

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

PROCEEDING NO. 23M-0013EG

IN THE MATTER OF A REPOSITORY PROCEEDING FOR THE FILING OF 2022 ELECTRIC AND GAS LOW-INCOME PROGRAMS ANNUAL REPORTS PURSUANT TO RULES 4 CCR 723-3-3412 AND 4 CCR 723-4-4412.

**INTERIM COMMISSION DECISION SCHEDULING A
COMMISSIONERS' INFORMATION MEETING FOR
OCTOBER 25, 2024**

Issued Date: September 20, 2024

Adopted Date: September 18, 2024

I. BY THE COMMISSION

A. Statement

1. By this Decision, we schedule a Commissioners' Information Meeting ("CIM") for October 25, 2024, to discuss preparations being made to increase or resume enrollment of income-qualified customers for energy assistance during the 2024-2025 winter heating season.

B. Background, Findings, and Conclusions

2. This proceeding was opened administratively on January 3, 2023, to serve as a repository for annual reports on PIPP programs as well as to receive the most recent evaluation of utilities' PIPP programs pursuant to Electric Rule 3412(k) and Gas Rule 4412(k). Decision No. C23-0095, issued February 9, 2023, further set a scope for this Proceeding, which recognized the intent "to initiate a broader conversation about overall efforts to support our most disadvantaged customers at a time when volatile natural gas prices have created significant affordability issues."

Through the decision, we explained that we may wish to collect comments or hold CIMs on income-qualified programs to contextualize the findings from the triennial evaluation of programs.

3. On February 22, 2023, we hosted a CIM to discuss utilities' PIPP programs, bill assistance offered through the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program ("LEAP") and by Energy Outreach Colorado ("EOC"), and to discuss the statement of work for the 2024 PIPP Evaluation Report. This was followed by a CIM hosted on June 22, 2023, discussing energy programs that are currently available to income-qualified residential customers, including weatherization and other demand-side management and renewable energy programs.

4. On April 5, 2024, CEO filed the final 2024 PIPP Evaluation Report in this Proceeding. Its author, GDS Associates, drew upon in-depth interviews, research on peer programs, analysis of deidentified participant data, online and written surveys, and focus groups to develop its findings and recommendations.

5. By Decision No. C24-0329-I, issued May 15, 2024, we sought comments on priorities for implementing the recommendations in the 2024 PIPP Evaluation Report. We also recognized that there have been evolutions in delivery of PIPP programs since the evaluation period. Accordingly, the 2024 PIPP Evaluation Report should be considered the start, rather than the capstone, of our identification of opportunities to enhance program delivery—potentially by future rules.

6. Participants filed comments on the 2024 PIPP Evaluation Report and other questions we set forth in June 2024. We appreciate participants' comments and are in the process of evaluating next steps for this Proceeding.

7. In the meantime, the next winter heating season, which is when the LEAP program opens for enrollment, begins November 1, 2024. We will continue to use this Proceeding as an opportunity to gather lessons learned in implementing energy assistance programs, to draw attention to customers' opportunities to enroll in those programs, and to recognize and encourage progress to make enrollment processes easier for eligible income-qualified customers.

8. Accordingly, we schedule a CIM for October 25, 2024, with the purpose of discussing the preparations being made by regulated utilities and assistance providers for the 2024-2025 heating season. We direct Staff to develop the agenda for the CIM to cover at least two topics.

9. First, we request updates on the Utility Bill Help ("UBH") Program.¹ Director Rebecca E. White initiated the UBH Program as a pilot during the 2023-2024 winter heating season. UBH serves as a connector to utility-offered PIPP programs for customers who are enrolled in other Colorado Department of Human Services assistance programs. At the CIM, we request that Staff provide an overview of UBH and address its purpose, performance, lessons learned, and expected initiatives for the 2024-2025 winter heating season.

10. Second, we request updates from state and nonprofit energy assistance providers, and regulated electric and gas utilities, about preparations that are underway for the 2024-2025 winter heating season, including efforts to refine program delivery and outreach. By Decision No. C24-0329, issued May 13, 2024, we invited comments on what kinds of data could be used to identify, and proactively enroll in energy assistance programs, customers who are persistently in arrears and at risk of disconnection. We particularly invite utilities and others to explain how they are using data to improve outreach and enrollment regarding PIPP programs.

¹ More information on the Utility Bill Help Program is available at <https://puc.colorado.gov/utilitybillhelp>.

11. Staff will post an agenda for the CIM in E-Filings in advance of the session.
12. The purpose of a CIM is for the Commissioners to learn from and ask questions of the presenters. The CIM is open to the public to view live or recorded on the Commission's YouTube channel. For questions about the CIM, please contact Tricia Anstey (tricia.anstey@state.co.us).
13. The Commission strives to accommodate all members of the public at its hearings and meetings by providing services for foreign language users and persons with disability upon receipt of a reasonable accommodation request. Requests for such accommodations should be made by October 18, 2024, by completing the Language Access Form. Requests can also be made directly by contacting Holly Bise at (303) 894-2024 or by email to: holly.bise@state.co.us.

II. ORDER

A. It Is Ordered That:

1. A virtual Commissioners' Information Meeting ("CIM") is scheduled as follows to discuss preparations regarding energy assistance programs for the 2024-2025 winter heating season, as discussed above:

DATE: October 25, 2024

TIME: 9:00 a.m. to no later than 12:00 p.m.

PLACE: Available for viewing at:

<https://www.youtube.com/@copublicutilitiescommission>

2. This Decision is effective immediately upon its Issued Date.

**B. ADOPTED IN MEETING AND COMMISSIONERS' WEEKLY MEETING
September 18, 2024.**

(S E A L)



ATTEST: A TRUE COPY

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca E. White".

Rebecca E. White,
Director

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

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Commissioners