

City, State Programs Available to Help Lower Utility Bills

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Last October, the City of Fort Collins put a new program in place designed to reduce the utility bills of low-income households. This initiative – the Income Qualified Assistance Program (IQAP) - comes at a particularly good time, given the skyrocketing cost of housing in Northern Colorado and the failure of wages to keep up with that and other costs of living.

The City estimates that the IQAP can reduce the average bill for electric, water, and wastewater services by \$32 per month, or \$387 per year. The program is available to households earning up to 165% of the Federal Poverty Level – about \$27,000 per year for a couple, or \$41,000 per year for a family of four.

Together with the State of Colorado’s “Low-Income Energy Assistance Program” (LEAP) and previously existing Fort Collins Utilities programs, the average utility bill can be lowered by a very significant \$87 per month, or \$1,044 per year. This represents annual savings of nearly half of the average total.

An added benefit of these programs is that they include assistance from the City and the State to lower energy use, not just energy costs. Therefore, they will help our community reduce its impact on the environment and achieve its Climate Action Plan goals, along with making life more affordable for relatively low-income residents.

The only problem with the IQAP and LEAP is that qualified people are not automatically enrolled – they must apply for the benefits by April 30th. After that, applications won’t be accepted again until November 1st. If you believe you might qualify, visit this webpage to learn more and to apply for LEAP and the IQAP: <https://www.fcgov.com/utilities/iqap>. If you do qualify, you’ll be glad you made the effort!

Kevin Cross is the convener of the Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG, <http://fcsg.fccan.org>), which is an affiliate of the Fort Collins Community Action Network. The FCSG successfully advocated for passage of the IQAP in the spring of 2018, based on its social and environmental benefits.