



## 2022-2023 Bill Payment Assistance Program Administration Requirements

### Introduction

Energy Outreach Colorado's (EOC) Bill Payment Assistance Program helps low-income individuals and families afford their home energy costs through direct payments to energy vendors on behalf of customers. The program is open to all Colorado residents regardless of documentation status.

For the most up-to-date version of this and all other program-related documents, including intake forms and educational materials, visit the [Partner Login](#) page of the EOC website. If a situation arises that is not covered in this document or clarification is needed, start by contacting your EOC Program Liaison. If your agency's Program Liaison is unsure how to address the issue, they can reach the Energy Assistance staff at [energyassistance@energyoutreach.org](mailto:energyassistance@energyoutreach.org).

### Eligibility

All program participants must meet the following eligibility requirements. Before doing an intake, screen applicants for eligibility as much as possible to ensure they are eligible for assistance. **If an applicant does not meet these criteria, do not have them go through the intake process or enter an application in the Energy Assistance Database.**

- Gross monthly household income (i.e. all work and non-work income before taxes or deductions) at or below 80% of area median income (AMI). Refer to the table on the [Partner Login](#) page to determine applicant's percentage of AMI.
- The qualifying energy sources are electricity, natural gas, coal, firewood, kerosene, propane, oil, and pellets.
- At least one day past the due date on utility bill or low on bulk fuel (coal, firewood, kerosene, propane, oil or pellets).
- Bill being paid is for energy consumed at the participant's home address.
- Applicant is directly responsible for paying the energy bill. If the applicant is not the account holder, follow the instructions in the Intake section below regarding verifying residency at the service address.
- Benefit is available no more than once per energy source (up to two energy sources) during the program year, which runs from October 1 through September 30.

## **Intake**

Once eligibility has been determined, follow the steps below to collect the required documentation and provide energy affordability education and resources:

### **Application Forms & Supporting Documentation**

- Participants must complete the paper Bill Payment Assistance application.
- Applicants must provide a photo ID to be included in their file. The ID does not need to be government-issued and expired is OK.
- Applicants must sign the Consent to Disclose Utility Customer Data form if they are requesting assistance with one of the four regulated utilities: Atmos Energy, Black Hills Energy, Colorado Natural Gas, and Xcel Energy. *Note: Only the primary account holder may sign the Consent to Disclose. If the primary account holder is not available, you may not request account data from the utility or access their online portal. In that case, use the information on the most current bill and make a note in the database explaining why the form was not signed.* If the applicant is not requesting assistance with a regulated utility, the consent on the EOC application is sufficient.
- In cases where the participant or a member of the household is not the account holder, applicant must provide evidence that they reside at the service address for which they are requesting assistance. Examples include:
  - Executed (signed by BOTH tenant and landlord/agent) lease that names applicant as tenant at service address.
  - Other type of written document that names applicant as tenant at the service address.
  - Applicant driver license or state ID listing service address as home address.
  - Income documentation (e.g. check stubs, reports) showing applicant name and service address.
  - Current utility bill or other such official business mail addressed to applicant at service address.
  - Home visit conducted by agency
  - Residency previously verified by agency

### **Energy Education & Resources**

Once the participant's emergency has been alleviated, we ask you to provide education and resources to help them take greater control of their energy costs to the extent possible:

- Review the Energy Savings Guide with participants which includes tips for saving energy and reading an energy bill. The guide is available for download in English and Spanish on the [Partner Login](#) page.
- If the participant has not yet applied for LEAP, encourage them to do so and provide information on how to apply.

- Opportunities for more intensive education currently exist for agencies serving Xcel customers. If you are interested in exploring these opportunities, contact Amy Brown at [abrown@energyoutreach.org](mailto:abrown@energyoutreach.org).

## **Application Processing**

### **Benefit Criteria**

Prior to making a commitment to pay, ensure that the following criteria are met:

- Benefits must guarantee service for at least 30 additional days from the date funds are committed.
- Benefits must be for actual amounts owed. EOC assistance cannot create a credit on the applicant's account.
- Benefits go directly to energy vendors. They cannot be made to individuals or landlords.
- EOC funds cannot be used to pay any fee that may be returned to the participant, such as deposits. It also cannot be used for optional insurance coverage.
- Refer to the table below for specific benefit amounts and requirements.

