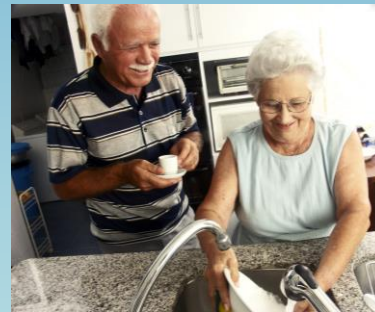


PORTLAND WATER BUREAU

Utility Financial Assistance Program



City Council Work Session – February 13, 2018



Presenting: Gabriel Solmer
Kathy Koch
Liam Frost

Low-Income Services Presentation

1. Program History
2. Current Services
3. Current Need
4. Meeting the Challenge
5. Proposed Enhancements
6. Next Steps

Low-Income Services History

1994

Low-Income Program Approved by City Council

1996

Discount Increase – 25% of Typical Bill

2004

Crisis Voucher Increase – \$75 to \$150 Annually

2007

Utility Safety Net Program Launched

2009

Discount Increase – 50% of Typical Bill

2016

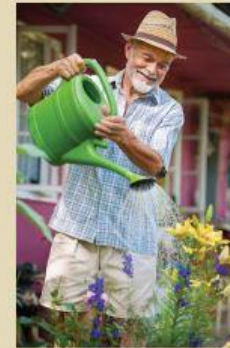
Program Upgrades

Current Services

- Bill Discount (6,600)
- Flexible Bill Pay (85,000)
- Crisis Assistance (2,400)
- Fixture Repair & Replacement (80)
- Utility Safety Net Program (115)
- Free Water Conservation Kits (380)

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR
Sewer, Stormwater
and Water Services

Need help paying
your utility bill?



Looking for
ways to reduce
your bill?



