

**Response to City Council Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI 11-1-A-1)  
Utility Discount Program -  
Increased Enrollment and Awareness**  
(includes excerpts from CCIS Consulting, Inc. product)

**Presented to the Seattle City Council  
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# City of Seattle Utility Assistance Programs – helping low-income households with their utility bills

## Seattle City Light (SCL):

- Emergency Low-Income Assistance Program (ELIA)
- Project Share - administered by the Human Services Department (HSD)

## Seattle Public Utilities (SPU):

- SPU Emergency Assistance Program – SPU & HSD
- Water Conservation Program – HSD & Senior Services

## Joint SCL/SPU:

- Utility Discount Program (Focus of SLI 11-1-A-1) – HSD



# Utility Discount Program (UDP)

- Governed by Memorandum of Agreement between SCL/SPU/HSD; updated annually
- UDP is housed at HSD's Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens (Central Building – 810 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue)
- Staffed by 9.02 FTE:
  - 4.97 Program Intake Representatives
  - 0.71 Utility Supervisor
  - 0.65 Public Relations Specialist
  - 0.55 Manager
  - 0.36 Admin Staff Asst
  - 1.78 Admin Support Asst



# UDP Performance & Funding

In 2010, HSD:

- Enrolled 4,069 new customers
- Recertified 4,732 existing customers
- Active Enrollment on March 31, 2011:  
14,206

2010 Funding:

- SCL: \$501,540
- SPU: \$389,294



# Consultant Study

- Between late January – March, 2011, CCIS Consulting, Inc. reviewed UDP business processes and recommended changes
- Consultant Scott Casson:
  - Reviewed data on industry standards, best practices around efficiency, quality and contact center metrics
  - Observed all core UDP processes
  - Interviewed HSD program staff and leadership



# Statement of Legislative Intent 11-1-A-1

## 1) Awareness

Identify a strategy for HSD to work in coordination with SPU and SCL to further increase low income customers' awareness of utility low income rate and assistance programs.

## 2) Ease of Enrollment and Re-Enrollment

Recommend an approach for significantly increasing the number of new enrollees and reducing attrition of eligible customers.

## 3) Efficiency of Enrollment and Re-Enrollment Process

Evaluate business processes used for enrollment and re-enrollment and recommend changes that will reduce the number of City staff hours needed to enroll a customer without reducing the quality of customer service.

## 4) Performance Measures

Provide input to SPU and SCL as they develop performance measures to supplement those in the Utility Assistance Program Memorandum of Agreement, beginning with a goal of significantly increasing enrollment by 2013.



# Overall Findings

## Associate Alignment

- The associates currently staffing the UDP functions are committed to their end customers and improving the overall operation

## Already Known

- Many of the problems and challenges to be discussed in the slides to follow are not new or even unknown, the issue has been developing the solutions necessary to correct them.

## Delete List

- Delete List backlog is an indicator of the group-wide, structural challenges; attempting to eliminate the backlog without overall process improvement will only result in the same performance.

## Cycle Time

- Cycle Time Improvement must become one of the most important objectives going forward.



# Findings & Recommendations: Create a Formalized Contact Center

## Findings

- Existing inbound call handling process lacks the staffing, knowledge, structure, and reporting necessary to be effective.
- The UDP process should be thought of as a Sales Process, whereas any call that goes to voicemail should be assumed a *Lost Sale*.
- Primary call handling issues include:
  - Calls going to voicemail
  - Coverage issues (breaks, etc.)
  - Limited management metrics
  - No ability to monitor quality or accuracy



# Findings & Recommendations: Create a Formalized Contact Center (cont.)

## Recommendations

- Immediately implement the Nortel Automatic Call Distributor (“ACD”) to enable efficient call routing capabilities.
- Deploy an Auto-Attendant (Menus and Prompts) to initially receive and assist in routing all inbound calls.
- Begin staffing a segment of inbound calls received (screening, interview, and pending calls) with PIRs as part of the “functionalization” process discussed in a later recommendation.
  - Receptionists would continue handling general information, Gold Card, and other similar call types.
- Begin measuring and managing critical contact center metrics to include TSF and Abandonment Rate.



# Findings & Recommendations: Screen & Complete Applications

## Findings

- The current front-end “screening process” is ineffective and results in increased cycle time and additional operational expense.
  - The “screening process” must be conducted by associates who can fully qualify an applicant for the program.
- The “application mailing” process sends blank applications to applicants resulting in decreased return rates and 80+% of returned applications being incomplete.
  - Best practices suggest applications should be completed with an applicant prior to mailing to increase return rates, while also improving accuracy.



# Findings & Recommendations: Screen & Complete Applications (cont.)

## Recommendations

- Create a call handling function to be staffed by PIRs, that will perform all applicant screening and interviews and whose objective will be to fully complete applications prior to mailing.
  - Begin the process of re-defining 2.5 the Receptionist pockets to allow handling of all call types, including the screening function.
- Create “fillable” electronic PDF applications to be used by team members when completing applications with applicants.
- Introduce a “Quality Management” program to be conducted by a Supervisor on a segment of PIR application completion calls to ensure proper execution of these calls.



