



# Human Services Department Utility Discount Program Update

Seattle City Council Energy & Environment Committee

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April 24, 2012 | Seattle Human Services Department | Dannette R. Smith, Director

Mayor Michael McGinn  
Deputy Mayor Darryl Smith

# Human Services Dept.'s Strategic Plan

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## **FOUR PRIMARY GOALS**

- Create a Proactive, Seamless Service System
- Strengthen and Expand Partnerships
- Engage and Partner with the Community
- Use Data-Driven Design and Evaluation to guide programming

# Utility Discount Program: Description

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The Utility Discount Program helps low-income people get current and stay current on utility payments by offering a discount of approximately 50 to 60 percent of electric, water and garbage bills through three programs:

- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – this is a federally funded program to assist low-income homeowners and renters with their heating and cooling needs. Customers can apply without having received a shut off notice.

# UDP Program Description (continued)

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- Emergency Low Income Assistance Program (ELIA) – an emergency assistance program for customers facing disconnection.
- Project Share – customers are eligible for this one time assistance if they don't qualify for either LIHEAP or ELIA and are facing disconnection.

The Utility Discount Program aligns with the city's values of serving the most vulnerable populations while meeting the departmental goals of effectively serving more customers and providing them with some stability. The program staff also links customers to other assistance programs such as Child Care Assistance, Home Weatherization and SPU Emergency Assistance if they see a need.

# UDP Optimization: Project Background

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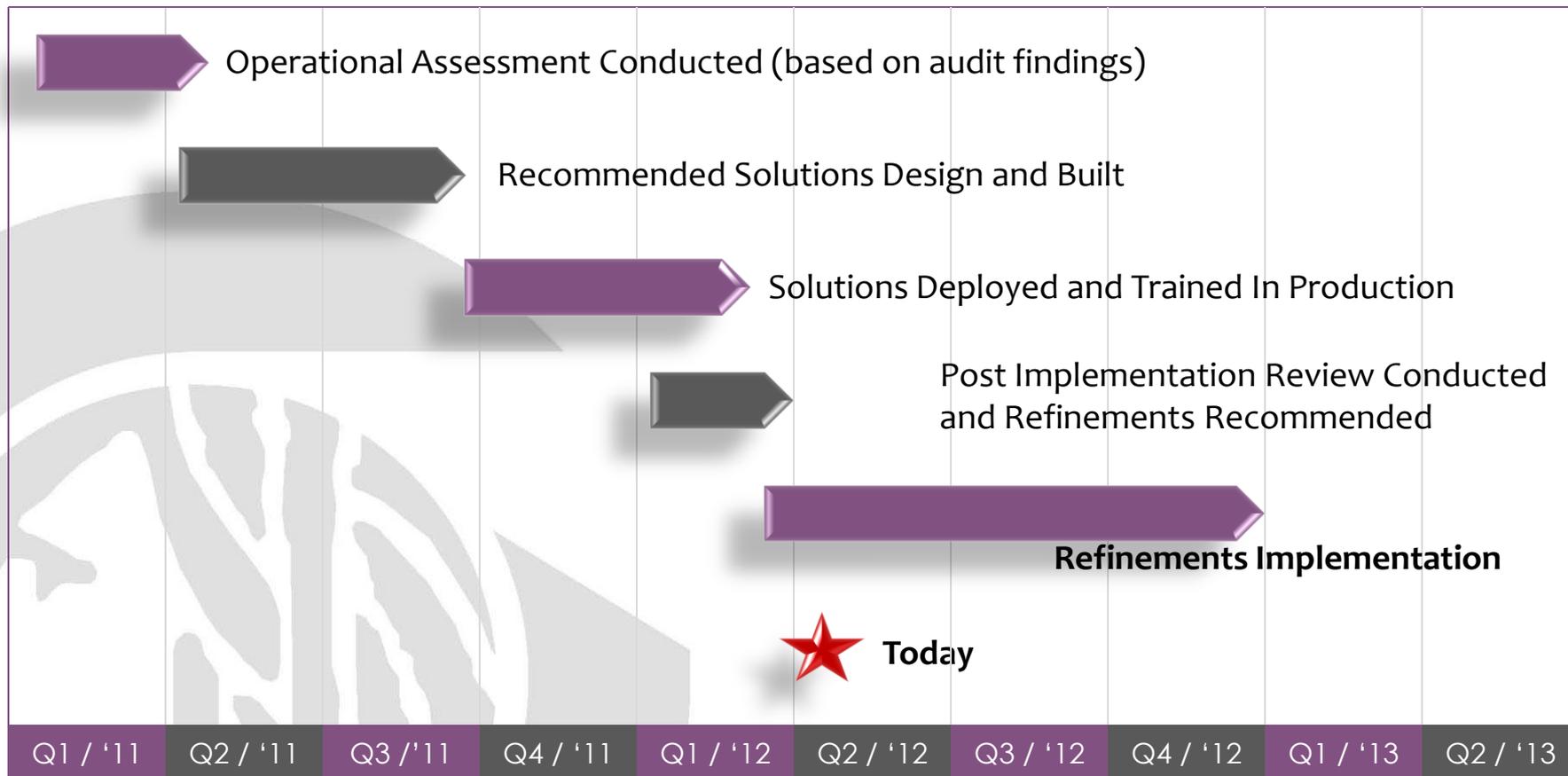
In early 2011, in response to SLI 11-1-A-1 (Nov. 2010), HSD contracted with CCIS Consulting, Inc.

CCIS asked to review UDP and recommend changes that would result in a seamless, data-driven system that could serve more customers.

