



**Illinois  
Department of Commerce  
& Economic Opportunity**

JB Pritzker, Governor

**Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) Steering Committee  
Minutes of Meeting Held on October 4, 2018**

**Attendance in Springfield:**

Members: *Mindy Browning, ERBA, Deirdre Coughlin, DCEO; Leslie Ann Lesko, DCEO; Ben Moore, DCEO; Kathy Walk, CEFS*

Guests: *Marie Mueller, DCEO; Angela Baldwin, DCEO*

**Attendance in Chicago:**

Members: *Leslie DeVore, DCEO; Maria Gallardo, DCEO; Jennifer Schmidt, CEDA;*

**Attendance via Telephone:**

Members: *Aimee English, Citizens Utility Board; Jennifer Fenske, Nicor Gas; Joan Howard, IL Commerce Commission; Michelle Machay, Peoples Gas; Ashley Miller, DuPage County Dept. of Community Services; Barbara Richardson, Legal Assistance Foundation of Metro Chicago; Aarian Smith, ComEd; Martha Strawser, Rockford Human Services;*

Guests: *Philip Gentry, Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA); Anthony White, Ameren; Ellen Rendos, Nicor Gas*

**Call to Order**

Leslie DeVore called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Minutes**

There were two corrections from the April 5, 2018 minutes that were revised and distributed the revised document

The motion was passed by Jen Schmidt, seconded by Kathy Walk. The minutes were approved. No corrections from the July 12, 2018 minutes were noted. Motion was made by Mindy Browning, seconded by Jen Schmidt. The minutes were approved.

No corrections from the August 15, 2018 minutes. Motion was made by Leslie Ann Lesko, seconded by Kathy Walk. The minutes were approved.

### **PIPP Recertification Process and True-Up Adjustments**

Maria Gallardo provided an update. She said the biggest volume of the PIPP recertification activity is in the months of July and August. From July 1 to the present, there is a total of 16,323 customers that have been recertified. In terms of the drops, there have been 1,462 customers dropped. Jennifer Schmidt said they had a successful recertification period with dropping 444 of the 9,700 compared to last year dropping 2,000 of the 13,000 customers. She also stated that during late August, early September, CEDA did robo calls to customers whose recertification period was open with at least a week in. The success with that is the ones who answered or were left a voice mail were likely recertify.

Maria discussed whether customers were seeing their letters to remind them to recertify. Mindy Browning thought their recertification activity went much smoother compared to previous years, the population was more manageable, and the intake staff knew what they were doing.

### **2019 Program Year Start-Up**

Maria said that for the PY2019, the Department intends to allocate a total of \$40 million, which is the same as last year (PY18). She reiterated that the PIPP True-UP adjustment funds come from the PIPP allocation. Maria also said that there are 17 local agencies accepting new PIPP applications starting in October and 18 LAAs are not because they have reached their allocation funding during the recertification summer months. Nicor asked for a list of the agencies that are accepting applications, and Leslie Ann Lesko said she would send it out to the group after the meeting.

### **Special PIPP Steering Meeting (August 15, 2018)**

OCA convened this special meeting to discuss the significant increase in state funding needed because of higher True-Ups experienced during the recertifications to date. Maria indicated that OCA sent each utility a sample of 10 customers (5 with highest state benefit increases and 5 highest budget bill increase) with the highest increases since July 1. The biggest trend found on the sample was the colder weather increased the customers usage and as a result, they are having a higher budget bill.

The meeting discussed the impact also of having a fixed budget bill set for 12 months and that no consumer education nor account verification is done until the customer recertifies. Therefore, the group felt the need to re-convene the Consumer Education Subcommittee to further discuss ways to educate customers on the impact their usage could have in their next budget bill and to educate them or refer them to utilities' energy efficiency programs and weatherization.

### **Consumer Education Subcommittee (September 25, 2018)**

Maria said the group discussed having more frequent true-ups to ease the impact of having a higher budget bill amount when the customer trues-up annually. However, the group agreed it will be too challenging for the LAAs to manage as they earn their Admin and Program Support through benefits provided. Therefore, they will not be compensated with all these extra client interventions. Also, the group realized frequent true-ups will confuse the customers.

