

State of Ohio

DRAFT 2022–2023 Home Energy Assistance Program State Plan

Prepared by:
Ohio Department of Development
Community Services Division
Office of Community Assistance

August 2022



Department of
Development

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DETAILED MODEL PLAN (LIHEAP)

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM(LIHEAP)

MODEL PLAN

SF - 424 – MANDATORY

2023 HEAP State Plan Summary of Changes

2.3 Check the appropriate boxes below and describe the policies for each.

Priority in eligibility box checked for young children.

2.4 Describe how you prioritize the provision of heating assistance to vulnerable populations, e.g., benefit amounts, early application periods, etc.

All applicants that meet eligibility, including children in the household that are 5 years and younger, receive an increased monetary benefit based on the Benefit Matrix.

2.5 Check the variables you use to determine your benefit levels. (Check all that apply):

Increased benefit amount is also included for households with a child 5 years and younger.

10.6 Explain or attach a copy of your local agency monitoring schedule and protocol

Removed the COVID-19 Protocols for Annual Monitoring Review to reflect that Development's Monitoring will be conducted remotely.

Section 1 – Program Components

Q: 1.1 Check which components you will operate under the LIHEAP Program. (Note: You must provide information for each component designated here as requested elsewhere in this plan.)

A: Boxes checked:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| - Heating Assistance | Start 10/1/2022 | End 5/31/2023 |
| - Crisis Assistance | Start 11/1/2022 | End 3/31/2023 |
| - Weatherization Assistance | Start 7/1/2023 | End 6/30/2024 |

The Winter Crisis Program dates are indicated above. The Summer Crisis Program dates are 7/1/2023 – 9/30/2023

Q: 1.2 Estimate what amount of available LIHEAP funds will be used for each component that you will operate: The total of all percentages must add up to 100%.

A: Percentages:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| - Heating assistance | 37.5% |
| - Cooling assistance | 0% |
| - Crisis assistance | 20% |
| - Weatherization assistance | 25% |
| - Carryover to the following federal fiscal year | 6.5% |
| - Administrative and planning costs | 10% |
| - Services to reduce home energy needs including assessment | 1% |
| - Used to develop and implement leveraging activities | 0% |

Q: 1.3 The funds reserved for winter crisis assistance that have not been expended by March 15 will be reprogrammed to:

A: Boxes Checked:

- Heating assistance
- Other (specify): Summer Crisis Assistance

Q: 1.4 Do you consider households categorically eligible if one household member receives one of the following categories of benefits in the left column below?

A: No

Q: 1.5 Do you automatically enroll households without a direct annual application?

A: No

Q: 1.7a Do you allocate LIHEAP funds toward a nominal payment for SNAP households?

A: No

Q: 1.7b Amount of Nominal Assistance

A: \$0

Q: 1. 7c Frequency of Assistance

A: No boxes checked

Q: 1. 8 In determining a household's income eligibility for LIHEAP, do you use gross income or net income?

A: Gross Income

Q: 1. 9 Select all the applicable forms of countable income used to determine a household's income eligibility for LIHEAP

A: Boxes Checked:

- Wages
- Self-Employment Income
- Contract Income
- Unemployment insurance
- Strike Pay
- Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits
 - o Excluding Medicare deduction
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Retirement/pension benefits
- One-time lump-sum payments, such as rebates/credits, winnings from lotteries, refund deposits, etc.
- Rental income
- Alimony
- Interest, dividends, or royalties
- Commissions
- Legal settlements
- Veterans Administration (VA) benefits
- Other:
 - o VA disability is excluded however VA pension is include

Section 2 – Heating Assistance

Q: 2.1 Designate the income eligibility threshold used for the heating component?

A: State Median Income 60%

Q: 2.2 Do you have additional eligibility requirements for Heating Assistance?

A: Yes

Q: 2.3 Check the appropriate boxes below and describe the policies for each.

A: Boxes checked:

- Do you require an Assets test? No
- Do you have additional/differing eligibility policies for:
 - o Renters? No

- Renters Living in subsidized housing? Yes
- Renters with utilities included in the rent? Yes
- Do you give priority in eligibility to:
 - Elderly? Yes
 - Disabled? Yes
 - Young children? Yes
 - Households with high energy burdens? No
 - Other? No

- Explanations of policies for each “yes” check above:

Tenants whose electric bills are not in the renter's name(s) are ineligible to receive benefits, unless they provide verification that they pay all or a portion (i.e., HUD Section 8 housing) of the electric bill.

A weighted benefit is given to clients that have someone in the home over the age of 60, a documented disability, or a child 5 years and younger.

Explanation of 2.1 Eligibility Threshold: Ohio uses 60% of the State Median Income as it best correlates to 175% of the HHS Federal Poverty level. Households must be at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Level in order to be determined eligible.

Q: 2.4 Describe how you prioritize the provision of heating assistance to vulnerable populations, e.g., benefit amounts, early application periods, etc.

