI technology across all of their customer bases or have already completed the rollout.

43%

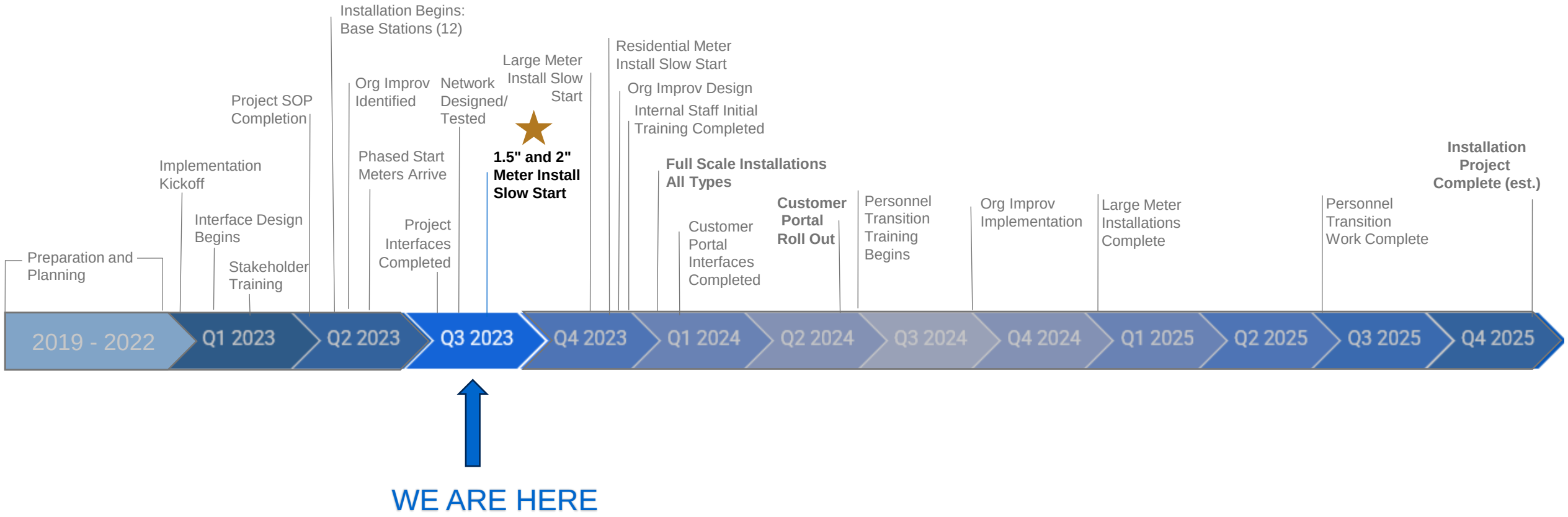
Slightly less than half of the surveyed utilities provided their customers with a functional AMI portal in August 2021. Another third of the utilities (33%) plan to provide customers with portal access in the future.

56%

Most surveyed agencies have already been systematically using AMI data to inform the utility's operations and the work of their employees.

**AWWA Increasing Consumer Benefits & Engagements in AMI-based conservation programs guidebook (2021)*

Schedule Update*



*(*subject to change)*

Rollout

Slow Start Route Plan (Initial)

1.5" and 2" meters for 2023*

- Completion of network infrastructure installation
- Number of 1.5” & 2” size meters in the route
- Anticipated pace of the installers
- Availability of meters to complete installations
- Avoidance of existing construction with JIRR/ CNO
- Blackout schedule due to meter reading or billing activities
  - No demographics are factored into route deployment decisions

