



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

Bruce Rauner, Governor

Low Income Energy Assistance Policy Advisory Council Minutes of Meeting Held on April 16, 2015 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Attendance in Chicago

Members: *Aimee English, Citizens Utility Board; John Knox, Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO); Kris White, Will County*

Guests: *Latoya Butler, CEDA; Allen Cherry, Attorney General; Brian Glasgow, CEDA; Nancy Kane-Richards, Nicor Gas; Shelby Montgomery, CEDA; Jennifer Schmidt, CEDA*

Staff: *Maria Gallardo, DCEO; Emily Monk, DCEO*

Attendance in Springfield

Members:

Guests: *Mindy Browning, ERBA; Dan Manfredo, IACCA; Kathy Walk, CEFS*

Staff: *Dennis Gorss, DCEO; Kevin Harrison, DCEO; Janet Hawes-Davis, DCEO; Patty Hughes, DCEO; Ben Moore, DCEO; Amy Park, DCEO; Jerry Thornton, DCEO*

Attendance via Conference Telephone

Members: *Christian Denes, City of Chicago; Julie Hubbard, Illinois Area Agency on Aging; Doc Mueller, Illinois Municipal Electric Agency; Ellen Rendos, Nicor Gas;*

Guests: *Melanie Brown, Ameren; Kimberly Burdine, ComEd; Latoya Crowe, ComEd; Jim Monk, Illinois Energy Association; Lauren Pashayan, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance; Barbara Richardson, Legal Assistance Foundation of Metro. Chicago*

Staff: *Leslie Ann Lesko, DCEO*

Call to Order

John Knox called the PAC meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

John Knox explained that there were no minutes ready for approval from the March 19, 2015 meeting. They will be sent out for review before the next meeting.

Fiscal Report

Ben Moore covered the provided fiscal overview.

There is currently \$26.8 million out to the LAAs in Weatherization money. The LAAs have spent about \$16.9 million, leaving about \$9.9 million. OEA is in the process of issuing DOE carry-over modification grants to the LAAs.

In LIHEAP there is about \$233 million out to the LAAs and about \$226.8 million has been expended, leaving about \$7 million available. There are some agencies that have stopped taking LIHEAP applications due to lack of funds.

Weatherization

Jerry Thornton talked about the production numbers provided in the overview.

Jerry talked about the Quality Control Inspector (QCI) Certification requirement by DOE. There have been additional refresher classes provided, and they are full, but there is still a very large percentage failing. There is both an on-line test and a field test; it is the on-line test that so many are having trouble with.

John Knox spoke about the State Weatherization Plan. The State Weatherization Plan is actually OEA's application to DOE for a grant. DOE requires that the State Plan be posted for public review and a public hearing be held, allowing the public to make comments on the plan if they would like. The final requirement is that the Policy Advisory Council (PAC) ratifies the State Weatherization Plan. There weren't a lot of changes to the plan this year. The highlights of the changes are an increase to the Health and Safety budget, OEA also updated the quality work plan (QCI requirement being one, the other two are updating OEA Field Standards and passing on OEA's requirements to our sub-grantees). The other major change to the State Weatherization Plan each year is the budget. There was discussion about using HHS and State funds for Weatherization, and if that was a good idea based on lack of funds for PIPP and LIHEAP. It was decided that it was too late to change things for the FY16 program year, but the debate needed to happen before the next program year. John indicated it was OEA's goal to get the State Weatherization Plan submitted by mid-May, so the public hearing would most likely be scheduled for the first week in May. OEA will request a special phone meeting of the PAC in order to ratify the Plan.

LIHEAP/PIPP

Maria Gallardo provided program updates on LIHEAP and PIPP, reviewing the information provided in the Program Status Summary.

Maria stated that LIHEAP has spent \$157.5 million on behalf of 278,275 households. As of April 14, 2015 there are fourteen agencies that have quit taking LIHEAP applications due to lack of funds. They are: CEDA; CEFS; Champaign; Illinois Valley; Madison County; Peoria; Project NOW; Tri County; Will County; Carver; Decatur; Kankakee; Lake and ERBA.

Maria stated that OEA has obligated \$61.6 million for the year on behalf of 55,404 households receiving PIPP benefits. The average annual PIPP benefit in FY15 is \$1,112 as opposed to \$910 in FY14.

The PIPP Recertification and True-Up process was deployed in STARS on February 15, 2015. OEA has recently started receiving the 60 day advance true-up notices from the utilities in STARS. Since the last meeting, OEA has sent a procedure letter to the LAAs addressing procedural issues and answering questions that came up during the webinars. A letter has been sent to PIPP clients letting them know the recertification process is going to change and to look for more information from their local agency.

