



**Illinois**  
**Department of Commerce**  
& Economic Opportunity

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Bruce Rauner, Governor

**Low Income Energy Assistance Policy Advisory Council  
(PAC) Meeting Thursday, July 19, 2018  
10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

**Attendance:**

*PAC Members:* Dave Baron, Peoples Gas; Leslie DeVore, DCEO; Melanie Brown, Ameren; Kevin Wright, IL Competitive Energy Association (ICEA).

*Guests:* Karen Luson, Attorney General's Office; Manuel Alicea, Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA); Mindy Browning, Embarras River Basin Agency, Inc.; Kim Campbell, Vistra Energy/Dynegy; Jim Monk, IL Energy Association; Kathy Walk, CEFS; Josalin Wills, Ameren.

*Staff:* Maria Gallardo, DCEO; Brigitte Hunter, DCEO; Nathalie Solis, DCEO; Wayne Hartel, DCEO; Marie McLean, DCEO; Ben Moore, DCEO; Judy Brown, DCEO; Leslie Ann Lesko, DCEO; Deirdre Coughlin, DCEO; *Jeffrey Davis, DCEO.*

**Attendance via Conference Telephone:**

*Members:* Christine Brinkman, ComEd; Aimee English, Citizens Utility Board; Joan Howard, IL Commerce Commission; Dalitso Sulamoyo, Champaign County Regional Planning Commission; Lorrie Walls, City of Chicago; Kris White, Will County Center for Community Concerns; Staci Wilson, IL Municipal Electric Agency; Brian Maruyama, Nicor Gas

*Guests:* Latoya Butler, CEDA; Owen Carter, Rockford Human Services; Janice Dale, Attorney General's Office; Larisa Lynch, Chicago Reporter; Michelle Machay, Peoples Gas; Shelby Montgomery, CEDA; Barbara Richardson, Legal Assistance Foundation; Aarian Smith, ComEd; Martha Strawser, Rockford Human Services; Jennifer Fenske, Nicor Gas; Arely Vazquez, Nicor Gas; Emily Williams, Nicor Gas; Zenobia Williams, CEDA; Tyrone, Pickens, CEDA.

**Call to Order**

Leslie DeVore called the meeting to order.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Leslie DeVore made a motion that the April 19, 2018 minutes be approved. No corrections presented. Motion to approve was made by Kevin Wright and was seconded by Dalitso Sulamoyo. Motion passed.

### **Fiscal Report**

Ben Moore provided a report about Weatherization funding. He said there was a total of \$30.2 million available for the grantees and a total of \$9.7 million is still available in those grants. He pointed out that two of the grant series (HHS-17-221 with \$3.6 million and State-221 with \$2.6 million) have been extended through the end of September 2018. The \$3.6 million remaining in DOE is multi-year and will be available to roll over when the previous grants are exhausted as necessary. Ben said the 2019 Weatherization State Plan is still under review by the Department of Energy (DOE) and we are hoping to get the award within a week or so. Grants are being processed based on the amount funded that has been allocated. OCA Fiscal is also working on the processing of new grants for the other funding series (State and HHS), anticipating that for the HHS grants, they should be able to start sending out notices to grant awards for signatures starting next week.

Ben Moore also provided a status report about the status of LIHEAP grants. A total of \$182.1 million was available during program year 2018. A total of \$150.3 million was spent and there is a \$31.8 million still available. The 2018 HHS grant (\$23.6 million) does not end until next June. These funds will be available for the start-up of the new program. He also said that with this amount and State funding, he is confident that they will be able to start up the program with necessary funding level until the new 2019 allocation from HHS is received. OCA Fiscal is now processing new grants for LIHEAP. We anticipate executing the PIPP program grants by mid-August.

It was asked why there was a large amount unspent. Ben said it was due to being behind on applications taken. Leslie DeVore said several factors contributed to a decrease in applications taken. She said some applicants thought LIHEAP was tied to the State budget and that they didn't think there was funding available.

