

Topic	Question	Answer
Administrative Costs	How much administrative funding comes with LIHWA?	OCS has allowed up to 15% of the total allocation for administrative costs. OHCS is passing on 10% to service providers for their administrative costs.
Administrative Costs	When can service providers receive funding to cover administrative costs?	OHCS is working on initiating the grant agreement process. Once these are in place, we will be transferring funds.
General Program	Will the funding be extended beyond December 2023?	At this point, OHCS is not aware that LIHWA will become permanent. However, OCS is going to review data collected through the life of the program to determine long-term water assistance needs.
General Program	Does the state have existing water use data?	No, OHCS does not know of any statewide programs with water use and arrearage history data. Therefore, we are engaging with the water and wastewater utilities to obtain this data. We have also referenced data from the Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program (OERAP) to identify current water and wastewater needs.
General Program	Can a household qualify for LIHWA more than once?	No, a household is eligible once.
General Program	Can a household qualify for water and wastewater assistance separately?	Yes, households may qualify for separate payments for water and wastewater if two different vendors provide the services. This is also the case if the household has a well or a septic tank and receives the second service from a utility.
General Program	What is the income eligibility for households?	Households must be at or below 60% State Median Income (SMI), which is the same as LIHEAP.
General Program	What is the official start date of the LIHWA Program?	OHCS would like to have LIHWA dollars going out to low-income households beginning concurrently with the LIHEAP program year, starting October 2021. Our proposed timeframe is also dependent upon receipt of our approved Oregon State Plan for LIHWA and the time necessary to establish grant agreements and coordinate with vendors.
General Program	How does the LIHWA Program relate to other programs?	LIHWA prioritizes households with disconnected services, those pending disconnections, or those with arrearages. To qualify for the program, households must be at or below 60% State Median Income (SMI).
General Program	How many Oregon Tribes will receive LIHWA?	The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs is the only Oregon Tribe that OHCS is aware of to be receiving LIHWA funds. OHCS recommends that unless the Tribal household seeking assistance has already received LIHWA assistance from their Tribe, the service provider is to award eligible Tribal households the same other households.
Program Costs	Can LIHWA funds be used for irrigation?	Unfortunately, OCS has stipulated that LIHWA is not to be used for irrigation costs.
Program Costs	What are eligible LIHWA program costs?	Eligible program costs cover public drinking water and wastewater service arrearages and current charges. These can include reconnection fees and charges, basic charges, and other current charges. At this time, OHCS does not foresee LIHWA being used as a long-term rate reduction program.
Program Costs	What if a household has leaking or broken pipes? Can LIHWA be used to pay for these repairs?	LIHWA may not be used for these repairs. However, OCS has allowed for the coordination of CSBG funding to cover ineligible costs related to drinking water and wastewater services. The local service provider may determine what are CSBG costs and coordinate the use of those funds with LIHWA funds to provide assistance to households.
Program Costs	Can LIHWA funds be used for account deposits?	Yes, LIHWA funds can be used to place deposits on accounts.
Program Costs	What is the standard payment for LIHWA?	Instead of a payment matrix as with LIHEAP, LIHWA standard payments will have a floor and ceiling. Once a client is qualified for assistance, then the household will receive no less than \$100. The ceiling, or cap, for a standard payment will be \$1,000. The payment to the household will be customized, dependent upon the cost for reconnection or averting disconnection and arrearages. If the household is current, then the household would qualify for the floor payment of \$100.
Program Costs	What is the qualification for a crisis payment?	Crisis payments will be very similar to those of LIHEAP. These payments may be warranted when the standard ceiling payment is not enough to reconnect or avert disconnection of services. Crisis payments may also be warranted in cases where service continuity is deemed a life-threatening situation. Crisis payments are determined on a case-by-case basis.
Program Costs	Can eligible households receive direct payments from LIHWA?	No, all payments must go directly to the utilities.
Program Implementation	How can LIHWA be streamlined for easier administration?	OHCS is working to draft program guidelines and documentation to ease the administrative burden of our service providers. Program eligibility and intake is anticipated to be parallel to that of LIHEAP. In addition, we are looking into express eligibility if the household has received LIHEAP.
Program Implementation	How do households without a member's name on the utility bill receive assistance (i.e., multi-household meters)?	OCS is aware of this inequity and has suggested to include the third party in the application process. OHCS is proposing a method, similar to LIHEAP, that requires a landlord authorization form that allows the household to access the utility bill. Payments made to the household through LIHWA will not be accessible by the third party. OHCS is currently vetting a draft internally prior to sending it out to service providers for review.
Program Implementation	Who are the priority households for LIHWA?	Priorities for LIHWA (in order) include households with disconnections, pending disconnections, and arrearages.
Program Implementation	How does the LIHWA application process coordinate with the LIHEAP application process?	OHCS anticipates the application processes to be nearly identical. Service providers determine household eligibility with the same documentation. The only difference in application process would be requesting the water and wastewater bills instead of the natural gas or electric bill. Ideally, service providers will be able to determine eligibility for energy and water assistance programs concurrently.
Program Implementation	When a household comes in for water or wastewater assistance, can the service provider also qualify the household for energy assistance at the same time?	Yes, this is a definite possibility. It is up to the individual service providers, but OHCS does recommend to qualify the household at time of eligibility for as many programs as they need.
Program Implementation	What database will OHCS implement for data entry?	OHCS plans to administer LIHWA through OPUS, which is our database that already houses information for our energy assistance and weatherization programs.
Vendor Agreements	Will OHCS provide an example of a water/wastewater vendor agreement?	OHCS will be providing a template vendor agreement to reduce burden upon the service providers. We will vet it through Oregon Department of Justice prior to sharing it.
Vendor Agreements	Can utilities provide feedback and modify the vendor agreements to fit their needs?	The LIHWA Program was established as an emergency solution to resolve water and wastewater access needs of low-income households. OHCS wants to be as flexible as possible to establish relationships with the utilities so as to provide this assistance in an equitable manner. However, OHCS' vendor agreement will meet program requirements without being overly burdensome. We will consider proposed changes to counter major conflicts.

Vendor Agreements	Will the agreements enforce the ability for LIHWA funds to reconnect client accounts or avert disconnections in a similar fashion to that of LIHEAP?	Yes, the vendor agreements will enforce activity upon client accounts with a commitment for payment. As the top two priorities of this program are to reconnect or avert disconnection, commitments will ensure that eligible clients will have continuity of services.
Vendor Agreements	Can households receive payments without a signed vendor agreement?	A vendor agreement must be in place for a service provider to pay a utility on behalf of a household. It is highly encouraged for service providers to work very closely with utilities and other community service providers in their territory to ensure these vendor agreements are signed.
Vendor Agreements	When a household receives a commitment, what is the manner and timing of that payment transfer to the utility?	Just as with LIHEAP, the service provider will send a bulk payment with an itemized authorization list (household name, account number, and payment amount) at a frequency agreed upon between the service provider and utility.