

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP)

2027-2028 Draft Plan • Laguna Community Presentation

Pueblo of Laguna Utility Authority (POLUA)



Purpose: Share the proposed plan, explain how LIHEAP works, and receive community input before the September 1, 2026 submission deadline.

What is LIHEAP?

A federal energy-assistance program for eligible low-income households.

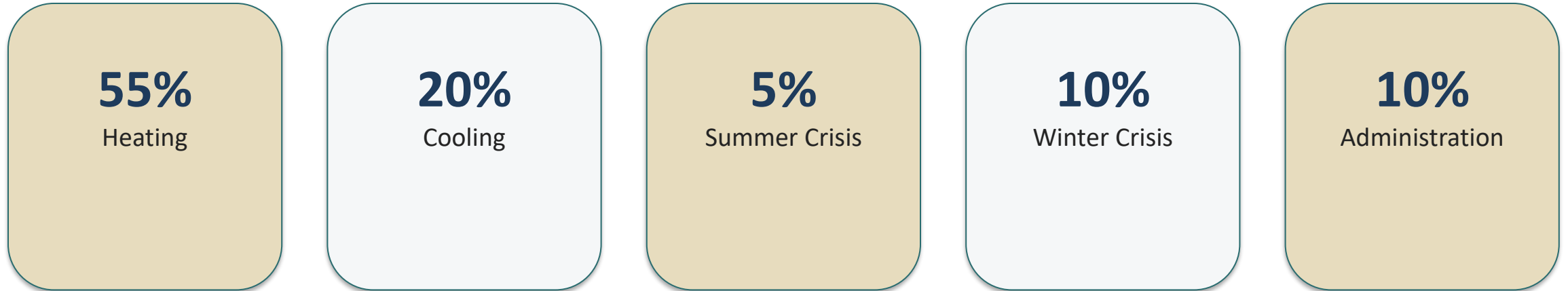
POLUA administers LIHEAP for the Pueblo of Laguna.

Assistance may help with heating, cooling, and qualifying energy crisis needs.

The 2027-2028 plan determines how POLUA proposes to operate the program and distribute available LIHEAP funds.

2027-2028 Program Structure

Confirmed funding percentages for the 2027-2028 plan.



Confirmed Operating Dates: Heating & Heating Crisis: 10/1/2026–3/31/2027 | Cooling & Summer Crisis: 4/1/2027–9/30/2027

Who May Qualify?

Eligibility threshold: up to 150% of the HHS Poverty Guidelines for heating, cooling, and crisis assistance.

Benefit calculations consider income, household size, home energy cost/need, fuel type, energy burden, and energy need.

Priority is given to Older Adults age 60+, individuals with disabilities, and households with young children.

Applicants must provide documentation needed to verify household eligibility and the energy account/need.

Countable Income: Net income will be used to determine eligibility. Counted income includes wages, SSA benefits, and SSI.

2027-2028 Benefit Levels

Benefit matrix and maximum benefit levels will remain the same as the prior-year plan.

Heating

\$70 min
\$700 max

Cooling

\$70 min
\$595 max

Winter Crisis

Up to
\$900

Summer Crisis

Up to
\$595

Crisis Assistance

Crisis definition: disconnection of services and/or no heating source, with supporting documentation.

Life-threatening crisis: a household member needs energy service because of a medical condition and has no other means of obtaining service.

When a crisis application is received, POLUA has 18 hours to respond.

For applicants unable to bring documents to POLUA, staff may arrange a home visit to obtain the application and supporting documents.

Energy Company Notice: POLUA provides a letter notifying the energy provider that a crisis application has been received and an award is being processed. The notice requests that service remain connected and helps prevent disconnection while assistance is processed.

How Assistance is Processed & Paid

POLUA reviews the application and supporting documentation.

Approved households receive written notice of the award amount; ineligible households receive written notice of the determination.

Benefit payments are generally made directly to the home energy supplier on the household's behalf.

POLUA uses designated general ledger accounts, monthly reconciliation, and separation of duties to track awards, vendor payments, and federal drawdowns.

Outreach & Coordination

Outreach includes flyers/posters, media announcements, vendor bill inserts, prior-recipient mailings, web posting, email, events, and social media.

POLUA coordinates referrals with Pueblo of Laguna benefit programs, the State of New Mexico LIHEAP Program, and other Pueblo departments.

Goal: make sure eligible households know assistance is available and can be referred to the appropriate resource.

Applicant Rights & Program Accountability

Applicants denied assistance or not acted upon timely have access to POLUA's fair-hearing process described in the POLUA tariffs.

POLUA's prior-year plan reported zero fair hearings in the preceding federal fiscal year.

Fiscal controls include designated accounts, monthly reconciliations, and a three-step verification process.

Program-integrity controls include identity/document verification, vendor verification, separation of duties, payment review, and coordination to avoid duplicate assistance.

Community Input is Part of the Plan

Tribal LIHEAP plans must provide timely and meaningful public participation.

The plan identifies Tribal Council, Village Council members, applicants, and the people served as important sources of feedback.

Community comments can help POLUA identify needed changes before the plan is finalized and submitted.

Next Steps Before September 1, 2026

Receive and document community comments.

Use the confirmed 2027-2028 program dates and components.

Update the applicable HHS income guidelines; retain the existing heating/cooling benefit matrices.

Retain the confirmed funding percentages and maximum benefit levels.

Review crisis procedures, outreach, fair-hearing language, fiscal controls, and program-integrity responses.

Incorporate approved changes and submit the final LIHEAP Model Plan.

Thank you. Community questions and comments are welcome.