Ben indicated that any unspent funding will be rolled over to the 2019 program year. It was asked if the Department was considering administering a Summer Cooling Program and Leslie DeVore said there are no cooling funds this year. She also said that a decrease in applications is a nationwide trend and challenge. Melanie asked if the program could start in September. Leslie said no because HHS discouraged us from starting in September because the new federal funding doesn't start until October and grants could not be obligated until we receive our allocation.

Kathy Walk asked if there would be close-out packages and Ben indicated they should be sent to the LAAs by next week.

### **Weatherization Report**

Wayne Hartel provided the program report and indicated that for program year 2018, a total of 2,219 housing units have been weatherized, which is less than the previous year. He said the reason was because they were late getting the grants out with all the GATA requirements causing delays. Some of the grants did not go out until December 2017. Some grants (HHS and State) were extended until September. Wayne said there are 185 homes in work-order status that will be done in the July-September period with HHS and State funds. Regarding the utility funding for the Weatherization network, Wayne said DCEO is still

working with the utilities to finalize the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). They are working on the funding for LAA staff support to get training with about \$18 million of utility funds going to the network.

Leslie DeVore explained that the money being used is from the Energy Efficiency Portfolios (EEPs) funds that was used by the state is now going back to the utility companies for low-income grants. She said the money is going directly to the network which they are working with, so they can split cost and allow the utilities to use the federal purchased equipment and weatherize more homes. Wayne stated that the utilities have agreements with all the individual LAAs and have started working on the cost of the projects.

Wayne discussed the new Weather Works System (ICAPS). He said OCA staff is going to test the new portion of the system known as Milestone I, which is the Intake Application part. The ISAC, which is the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, is the organization developing the system for DCEO and are coming to provide a demo and begin testing. Wayne said they are working on Milestone II, which is the energy audit, the budget aspect of the system which is the biggest piece and testing is scheduled to begin February 2019. He also said that part is going to take the most time. They are working with the utilities in terms of utilities communication with the new system to be able to verify utility accounts and gather pre and post weatherization data.

Aarian Smith asked for clarification of the system testing and the schedule for the utilities. Leslie DeVore indicated this testing effort is for the Milestone I and we currently don't have a schedule to share with the utilities on the LIHEAP/PIPP portion of the system. OCA will share information as we receive updates

The LAAs were sent the Field Standards and Operations Manual for PY19. We are working on the Procurement Manual at this time. There have been changes since it was last updated. The first draft was received a few weeks ago and is being reviewed hopefully training will begin towards the end of the year. Wayne stated that the Procurement Manual is for all of OCA's programs. Leslie stated that there will be regional training offered as well.

### **LIHEAP Report**

Leslie Ann Lesko provided the LIHEAP status report for PY18. She said the program ended on May 31 and a total of 258,317 households have received at least one benefit. A total of \$124.6 million was spent on LIHEAP benefits. Leslie Ann said the applicant intake was about 7% behind than last year. Our goal is to do more press releases and increase outreach efforts for the new program year. OCA will conduct a Program Workshop with the LAAs on August 29, 2018. Training will be provided to the LAAs regarding the upcoming PY19 changes and updates. OCA is also working on sending the updated Vender Agreements to all utilities and the documents should be coming out in about a week or so.

Janice Dale wanted to know if there will be any training about alternative suppliers. Leslie Ann said there is information in the manual that has been in there for a couple of years that they can refer to until further notice. Maria Gallardo said this educational information is the LIHEAP Alert and Choosing a Supplier developed by the Attorney General's Office a couple of years ago and that these documents are given to LIHEAP applicants. Kevin Wright asked if he could see these documents and Leslie Ann said we will send him a copy.

### **2019 LIHEAP State Plan**

Maria Gallardo presented the draft of the 2019 LIHEAP State Plan. The plan is due each year to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) no later than September 1. The draft document is shared with our stakeholders and with our LIHEAP Working Group to gather input. It will also be sent to the LAAs to receive their input as well. The draft document is also posted in the LIHEAP website. The Public Hearing to receive comments from the public is scheduled on August 9, 2018 in the Chicago and Springfield offices. The Notice of Public Hearing will be posted in the LIHEAP website and on bulletin boards in both office locations.

