Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP): Updates & Promising Practices

April 20th, 2023



National Community Action Partnership

Office of Community Services (ACF)

CAP Riverside

Total Community Action, Inc.

Helping People. Changing Lives.
community Action PARTNERSHIP
AMERICA'S POVERTY FIGHTING NETWORK

Agenda

- OCS Updates & Resources
- Promising Practices
  - CAP Riverside
  - Total Community Action, Inc.
- Facilitator & Audience Q&A

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AMERICA'S POVERTY FIGHTING NETWORK



LIHWAP NCAP Updates

APRIL 2023

LIHWAP is the first ever federal program to support bill payment assistance for water utilities

The program is funded at $1.1 billion and authorized through September 30, 2023.

Priorities are:

1. Reconnection for disconnected households
2. Prevention of disconnection for households with arrearages
3. Rate reduction for those with current accounts



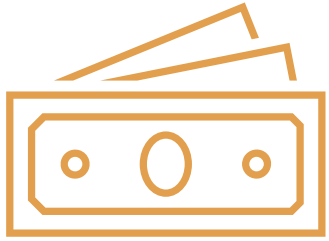
152 grant recipients are operating LIHWAP



411,000+ households served in FY 2022



13,000+ water vendor agreements



45% of total funds have been drawn down

Grant recipients have five more months to obligate funding



OCS is providing individualized T/TA to grant recipients to promote timely expenditure of funds

Best practices include:

1. Increasing the maximum benefit payment
2. Adding rate reduction payments
3. Issuing supplemental payments
4. Allowing for credits on beneficiary accounts
5. Data matching with utilities
6. Utilizing septic or bottled water flexibilities



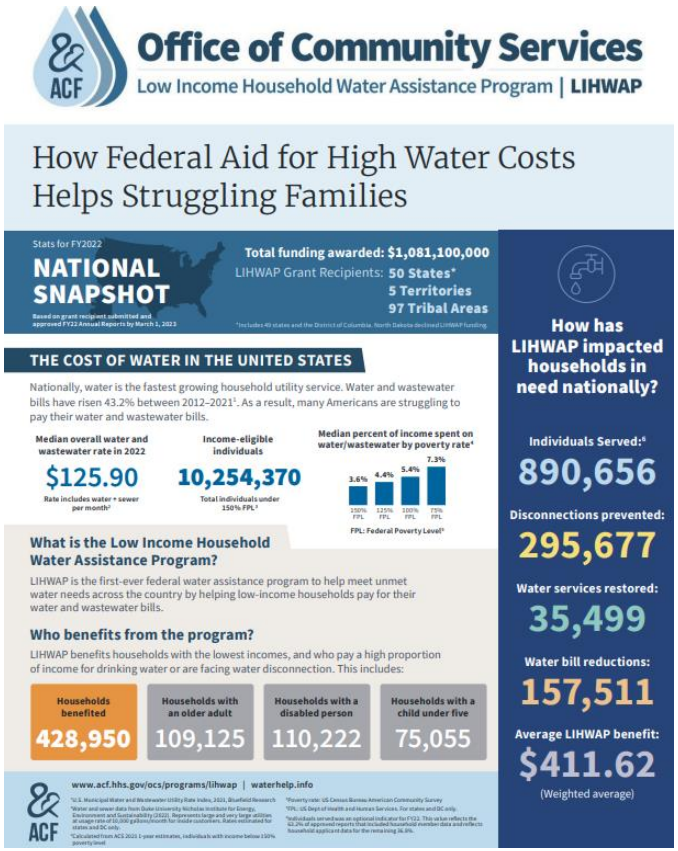
Outreach Toolkits

- Targeted outreach to nonparticipating water service providers
- Reaching providers through associations with direct contact
  - One-pagers
  - Social Media
- Reaching households through water service providers
  - Bill inserts
  - Social media toolkit
  - One-pagers
- Toolkits here: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/lihwap-outreach-toolkits



Keep up with program implementation on the LIHWAP Data Dashboard

- Data Dashboard shares quarterly and annual report data
  - 411,000 Households Served
    - 218,000 under 75% FPL
    - 226,000 had at least one vulnerable population member (elderly, young children, people with disabilities)
  - Other data to come: race, ethnicity, housing status
- World Water Day 2023 Website
  - National and State One-Pagers, Spotlight Videos



