

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DE 24-093

STATEWIDE LOW-INCOME ELECTRIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

2024-2025 Electric Assistance Program Budgets

Order *Nisi* Approving 2024-2025 Program Year Budgets

O R D E R N O. 27,052

August 29, 2024

In this order, the Commission approves on a *nisi* basis the Electric Assistance Program (EAP) administrative budgets for the 2024-2025 EAP program year. The EAP budget in 2024-2025 is flat when compared to the budget approved last year.

I. BACKGROUND

The purpose of this docket is to review the budgets for administering the EAP as established by statute and by prior orders of the Commission; *see, e.g., Statewide Low-Income Electric Assistance Program*, Order No. 23,980 (May 30, 2002); *Statewide Low-Income Electric Assistance Program*, Order No. 26,870 (August 9, 2023). The EAP is funded by the system benefits charge, which is paid by all ratepayers as required by RSA 374-F:3, VI, and RSA 374-F:4, VIII(c). The EAP program is administered by the community action agencies (CAAs), the New Hampshire Department of Energy (DOE), and the State's four electric distribution utilities: Liberty Utilities (Granite State Electric) Corp. d/b/a Liberty (Liberty); the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, Inc. (NHEC); Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy (Eversource); and Unitil Energy Systems, Inc. (UES) (together, the Utilities).

On July 29, 2024, NHEC filed its proposed EAP administrative budget for the upcoming 2024-2025 EAP program year (October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025). On

July 31, 2024, UES, the CAAs, and Liberty filed their proposed administrative budgets for the 2024-2025 program year. In the cover letter to the CAAs' EAP budget filing, filed with the Commission on July 31, 2024, the CAAs' representative (Ms. Elizabeth Reynolds, NH Electric Assistance Program Director, Community Action Programs, Belknap-Merrimack Counties Inc.) stated: "While we are still reviewing the recent [Commission] Order No. 27,031 [issued on July 9, 2024 in Docket No. DE 22-043], I do anticipate that it will cause additional administrative costs that would need to be incorporated." On August 1, 2024, Eversource filed its proposed EAP administrative budget with the Commission.

On August 1, 2024, UES filed a "Letter of Clarification" stating that "...the [UES] EAP budget filed on July 31st does not reflect any administrative cost impacts associated with the Commission's recent Order No. 27,031 (July 9, 2024) issued in Docket No. DE 22-043. As noted in the July 31, 2024 filed by the [CAAs] in this docket, the [CAAs] are reviewing Order No. 27,031 and anticipate that additional costs will need to be incorporated into their budgets. The Company [UES] will file a supplement budget at such time as the CAPs provide an estimate of any additional costs related to compliance with Order No. 27,031." On August 5, 2024, the Office of the Consumer Advocate (OCA) filed a letter of participation.

On August 21, 2024, the Commission, by Order No. 27,048 in Docket No. DE 22-043, granted a joint motion for rehearing of Order No. 27,031 by the parties to that proceeding, and stayed implementation of the ordering clause of concern to the parties pending rehearing. The Commission further ordered the Utilities to ensure that the EAP budgets filed in the instant proceeding "will incorporate the above-ordered stay." Order No. 27,031 at 4.

The table below presents the proposed EAP 2024-2025 budgets for the CAAs and each Utility, with a comparison of the budget figures proposed for the last (2023-2024) EAP program year, in Docket No. DE 23-073. The figures for the Utilities incorporate the pro-rated shares of CAA administrative costs imputed to each Utility, based on their share of statewide electricity load pursuant to the terms of the EAP program.

EAP BUDGET COMPARISON

Budget Entity	Proposed 2024-2025	Proposed 2023-2024	Change (%)
CAAs	\$2,090,491	\$2,091,664	0.0 %
Eversource	\$1,511,488	\$1,533,190	- 1.4 %
Liberty	\$155,656	\$148,709	+ 4.7 %
NHEC	\$196,483	\$193,533	+ 1.5 %
UES	\$232,734	\$218,370	+ 6.6 %

The EAP budgets filed by the CAAs and the Utilities, and subsequent docket filings, other than information for which confidential treatment is requested of or granted by the Commission, are posted to the Commission's website at <https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2024/24-093.html>.

II. COMMISSION ANALYSIS

Based on our review of the proposed 2024-2025 EAP administrative budgets, comparing those budgets to the prior year and the detailed allocations provided by the CAA's, we find that the proposed budgets are reasonable, and we therefore approve them on a *nisi* basis. Such approval without a hearing is not the norm in current Commission practice related to the EAP, but it is appropriate in this instance given the CAAs' and the Utilities' laudable efforts at cost control, which have continued from last

year. See *Statewide Low-Income Electric Assistance Program*, Order No. 26,891 (September 28, 2023), at 6.

Consistent with prior practice, DOE Audit Staff will conduct a review of actual expenses incurred following the completion of the 2024-2025 EAP program year and report the results to the Commission. Furthermore, we order that any deviation from these approved budgets for the CAA's, and/or the Utilities, arising from the provisions of Order No. 27,031 shall be presented to the Commission for review and approval, but in no case later than January 10, 2025.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED NISI, that subject to the effective date below, the proposed Electric Assistance Program administrative budgets for the 2024-2025 program year from October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025, are hereby APPROVED; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that any deviation from these approved budgets for the CAA's, and/or the Utilities, arising from the provisions of Order No. 27,031 shall be presented expeditiously to the Commission for review and approval, but in no case later than January 10, 2025; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, consistent with prior practice, that DOE Audit Staff will conduct a review of the Electric Assistance Program's actual incurred expenses following completion of the 2024-2025 program year and file its report with the Commission; and it is


FURTHER ORDERED, that the Utilities shall cause a copy of this order to be published on their websites within two business days of the date of this order, with an affidavit of publication to be filed by each Utility with this office on or before September 12, 2024; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that all persons interested in responding to this order be notified that they may submit their comments or file a written request for a hearing, stating the reason and basis for a hearing, no later than September 12, 2024 for the Commission's consideration; and it is

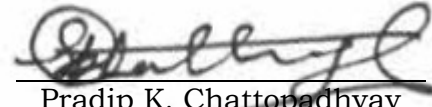
FURTHER ORDERED, that any party interested in responding to such comments or request for hearing shall do so no later than September 19, 2024; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that this order shall be effective September 30, 2024, unless the Utilities fail to satisfy the publication obligation set forth above or the Commission provides otherwise in a supplemental order issued prior to the effective date.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New Hampshire this twenty-ninth day of August, 2024.



Daniel C. Goldner
Chairman



Pradip K. Chattopadhyay
Commissioner

Service List - Docket Related

Docket#: 24-093

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