

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DE 15-297

STATEWIDE LOW-INCOME ELECTRIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

2015-2016 Program Administrative Budgets

Summary of Order *Nisi* No. 25,805 Approving EAP Budgets

August 31, 2015

The purpose of this docket is to review the budgets for administering the statewide low-income electric assistance program (EAP). The EAP is funded by the systems benefit charge and is operated by the community action agencies (CAAs) and the state's four electric distribution utilities. The EAP serves approximately 34,000 customers with no waiting list, which is approximately 1,000 more customers than were served at this time in 2014. The program was originally envisioned to provide benefits to approximately 33,500 customers. The utilities, the CAAs, and the Office of Energy and Planning (OEP) submitted their budgets for the program year October 1, 2015, through September 30, 2016.

Commission Staff (Staff) and the OEP monitor, evaluate, and audit the EAP. OEP's proposed budget of \$27,000 is greater than last year's budget of \$7,000 because the OEP must conduct a triennial evaluation of the program during the upcoming year. Staff's costs associated with the program are not charged to the EAP fund.

The utilities bill and collect the system benefits charge, apply the EAP discounts to the bills of eligible customers, and add and remove customers as the CAAs direct. The utilities' combined budget of \$11,879 is 2.13% lower than last year.

The CAAs' proposed budget of \$1,839,005 is the same as 2014-2015. The CAAs' budget includes the activities of the EAP program administrator and the six CAAs. The program

administrator contracts with, monitors, and performs annual compliance reviews of the other CAAs. The program administrator also compiles the CAAs budgets, invoices the utilities, allocates the administrative revenues to the respective CAAs, and prepares weekly enrollment reports for Staff, the Advisory Board members, and each CAA. The individual CAAs provide customer education, intake services, certification and re-certification of eligibility, discount tier determination, and removal of ineligible customers.

The proposed 2015–2016 budgets were provided to all members of the EAP Advisory Board which reviewed the budgets and conducted an informal discovery process. The Advisory Board concluded that the expenses budgeted for the upcoming program year are reasonable. Staff also recommended approval of the proposed budgets. Staff noted that the 2015–2016 budget is 1.06% higher than the prior year and that the increase is due to OEP's costs to perform its triennial review of the program. The Commission approved the budgets as filed.

In order to ensure that all interested parties receive notice of this docket and have an opportunity to request a hearing, the Commission delayed the effectiveness of its approval until September 30, 2015. All persons interested in responding to the Commission's approval may submit their comments or file a written request for a hearing which states the reason and basis for a hearing no later than September 17, 2015. Any party interested in responding to such comments and request for hearing shall do so no later than September 24, 2015. Following consideration of any comments and requests for hearing received, the Commission may further extend the effective date of its approval. The Commission's approval shall become final and effective on September 30, 2015, unless the Commission orders otherwise.