The City of Portland
offers assistance to
qualifying customers



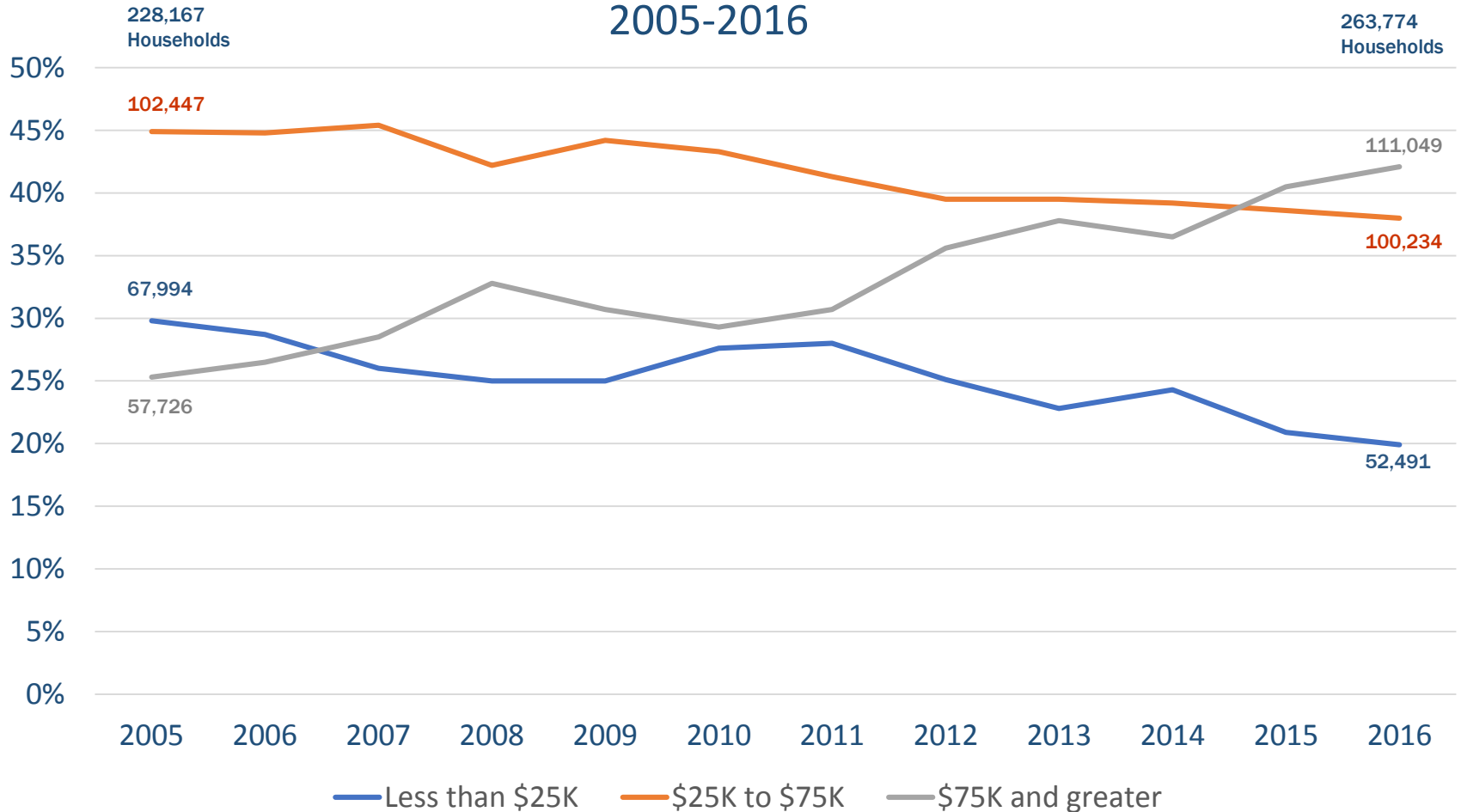
A National Challenge

“The challenge for utilities today is threefold: earn enough revenue to repair broken pipes, keep water affordable for the poor, and do so while selling less of their product.”

Brett Walton, *Circle of Blue* (Natural Resources Non-Profit Media Group)

