


PORTLAND WATER BUREAU

Low-Income Services – Proposed Enhancements




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



Our Current Program


- Bill Discount
- Flexible Bill Pay
- Crisis Assistance
- Fixture Repair & Replacement
- Utility Safety Net Program
- Free Water Conservation Kits

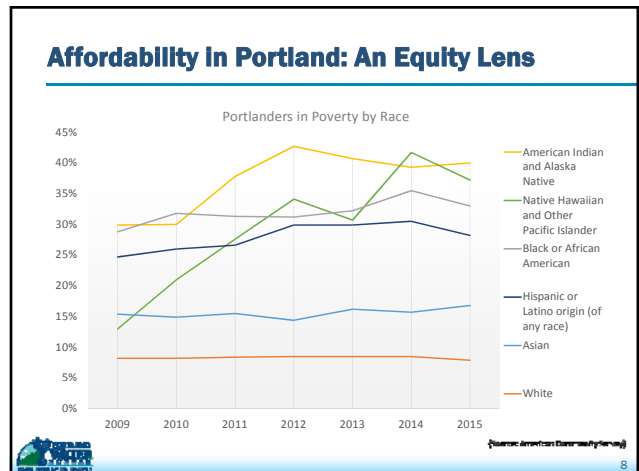
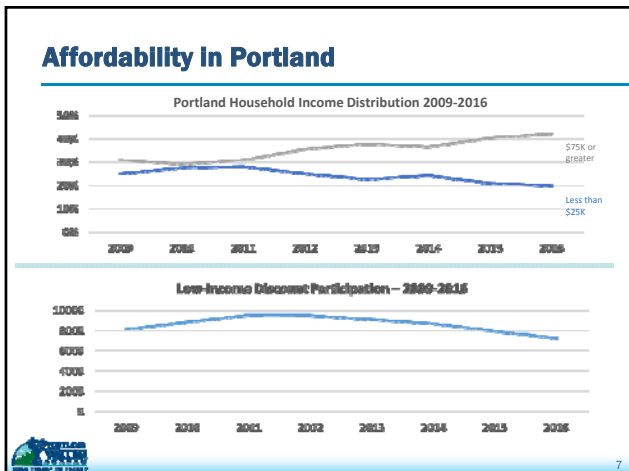
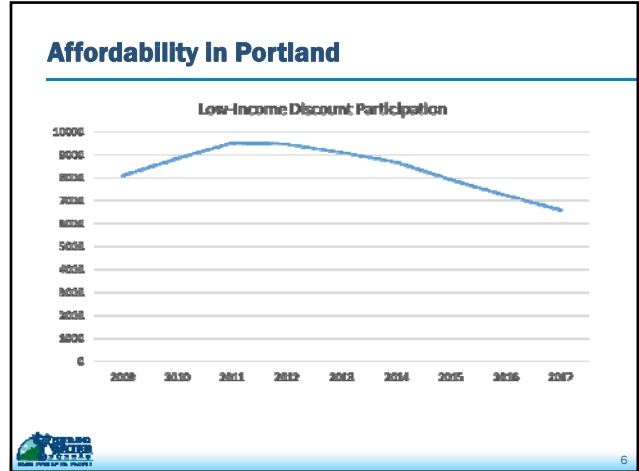
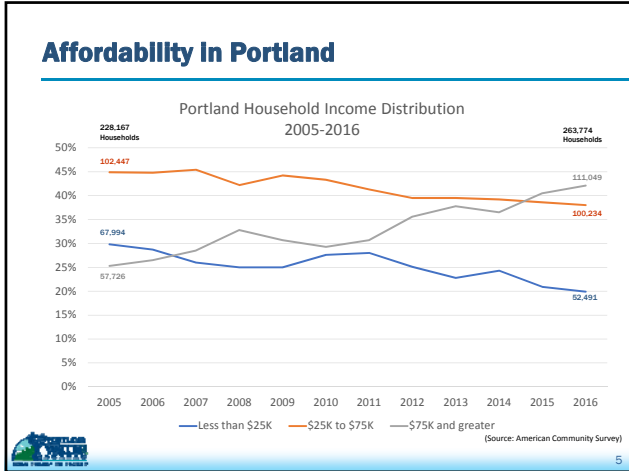


Affordability in Portland

A single parent with one preschooler and one school-aged child would need to earn \$28.42 per hour to meet their basic needs.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Oregon - 2014





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.”