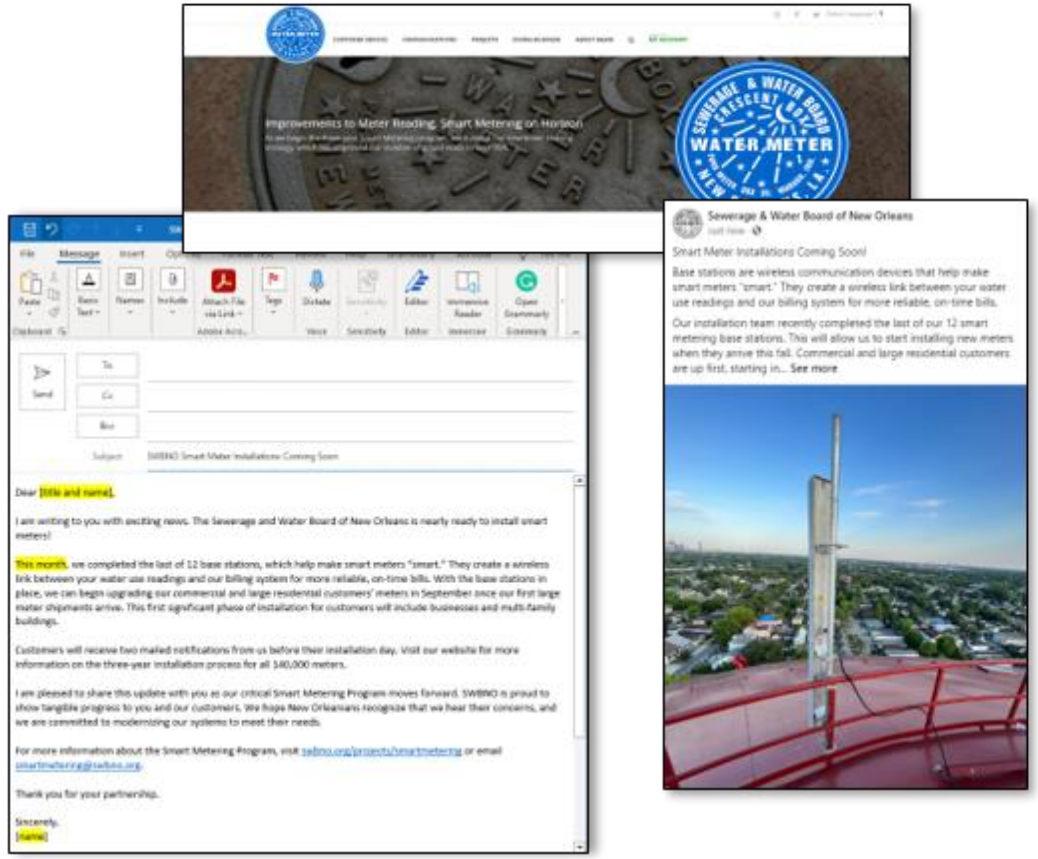
Month	Districts	Neighborhoods
September	A, B	Hollygove, Mid City
October	A, B, C	Mid City, Uptown, Central City, West Bank
November	A, B, C	Uptown, West Bank
December	A, C, D, E	East, Uptown, Gentilly, Marigny

District	September	October	November	December	**Total**
A	34	10	9	43	**96**
B	16	70	23		**109**
C		45	41	29	**115**
D		32		50	**82**
E			59	42	**101**
Total	**50**	**157**	**132**	**164**	**503**

**Process replicated for routes of all other meter sizes*

Communications Strategy

- Neighborhood meetings
  - In-person and virtual
- Frequent status updates with external stakeholders
- FAQs on SWBNO website
- New protocols in place to track/resolve customer concerns
- Identify and contact large usage accounts to provide additional information
- Customer Portal information sessions to be held beginning Q2 2024



What Customers Can Expect

Three customer notices

1. Postcard to account holder
2. Postcard to service address
3. Door hanger

Water shut off during installation

- Residential: 15 – 30 minutes
- Commercial: 20 minutes – 2 hours

Process overview available at swbno.org/Projects/SmartMetering

ID Badge

Uniform

Vehicle Decal

Flushing Your Plumbing

Installation Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):

Installer will flush outside spigot, whenever possible, to remove:

- debris
- air
- potential contaminants

More flushing instructions provided on post-installation door hanger and on SWBNO website

Customer Support

General Smart Metering Program Questions

SWBNO Website
https://swbno.org/projects/smartmetering

52-WATER
SWBNO Customer Service Team

De-Escalation Resources:

- Designated CSR Smart Metering Program experts
- Increased training frequency and touchpoints