A: All applicants that meet eligibility and are 60 years or older, disabled, and/or have a child in the house 5 years and younger, receive an increased monetary benefit based on the Benefit Matrix. Elderly and disabled clients also receive the new HEAP application by mail first.

Q: 2.5 Check the variables you use to determine your benefit levels. (Check all that apply):

A: Increased benefit amounts for the elderly and/or disabled clients, and households with a child 5 years and younger.
Decreased benefit amounts for the Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP) clients. The FY2022 Benefit Matrix (see attached) is submitted with the State Plan assuming Ohio's LIHEAP funding level remains the same. A final version of the FY2023 Benefit Matrix will be submitted when funding information is finalized.

Q: 2.6 Describe estimated benefit levels for FY 2023:

A: Minimum Benefit \$46.03 Maximum Benefit \$930.47

Q: 2.7 Do you provide in-kind (e.g., blankets, space heaters) and/or other forms for benefits?

A: No

Section 4 – Crisis Assistance

Q: 4.1 Designate the income eligibility threshold used for the heating component?

A: State Median Income 60%

Q: 4.2 Provide your LIHEAP program's definition for determining a crisis.

A: Explanation of 4.1 Eligibility Threshold: Ohio uses 60% of the State Median Income as it best correlates to 175% of the HHS Federal Poverty level. Households must be at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Level to be determined eligible.

For Heating Crisis Assistance: a disconnection, notice of disconnection, establishing new service, less than 25% supply of deliverable fuel, or a heating system needing repair to be operable are criteria to be considered in crisis.

For Summer Crisis Assistance: a disconnection, notice of disconnection, establishing new service, a medical certification and/or being elderly (age 60 or older) are criteria to be considered in crisis.

Q: 4.3 What constitutes a life-threatening crisis?

A: Development's Energy Assistance Programs Guidelines, in keeping with the LIHEAP statute, require local HEAP providers to, no later than 18 hours after a household applies, provide assistance that will resolve the crisis if the household is eligible to receive such benefits and *is in a life-threatening situation*. Development and our local provider agencies understand a life-threatening situation to be a situation that is very dangerous or serious with the possibility that death could be the outcome. For example, an eligible household containing a member with a disability or a frail elder who would be more vulnerable to experiencing a serious outcome if heat and light are not expeditiously restored. A household with a newborn baby is another example of how a utility/energy service crisis e.g., imminent shut-off, disconnection or empty fuel tank, can have more dire outcomes, up to and including death, if not quickly remedied. A life-threatening crisis could also exist when a household is without service and is using alternative heating sources such as kerosene heaters or using their oven.

Q: 4.4 Within how many hours do you provide an intervention that will resolve the energy crisis for eligible households?

A: 48 hours once application is completed.

Q: 4.5 Within how many hours do you provide an intervention that will resolve the energy crisis for eligible households in life-threatening situations?

A: 18 hours once application is completed.

Q: 4.6 Do you have additional eligibility requirements for Crisis Assistance?

A: Yes

Q: 4.7 Check the appropriate boxes below and describe the policies for each

A: Boxes checked:

- Do you require an Assets test? No
- Do you give priority in eligibility to:
 - o Elderly? No
 - o Disabled? No
 - o Young children? No
 - o Households with high energy burdens? No
 - o Other? No
- In Order to receive crisis assistance:
 - o Must the household have received a shut-off notice or have a near empty tank? Yes
 - o Must the household have been shut off or have an empty tank? No
 - o Must the household have exhausted their regular heating benefit? No
 - o Must renters with heating costs included in their rent have received an eviction notice? No
 - o Must heating/cooling be medically necessary? Yes
 - o Must the household have non-working heating or cooling equipment? Yes
 - o Other? No
- Do you have additional/differing eligibility policies for:
 - o Renters? No
 - o Renters Living in subsidized housing? Yes
 - o Renters with utilities included in the rent? Yes

For Winter Crisis Assistance: a disconnection, notice of disconnection, establishing new service, less than 25% supply of deliverable fuel, or a heating system needing repair to operate are criteria to be considered in crisis.

To participate in the Summer Crisis program, the household must be disconnected, have a disconnection notice, establishing new service, must include an individual with a documented medical condition and/or the household must have at least one-member age 60 or older. If qualified based on age or medical condition, the household may receive a monetary benefit and/or an air conditioner unit or central air repair and/or fan up to the maximum benefit amount per household. Households may receive one air conditioner, provided the household has not received an air conditioner in the prior three years, up to the maximum benefit allowed. Households can be provided no more than two fans, once every three years, up to the maximum benefit amount.

Renters whose bill is in the landlord's name must produce a lease or written documentation from the landlord verifying that the renter is responsible for the electric bill, and/or the gas bill.

Q: 4.8 How do you handle crisis situations?

A: Separate Component

Q: 4.9 If you have a separate component, how do you determine crisis assistance benefits?

A: Other - Describe:

Ohio has a maximum benefit amount and requires a copay if necessary. Also, see Section 4.7.

