



Hancock Software Case Study

LIHEAP Solution Minimizes Overhead, Improves Efficiency & Regulatory Reporting for the State of Louisiana

Key Highlights

Customer

State of Louisiana

Industry

LIHEAP Fuel Assistance

Location

Louisiana, LA, USA

Key Benefit

Eliminated errors and automated manual processes

Overview

Since the inception of the LIHEAP program, all states have been required to report on key metrics of its management. Louisiana had been compiling information over the years by hand and/or with locally developed data collection systems. As a result, many community agencies who implement the program only had the resources to provide part of the information needed to generate the detailed reports required by the Department of Energy and the Department of Health and Human Services. Some of their data collection systems offered only limited analysis of client data, little ability to provide insight into the demographics of the population served, and no ability to report historical trending. Internal audit reviews identified several deficiencies that required the state program to improve the delivery and accuracy of their Fuel Assistance and Weatherization programs. “We were severely challenged to efficiently and accurately administer, track and provide regulatory reporting for our multimillion dollar programs without a centralized online system,” said Danny E Veals, Information Technology Director.

The Administrative Challenge

The LIHEAP program required a comprehensive, automated system to manage more than fifty participating community action agencies. The system needed to track detailed eligibility information, demographic data, and payment records for thousands of households across the state. Louisiana also recognized that the regulatory requirements of the federal system were growing more demanding and requiring even more detailed, complex reporting. They sought a system with the flexibility and extensibility to support continually changing requirements without extensive reprogramming or the need to purchase replacement systems in the future.

The Evaluation Process

The state of Louisiana defined the following criteria in its search for the right solution:

- Single system to manage both LIHEAP and WAP programs
- Simple, user friendly design
- Web-based direct access for all CAA agencies
- Customizable for state-specific needs
- Rapid implementations
- Proven through successful use by agencies providing similar energy assistance programs around the nation

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Danny Veals
Information Technology
Director

Develop In-house or Choose Off-the-shelf

After extensive research, the state of Louisiana concluded that no existing, off-the-shelf software system could address both their weatherization and LIHEAP needs. The agency was also unwilling to invest years and millions of dollars for internal software development as other states have done. As part of their extensive due diligence, Louisiana visited and rated several energy software vendors (including Hancock Software) and vendors' clients to validate:

- 1) the performance of the centralized database,
- 2) the ease of state-wide administration and management, and
- 3) its reporting features.

These features were the key criteria for a successful software solution for Louisiana fuel assistance and weatherization programs. In selecting the Hancock solution, the state concluded that the broad abilities of LIHEAP and WAP web-based systems would allow them to track all the key metrics they needed, produce the reports necessary to maintain themselves in good standing with the federal funding agencies, and have the accountability and audit trails the state also needed.

A Fast, Cost Effective Solution

Louisiana deployed Hancock's LIHEAP and Weatherization system as a web-enabled software application that met all of their administrative needs. The project was completed on time and within budget, at a fraction of the cost of other similarly-developed projects. It enabled LHFA to implement and meet their federal program requirements in only four months. "Our discussions with other jurisdictions during this process prepared us for the possibility that implementation could take a year," said Mr. Veals, " Hancock Software committed to help us manage information at our fingertips. This demanding installation, training, and go-live project and their efforts actually helped us reduce the implementation time to four months! We eliminated human errors by automating previously manual processes and continue to look forward to Hancock's advice and new features in the LIHEAP system around client benefit calculations and payment processing. We continuously extend the abilities of the software to meet our expanding programs. The solution provides full visibility to CAA agency performance and automates rule enforcement. Hancock has been a true partner."

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Danny Veals
IT Director, LHC

Dramatic Benefits

In just four months, Louisiana was able to dramatically shorten the time from client application to payment of the benefit check. In addition, the state increased the frequency of payments from monthly to weekly. They virtually eliminated human errors by automating previously manual processes. The system provides full visibility to CAA agency performance, automates rule enforcement to ensure consistency, includes built-in fraud detection, controls distribution of budgets, and produces DHHS and DOE operational and statistical reports. The system also easily accommodates additional allocations from new funding sources with minimal support cost.