

AGENCY STRATEGIC PLAN

Fiscal Years 2021-2025

by

OFFICE OF PUBLIC UTILITY COUNSEL



June 1, 2020

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Lori Cobos

May 2019 – Present

Austin, Texas

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Signed and Approved:



Lori Cobos, Chief Executive & Public Counsel

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Office of Public Utility Counsel’s Mission

The Office of Public Utility Counsel (OPUC) was created in 1983 as part of the 68th Legislature’s Sunset Review of the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT). The Legislature created OPUC to represent the interests of residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in utility proceedings in Texas. Pursuant to its current statutory mission, OPUC represents residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in the electric, water, wastewater, and telecommunications utility industries in Texas.

AGENCY OPERATIONAL GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

OPUC's goal is to provide effective comprehensive representation of residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in the electric, water, wastewater and telecommunications utility industries in Texas. OPUC will achieve this important goal by providing high quality legal, regulatory, policy and professional representation on behalf of consumers in these critical utility industries.

SPECIFIC ACTION ITEMS TO ACHIEVE GOAL

In order to achieve this important goal, OPUC conducts specific actions that include the following:

- (1) Advocating on behalf of residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in utility proceedings before the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT), State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH), and state courts;
- (2) Representing consumers in stakeholder and board governance processes at the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) and Texas Reliability Entity (Texas RE); and
- (3) Maintaining a prompt and efficient process to address and resolve utility-related consumer inquiries and complaints.

In contested case proceedings at the PUCT and SOAH and appeals of PUCT decisions in state court, OPUC provides legal representation and technical expertise to represent, protect, and promote consumer interests, which includes ensuring that consumers pay just and reasonable utility rates. In rulemaking and policy projects at the PUCT, OPUC provides policy, regulatory, legal and technical expertise to represent, protect, and promote consumer interests, which includes ensuring adequate customer protection safeguards.

In 2015 and 2017, the Texas Legislature passed legislation requiring electric utilities operating outside and inside of the ERCOT region to file a rate case at the PUCT every four years. As a result of this legislation, the PUCT established 16 Texas Administrative Code (TAC)§ 25.246 and § 25.247 in 2016 and 2018 to implement a rate review schedule for non-ERCOT and ERCOT electric utilities. As a result of this new PUCT rate review process, OPUC will be involved in litigating more comprehensive electric utility base rate cases at the PUCT, since both ERCOT and non-ERCOT electric utilities will be filing base rate cases more frequently at the PUCT.

In addition to OPUC's extensive representation of consumers at the PUCT, SOAH, and state courts, the agency is also an active participant in the ERCOT stakeholder and board governance processes. ERCOT is the Independent System Operator (ISO) for ninety percent (90%) of the state's electric grid. OPUC's Chief Executive & Public Counsel serves as an *ex-officio* voting member of the ERCOT Board of Directors (ERCOT Board). OPUC also has dedicated staff that represents residential consumer interests as a voting member in the ERCOT stakeholder process and a representative that is appointed by OPUC's Chief Executive & Public Counsel to represent residential consumer interests at ERCOT's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

HOW GOAL OR ACTION ITEMS SUPPORTS STATEWIDE OBJECTIVES

OPUC's goal of providing effective comprehensive representation of residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in the electric, water, wastewater and telecommunications utility industries in Texas supports statewide objectives as follows:

- (1) **Accountable to tax and fee payers of Texas.** OPUC directly represents the interests of tax and fee payers in the electric, water, wastewater, and telecommunications utility industries in Texas. OPUC effectively manages its budget to ensure that taxpayers are being represented in a cost-effective manner. OPUC also maintains strict controls over its contracting process, which includes requiring contract employees to maintain the certifications issued by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.
- (2) **Efficient such that maximum results are produced with a minimum waste of taxpayer funds, including through the elimination of redundant and non-core functions.** OPUC's total annual budget is \$2,135,765 for Fiscal Year 2020 and Fiscal Year 2021. The agency has a full-time-equivalent (FTE) cap of 20.5. With these lean budget and staff resources, OPUC participated in an average of 41 major utility cases and 31 projects at the PUCT per year for fiscal years 2015 through 2019. By intervening in major electric and water utility rate cases and participating in rulemaking and policy projects at the PUCT, OPUC has delivered a strong return on investment, saving Texas ratepayers an average of \$134 million each year during this time period.
- (3) **Effective in successfully fulfilling core functions, measuring success in achieving performance measures and implementing plans to continuously improve.** OPUC's comprehensive representation of residential and small commercial consumers enables the agency to consistently and effectively fulfill its core functions of advocating on behalf of consumers in contested cases, rulemaking projects, and policy projects at the PUCT. OPUC consistently meets or exceeds its performance measures. OPUC actively encourages ongoing employee training on legal, regulatory, policy and technical issues in order to continually improve its representation of consumers in the complex electric, water, wastewater and telecommunications utility industries.

