



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Community Services | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201
www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs

Low Income Household Water Assistance Program Action Transmittal

AT#: LIHWAP-AT-2021-11

DATE: August 30, 2021

TO: State, Territory, and Tribal Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) Designated Officials

SUBJECT: Model LIHWAP Application Plan (Application deadline October 15, 2021)

ATTACHMENT(S): [Attachment 1: Model LIHWAP Plan for Tribes](#)
[Attachment 2: LIHWAP Plan Instructions](#)
[Attachment 3: LIHWAP Definitions](#)

[The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021](#) and the [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARP\) of 2021](#)

BACKGROUND: States, the District of Columbia, Territories, and Tribes/Tribal organizations, that are current FY 2021 LIHEAP grantees, wishing to administer the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) must submit an application for funds by submitting a LIHWAP Plan using the attached template no later than **October 15, 2021**, covering the grant period of **May 27, 2021** through **September 30, 2023**. The application should be submitted electronically to the appropriate email boxes: LIHWAPstates@acf.hhs.gov for States and Territories, and LIHWAPtribes@acf.hhs.gov for Tribes.

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) assigned responsibility for administering the Low-Income Household Drinking Water and Wastewater Emergency Assistance Program, hereafter referred to as the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), to the Office of Community Services (OCS). Per the authorizing legislation, “the Secretary... shall, as appropriate and to the extent practicable, use existing processes, procedures, policies, and systems in place to provide assistance to low-income households.”

OCS reviewed existing programs to identify processes and procedures that support and align with the Congressional intent of LIHWAP. Per this review and consultation with the ACF Office of Legislative Affairs and Budget (OLAB), OCS identified the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) as most closely aligned with LIHWAP, which will be administered through the Division of Energy Assistance (DEA). In accordance with LIHEAP procedures, OCS is

providing a model LIHWAP Plan grantees can use to complete their LIHWAP application. Once the Plan is submitted and approved, grantees can drawdown their full allocation of LIHWAP funding.

The Office of Community Services (OCS) has responsibility to review and accept LIHWAP Plan submissions on behalf of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), which is the agency that administers LIHWAP at the federal level. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved ACF's LIHWAP Plan under clearance number 0970-0571 effective through December 31, 2021. The LIHWAP Plan contains required content for all LIHWAP grantees for the FY 2021 program and is due to ACF no later than **October 15, 2021**.

PURPOSE: To provide LIHWAP grantees with a Model Plan template and instructions for how to apply online for FY 2021 federal LIHWAP funding. This Action Transmittal (AT) also confirms the deadline to apply is **October 15, 2021**.

CONTENT: On December 27, 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 was signed into law. This authorizing legislation included \$638 million in emergency spending to assist low-income households with water and wastewater bills. On March 11, 2021, an additional \$500M was appropriated in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) of 2021 in emergency spending to assist low-income households with water and wastewater bills. On March 13, 2020, the President declared a national emergency in response to COVID-19, pursuant to sections 201 and 301 of the National Emergencies Act, (50 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) and consistent with section 1135 of the Social Security Act (SSA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 1320b-5). This followed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declaration of a nationwide public health emergency on January 31, 2020, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 247d, and the World Health Organization (WHO) declaration of a pandemic on March 11, 2020. As various jurisdictions in the country move through phases of their respective re-opening Plans, we remain aware that each State, Territory, and Tribal grantee faces unique local challenges in gathering information required to submit a complete FY 2021 LIHWAP Plan to OCS.

As such, OCS is giving grantees 45 days to apply for this new emergency funding. OCS is also providing extensive instructions on how to apply for the emergency funding (see below).

Instructions:

Please find the instructions for submitting the LIHWAP Model Plan, [here](#).

Model Plan:

Please find the LIHWAP Model Plan, for Tribes, [here](#).

Plan Definitions:

Please find the LIHWAP Plan Definitions [here](#).

Note: We encourage grantees to print out the definitions and instructions, or otherwise have them ready at hand while completing the Model Plan. We also encourage grantees to read through the instructions, definitions, and Model Plan in full before drafting the submission.

