



**Agenda Item Number
6 c.
Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) and Low Income
Household Water Assistance (LIHWAP) Programs**

Date: June 22, 2023

Presenter: Brenda Wilson

Action Recommended: Approve Recommendation

Subject: Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) and Low Income Household Water Assistance (LIHWAP) Programs

BACKGROUND: For many years, S&DS has contracted with Lane County as a service provider of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP is a federally funded program that aims to keep families safe and healthy by providing assistance in managing costs associated with home energy bills and other energy-related expenses, while reducing risk from unsafe heating and cooling practices. Lane County's LIHEAP serves low-income households, at or below 60% Area Median Income (AMI), on a first-come, first-served basis.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, these funds were available only during a few winter months when temperatures dropped significantly. During the pandemic and due to increased community need, the County expanded LIHEAP to be available during the summer and has now expanded the Program to year-round. Lane County has reached out to S&DS to participate in a new water assistance focused program, Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), which would function as a similar model to LIHEAP on a year-round basis. This has made the delivering of the program more complicated – and more costly.

LIHEAP has been challenging to deliver due to the limitation on administrative expenses from the County and the workload on S&DS staff to ensure program requirements are met. 85% of allocated funds go directly to the consumer and LCOG receives the remaining 15% for Program Delivery and Administrative Costs. In other words, for every \$100 we provide to a consumer in assistance, LCOG receives \$15. Due to the workload required to provide these services, we have been supplementing the program with Medicaid funds.

S&DS' current contract period expires September 30, 2023. S&DS served 561 unduplicated consumers during our 20-21 fiscal year, 546 unduplicated consumers between July 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022, and 636 unduplicated consumer this fiscal year so far. The cost of this program is as follows:

FY23 Year to date through May 2023

Total Cost for Program Delivery & Admin Costs:	\$61,782
County Reimbursement:	\$55,985 (Includes \$12,592 of emergency funding carried forward from FY22)
LCOG Backfill:	\$5,797
FY22 Total Cost for Program Delivery & Admin Costs:	\$67,222
County Reimbursement:	\$67,222
	(No backfill due to emergency funding)
FY21 Total Cost for Program Delivery & Admin Costs:	\$70,215
County Reimbursement:	\$47,665
LCOG Backfill:	\$22,550
FY20 Total Cost for Program Delivery & Admin Costs:	\$63,498
County Reimbursement:	\$35,841
LCOG Backfill:	\$27,657
FY19 Total Cost for Program Delivery & Admin Costs:	\$49,967
County Reimbursement:	\$29,908
LCOG Backfill:	\$20,059
FY18 Total Cost for Program Delivery & Admin Costs:	\$42,239
County Reimbursement:	\$26,616
LCOG Backfill:	\$15,623

At the June 13 Executive Committee meeting, the Committee recognized LIHEAP as a valuable resource to our consumers, however agreeing that supplementing the program with Medicaid funds is inappropriate. The Committee recommended LCOG continue the delivery of the programs for one year beginning effective October 1, 2023, hiring "up to 0.5 FTE" funded with General Fund dollars with the position being paid to do other work if the entire position is not required to handle the applications. Committee members

suggested working with the County to address the administrative issues and working with our Federal Delegation on the reimbursement issue.

Suggested Motion:

Continue the delivery LIHEAP and LIHWAP programs, for one year beginning effective October 1, 2023, hiring “up to 0.5 FTE” funded with General Fund dollars with the position being paid to do other work if the entire position is not required to handle the applications. Continue to look for solutions.