OPUC's use of IT services is an integral part of the agency's representation of consumers and central to fulfilling the agency's core functions. Electronic filings are required by the PUCT, SOAH and state courts. This requires OPUC to prepare, file, and serve legal filings via electronic filing systems. Because legal and regulatory matters in the utility industry are technical and complex, OPUC analyzes and prepares voluminous documents in a variety of native formats. Therefore, there is a substantial IT component to OPUC's legal representation, which requires OPUC's IT systems to be robust, stable, and secure in order to handle voluminous electronic documents, while protecting confidential information.

OPUC prioritizes cybersecurity and network security. OPUC ensures that cybersecurity and network security risks are minimized by managing the agency's security program consistent with industry standards. In addition, OPUC has moved its network servers to

the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR) Data Center Services (DCS), which will increase both the reliability and security of the agency's IT system. Furthermore, OPUC also entered into a contract with an approved DIR vendor to provide the agency with laptops and ongoing IT helpdesk services, which will increase the agency's operational stability, efficiency, flexibility, and continuity when teleworking is necessary.

- (4) Providing excellent customer service.** In accordance with its statutory obligations in PURA 13.005, OPUC maintains a process to promptly and efficiently address and resolve utility-related consumer inquiries and complaints. OPUC collaboratively works with individual consumers, the PUCT's Customer Protection Division, and industry stakeholders to address and resolve consumer concerns, including assisting consumers with filing and tracking complaints at the PUCT and directing consumers to bill payment assistance resources.

OPUC has historically provided excellent customer service. In OPUC's June 2020 Report on Customer Service, the majority of consumers that responded to OPUC's customer satisfaction survey indicated that they were 100% satisfied in both receiving a timely response and in having their complaint or inquiry routed to the proper agency staff. Furthermore, 88% of the consumers that responded to the survey expressed overall satisfaction with OPUC's services.

- (5) Transparent such that agency actions can be understood by any Texan.** OPUC uses information resources to provide transparency on the agency's representation of residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in the electric, water, wastewater and telecommunications utility industries in Texas. The public can access agency-specific information on OPUC's website at: www.opuc.texas.gov. OPUC's website includes information about the agency's mission, agency's representation of consumers at the PUCT, agency reports, PUCT customer complaint process, available consumer resources, and agency leadership.

OPUC has increased digital outreach and engagement on social media to provide consumers with important information, including OPUC activities and developments, PUCT and ERCOT activities and developments, energy conservation measures that can provide potential cost savings on consumer utility bills, and grid reliability and service outage updates. Finally, the public can obtain OPUC's filings in PUCT contested cases, rulemaking projects, and policy projects on the PUCT's interchange that is available at: <http://interchange.puc.texas.gov/WebApp/Interchange/application/dbapps/login/pgLogin.asp>. The filings provide OPUC's positions, recommendations, and requests in PUCT contested cases, rulemaking projects, and policy projects that impact residential and small commercial consumers in the electric, water, wastewater and telecommunications utility industries in Texas. Hard copies are also maintained at the agency.

AGENCY REDUNDANCIES AND IMPEDIMENTS			
Service, Statute, Rule or Regulation (Provide Specific Citation if applicable)	Describe why the Service, Statute, Rule or Regulation is Resulting in Inefficient or Ineffective Agency Operations	Provide Agency Recommendation for Modification or Elimination	Describe the Estimated Cost Savings or Other Benefit Associated with Recommended Change
	<p>OPUC has not identified a service, statute, rule or regulation that is resulting in inefficient or ineffective agency operations at this time. OPUC will provide feedback on this topic in the future, if necessary.</p>		

Appendix A

Budget Structure Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures

GOAL: Equitable Utility Rates for Residential and Small Commercial Consumers.

OBJECTIVE: To Protect Consumers and Ensure Reasonable Rates.

