FILED
08/11/2026
Executive Secretary G.P.S.C.

Docket # 12897
Document # 227544

COMMISSIONERS:

JASON SHAW, Chairman
LAUREN "BUBBA" McDONALD, Vice-Chairman
PETER HUBBARD
DR. ALICIA M. JOHNSON
TRICIA PRIDEMORE



REECE McALISTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SALLIE TANNER
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 656-4501
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 656-2341
psc.ga.gov

DOCKET NO. 12897

IN RE: UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND ("USF") GRANT PROGRAM TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME SENIOR CITIZENS AND OTHER LOW-INCOME CITIZENS

FINAL ORDER APPROVING HEAT PETITION FOR UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND EMERGENCY HEATING ASSISTANCE YEARS 2027-2029

I. Background

At its Administrative Session on October 2, 2001, the Georgia Public Service Commission ("Commission") created a grant program to assist low-income seniors. The Commission found that such a program was necessary because a large number of low-income senior citizens were having difficulty being able to afford to pay their natural gas bills. The Commission is authorized to use funds from the USF in order to assist low-income residential consumers in times of emergency. O.C.G.A. § 46-4-161(a)(3). The General Assembly left the determination of "emergency" to the Commission's discretion. Id.

II. HEAT Petition

On Thursday, June 25, 2026, Heating Energy Assistance Team, Inc. ("HEAT") filed for Universal Service Fund ("USF") emergency heating assistance for their low-income assistance program. The request was made by HEAT to assist low-income natural gas customers served on Atlanta Gas Light Company's ("AGL") natural gas distribution system. The petition discussed the following:

A. HEAT Background
B. HEAT Scope
C. HEAT Target Outcomes and Objectives
D. HEAT Monthly Reporting
E. HEAT Request for 2027-2029

The HEAT program helps low-income Georgians –seniors, individuals with disabilities, and families with children – by assisting them with utility bills.

A. HEAT Background

According to the petition, HEAT was created by Atlanta Gas Light in 1983 to raise funds for energy assistance. As stated in the petition, HEAT became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1998 following natural gas deregulation. The petition explains that HEAT's mission is to provide energy assistance to low-income Georgians, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and families with small children. As described in the filing, HEAT has two application methods for qualifying and distributing assistance to low-income Georgians, that include low-income natural gas customers on AGL's distribution system. The first application method is HEAT working with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services ("DFCS") to distribute energy assistance funding through the Community Action Agencies ("CCA") that are associated with the Georgia Community Action Association. There are 19 CCA's located across Georgia where low-income natural gas customers can apply for HEAT assistance. The second application method is eligible residents may also contact HEAT directly for help by telephone or email.

In the petition, HEAT states that it plans to introduce a third application method by launching a web-based application system in the third quarter of 2026. The filing states that this online platform will allow applicants to submit requests 24/7 and is intended to reduce access barriers, streamline intake, and improve HEAT's ability to manage increased application volumes.

The petition further states that the Commission initially approved USF emergency low-income assistance funding for HEAT in 2015. Since 2016, HEAT has used these funds to prevent disconnection or restore natural gas service for customers on AGL's system. As reported in the petition, the Commission has approved $2.5 million to date, of which HEAT has disbursed over $2.26 million to assist 8,869 households. The petition states that the last approved disbursement was in 2023. Based on increased activity from 2023 through 2025, the remaining balance of $286,023 as of April 2026 is projected to be exhausted before the end of 2026.

Finally, as stated in the petition, HEAT continues to operate under the Commission-approved Scope, Target Outcomes and Objectives, and Reporting requirements for administering the emergency assistance program.

B. HEAT Scope

According to the petition, the Commission-approved Scope for HEAT's emergency assistance program includes the following requirements:

1. The participant must be a residential AGL natural gas customer served by a marketer.

2. Total gross income must meet the annual poverty income guidelines set forth by Georgia DHS. The participant must have total gross yearly household income at or below 200%.

3. The person submitting the application is a U.S. citizen and must be a resident of the State of Georgia, a resident of the household. The applicant must provide proof that their name is on the bill and reside at the service .

4. The applicant has received a past due bill and/or a disconnection notice or needs service restored (must provide verification). USF funding shall be used to provide assistance in preventing disconnection and/or restoring service.

