

Introduction:

Thank you for meeting with us today. The purpose of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, barriers, successes and challenges of water service providers in implementing or in choosing not to implement the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). We encourage participants to share all opinions and critiques of the program, as they are valuable to future development. All information will be kept private.

Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary and should take approximately thirty minutes. The Office of Community Services (OCS) formally welcomes public comment on this data collection effort. Please address all comments to: Olivia Barfield, Program Specialist, Olivia.Barfield@acf.hhs.gov

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Note: Each respondent will be asked only one set of questions depending on if they have or have not participated in LIHWAP.

Participating Water Service Provider Interview Questions:

- 1) What is your name, job title, and the name of your utility?
- 2) Can you tell me about the geographic area you serve?
 - a. Do you serve a rural or urban area?
 - b. About how many customers do you have?
- 3) How have you used LIHWAP funds at your utility?
 - a. Probe questions- Examples to ask about:
 - i. Water, wastewater, or both?
 - ii. Reducing arrearages?
 - iii. Restoration of water services and/or avoided disconnections?
 - iv. Other?
- 4) Could you please share your experience with the implementation of LIHWAP?
- 5) Please describe any challenges you have encountered while implementing LIHWAP and how you worked to overcome them.
 - a. Probe questions- Examples to ask about:
 - i. Bundled customer water/wastewater bills
 - ii. Rental properties/landlord issues
 - iii. Billing systems concerns
 - iv. Administration of the program
 1. LIHWAP Vendor agreements

2. Enrolling households and/or establishing household eligibility?
3. Have you had enough staff capacity to implement LIHWAP?
- 6) If you have experienced challenges, what might help solve these problems for your utility?
- 7) What local/community offices and/or state agencies are you working with to implement LIHWAP?
 - a. Can you tell me a success that you've had working with these offices or agencies?
 - b. Can you tell me of a challenge that you've had working with these offices or agencies?
- 8) Can you tell me up to three ways that LIHWAP has benefitted your utility, customers or community?
- 9) What is one or two best practices you have found to work for you in your LIHWAP program?
- 10) What is one piece of advice you'd give to other utilities who would like to join LIHWAP?
- 11) Can the LIHWAP leadership team provide you with any additional guidance or assistance to help you achieve greater success implementing LIHWAP?

Non-Participating Water Service Provider Interview Questions:

- 1) What is your name, job title, and the name of your utility?
- 2) Can you tell me about the geographic area you serve?
 - a. Do you serve a rural or urban area?
 - b. About how many customers do you have?
- 3) Have you heard about processes of LIHWAP in your area?
- 4) Did your utility consider implementing LIHWAP?
- 5) If you considered implementing LIHWAP, can you please share any of the barriers to implementation that you were concerned about?
 - a. Probe questions- Examples to ask about:
 - i. Limited staff or organizational capacity?
 - ii. Business decision: organizational expense vs financial benefit to the utility?
 - iii. Outreach and relationships?
 - iv. Terms and conditions?
 - v. Data sharing challenges?
 - vi. Billing system or system change requirements?
 - vii. Bundled bills?
 - viii. Landlord/rental agreements?
 - ix. Direct payment concerns?
 - x. Other system challenges?
 - xi. Please describe any challenges.
- 6) Is there anything about the LIHWAP program that could change to make the program more user-friendly or easier for water service providers to implement?
 - a. Advice for your local service provider (if applicable)?

- b. Advice for your state?
- 7) If LIHWAP becomes permanently funded, would you consider participating in it in the future?
 - a. What would have to change about LIHWAP for you to participate in the future?