# Findings & Recommendations: Follow-Up on In Progress Cases

## Findings

- No “follow-up processes” exist to salvage or accelerate cases that have been mailed (but not returned) or returned and require additional information (pending).
- PIRs currently do not have the capacity or tools necessary to “farm” already interested applicants into a completed new enrollment or re-enrollment.
  - Current PIR job model does not allow time for follow-up to occur.
  - Only limited reports are available to show where cases are in the process and no process exists to provide this critical follow-up activity.



# Findings & Recommendations: Follow-Up on In Progress Cases (cont.)

## Recommendations

- Institute a new function to be staffed by PIRs that will begin following up on “Mailed but Not Returned” and “Returned but Pended” cases.
- Modify the UDP II database to provide additional statuses necessary to produce reports for cases at various stages of the fulfillment process
- Begin rigorous measurement / tracking and management of each stage of the fulfillment process as the leading indicators and daily determination of success for the MOSC.



# Findings & Recommendations: Restructure Operating Model

## Findings

- Within today's structure, PIRs are asked to perform more than seven (7) functions on a daily basis, each function with high urgency and priority.
- Belief widely held within the MOSC is a single case should progress from “end-to-end” with a single PIR for both efficiency a “good customer rapport”.
  - Both beliefs are simply untrue as efficiency comes with a “repetitive task” approach and customers prefer “speed over high touch”.



# Findings & Recommendations: Restructure Operating Model (cont.)

## Recommendations

- Restructure the PIR role into a “functionalized” job model where work will be processed in an assembly line manner versus the current “end-to-end” approach.
- Develop and hold PIRs accountable both to group and individual productivity measurements.
  - Individual measurement and management would be conducted using Outlier Management (discussed later).
- Determine a rotation schedule that would move all PIRs through each function at predetermined frequencies.
- Develop a Quality Monitoring program that would perform accuracy checks on PIRs individual work throughout the fulfillment process.



# Proposed New Operating Model

## Recommended Functions (preliminary):

Phone / Intake

Application Management

Approver

Phone / Case Management

### Primary Functions

#### Phone / Intake:

- Eligibility calls
- Application completion

#### Phone / App Management:

- Status calls
- Additional requirement calls
- Approval / termination calls

#### Approver:

- Approve applications
- Terminate applications
- Enroll applicants

#### Application Management:

- Scrubbing applications
- Delay letter processing
- Follow-up on mailed applications
- Follow-up on pended applications
- Filing and file management



# Recommendations in Technology

## Telephone System

- Implement Nortel Automatic Call Distributor (ACD) to enable efficient call routing
- Deploy an Auto-Attendant (menu and prompts) to initially receive and assist in call routing

## Barcode Application Tracking

- Use *barcode* technology to improve case tracking
- Provide scanning devices on all desktops for locating cases and eligibility documentation

## UDP Database Functionality

- Enhance case tracking to show each case from *Completed Application Sent to Application Approved* and *Case Terminated* status
- Include status date to track duration of a case in each status
- Create a unique identifier for tracking each case



# Metrics and Outlier Management

## Findings

- Current metrics are limited to individual PIR performance on new and recertified applications
- Since late 2010 tracking individual weekly performance versus goals for each PIR
- MOA includes goals for new enrollment, recertification, total served in UDP

## Recommendations

- Create monthly “scorecards” to track both individual and program performance
- Expand types of information tracked, e.g. telephone metrics
- Use outlier management - average performance as a baseline
- New MOA should include productivity; customer experience and retention data



# UDP Awareness

## Recent/Current Activities

- Community enrollment events at five community-based organizations (Fri-Sun) in Nov '10-Jan '11
- Monthly enrollment outreach at a community organization and a labor agency
- Presentations to community groups, churches, fairs
- Bill inserts, media campaign
- Brochures in neighborhood sites and on the Web

## Planned Activities

- Expand monthly enrollment outreach to under-served communities
- Reach out to customers needing to follow through with pending applications
- Coordinate with housing groups serving low-income tenants
- New access to UDP via Washington Connection, state public benefit portal



# Expected Outcomes of Operating Model Changes, Technology Enhancements

## New Enrollment

- Actual average per month, Jan-March 2011: 453
- Projected increase 12 months after new design: 20%

## Active Enrolled (snapshot)

- Active at end of March 2011: 14,206
- Projected increase 12 months after new design: 20%

## Cycle Time (from application to HSD approval)

- Estimated current cycle time: 2-4 months
- Projected cycle time 12 months after new design: 1-2 months



# Next Steps - Target Start July/August 2011

## Business processes

- Define functionalized modules, tasks
- Develop processes for serving persons speaking various languages
- Develop operational procedures, train staff

## Personnel

- Re-organize UDP staffing structure, define position roles/responsibilities
- Identify staffing level at functionalized modules
- Conduct hiring, train staff

## Technology

- Develop, install, test Nortel phone system
- Develop new database



*Questions or Comments?*