The group concluded that the utilities will see if they can contact PIPP customers through robocalls (for example) or other ways and refer them to the utilities' energy efficiency programs.

The Attorney Generals' Office and the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) will design a poster that will include the electric and gas Prices from the Alternative Suppliers, so customers can compare their rates against the utility price.

OCA will develop new usage reports with the help of utilities for LAAs to use this data to contact customers with higher usage prior to recertification – in time to possibly affect their usage habits. We need to also discuss how these reports will be used and what will be the expectation.

Another special meeting will be scheduled on November 5, 2018. A meeting invite will follow.

### **Discussion of the suggested “Upside-Down Report” and Procedure**

Jennifer Fenske said the utilities are more than willing to run reports of customers that would have a higher True-Up and give it to the LAAs for follow-up. However, she said Nicor currently does not have the IT resources to do a more in depth and frequent report. Maria stated this will require the agencies to do a manual client intervention and having a standard process and frequency will help them utilize these reports. She also stated that they feel the customers would be trusting if the letter came from the agency rather than a call from the utilities.

Maria said it would be hard to know how much an agency can handle manually. Leslie DeVore said having something is better than having nothing and the agencies may be limited. She also suggested that we can work with the LAAs and provide them with a template letter, so they can send it out.

Kathy Walk said she had Melanie from Ameren prepare a report, at the time she had a little over 900 people on PIPP and 90 were on the “Upside-Down report”, which includes PIPP customers who are having a higher usage and therefore, could experience a higher True-Up later. She had it done because they are in the process of working with Ameren, targeting PIPP customers (Christian & Montgomery counties to start with) who have large increases and needed to know who these customers are. Kathy said they are going to do an education module with them which will cover understanding their bill and how what they do is going to impact budget billing. The other module is working with the U of I Extension Office where they have been doing Energy Conservation workshops and they are going to tailor that for the PIPP customers to give tips for better usage. They are also going to meet one-on-one with people to see if there have been changes. The customers will have to agree to the audit and get all light bulbs changed to LED and smart strip insulations as part of this special program. For all the modules that are completed, there will be a \$25 credit on the utility bill that could be up to \$100 if they complete all four modules.

Maria asked how they were funding it and Kathy said this is a special program they are running with Ameren funds.

Maria and Jen Schmidt said OCA will get together with a few agencies to come up with a standard report that all the utilities can provide the same data, so it would be easy to look through for the agencies who have multiple utilities. Mindy Browning suggested that if it were done in an excel spreadsheet, it would be easier to do a mail merge for a letter. Jen stated that part of the letter must be customized by each individual agency and what resources are available from the utilities they serve and their own

weatherization programs. It was asked if there could be one general letter with all the specific contacts regarding the utility provider with all the information the customers need.

### **Letter Changes**

The PIPP Recertification approval and denial letters have been automated and they are now available via STARS. The LAAs indicated they are incredibly helpful and save a lot of time.

### **Other Business**

Aimee English asked if there was a way to cross-reference the addresses of the PIPP recipients with the weatherization program to find out if that address has been weatherized in the past. Maria stated that they are trying to automate it in STARS, however, and it will be a referral. She said the agencies usually keep track manually. Jen said that in June, CEDA took 400 of the highest primary budget bill customers who in STARS are listed as being owners. She said they got the list from DCEO because they don't have a report that targets owners which they give to their weatherization department who check to see if they have previous recipients. They sent out 215 letters to PIPP customers with budget bills in June and encouraged them to apply for weatherization and would most likely be recertifying in the near future. She said they asked the customers to give a copy of the letter to the intake site when they so their weatherization applications, so they can track it. So far, they had two applications with the letters with it. It was further discussed about ways to reach the customers.

### **Meeting Schedule**

The 2019 quarterly meetings are scheduled on January 17; April 11; July 11; and October 10, 2019.

A special conference call meeting will be scheduled sometime in November to further discuss how can we help PIPP customers who are experiencing a higher usage to reduce their usage, so they don't experience a higher True-Up during their recertification. OCA will send a meeting invite.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.