We need your help to reach more families in need

- Use your networks to help inform households that they may be eligible to receive help on their water bill
  - Waterhelp.info
- Conduct outreach to and collaborate with water service providers
- Tell your state and OCS what resources would help you



$15.7 million of ARPA funds will be re-allotted in May 2023

Grant recipients were eligible for supplemental funding if they had:

1. Expended at least 75% of their funding by March 1, 2023
2. Projected a full expenditure of remaining grant funds by September 30, 2023
3. Indicated a need for additional funding above the current grant award to meet the demand for benefits assistance in their service area

States Receiving a Supplement

1. American Samoa
2. District of Columbia
3. Georgia
4. Iowa
5. Kentucky
6. Pennsylvania
7. Puerto Rico
8. Virginia

The LIHWAP reallotment process was optional. No grant recipient was required to return funds or to receive additional funds.

Visit our website for more resources and information

- LIHWAP Website
- WaterHelp.info: information for households seeking assistance
- Outreach Toolkits: resources intended to ensure water service providers and households know about LIHWAP
- LIHWAP Data Dashboard
- Information Memorandum: guidance for LIHWAP implementation (ex: vendor agreements, serving renter households, benefits policy, use of funds FAQ)
- Dear Colleague Letters: notifications and updates related to LIHWAP (ex: funding release, alternative utilities funding, CSBG coordination)
- Past Events: World Water Week, Earth Day, American Rescue Plan Anniversary, and World Water Day
- Training Resources: information for water vendors, grant recipient training modules, and use of funds information

Federal contacts

Christina Clark – Operations Branch Chief – christina.clark@acf.hhs.gov

Mary Watts – Policy Branch Chief – mary.watts@acf.hhs.gov

Rachel Hammond – Program Specialist – rachel.hammond@acf.hhs.gov

Community Action Partnership of Riverside County

LIHWAP

Riverside County, CA

We know each county is unique.
About Riverside County:

- 4th largest county in CA
- Over 2.5 million residents
- Roughly rectangular, Riverside County covers 7,208 square miles

We are home to the Coachella Valley Music And Arts Festival and the hard working Coachella Valley Farm Workers



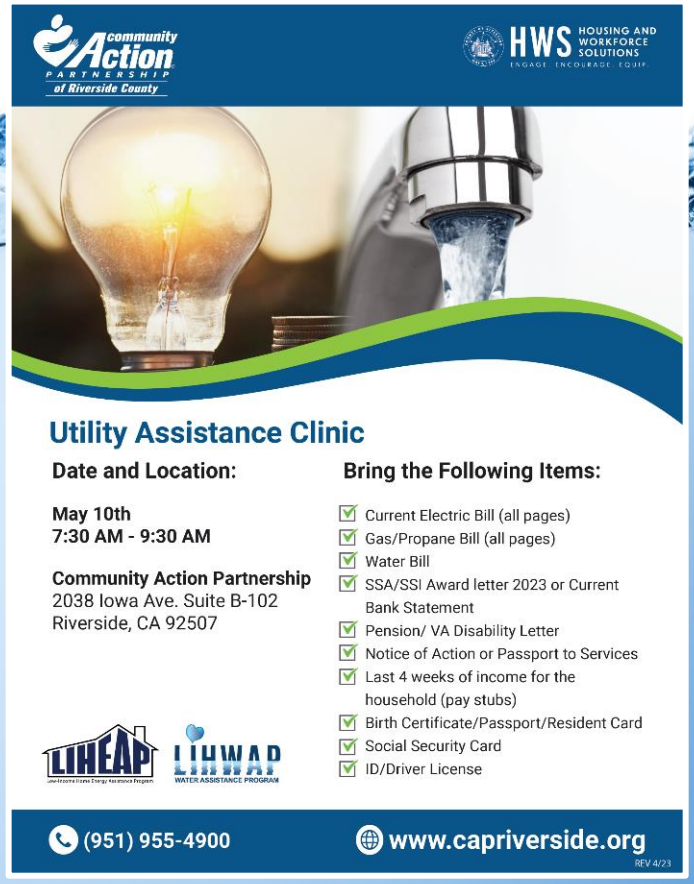
Early Challenges

- Building a strong relationship with water stakeholders
- Detailed program information was not easily accessible to LSPs.
- Communication & Clear messaging with both the public and water systems
- Streamlining Operations



