

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Investigation into the Establishment of)
Reduced Rates for Low-Income) Case No. 20-0203-INV
Residential Ratepayers of Vermont)
Electric Utilities)

TOWN OF STOWE ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT INFORMATION REQUEST RESPONSE

On February 3, 2023, the Vermont Public Utility Commission (“PUC”) requested the distribution utilities provide by March 3, 2023 information on how they plan to apply the grant funds awarded through the Affordable Community Renewable Energy (“ACRE”) Program. The PUC asked the following questions, which the Town of Stowe Electric Department (‘SED’) respectfully now provides responses.

Q1: How many low-income customers each utility aims to enroll in its ACRE Program?

A1: SED intends to enroll up to 167 income-qualifying customer accounts in the program.

Q2: The amount of bill assistance each participating low-income customer will likely receive?

A2: SED expects each enrolled income-qualifying customer to receive a \$20 per month or \$240 benefit per year for the duration of the program. This will equal \$1,200 bill savings for participants enrolled for the duration of the program.

If SED does not reach the target enrollment in the first year, then SED will adjust the monthly benefit to allow for an increased savings benefit per enrolled account. As an example, 84 qualifying customers would receive a \$40 per month or \$480 per year benefit for the duration of the program.

Q3: The length of time each utility anticipates they will be able to provide this bill assistance before the funds run out?

A3: Stowe Electric anticipates the ACRE program to run 60 months.

A4: How each utility plans to make low-income customers aware of its ACRE Program and then enroll eligible customers?

Q4: SED will work directly with Capstone Community Action to identify income-eligible customers and to encourage the individuals to enroll in the program. SED will also work directly with landlords that have renters receiving income-eligible housing vouchers and/or subsidized housing with heat included in the rent.

SED has also communicated directly with community action groups, like area religious organizations and Lamoille County Planning Commission, about outreach efforts to identify eligible participants. SED will continue to work with trusted partners to communicate about this program and encourage potential participants to apply to the program.

SED will continue to communicate about this program through website and social media updates, on-bill messages and bill inserts, and direct communication to those individuals looking for additional assistance paying their electric bills.

Q5: The Commission is also interested in learning what, if anything, utilities are planning to do to take advantage of provisions in the federal Inflation Reduction Act that may be used to benefit low-income customers?

A5: SED will continue to communicate with our customers regarding opportunities available under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). SED, like the other distribution utilities in Vermont, participate in regional and national conferences and workshops to help us identify how to maximize the available benefits under the IRA to the utilities and our customers.

Q6: Utility plans to create a program to provide low-income customers with bill assistance that is outside the ACRE Program or Inflation Reduction Act?

A6: SED has a community renewable program under development that will become a long-term income-qualifying energy assistance program. This project will serve as part of the generation resource for the ACRE Program and will continue to serve SED's income-qualifying customers after the 60-months of the ACRE Program term concludes.

SED looked to Burlington Electric Department's Energy Assistance Pilot Rate, Case No. 22A-2177, for guidance and program development for this program. Under SED's community renewable program, income qualifying customers will be eligible for a 12.5% - 25% on bill credit. SED will seek to enroll up to 715 income-eligible customers. SED will prioritize our most vulnerable customers first, those living at less than or equal to 185% of the federal poverty level, then open the program to seniors on fixed incomes and those living at less than or equal to 80% of the federal poverty level.

Dated at Stowe, Vermont, this 3rd day of March 2023.

Respectfully,

_____/s/_____
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