



Ontario Energy Board

Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario

LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance - Training Webcast: Distributors

November 25 & 26, 2010

Agenda

- Program Manual
- Program Overview
- Rate Recovery of Funds
- Utility – Social Service Agency Partnerships
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Eligibility Criteria & Grant Amounts
- Application Process
- Reporting
- Questions



2011 LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance Program Manual

- What is it?
 - The Program Manual provides the framework for the administration & delivery of LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance.
 - It provides the information that guides the working relationship between utilities and the agency partners.
- How should it be used by utilities?
 - To guide design of processes & protocols with social service agency partners.
 - To guide reporting processes.
 - Provides information that can be used in developing training materials for call centres.
 - Can be provided to potential agency partners so that they can understand the program before agreeing to administer LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance.



Program Overview

- LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance is a province-wide, rate-payer funded emergency financial assistance program for eligible low-income customers.
 - For 2011, available to eligible customers of electricity distributors and unit sub-metering providers. Gas distributors to continue Winter Warmth.
- LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance is designed to provide emergency assistance to customers struggling to pay their bills, and *not ongoing* bill assistance.
- Funds from each distributor are available only to eligible customers of that distributor, and customers of unit sub-metering providers within the distributor's service area (i.e. funds are not pooled provincially).



Program Overview

- Social service agencies will receive and manage funds from distributors.
- Agencies will screen applicants and make final decisions on funding.
- For approved applicants, money will be remitted directly to the distributor or unit sub-metering provider and credited to the applicant's account.
- Funds are NOT provided directly to customers.