Post-Installation Questions

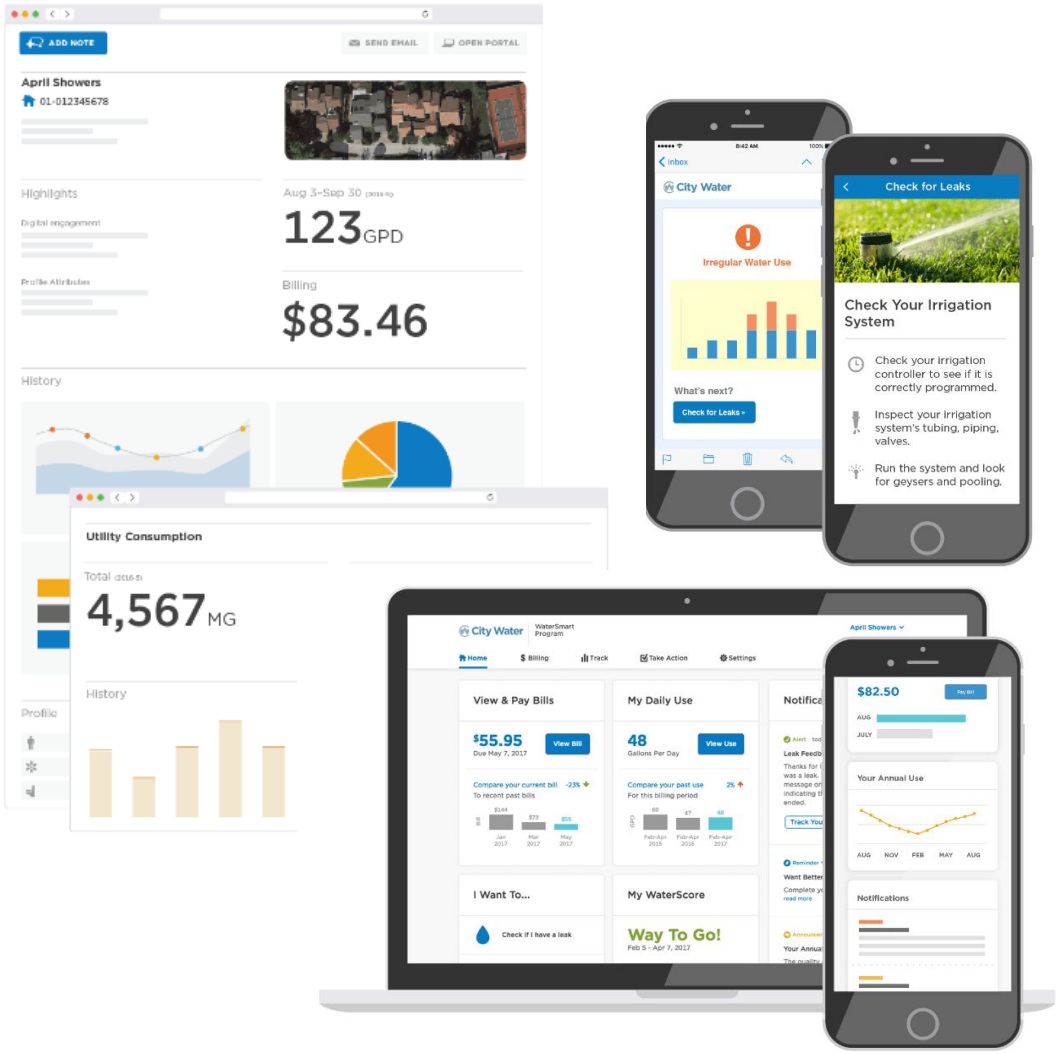
Aqua Metric

Installation Vendor's Call Center

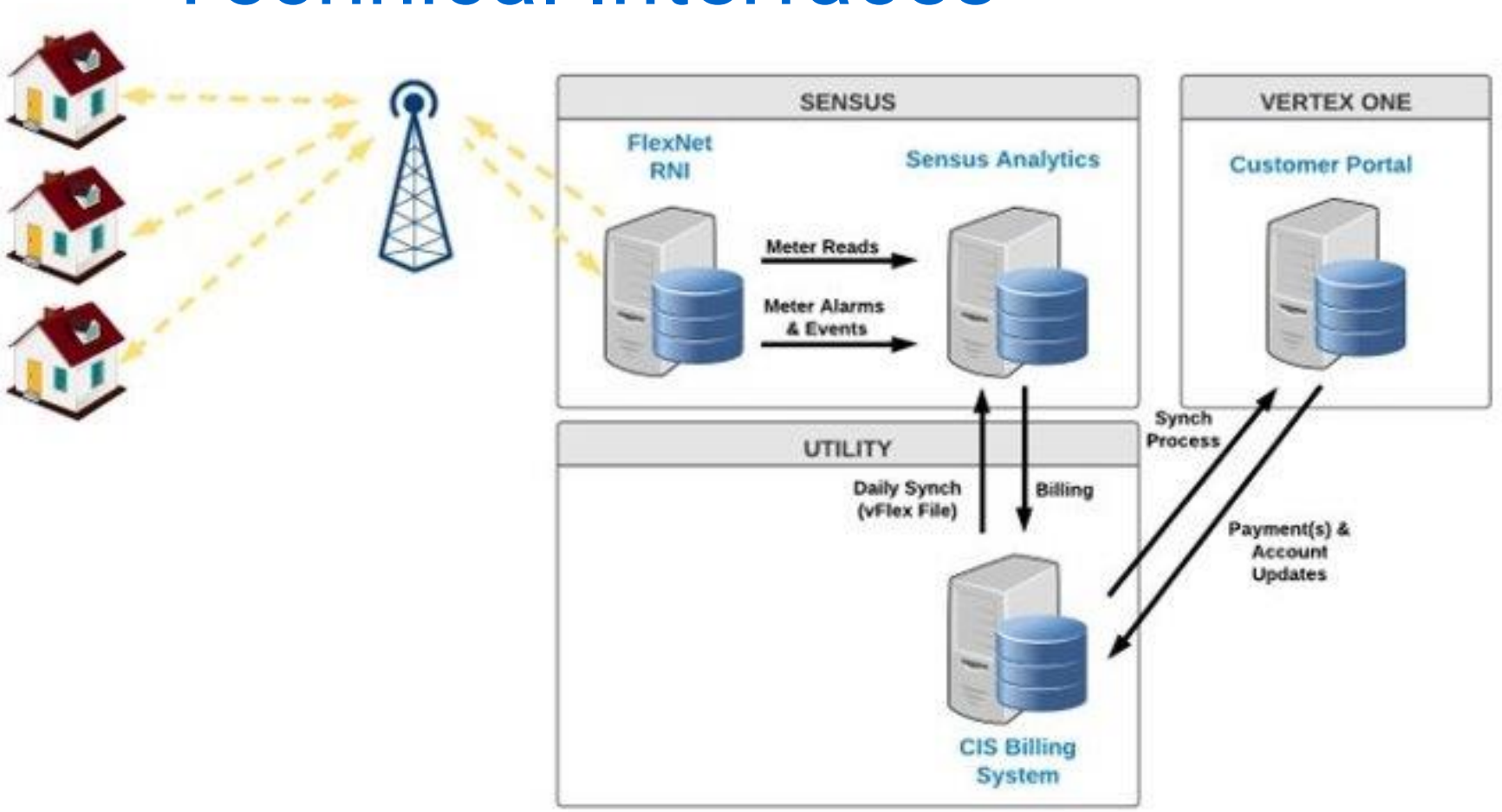
504-313-1576

Customer Portal

- No cost to customer
- Available on desktop and mobile devices
- Offers modern account management tools
- Customer Service team can troubleshoot within three days of smart meter installation even if
  - customer does not have to have a portal account
  - customer does not have access to the internet or a smart phone
- Usage information updated every 24 hours
  - Alarms can post every 5 minutes
- Rollout expected Q2 2024



Technical Interfaces



Amount of Data:

840,000 annual reads → 1,226,400,000 annual reads

Testing:

- All interfaces are integrated and working correctly
- SWBNO IT is completing some of interfaces manually to ensure process is working ahead of automation
- Automation is designed and will likely be implemented in the next 2-3 weeks

Initial Rollout Challenges & Solutions

Challenge	Solution
Infrastructure • Broken valves, pipes, other assets • Large meters are extremely old, and some include fire service requirements	• Many items can be fixed by the Vendor Installation contractors • Some require SWBNO staff to support (isolate service line with valve closure) or do themselves. • Designing a specific approach for ~800 fire rated meters
Customer Resistance	• Identify benefits; dispel misinformation • Continue outreach via many different avenues