Q: 4.10 Do you accept applications for energy crisis assistance at sites that are geographically accessible to all households in the area to be served?

A: Intake centers are located in all 88 counties in Ohio. Additionally, Development launched an online application to allow clients to enter household information at their convenience. While an appointment is required for crisis assistance, the client can enter in their information and upload documentation online to expedite the intake process once at the local agency. All applications can be completed at the 51 local Energy Assistance Provider locations around the 88 counties.

Q: 4.11 Do you provide individuals who are physically disabled the means to:

A: Submit applications for crisis benefits without leaving their homes? Yes
Travel to the site at which applications for crisis assistance are accepted? Yes

Q: 4.12 Indicate the maximum benefit for each type of crisis assistance offered.

A: Winter Crisis \$900 Summer Crisis \$800 Year-round Crisis \$0

Q: 4.13 Do you provide in-kind (e.g. blankets, space heaters, fans) and/or other forms of benefits?

A: Yes, as a last resort funds can be authorized to purchase portable heaters equipped with an automatic shut-off switch and an Underwriters Laboratory (UL) or Electrical Testing Laboratories (ETL) safety approval.

Q: 4.14 Do you provide equipment repair or replacement using crisis funds?

A: Yes

Q: 4.15 Check appropriate boxes below to indicate type(s) of assistance provided.

A: Boxes checked:
- Heating system repair Winter Crisis
- Heating system replacement Winter Crisis
- Cooling system repair Summer Crisis
- Cooling system replacement Summer Crisis

Q: 4.16 Do any of the utility vendors you work with enforce a moratorium on shut offs?

A: Yes

Q: 4.17 Describe the terms of the moratorium and any special dispensation received by LIHEAP clients during or after the moratorium period.

A: It is rare in Ohio for the Governor to issue a moratorium prohibiting regulated utilities from issuing disconnection notices. This only occurs when there is an extreme weather event or a significant economic downturn. However, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, annually issues a Reconnection Order that coincides with the Winter Crisis Program. The annual Reconnect Order requires regulated utilities to stop a disconnection or restore service for a maximum of \$175. The Reconnection Order and the Winter Crisis Program is in place from

October 15 to April 15. See attached sample in PDF version of 2022-2023 Special Reconnect Order issued by PUCO.

Section 5: Weatherization Assistance

Q: 5.1 Designate the income eligibility threshold used for the Weatherization component

A: HHS Poverty Guidelines 200%

Q: 5.2 Do you enter into an interagency agreement to have another government agency administer a WEATHERIZATION component?

A: No

Q: 5.4 Is there a separate monitoring protocol for weatherization?

A: Yes

Q: 5.5 Under what rules do you administer LIHEAP weatherization? (Check only one.)

A: Other: The differences are as follows: U.S. Department of Energy income eligibility requirements (200% of the Federal Poverty Level); Health and Safety is limited to no more than 25% of Program Operations (Materials + Support total) for LIHEAP (limit is 14.9% for DOE); and an additional \$1,200 for incidental repairs is available per single family unit with LIHEAP funds (in an effort to avoid deferrals).

Additionally, Development requested and received a waiver to transfer an additional 10% of LIHEAP funds to weatherization and energy related home repairs. This will make the total transfer of LIHEAP funds 25%. Fifteen percent of the transferred funds will be used to serve households as described above. The additional 10% transfer will be used for a complimentary program to Ohio's weatherization program. The Ohio Home Weatherization Assistance Program Enhancement (approximately \$15.7 million) will install specific measures in households that are at or below 175% (LIHEAP Income Guidelines) of the Federal Poverty Guidelines and may have been deferred previously for weatherization services. The measures to be installed will include furnace repair and replacement, electric repair and replacement, ventilation measures (i.e., ASHRAE fans), minor plumbing repair and replacement, pest infestation, air conditioning repair/replacement for households with a member at least 60 years of age or with a documented medical condition (mirroring Summer Crisis Program guidelines), multi-family unit energy conservation measures, and minor roof repair. Utilizing these additional funds for these specific measures will allow the weatherization program to serve homes that would have been deferred due to costs and to install more energy conservation measures in homes.

It is important to note, the Ohio Legislature passed, and Governor DeWine signed into law House Bill 6 (HB 6) in July 2019. One of the provisions of HB 6 directs Development to request a waiver from Health and Human Services beginning July 2021 to transfer an additional 10% of LIHEAP funds for weatherization and energy efficiency purposes, with a total transfer amount of 25%.

Q: 5.6 Do you require an Assets test?

A: No

Q: 5.7 Do you have additional/differing eligibility policies for:

- Renters? Yes
- Renters living in subsidized housing? Yes

Q: 5.8 Do you give priority in eligibility to:

A: Boxes Checked:

- Elderly? Yes
- Disabled? Yes
- Young children? Yes
- Households with high energy burdens? Yes
- Other? High energy user households Yes

If you selected "Yes" for any of the options in questions 5.6, 5.7, or 5.8, you must provide further explanation of these policies in the text field below.

