

Utility Discount Program

**PRESENTATION: CITY LIGHT REVIEW PANEL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 18, 2015**

Background

- The Utility Discount Program is one of the most generous low-income utility assistance programs in the country, yet it is under-utilized.
- Last year, Mayor Ed Murray announced a goal of doubling enrollment in the UDP – from 14,000 to 28,000 customers – by the end of 2018.
- An IDT developed recommendations to achieve this goal by creating a utility assistance program that is better known, easier to navigate, and simpler to enroll in.
- The report containing these recommendations – “Strengthening the Utility Discount Program” – was transmitted to Council in August 2014.
- City Council has long supported efforts to expand participation – approved both Seattle City Light’s and Seattle Public Utilities’ strategic business plans which include funding for increased UDP enrollment.



UDP Mission and Eligibility

To ensure that utility bills are affordable for all.

The Utility Discount Program (UDP) helps low-income customers with utility payments by offering a discount of 60% on Seattle City Light bills and a 50% discount on Seattle Public Utilities bills.

This program is available for residential Seattle City Light and Seattle Public Utilities customers.

This program is funded by SCL and SPU rate payers.

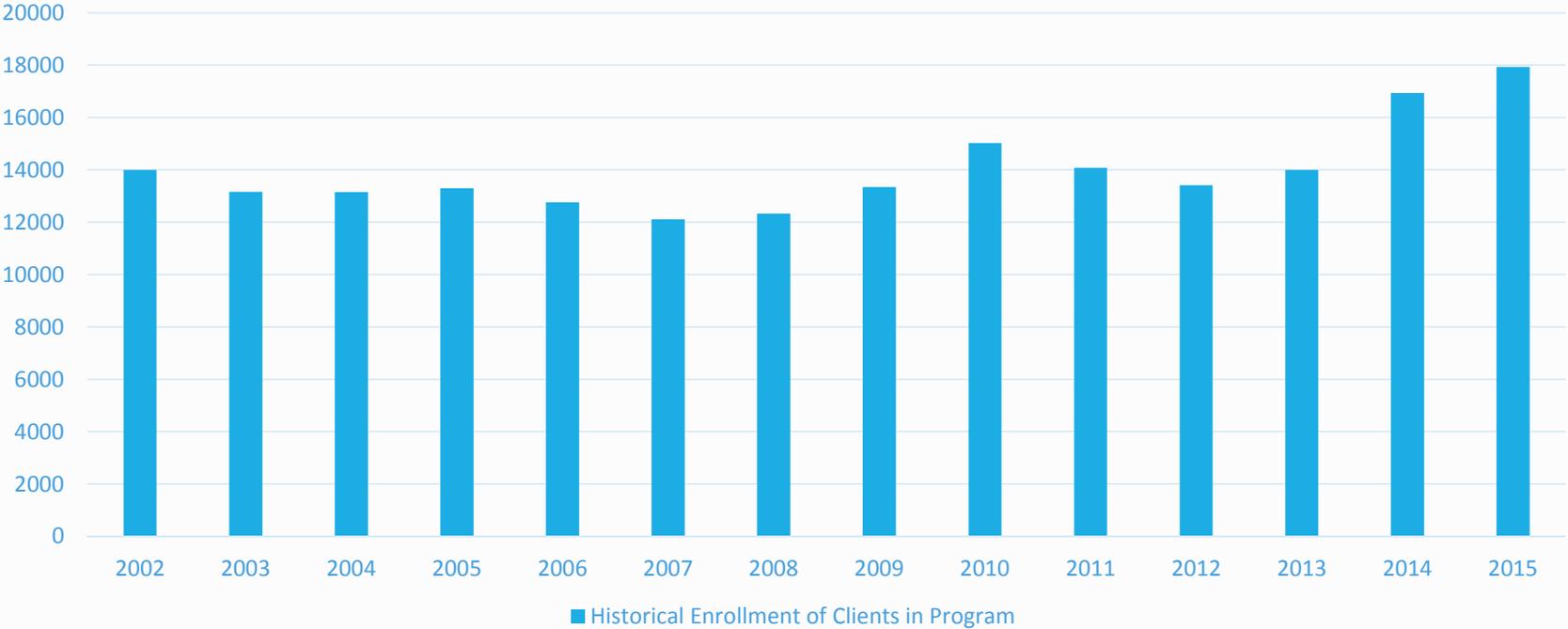
Household Size	Gross Monthly Income	Gross Yearly Income
1	\$2,570	\$30,840
2	\$3,360	\$40,320
3	\$4,151	\$49,812
4	\$4,941	\$59,292
5	\$5,732	\$68,784
6	\$6,523	\$78,276
7	\$6,671	\$80,052
8	\$6,819	\$81,828
9	\$6,967	\$83,604
10	\$7,116	\$85,392
Each additional	\$211	\$2,541

*Note: Gross Income is based on 70% of the state's median income.