Four primary recommendations :

- 1) Streamline roles of Program Intake Representatives (PIR)
- 2) Upgrade technology and improve customer service
- 3) Improve screening processes
- 4) Improve reporting and data analysis

# UDP Optimization: Project Timeline



## SLI Response #1: UDP 2010–2012 Staffing Comparison

FTE	2012 Proposed	2010 Actual	Change
Manager 1	0	0.78	-0.78
Supervisor	1.0	1.0	0
Lead PIR <sup>(1)</sup>	1.0	0	1
PIR <sup>(1)</sup>	9.0	7.5	1.5
Administrative Spec 1	2.0	0	2
Admin Support Assistant	0.5	2.5	-2
Admin Staff Assistant	0	0.5	-0.5
Public Relations Spec	0	0.91	-0.91
<b>Totals</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>13.19</b>	<b>(+) 0.31</b>

*(1) Program Intake Representative*

## SLI Response #1: UDP 2010–2012 Budget Comparison

Expense Type	2012 Proposed	2010 Actual	Change
Labor	\$1,052,925	\$923,899	\$129,026
Operating	\$166,212	\$167,842	(\$1,630)
Indirect Costs <sup>(1)</sup>	\$195,793	\$210,269	(\$14,476)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$1,414,390</b>	<b>\$1,302,010</b>	<b>\$112,920</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Indirect rate in 2012, 16.06%, in 2010 19.26%

## SLI Response #2: Key Processes, Before and After

Process Area	Before	After
Screening	Brief high-level screening performed	Detailed screening interview is done by Program Intake Representative (PIR)
Application Mailing	Blank applications mailed to applicants including only name and address	Applications pre-populated with customer information are now mailed to applicants; additional requirements are highlighted

## SLI Response #2: Key Processes, Before and After

Process Area	Before	After
Inbound Call Handling	Customers would typically contact a specific PIR regarding issues or pending applications but majority of calls went to voice mail with PIR calling customer back; operated like case management	New model has allowed 90+% of these calls to actually be answered by a PIR instead of being directed to voicemail. <i>(Within an average week the UDP team will handle approximately 1,400 inbound calls from customers.)</i>
Application Processing	All PIRs were responsible for all functions required to process UDP new and recertification applications.	PIRs are now organized by function, allowing them to focus on a series of single tasks at a time.

## SLI Response #2: Key Processes, Before and After

Process Area	Before	After
Streamlined application forms	PIRs used a manual process to complete an application when interviewing an applicant for the program (about 14 minutes), and after a PIR manually entered applicant information into the form, the same information was re-entered by administrative personnel into the UDP data base program.	Moving to a streamlined and more automated application form will reduce the average time to complete a new application by 5 minutes and also eliminate the re-entry of data into the UDP database. Staff started using this new form earlier this month, an assessment is scheduled for July 2012.
Testing & implementation of program eligibility worksheet	Previously, PIRs had manually completed the calculations required to determine if an applicant is eligible.	A new Excel worksheet is being used that automatically calculates eligibility to expedite case processing and reduce calculation errors.

# SLI Response #3: What's Working Well

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## Contact Center

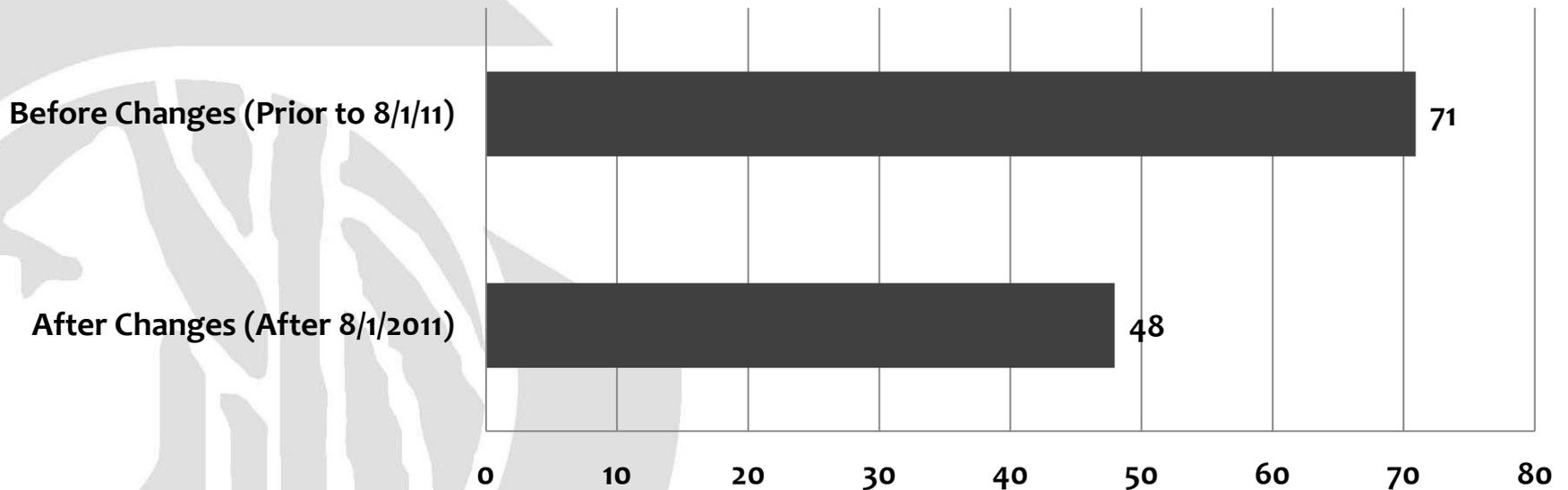
- **In August 2011**, HSD implemented a **Contact Center** model for managing all customer contacts.
- Customer contacts can now be tracked and data can be gathered more efficiently through the UDP database.
- This model allows HSD to improve internal controls and program accountability while increasing ease of enrollment.