The applications are prioritized as required by 10 CFR 440.16 "Minimum Program Requirements": Elderly person(s), Disabled person(s), Dependent child(ren) in the home, high energy burden households, high energy user households.

Appropriate documentation is required in the client file to substantiate the assigned priority for service delivery. Clients meeting one or more of the priorities for service delivery as described above will be considered "Priority Applicants". Clients that apply for HWAP services and do not meet one or more of the priorities for service delivery will be considered "Traditional Applicants". All clients will be placed on the subgrantee waiting list for the county in which they reside. Priority Applicants will be placed on the waiting list ahead of Traditional Applicants and ordered by eligibility date (oldest to newest). Under no circumstances shall a Traditional Applicant be served before a Priority Applicant. Each subgrantee is assigned a specific minimum number of units to complete per program year based on funds allocated.

Weatherization funds are to be used to equitably serve all eligible clients with priority for service delivery to households meeting the conditions of 10 CFR 440.16. High energy burden users are defined as a household at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Level at the time of application. These households tend to expend more of their income on utility costs than the median for low-income users. To ensure permission of the landlord there is an agreement signed by the landlord, the tenant, and the local provider.

NOTE: Response to 5.9 and 5.10 - Ohio has a maximum average expenditure statewide of \$8,009.

Section 6: Outreach, 2605(b)(3) - Assurance 3, 2605(c)(3)(A)

Q: 6.1 Select all outreach activities that you conduct that are designed to assure that eligible households are made aware of all LIHEAP assistance available:

A: Other (specify):

Development has a comprehensive marketing plan for client education. It's a multi-platform plan that includes: brochures, social media posts, posters, a website, and press release templates. These materials provide program information as well as instructions on how to apply for assistance. The brochures, posters, and press releases are formatted for co-branding with local Energy Assistance Providers.

Our website (energyhelp.ohio.gov) provides comprehensive information on the Energy Assistance Programs, including contact information for local Energy Assistance Providers, a portal for clients to check the status of their application, and an online application process for clients to apply for certain programs online. Development also operates an (800) number to direct clients to their local Energy Assistance Provider. Development works with the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, Ohio Department of Veterans Services, Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, local libraries, and local Community Action Agencies to educate clients on the available Energy Assistance Programs. Development also partners with the Ohio Department of Aging to help older Ohioans. Last year, the Ohio Department of Aging distributed a total of 37,096 HEAP applications (23,017 of these were distributed to homebound residents), 49,682 people were assisted (3,293 of these were homebound), and 729 presentations were held with a total attendance of 63,842 people.

Section 7 - Coordination, 2605(b)(4) - Assurance 4

Q: 7.1 Describe how you will ensure that the LIHEAP program is coordinated with other programs available to low-income households (TANF, SSI, WAP, etc.).

A: Ohio uses a combined Energy Assistance application for HEAP, PIPP and Weatherization. Development has launched an online application process for clients to apply for programs online.

HEAP clients will be notified of energy conservation and assistance efforts by the major utility and fuel companies in Ohio. Educational pamphlets and speakers, which address ways to conserve energy, will be made available by Development. Development collaborates with the Ohio Department of Aging, Ohio Association of Foodbanks, local Energy Assistance Providers, and Community Action Agencies to serve low-income households and the elderly.

Section 8: Agency Designation, 2605(b)(6) - Assurance 6

(Required for state grantees and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico)

Q: 8.1 How would you categorize the primary responsibility of your State agency?

A: Other: The Ohio Department of Development is committed to creating jobs and building strong communities, while ensuring accountability and transparency of taxpayer money and exceptional customer service.

Q: 8.6 What is your process for selecting local administering agencies?

A: Most of Ohio's administering agencies have been administering LIHEAP at the local level for many years. In addition, it is extremely rare in Ohio for a local Energy Assistance Provider to be added or replaced, except in cases where Assurance 16 is administered. If a provider needs replaced, Development ensures that services to clients continue during the transition to a different provider by identifying a contiguous local Energy Assistance Provider in good standing to take over services in the territory being vacated on an interim "emergency" basis. A short-term contract of 6 -12 months is typically provided. Providers near the unserved area know the landscape and the population to be served. Development works with the new provider to quickly establish intake sites that can be easily accessed by local clients. If the interim arrangement proves to be satisfactory, Development will name the entity providing services as the "permanent" provider of services for the area. In selecting a contiguous agency, Development also takes into account whether the agency is already providing other services in the service territory.

Q: 8.7 How many local administering agencies do you use?

A: 53

Q: 8.8 Have you changed any local administering agencies in the last year?

A: Yes

Section 9 - Energy Suppliers, 2605(b)(7) - Assurance 7

Q: 9.1 Do you make payments directly to home energy suppliers?

A: For the Crisis Programs, payments are made directly to suppliers by both Development and the local Energy Assistance Providers.

Q: 9.2 How do you notify the client of the amount of assistance paid?