### **Commitment to Pay**

If the assistance you intend to provide meets the above criteria:

- Contact the vendor by phone or email to verify the current amount owed and commit funds based on the guidelines in the Benefits section of this document. Current balance can also be verified through the utility's online portal if it is an Atmos, Black Hills or Xcel account.
- Verify with vendor that funds committed will guarantee at least 30 days of service if you committing to pay less than the past due amount on the bill.
- Enter applications into the Energy Assistance Database as soon as funds are committed to the energy vendor. The database is a critical tool that allows EOC network agencies to determine eligibility as well as collection information for reporting purposes.

## Benefit Guidelines: 2022-2023 Program Year

Assistance Type	Maximum	Benefit Notes	Documentation Requirements
Electric only	\$1,000	Benefit must be provided in a single payment.	· Bill with past due balance
Gas only	\$1,000	Benefit must be provided in a single payment.	· Bill with past due balance
Combined Gas & Electric bill	\$2,000	Benefit must be provided in a single payment.	· Bill with past due balance
Prepay Electricity	\$1,000	Benefit must be provided in a single payment.	· Proof of low balance (within 5 days of running out); OR · Proof of zero balance in account · In the database field for "Amount Owed", enter the amount being paid
Propane, Fuel Oil, Kerosene	\$1,000	Minimum tank size = 100 gal Assistance covers one delivery only.	· Out of fuel or running low · Invoice from vendor · In the database field for "Amount Owed", enter the amount being paid
Firewood	\$1,000	Assistance covers one delivery only.	· Out of wood or running low · Invoice from vendor · In the database field for "Amount Owed", enter the amount being paid
Pellets, Coal	\$1,000	Assistance covers one order/delivery only.	· Out of fuel or running low · Invoice from vendor · In the database field for "Amount Owed", enter the amount being paid
<b>Total Household Energy Benefit Maximum</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>	<b>Maximum of \$2,000 for combined gas &amp; electric accounts; OR Maximum of \$2,000 for two separate fuel accounts</b>	
Aurora Water	\$500	Benefit must be provided in a single payment.	· Bill with past due balance
<b>Total Household Utility Benefit Maximum</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	<b>If assistance includes two separate fuel accounts or is a combined G&amp;E bill and Aurora Water, the maximum benefit for the year is \$2,500.</b>	

## **Referrals**

If your agency is unable to assist an applicant for any reason, refer them to another EOC partner agency.

- **Do not refer applicants directly to EOC.**
- To find another agency, visit <https://www.energyoutreach.org/find-agency/> or call (866) 432-8435.

## **Adding a Vendor**

In cases where a vendor is not already listed as an option in the Energy Assistance Database:

- Obtain a completed W-9 form from the vendor
- Download and complete New Vendor Request form from the [Partner Login](#) page
- Have Program Liaison submit New Vendor Request and W-9 forms to [energyassistance@energyoutreach.org](mailto:energyassistance@energyoutreach.org)

## **Documentation**

All applicant files must be retained for 3 years. They can be stored in hard copy or electronically and must contain at a minimum:

- A completed paper application
- The bill or invoice that was paid
- Signed Consent to Disclose Utility Customer Data, if applicable (see pg. 2)
- Copy of the participant's photo ID

## **EOC Assistance for Agency Network Staff, Volunteers and Board Members**

Agency staff, volunteers and board members are eligible to receive assistance if they meet program requirements. Follow the steps below to process staff applications:

1. Staff member completes required documentation and submits to EOC Program Liaison.
2. EOC Program Liaison reviews applications for eligibility and approves if it meets requirements.
3. Agency staff enters application in Energy Assistance Database.
4. Program Liaison emails completed staff applications to [energyassistance@energyoutreach.org](mailto:energyassistance@energyoutreach.org) with subject line indicating that it is an agency staff application.