Initial Rollout Challenges & Solutions

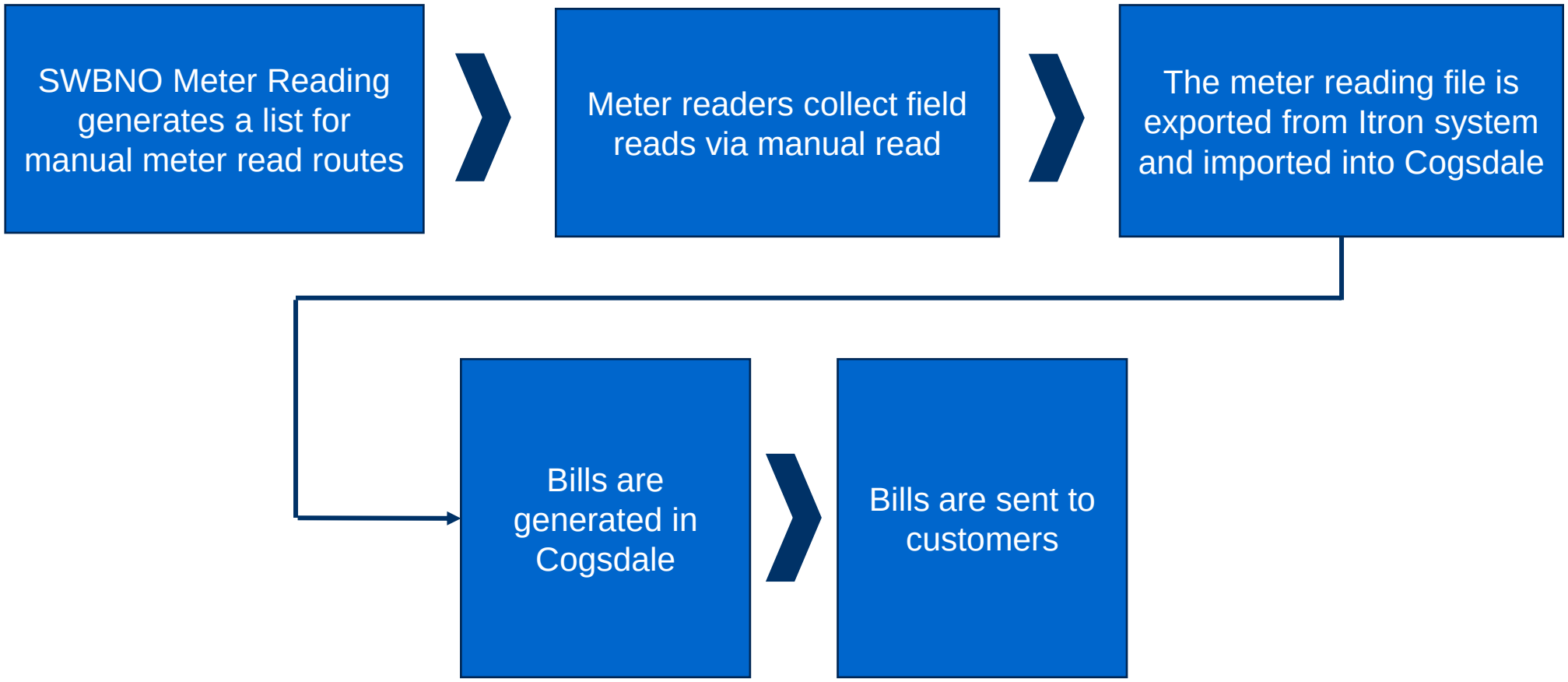
Challenge	Solution

Customer Service Response Time	• Newly developed protocols
	  • Identified Smart Meter Customer Service Representatives
	  • Tracking mechanism built into system for better response accountability

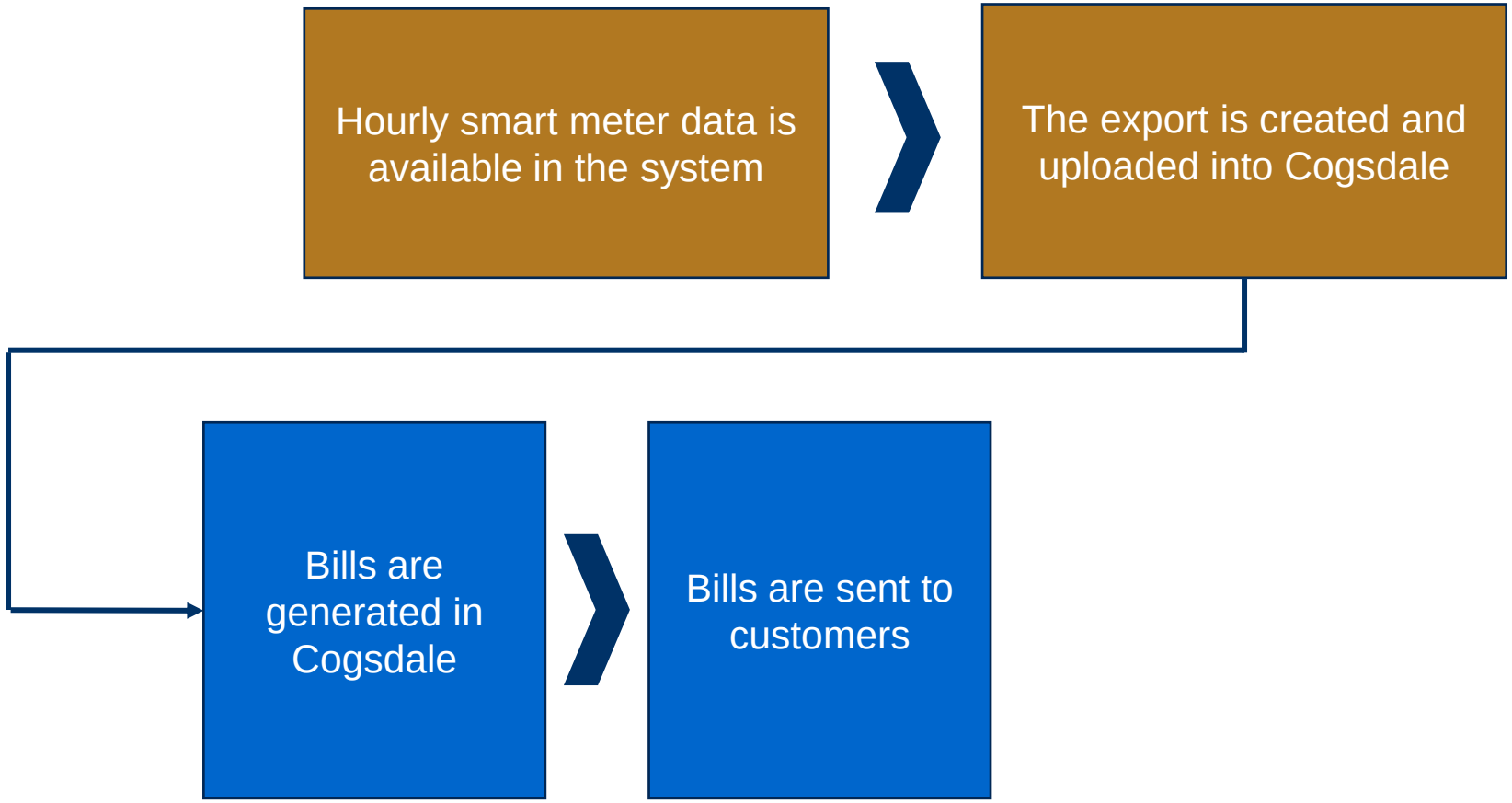
Installation Quality	• Follow QA/QC procedures, especially during slow start
Technical Interfaces	• Designed and tested prior to rollout • Currently being used in SWBNO's production environment with oversight and guidance from external sources (Jacobs and Aqua-Metric) • Using calculated slow start to identify any issues and change protocols as needed

