

# Meaningful Public Participation

Division of Energy Assistance  
Office of Community Services  
Administration for Children & Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

# Public Participation

- What is Public Participation?
  - It is a process that:
    - Directly engages the public in decision-making.
    - Gives full consideration to public input.
- What are the benefits of Public Participation?
  - Citizens are enabled to provide informed and timely input and influence decisions that affect the LIHEAP program.
  - Grantees will make better decisions.
  - Decisions will:
    - Be more easily implementable.
    - Reflect public interests and values.
    - Be better understood by the public.

# Agenda

- Overview
- Small Group Discussions: Meaningful Public Participation Techniques
- Meaningful Public Comment by a Tribal Grantee
  - Dustin Davis – Shoshone-Bannock Tribe
- Meaningful Public Participation LIHEAP Model Plan
  - Bill Freeman - Maryland
- Conclusion



# Overview

This section provides an overview of the need for public participation.

# Statutes

- LIHEAP Statute Section 2605(a)(2) states:

...no funds shall be allotted to such State for any fiscal year under this title unless such **State conduct[s] public hearings** with respect to the proposed use and distribution of funds to be provided under this title for such fiscal year.

- Block Grant Regulations at 45 CFR 96.48(d) states:

*Public Hearings not Required for Tribes ...* **An Indian tribe or tribal organization is not required to comply with section 2605(a)(2) of the Act ...**



# Group Discussion: Meaningful Public Participation Techniques

This section provides an opportunity to share ideas for increasing public participation.

# Group Discussion

- How do you identify and involve outside stakeholders in LIHEAP Program Planning?
- How do you ensure participation in program planning by the general public and the LIHEAP recipients?
- How do you ensure the local agency staff takes part in the program planning process?
- What else can be done to facilitate the planning and public participation process?
- How much lead time do you need to give to the public for participation?



# Meaningful Public Comment by a Tribal Grantee

Dustin Davis

*Member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe*

*Manager of the Consumer Service Program: 477*

*Human Service Program*



# Preparing for Public Input

- Before getting public input, know what your program does
- Good to have a base set of policy and procedures in place before going out into a public setting
  - Questions will be asked
  - Be transparent in what you do
  - Goal is to be accessible and to help people
  - Have policies to increase your chance of getting a response from the community

# How Did I Start Developing the Public Input Survey?

- Community needed to know about LIHEAP
- Highly recommended during the 2015 OCS review team visit
- Learned that it was helpful to have public input

# What Was I Seeking in the Public Survey?

- Surveys were done in the past, but did not serve to see what the public wanted from LIHEAP
- New survey would serve two purposes:
  - Provide information about what LIHEAP can do
  - Ask what they would like to see in the program
- Public needs to provide good input of what is needed
  - Clients are not always knowledgeable about the LIHEAP program
  - This is very helpful information

# Places Where We Had the Surveys

- Did not have much time to get the survey out before the next annual plan was due
- Went out to 5 local districts: Gibson, Lincoln Creek, Fort Hall, Ross Fork, and Bannock Creek
  - Held monthly meeting with the general membership living in the area
  - Included a council member representative to hear the concerns of the people
  - Able to find the most vocal of general membership
    - Important to have policies in place and also to be as transparent as possible

# Changes Made Because of Public Input

- Increase in the benefit amount to the most vulnerable populations
- Flexibility in crisis assistance
- Because of these changes, they have been well-received by the public

# Why We Need Public Input

- Even though not required by tribal programs, it is strongly recommended
- Helpful in cases where we might not notice something that the general public may view as common knowledge
- Can double as an assessment of how well you are serving the community
  - What things can be improved upon from public comment?
- Able to hear from the most vocal members of the community about what can be improved

# Future Plans For Public Input

- Goal this year is to have a bigger public input to see what the community would like to see with LIHEAP
- Plan to visit places that would have the most community members located in one spot at one time
- Want to host more weatherization classes for the community to gather more input on what they see is needed
- Will incentivize opinions with prizes that are related to weatherization and home improvement

# Contact

Dustin Davis

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# COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION