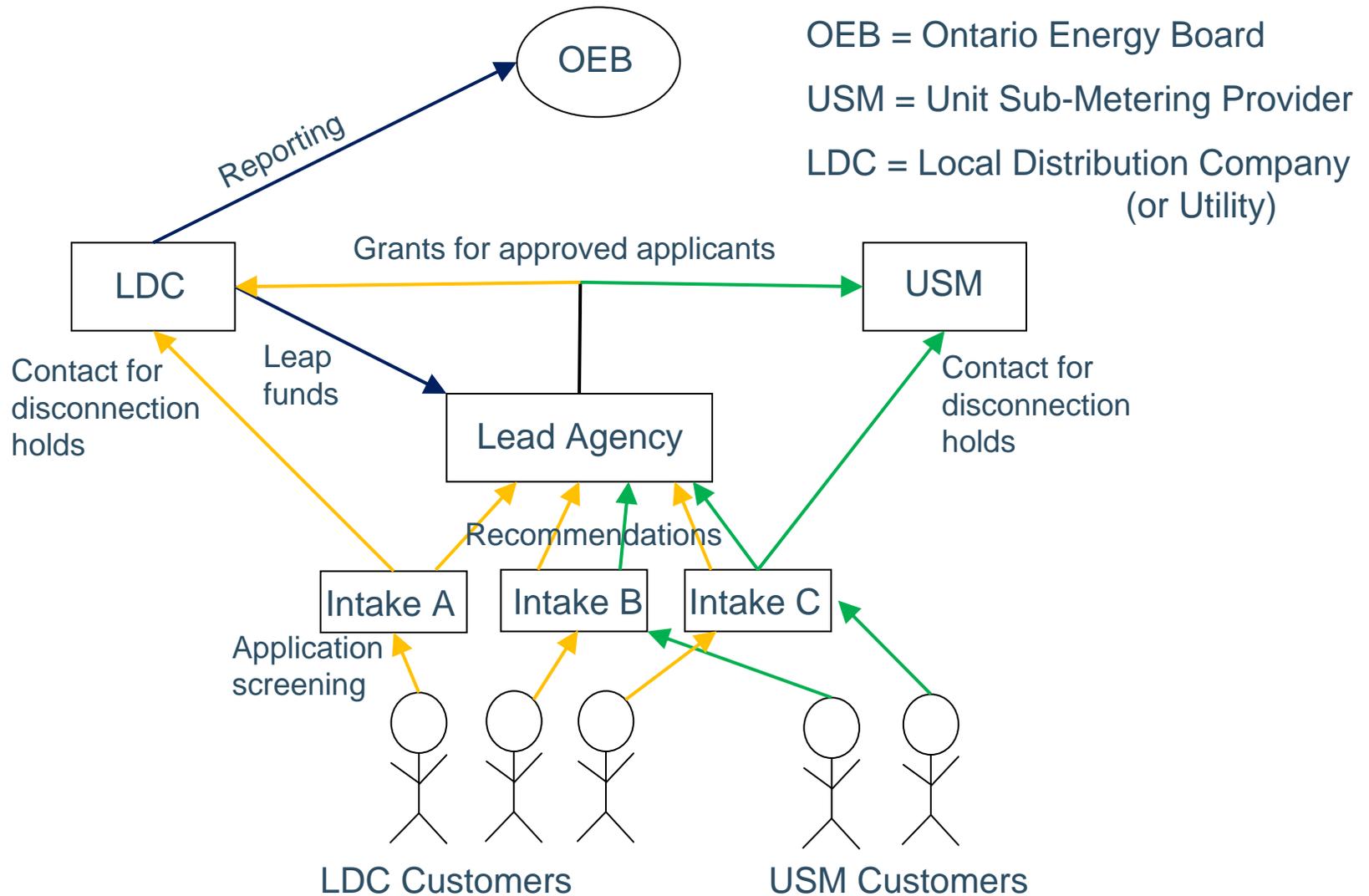


Rate Recovery of Funds for LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance

- Each distributor must provide the greater of 0.12% of Board approved total distribution revenue or \$2,000.
- **Cost of Service Applications:**
 - LEAP amount to be included as part of OM&A expenses.
 - LEAP amount will be adjusted in draft rate orders to account for changes resulting from Board's decision on the final service revenue requirement.
- **IRM Applications :**
 - Accommodate LEAP amount within existing OM&A budget.
- NOTE: Total distribution revenue means forecasted service revenue requirement, as approved by the Board, and includes revenue from specific service charges.



Program Overview



Utility – Social Service Agency Partnerships

- Each utility must partner with at least one social service agency.
- Partnerships should follow framework outlined in the Program Manual.
 - Some elements left to negotiation between utilities and their agency partners.
- Program admin/delivery fees are limited to 15% of the LEAP funds contributed by utilities (i.e. 15% of 0.12%).
 - Division of 15% between Intake and Lead agencies to be negotiated between agencies.
- Timing & form of payments made by utilities to social service agencies to be agreed upon between partners.
 - i.e. lump sum in January or spread out over several smaller payments.
- Important that utilities ensure their social service agency partners are aware of the customer service rules.



Utility Roles & Responsibilities

- Collecting money from ratepayers for LEAP in the amount established by the OEB.
- Transferring program funds to Lead Agencies.
- Determining funding allocations within their service territory by geography.
- Establishing partnerships, contacts, and operational procedures with Lead Agencies.
- Receiving, recording and taking appropriate action upon notification from an Intake Agency (or Lead Agency as appropriate) that an assessment of eligibility is being undertaken and when informed of decisions on applications.
- Training call centre and collections staff on LEAP, customer service rules, and conservation programs.
- Confirming customer and account information used in determining program eligibility, including information on payment history.
- Reporting to the OEB in accordance with OEB reporting requirements.



Unit Sub-metering Provider Roles & Responsibilities

- Receiving, recording and taking appropriate action upon notification from an Intake Agency (or Lead Agency as appropriate) that an assessment of eligibility is being undertaken and when informed of decisions on applications.
- Training call centre and collections staff on LEAP, customer service rules, and conservation programs.
- Confirming customer and account information used in determining program eligibility, including information on payment history.



Agency Roles & Responsibilities (General)

Intake Agencies:

- Screening & processing applicants & making recommendations to lead agency.
- Informing applicant's service provider that assessment of eligibility is being undertaken to ensure appropriate action by the service provider, which may include a hold on a scheduled disconnection.

