



DISCUSSION WORKSHOP
STATEWIDE ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM DESIGN STUDY
KEY QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS
July 10, 2023, starting at 1 p.m.
Hosted via online webinar, details below

Login information

- [Meeting link](#) (link)
- Meeting ID: 849 8870 1210
- Passcode: Assistance

Dial-in information

- Phone #: +1 253 215 8782
- Find your local number: <https://wastatecommerce.zoom.us/j/kdJJJoUNlca>
- Meeting ID: 849 8870 1210
 - Passcode: 4200224909
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BACKGROUND

This discussion-based workshop will focus on identifying key questions and considerations about the design of a statewide energy assistance program. Commerce will provide a few key questions for different program design elements to begin a discussion on each element. Meeting participants will be asked to contribute their own questions for consideration for each aspect of program design. The elements that will be considered include, but are not limited to:

- Data collection on energy burden and assistance need
- Universal intake coordination and data sharing across statewide programs serving low-income households
- Program eligibility, enrollment, and administration
- Multicultural services, and outreach and community engagement
- Funding
- Reporting

Following the workshop, stakeholders will have roughly two weeks to submit formal written comments on key questions and considerations regarding the program design elements.

The Washington 2023 Operating Budget requires Commerce submit a report to the Legislature by Jan. 1, 2024, with recommendations on a design for a statewide energy assistance program to address the energy burden and provide access to energy assistance for low-income households.

Background

The proviso follows the publication of the Department of Commerce's [Low-Income Energy Assistance 2023 Legislative Report](#) required by [RCW 19.405.120](#) (Sec. 120). A key finding from that report was that utility programs statewide serve only a small percentage of low-income households compared to individual statewide programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), that have similar eligibility standards. Commerce is required by the Legislature under Sec. 120 to evaluate additional mechanisms to energy assistance, including adoption of system benefits charge, which could be used to fund a state administered low-income energy assistance program. Commerce found multiple potential benefits to a statewide approach to low-income energy assistance, including, but not limited to:

- Universal access to energy assistance
- Increased program participation
- Improved targeting of assistance to those with the most need
- Protection from potential rate hikes
- Reduced administrative costs
- Reliable funding

[The Low-Income Energy Assistance 2023 Legislative Report](#) makes no recommendations, and Commerce will not be making a recommendation for the creation of a statewide program in its upcoming study.

The statewide low-income energy assistance program discussed in [the Low-Income Energy Assistance 2023 Legislative Report](#), and that will be explored in Commerce's upcoming study, is separate and different from the federal block grant program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP offers limited assistance to low-income households and has distinct federal requirements.

AGENDA

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| 1. Welcome | 5 minutes |
| 2. Meeting objectives and process | 10 minutes |

KEY QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROGRAM DESIGN

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|---------------------------|------------|
| 3. Data collection | 15 minutes |
| 4. Data sharing | 15 minutes |

5. Eligibility	15 minutes
6. Enrollment	15 minutes
7. Multicultural services, outreach & community engagement	15 minutes
8. Break	10 minutes
9. Funding	15 minutes
10. Distribution of assistance	15 minutes
11. Reporting	15 minutes
12. Other program design considerations	15 minutes
13. Next steps	20 minutes