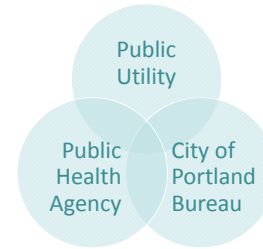
Brett Walton, *Circle of Blue* (Natural Resources Non-Profit Media Group)



9

Responding to a Changing Portland

Our Role:



Our Commitment:

To provide clean, safe and reliable water to *all* customers.



10

Goals

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



11

Stakeholders

- Multnomah County
- Home Forward
- Auditor Mary Hull Caballero
- Joint Office of Homelessness
- 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



12

Audit Recommendations

1. Continue to study how to extend assistance to residents of multifamily housing.
2. Collect and use data to help identify disparities, develop and measure effective payment assistance objectives and options, and tailor outreach strategies.
3. Focus outreach for payment assistance on customers most likely to be eligible and in need; ensure that general information about payment assistance is easy to find and understand.
4. Strengthen training and program guidelines to ensure that customers receive consistent information and awards of payment assistance, including crisis vouchers. Refresher trainings should be offered. Training should include staff in social service agencies under contract to the City.



13

Ongoing Improvements

Data Synthesis and Analysis

- Complete Low-Income Database (current customers).
- Launch Online Application for Discount.
- Monitor Ongoing Trends.
- Identify Target Populations.



14

Interim Improvement

Low-Income Older Adults and People with Disabilities

- Increase the value of the crisis voucher from \$150 to \$300.
- Eligibility: Low-income recipients of SSI, SSDI, and Social Security.
- Targeted outreach through partnerships with stakeholders.



15

Proposed Enhancements - FY 18-19

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



16

1. Create Low-Income Services Team

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



17

2. Increase Value of Crisis Voucher

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



18

3. Adjust Income Guidelines

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



19

3. Adjust Income Guidelines

Median Family Income (MFI) Comparison

HH Size	State 60% (current)	PDX 60%
1	\$23,095	\$31,380
2	\$30,201	\$35,880
3	\$37,308	\$40,380
4	\$44,414	\$44,820
5	\$51,520	\$48,420
6	\$58,626	\$52,020
7	\$59,958	\$55,620
8	\$61,291	\$59,220



20

3. Adjust Income Guidelines (recommendation)

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4. New Discount for Households in Poverty

Increase Low-Income Discount to 80% (from 50%) of typical bill for households earning below 30% of MFI.

Example

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



5. New Multi-Family Crisis Assistance

- Up to \$500 of crisis assistance per household, annually.
- Transfer \$600,000 to Home Forward’s *Short-Term Rent Assistance Program (STRA)*.
- Funding distributed to 19 community organizations.
- Evaluate after the first year of implementation.

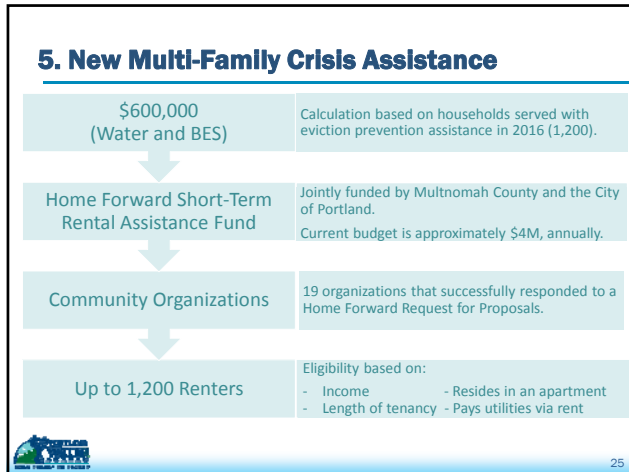



5. New Multi-Family Crisis Assistance

Formula

Average annual consumption per MF unit	44.4 CCF
Multiply by combined consumption rate - \$14.78	\$652
Apply 80% reimbursement	\$522
New Multi-Family Crisis Assistance	\$500





- ### Next Steps
- December 5 – Full PUB Board Meeting
– Decision Package Presentation
 - January 2018 – Launch Fixed-Income Targeted Outreach
 - March 2018 – City Council Work Session
 - May 2018 – Budget Work Session
 - July 2018 – Program Implementation
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- 26