Lead Agencies:

- Performing intake functions when there is no intake agency.
- Making final decision on funding for applicants.
- Providing utility partner(s) with an updated list of the Intake Agencies for the purposes of referrals by utility call centre staff.
- Tracking and reporting program performance and expenditures.
- Remitting payment back to utility for approved applicants and ensuring funds are only used for utility's customers.
- Management of customer files, including negotiating the location of storage and process for transferring files with Intake Agencies.



Eligibility & Screening Criteria

- Applicants must meet the following criteria:
 1. Are an existing customer of the utility providing the funding, or are an existing customer of a unit sub-metering provider operating within the service area of the utility;
 2. Reside at the address for which there are arrears; and
 3. Have a pre-tax household income at or below the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut-off (LICO) + 15%, taking into account family size and community size.
(see table on page 21 of the Manual)



Eligibility & Screening Criteria

- In screening applicants, agencies to consider the following:
 - Receipt of financial assistance should allow the applicant to maintain or reconnect energy service, in order to promote sustainability of the customer's connection.
 - The applicant has demonstrated a prior attempt to pay the bill. The service provider, as appropriate, can be contacted for information about the applicant's payment history, if necessary.
 - The applicant is in the threat of disconnection or has been disconnected. Agencies should focus on *emergency* assistance, but will need to balance this with early intervention.
 - Funding should be accessed only once per year per fuel, up to the financial cap.



Grant Level

- Maximum grant is \$500 per fuel per household per year.
 - Agencies may use their discretion to offer up to \$600 to applicants that live in electrically heated homes.
 - If applicant owes less than maximum, the grant cannot exceed amounts owed.
 - If applicant owes more than the maximum, a maximum grant may be provided, as long as the applicant will be able to sustain their energy service following the grant. Rationale must be documented.



Application Process (General)

1. Applicants are screened for LEAP eligibility.
 - If applicant is deemed ineligible for LEAP, agency will inform and provide them with information on other resources.
 - Applicant should also be informed that they may qualify for conservation programs.
2. If eligible, an application interview is conducted where income eligibility is verified through documentation.
 - Customer consent will be obtained during interview and utility will be contacted to verify arrears and account information.
 - Disconnection hold may be requested.
3. Once all information is verified, Intake agency will make a recommendation for funding to Lead agency.



Application Process (General)

4. Lead agency will review application and make a final decision on funding.
 - Applicant will be informed of decision.
5. If approved, cheque will be issued to the service provider on behalf of the customer, according to schedule of payments agreed upon between service provider & lead agency.
 - Cheque to be accompanied by a list of customer names, account numbers & grant amount to be credited to each account.
 - Agencies will inform customers that they may receive another bill prior to the cheque being processed and credited to the account. However customers may still contact the service provider, and if so, should be directed to contact the Intake Agency.



Reporting

- Requirements set out in Appendix C of Program Manual.
- 3 forms of reporting:
 - Monthly reporting by agencies to utilities
 - Tracks each utility's LEAP funds spent over the course of the month.
 - To be submitted by agency by the 15th day of the following month.
 - Monthly tracking by agencies:
 - Tracks applicant demographic information for use in program evaluation.
 - Lead agency to keep and store data.
 - Annual reporting by utilities to OEB
 - Utilities will provide an annual report to the OEB for program evaluation.
 - Report is dependant on timely information from agency partners.
 - Further direction from the OEB to be provided in the near future.



Questions?

- Will Program Manual be available in French?
 - Yes. It will be posted on the OEB site when ready.
- Is there a master list of utility – agency partners?
 - Will be posted on OEB site when all submissions are received.
- Questions?
 - Questions can be asked through the Q&A tab in Microsoft Office Live Meeting or via telephone by pressing *1.



Contact Information

- **For additional questions, please contact:**
 - ***Market Operations Hotline:***
market.operations@oeb.gov.on.ca
- **For additional information on LEAP:**
 - ***visit the Board's website at:***
www.oeb.gov.on.ca