Billing

Current Billing Process



Smart Meter Billing Process



Transitional Billing

First bill after replacement = Old meter consumption + New meter consumption

Quality Assurance/ Quality Control

- Digital photos of both the final reading from old meter and the first reading from new meter
  - Not included in bill
- Input both final and first meter readings into Smart Meter software

Anticipated Challenges:

- Final read on old meter lower / higher than expected = automated billing hold for additional review

Slow Start Installation Data

Initial data meets expectations, showing:

- New meters are more accurate and sensitive
  - The result: some increased bills
- Continuous flow alerts indicate high percentage of customer-side leaks
  - Largely undetected by older meters
- Some post-AMI bills projected as higher than previous estimated bills

Older meters often under-register

- Average age of commercial meters: 36 years old
- Average age of residential meters:14 years old

Addressing Unexpected High Bills

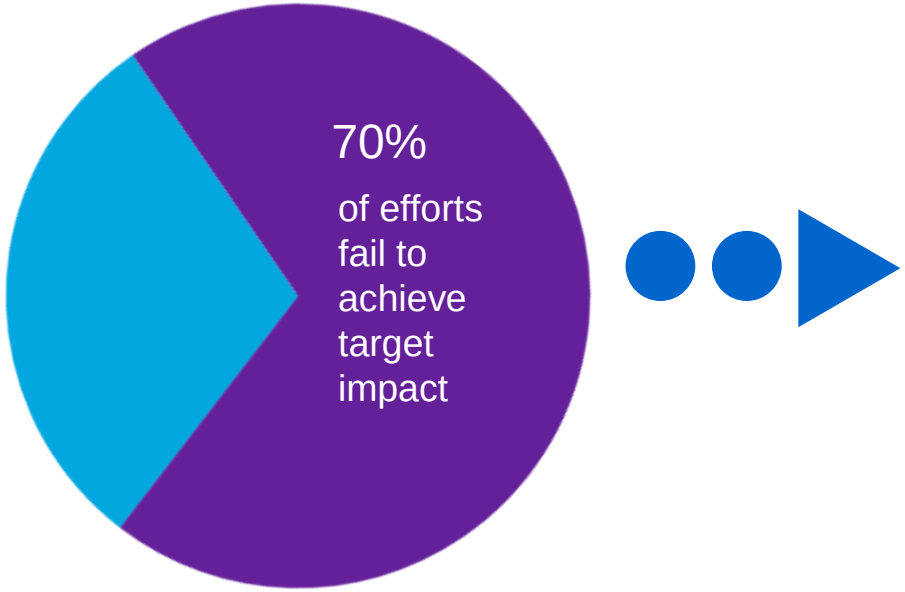
Post-Installation

- Adding resources to proactively identify accounts with higher-than-normal water use
- Customer Service is ready to listen and troubleshoot
  - New escalation processes in place
  - User guides provided for varying escalation scenarios
- Communicating with customers on case-by-case basis to address their individual situation