Outcome Measures:

- Percentage of OPUC Utility Cases that are Competition Related.
- Percentage of OPUC Utility Cases that are Resource Related.
- Current Year Bill Savings for Residential and Small Commercial Utility Consumers (In Millions).

STRATEGY: Participate in Major Utility Cases.

Output Measures:

- Number of Utility Cases in Which OPUC Participates.
- Number of Utility Court Cases in Which OPUC Participates.

Efficiency Measure:

- Average Cost Per Utility Case in Which OPUC Participates.

GOAL: Protect Consumer Interests in Utility Markets.

OBJECTIVE: Promote Utility Choices and Consumer Protection Policies.

Outcome Measures:

- Percentage of OPUC Utility Projects that are Competition Related.

STRATEGY: Participate in Major Utility Projects Affecting Consumers.

Output Measures:

- Number of Utility Projects in Which OPUC Participates.

Efficiency Measure:

- Average Cost Per Utility Project.

Appendix B

Performance Measure Definitions

Performance Measure Definitions

Goal:	Equitable Utility Rates for Residential and Small Commercial Consumers
Objective:	To Protect Consumers and Ensure Reasonable Rates
Strategy:	Participate in Major Utility Cases

Outcome Measure:	Percentage of OPUC Utility Cases that are Competition Related.
Definition:	Utility Cases that are competition related include OPUC cases, excluding court cases, which address issues such as choice in providers and services, market power, access to new and advanced technologies, and consumer protection policies.
Purpose/Importance:	Competition is an important benefit for consumers. As such, the agency workload will be best measured by the percentage of total utility cases that are competition related.
Source/Collection of Data:	OPUC records.
Method of Calculation:	OPUC determines the number of total utility cases in which it participates. OPUC divides this number into the number of utility competition cases in which OPUC actually participates.
Data Limitations:	N/A
Calculation Type:	Non-cumulative.
New Measure:	No.
Target Attainment:	Higher than target.

Outcome Measure:	Percentage of OPUC Utility Cases that are Resource Related.
Definition:	OPUC utility cases that are resource related include utility cases, excluding court cases, which address issues such as renewable energy requirements, energy efficiency goals, energy portfolio issues, transmission planning and water conservation.
Purpose/Importance:	SB7 instituted certain statewide goals and mandates related to resource planning and acquisition. The agency will actively pursue these requirements through the most cost-effective means possible.
Source/Collection of Data:	OPUC records.
Method of Calculation:	OPUC determines the total number of utility cases in which it participates. OPUC divides this number into the number of utility resource related cases in which OPUC actually participates.
Data Limitations:	N/A
Calculation Type:	Non-cumulative.
New Measure:	No.
Target Attainment:	Higher than target.

Outcome Measure:	Current Year Bill Savings/Res/Sm Com Utility Customers (In Millions).
Definition:	Bill savings measure the impact on residential and small commercial consumer's bills. Different types of utility cases result in rate adjustments on consumer's bills such as rate increases/decreases, surcharges, refunds, incentives, mark-ups, transition charges, and fuel charges.
Purpose/Importance:	OPUC will participate in utility cases, excluding court cases, to ensure the maximum bill savings on residential and small commercial consumer's bills. This measure will quantify the impact in the current year for participation in the current year's proceedings on a state-wide basis.
Source/Collection of Data:	OPUC records.
Method of Calculation:	<p>OPUC calculates the bill savings as the difference between a requested amount for a rate adjustment and the amount actually approved, for the current fiscal year. Bill savings should include only residential and small commercial, Industrial and transportation consumers will be removed using information from the U.S. Department of Energy.</p> <p>Impact on industrial and transportation consumers will be separated out using the most recently available information from the U.S. Department of Energy. The calculation is based on using one of the following: national retail sales of kilowatt hours, state retail sales of kilowatt hours, or state retail revenue earned by all electric companies that sell electricity in Texas. In addition, information from the U.S. Department of Energy should be used to calculate a three year average moving for residential and small commercial market sector to minimize the fluctuation in the market.</p>
Data Limitations:	Small commercial consumers and large commercial consumers cannot be separated based on the information currently available. Therefore, the "Commercial" information will be substituted for "Small Commercial".
Calculation Type:	Non-cumulative.
New Measure:	No.
Target Attainment:	Higher than target.

