

# Customer Collaboration: Utility Bill Relief Initiatives

Electric Utility Commission

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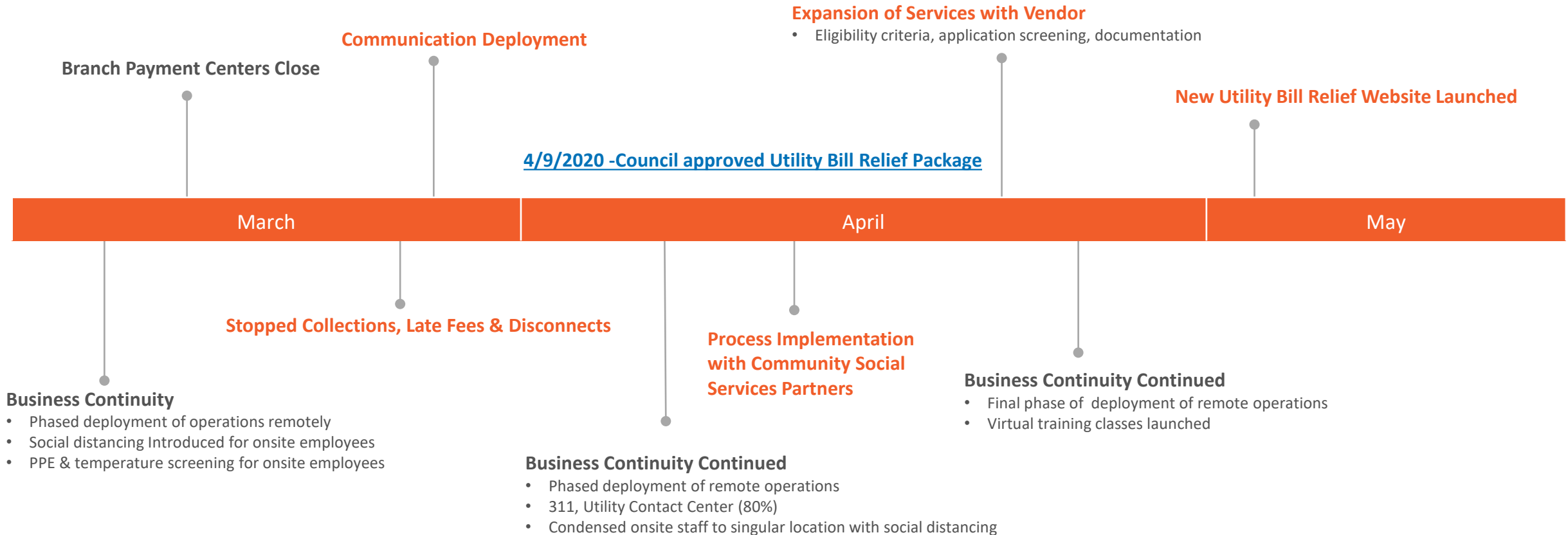
# Agenda

- Overview
- Customer Care COVID-19 Response
- Communications Strategy
- Utility Bill Relief Funding
- Customer & Community Outreach



**\*To request utility bill assistance go to [www.austinbillhelp.com](http://www.austinbillhelp.com)**

# Customer Care COVID-19 Response



# Communications Strategy



4/9/2020- Council Approved Utility Bill Relief Package

## Customer outreach campaigns:

- Outbound calls to disconnected customers
- Emails promoting suspended disconnections & late fees
- Changes made to Collections Letters
- Social Media messaging of branch closures & alternate ways to pay

## Utility Bill Relief outreach efforts:

- Emails to all customers
- Radio, print and digital ads
- Social Media Videos
- Expansion of Donate page on website
- New Plus 1 Donate flyers in English/Spanish
- IVR messaging changes

## Continue outreach efforts:

- Press Releases/Media Interviews
- Spanish language and public radio
- Utility News On-Bill Messaging
- Customer Programs Campaign
- Reopen Payment Centers
- Direct letter mailouts