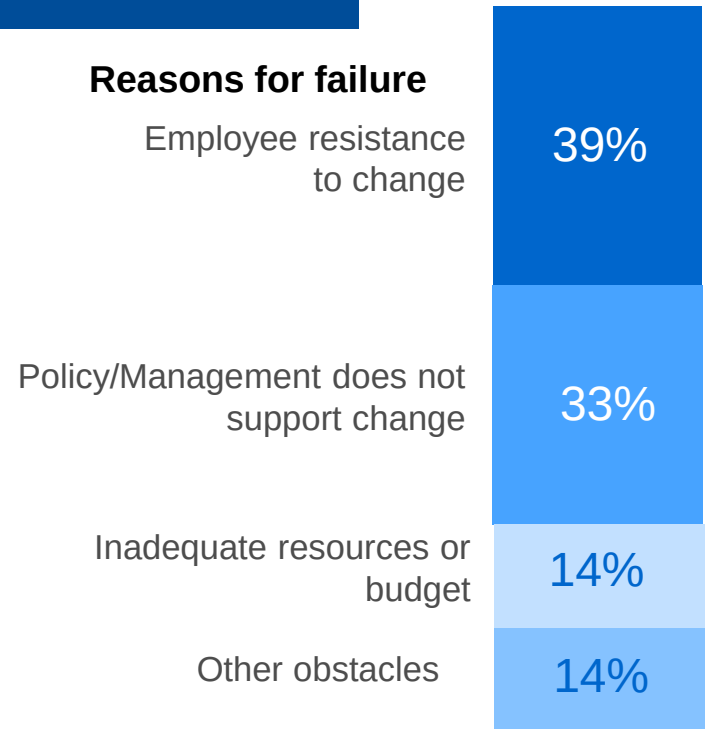
Operations

Importance of Buy-In and Operational Changes

Benefits from most transformational programs fail to be fully realized



Reasons for failure



Transitioning Operations

Utilizing same workforce

- Some job roles will change
- Some new functions will be required

Must operate both old and new system concurrently

- Ongoing need for manual meter reads

Working with Civil Service to create three job series:

- AMI Meter Techs
- Data Analysts
- Data Scientists

Operational Changes

Departments that will see the biggest changes include:

- Meter Shop
- Meter Reading
- Field Services (Turn On/Off)
- Maintenance
- Billing
- Payment Processing
- Credit and Collections
- Escalations
- Accounting
- Customer Service

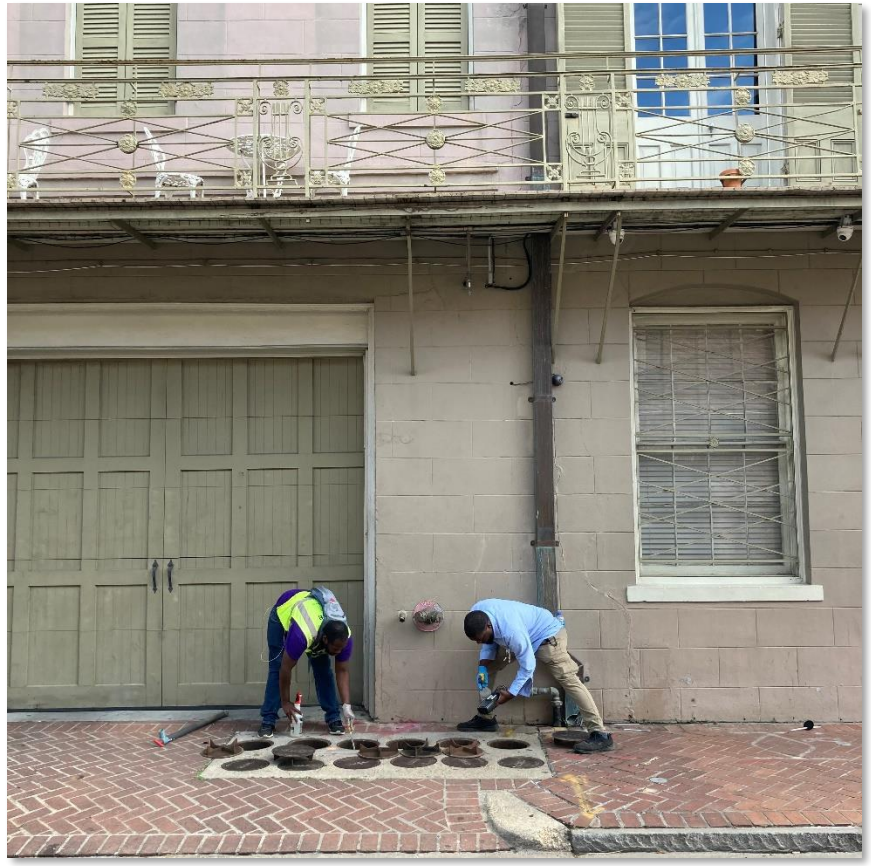
Eight additional departments identified as changing operations due to smart metering

Operational Changes

Billing

Supporting Our Employees

- Currently reviewing and updating job descriptions
- Training internally to meet new job requirements
  - New skill sets
  - Understanding the technology
- Developing and training workforce on new SOPs
- Developing policies that will parallel existing skill sets and new opportunities



Operations & Maintenance

Shift of Operational Strategy

- Focus changing from replacing oldest meters in population to more proactive metrics
- No longer removing meters after turn-off
  - Utilizing usage alerts on non-active accounts

Metrics include:

- Ally meter installation to assist with Salt Wedge response
- Existing log of meter change requests
- Locations difficult for Meter Reading, identified via Skip Codes
- Accounts with more than 3 months of estimated reads
- Accounts with manual estimates
- Escalation of delinquent accounts/ back-payments

Questions?

THANK YOU!