Streamline Operations

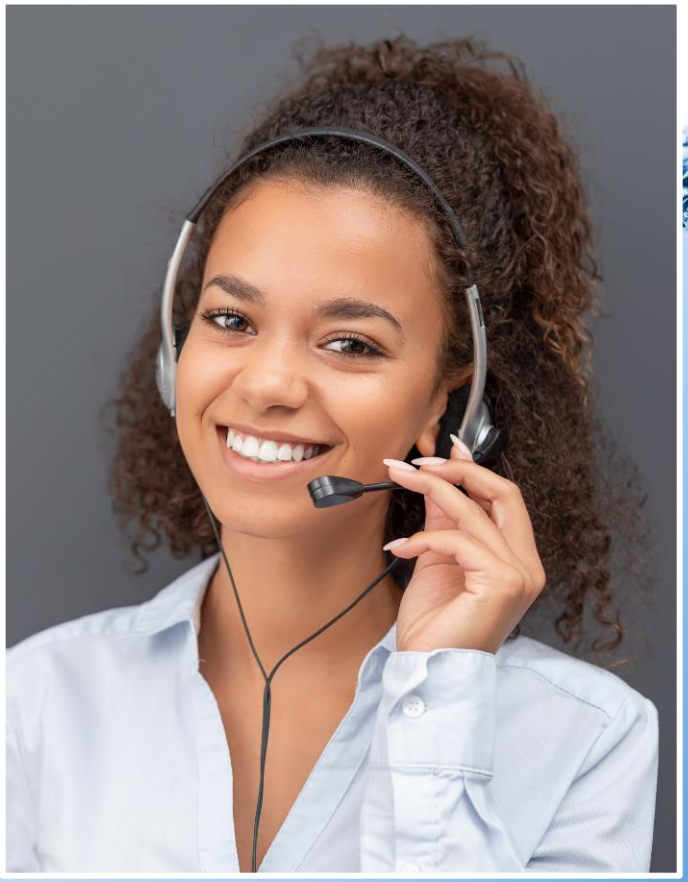
- Build off LIHEAP experience and relationships to create the pledge system.
- Use one application packet for both LIHEAP and LIHWAP, this way everyone is aware of the opportunity to apply for LIHWAP.
- One checklist and flyer is created for both LIHEAP and LIHWAP.
- Staff is trained to process both applications.



Staff

Temporary Grants=Temporary Workforce

- TANF - Welfare to Work programs
- Office on Aging - Senior Employment
- Workforce/Unemployment Offices
- Work Study/Interns
- AmeriCorps



Existing Relationships with Elected Officials

(Denied) Water Customers

DATA

Tripartite Board Members

Water System Associations



Leveraging for Water System Enrollment

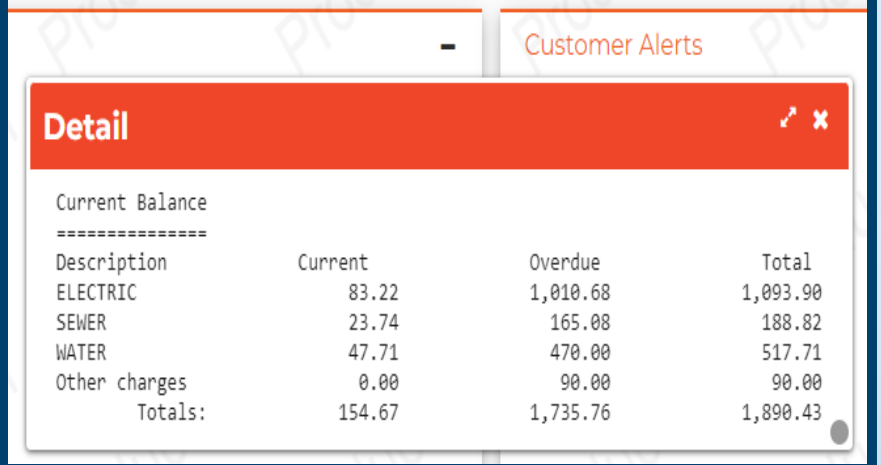
Water Systems

- Establish clear points of contact for each water system. Especially for balance confirmations and pledges.
- Much of the LIHWAP messaging would not reach the front-line staff at the water systems.
- Create a water stakeholders email group for regular updates.
- Ease their fears about reporting requirements and workload.
- Friendly competition! Many water systems like to compete with each other-Who has received the most $.



