



Mason PUD 3 Policy & Procedures

Policy Name: Low-Income Energy Assistance Grant Program		
Effective Date: October 1, 2022		Policy No. ADM/CETA-ea/b
Approved By: Resolution 1784 Policy Approved by Manager	Compliance: RCW 19.405.120 CETA	Responsible Party: Power Manager
Department(s): Power Supply/Customer Service/Conservation/ Accounting		Suggested Review: Annually

POLICY:

The Board of Commissioners of Mason PUD 3 wish to implement a program for low-income customers in compliance with the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA) legislation (RCW 19.405.120).

PURPOSE:

The Washington State Legislature passed CETA (E2SSB 5116, 2019, RCW 19.405) which includes a section (section 120) requiring utilities to make programs and funding available for energy assistance to CETA-defined low-income households with a priority to those customers with a high energy burden. This new program is in addition to and separate from the Mason PUD 3’s existing low-income programs.

Under the CETA legislation, the goal of this program is to:

- Make energy assistance funds available to low-income households.
- Give priority to low-income households with a high energy burden.
- Biennially, assess programs and mechanisms used to reduce energy burden, assess the effectiveness of those programs and mechanisms and, subsequently, plan to improve the effectiveness.
- Conduct and document outreach strategies used to encourage participation.
- Reach 60% of the current energy assistance need by 2030 and 90% by 2050.

PROCEDURES:

1.0 ENERGY ASSISTANCE GRANT

Customers who apply for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Grant and meet the eligibility and verification requirements will be issued a one-time credit to their Mason PUD 3 electric bill.

1.1 Application Required

All interested applicants must apply, be determined eligible under the criteria in Section 2 of this policy, and successfully complete the verification requirements in Section 3 of this policy to receive the grant. Customers are only eligible for one Low-Income Energy Assistance Grant within a 12-month period.

1.2 Grant Amount

Applicants who meet the eligibility and verification requirements will receive a one-time grant in the amount of \$325 which will be applied to the recipient’s Mason PUD 3 electric bill.

1.3 Recipients Must Re-Apply Annually

Grants are not automatically renewed. Customers must re-apply annually to verify eligibility under current program requirements and criteria to receive future grants.

1.4 Closed Accounts

If a recipient closes their Mason PUD 3 account within twelve (12) months of receiving a grant from this program and does not re-open a new account and the final balance of the closed account is a credit, then any balance (up to the amount of grant received) will be credited back to the grant fund for future PUD 3 grant recipients.

1.5 Combined Benefit with Other Low-Income Programs

Grant recipients of this program grant **MAY NOT** receive assistance from these Mason PUD 3 assistance programs in addition to the grant and will be required to choose the assistance program (*if eligible*) that better meets their needs:

- Low-Income Senior Discount
- Low-Income Disabled Discount

1.6 Limited Funds

It may not be possible to assist **ALL** households who may be eligible for assistance under this program as the funds will be budget-driven.

2.0 HOUSEHOLD ELIGIBILITY

Once a customer has applied for the grant, a PUD employee or representative will verify eligibility using the following criteria.

2.1 Screening Criteria

Households must meet all the initial screening criteria:

- The TOTAL household income from all people living at the service address may not exceed the higher of 200% of Federal Poverty Level or 80% of Mason County's Area Median Income, both adjusted for household size.
- Energy Burden at or above six percent (6%).
- Have an active Mason PUD 3 account in the applicant's name.
- Be a permanent, year-round resident in Mason PUD 3's service territory as opposed to a seasonal, part-time or vacation resident.

3.0 VERIFICATION

Mason PUD 3 may process applications internally using in-house staff or it may use an outside partner such as the Community Action Council to ensure applications meet the criteria of the program.

3.1 Income Verification

Mason PUD 3 will require documentation from all people living at the service address to prove the applicant meets the income-level requirement identified in Section 2.1.

3.1 High Energy Burden Verification

The CETA definition of high energy burden means the share of annual household income used to pay annual home energy bills is at or above six percent (6%). Applicants will be able to demonstrate this by providing copies of their Mason PUD 3 bills, natural gas or propane bills, receipts for firewood, heating oil or kerosene purchased, or any other allowable home energy bills.

4.0 BENEFITS TO LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Those customers that receive the Low-Income Energy Assistance Grant get a direct monetary benefit that will go toward their annual home energy costs.

Mason PUD 3 will endeavor to ensure that the following customer accounts will receive the benefit of not having to fund this new grant program for a 12-month period:

- those that are actively enrolled in Mason PUD 3's Low-Income Senior Discount or Low-Income Disabled Discount;
- those that have received funds from any of the following low-income energy assistance programs: 1) Mason PUD 3's Low-Income Energy Assistance Grant, 2) Mason PUD 3's Project Share, or 3) federal LIHEAP administered through the Community Action Council.
- those that have been identified by the Mason PUD 3 as in a highly impacted community.