

Draft meeting notes

Friday December 15th, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Virtual via Webex

Board Member Attendance:

Present (Virtual): Delgado-Olson, Stamas, Wimbley, Castaneda, Irwin, Bierman, Medina, Tang

Absent: Stamas, Shiroma

Meeting Presentations: <https://liob.cpuc.ca.gov/previous-liob-meetings/>.

Please note: Agenda Items are listed in the order in which they were discussed. Some items were discussed out of numerical order.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Board Chair Delgado-Olson opened the meeting of the Low Income Oversight Board (LIOB) at approximately 9:00 AM. Board Chair Delgado-Olson provided remarks and summarized the meeting agenda. The Board Chair noted that given the absence of Commissioner Shiroma and Vice-Chair Stamas, he had asked Board Member Wimbley to provide back-up meeting facilitation. Other Board Member introductions followed.

2. Approval of the October 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes – Action Item

Board Member Castilone moved to approve the [minutes from the December meeting](#) and Board Member Castaneda seconded the motion. The LIOB members in attendance approved the minutes unanimously.

3. Public Comment

There was one public commenter. Ashley Hinson, of Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) provided a public announcement via public comment. Ms. Hinson provided information regarding the solicitation for an analysis of the medical baseline program. Interested bidders should refer to the PG&E website for more information on this opportunity. Board Member Medina asked if this information was being shared with local governments. Board Chair Delgado-Olson inquired if this solicitation or study had any guidance about coordinating with the Department of Developmental Services(DSS). Ms. Hinson replied that PG&E would investigate these inquiries.

4. CARE Income Verification: A case study using the CalFresh Confirm Hub – Public Advocates Office

James Ahlstedt and Adam Buchholz of the California Public Advocates Office [presented on a case study](#) for California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) income verification using the CalFresh Confirm Hub.

Chair Delgado-Olson spoke positively of this case study and noted that it aligned with work that the LIOB Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) had done. The Board Chair asked whether there is data on the number of customers that are de-enrolled based on income. The speakers spoke to certain indicators, such as the number of customers who are removed from the program, but then reapply shortly after. This might indicate that they are still income eligible for the program. Mr. Ahlstedt and Mr. Bucholz were able to share that an average of 11% of the CARE population is removed due to non-response to income verification. Chair Delgado-Olson also asked about the relationship from the CARE discount to rates and disconnections. Mr. Ahlstedt and Mr. Bucholz pointed out that being removed from CARE could make someone ineligible for other rate-based programs or disconnections assistance. They also noted increases in customers eligible for disconnections.

Board Member Bierman asked a clarifying point about whether this case study had potential for the Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) program. The speakers clarified that the CalFresh income limits do not align with FERA, but some of the medical assistance public programs do. They also noted that the best way to target FERA eligible customers would be through the franchise tax board or another entity that has access to income data.

Board Member Wimbley asked about the programs most used for categorical eligibility and the speakers answered that Medi-Cal and CalFRESH are commonly used programs. Board Member Wimbley then asked if this case study had any potential impact on the development of the universal application system (UAS). The speakers answered that yes, they are hoping that this system could be integrated into other systems the Commission is working on in the future, as well as speaking to the importance of increasing coordination across agencies.

Board Member Tang responded to the presentation by speaking to the effectiveness of data sharing, particularly in the case of water and energy IOUs for bill discount assistance.

Board Member Medina shared her appreciation for the presentation and for the efforts to be more transparent to customers. She also noted the similarities in non-response drop offs to those that happen in health care assistance and noted how disruptive losing benefits can be.

Board Member Castaneda also spoke highly of the presentation and recommended that the Board work more with the California Public Advocates Office to better assess low-income programs and advocate for change.

5. Subcommittee Reports

The Low Income Energy Assistance Programs (LIEAP) subcommittee met on December 1st and worked on a draft letter regarding Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) program concerns. This letter is addressed on the agenda under topic nine, ESA Situational Analysis.

The Low Income Needs Assessment (LINA) subcommittee did not meet this quarter.

The Legislative Subcommittee did not meet this quarter but would meet in April or May to discuss relevant legislation from the next session.

The Water & Climate Change subcommittee did not meet this quarter.

6. Technical Advisory Committee – Action Item

To accommodate staff presenter schedules, the Board moved up item ten during discussion. The Board Chair proposed an amendment to the current scope of the LIOB's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The proposed changes to the TAC's charge will be to provide a formal body consisting of LIOB Members and potentially other experts to provide consistent and structured feedback for the Low-Income Decision, previous decisions, and related matters. This item followed up on discussion from the October 13 meeting of the LIOB.

Board Member Castaneda spoke to this revised scope and the need to document the institutional knowledge and contributions of the Board to various programs. Additionally, this will allow for more stakeholder engagement.

Board Member Medina moved to approve the amended TAC and Board Member Watts seconded. The amendment was approved unanimously by the Board Members in attendance.

7. CPUC Standing Reports – Energy Division Update

Kapil Kulkarni, of the CPUC Energy Division, provided [an update on Large IOUs ESA/CARE/FERA program cycle, Mid-cycle recommendations and report, Concurrent Application System \(CAS\), Categorical Eligibility study, Low Income Needs Assessment \(LINA\), and Energy Division organizational changes.](#)

Board Member Castaneda asked for clarification about which programs the Investor Owned Utilities (IOUs) are planning to remove from categorical eligibility and whether that included Medi-Cal . Mr. Kulkarni answered that there are two slightly different proposals from the IOUs, but that yes, there would be changes to how Medi-Cal enrollment could be used for categorical eligibility.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked for clarification on which programs are being proposed to be removed. Mr. Kulkarni pointed the Board and attendees to the actual advice letters, as well as the filed protests to the letter. He answered that the utilities agree on keeping the following programs as categorically eligible: CalFresh, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The Board Chair also asked what the deadline for Energy Division's response is to the advice letter. Mr. Kulkarni answered that the advice letter is currently suspended through March 13th, 2024, but could be suspended again to give staff more time to review.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson closed discussion on this item by expressing that the Board should be supportive of ways to make programs easier for customers to enroll in, rather than create barriers. To that end, there would be more discussion of the categorical eligibility letter in the future.