Plan Submission Deadline:

The deadline for the LIHWAP Plan is October 15, 2021. Grantees must submit their LIHWAP Plan no later than October 15, 2021, and receive approval before ACF will release the full funding awards under the Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

The LIHWAP Model Plan is provided in an interactive (fillable) Portable Document Format (PDF). A single application format is provided for States, Territories, and Tribes. The Plan is a combination of check-off boxes and narrative. In most narrative sections, answers are limited to no more than 2,500 characters (approximately 1 page) of text. Text will scroll so that not all text will be visible at the same time. OCS has the following recommendations to expedite completion of this Plan:

- **Model Responses on LIHEAP Plans Where Appropriate** - The LIHWAP Model Plan is closely modeled after the model State and Tribal Plan questions and formats for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Therefore, it is strongly recommended that States, Territories and Tribes review and have available the most recently accepted LIHEAP Plan while completing the required sections of the LIHWAP Model Plan. Throughout the instructions document, OCS has noted areas where it will be acceptable to cut, paste, and modify content from the LIHEAP Plan.
- **Consider Emergency Flexibilities**— LIHWAP funding is part of emergency supplemental appropriations from the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The funding provides urgently needed payments on behalf of low-income households for drinking water and wastewater needs. Where possible, States, Territories and Tribes should not only expedite Plan development by modeling on LIHEAP processes and procedures, but also look for ways to expedite the distribution of resources.
- **Look for Opportunities for Integrated Eligibility Determination** – Consistent with the LIHEAP model, OCS has provided States, Territories, and Tribes with considerable flexibility to adapt policies and procedures to local needs and systems. In developing this Plan, grantees are strongly encouraged to use and adapt existing outreach mechanisms, intake systems, eligibility determination procedures, and monitoring infrastructure. This will not only help prevent duplicate systems and ensure operational efficiency, but it can also improve services by helping households avoid having to provide duplicate information and duplicate applications.

Timely Submission and Completion of Plan and Reports:

As noted above, all necessary information must be included in the Plan and properly certified by the appropriate grantee official before it can be accepted by OCS as complete and ready for review. Once the Plan is approved, OCS will release the remainder of the grant award for non-administrative costs. The application should be submitted electronically to the appropriate email boxes: LIHWAPstates@acf.hhs.gov for States and Territories, and LIHWAPtribes@acf.hhs.gov for Tribes.

Submission Deadline Extension: If a grantee anticipates needing an extension of the DATE submission deadline, the grantee must submit an email requesting a deadline extension. Grantees should email LIHWAPstates@acf.hhs.gov for States and Territories, and LIHWAPtribes@acf.hhs.gov for Tribes and should submit their request as soon as possible. The letter must provide a specific, reasonable alternative date and a brief explanation of the reason for needing an extension. Limited extension requests will be granted for extenuating circumstances.

Follow-up Action on Plan Submissions: Upon receipt of the LIHWAP Plan, OCS staff will review the Plan and respond to the grantee regarding whether any changes or clarifications are needed before acceptance for purpose of releasing the full grant award in the Payment Management System (PMS). Grantees whose Plans are rejected must take immediate action to edit their Plans according to the comments in the Plan and resubmit the edited Plan to OCS within the deadline noted by the reviewer.

ACF will only issue LIHWAP funding upon receipt and review of a LIHWAP Plan submission that OCS considers “complete” with respect to the Model LIHWAP Plan as shown in Attachment 1 of this Action Transmittal.

All LIHWAP grantees have an ongoing responsibility throughout the grant period to submit revised Plans and reports, as needed, to reflect changes to ensure OCS has final, actual program data.

Contact and Questions:

If you are a LIHWAP grantee and you have questions, please refer to the LIHWAP [Contacts page](#) on our website and reach out to the LIHWAP program contact for your region.

For general questions, please reach out to: LIHWAP@acf.hhs.gov.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. OCS looks forward to continuing to provide high-quality services to OCS grantees.

/s/

Lauren Christopher
Director, Division of Energy Assistance
Office of Community Services