

Utility Payment Assistance: Program improvements would enable City to assist more customers



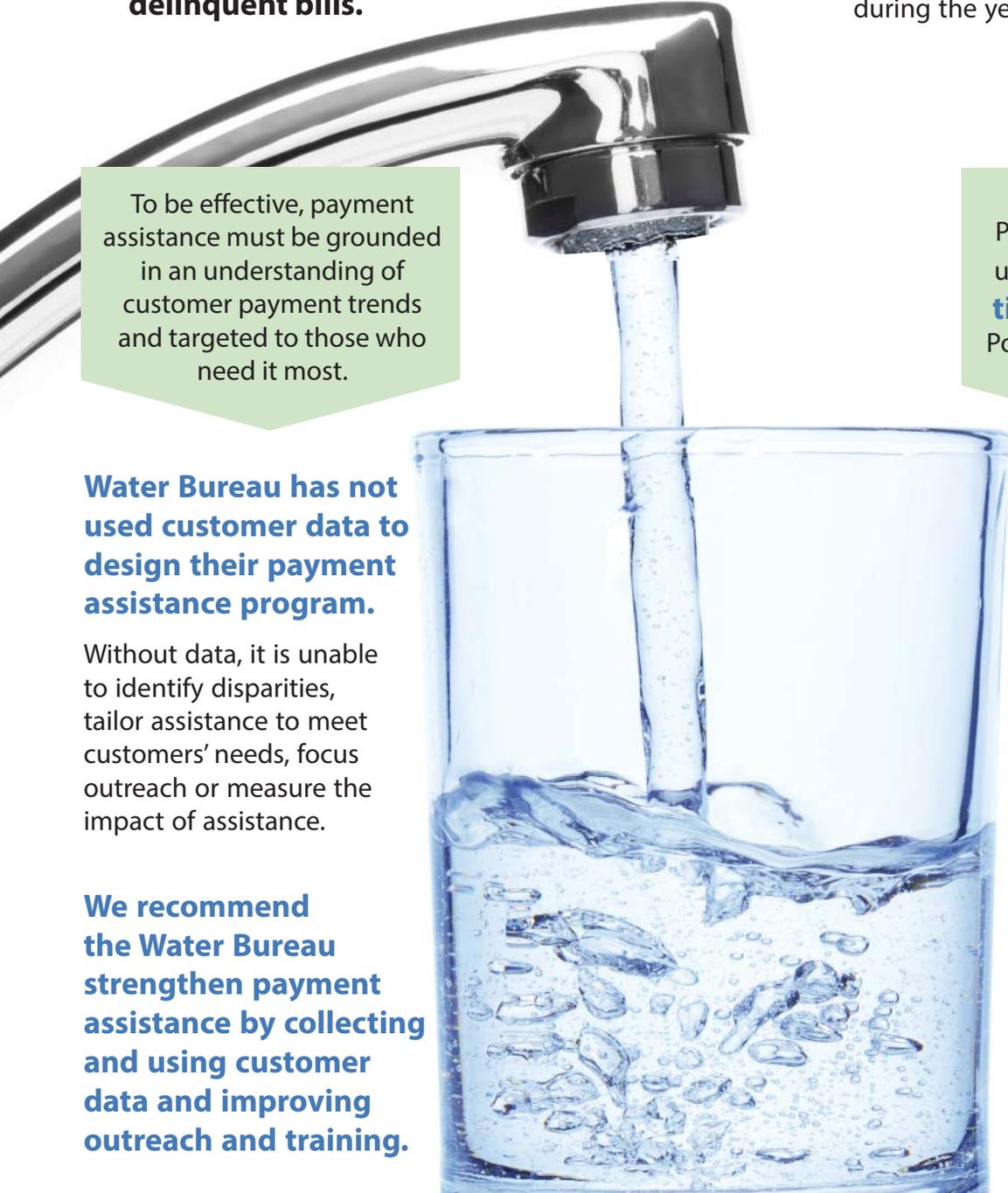
Audit highlights - October 2017

**The Water Bureau
shuts off customers'
water to compel
payment of
delinquent bills.**

4,500
shutoffs of single-family
residential accounts for
nonpayment in 2015.

40%
of those were
shut off more
than once
during the year.

8%
were without
water for more
than one
month.



To be effective, payment assistance must be grounded in an understanding of customer payment trends and targeted to those who need it most.

The poverty rate for Portlanders in multifamily units is **more than two times** the poverty rate of Portlanders living in single-family households.

Water Bureau has not used customer data to design their payment assistance program.

Without data, it is unable to identify disparities, tailor assistance to meet customers' needs, focus outreach or measure the impact of assistance.

We recommend the Water Bureau strengthen payment assistance by collecting and using customer data and improving outreach and training.

Payment assistance is not available to residents of multifamily housing.

Most pay for City utilities as part of their rent, so they are not direct customers of the Water Bureau.

We recommend the Water Bureau continue to study how assistance could be extended to residents of multifamily housing.



For the full report, click or go to: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/auditservices/article/658743>
To see other audit reports from the Audit Services Division, Office of the City Auditor:
www.portlandoregon.gov/auditservices