

# LIHWAP Manual for Grant Recipient Staff

Welcome! We are so glad you have joined the LIHWAP team and look forward to working with you.



**Office of Community Services**  
Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program | **LIHWAP**

## Table of Contents

First Steps.....	3
Program Overview .....	4
Purpose .....	4
Legislative Authority and Appropriations .....	4
Funding .....	4
Regulations.....	4
Implementation Plans .....	5
Priorities.....	5
Use of Funds.....	5
Beneficiary Eligibility .....	6
Communications from OCS.....	7
Your Federal Contact .....	7
Program Notifications .....	7
Regional Check-Ins .....	7
Webinars and Office Hours.....	7
Reporting Requirements.....	8
Quarterly Reports .....	8
Annual Reports.....	8
Federal Financial Reports.....	8
Reporting Schedule .....	9
Training Resources .....	10
Intake and Benefits .....	10
Vendor Agreements.....	10
Renters .....	10
Outreach .....	11
Roadmap to Program Implementation.....	12

## First Steps

Welcome! We are so glad to have you as part of the LIHWAP team. If you're hoping to learn more about the program, you have come to the right place. Here are some initial actions you can take to set yourself up for success.

- ✓ Bookmark the LIHWAP website – [acf.hhs.gov/ocs/programs/lihwap](https://acf.hhs.gov/ocs/programs/lihwap)
- ✓ Read the [LIHWAP Supplemental Terms and Conditions](#) to learn more about the program and its requirements.
- ✓ Read your state, tribe, or territory's Implementation Plan. Your organization should have a copy of the plan on file. You can also email your [program specialist](#) to ask for a copy.
- ✓ Email or call your program specialist to introduce yourself. You can find your assigned Program Specialist [here](#). If you do not know what region you are in, go [here](#) (states and territories) or [here](#) (tribes).
- ✓ Add [LIHWAP@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:LIHWAP@acf.hhs.gov), [LIHWAPstates@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:LIHWAPstates@acf.hhs.gov) and [LIHWAPtribes@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:LIHWAPtribes@acf.hhs.gov) to your contact list. Most program announcements are sent using Mailchimp from [LIHWAP@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:LIHWAP@acf.hhs.gov).

## Program Overview

### Purpose

LIHWAP is a temporary emergency program that provides funds to assist low-income households with water and wastewater bills. It is modeled closely after the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

### Legislative Authority and Appropriations

LIHWAP is funded at \$1.138 billion. \$500 million is from the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021](#) (CAA), and \$638 million is from the [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#) (ARPA).

Legislative authority comes from:

- Sec. 533 of the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2021 (Division H of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021), which became law on December 27, 2021 (Public Law 116-260).
- Section 2912 of the American Rescue Plan Act, which became law on March 11, 2021 (Public Law 117-2).

The relevant statutory references can be read [here](#).

### Funding

LIHWAP grant recipients include 49 states (North Dakota declined to participate), five territories (American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands), the District of Columbia, and 97 tribes and tribal organizations.

Award amounts for states and territories can be found [here](#). Award amounts for tribes in the first funding release can be found [here](#), and award amounts for tribes in the second funding release can be found [here](#).

Each grant recipient received a Notice of Award (NOA) for CAA and ARPA funds. The NOAs contain information on your award amount, your Payment Management System (PMS) account, and terms and conditions. If you cannot locate your NOAs, email your [program specialist](#). They would be happy to send it to you.

### Regulations

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) [General Terms and Conditions](#) apply to LIHWAP. Additional, LIHWAP has Supplemental Terms and Conditions that can be found [here](#). The Supplemental Terms and Conditions lay out program information and requirements. OCS recommends familiarizing yourself with the terms and conditions, as they are critical to program operation.

OCS has also issued three Use of Funds Q&As. They address many questions that may arise when reading the terms and conditions and learning about the program.

- [LIHWAP IM 2021-03 Use of Funds Q and A](#)
- [LIHWAP IM 2022-02 Update to FAQs on LIHWAP](#)
- [LIHWAP IM 2022-03 Update to FAQs on LIHWAP](#)

## Implementation Plans

Each grant recipient completed an [Implementation Plan](#) for their LIHWAP. This document lays out how your state, territory, or tribe has opted to operate your program. OCS recommends reading your plan to learn about operational priorities, eligibility for households, monitoring, and more. If you cannot find a copy of your plan, email your [program specialist](#).