5. The maximum percentage of administration fees charged is 10% for each individual award to each low-income citizen.

6. The annual USF award to each individual low-income household may be up to, and no more than, $500.00.

C. HEAT Target Outcomes and Objectives

As described in the petition, the Target Outcomes and Objectives of the program include:

1. The low-income citizens receiving USF funding will be able to keep their families and children warm during the winter heating season while maintaining a good relationship with their natural gas marketer.

2. AGL and the marketers will keep natural gas customers on the system that are in danger of leaving the system. This has a direct economic benefit to AGL and the marketers by increasing revenue requirements and cash flow.

3. HEAT aims to provide energy assistance to an estimated 1,750 households annually, serving a total of 5,250 households over the three-year period from 2027 through 2029. This projection is grounded in the steady and measurable program growth in recent years. In 2024, HEAT served 1,004 households, and then increasing to 1,142 households in 2025. Based on current trends and rising demand, HEAT projects serving approximately 1,750 households in 2026. This anticipated growth is further supported by the option of online enrollment 2026 will mark the first time in the organization's history that applicants will be able to apply for assistance through three different methods.

   Program data demonstrates both long-term and recent increases in the average household benefit, underscoring the growing financial burden on extremely low-income households. During the 2016–2020 grant funding period, the average household benefit was $195.95. By 2025, this amount had increased by $132.82, reflecting significant escalation in energy

costs and household need. More recent data show continued upward pressure: in 2024, the average household benefit was $329.35, followed by $328.77 in 2025. For the current year, 2026, the average benefit from January through May is $364.75—an increase of $35.98 per household compared to the prior year average.

Given the current economic challenges facing both our state and the nation as shared by our energy assistance applicants, HEAT anticipates a continued and significant increase in both the number of applicants seeking assistance and the level of support required per household. With the expansion to three application methods—including the launch of a new web-based application platform in 2026—HEAT expects applicant volume to grow at historically significant levels. This enhanced accessibility will allow more extremely vulnerable individuals and families to request assistance at their point of greatest need and underscores the urgency of securing additional emergency funding to effectively meet rising demand.

D. HEAT Monthly Reporting

HEAT will continue to file monthly reporting as approved in the 2015 Joint Petition. HEAT is required to file the previous month's activity by the 15th of the following month. The following are currently required as part of the reporting:

1. Monthly Filing Cover Sheet
2. Attachment I (Quick Summary)
3. Attachment II (Excel Analysis)

E. HEAT Requests for 2027 – 2029

As stated in the petition, HEAT requests the following from the Commission:

1. Approval of **$1.2 million** in USF emergency heating assistance for the 2027–2029 period. By November 1st of the preceding year, HEAT will receive a $400,000 disbursement from the USF. If there are any unused funds during the year, they will automatically rollover to the next year. HEAT can begin using the USF funds upon disbursement.
2. Approval of HEAT's currently authorized Scope, Target Outcomes and Objectives, and Reporting Requirements for continued use unless modified by future Commission Order.

III. Staff Analysis

Several months prior to the filing, the Staff worked with HEAT in examining their current funding to determine a timeline when the funding would be exhausted. Likewise, the Staff reviewed the history of assistance to households to determine a reasonable future need over the

next three-years, 2027 – 2029. The Staff communicated with HEAT on the reasonable amount of assistance it could request and a schedule of USF disbursements. The Staff worked with HEAT on developing a framework for a petition to ensure it documented relevant information as part of their request. When HEAT filed their petition, the Staff analyzed and reviewed the document and the July 22, 2019 Final Order in Docket No. 12897 to ensure the Scope, Target Outcomes and Objectives, and Monthly reporting had now new changes. . The petition filed by HEAT did not request a change to its current Program Scope, Target Outcomes and Objects, or Monthly Reporting. Through the monthly reporting, the Staff has found no material issues impacting the execution of HEAT's program. It is the Staff's opinion that HEAT has been a good steward of the USF funds disbursed.

A. USF Funding and Households Served – Staff Analysis

As of the end of May 2026, the HEAT program had approximately **$252,104** in the bank and $0 encumbered in the USF for low-income household assistance. It is projected that by HEAT, or before, the end of December 2026, the balance in the bank will be reduced to $0. Since 2015,

In **Table-1** below, the total USF funding received by HEAT since its inception is provided, along with their expenditures, and ending balances. Since 2015, HEAT has received $2.5 million from the USF in support of low-income customer assistance. Likewise, since that time, HEAT has spent over $2.3 million in support of low-income customer households. This data is updated as of May 2026. **Chart-1** below shows the historic data for HEAT expenditures over the years.

