

Empathy and the Impact of Utility Rates on Customers

Kansas Governor's Water Conference 2022



ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER



CUSTOMER IMPACT



Empathy

\ 'em-pə-thē \

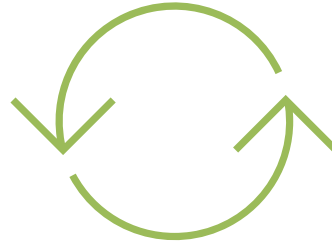
noun

the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another

Practicing Empathy



Active Listening



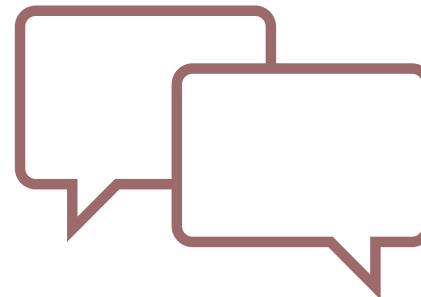
Repeat Back



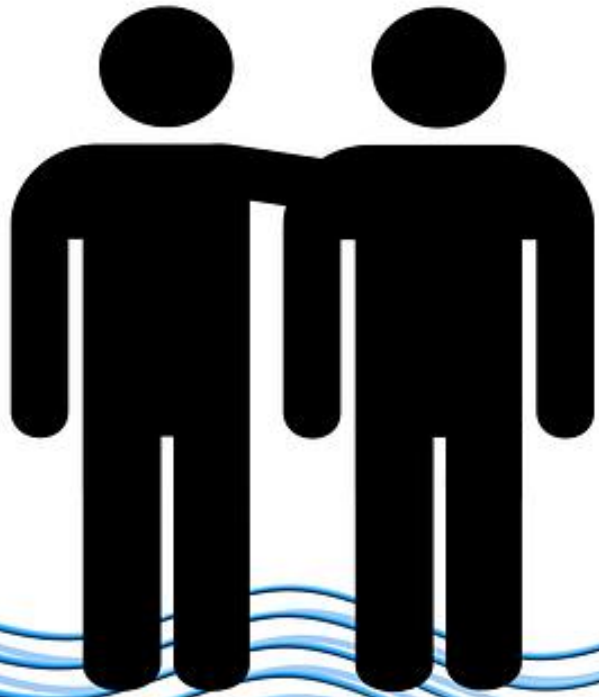
Thoughtful
Response



Use Positive
Language



Multiple
Communication
Channels



EMPATHY AND CUSTOMER IMPACT

Top 4 Household Expenses



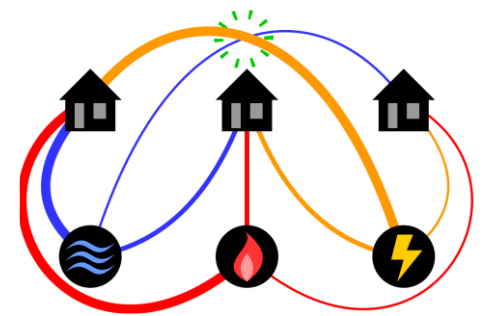
Rent/Mortgage



Food



Taxes



Utilities

Family of 3: 2 adults, 1 13-year-old

Income	
Gross wages	\$2,500
Medical insurance (pre-tax)	(\$270)
Taxes	(\$170)
Net wages	\$2,060

Total remaining income: **(\$40)**

Expense	Amount
Rent	\$752
Phone	\$112
Household gas	\$64
Electricity	\$114
Water/Sewer	\$75
Internet	\$60
Food	\$550
Transportation	\$250
Vehicle Expenses	\$122
Total Expenses	\$2,100

What Do You Do?



Lower Grocery Bills



Reduce Other Utility Expenses



Reduce Transportation Expenses



Increase Income



Find Lower Cost Housing



Alternate Not Paying a Bill Each Month

Decision Results

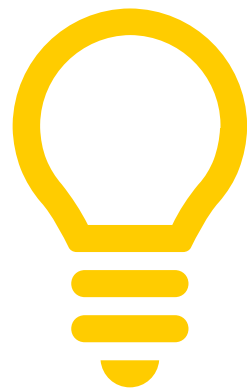
- How will you save?
- Which bill(s) do you not pay?
- Missed work
- Financial impacts for months, possibly years.



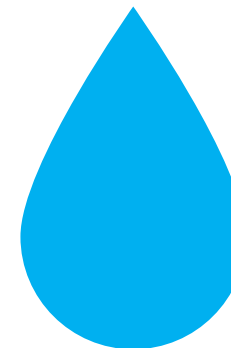
Prioritize



Housing



Power



Water



HOW TO PAY?

OPTIONS TO STAY AFLOAT

Assistance Programs



Utility assistance



Nonprofits

Last resort options



Credit cards



Personal
loans



Bankruptcy

A high-speed photograph of a water droplet just before it hits a surface, creating concentric ripples. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue. The text 'UTILITY IMPACT' is centered over the image.