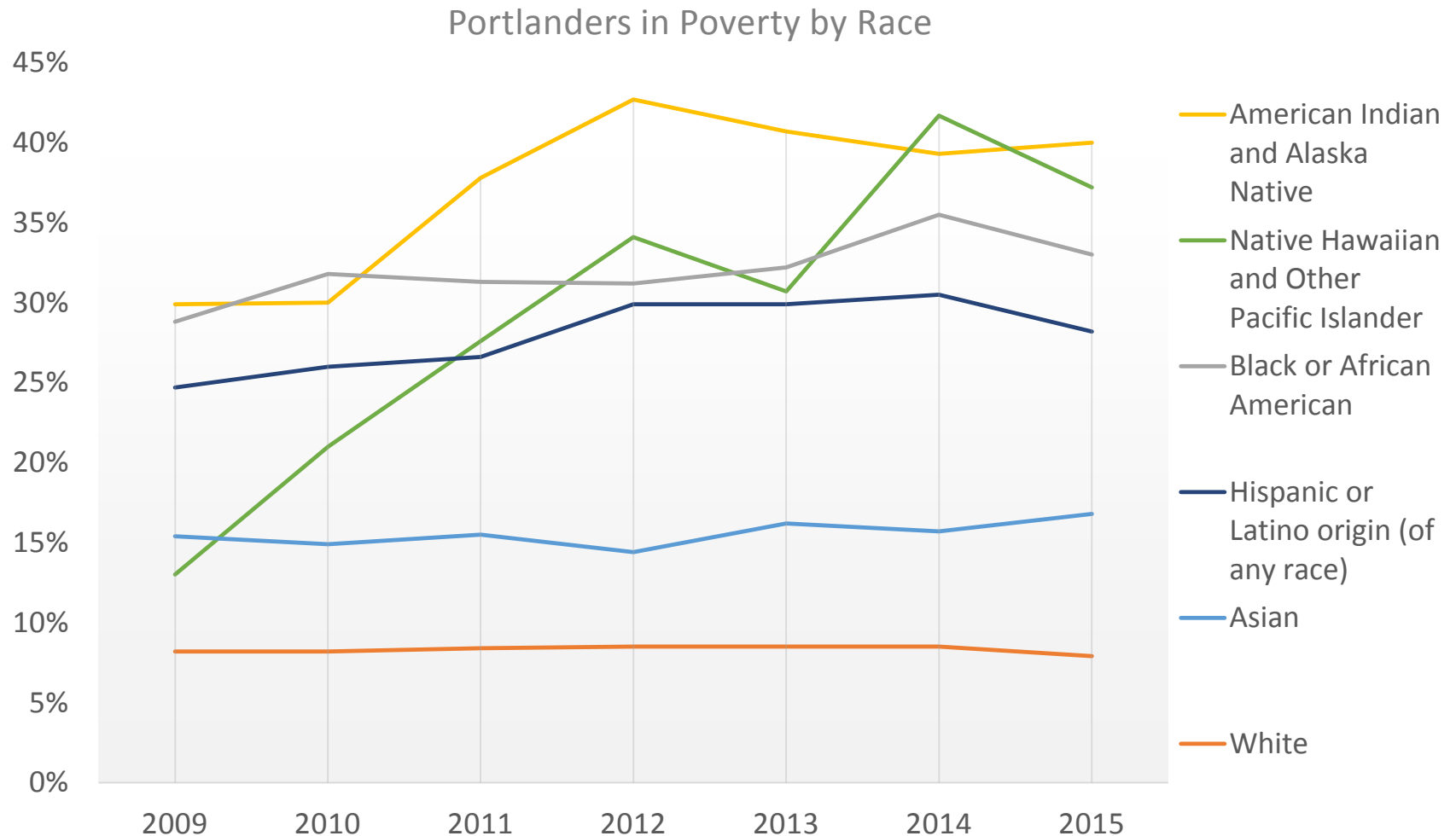
Our Challenge: A Changing Portland

Portland Household Income Distribution
2005-2016



(Source: American Community Survey)

Our Challenge: An Equity Lens



(Source: American Community Survey)