SWBNO
SMART METERING
PROGRAM

A Modern Solution to Meet Customer Needs

Sewerage & Water Board

Workforce Model Analysis, Development, and Implementation: *The People Plan*

October 17, 2023

400 Lafayette St.
Suite 304
New Orleans, LA
70130

Project Overview and Progress Update

Project Timeline

Assessment
April – October 2023

- Identify current challenges and opportunities
- Define key goals and metrics for future results
- Data analysis, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups

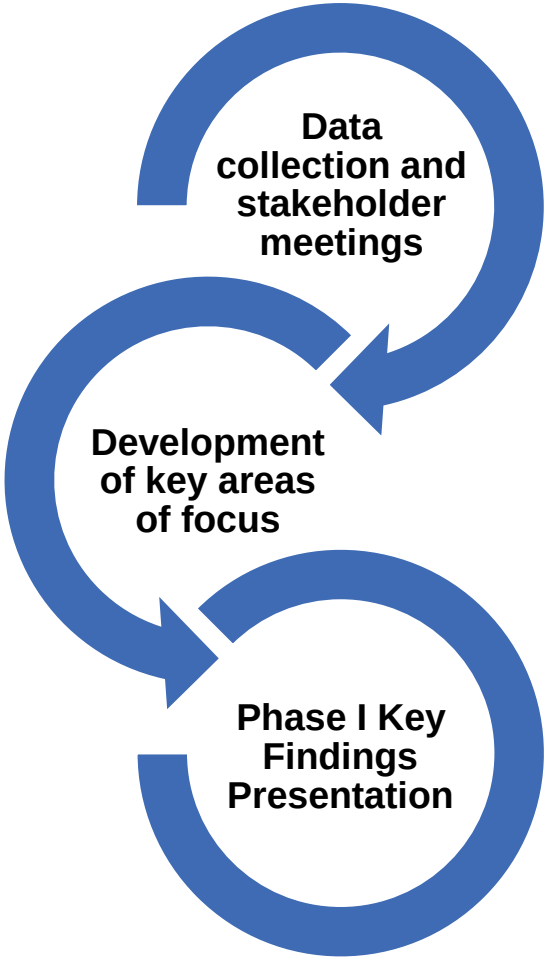
Options Development
October – December 2023

- Benchmarking utilities under different models
- Comparison of strengths, weaknesses, and applicability to SWBNO's unique circumstances
- Ongoing SWBNO engagement and collaboration

Implementation
January – December 2024

- Develop actionable implementation plan
- Provide support for approval processes, logistical and operational steps, communications, and change management

Phase I: Assessment



- This project phase is focused on understanding and documenting the key characteristics of SWBNO's current workforce model under the Civil Service system.
- The PFM team has conducted a series of individual and group meetings with SWBNO leadership and additional key stakeholders both within SWBNO and the City overall.
- PFM will also conduct a thorough review of any written reports, the FY2022-2027 Strategic Plan, past analyses, and existing measures and data provided by SWBNO.
- Across every area of our analysis, PFM applies a diversity lens to evaluate the impact of SWBNO's workforce structure and practices on the utility's ability to meet its goals for equity and inclusion.

Phase I: Progress

- Three meetings held with the full project Steering Committee.
- Seven focus groups conducted
  - Participants selected by department leadership
  - 65 employees across divisions
- Employee-wide survey to be initiated shortly
  - Mobile access is available
- Phase 1 Deliverable: Present summary of preliminary assessment to the Steering Committee.

Phase II: Options Development

- During this Phase, PFM will focus on evaluating additional workforce model options, including but not limited to state and local civil service systems, or other models used by high-performing utilities.
- PFM will conduct a focused benchmarking review of up to six other public employers evaluating workforce structures, programs, practices, and outcomes. Through benchmarking, we will seek to identify the strengths and weaknesses for each comparator.
- PFM will identify a series of models most likely to benefit SWBNO and highlight the structures and features of each model, including potential legal and legislative requirements, estimated costs to transitioning to the alternative model, general feasibility, and any additional context (most importantly, employee feedback) needed to achieve a positive end result.
- At the conclusion of Phase II, PFM will provide the Steering Committee with a final report based on the research, analysis, evaluation, and comparison of the identified workforce models – and recommend the model (or combination of models and practices) that would be most likely to support and promote a utility-wide workforce that is skilled, committed, inspired, rewarded, engaged, and accountable.

Phase III: Implementation

- During the Implementation Phase, PFM will work with SWBNO and other identified stakeholders to develop an implementation plan to facilitate successful transition. The implementation plan will take into account:
  - Legislative, budget, and other approval requirements and processes
  - Operational logistics to modify systems, policies, and procedures
  - Employee relations, communications, and change management approaches
- PFM will also provide additional support and advise SWBNO during a successful transition to the workforce model recommended in the previous phase. This could include:
  - Testimony before City Council or other legislative bodies
  - Presentations with key stakeholders
  - Evaluation/analysis of compromise measures
  - Assistance with change management approaches

Questions?

Thank You

pfm