# Meaningful Public Participation LIHEAP Model Plan

Bill Freeman

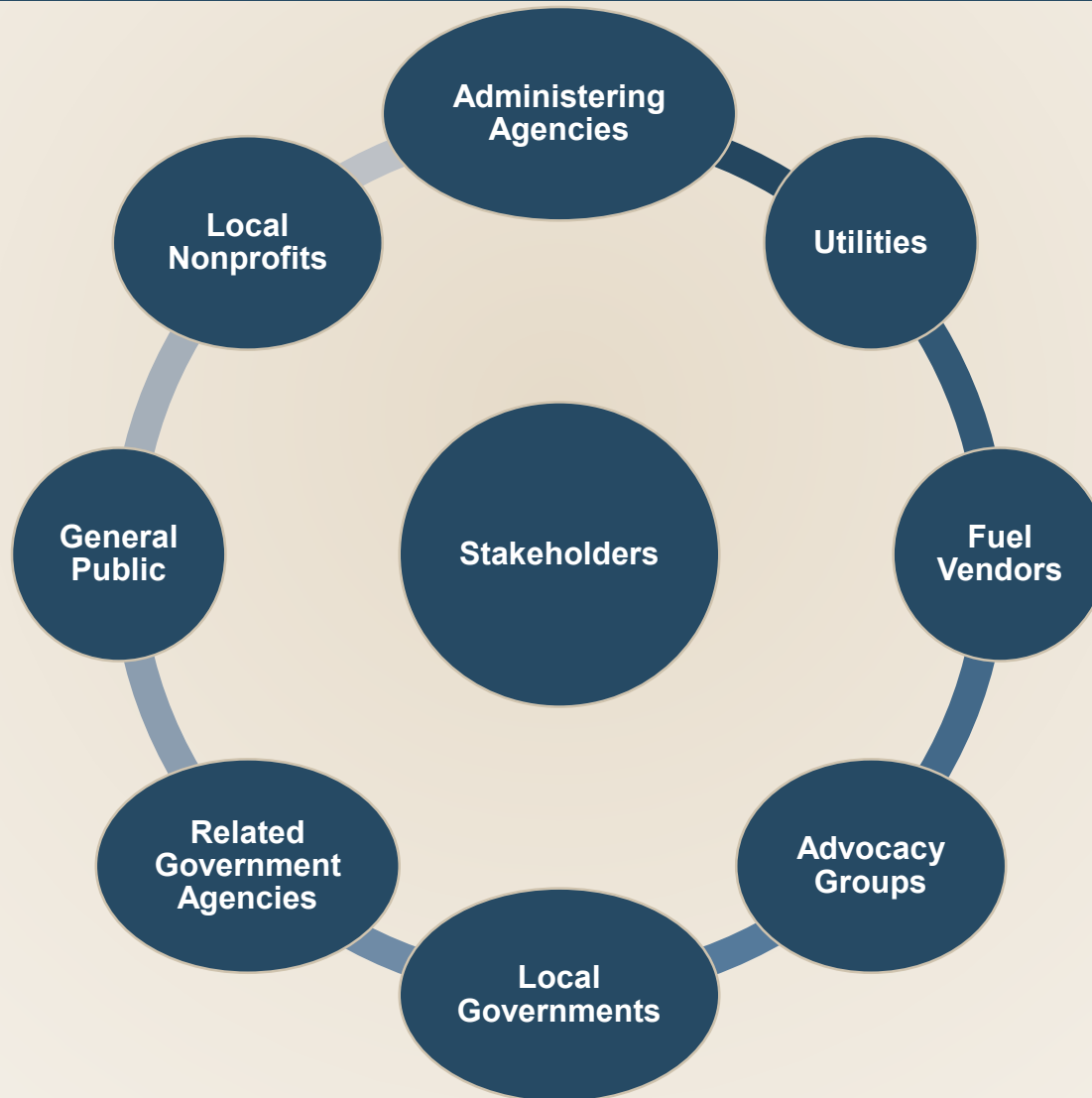
*Director, Office of Home Energy Programs*