Output Measure:	Number of Utility Cases in Which OPUC Participates.
Definition:	OPUC intervenes in utility cases which have the most significant impact on residential and small commercial consumers in Texas. “Cases” include tariffs and docketed proceedings, excluding court cases.
Purpose/Importance:	This measure quantifies the number of utility cases OPUC participates in. Many significant issues are presented as tariffs or docketed proceedings. OPUC actively participates in these cases on behalf of residential and small commercial consumers.
Source/Collection of Data:	OPUC records.
Method of Calculation:	OPUC uses a manual count of all utility cases in which OPUC actually participates.
Data Limitations:	N/A
Calculation Type:	Non-cumulative.
New Measure:	No.
Target Attainment:	Higher than target.

Output Measure:	Number of Utility Court Cases in Which OPUC Participates.
Definition:	OPUC participates in court cases in which utility matters are litigated. OPUC can participate in court either as the petitioning party, as an intervenor, or as an <i>amicus curiae</i> . In many instances, OPUC performs two roles in the same case.
Purpose/Importance:	This measure quantifies the number of utility court cases in which OPUC participates. Many significant issues are litigated in the court system. OPUC actively participates in these cases on behalf of residential and small commercial consumers.
Source/Collection of Data:	OPUC records.
Method of Calculation:	OPUC uses a manual count of utility court cases in which OPUC actually participates.
Data Limitations:	N/A
Calculation Type:	Non-cumulative.
New Measure:	No.
Target Attainment:	Higher than target.

Efficiency Measure:	Average Cost Per Utility Case in Which OPUC Participates.
Definition:	Average cost per utility case.
Purpose/Importance:	This measure provides a guide as to the average cost per utility case, excluding court cases. The amount determined will be higher if longer or more complex cases are more common. It will be lower if shorter or less complex cases are more common.
Source/Collection of Data:	OPUC records.
Method of Calculation:	OPUC calculates the hourly rate for each attorney and technical staff and multiplies that hourly rate by the individual time spent on each case. The sum of all attorney and technical staff time is then divided by the total number of utility cases in which OPUC participates. Outside expert witness contracts are included in this calculation.
Data Limitations:	N/A
Calculation Type:	Non-cumulative.
New Measure:	No.
Target Attainment:	Lower than target.

Goal:	Protect Consumer Interests in Utility Markets
Objective:	Promote Utility Choices and Consumer Protection Policies
Strategy:	Participate in Major Utility Projects Affecting Consumers

Outcome Measure: Percent of OPUC Utility Projects That Are Competition Related.

Definition: Projects include rulemakings and generic projects. Utility projects that are competition related include projects which address choice in utility providers and services, market power, access to new and advanced technologies, & consumer protection policies.

A rulemaking is an agency process for formulating, amending, or repealing a rule. A rule is an agency statement of general applicability designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy or describes procedure, or practice requirements of an agency and includes the amendment or repeal of a prior rule.

A generic project is matter in which an agency has assigned a control number but is not a case or rulemaking. Examples of generic projects can include such activities such as fact-finding, development of policy that does not result in a rulemaking, communicating with the legislature or stakeholders, providing assistance or information to customers, or participating at the ERCOT or the Texas RE.

Purpose/Importance: Competition is an important benefit to consumers. As such, OPUC workload is best measured by the percentage of total projects that are competition related.

Source/Collection of Data: OPUC records.

Method of Calculation: OPUC determines the total number of utility projects in which it participates. OPUC divides this number into the number of utility competition projects in which OPUC participates.

Data Limitations: N/A

Calculation Type: Non-cumulative.

New Measure: No.

Target Attainment: Higher than target.

Output Measure:	Number of Utility Projects in Which OPUC Participates.
Definition:	<p>OPUC participates in utility projects which have the most significant impact for residential and small commercial utility consumers in Texas. “Projects” include rulemaking proceedings and generic projects. A rulemaking is an agency process for formulating, amending, or repealing a rule. A rule is an agency statement of general applicability designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy or describes procedure, or practice requirements of an agency and includes the amendment or repeal of a prior rule.</p> <p>A generic project is matter in which an agency has assigned a control number but is not a case or rulemaking. Examples of generic projects can include such activities such as fact-finding, development of policy that does not result in a rulemaking, communicating with the legislature or stakeholders, providing assistance or information to customers, or participating at the Electric Reliability Council of Texas or the Texas RE.</p>
Purpose/Importance:	Many significant issues are decided through projects at the PUC. OPUC participates in these projects on behalf of residential and small commercial consumers.
Source/Collection of Data:	OPUC records.
Method of Calculation:	OPUC uses a manual count of all utility projects in which OPUC actually participates.
Data Limitations:	OPUC does not control the number, subject matter, or timing of projects that the Public Utility Commission files.
Calculation Type:	Non-cumulative.
New Measure:	No.
Target Attainment:	Higher than target.