OEA has been working on the newly required HHS Performance Measures. HHS will require all states to start reporting on four main areas of data in FFY16, due to HHS by January of 2017. HHS is encouraging states to start submitting the information as soon as possible in order to figure out any problems and resolve any issues. OEA has been working with OIM to see what information is already available and what new information needs to be collected. OEA has identified two areas where it needs to collect information; annual usage of clients as well as annual bill data from both regulated utilities and fuel vendors. HHS would also like OEA to provide information from the top ten Illinois fuel vendors who are primarily propane vendors.

Maria provided an update on how the PIPP drops process was proceeding. There are 8,469 clients that will be dropped due to funding limitations. There are about 1,018 clients on the list in the Ameren territory, 7,451 in Peoples Gas and 5 in Nicor. Maria explained about the one time exception to the PIPP Business Rules, allowing Peoples Gas/ComEd clients to remain on PIPP on the ComEd side and receive a DVP later on the Peoples Gas side in order to minimize the impact to clients. There are no budget constraints with ComEd. The letter was forwarded to the printer and should reach clients in approximately seven days. The clients will be dropped on June 30, 2015.

Maria brought up the proposed updates to the PIPP Business Rules that were sent out to the PAC this morning. There was a meeting last week of the PIPP Steering Committee, and their recommendations are the changes that are indicated in the document. Lauren Pashayan indicated that the PIPP Business Rules Maria provided weren't the latest version. The version Lauren has are from an August 2012 PAC meeting, they are marked draft but she has in her notes that they were approved, perhaps December of 2012. Maria indicated the PIPP Business Rules OEA uses are the ones that were approved July 21, 2011 by the PAC. Maria indicated that she would have to go back and check to see if the Business Rules from 2012 were approved. Maria proposed that the PAC go ahead and approve the two changes today and go back and insert them in the most recently approved PIPP Business Rules. The first proposed rule change is adding language requiring PIPP participants to certify their income and household composition every time they move during the program year so OEA can ensure their continued eligibility. The second proposed rule change is that language be added to indicate that PIPP participation is contingent upon funding availability, that OEA may terminate a client at any time during the program year if funding is no longer available. Also, it was indicated that on page 28 under section E, 1 there needs to be an (e) added to the list that says "Lack of funding availability." The old rules referred to LIHEAP.net and Maria went ahead and updated those references to STARS.net. Maria also changed the reference from SB1918 to the Energy Assistance Act. Maria also inserted the PAC approved addendum regarding the PIPP recertification and True-Up process into the business rules. Kris White made a motion that the changes that were presented in the

Proposed PIPP Business Rules Changes Summary 4-16-2015 and the change presented for page 28 be approved. Aimee English seconded the motion, and the motion carried. It was requested that future changes reference the Section that is changing, not page, as page numbers can be thrown off depending how things print out. It was also requested that the final approved PIPP Business Rules be posted on the website.

Maria Gallardo discussed two funding challenges facing OEA in the upcoming heating season program. The first challenge is to have funds available to start the LIHEAP program in the fall, most likely moving the start date to October 1st to coincide with the Federal award. It was mentioned that SB418 sponsored by Senator Andy Manar was introduced to allow the use of the \$65 million dollars carryover from the Supplemental LIHEAP fund towards the LIHEAP program. In order for it to help start the program in September, it would need to be approved before closeout of this program year. OEA also needs to make clients and the public aware of the changes to the start of the program as soon as possible. The second challenge is to make the money last further into the program year. Working towards the second challenge, one thought is to look at income eligibility. Currently OEA uses 150% but that percentage could go lower, but no lower than 110% per HHS rules. Another option is to adjust the benefit matrix; OEA's benefits are higher than other states. Another consideration is changing the way OEA provides reconnection assistance or changing the benefit amount. Currently OEA provides reconnection assistance even though the client might not get their utilities restored. The changes the PAC approves need to be submitted as part of the HHS State Plan. The discussion indicated that the PAC preferred not to change income eligibility because it will mostly affect seniors and families with fixed income. The preference was to change the benefit matrix and to drop reconnection assistance when it wouldn't reconnect utilities. There was discussion about dropping imminent disconnection assistance and changing the amount of reconnection assistance per client.

New Business

Meeting Schedule

John Knox explained that meeting monthly is not working well for OEA because of the short staffing issue and suggested moving to quarterly PAC meetings, with Sub Committee Meetings and PIPP Steering Committee Meetings held in between. There was much discussion, and it was tabled for now. The next meeting information will be communicated by email.