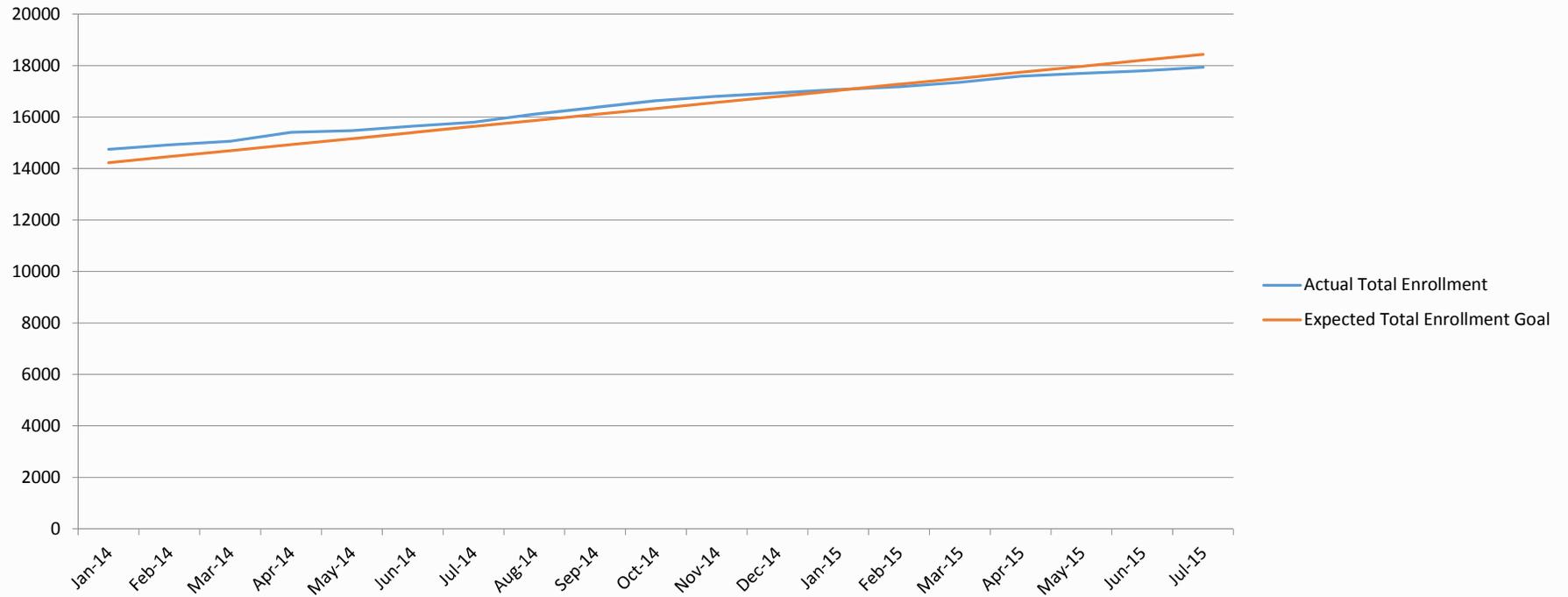
Historical Enrollment of Clients in Program

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Goals & Outcomes

2014-2015 Monthly Total Enrollment Statistics



Status of Project

Achievements to date:

- Enrollments at historic high: 17,940
- Improved coordination and collaboration
- Lack of backlog in application process
- Program data & reporting consistency
- Integration strategy with city affordability programs
- Clarity of roles
- Easier application process



Utility Discount Program: Latest Improvements

Specifically, proposals to:

1. Allow the auto-enrollment of low-income units,
2. Allow enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”) to meet income documentation requirements,
3. Remove the rent status documentation requirement, and
4. Align the income eligibility thresholds of all city utility assistance programs.



Allowing the auto-enrollment of low-income units

- Once a client has been approved for affordable (i.e., income restricted) housing, they are usually income-qualified for UDP
- Washington State Housing Finance Commission (WSHFC) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) provides access to these residences for UDP
- Up to 5,000 customers may be qualified through this process
- Timeline: Finalize MOA with WSHFC – August 15; Opt-out letters sent to eligible customers – September 1; Auto-enrolling begins – October 1



Allow enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”) to meet UDP’s income documentation requirement

- Benefit programs require income validation that in some cases matches UDP requirements
- Example: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); a SNAP customer will now only have to provide ID to get enrolled
- 8,500 SNAP benefit recipients may be eligible for UDP
- HSD will have access to Washington Connections database to verify program enrollment and active status in SNAP to confirm income and enroll client in UDP
- HSD staff were trained by Seattle-King County Public Health team



Remove the rent status documentation requirement

- The IDT recommends no longer requiring an applicant to provide documentation related to rent status.
- Instead, applicants will self-certify that they are not in housing that is precluded from UDP enrollment.



Align the income eligibility thresholds of all City utility assistance programs

- Ordinance will request that all of the City's utility assistance programs use the standard of 70 percent of state median income to determine eligibility



To Enroll in the Utility Discount Program or for More Information

Web: <http://www.seattle.gov/udp>

Call: 206-684-0268 (TTY/TDD 206-233-2778)

Email: udp@seattle.gov

In Person:

810 3rd Avenue, Suite 350

Seattle, WA 98104

(8:30am – 4:00pm; Monday - Friday)