Efficiency Measure:	Average Cost Per Utility Project.
Definition:	<p>Average cost per utility project. Projects include rulemakings and generic projects. A rulemaking is an agency process for formulating, amending, or repealing a rule. A rule is an agency statement of general applicability designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy or describes procedure, or practice requirements of an agency and includes the amendment or repeal of a prior rule.</p> <p>A generic project is matter in which an agency has assigned a control number but is not a case or rulemaking. Examples of generic projects can include such activities such as fact-finding, development of policy that does not result in a rulemaking, communicating with the legislature or stakeholders, providing assistance or information to customers, or participating at the Electric Reliability Council of Texas or the Texas RE.</p>
Purpose/Importance:	This measure provides a guide as to the average cost per project. The amount determined will be higher if longer or more complex projects are more common. It will be lower if shorter or less complex projects are more common.
Source/Collection of Data:	OPUC records.
Method of Calculation:	OPUC calculates the hourly rate for each attorney and technical staff and multiplies that hourly rate by the individual time spent on each project. The sum of all attorney and technical staff time is then divided by the total number of utility projects in which OPUC participates. Outside expert witness contracts are included in this calculation.
Data Limitations:	N/A
Calculation Type:	Non-cumulative.
New Measure:	No.
Target Attainment:	Lower than target.

Appendix C

Historically Underutilized Business Plan

Historically Underutilized Business Plan

The Office of Public Utility Counsel (OPUC) is committed to increasing procurement opportunities for Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) in accordance with Chapter 2161 of the Texas Government Code. The goal of the HUB program is to promote and maximize fair and competitive business opportunities for minority, women, and service-disabled veteran owned businesses.

OPUC’s purchasing procedures demonstrate the agency’s commitment to promote HUB participation in purchasing and contracting functions. OPUC’s purchaser first looks to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts’ Centralized Master’s Bidders List (CMBL) to identify potential HUB vendors. If a HUB vendor exists and can provide the good or service at the best value for the agency, OPUC will then procure the good or service from that HUB vendor. Further, the agency’s HUB Coordinator actively participates in HUB-related meetings, networking with other state agencies to share best practices related to HUB vendors, and encourages the HUB vendor community to become HUB certified and registered with the Texas Comptroller of Public Account’s CMBL to increase the opportunity for the agency to award procurements to HUBs in order to meet statewide HUB goals.

OPUC continually strives to meet or exceed established statewide HUB goals. However, due to the unique nature of the agency’s statutory mission, OPUC procures goods and services in only two procurement categories (other services and commodity purchases). In addition, many of the agency’s purchases are statutorily required to be made within the Texas SmartBuy online ordering system or by utilizing the Texas Correctional Industries (TCI) and WorkQuest (formerly TIBH) vendors through the Set Aside Program governed by the Texas Workforce Commission. Purchases made through SmartBuy, TCI or WorkQuest are not counted toward the agency’s statewide HUB goals. Both of these factors may limit the agency’s ability to meet its statewide HUB goals during a fiscal year.

Category	Statewide Goal	OPUC FY18	OPUC FY19
Other Services	26.0%	3.09%	18.48%
Commodities	21.1%	13.68%	45.64%

Appendix D

Agency Workforce Plan

Office of Public Utility Counsel's Workforce Plan

Pursuant to its current statutory mission, the Office of Public Utility Counsel (OPUC) represents residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in the electric, water, wastewater, and telecommunications utility industries in Texas.

The following charts provide a profile of OPUC's workforce as of June 2020. The agency currently has 11.0 full-time equivalents (FTEs), consisting of attorneys, regulatory, policy, administrative and other professional staff. Currently, OPUC's workforce is comprised of approximately 45 percent male and 55 percent female staff members, with 27 percent between the age of 30-39 years old, 37 percent between the age of 40-49 years old, and 27 percent between the age of 50-59 years old. The agency strives to maintain a diverse workforce. Currently, approximately 64 percent of the agency's employees are minority.

Over the past five years, OPUC's employee turnover rate has averaged 12.2% per year and the agency's turnover rate is expected to follow this trend in the future. Currently, OPUC has four employees that are eligible to retire within the next five years.