A: Heating: All households who complete an application receive written notice of eligibility that includes the amount of the benefit.
Crisis: local Energy Assistance Providers are required, by the terms of their executed agreement, to provide each client with a written notice of decision that includes the amount of the benefit.
Cooling: Not Applicable

Q: 9.3 How do you assure that the home energy supplier will charge the eligible household, in the normal billing process, the difference between the actual cost of the home energy and the amount of the payment?

A: Bulk fuel vendors are required to provide a delivered invoice for payment so only the benefit amount is charged to the program. For utilities (regulated and un-regulated), Development may require the client make co-payments for amounts above the benefit threshold after confirming with the utilities the client's actual usage charges.

Q: 9.4 How do you assure that no household receiving assistance under this title will be treated adversely because of their receipt of LIHEAP assistance?

A: Development has a Home Energy Assistance Vendor Agreement and local Energy Assistance Provider grant agreements that both include a nondiscrimination policy. Copies of both are attached.

Q: 9.5 Do you make payments contingent on unregulated vendors taking appropriate measures to alleviate the energy burdens of eligible households?

A: No

Section 10: Program, Fiscal Monitoring, and Audit, 2605(b)(10)

Q: 10.1 Ohio Grants Management Tracking LIHEAP Funds:

A: Development's grant management and database software is Salesforce, a web-based application. Local Energy Assistance Providers are required to complete and submit an application in Salesforce detailing their management plan and budget.

The online application is designed and built with various validations to assist and ensure good fiscal accounting and tracking of LIHEAP funds in the following ways:

1. Prevent budgeting greater than the maximum grant award.
2. Only allow the maximum administration amount to be budgeted and track expenditure during the grant period. Track and prevent reporting total cash received smaller than sum of monthly cash received, and track and prevent reporting expenditures greater than the grant award amount.
3. Track final expenditures with grant balance.

Reports are available from all of Development's systems to produce statewide obligation/expenditures and number of households served reports to track expenditures on heating, crisis, and weatherization by program year.

Local Energy Assistance Providers have the opportunity to submit budget revisions, as necessary by program needs, and/or to align with actual expenditures at the end of the grant period. All requested revisions go through a review and approval process by Development staff.

Q: 10.2 Is your LIHEAP program audited annually under the Single Audit Act and OMB Circular A-133?

A: Yes

Q: 10.3 Describe any audit findings rising to the level of material weakness or reportable condition cited in the A-133 audits, Grantee monitoring assessments, inspector general reviews, or other government agency reviews of the LIHEAP agency from the most recently audited fiscal year?

A: Three findings including LIHEAP- Cash Management, LIHEAP-Transparency Act Reporting, and LIHEAP-Reporting.

Q: 10.4 Audits of Local Administering Agencies

A: Boxes Checked:

- Local agencies/district offices are required to have an annual audit in compliance with Single Audit Act and OMB Circular A-133.
- Local agencies/district offices' A-133 or other independent audits are reviewed by Grantee as part of compliance process.
- Grantee conducts fiscal and program monitoring of local agencies/district offices.

Q: 10.5 Describe the Grantee's strategies for monitoring compliance with the Grantee's and Federal LIHEAP policies and procedures: Select all that Apply:

A: Other: A structured monitoring system was implemented by Development for on-site visits by trained personnel for review of all computer collected/compiled data and through identification of special problems. Development implemented a web-based centralized client application and database called the Ohio Community and Energy Assistance Network (OCEAN) in 2006. This system is shared with local Energy Assistance Providers and allows for real-time reporting as well as access to client intake processes, income calculations, eligibility determination and client comments. There is also an audit log which tracks any updates to a client's record. Development created a monitoring Review Tool in the client entry Salesforce system. Both local Energy Assistance Providers and Development can access and review client applications that are in the system. These reviews can track where errors are being made, what team member may need additional assistance, and allow the intake worker to view their mistakes and make corrections. There are reports designed to track how many reviews have been completed and if they are expected to reach the required number of reviews in each individual category (as outlined in the Energy Assistance Programs Guidelines).

Q: 10.6 Explain or attach a copy of your local agency monitoring schedule and protocol.

A: It is Development's practice to monitor local Energy Assistance Providers annually. The monitoring process may be conducted remotely. Development will send each local Energy Assistance Provider a copy of the monitoring tool, a list of items to submit through a secure website, along with submission instructions. Development will review all items and schedule an exit interview with the local Energy Assistance Providers. During the exit interview, the Community Development Analyst will review the tool with staff and may provide a copy of the tool for review and comments, if necessary.

Q: 10.7. Describe how you select local agencies for monitoring reviews. Site Visits:

A: It is Development's practice to monitor every local Energy Assistance Provider annually.

Desk Reviews:

Available as needed using electronic system.

Q: 10.8 How often is each local agency monitored?

A: It is Development's practice to monitor local Energy Assistance Providers annually. In the event of unforeseen circumstances, a monitoring will occur at a minimum of every other year.

