

The Small Business Utility Disruption Prevention Program provides an opportunity for small business utility customers to receive credit to their utility accounts. This handout specifically addresses information relevant to the various utilities in the state who provide service to these customers and has been updated to reflect the second phase of the program, initiated on August 21, 2020. This phase of the program provides eligibility for small businesses that do not have debt to the utility, but can demonstrate financial hardship as result of COVID-19.

A program fact sheet and this FAQ for Utility Partners document can be found at iowabusinessrecovery.com. These documents may be updated throughout the program.

Utility Role

Applicants will identify their utility service provider(s) in the application. Utility providers will be responsible for reviewing information specific to the customer usage and monthly expenses. The review will be completed through the on-line application portal. Applications will be funded based upon order of receipt and utilities will have 10 days to review an application.

Applications that pass utility screening must wait until both Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) screening is complete and until other applications submitted before the time stamp of the application in question have completed the review process for funding to be awarded. Following final clearance, IEDA will provide payment to the utility through either a check or electronic payment. Utilities will then credit the account of the applicant within 70 days of receipt of funds.

Applicants may opt to contact their utility provider as they complete the application to verify information regarding their eligibility, such as average monthly usage and billing summaries over the period of the program.

Portal Access for Utility Review

Each utility must provide the name and email address of one person to serve as the point of contact to IEDA throughout the application review process. Portal reviewer accounts were established as part of the Phase One program. Additional reviewer accounts can be established by contacting IEDA at:

Shelly Peterson
Shelly.peterson@iowaeda.com
515-348-6217

Applications are sorted by utility provider and the utility administrator(s) will receive a daily message stating the number of applications in the review queue.

Utility Review Process

The portal review screen includes several checkpoints for electric and/or gas customers. This includes verification of customer service and account number and verification that an applicant's average energy use is below the threshold established for a small business. Applicants provide the billing date and statement amount for up to four months of service or \$7,500 in total request, whichever is greater. Utilities will provide confirmation of the bill statement amount. If the applicant credit request is incorrect, the utility reviewer may reduce the request to align with the bill amount. Note that the utility will not be able to increase the amount requested by an applicant.

Participating utilities must certify that applicants awarded funds for debts incurred for electric and/or natural gas services between March 17, 2020 and October 31, 2020 will not have service disrupted based on debts while the application is reviewed and processed. Late fees, penalties, or interest for billing cycles funded under the program must be waived.

Next Steps

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document for utilities will be updated throughout the program to address issues as they arise.

Specific questions related to the utility review of applications can be addressed to: energyrecovery@iowaeda.com and staff will do their best to provide a prompt response. Questions from applicants can also be directed to the Energy Recovery Help Line:

toll-free 855-300-2342

local 515-348-8914

Utility Reviewer FAQs

- 1. How is average monthly energy use determined for applicants without a complete year of service record for 2019?**
 - a. Average energy use for applicants who began service with a utility during 2019 or 2020 can be calculated by adding all months of data available for 2019 plus the months of January 2020 and February 2020 and dividing by the total number of months available. Average monthly electrical usage must be less than 25,000 kWh and average monthly natural gas usage must be less than 2,500 therms.

- 2. What if a customer has more than one account number for their business?**
 - a. If a business is served by more than one account, up to three account numbers may be entered in the application. The total of these accounts must meet the average energy use threshold.

- 3. How do I determine what billing cycles apply to the March 17 to October 15 time period of eligibility?**
 - a. A customer is eligible for up to four months of financial assistance or \$7,500 in total gas and electric assistance. Customers provide the billing date and dollar amount for up to four billing statements. The date of a billing statement should not be prior to March 17 or later than October 15. The customer is not required to show debt to the utility to qualify for Phase Two of the program. The months do not have to be consecutive.

- 4. The amount of assistance requested by the applicant does not match the monthly billing record. Can this be corrected during utility review?**
 - a. The utility reviewer may decrease the amount of assistance provided to an applicant if billing records do not justify the amount listed in the application. Utility reviewers cannot increase the amount of assistance requested. Applicants are limited to a \$7,500 total credit across all utilities. Therefore, an applicant may be requesting credit for less than the billing statement amount on an account in order to stay within the eligibility requirements.

5. Can an applicant who received assistance in Phase One of the program reapply in Phase Two?

a. An applicant who received assistance in Phase One of the program is eligible for assistance in Phase Two as long as the combined request amount is under the \$7,500 cap and the additional assistance covers a bill not included in the Phase One credit.

6. How and when will utilities receive payment for approved applications?

a. Utility payments will be batched for approved applications and paid on a daily basis. If the utility provider is set-up as a vendor with the State, they will be paid via ACH payment. If not, they will be paid via check. Payments will include a summary of the account holders for which the payments are to be applied.

7. Will businesses with multiple locations be eligible?

a. Some businesses may be served by more than one account (i.e., storefront and warehouse) and applicants may enter up to three account numbers in an application for a total of not more than \$7,500. Owners of multiple businesses may complete a separate application for each distinct business.

8. If a customer is on budget billing, is a future billing statement eligible for credit?

a. A customer on budget billing may apply for assistance with any billing statement dated between March 17 and October 15 as long as the four month limit and \$7,500 cap are not exceeded.