

Operation Fuel: *How Our Programs Evolve with the Times*

OUR MISSION

Operation Fuel ensures equitable access to energy for all by providing year-round energy and utility assistance, promoting energy independence, and advocating for affordable energy.

Presented by Gannon Long, Chief Program Officer. Gannon@Operationfuel.org



2023-24 Energy Assistance Programs

Eligibility Guidelines:

- Clients earn 75% State Median Income (SMI) and below
- Clients may apply for 1 grant per year, up to \$500, to pay electricity, gas, or delivered fuel bill.
- Energy applicants may also qualify for water assistance in the same year.
- We do not provide bill credits or pay down past debt – we focus on helping struggling families meet urgent needs, as quickly as possible.

Where we are today: fast growing demand.

- Summer/Fall season was previously almost 6 months long. This year, we ran from 8/1/23 through 10/6/23 – our shortest season yet.
- 2023 season experienced roughly same level of demand as 2022, but in half the time.
- 2022 demand was roughly twice 2021.
- Winter season expected to open 1/2/24.
- Winter demand is generally twice summer demand.



Better Homes & Buildings Program, 2022 - Today

- Managed by Tenée Mack, Energy Efficiency Programs Manager
tenée@operationfuel.org
- Partnership with Neighborhood Housing Services & I Heart My Home
- NHS refers clients and works with them to maximize energy efficiency and other incentives to pay for home improvement work.
- Goal is to address aging housing in CT, upgrade to be ready for heat pumps – may require remediating mold and other barriers to weatherization, energy efficiency updates to home.
- Provides up to \$25k to eligible clients.
- Served 20 clients in first year.



Better Homes & Buildings: *Coming to Bridgeport, Fall 2023!*

- Operation Fuel will be working with BREP, in Bridgeport, to promote Home Energy Solutions, Income-Eligible (HESI-E) program through Energize CT and BHBP.
- We want to connect with you! If you can help us meet clients and residents who want to reduce their energy burden

Contact:

Britt'ny Bettis-Allen

Community Engagement Project
Manager

75 Charter Oak Avenue
Suite 1-300

Hartford, CT 06106

(P) 860-243-2345 x3316

brittny@operationfuel.org



What's next?

- Continuing to process applications received for energy assistance – team is working hard
- Affordability study to be released next month – be on the lookout @ www.Operationfuel.org
- Presenting at Northeast Summit for a Sustainable Built Environment 11/17 in New Haven (CT Green Building Council)
- Strengthening partnerships with vendors, fuel banks, state agencies, regulators, policy makers, utility partners, advocates
- Support us at www.operationfuel.org/givehelp or Add a Dollar on your bill

Thank you!



Water Assistance, 2017 - Today

Aquarion

- Managed by Eveny Pagan, Energy & Utility Case Manager eveny@operationfuel.org
- Every Aquarion customer can apply for \$50 “prevention” assistance on their bill.

Customer Assistance Program (CAP):

- Income Limits: 75% SMI and below.
- Grant awards: up to \$250/ year.

Low-Income Rate Assistance Program (LIRAP):

- Provides 15% discount on total water bill for eligible Aquarion customers.
- Developed through Aquarion rate case, decided by PURA, but currently under review in CT courts.

MDC

- MDC sends shutoff notices to customers between April and November annually.
- Eligible customers earn up to 75% SMI, can receive one \$500 grant per year.

CT Water

- Eligible clients earn up to 60% SMI, can receive up to \$500 grant.
- Over-income customers may also seek assistance by reaching out to CT Water.
- They are committed to helping their struggling customers regardless of circumstance.



Homelessness Intervention & Prevention Program, 2013 - Today

- Op Fuel CEO Brenda Watson created program in 2013, to address the connection between utility debt and housing insecurity.
- Often clearing a past due utility bill is the last step for a person working to secure housing. Preventing a utility shutoff, may prevent an eviction, keeping families in their homes.
- Provides \$1000 to Op Fuel clients at risk of losing housing due to past due utility bills, or who are prevented from securing housing due to past utility debt.
- Op Fuel works with specific fuel banks that offer case management services for housing insecure residents to determine need and eligibility.
- This program continues to evolve to meet needs.



Low-Income Discount Rate (Electricity): From idea, to debate, to reality

- Operation Fuel commissions regular affordability studies showing how CT families struggle to meet basic needs. 2007 report demonstrated need for affordable rates.
- Operation Fuel, led by former Executive Director Pat Wrice, led the charge for a discounted electricity rate for the lowest income residents.
- In 2020, the CT legislature enabled PURA to create the new rates.
- In 2022, PURA determined the process for implementation.
- Today, Op Fuel works with Eversource Electric and UI to identify customers who qualify for the new Low-Income Discount Rate (LIDR).
- *Rates will be in effect by January 1, 2024.*