# SLI Response #3: What's Working Well

## Contact Center Efficiencies

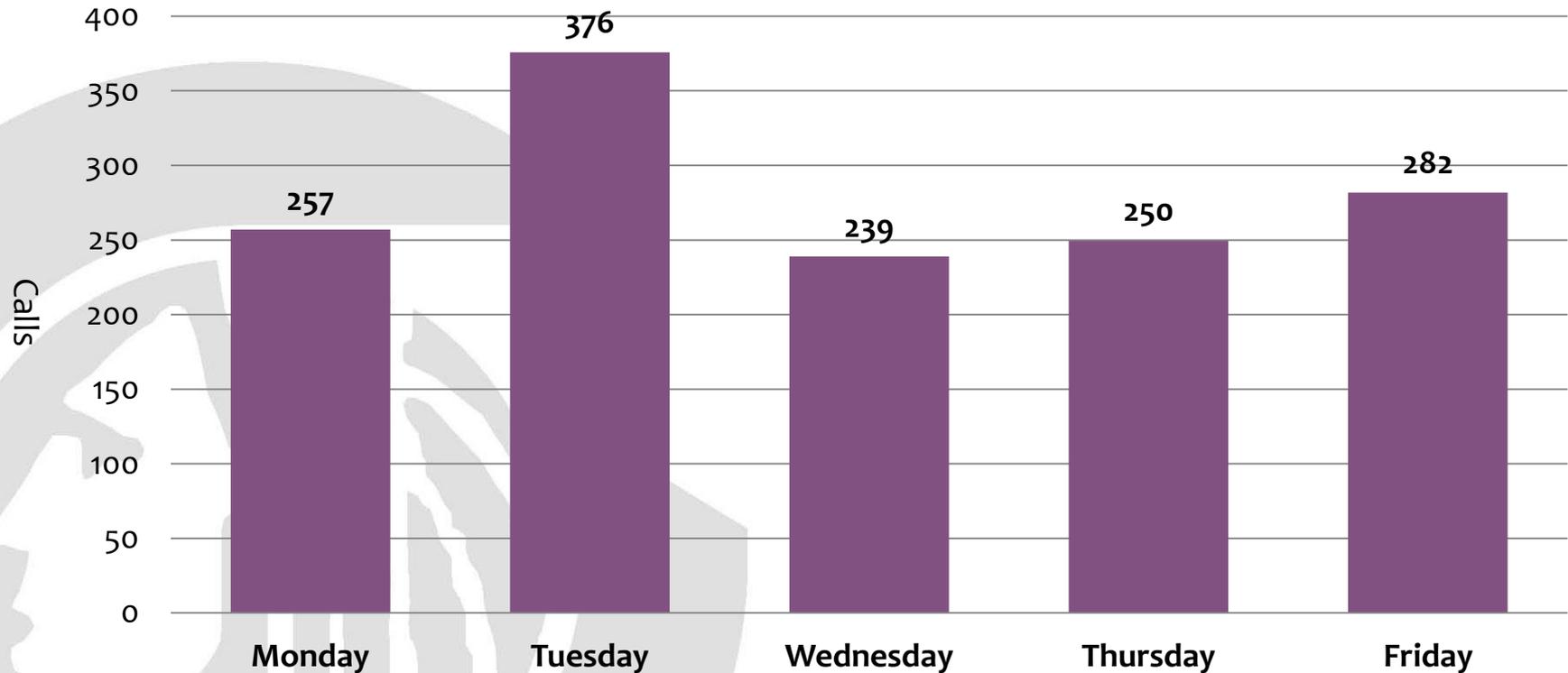
UDP conducted a 90-review. Early indicators are positive.