Learn the Language of the Water Systems

Account Summary

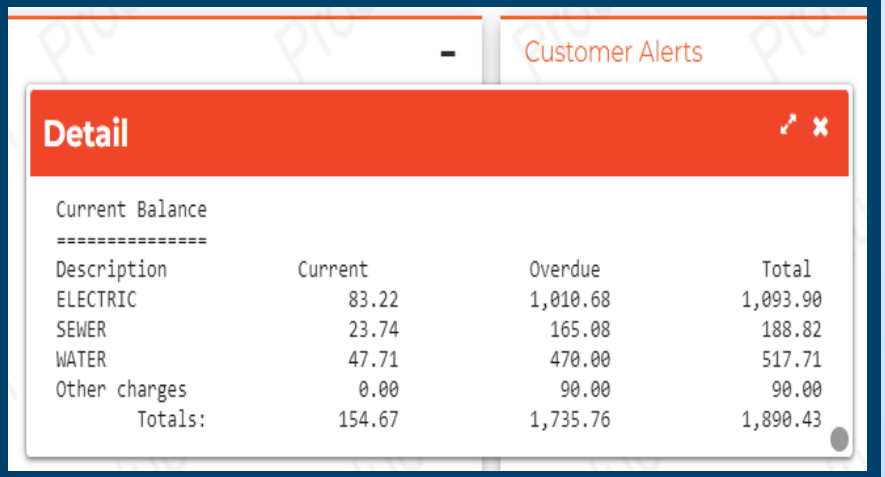


Account Breakdown

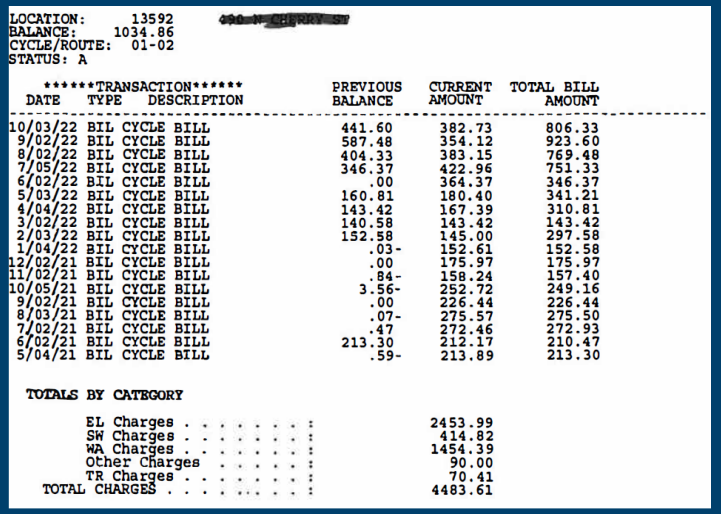


Be On The Same Page

Current Balance



Total Charges



LOCATION: 13592 [redacted]
BALANCE: 1034.86
CYCLE/ROUTE: 01-02
STATUS: A

DATE	TRANSACTION TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PREVIOUS BALANCE	CURRENT AMOUNT	TOTAL BILL AMOUNT
10/03/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	441.60	382.73	806.33
9/02/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	587.48	354.12	923.60
8/02/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	404.33	383.15	769.48
7/05/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	346.37	422.96	751.33
6/02/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	.00	364.37	346.37
5/03/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	160.81	180.40	341.21
4/04/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	143.42	167.39	310.81
3/02/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	140.58	143.42	143.42
2/03/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	152.58	145.00	297.58
1/04/22	BIL	CYCLE BILL	.03-	152.61	152.58
12/02/21	BIL	CYCLE BILL	.00	175.97	175.97
11/02/21	BIL	CYCLE BILL	.84-	158.24	157.40
10/05/21	BIL	CYCLE BILL	3.56-	252.72	249.16
9/02/21	BIL	CYCLE BILL	.00	226.44	226.44
8/03/21	BIL	CYCLE BILL	.07-	275.57	275.50
7/02/21	BIL	CYCLE BILL	.47	272.46	272.93
6/02/21	BIL	CYCLE BILL	213.30	212.17	210.47
5/04/21	BIL	CYCLE BILL	.59-	213.89	213.30