*Maryland Department of Human Resources*

# Do Not Fear Public Participation



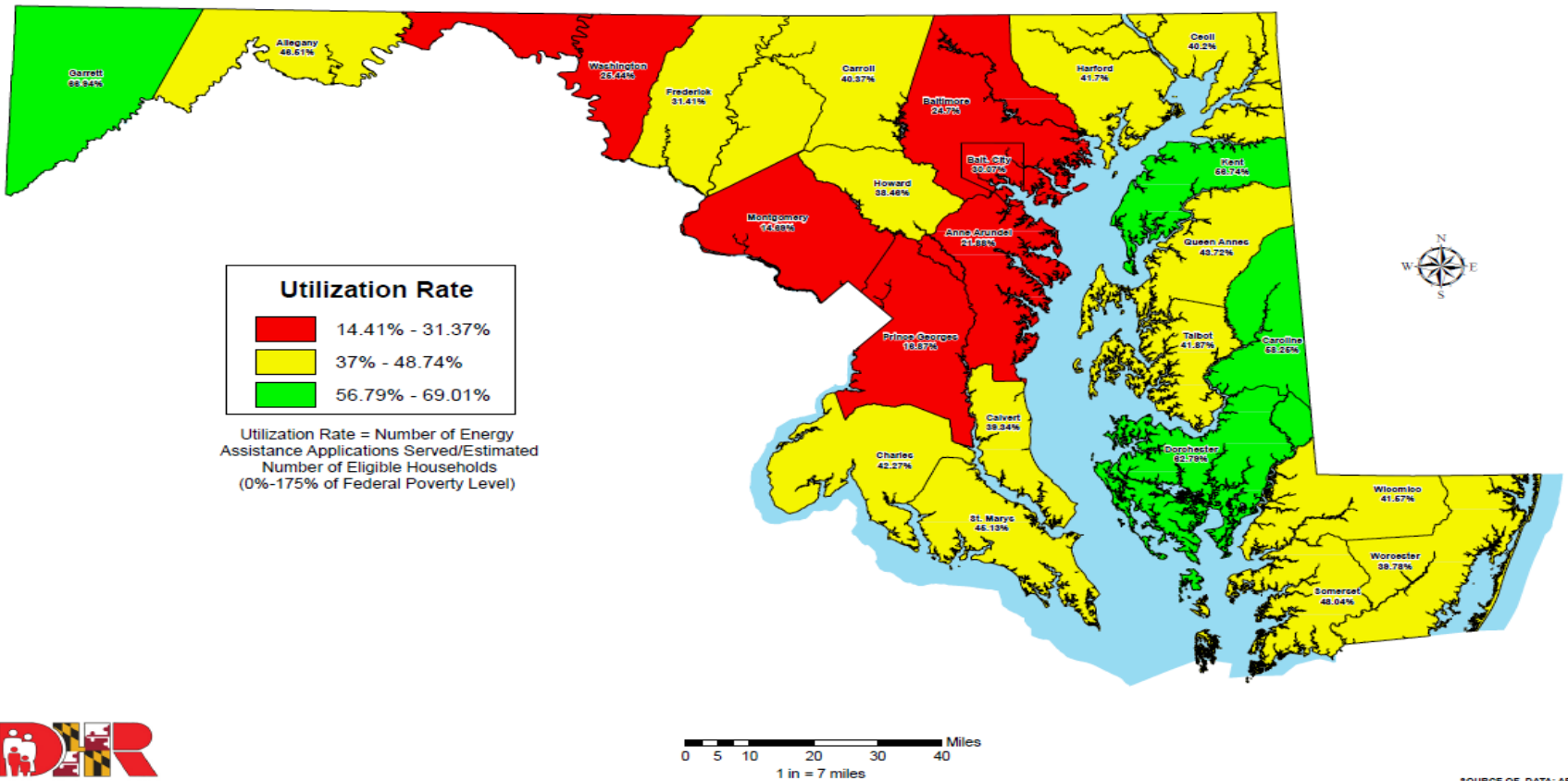
# Cast a Wide Net





# Spread the Word in the Right Places

Office of Home Energy Programs Utilization Rates in Maryland Counties



# Do Not Forget the Boring Stuff

## DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

**Subject:** Public Hearing

**Date and Time:** September 1, 2016, 10  
a.m. — 5 p.m.

**Place:** Howard Co. Gateway Bldg., 6751  
Columbia Gateway Dr., Ste. 226,  
Columbia, MD

**Add'l. Info:** A public hearing will be held to solicit comments for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) State Plan that will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services, Division of Energy Assistance. Written comments regarding the Plan must be submitted no later than 4 p.m., September 9, 2016, to Matthew Lyons, Director, Office of Home Energy Programs, Department of Human Resources, Office of Home Energy Programs, 311 W. Saratoga Street, Room 239, Baltimore MD 21201.

**Contact:** Cherie Lanier (410) 767-7218

[16-17-25]

# Make the Presentation Interesting and Seek Genuine Stakeholder Input



# Contact

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# COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION



# Conclusion

This section summarizes key points from the session.

# Summary

- Public Participation is required by LIHEAP statute.
- Start by understanding the program.
- Look for multiple venues for participation.
- Make use of technology.

# Questions?