### Average Cycle Time - New Apps (in days)



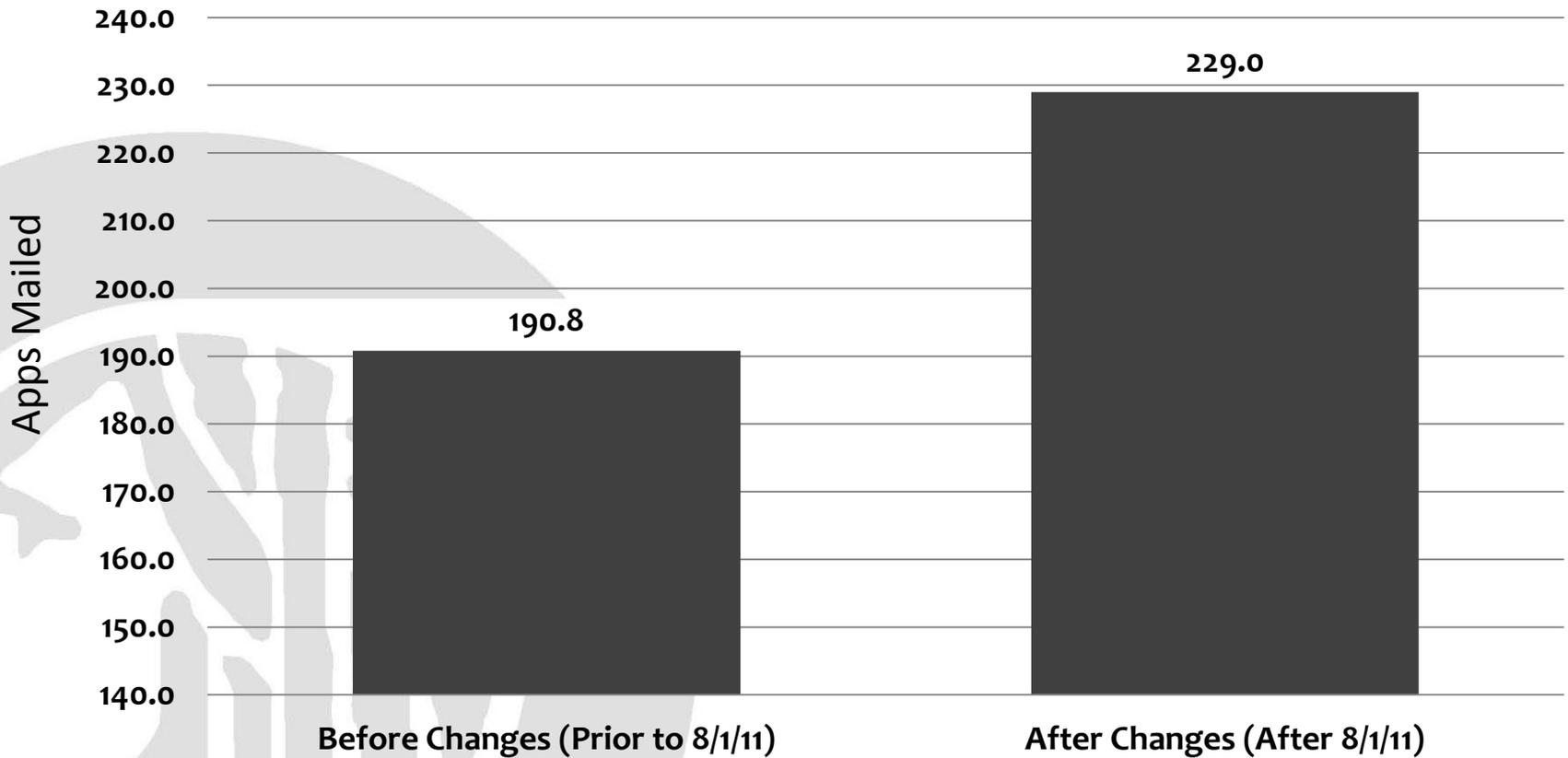
# SLI Response #3: What's Working Well

## UDP Average Daily Call Volume (January 2012)



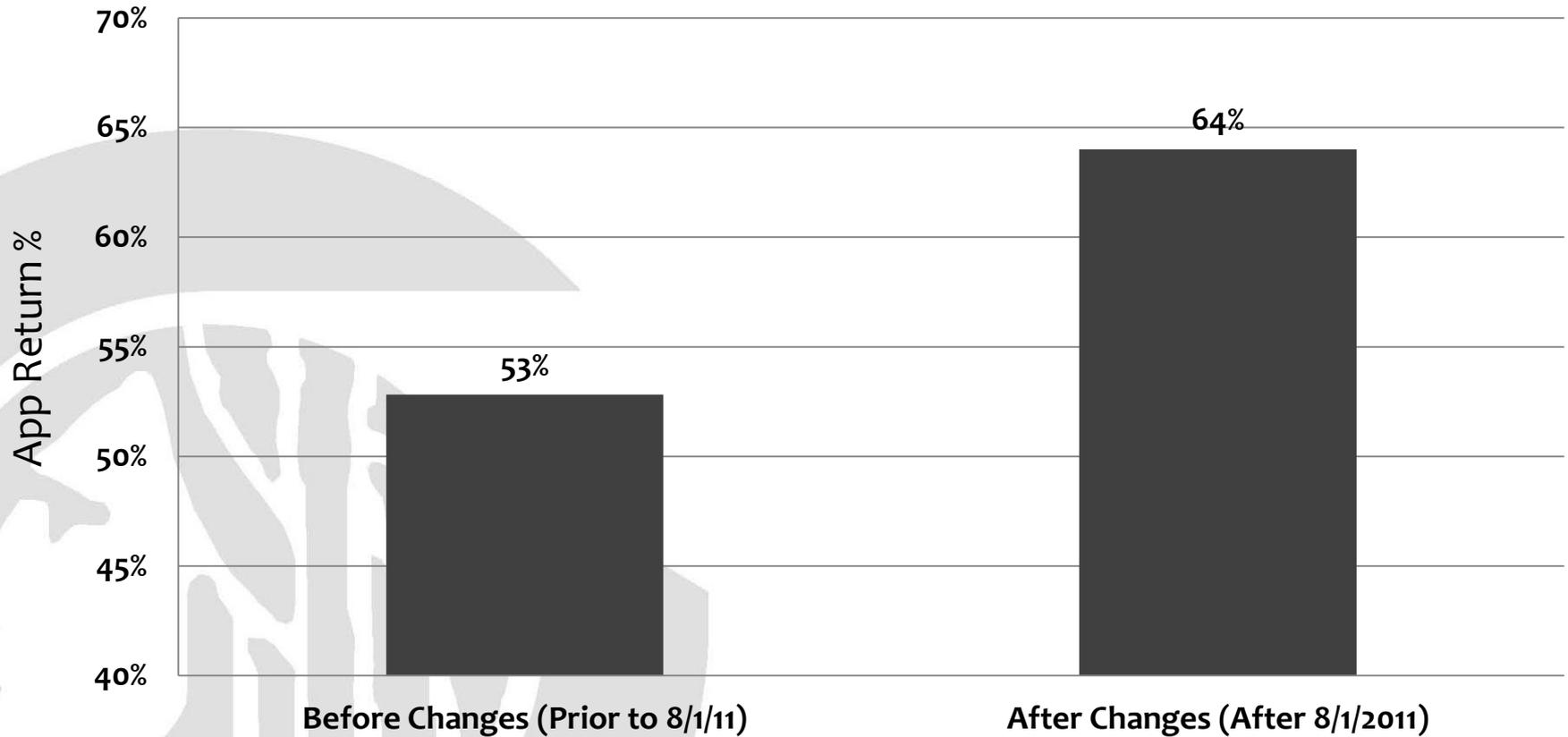
# SLI Response #3: What's Working Well

## Average Apps Mailed per Week

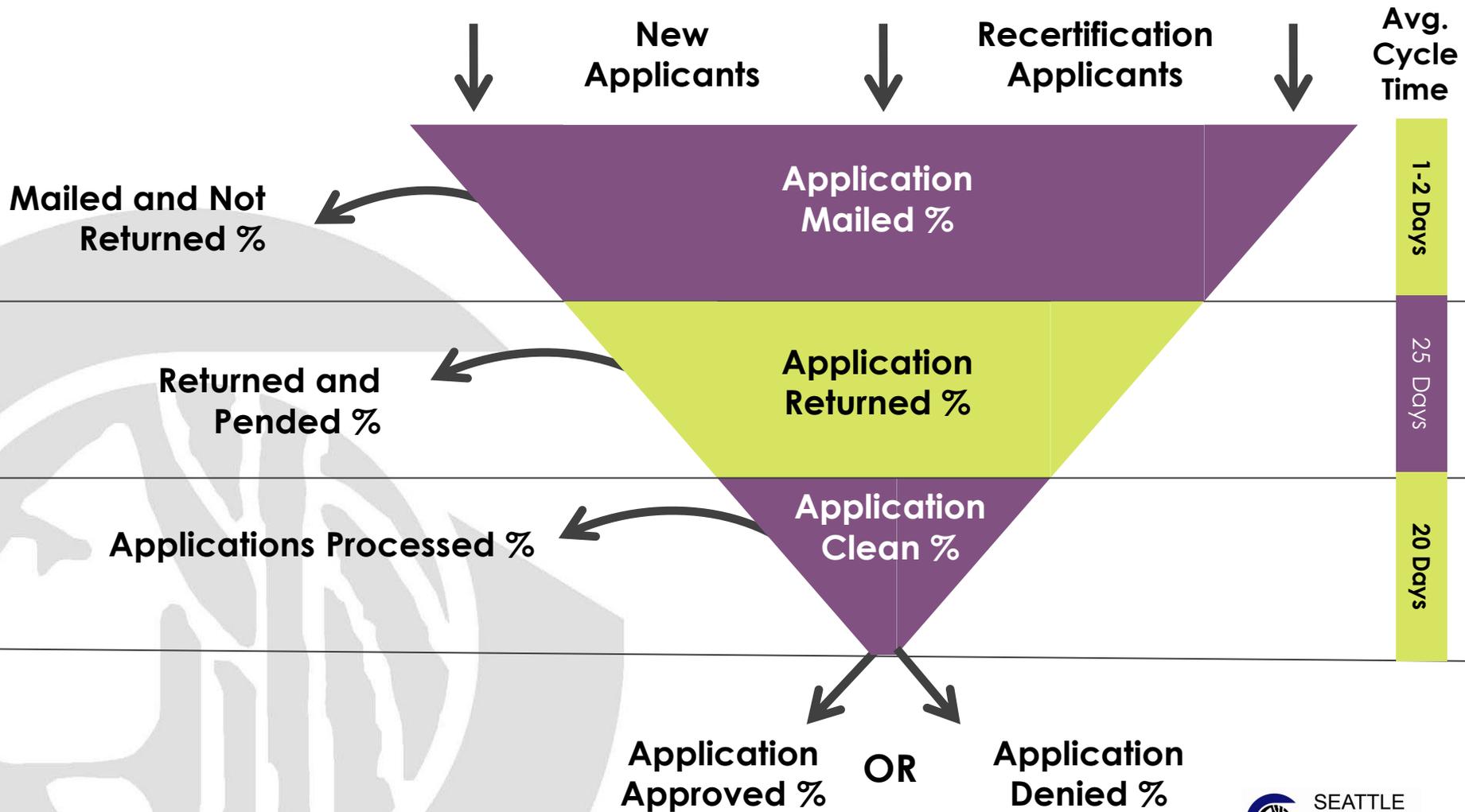


# SLI Response #3: What's Working Well

## Average Application Returned %



# UDP "Process Funnel"



# SLI Response #3: Improvements Needed

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## Outreach/Seasonal Staffing

With the new contact center model, we are identifying call patterns to help us determine low, medium & high volume times; as well as looking at whether more applications come in during a certain time (late fall, early winter) to establish a more effective staffing plan.

**Recommendation:** Continued identification of call/mail patterns and continued collaboration with SCL and SPU to reach out to potential customers during summer and fall to reduce wait times and increase applications.

# SLI Response #3: Improvements Needed

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## Eligibility

A recent City Auditor/SPU review found a 20% income deduction being given that was not part of the original ordinance nor approved by City Council.

As of January 1, 2012 deductions are no longer allowed.

Impact: Reduces the number of individuals eligible for UDP.

**Recommendation:** Per City Audit Office suggestion revise the City ordinance to allow the previously offered 20% income deductions.

## SLI Response #3: Currently Working On:

While program improvement has occurred, the 90-day evaluation identified several short-term improvements:

#	Solution	Expected Result
1	Fully deploy “functionalized” PIR model	↑ Process efficiency
2	Cross-skill and deploy back-up agents	↑ PIR processing time ↑ Completed applications
4	Implement a hosted automated dialer	↑ PIR processing time ↑ Returned applications
5	Measure and manage PIR-level metrics	↑ PIR productivity ↑ Approved applications