Q: 10.11 How many local agencies are currently on corrective action plans for eligibility and/or benefit determination issues?

A: 0

Q: 10.12 How many local agencies are currently on corrective action plans for financial accounting or administrative issues?

A: 0

Section 11: Timely and Meaningful Public Participation, 2605(b)(12), 2605(C)(2)

Q: 11.1 How did you obtain input from the public in the development of your LIHEAP plan?

A: To facilitate input from the public regarding the structure of the Home Energy Assistance Program, Development:

- Requested written comments regarding ways to improve the FY2022 HEAP program from all local Energy Assistance Providers.
- Will conduct a public hearing in August 2022.
- The Local Energy Assistance Providers created the Ohio HEAP Leadership Association (OHLA) in 2022 and provided feedback on Energy Assistance Program processes. Development has met with OHLA to discuss potential changes to the programs.

Q: 11.2 What changes did you make to your LIHEAP plan as a result of this participation?

A: N/A

Q: 11.3 List the date and location(s) that you held public hearing(s) on the proposed use and distribution of your LIHEAP funds?

A: 8/19/2022 FY2022 LIHEAP Public Hearing via online Webex webinar and in person.

Q: 11.4 How many parties commented on your plan at the hearing(s)?

A: Development will provide this information following the hearing.

Q: 11.5 Summarize the comments you received at the hearing(s).

A: Development will provide this information following the hearing.

Q: 11.6 What changes did you make to your LIHEAP plan as a result of the comments received at the public hearing(s)?

A: Once the hearing is conducted, Development will provide an update.

Section 12: Fair Hearings, 2605(b)(13) - Assurance 13

Q: 12.1 How many fair hearings did the grantee have in the prior Federal fiscal year?

A: 0

Q: 12.2 How many of those fair hearings resulted in the initial decision being reversed?

A: 0

Q: 12.3 Describe any policy and/or procedural changes made in the last Federal fiscal year as a result of fair hearings?

A: The appeals process will be managed at the local level by each local Energy Assistance Provider. If the client wishes to pursue a further appeal, they must submit a state level appeal to Development within 30 days of the final decision rendered at the local agency.

Q: 12.4 Describe your fair hearing procedures for households whose applications are denied.

A: Clients have 30 days from the date they receive their eligibility or benefit notification to appeal decisions made regarding their Energy Assistance Application for HEAP, WCP, SCP, and PIPP. Clients must be informed of this right when they receive their application and again in their notification letter.

Clients must be informed of this right at the time an application is submitted. Clients may appeal more than once within the same/current program year.

Grounds for appeal include:

- Energy Assistance Application was denied.
- Disagreements with the benefit/installment amount (HEAP, WCP, SCP, and PIPP).
- Household composition has changed since the application was submitted.
- Income has changed since the application was submitted.
- Utility provider has changed or is incorrect.
- Multi-Program discount was applied to HEAP, but client is not in PIPP.
- Intake worker error in inputting client information
- If an applicant is found noncompliant and is placed under Compliance Review
- Client is eligible for HEAP due to heat/energy included in rent, bill in landlord's name, etc.
- If documentation of an income deduction was not submitted with the original application and not deducted (documentation of disability, insurance premiums).

- If documentation of an excluded income type was not submitted with the original application and income was counted/included, example: Title V wages etc.

Local Level Energy Assistance Programs - Written Appeal

Clients have 30 days from the date they receive their benefit notification to appeal decisions made regarding their Energy Assistance Application. All appeals must be submitted in writing (letter or email) with supporting documentation attached to the local Energy Assistance Provider's HEAP Coordinator.

The appeal review must be completed within 30 days from the date of the client's appeal request. The local Energy Assistance Provider must notify their Development Community Development Analyst of the final decision and scan all documentation into OCEAN/Portal (i.e., the appeal request, supportive documentation, local Energy Assistance Provider's Resolution/Notification/Actions, etc.). An e-mail must be sent to heapappeals@development.ohio.gov, copying their Development Community Development Analyst. The client must be notified of the decision made by the local Energy Assistance Provider within 10 days of the decision.

Local Level Energy Assistance Programs - Hearing

Clients who were denied during the written appeal process may request a formal hearing within 30 days of the denial of the written appeal. The client must submit a request for a formal hearing in writing (letter or email). The request is to be made to the Executive Director of the local Energy Assistance Provider. The local Energy Assistance Provider shall schedule a hearing within 30 days of the receipt of the letter/email requesting a hearing. The hearing shall be held at a mutually convenient place and a hearing officer shall be appointed by the local Energy Assistance Provider. The hearing officer may be a staff member of the local Energy Assistance Provider who was not involved in the decision that is being appealed.

The client must be notified of the local Energy Assistance Provider's decision regarding the appeal within 10 days of the date of the formal hearing.

The local Energy Assistance Provider must also notify their Development Community Development Analyst of the final decision and scan all documentation into the OCEAN database (i.e., the appeal request, supportive documentation, local Energy Assistance Provider's Resolution/Notification/Actions, etc.).

