

Utility Rate Assistance Outreach Overview

September 14th 2010 Briefing to:
Seattle Public Utilities and Neighborhoods City
Council Committee

Utility Rate Assistance: Presentation Overview

1. 2010 Program Performance
2. Current Outreach and Additional Efforts
3. [Missing]
4. Best Practices in Customer Payment Assistance
5. 2010 Marketing Plan
6. Program Administration Funding

Utility Assistance Programs Overview

2010 Performance Measures	2008 Actual	2009 Actual	2010 Target	6/30/10
Eligible households are better able to maintain basic utilities through ongoing rate assistance	15,230	16,810	17,220	15,713
New households are enrolled for low income rate assistance	3,009	4,376	3,750	2,238
Eligible households are recertified for participation in the low income rate assistance program	4,778	4,871	4,400	1,836
Eligible households avoid loss of service through one-time assistance with a high electric bill	868	924	750	534
Eligible households are referred to SPU for one-time assistance with a high water bill	400	689	550	434
Eligible households are referred to the free toilet replacement program	1,038	1,796	1,200	7,339

Current Outreach Efforts:

- Direct mail to utility customers who are struggling to pay their bills
- Free online media, including neighborhood newspapers and blogs
- Personal contact with low-income housing facility managers
- PeoplePoint* outreach hours at Neighborhood Service Centers and the International District Family Center
- Native language speakers on staff
- TV/radio interviews, especially on ethnic language stations
- Language brochures (11 languages available)
- Language Line training (100% of Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens staff trained to use telephonic interpreter services)
- Annual Utility Assistance Summit with community partners

*PeoplePoint:Bridge to Benefits provides one-stop access to several benefit programs for low-income to moderate income families and individuals

Additional Efforts: PeoplePoint, Bridge to Benefits

Federal Stimulus Funding 2010–2011 Grant

Support for Community and Faith-Based Organizations to expand People Point's reach

Statewide Benefits Portal to include City benefits

Outreach Plan Key Strategies:

- ❖ Coordinated Public Awareness campaign
- ❖ Trusted community advocates
- ❖ Consolidated Outreach Calendar and Schedule
- ❖ Streamlined web content

How to Apply:

- ❖ By Phone: 206-684-0268
- ❖ By E-mail: UDP@seattle.gov
- ❖ In Person:
 - Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens
 - 810 3rd Avenue, Seattle 98104
 - (between Columbia & Marion Streets)
 - Seattle WA 98104
- ❖ More information: www.seattle.gov/utilityassistance

*Best Practices in Customer Payment Assistance:

1. Vary approaches to meet needs of payment troubled customers
 2. Connect customers to assistance on first point of contact
 3. Implement campaigns to expand awareness
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*2010 Water Research Foundation Study

Best Practices in Customer Payment Assistance:

4. Integrate assistance with private, social service providers in community
5. Connect customers to additional resources to minimize recurrences

Best Practices in Customer Payment Assistance for Electric :

1. Education
 - ❖ Knowledgeable staff connecting customers to right assistance programs
2. Manage and Resolve Past Due Balances
 - ❖ New Metering Technology, Forgiveness Programs
3. Multiple Programs
 - ❖ Rate Discount, Emergency Assistance, Conservation
4. Partnerships
 - ❖ Increased Low Income Home Energy Assistance Programs (LIHEAP) participation

Energy & Utility Rate Assistance

2010 Marketing Plan Highlights

- Target:** 69,000 income eligible households in Seattle
- Timing:** Launch campaign Fall 2010
- Strategy:** Incorporates industry best practices and recommendations from “2009 UDP: Outreach review” commissioned by SPU
- Tactics:** Earned and paid media, newsletters, sign-up events with community based organizations, website, posters and brochures
- Messaging:** Simple “save money on your bills”
- Budget:** \$108K (\$54K SPU, plus SCL match)

Energy & Utility Rate Assistance

2010 Marketing Plan Highlights

Barriers to Participation:

- ❖ Poor access to information,
- ❖ Limited English Proficiency
- ❖ Mobility, disabilities

Opportunity:

- ❖ Non-traditional means: community- and faith-based organizations, schools, local chapters of national organizations
- ❖ Broadcast and print media
- ❖ Non-English print and broadcast media

Strategy:

- ❖ Clear simple welcoming messaging

Rate Assistance Funding Overview: HSD Program Administration

Fund	2010	2011	2012
Solid Waste	\$146,780	\$154,092	\$157,174
Drainage & Wastewater	\$146,780	\$154,092	\$157,174
Water	\$151,228	\$158,762	\$161,937
SPU Total	\$444,789	466,946	\$476,285
*SCL	\$865,105	\$867,700	
Total Utility Assistance Administration	\$1.31 M	\$1.33M	

*Includes \$363K Project Share administration

As of 8/01/10

9/13/2010

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