Implementation plans can be updated at any time. To make a change:

1. Make changes directly on your existing Implementation Plan
2. Have the plan re-signed by your designated official
3. Ask your program specialist for the Plan Amendment Checklist. Use the checklist to indicate which sections of your plan have been updated
4. Send the Implementation Plan and Plan Amendment Checklist to your program specialist via email

## Priorities

OCS identified three priority groups for LIHWAP assistance. All grant recipients must serve priority group one. Grant recipients indicated in their implementation plan which priority groups they plan on serving.

1. **Restoration of services** to households that have had water and/or wastewater services disconnected due to arrearages.
2. **Prevention of disconnection** from water and/or wastewater services for households at risk of disconnection due to arrearages. These are households that have received a shutoff notice but have not yet been disconnected.
3. **Rate reduction** for households that are current on their water and/or wastewater bills but are still seeking assistance. Benefit payments are applied to the current balance to support affordability.

## Use of Funds

LIHWAP benefits may only be used to pay for water and wastewater services and associated fees. The payments must be made to owners or operators of public water systems or treatment works. Allowable uses of funds include:

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| ✓ Water bills            | ✓ Reconnection fees    |
| ✓ Wastewater bills       | ✓ Bottled water*       |
| ✓ Storm water bills      | ✓ Water cisterns*      |
| ✓ Late fees              | ✓ Septic tank pumping* |
| ✓ Service fees and taxes |                        |

\*indicates optional flexibilities

After LIHWAP implementation began, it became clear that additional flexibilities were needed to serve more households across the country in need of water and wastewater bill assistance. Not all communities have piped water and wastewater systems. The added flexibilities are:

- **Bottled Water:** Grant recipients may propose to reimburse vendors for household water delivery (e.g. truck delivery services) in very limited circumstances in which this is the only

method for receiving safe drinking water (e.g. circumstances with lead contamination in existing water systems) in communities within their jurisdictions

- Water Cisterns: Grant recipients may pay a vendor to fill water cisterns for households that rely on such containers for their supply of water.
- Septic Tank Pumping: Grant recipients may define wastewater treatment works to include septic services offered through contract as a service to a community of income-eligible households, provided that payments are made by the grant recipient directly to a vendor based on a LIHWAP vendor agreement for wastewater removal. For example, in some rural and tribal communities, the local government contracts with a local company to offer periodic septic wastewater removal to the community. In these circumstances, the grant recipient may define water treatment works to include that provider and use LIHWAP funds to reimburse for household services in lieu of a household payment.

Grant recipients that wish to incorporate these flexibilities into their LIHWAP must include them in sections 1.1 and 1.2 of the Implementation Plan. Contact your [program specialist](#) if you are interested in modifying your plan.

LIHWAP funds may not be used to pay for other utility bills, such as garbage, or infrastructure repairs, such as mending a leaky pipe. OCS encourages grant recipients to braid and blend other funding sources to assist households with these needs. For example, CSBG funds can be used to pay for minor plumbing repairs. Read [LIHWAP DCL 2021-15](#) for more information about federal funding sources that can be used in combination with LIHWAP.

### Beneficiary Eligibility

Each grant recipient sets eligibility criteria for households. The income cutoff can be 150% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL), 60% of State Median Income (SMI), or a hybrid mix of the two. All grant recipients are also using some form of categorical eligibility. This means that if a household has already been determined to meet income eligibility requirements of another means-tested program, they are considered to have passed the LIHWAP income eligibility test. The allowable programs for categorical eligibility in LIHWAP are:

- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Means-tested Veterans Programs (payments under section 415, 521, 541, or 542 of title 38, United States Code, or under section 306 of the Veterans' and Survivors' Pension Improvement Act of 1978)

For more information on categorical eligibility, read [LIHWAP IM 2021-04](#).

## Communications from OCS

### Your Federal Contact

Each LIHWAP grant recipient has a designated Program Specialist to assist you with implementation, training and technical assistance, and more. You can find your assigned Program Specialist [here](#). If you do not know what region you are in, go [here](#) (states and territories) or [here](#) (tribes).

Tip: Take a moment to call or email your program specialist. They will appreciate the introduction and will make sure to add you to emails and meetings going forward.

### Program Notifications

OCS issues three forms of notifications to grant recipients.

1. [Action Transmittals \(AT\)](#) – ATs communicate actions that LIHWAP grant recipients need to take concerning the program.
2. [Dear Colleague Letters \(DCL\)](#) – DCLs provide notices of announcements and events related to the program.
3. [Information Memoranda \(IM\)](#) – IMs provide official guidance to assist grant recipients in administering the program.

