



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:
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Agenda Item Number: 4

Agenda Date: August 12, 2022

In Control: Economic and Workforce Development Committee Meeting

DEPARTMENT: Economic Development Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Brenda Hicks-Sorensen

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Small business utility assistance programs

SUMMARY:

The Economic Development Department, along with representatives from CPS Energy and San Antonio Water System (SAWS), will provide a briefing on utility assistance programs available to assist small business customers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On June 23, 2022, City Council approved the \$30.95 million ARPA Small Business Implementation Plan to support recovery and long-term resiliency of small businesses. The Plan includes short-term relief through \$17 million for the COVID Impact Grants program to small businesses hardest hit by the pandemic. As part of additional support for impacted small businesses, City Council requested that staff brief the Economic and Workforce Committee (EWDC) on small business utility assistance programs.

In March 2020, CPS Energy and SAWS suspended service disconnections for delinquent customer accounts in response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the summer of 2021, both utility companies announced plans to resume service disconnections in the fall, as well as the intention to assist customers who have past-due accounts. In October 2021, CPS Energy and SAWS resumed service disconnections with a brief pause during December 2021 for the holidays. Service disconnections resumed in January 2022.

ISSUE:

This presentation will include information about small business payment plan options for CPS Energy and SAWS utilities, and communication efforts to small business owners about the options through the COVID Impact Grants Program.

CPS Energy's Energy2Business (E2B) Team is a hands-on, mobile group committed to serving small and medium-size business customers. Payment plan options are developed based on customer need. After an initial payment of obtaining fifty (50) percent of amount owed, small business customers can establish a payment plan of up to forty-eight (48) months for the remaining balance. CPS Energy hosts quarterly community fairs for small businesses to access resources such as loan and grant assistance, and information from local non-profit organizations.

SAWS offers three (3), six (6) and nine (9) month payment plan options but could accommodate up to eighteen (18) months or more, if needed. The initial payment required to begin a payment plan is dependent on customer history.

Both CPS Energy and SAWS work directly with small business customers to develop payment plan options that work best for customer needs. CPS has more than 60,000 small businesses in its directory and has mailed and emailed COVID Impact Grant information to those businesses. SAWS added COVID Impact Grant information to their website and has customer service representatives inform customers of the opportunity when they call in for general assistance.

Information about CPS Energy and SAWS repayment options is being provided on the COVID Impact Grants website, through emails sent to grant applicants, and through business development organization partner outreach. Federal guidelines allow for the use of grants funds to pay utility bills either in arrears, current or future, inclusive of dates between March 3, 2020 and December 31, 2024.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.