## PIR – Level Key Performance Metrics

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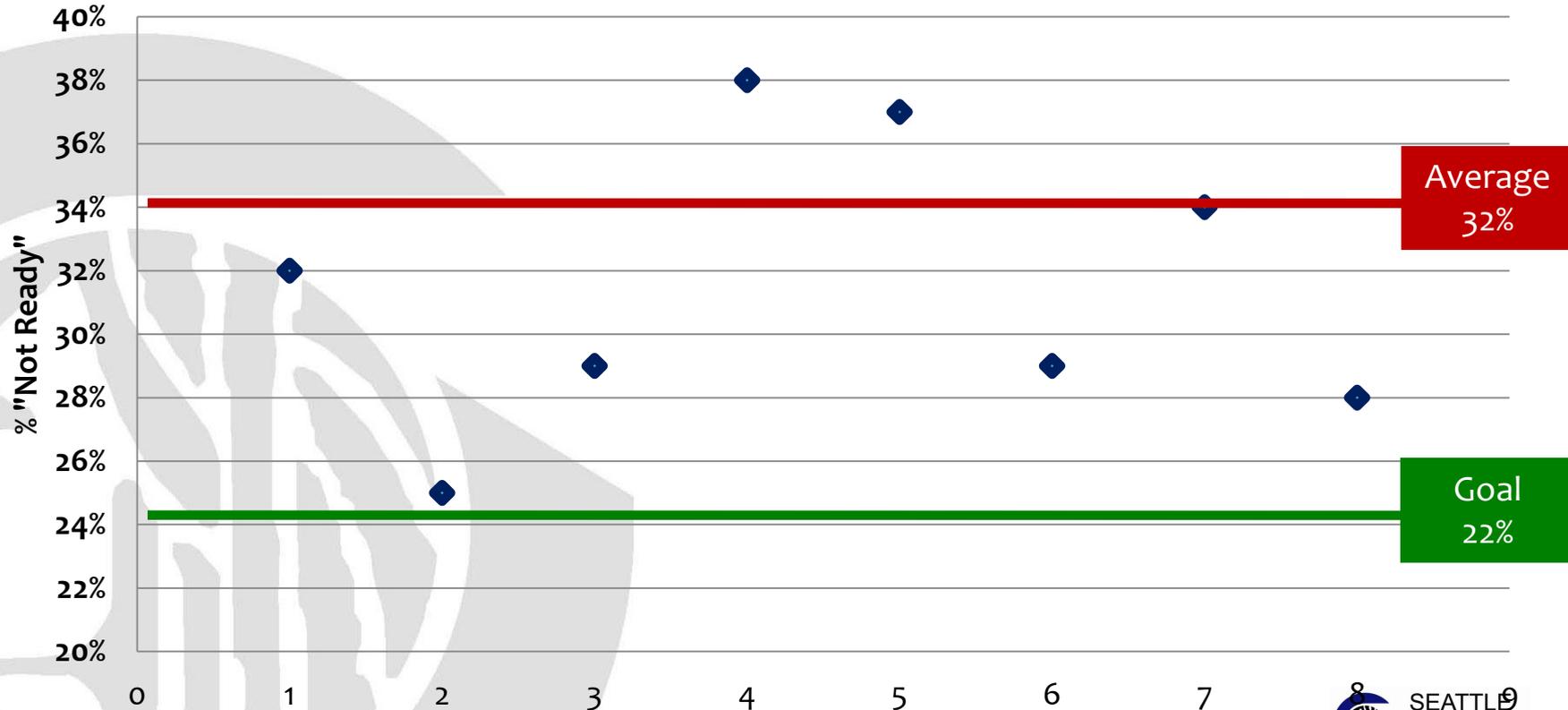
- To assist with increasing productivity, program output and align with SPU, PIR productivity reporting will begin May 2012. The four key performance indicators are:
  - 1) Average “Not Ready” by PIR
  - 2) Average Calls returned to “Queue” by PIR
  - 3) Average Calls Per Hour by PIR
  - 4) Average Available Time by PIR

# Measure and Manage PIR-Level Metrics

## Average "Not Ready" % by PIR:

### HSD - Utility Discount Program

% "Not Ready" by PIR (November 2011)

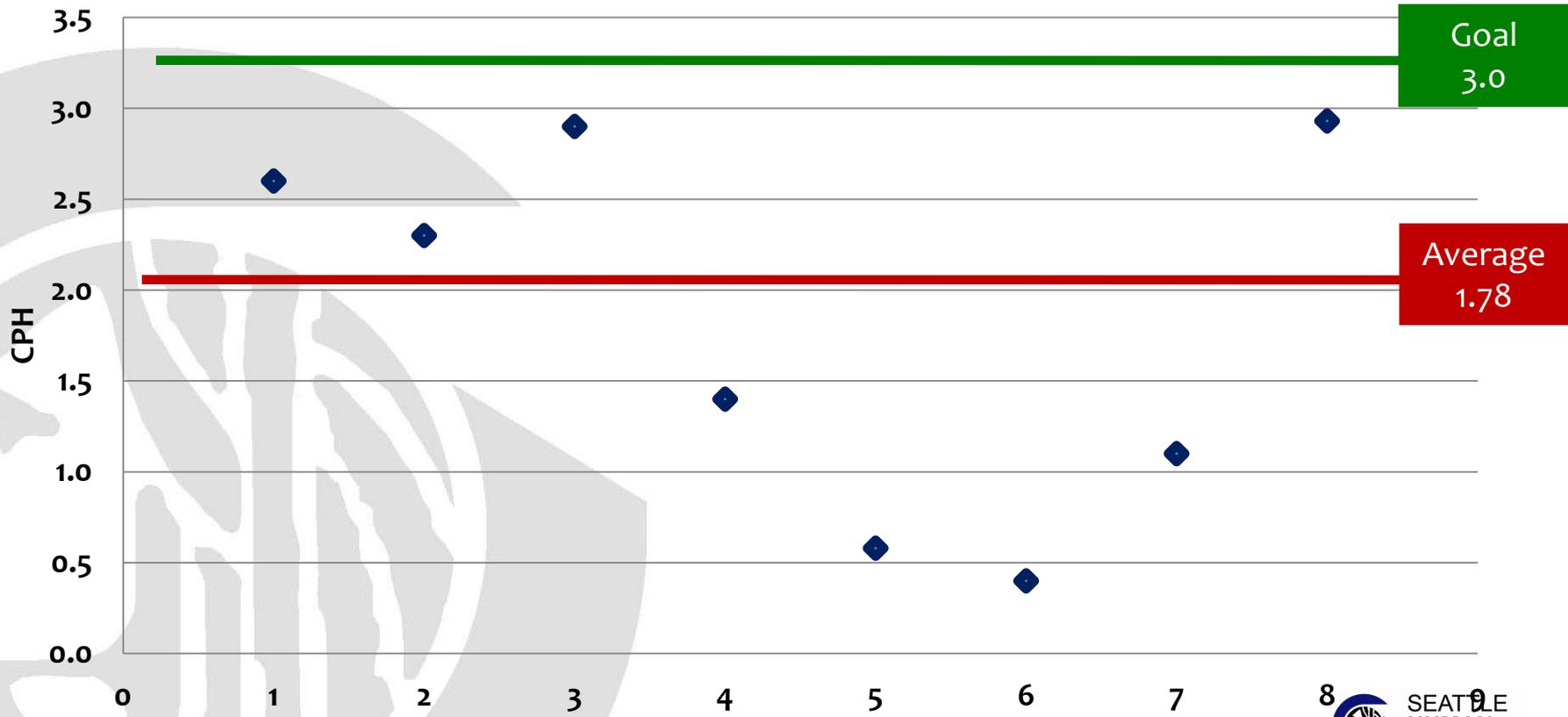


# Measure and Manage PIR-Level Metrics

## Calls Per Hour by PIR:

### HSD - Utility Discount Program

Calls per Hour by PIR (November 2011)