Table-1: HEAT USF Disbursement, Expenditures, and Balance:

	USF Disbursement	Total Funds Available	Actual Adjusted Expenditures	Ending Annual Balance
Year-1: 2016	$400,000.00	$400,000.00	$226,401.28	$173,598.72
Year-2: 2017	$200,000.00	$373,598.72	$202,986.14	$170,612.58
Year-3: 2018	$200,000.00	$370,612.58	$229,467.01	$141,145.57
Year-4: 2019	$500,000.00	$641,145.57	$219,017.76	$422,127.81
Year-5: 2020	$0.00	$422,127.81	$90,448.62	$331,679.19
Year-6: 2021	$600,000.00	$931,679.19	$69,659.00	$862,020.19
Year-7: 2022	$300,000.00	$1,162,020.19	$135,112.94	$1,026,907.25
Year-8: 2023	$300,000.00	$1,326,907.25	$182,021.66	$1,144,885.60
Year-9: 2024	$0.00	$1,144,885.60	$365,559.43	$815,917.33
Year-10: 2025	$0.00	$815,917.33	$407,394.42	$425,273.22
Year-11: 2026	$0.00	$425,273.22	$175,869.26	$252,104.29
Totals	**$2,500,000.00**		**$2,303,937.51**	**$252,104.29**

Chart-1: HEAT year-over-year Expenditure:



As seen in **Table-2** below, HEAT has served 8,957 households since its inception of the program through May 2026. The USF funding has helped to keep these households on AGL's system. **Chart-2** below shows the historic data for HEAT Household recipients Served over the years.

Table-2: HEAT Households Served:

	Net HH Served	**Cumulative HH Served**
Year-1: 2016	1,326	1,326
Year-2: 2017	974	2,300
Year-3: 2018	1,083	3,383
Year-4: 2019	1,101	4,484
Year-5: 2020	418	4,902
Year-6: 2021	296	5,198
Year-7: 2022	556	5,754
Year-8: 2023	626	6,380
Year-9: 2024	1,004	7,384
Year-10: 2025	1,142	8,526
Year-11: 2026	431	8,957
Totals	**8,957**	

Chart-2: HEAT year-over-year Households Served:



B. Program Scope, Target Outcomes, and Monthly Reporting – Staff Analysis

Staff has reviewed HEAT's proposed Program Scope, Target Outcomes and Objectives, and the Monthly Reporting provided in the petition and found each to be similar to that approved as part of the July 22, 2019 Final Order in Docket No. 12897.

C. HEAT USF Available Funds

The total USF funding received by HEAT is **$2,500,000**, and the total USF funding used ending May 2026, **$2,303,937**. The ending May 2026 balance of available USF funds to serve low-income Georgians for the period of June – December 2026 is **$252,104**. The analysis indicates that HEAT will reach a **$0.00** balance on USF funds available by or before the end of December 2026.

D. USF Unencumbered Funding

Ending July 31, 2026, the USF had an approximately balance of $81.9 million. Regarding the $25 million budget restriction for 2026, there is approximately $13.7 million unencumbered and available. If approved, the available funding will be approximately $12.5 million.

IV. Commission Decision

During the August 4, 2026 Administrative Session, Commissioner Shaw offered a Motion to approve the HEAT Petition. The Commission approved the HEAT petition.

* * * * *

V. Ordering Paragraphs

WHEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED, that the Commission approves the HEAT Petition as requested.

ORDERED FURTHER, that the Commission approves the HEAT's Scope, Target Outcomes and Objectives, and Monthly Reporting.

ORDERED FURTHER, that the Commission approves HEAT's request for 2027 – 2029 funding in the amount of $1,200,000. By November 1st of the preceding year, HEAT shall receive a $400,000 disbursement from the USF. If there are any unused funds during the year, they will automatically roll over to the next year. HEAT can begin using the USF funds upon disbursement.

ORDERED FURTHER, that all Findings, Conclusions and Directives contained within are adopted as Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and by this Commission shall be strictly complied with by the Petitioner.

ORDERED FURTHER, that jurisdiction over this proceeding is expressly retained for the purpose of entering such further Order or Orders, as this Commission may deem proper.

ORDERED FURTHER, any motion for reconsideration, rehearing or oral argument shall not stay the effectiveness of this Order unless expressly ordered by the Commission.

The above by action of the Commission in Administrative Session on the 4th day of August 2026.

Sallie Tanner
Executive Secretary

8-11-26
Date

Jason Shaw
Chairman

8-11-26
Date