All ATs, DCLs, and IMs are posted and retained on the [LIHWAP website](#). Grant recipients will receive an email when a new notification is released. The email will be sent via Mailchimp from [LIHWAP@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:LIHWAP@acf.hhs.gov), so be sure to add the address to your email contacts.

### Regional Check-Ins

Program specialists host a regional check-in for grant recipients in their portfolio once per quarter. These meetings occur via Zoom or Microsoft Teams and are an opportunity for grant recipients to share updates on their program and learn from each other.

You will receive a calendar invitation from your program specialist for the meeting at least two weeks ahead of time. Check-ins occur in February, May, August, and November of each year.

### Webinars and Office Hours

OCS will occasionally host webinars on various aspects of operating LIHWAP. OCS also offers office hours where grant recipients can come with specific questions on a given topic. You will receive email invitations to all webinars and office hours. If there is a specific topic you would like covered in one of these events, email your program specialist.

## Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients are required to submit quarterly reports, annual reports, and Federal Financial Reports (FFR).

### Quarterly Reports

The purpose of collecting the quarterly reports is to obtain benefit data from all grant recipients as the program is implemented and executed in near real-time. This data will be used by OCS to analyze how grant recipients have chosen to implement LIHWAP and address the water affordability needs of low-income households.

Quarterly reports are submitted as an Excel file. Grant recipients should email their quarterly report to [LIHWAPreports@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:LIHWAPreports@acf.hhs.gov). Please copy your program specialist on the email submission.

More information about quarterly reports is in [LIHWAP DCL 2022-01](#) and [LIHWAP DCL 2022-08](#). There you can find instructions for [FY2022](#) and [FY2023](#) and the report forms for [FY2022](#) and [FY2023](#).

There are two recorded webinars that provide information on the reporting requirements.

- [Recorded Presentation from the LIHWAP Data Report Webinar Held December 7, 2021](#)
- [LIHWAP Quarterly Report Update – Quarter 3](#)

### Annual Reports

The purpose of collecting the annual reports is to learn more about the implementation of LIHWAP with regard to use of funds, household characteristics, and performance measures.

Annual reports are submitted as an Excel file. Grant recipients should email their annual report to [LIHWAPreports@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:LIHWAPreports@acf.hhs.gov). Please copy your program specialist on the email submission.

OCS will host a webinar in December 2022 to introduce and explain the LIHWAP Annual Report. Following the webinar, OCS will host office hours in December 2022 and January 2023 for grant recipients to receive additional training and technical assistance on the annual report. The webinar will be recorded and post on the OCS website.

More information about annual reports is in [LIHWAP DCL 2022-01](#) and [LIHWAP DCL 2022-08](#). There you can find [instructions](#) and the [report form](#).

### Federal Financial Reports

Per [LIHWAP Terms and Conditions](#), the OMB approved Financial Reporting form for this program is the [SF-425 Federal Financial Report](#). Grant recipients must use this form to track and report on LIHWAP funds annually.

The LIHWAP FFR must be submitted via the [Payment Management System](#) (PMS). The FFR Grantee User Guide is available in PMS only after logging in. Additional information on how to access the FFR User Guide within PMS can be found at [PMS User Guide-FFR](#).

More information on the FFR is in [LIHWAP AT-2022-02](#).



## Reporting Schedule

<b>Report</b>	<b>Time Period Covered</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
FY 2022 Quarter 1 Report	October 1, 2021 — December 31, 2021	January 31, 2022
FY 2021 FFR	Project Start Date – September 30, 2021	February 20, 2022
FY 2022 Quarter 2 Report	January 1, 2022 — March 31, 2022	April 29, 2022
FY 2022 Quarter 3 Report	April 1, 2022 — June 30, 2022	July 29, 2022
FY 2022 Quarter 4 Report	July 1, 2022 — September 30, 2022	October 31, 2022
FY 2022 FFR	October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022	December 30, 2022
FY 2023 Quarter 1 Report	October 1, 2022 — December 31, 2022	January 31, 2023
FY 2022 Annual Report	Project Start Date – September 30, 2022	January 31, 2023
FY 2023 Quarter 2 Report	January 1, 2023 — March 31, 2023	April 28, 2023
FY 2023 Quarter 3 Report	April 1, 2023 — June 30, 2023	July 31, 2023
FY 2023 Quarter 4 Report	July 1, 2023 — September 30, 2023	October 31, 2023
FY 2023 FFR	October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023	December 29, 2023
FY 2023 Annual Report	October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023	January 31, 2024

## Training Resources

OCS has published many [training resources](#) on the LIHWAP website. The resources cover various aspects of program implementation and are described in more detail below.