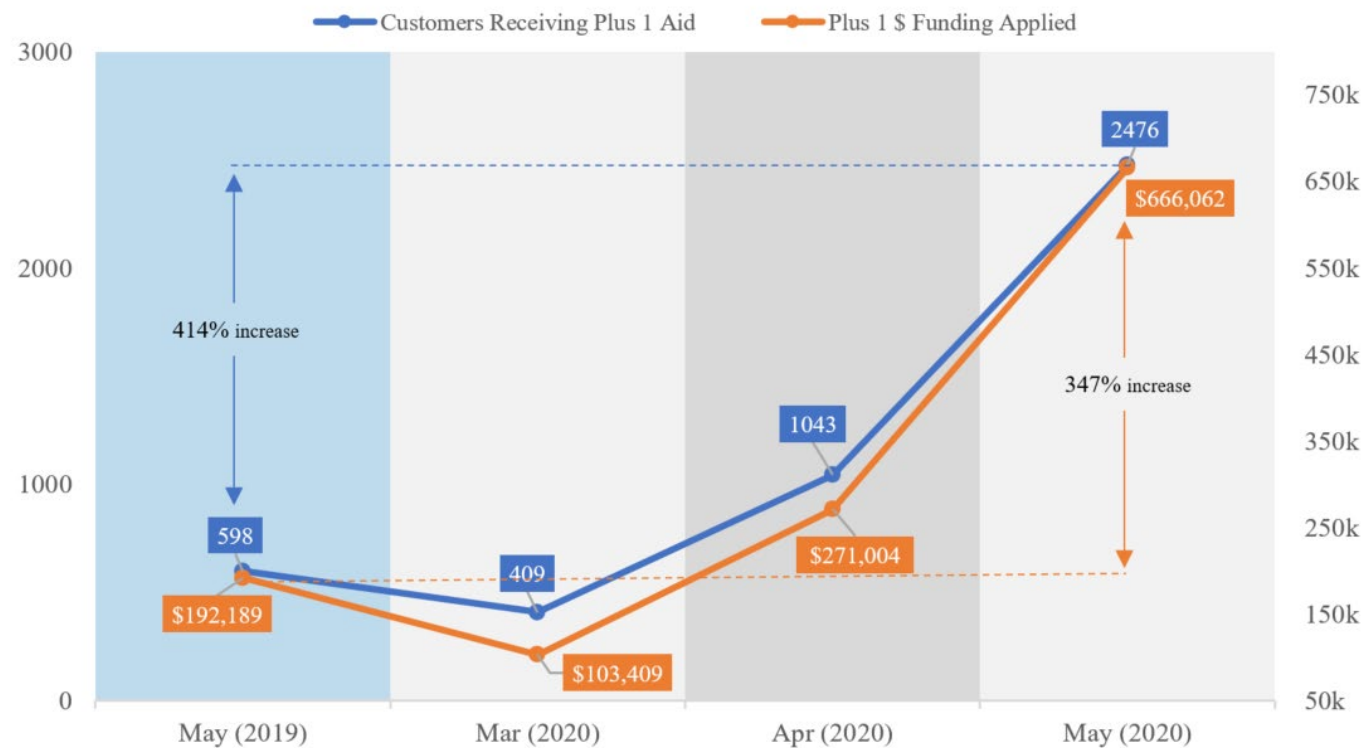
# Utility Bill Relief Funding: COVID-19

*As part of COA Utilities' COVID-19 response, an additional \$10M was added on April, 9, 2020, to the Plus 1 fund.*

## Bill Relief Funding Components

- Network of 56 community social service partners for disbursement of funds
- New COA Utilities Online application process  
[www.austinbillhelp.com](http://www.austinbillhelp.com)
- Increase in the maximum funding per household
- Increase in assistance from same partners within a 12-month period
- Additional Marketing on Bill Relief Assistance via social media and direct mail

## Plus 1 Financial Assistance Applied



\*10% of Customers have received multiple bill relief assistance since April, 9, 2020.



# Utility Bill Relief Funding: COVID-19

## Customer Outreach

296,761

Emails sent to Residential customers promoting the Utility Bill Relief Package

1,045

Outbound calls made with no payments since February 2020\*

17,043

Direct letters mailed to customers with a late payment for the 1<sup>st</sup> time within twelve months\*

3,553

Direct letters mailed for missed payment arrangements since March 15, 2020\*



\*Focused outreach efforts on customers who exhibited different than normal payment behaviors.

# Continued Community Outreach: Agency Partnerships & Customer Education



## Affordable Utility Summit

*Education opportunity specifically designed  
for partnering agencies*



## Summer Savings Campaign

*Education opportunity for energy saving  
tips, water conservation, and tools and  
apps to monitor usage*



## Community Connections Annual Resource Fair

*Customer Assistance Program sponsored  
event featuring education, services and  
resources  
for community*



**Integration of technology to create virtual experiences in light of current events are being explored.**

Thank you!

Questions?



