



# Utility Discount Program Update

## Energy Committee Briefing

### April 23, 2014



# Presentation Overview

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# Background

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Seattle City Light (SCL) has been providing bill assistance to customers in need for more than 30 years. There are three specific programs:

- Utility Discount Program (UDP)
- Emergency Low Income Assistance (ELIA)
- Project Share

In 2012, SCL worked with the Energy & Environment Committee to propose an additional focus on UDP enrollments to mitigate rate impacts driven by strategic plan

- Conducted pilots focused on direct marketing strategies
- Received additional budget funding to support increased enrollment activities
- Developed target goals to increase enrollment by 2,500 in 2014 and to a total of 22,000 by 2018

# Options

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## ➤ **Utility Discount Program**

- Currently has 14,243 customers enrolled receiving more than \$7.3 million annually in discounts
- SCL rate payer funded
- Eligible customers receive 60% reduction on their electric bill
- Gross income must be 70% or below state median income
- Customers receiving Section 8 vouchers or who live in subsidized public housing are excluded

# Options continued

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## ➤ **Emergency Low Income Assistance Program**

- SCL funds
- Eligible customers may receive up to \$200 annually
- Customers must have received a shut off notice and have a balance of \$250 and make a payment arrangement
- In 2013, 1,206 customers received funds totaling \$212,000, average award was \$158

## ➤ **Project Share**

- Privately funded by SCL Customer and Employee Donations
- Eligible customers who have received ELIA or Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) may receive up to \$500 annually
- In 2013, we received \$272,800 in donations and distributed \$222,774 to approximately 1,139 customers average award was \$195

# Other Resources

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## ➤ **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program**

- Funded by Federal Government
- Offers customers funding, energy education, budget counseling, and weatherization services
- In 2012, more than 6,000 customers helped totaling \$1.6 million

## ➤ **Payment Arrangements**

- Customers may extend time to pay to avoid disconnection

## ➤ **Life Support Equipment**

- With doctor's certification customers will not be disconnected for a period of time

## ➤ **211 Crisis Line**

- Customers in crisis may call the SCL Customer Care office for emergency help in preventing disconnection

# 2013 Highlights

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- Ramped up staffing
- Changed ordinance allowing UDP to use affordable housing associations for enrollment certifications
- Significant increases in direct marketing and outreach to increase enrollment and promote conservation
- Used four distinct strategies to target specific customer groups
- Enrolled an additional 1,093 participants through a combination of bill inserts, direct mail and outreach activities

# 2013 Highlights continued

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## ➤ Direct Marketing:

- Targeted 2,200 customers in low income buildings with signed Memorandum of Agreements (for housing initiative)
  - Sent personalized letters to customers
  - Low income senior homeowners
- Targeted 5,000 seniors who receive property tax exemption through King County
  - Sent personalized letters, postcards and made follow-up calls
- HomeWise participants
  - Targeted 426 customers who are on HomeWise program
  - Sent personalized letters to customers
- Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) waitlist
  - Targeted 5,000 customers who are on waitlist to get on SHA housing
  - Sent personalized letters

# 2013 Highlights continued

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## ➤ Community Outreach:

- School Kids on Reduced & Free Lunch Program: Flyers and materials in backpacks during Back to School event
- Developed Warm Winter Campaign to increase presence in communities
- Public outreach & engagement leaders for:
  - East African
  - Seniors
- Community partners: Flyers, Posters & Sign-up events
  - Food Bank
  - Senior Centers
  - Faith Based Organizations
  - Educational Institutions, e.g., University of Washington
  - Neighborhood Service Centers
- Application available in 7 different languages

# 2013 Highlights continued

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## ➤ Conservation Activities

- Sent Home Energy Visit letters to 300 highest users eligible or enrolled in UDP
- Made follow-up calls to schedule visits
- Completed approximately 174 Home Energy Visits
- Made 82 referrals to HomeWise
- Conducted follow-up calls with customers needing assistance with UDP applications

# Enrollment Progress

<b>2014</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>YTD</b>
Applications Mailed	354	436	407	283	1480
Applications Received	345	327	349	240	1261
Applications Approved for SCL	233	270	239	122	864
Applications in Process				702	702
VRAs* Approved				27	45
Total Approved Applications	233	270	239	149	909

# 2014 Highlights

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- Mayor Murray announced goal of doubling enrollment to 28,000 by 2018
- Participation on Interdepartmental Team made up of Human Services Department, Seattle City Light and Seattle Public Utilities to leverage resources and develop a plan to reach the 28,000 goal
  - Focus areas:
    - Policy
    - Marketing and Outreach
    - Retention
    - Data/Metrics
- Draft Report due to Mayor in mid May



# Questions?