8. Joint Investor Owned Utilities Status Reports

For the joint investor-owned utility (IOU) updates, a representative of each IOU presented short slide summary for program status updates from their respective utility before Board Member discussion. There was also a joint update on the Low Income and Clean Energy Workshop. [More information on low-income programs, disconnections, and arrearage management, was provided to the Board in advance.](#) Given the timing of the agenda ahead of schedule, representatives from Southern California

Edison (SCE), Southern California Gas (SoCalGas), and San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) spoke before lunch. After the lunch recess, PG&E provided their update.

Board Member Irwin asked SoCalGas for an update on their tribal min-grant program, as it was missing from their presentation. SoCalGas shared a verbal update that one tribe and two tribally focused community based organizations have entered into mini-grant agreements.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked if the unspent funds from the ESA program would be returned to ratepayers or encumbered somehow. The IOUs answered that they planned to commit all 2023 funds by the end of the year. Board Member Castenda then followed up by asking if the commitment of 2023 funds into 2024 would reduce the program budgets for 2024. The IOUs all answered that their 2024 budgets would not be changed.

Board Member Wimbley commented that adding 2023 funds to 2024 might have similar ramp up issues that 2023 experienced if the programs aren't designed in a way to meet goals. Board Member Castenda agreed and noted that it would be good to get contractor comments on the topic.

Board Member Medina commended PG&E for spending all 2023 funds and for using ratepayer money responsibly.

9. ESA Situational Analysis

Chair Delgado-Olson opened this item by thanking LIEAP subcommittee members, especially Board Members Watts and Castaneda, on the work they did in putting forth an ESA situational analysis and recommendations.

PG&E contributed to the discussion of this agenda topic by [presenting on](#) their organization's best practices and lessons learned in transition to a new ESA program design, focusing on key drivers for meeting program goals.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked why other utilities are not using these best practices or how their program designs differ. Board Member Castaneda responded that he sees two strengths of PG&E's program: providing all feasible measures and, having a data driven marketing and outreach program to acquire customers successfully. Board Member Castaneda also noted that SCE is working on launching a similar customer targeting system for contractors.

Board Member Watts asked about measures with negative energy savings and whether that affects contractor compensation. PG&E answered that there are some program measures with negative therm savings, but that doesn't affect their contractors, as they are paid on a time and material basis.

Board Member Wimbley commented on PG&E's program design, which includes providing all feasible measures, and how to be successful, there must be strong data driven leads to target customers. Given the success of PG&E's design, Board Member Wimbley asked for more information from them on how they balance energy savings and contractor work productivity. PG&E responded that one thing they do is remind contractors of the annual budgets, so they understand what is feasible.

Board Member Medina asked about training opportunities and how different levels of training are offered. PG&E responded that there are different levels of training available for contractors and some training available through other state programs.

The Board Chair then transitioned to discussing the [draft ESA situational analysis letter](#), which had been approved by the LIEAP subcommittee and sent to the full board for consideration. The Board Chair commented that in response to PGE's presentation, he would ask for an amendment to the letter that recommends encouraging the implementation of all feasible measures.

Board Member Watts commented on the different natures of various ESA program designs, specifically noting the difference between an implementer model and a contractor led model. These designs make it difficult to compare evenly.

Board Member Wimbley reiterated previous statements about the need to provide contractors with a productive output, not necessarily high volume, but quality work opportunities, regardless of the different program design models. Board Member Wimbley suggested strengthening the language to the letter to emphasize that point.

Board Member Watts also spoke of the need to fair compensation based on real costs and that a market rate study could provide that.

Board Member Bierman commented on the different program designs of each ESA program and the specific IOU organizational differences. Board Member Bierman also noted the different level of administrative changes needed based on the specific recommendations.

After reviewing the major points of discussion, the LIOB made the following changes to the letter:

- Under Recommendations (New Points)
 - Structural Changes: The LIOB requests that the ESA program design for contractors' compensation be based on a time and materials basis. We further request that the effectiveness of the PG&E model of lead generation, balanced with energy savings potential and including all feasible measures for contractors be considered to improve outcomes in other regions of the state.
 - Market Rate Study: The LIOB requests the Commission complete a market rate study to inform how contractors are reimbursed for their work on the ESA program and to achieve a prevailing wage for their workforce.
- Adding new clause after "Weatherization":
 - The LIOB further asks the CPUC to direct the IOUs to perform all feasible measures to include "weatherization measures" consistent with PUC Code 2790. This includes completing as many measures as possible to each household for the benefit of the contractor as well as the health, safety and comfort of the ratepayer. These measures include...

The Board Chair made a motion to approve the letter with stated changes, and for that letter to then be sent to the Commission. Board Member Castaneda seconded that motion.

Approved by members: Delgado-Olson, Castaneda, Irwin, Medina, Tang

Members Abstaining: Bierman

Members not present: Wimbley, Stamas, Shiroma

10. California Department of Community Services & Development Update

Board Member Wimbley did not have any significant updates at this time.

11. Wrap Up & Closing Remarks

Board Chair Delgado-Olson began the closing remarks of the meeting by sharing that there would be more information on the next meeting date to come. The Chair thanked all members and IOU representatives for this productive discussion.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:15 PM.

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