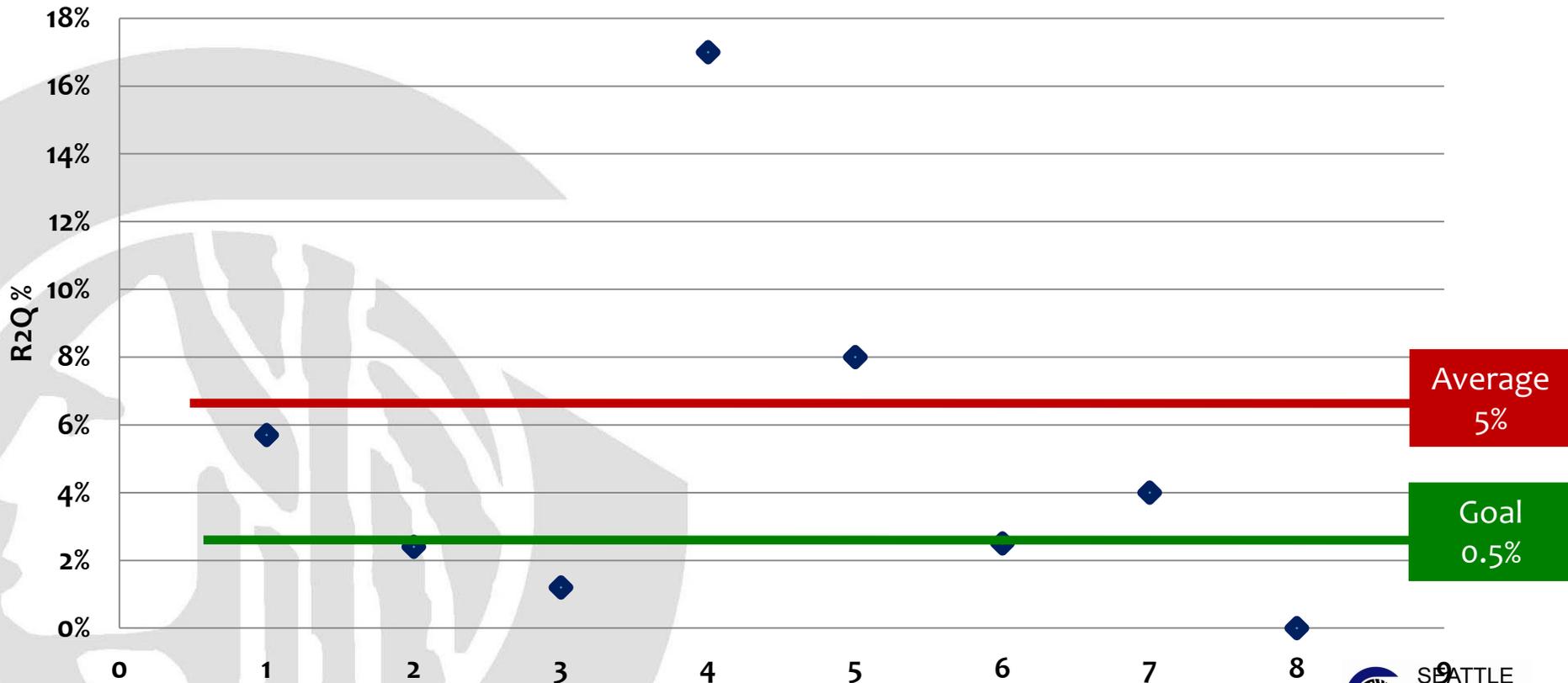


# Measure and Manage PIR-Level Metrics

## Returned to Queue (“R2Q”) by PIR:

### HSD - Utility Discount Program

R2Q % by PIR (November 2011)