State Level Energy Assistance Programs Appeal

If the client wishes to pursue a further appeal, they must submit a state level appeal to Development within 30 days of the final hearing decision rendered at the local Energy Assistance Provider. The appeal request may be mailed to:

Ohio Department of Development Office
of Community Assistance, Appeals
P.O. Box 2169
Columbus, Ohio 43216
or faxed to **(614) 387-2718 Attention: Appeals**

Development will only review client appeals which have been denied at both the local Energy Assistance Provider written and hearing appeal process and that contain new information, or information not considered during the local Energy Assistance Provider written and hearing appeal process.

The appeal request must contain the following information:

- Client's name, Address, Telephone number,
- Client number (if available),
- Reason for the appeal,
- Supporting documentation, and
- Client's signature.

A decision on the appeal will be made within 30 days of receipt of the appeal request. The client will be notified within 10 days of Development's decision.

Federal Level Energy Assistance Programs Appeal

If the client wishes to pursue an appeal of a State level appeal determination, they must submit a federal level appeal to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families. The appeal request may be mailed to:

Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families
Office of Community Services/Division of Energy Assistance
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
(LIHEAP) Mary E. Switzer Building, 5th Floor
330 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
Or fax to **(202) 401-5661**

All appeal decisions made by Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families are final.

Q. 12.5 When and how are applicants informed of these rights?

A: Clients are notified of their fair hearing rights in the following manners:

- Verbal Notification: HEAP staff will advise clients of their application status and appeal rights.
- Written Notification: Whether an application is approved or denied, all clients are notified of appeal rights in the letter containing the original determination of eligibility.
- Agency Notification: For crisis assistance, all clients are interviewed face-to-face unless face-to-face requirement waived by Development. Clients are informed of their appeal rights during the interview. For in-person interviews, agencies displaying the appeals process in its entirety in the waiting areas. Also, the appeal procedure described above is incorporated into the Energy Assistance Programs Guidelines issued by Development to all local grantees.
- Appeal process is posted on Development's online application page.

Q. 12.6 Describe your fair hearing procedures for households whose applications are not acted on in a timely manner.

A: Same as 12.4

Q. 12.7 When and how are applicants informed of these rights?

A: Same as 12.5

Section 13: Reduction of home energy needs, 2605(b)(16)-Assurance 16

Q: 13.1 Describe how you use LIHEAP funds to provide services that encourage and enable households to reduce their home energy needs and thereby the need for energy assistance?

A: In order to comply with Section 2605(b)(16) of the LIHEAP statute (42 U.S.C & 8624(b)(16))- Assurance 16, Development will provide a maximum of 5% of the total annual State of Ohio LIHEAP allocation to encourage and enable households to reduce their home energy needs. Funding is available annually through a request for proposal process. Applications will be received and reviewed on a first come, first served basis during the open application period. The request for proposal will outline the following:

- Duration of program (Annual award vs. One-time)
- Requested funding amount, uses and any leveraged resources
- Description of the project and how the project will reduce the household's energy burden
- Anticipated outcomes
- Methodologies for tracking outcomes

If the applicant is awarded funds, they will be required to report on the number of households served and the impact on those households (including pre- and post-testing, client survey responses, etc.).

Examples of how LIHEAP funds have been provided through Assurance 16 includes the following:

- **The Breathing Association** – Provides energy efficiency education and assessments, energy saving referrals and energy saving kits through its mobile medical unit and lung clinic and currently served 1,392 households.
- **HARCATUS Tri-County Community Action Organization** – Provides energy needs assessments, referrals for energy efficiency services and energy efficiency kits and currently served 92 households.
- **Kno-Ho-Co-Ashland Community Action Commission** – Provides energy efficiency education, home assessments and kits, and currently served 308 households.
- **Mahoning Youngstown Community Action Partnership** – Provides energy efficiency education, energy efficiency audits with 60-day reviews, and energy

efficiency kits and currently served 92 households.

- **Ohio Energy Partners** – Provides energy efficiency education and energy efficiency kits through its E3 smart program that works with classrooms (students and teachers) in underserved regions in Ohio and currently served 1,317 households.
- **West Ohio Community Action Partnership** – Provides energy efficiency education, energy efficiency assessments, energy efficiency kits, Case Management, Energy and financial counseling.
- **Clean Energy 4 All** – Provided energy efficiency education, energy efficiency audits, program referrals for household efficiency improvements and oversight of the improvements.

Q: 13.2 How do you ensure that you don't use more than 5% of you LIHEAP funds for these activities?

A: Development will allocate funds in the methods described in 13.1 up to a maximum of 5% of the LIHEAP funds allocated to the State of Ohio.

Q: 13.3 Describe the impact of such activities on the number of households served in the previous Federal fiscal year.

A: The Breathing Association has been funded by the HEAP Assurance 16 to provide clients with residential energy savings education along with receiving a HEAP benefit. For PY22 there was a 12% increase in patients' knowledge after energy assistance guidance related to energy usage and health was given.