Meeting the Challenge: Proposed Enhancements

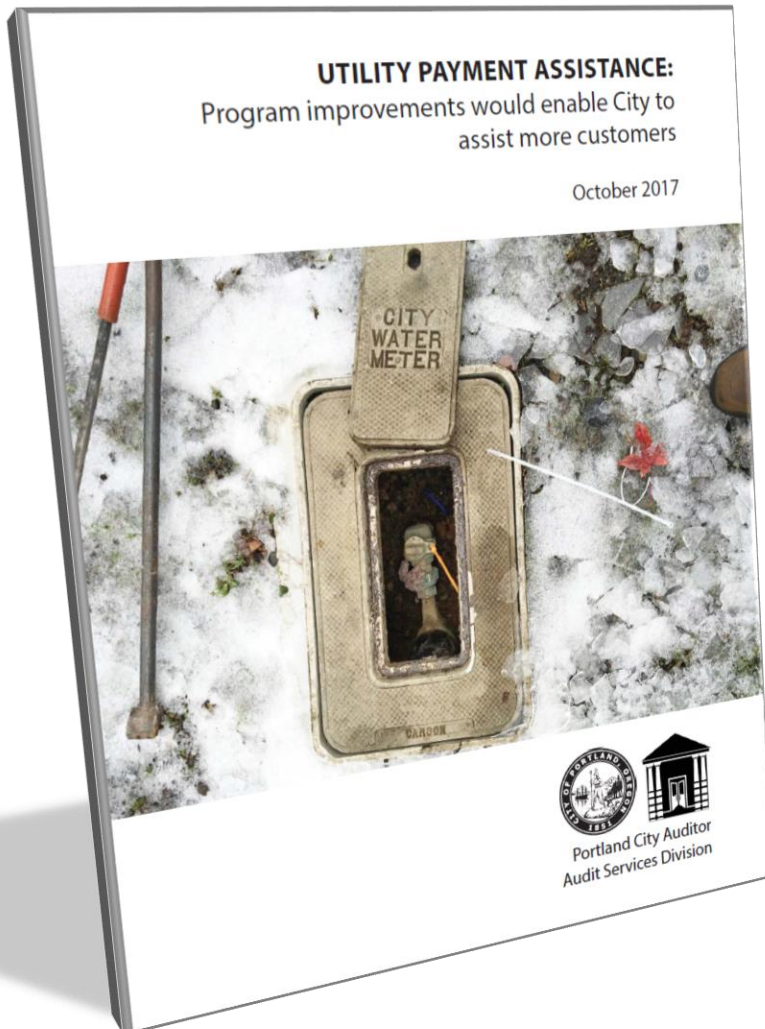
Goals

1. Target Underserved Communities and Portlanders in Need
2. Reach Customers Without Accounts/Individual Meters
3. Reduce Shutoffs for Low-Income Customers

Sources of Data and Community Partners

- Multnomah County
- Home Forward
- Auditor Mary Hull Caballero
- Joint Office of Homeless Services
- Portland Housing Bureau
- Bureau of Environmental Services
- Revenue Bureau
- City Attorney
- Portland State University
- Portland General Electric
- Age-Friendly Cities
- AARP
- Elders in Action
- Latino Network
- Self Enhancement Inc.
- Human Solutions
- El Programa Hispano
- IRCO – Asian Family Center
- NAYA
- Impact Northwest
- Neighborhood House
- Independent Living Resources

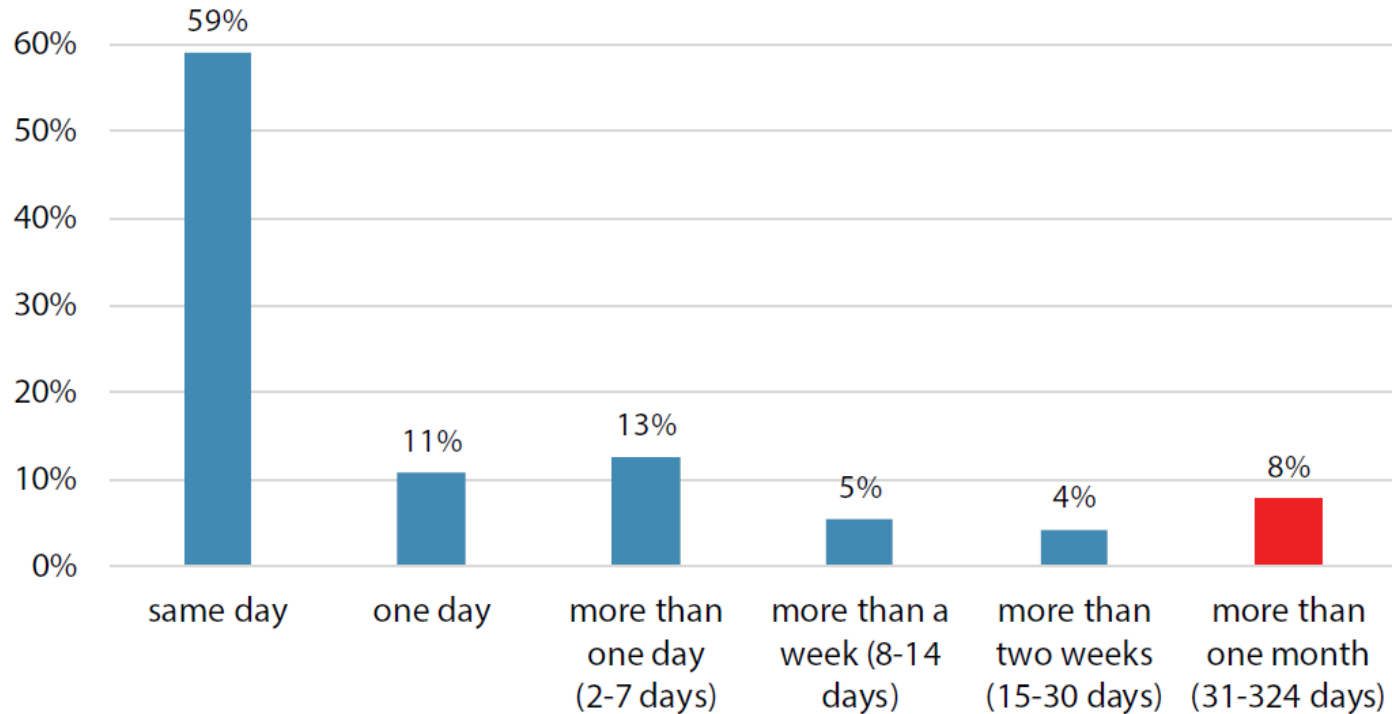
City Auditor Recommendations – Oct. 2017