**Customer Driven.  
Community Focused.<sup>SM</sup>**



# Appendix



## Website Metrics Highlights

**200% increase**

CAP page views over the  
same time in 2019

**457% increase**

New users on CAP pages  
over the same time in 2019

**6,048**

Total page views on new  
Utility Bill Relief page April 9  
- May 27

**3,351**

Total new users on Utility Bill  
Relief Page April 9 - May 27



**Demonstrates customer interest and engagement in the timely, relevant content provided!**

# Utility Bill Relief Marketing

**Facing Financial Hardship? We're Here to Help.**

1. See if You Qualify for Help on Utilities:  
• [austinenergy.com/go/cap](https://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

2. Explore Your Options:

- Utility Bill Discounts
- Emergency Financial Assistance
- Payment Arrangement
- Budget Billing
- Medically Vulnerable Services

3. Submit Your Application:  
• Start today at [austinenergy.com/go/cap](https://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

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Multichannel Infographic

**Facing Financial Hardship? Get Help on Utilities.**

See if you qualify

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Digital Ads



**¿Tiene Dificultades Financieras? Obtenga Ayuda con los Servicios Públicos.**

- Descuentos en facturas de servicios públicos
- Asistencia financiera de emergencia
- Plan de pago diferido
- Plan de presupuesto
- Servicios para clientes con necesidades médicas

Vea si califica:  
[austinenergy.com/go/cap](https://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

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**Facing Financial Hardship? Get Help With Utilities.**

- Utility Bill Discounts
- Emergency Financial Assistance
- Payment Arrangement
- Budget Billing
- Medically Vulnerable Services

See if you qualify:  
[austinenergy.com/go/cap](https://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

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English and Spanish Print Ads

**Your Safety. Your Utilities. Our Priority.**

We want to keep your lights on and your water running.

The City of Austin cares about your health and safety. Smart actions can keep your utilities on and help you stay safe. Remember these tips during this time of caution:

**Get help with utilities:** Facing financial hardship? From utility bill discounts to budget billing, the City of Austin offers support for qualifying customers. See if you qualify: [austinenergy.com/go/cap](https://austinenergy.com/go/cap).

**Continue your service:** The City of Austin has stopped utility disconnects caused by non-payment. If your utilities were recently turned off because of unpaid bills, contact City of Austin Utilities today for a courtesy reconnection. Call **512-494-9400**.

**Consider new ways to pay:** For public safety reasons, the City of Austin Walk-In Utility Service Centers are currently closed. Check out other payment options by visiting [austinenergy.com/go/paymentoptions](https://austinenergy.com/go/paymentoptions) or call **3-1-1** for more information.

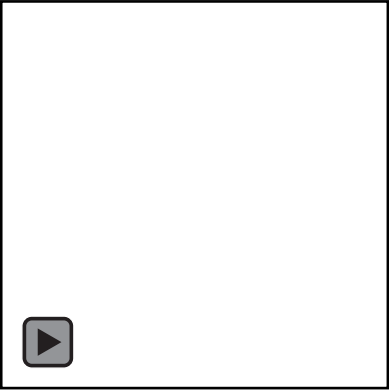
**Stop the scams:** Watch for possible scams during this time. Contact us if you have any doubts about a suspicious billing call or email. Call **512-494-9400**.

While physical distancing, stay connected to your City Utilities and City Information channels. However you spend your time at home, be safe and contact us if you need utility assistance.

City of Austin Utilities

For more information, please visit [austintexas.gov/COV](https://austintexas.gov/COV)

Video for social media



Addressed urgent need to communicate COA Utilities messaging.





## Facing Financial Hardship? We're Here to Help.

### 1. See if You Qualify for Help on Utilities:

- [austinenergy.com/go/cap](https://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

### 2. Explore Your Options:



- Utility Bill Discounts

- Emergency Financial Assistance



- Payment Arrangement

- Budget Billing



- Medically Vulnerable Services

### 3. Submit Your Application:

- Start today at [austinenergy.com/go/cap](https://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

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## ¿Tiene Dificultades Financieras? Estamos Aquí para Ayudar.

### 1. Vea si califica para recibir ayuda con servicios públicos:

- [austinenergy.com/go/cap](https://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

### 2. Explore sus opciones:



- Descuentos en facturas de servicios públicos

- Asistencia financiera de emergencia



- Plan de pago diferido

- Plan de presupuesto



- Servicios para clientes con necesidades médicas

### 3. Enviar su solicitud:

- Comience hoy en [austinenergy.com/go/cap](https://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

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