

HSD utility low income enrollment and outreach

SLI 11-1-A-1

Statement of Legislative Intent:

The Council requests that by May 1, 2011 the Human Services Department (HSD) submit a report that recommends how enrollment of low income customers can be significantly increased without increasing City staffing and funding. The report should be developed in coordination with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) and Seattle City Light (SCL) and include the following elements:

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. The strategy should consider outreach through City and community websites, media campaigns, bill inserts and brochures, and partnering with community organizations.
2. Ease of enrollment and re-enrollment. Recommend an approach for significantly increasing the number of new enrollees and reducing attrition of eligible customers. The approach should consider assigning City staff to work in neighborhoods to proactively identify eligible customers and enroll them, contracting with community organizations to help enroll new customers, streamlining the application process for re-enrolling customers, and having enrollment staff who speak multiple languages.
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. The hours freed up by the recommended changes should allow staff to accommodate increased applications generated through increased outreach.
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. Performance measures could address the number of customers reached through various information and outreach efforts, the number of customers enrolled during their first contact with City enrollment staff, a target reduction in hours spent by City staff for each enrollment or re-enrollment, and a target reduction in attrition of customers who remain eligible but must re-enroll.

It is anticipated that report recommendations will be the basis for a test period in 2011 during which new practices will be applied and results monitored. Results of the test period may be used to reallocate staff and resources toward the most effective enrollment and outreach activities as part of the Council's 2012 budget approval process.

Responsible Council Committee: Seattle Public Utilities and Neighborhoods

Date Due to Council: Report due by May 1, 2011