Q: 13.4 Describe the level of direct benefits provided to those households in the previous Federal fiscal year.

A: Clients received residential energy savings education along with receiving a HEAP benefit, and medical care. Some agencies also provided energy conservation kits to clients in addition to education materials.

Q: 13.5 How many households applied for these services?

A: The current number is: 5,990. We will provide an updated number at a later date. Agencies are still serving clients.

Q: 13.6 How many households received these services?

A: The total number of households that received services is: 5,990.

Section 14: Leveraging Incentive Program, 2607 (A)

Q: 14.1 Do you plan to submit an application for the leveraging incentive program?

A: Yes

Q: 14.2 Describe instructions to any third parties and/or local agencies for submitting LIHEAP leveraging resource information and retaining records.

A: Development has and will continue to engage in activities which enhance the value of basic LIHEAP assistance to eligible households. These activities are consistent with general definitions of "leveraging" as found in Section 707 of Public Law 101-501, Section 2607A. Regulations implementing the leveraging incentive program are contained in 45 CFR Part 96. Development will describe those activities for award of additional federal funds appropriated for this purpose.

Q: 14.3 For each type of resource and/or benefit to be leveraged in the upcoming year that will meet the requirements of 45 C.F.R. Â§ 96.87(d)(2)(iii), describe the following:

A:

Fuel Funds	Several regulated gas and electric utilities in Ohio raise and provide funds for eligible low-income clients. Many of these fuel funds are directly administered by the State LIHEAP office or its grantees, which employ a certification of eligibility by the state office and its Local Energy Assistance Providers and often requires verification that the LIHEAP benefits are exhausted to qualify for assistance. Other policies, such as amount of benefit and months of availability, may vary by fund. Determination of income eligibility and certification of same is performed by the local Energy Assistance Provider, as already specified in Ohio's state plan. Ohio's private fuel funds could not operate according to their program rules without information provided and/or verified by the Ohio LIHEAP program.
Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus	The Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP) is designed for low-income Ohioans who need assistance paying their utility bills to maintain gas and/or electric service. It can be combined with the Home Energy Assistance Program benefit to help income-eligible Ohioans manage their energy bills. PIPP is funded by the Universal Service Fund (USF). The USF is a rider on the utility bill of all clients of regulated utilities. A rider is an additional charge on a utility bill which must be approved by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) for a specific purpose. The PUCO calculates the gas PIPP rate and audits utilities which provide gas PIPP. The Ohio Department of Development calculates the electric PIPP rate case, which determines the funding level of the USF and the electric PIPP program. The PIPP is available for Ohioans with a household income at or below 150% of the federal poverty guideline, receiving gas or electric service from a utility regulated by the PUCO.

Electric Partnership Program	Each year, more than \$14 million of the USF is designated for education and energy efficiency measures. Some of the PIPP-eligible households with high consumption rates and high arrearages are identified to participate in the educational program. The program serves about 11,000 PIPP electric households each year with in-home audits to identify energy-saving measures and provide conservation education. Replacement light bulbs, weather-stripping and in some cases new appliances are provided. This service helps HEAP implement practices to reduce their energy consumption over time.
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Section 16: Performance Goals and Measures, 2605 (b)

Q: 16.1 Describe your progress toward meeting the data collection and reporting requirements of the four required LIHEAP performance measures. Include timeframes and plans for meeting these requirements and what you believe will be accomplished in the coming federal fiscal year.

A: We contacted our top 10 Propane/Bottle Gas, Fuel Oil/Kerosene and Wood/Coal/Other vendors and explained that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which funds the Ohio Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), requires Development to collect and report data on Ohio HEAP client usage.

We have previously enhanced our OCEAN system to make it more user-friendly for vendors to provide the needed data. We emailed vendors the instructions on how to retrieve the client information of our mutual HEAP clients. We provided specific dates for vendors to use to reflect the 12 months of data needed to report the annual bill amount, annual usage, full year service address, and clients that were a customer for at least 12 months.

We have received data from the following categories of vendors:

- (10) Propane/Bottle Gas
- (10) Fuel Oil/Kerosene
- (10) Wood/Coal/Other
- (5) Gas
- (6) Electric

Time frames and plans for meeting these requirements:

We require the data usage report to cover 10/1/21-9/30/22. We make weekly contact with fuel vendors to ensure progress is being made on data collection and to answer questions. We will process the data and prepare the Performance Measures Data Collection Report submission on January 31, 2023.

What we hope to accomplish in the coming federal fiscal year:

Development will make process improvements to the performance data collection and reporting based on feedback from HEAP vendors, clients, and Development staff. Development will analyze the HEAP client usage data to improve the program and customer service. Development will ensure data is being properly collected and reported from vendors. Our goal is to have 95% or more of our vendors participating in the data collection and reporting process. Some of our vendors are building capacity over the next year to pull their data extraction processes/systems together for full participation.