### Intake and Benefits

Intake of potential LIHWAP clients and benefit determination are two critical program components. OCS has released several resources on identifying potential applicants, creating a LIHWAP application, methods to expedite intake, income verification, and benefit matrices. Grant recipients have many flexibilities in this part of program operation, so OCS's resources should be adapted to fit your state, tribe, or territory's needs.

Quick Links to Resources:

- [LIHWAP IM 2021-01 Benefit Policy and Matrix Resources](#)
- [Intake and Benefits Toolkit](#)
- [LIHWAP IM 2021-04 Categorical Eligibility](#)
- [Recorded Webinar on Intake and Eligibility](#)
- [Recorded Webinar on Benefit Determination and Notification](#)
- [LIHWAP IM 2022-01 Sample Household Application](#)

### Vendor Agreements

LIHWAP benefits must be paid directly to water service providers, so relationships with these vendors are essential for program success. OCS strongly encourages grant recipients to enter into agreements with vendors to clearly define roles, set expectations, establish provisions for circumstantial changes, and fulfill federal requirements for consumer protection. Consumer protection requirements are in 11h of the [Supplemental Terms and Conditions](#). The resources below provide sample vendor agreements and outreach materials for encouraging water service providers to participate in LIHWAP.

Quick Links to Resources:

- [LIHWAP IM 2021-02 Vendor Agreement](#)
- [Sample Vendor Agreement](#)
- [LIHWAP DCL 2023-02 LIHWAP Implementation Without Written Agreements Webinar](#)
- [Water Service Providers 2022 Fact Sheet](#)
- [LIHWAP Introduction for Water Service Providers \(English, Spanish, Traditional Chinese\)](#)
- [Recorded National Water Service Providers Meeting – May 19, 2022](#)

### Renters

Grant recipients must establish procedures to treat homeowners and renters equitably. There are many different scenarios and processes that can be implemented to serve households who rent their units, including households whose water is included in their rental payment. In many cases, this may require the local benefit administering agency to work with landlords and/or the landlord's water service provider. The resources below provide information on the renter scenarios you may encounter and a sample landlord agreement.

Quick Links to Resources:

- [LIHWAP IM 2021-05 Renter Household](#)
- [Renters Resource Guide](#)
- [Sample Landlord Agreement](#)

## Outreach

Outreach to potential applicants and water service providers is an ongoing part of LIHWAP implementation. OCS has created videos, one-pagers, and social media images to assist in grant recipient efforts to inform more people about the program.

- [Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [LIHWAP DCL 2022-18 Outreach Resources](#)
- [What's In Your Water Bill? One-Pager](#)
- [Water Conservation One-Pager](#)
- LIHWAP Introduction for Households ([English](#), [Spanish](#), [Traditional Chinese](#))
- LIHWAP Introduction for Water Service Providers ([English](#), [Spanish](#), [Traditional Chinese](#))
- [Waterhelp.info](#) Household Landing Page and Search Tool

## Roadmap to Program Implementation

If you have not fully implemented your LIHWAP, the steps below outline how you can get from planning to full implementation. OCS recommends aligning LIHWAP and LIHEAP as much as possible.

1. Review OCS Policies
  - a. Read the [authorizing language](#)
  - b. Familiarize yourself with the [ACF Terms and Conditions](#) and the [LIHWAP Supplemental Terms and Conditions](#)
  - c. Read the [three FAQ documents](#) on LIHWAP
  - d. Meet with your [program specialist](#) to go over outstanding questions
2. Develop Program Policies and Processes and Obtain Necessary Approvals
  - a. Establish a budget
  - b. Create [eligibility criteria](#)
  - c. Develop a [vendor agreement](#)
  - d. Create an [application](#)
  - e. Establish processes for working with [renters](#)
  - f. Develop an [intake process](#)
  - g. Create a [benefit matrix](#)
  - h. Add LIHWAP to your data systems and review [reporting requirements](#) to ensure all required information is collected
  - i. Follow internal approval procedures for finalizing policies
3. Build Partnerships
  - a. Determine local service provider networks, such as Community Action Agencies
  - b. Conduct outreach to water service providers
  - c. Identify other community partners, such as water boards and associations
4. Train Program Staff
5. Begin Accepting Applications
6. Advertise the Program
  - a. Post flyers in the appropriate offices
  - b. Add information about LIHWAP to the department website
  - c. Post about LIHWAP on social media. Utilize the [OCS Social Media Toolkit](#)
  - d. Include information about LIHWAP in regularly circulated newsletters