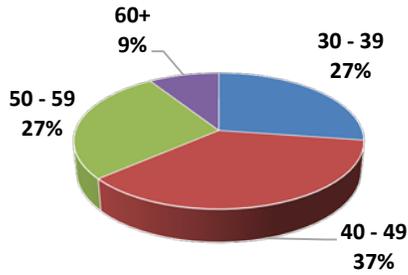
OPUC will continue to strive to maintain an adequate, robust workforce. However, in a competitive job environment, the agency's recruitment and retainment of qualified, skilled talent will continue to present a challenge in the future due to the agency's budgetary resources for employee salaries in comparison to private sector and other government employers. Furthermore, the electric, water, wastewater, and telecommunications utility industries are complex, technical areas that require legal, regulatory, policy, technical and professional expertise. Therefore, there is a small pool of qualified, skilled candidates that can work in this arena in today's workforce, which often leads to a shortage in qualified candidates and requires extensive training of new employees.

Currently, each employee at the agency has the expertise and skills that are necessary to meet OPUC's statutory mission and goals.

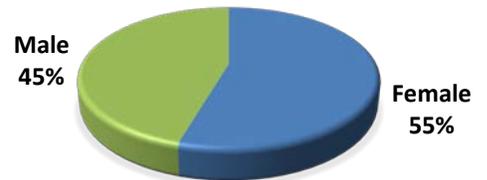
Workforce Planning Goals:

- Continue to provide employees with merit increases and performance bonuses, when possible and appropriate
- Continue to offer employees flexible work schedules, when possible and appropriate
- Continue to offer employees with training opportunities, when possible and appropriate
- Continue to foster an open communication, team work environment among all employees
- Continue to use creative recruitment strategies, including outside third-party sources, when possible and necessary

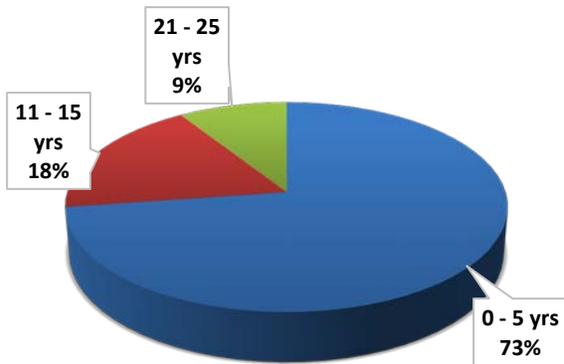
AGE



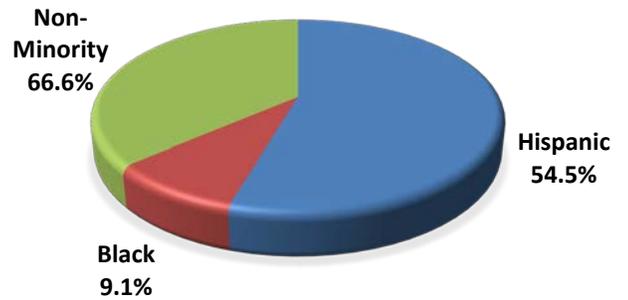
GENDER



AGENCY TENURE



RACE / ETHNICITY



Appendix E

Customer Satisfaction Survey

REPORT ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

**Submitted to the Governor’s Office of Budget and Policy
and the Legislative Budget Board**

by

OFFICE OF PUBLIC UTILITY COUNSEL



June 1, 2020

Background

Pursuant to Chapter 2114 of the Texas Government Code, the Office of Public Utility Counsel (OPUC) created an inventory of external customers that directly contacted the agency and gathered information from those customers using a survey designed to measure customer satisfaction with the services provided by the agency.

Identification of Customers Served

Created by the Texas Legislature in 1983, OPUC represents residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in the electric, water, wastewater, and telecommunications utility industries in Texas. OPUC is the only entity in the state that represents residential and small commercial consumer interests in water utility rate-related matters. OPUC primarily represents the consumers in utility proceedings before the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT), State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) and state courts. OPUC also represents consumer interests in the board governance and stakeholder processes at the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) and Texas Reliability Entity (Texas RE). OPUC's Chief Executive & Public Counsel oversees the operation of the agency, including the agency's budget and staffing, and leads the agency's representation of consumers at the PUCT, SOAH, state courts, ERCOT and Texas RE pursuant to the agency's statutory mission.¹ In addition, OPUC assists consumers with utility-related inquiries and complaints, which includes helping consumers reach informal resolution with their utility, assisting consumers with the PUCT complaint process, and referring consumers to applicable regulatory authorities and entities as necessary.