TOTALS BY CATEGORY

EL Charges	2453.99
SW Charges	414.82
WA Charges	1454.39
Other Charges	90.00
TR Charges	70.41
TOTAL CHARGES	4483.61

Clear Messaging For Customers



Wastewater Versus Sewer

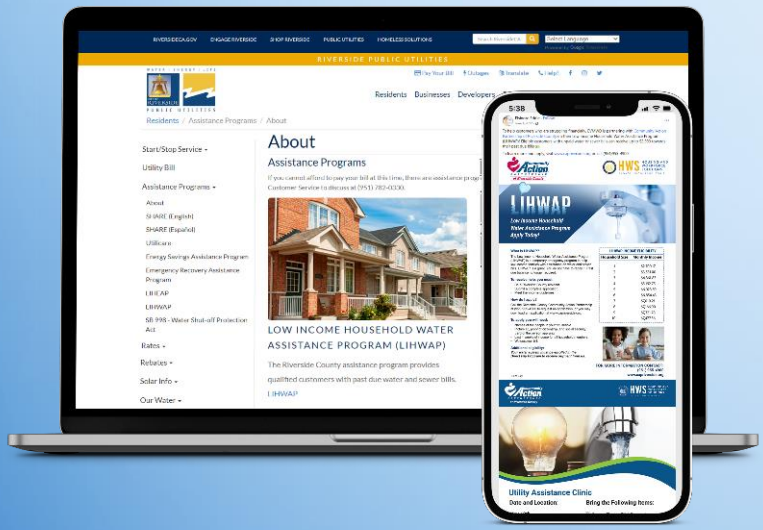
Customers Equate “Waste” With Waste Management = Trash

Water Is Often Included In Rent, But Not Sewer. Many Customers Are Billed Separately For Sewer.

Outreach via the Water Systems

Water System

Website/Social Media



Customer Service Centers

- Customer Service staff are aware of LIHWAP and where to refer customers to apply.
- LIHWAP applications available at payment offices.
- LIHWAP intake held on site - at the water system.

Pandemic Aftermath



Large Bills

High numbers of disconnections.

- Families unable to maintain payment arrangements - multiple disconnections.
- Increased # of customers who have been shut off prior to applying and shut off for longer periods of time.

1st Time Customers

New to utility assistance and the application process.

- Education on how the pledge/payment system works.
- One-time payment versus a recurring credit.

Retraining

Retraining customers back to pre-pandemic funding.

- Not always able to pay the whole bill.
- Unable to pay both electric & gas.
- Longer wait times between when they may apply for assistance again.
- Denied due to limited funding.

Questions?

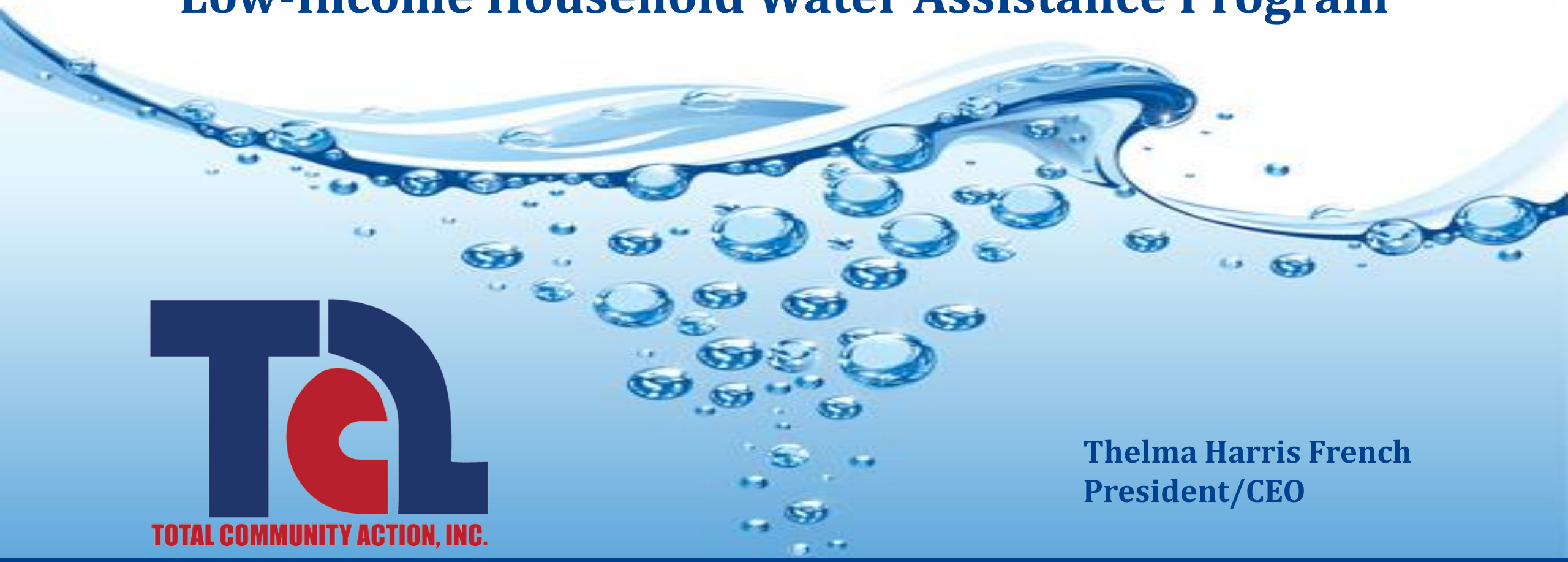
We are available for questions, idea sharing, and support!