Maria provided an overview of the proposed changes to the 2019 LIHEAP State Plan. The program will begin on October for seniors and disabled applicants. In November, applications are being accepted for families with children ages 5 or under. In the month of December, the program is opened to the general low-income population. Maria indicated the LIHEAP benefits will be increased by 23% compared to the 2018 LIHEAP Benefit levels.

Maria Gallardo also indicated that the maximum of the Reconnection Assistance (RA) benefit is proposed to be increased to a \$1,000 instead of \$750.

Maria said there will be a new requirement for applications that will need reconnection assistance and require an 18-hour response. Outreach sites will be required to securely scan and email these applications along with the supporting documentation to the LAA Main office via secure file transfer system with the Department's prior approval.

The members indicated there are positive changes/updates to the new program year. Leslie Ann Lesko shared that a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was posted on Tuesday for the Knox county service area. The notice can be found on the DCEO and GATA websites. She also made it known that there are links that can be found throughout the state for funding opportunities. It was asked how long the process would take and Leslie Ann said the due date for all applications in on August 16, 2018. She stated they plan to have the review completed by August 24, 2018. Deirdre Coughlin said they allowed themselves until August 31, 2108 to post the results, which is supposed to be posted for 30 days. Leslie Ann reiterated that it is for both LIHEAP and PIPP programs.

Latoya Butler had a question about the new appeal process posters. She wanted to know if there will be a space to include further information from the LAA. The poster is expected to include a blank area that an LAA could add more information, as needed.

A motion to approve the State Plan as a draft was moved by Kevin Wright and seconded by Dave Baron. All members approved the State Plan as drafted.

### **PIPP Report**

Maria Gallardo provided the PIPP report and indicated that a PIPP Steering Committee meeting was held on July 12, 2018. The meeting mainly discussed updates about the annual recertification of PIPP customers. area total of 24,940 PIPP customers are enrolled statewide. about a total of \$24.7 million is obligated annually on behalf of these customers. Most customers recertify their eligibility during the months of July and August, which represent approximately 71% of the total amount of customers enrolled. Maria reminded the group about the two letters are sent to the customers as a reminder of their annual PIPP

recertification requirement. A total of 265 customers are going to be dropped manually from STARS by June 30 because one of their PIPP-Participating Utility had dropped during the program year. In doing this special drop, these customers could come back during their priority enrollment period and apply again for energy assistance.

The PIPP Steering also discussed a trend we have been observing about customers increasing their State PIPP benefits or budget bills as a result of an increase in budget bills during the utility true up. OCA is going to gather data from the STARS system and send the sample to the utilities to better understand why an increase is being experienced. She said they are still in the process of collecting data. Once OCA have the data, there will be a special PIPP Steering Committee meeting for further discussion.

Barb Richardson wanted to know if all the letters were sent to the PIPP customers to recertify. Maria explained they have two letters; a 30-day letter followed by a 15-day letter which should be going out now for those customers who are recertifying within the next 60 days or so

It was asked why CEDA will not be taking new PIPP applications during PY2019. Maria responded indicated the funding approach for PY19 is to allocate the same funding amount (\$40 million) as allocated in the prior year. Given that some agencies reached their funding and/or administrative capacity, OCA is leaving the decision to the local agencies whether they could accept more PIPP applications or not.

Kathy Walk stated that they try to add new customers based on the number of customers that have been dropped, moved, etc. They are also concerned that there will not be enough money to add new customers due to budget bills are going up. LaToya Butler said the reason why CEDA was not planning on accepting new customers in the new program year is because they reached to their funding capacity.

Kevin Wright asked how many customers are enrolled with an alternative supplier from the LIHEAP/PIPP population. Leslie DeVore said currently OCA does not collect that data but are trying to start collecting this data during next program year.

### **New Business**

None

### **Other Business**

Leslie DeVore reiterated that the LIHEAP matrix was increased by 23% to actively reflect some energy prices within the state of Illinois. Kevin Wright asked how long it has been since the last matrix was changed. Leslie Ann Lesko said in PY2016, it was decreased across the board by 12% because of funding due to the state budget impasse.

### **Meeting Schedule**

The next scheduled meeting is October 18, 2018.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.