1. Continue to study how to extend assistance to multi-family renters
2. Collect and use data to identify disparities and tailor outreach strategies
3. Focus outreach on customers most likely to be eligible
4. Strengthen training so that customers receive consistent information

Audit Analysis - Shutoffs

Most 2015 shutoffs reconnected same day, but some customers are without water for extended periods



Source: Auditor analysis of 2015 single-family residential customer data from Customer Information System (Cayenta) queried by Revenue Bureau.

5 Proposed Enhancements - FY 2018 - 2019

1. Create Low-Income Services Team
2. Increase the Value of the Crisis Voucher
3. Adjust Income Guidelines to Reflect Local Incomes
4. Expanded Discount for Households in Poverty
5. Crisis Assistance for Multi-Family Renters

1. Create Low-Income Services Team

- Consolidate all low-income services and hire 2 FTE
- Manage data collection and generate regular reports
- Submit policy recommendations as needed
- Provide customer service tailored to underserved communities and Portlanders in need
- Host biannual workshop trainings for service providers and other community groups

2. Increase Value of Crisis Voucher

Crisis Voucher	PWB-BES Combined
Budgeted Participation	3,000 participants
\$150 (current)	\$450,000
\$300 (option a)	\$900,000
\$500 (option b)	\$1,500,000

3. Adjust Income Qualification Guidelines

- The Portland metro area does not reflect the state's income profile
- Current eligibility is based on 60% of the state median family income (MFI) - \$23,095 (1 person)
- 60% of Portland metro's MFI - \$31,380 (1 person)

4. Expanded Discount for Households in Poverty

For households in poverty, increase Low-Income Discount to 80%, from 50%, of typical bill.

Example

A four-person family earning below 30% of MFI (\$22,000 annually) would pay approximately \$25 a month for water, sewer and stormwater services.

5. Crisis Assistance for Multi-Family Renters

The Challenge

- Assist customers without a Water Bureau account/ individual meter
- Must be consistent with City Charter and bond requirements
- Must be cost-effective
- No additional bureaucracy

5. Crisis Assistance for Multi-Family Renters

The Proposal

Provide up to \$500 in utility crisis assistance per year by investing in a proven program

5. Crisis Assistance for Multi-Family Renters

Up to \$600,000
(Water and BES)

Based on households served with eviction prevention assistance in 2016 (1,200).

Home Forward Short-Term
Rental Assistance Fund

Jointly funded by Multnomah County and the City of Portland. Current budget is approximately \$4M, annually.

Community Organizations

Funding distributed to 19 organizations that successfully responded to a Home Forward Request for Proposals.

Renters in Crisis

Eligibility based on:

- Income
- Length of tenancy
- Resides in an apartment
- Pays utilities via rent

5. Crisis Assistance for Multi-Family Renters

Benefits

- Reaches low-income customers without accounts/individual meters
- Meets the *Anderson Test*
- Limited bureau administration
- Invests in a proven program with a trusted City partner

Next Steps

March 2018

Budget Work Session

May 2018

Home Forward IGA Ordinance

June 2018

Budget Approval

July 2018

Create Low-Income Team



Launch Multi-Family Program

Launch Service Enhancements

Ongoing Monitoring and Data Analysis

August 2019

Multi-Family Program Evaluation