UTILITY IMPACT

Utility Operations



Minimum standards



Desired level of service



Funding



METRICS

- Research
- Tools
- Webinars

Metrics

Residential Indicator (RI)

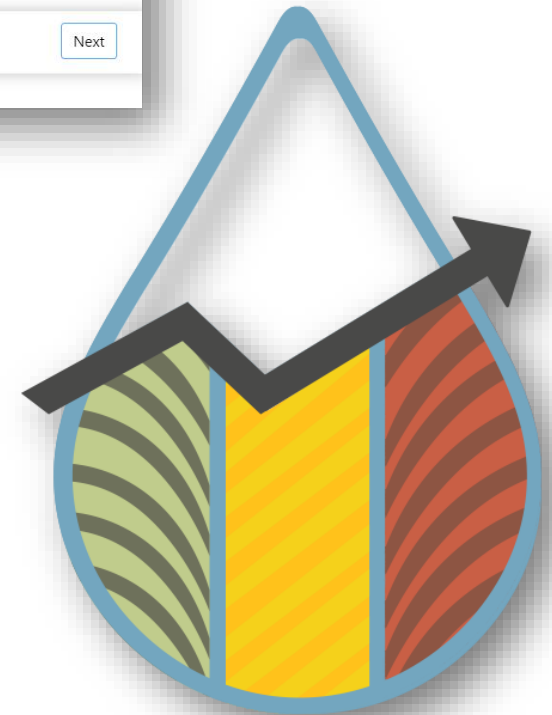
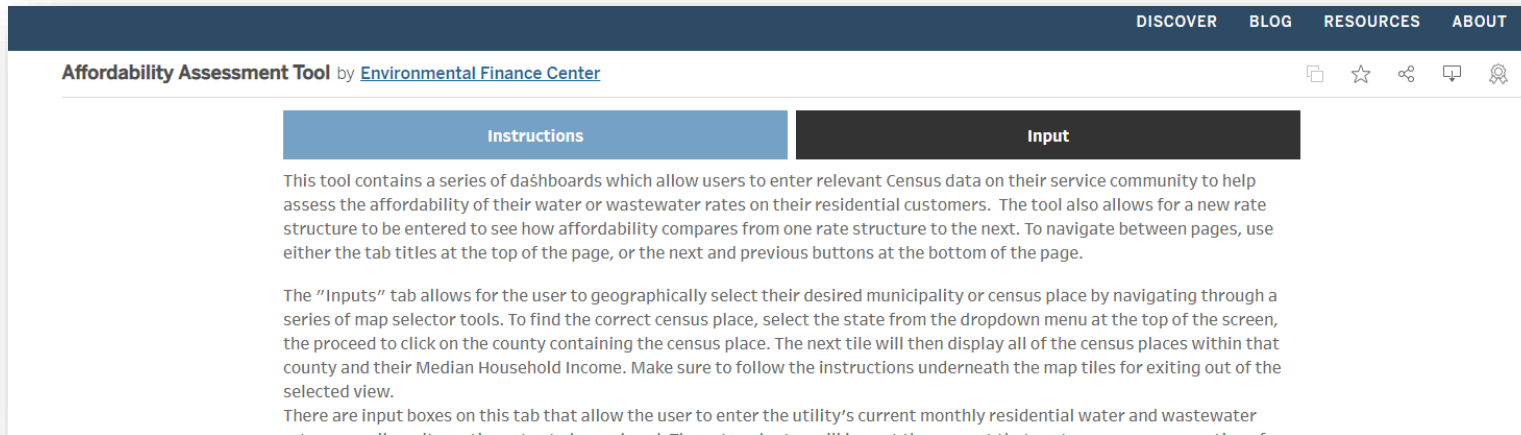
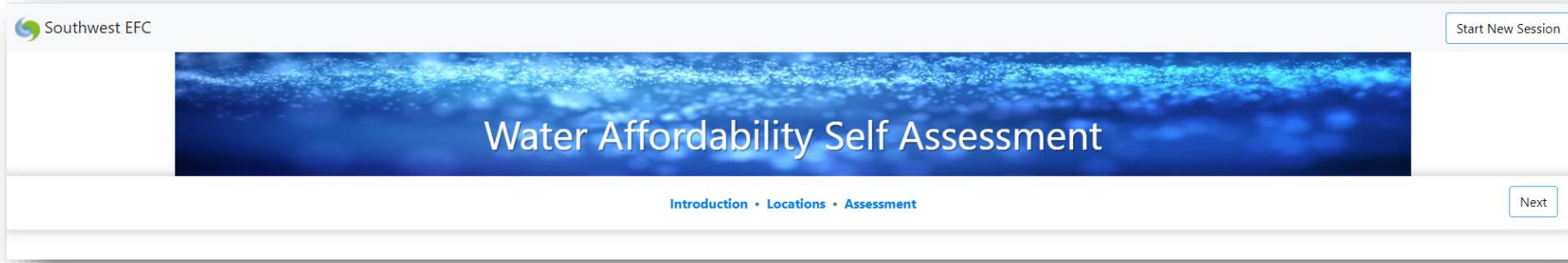
Poverty Prevalence Indicator (PPI)

Household Burden

Affordability Ratio

Hours at minimum wage

Tools



**COMMUNITY
SUSTAINABILITY TOOL**



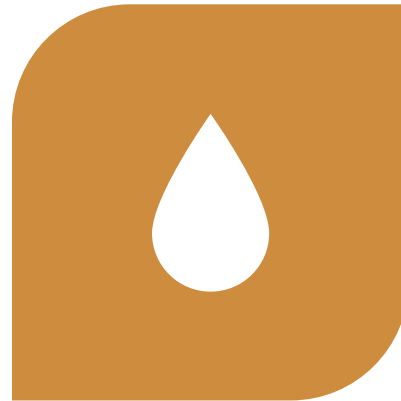
NOW WHAT?

You have the information. What do you do with it?

Using the information



INCREASED ATTENTION TO
AFFORDABILITY CONCERNS



UNDERSTANDING OF
PROCESSES NECESSARY TO
PROVIDE CLEAN, SAFE WATER



TOOLS FOR RATE SETTING

Thank you!

Contact

Michelle DeHaven

michelle.dehaven@wichita.edu