The General Appropriations Act (GAA) for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 contains two strategies for OPUC. The first strategy is "Participation in Major Utility Cases," which reflects the agency's mission of representing residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in major electric and water utility rate cases. In these major utility rate cases, OPUC staff represents consumers throughout the rate review process, which includes using internal staff attorneys and outside expert consultants to extensively review the utility's rate application, engaging in discovery, filing expert witness testimony, engaging in settlement discussions, participating in hearings, filing post-hearing briefs and other key legal filings, and monitoring and participating, as necessary, in PUCT deliberation on utility rate cases at open meetings. The second strategy is "Participation in Major Utility Projects Affecting Consumers," which reflects the agency's responsibility to represent consumers in PUCT rulemaking and policy projects in which the PUCT is addressing policy issues that impact consumers. In these projects, OPUC represents consumers throughout the policymaking and rulemaking process by using internal staff to extensively review the PUCT's rule proposals, filing comments, participating in workshops and hearings, engaging in stakeholder meetings, and monitoring and participating, as necessary, in PUCT deliberation on policy matters at open meetings.

¹ Public Utility Regulatory Act (PURA) §13.003.

Survey Methods and Response Rates

OPUC surveys consumers that directly contact the agency for assistance with utility-related matters. OPUC receives telephone calls, emails, and U.S. mail from consumers with utility-related complaints or inquiries involving a range of issues, which include:

- Billing issues
- Bill payment assistance
- Disconnection of service
- Establishing service
- Specific information about ongoing cases, policy projects, and rulemaking projects

Among these main issues, OPUC primarily receives complaints and inquires relating to billing and service issues. Over the past two fiscal years of 2018 and 2019, the agency did not receive any consumer inquiries regarding PUCT policy projects or rulemaking projects. The agency, however, received consumer inquiries regarding ten (10) PUCT contested cases.

Following the informal resolution of a consumer complaint or inquiry, OPUC sends the consumer an email with a link to a Customer Service Survey (CSS) that is accessible online. If the consumer does not have email capability, the CSS is sent via U.S. Postal Service. If the consumer does not provide an email or mailing address, the agency is unable to send the CSS to the consumer.

During the last two fiscal years of 2018 and 2019, OPUC received a total of 593 consumer inquiries and was able to send 300 surveys to consumers who provided the agency with an email or mailing address. The number of consumers who responded to OPUC’s CSS was 27 out of the 300 surveys, or nine percent (9%). This survey response rate is an improvement from the seven percent (7%) survey response rate from the prior fiscal years of 2016 and 2017. Of the survey responses, 22 were submitted online and 5 were returned by U.S. Postal Service.²

Customer Service Quality Standard	Level of Satisfaction
Telephone call, email or mailed letter was routed to proper staff	100%
Telephone call, email or mailed letter was answered timely	92%
Agency website was well-organized and easy to use	88%
Staff interacted in a courteous and professional manner	88%
Staff was knowledgeable and demonstrated a willingness to help	96%
The agency makes it easy to ask questions or to make a complaint	88%

² OPUC provided a self-addressed return envelope with each CSS mailed to a consumer, but the agency did not provide return postage.

Analysis and Findings

The majority of the consumers that responded to the survey were satisfied with the assistance provided by agency staff, with ninety-six percent (96%) stating that agency staff was knowledgeable and demonstrated a willingness to help, eighty-eight percent (88%) stating that agency staff interacted with them in a personal and professional manner, and eighty-eight percent (88%) stating that they were satisfied with their overall experience. All consumers who responded to the survey indicated that they believed their inquiry was routed to the proper agency staff and ninety-two percent (92%) felt that they received a timely response from agency staff.

Performance Measures

During the past two fiscal years, OPUC staff met the agency standards for timely response and returning customer inquiries within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt. OPUC expects its performance for the next fiscal years to maintain this high standard.

Outcome Measures

Percentage of Surveyed Consumer Respondents Expressing Overall Satisfaction with Services	88%
Percentage of Surveyed Consumer Respondents Identifying Ways to Improve Service Delivery	0%

Output Measures

Total Consumers Surveyed	300
Total Consumers Served	593

Efficiency Measures

Cost per Consumer Surveyed	\$2.72
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Explanatory Measures

Total Consumers Identified	593
Total Consumer Groups Inventoried	2