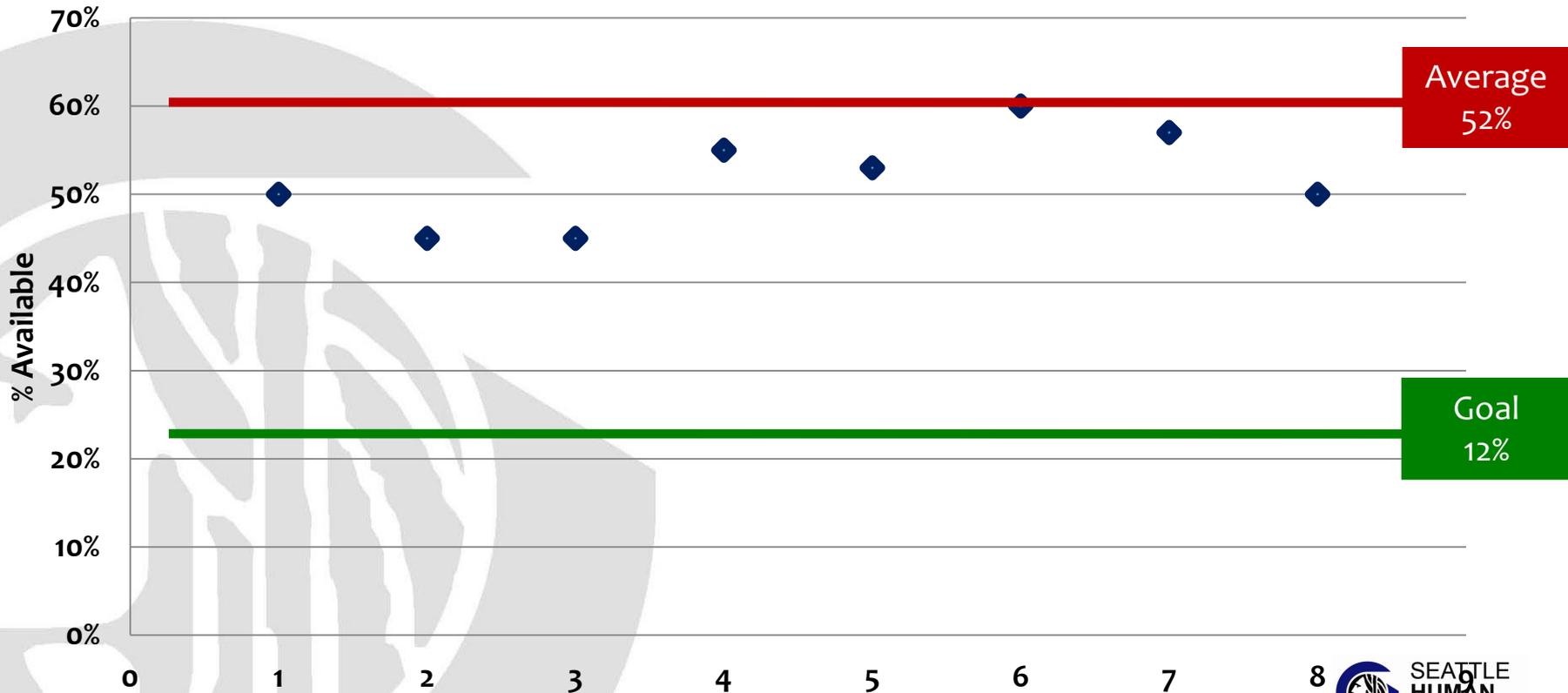
Average  
5%

Goal  
0.5%

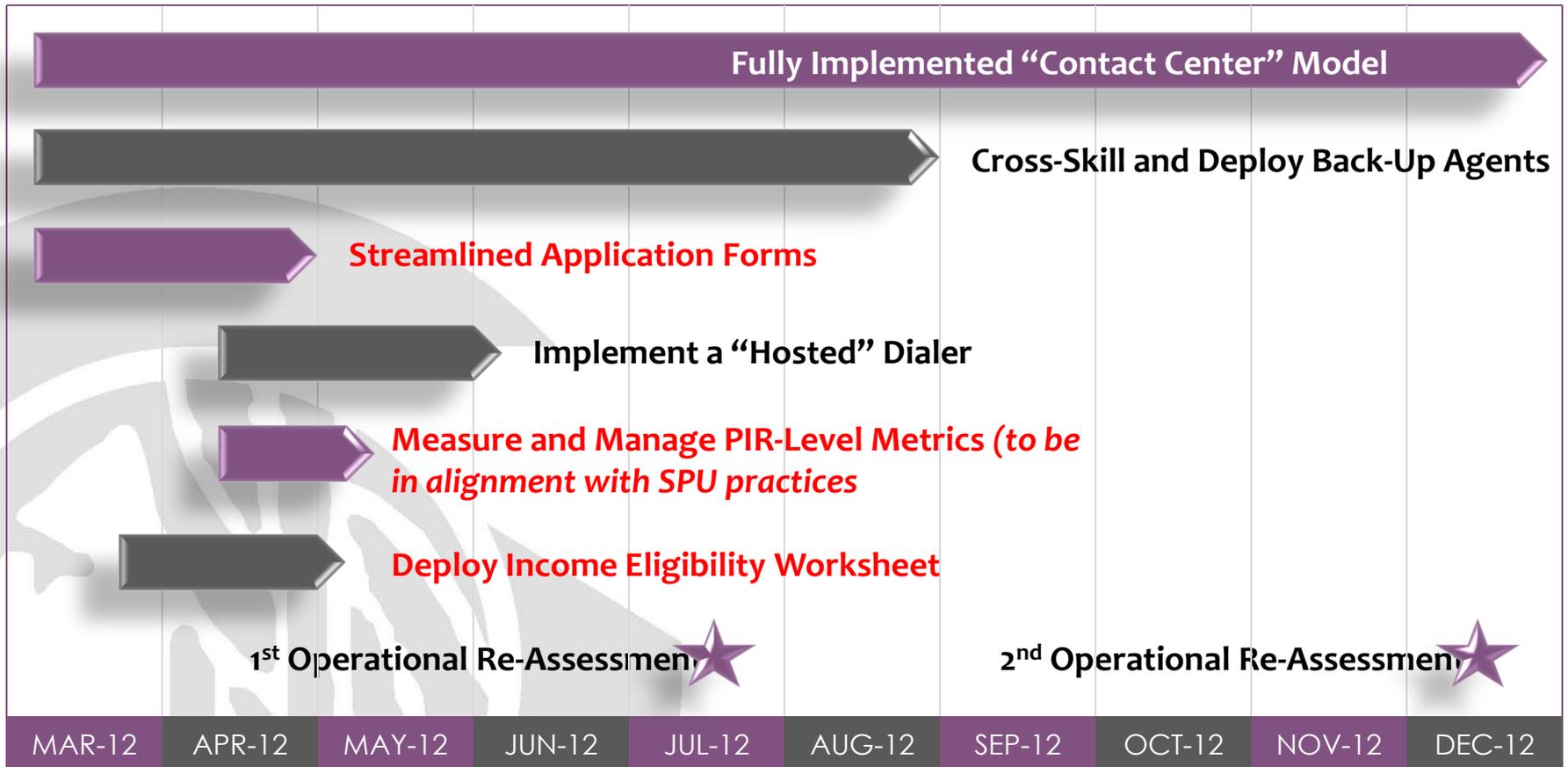
# Measure and Manage PIR-Level Metrics

## Average Available % by PIR:

**HSD - Utility Discount Program**  
% Available by PIR (November 2011)



# Timeline for Future Operations Improvement



# Questions and Comments