Monica Santana, MA, CCAP | Utility Assistance
mosantana@capriverside.org | (951) 955-4900
www.capriverside.org | Established 1979



LIHWAP

Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program



TOTAL COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.

Thelma Harris French
President/CEO

TCA Mission

Our mission is to reduce poverty in our community through collaboration with other agencies and by providing human services, experiences and opportunities that assist individuals a with low incomes to achieve economic security.

New Orleans

Population	383,997
Median Household Income	$45,595
Households	156,586
Percent of Population in Poverty	23.8%
Race and Ethnicity	
• White	32.7%
• Black or African American	8.1%
• Asian	2.7%
• Hispanic or Latino	5.6%

Local Need

Office of the New Orleans Inspector General has estimated Sewerage and Water Board (SWBNO) has $150 million unpaid bills.

According to SWBNO:

- $60 million – zero to 60 days owed
- $88 million – bad debt
  - A little more than $57 million past due by 60 or more days
  - Remaining $31 million comes for closed accounts

History of Water Assistance

TCA and Sewerage and Water of Board of New Orleans (SWBNO) partnered to provide Water Help Program since 1996. The program provided one time water assistance payments ($200) to low income elderly and disabled residents.

Water Help Assisted

2021 – 1076 individuals/household = $215,000.00

2022 – 635 individuals/households = $127,000.00

TCA LIHWAP Service

10/1/2021 -4/1/2023

LIHWAP CAA -1429 Households/2597 occupants = $1,098,896.44

LIHWAP ARP 1058 Households/1937 occupants = $794,845.33

100% of allocation expended.

Keys to TCA Service Efficiency

- **Universal Application** (provides required data for all agency programs)
- **Total Access Service Model-** staff is cross trained to provide LIHEAP, LIHWAP services sequentially @ point of service.

TCA Committed to the One Water Vision

We envision a future where all water is valued. Irrigation on a farm, water from the tap, stormwater, and water flowing toward a treatment plant. Water, in all its forms, is valuable, and our collective future depends on water.

Impact Through Partnerships

US Water Alliance Equity Network

Water shapes economic growth, the environment, and the very social fabric of our communities. Ensuring that all people have access to safe, reliable, and affordable water and wastewater systems is the cornerstone of a sustainable and prosperous nation. As a member of the Water Equity Network we lift up and advance promising practices and policies that foster equitable water management.

National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition

A broad based coalition of diverse member organizations and individuals dedicated to heightening awareness of energy needs of low-income consumers, fostering public-private partnerships and engaging in innovative strategies to support affordability including water.

Impact Through Partnerships

New Orleans Lead Service Line Collaborative

A local collaborative that supported by WE ACT for Environmental Justice and the National Resources Defense Council, committed to education of key stakeholders about Lead Service Lines (LSL), and the adverse exposure to lead and the need to prioritize BIPOC residents about LSL replacement plans.

New Orleans Lead Service Line Partners

- Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans
- The Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans
- Civic Studio
- Blue Conduit

Water is a Common Good, and everyone should have access to clean, safe and affordable water.

Questions?



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