



## **LIHEAP PERFORMANCE MEASURES UPDATE**

**"Unity is strength. . . when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved."**

**-Mattie Stepanek**

### **Working with Multi-State Vendors**

Amerigas, Xcel Energy, Atmos Energy, Centerpoint Energy, and Duke Power are just a few of the vendors that conduct business in several states. One of these vendors, Xcel Energy, took the lead to standardize the methodology for data collection across all the states they serve. They will provide energy cost data to all states they operate in at the end of the federal fiscal year.

Xcel Energy got involved with this project as a result of a vendor meeting that Aggie Berens, LIHEAP Director for the state of Colorado, held in September of 2014 to introduce performance measures and to develop a game plan on how to collect the data. Aggie invited all her top 5/ top 10 vendors to the meeting. At the meeting Aggie shared information developed by the APPRISE team and the Performance Measures Implementation Work Group including talking points and templates. By the end of the meeting, all the vendors had agreed on a format/template that would be used to collect the data and agreed to begin providing the data in the fall of 2015.

The approach used to develop a tool to meet the new federal guidelines was "Keep it Simple." The strategy outlined for this approach was to communicate with other states, meet and educate utility suppliers that had the ability to automate their process, utilize the tools and resources made available by APPRISE, and to adopt a common goal that would be better served by all parties; state, utility suppliers and LIHEAP clients. Aggie did not include other states' LIHEAP coordinators in her vendor meeting because she was unaware of which states the other vendors operated in.

Diedra Howard, representing Xcel Energy, left the vendor meeting and went to work with Xcel's IT department to standardize the data requests and reports across all states in which they provide service. Diedra and IT took a look at what each state was asking for, found commonality, and then finalized the report template and what data they would be providing to the states.

One reason for the success that Colorado has experienced directly relates to the strong working relationship LIHEAP has with their vendors, community partners, and beneficiaries. Diedra stated that her conversations with Aggie and the information Aggie brought to the table from the LIHEAP Performance Measures Working Group supplied the Xcel Energy Team with the knowledge of what data needs to be collected.

Aggie and Diedra have worked as a team for about three and one half years. The levels of communication are always the same with the key components being consistency with availability, along with open communications. Both Aggie and Diedra readily display dedication, passion and the willingness to support families that are in need.

Colorado LIHEAP has established a practice of updating their vendor agreements every five years with the next update being the fall of 2015. The present vendor agreement for Colorado's 2015 LIHEAP Program does not include language about collecting performance measures data. This language will be added to the new vendor

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## Multi-State Vendors Cont'd from Page 1

agreement. In spite of not having any language about collecting data in the current agreement, all vendors were willing to work with Aggie and provide the information this year.

Colorado's "Best Practices" for the development of their LIHEAP data collection process and what they would like to share with their peers from other states includes:

- Develop a working relationship between all interested parties and utilize open communications.
- Provide reliable Information. This will help to guide discussions.
- Research and identify information utilize by other states.
- Utilize the APPRISE team and other available resources.
- Coordinate your efforts with other state coordinators who use the same vendors.

The APPRISE Team, along with the LIHEAP Clearinghouse, have developed a list, broken out by vendor, showing all the states each vendor serves.

For a complete listing of vendors who operate in multiple states, please go to <https://liheappm.ncat.org/>. Once you are signed in, click on Grantee Resources, then click on Tools for Grantees, then click on Best Practices. You will find the lists of multi-state vendors here.

The work group strongly advises states to look at this list, contact some of the other states served by a common vendor to see what success they've had with a specific vendor, get a contact name of a person they worked with at specific vendor's office, and try to build on what the other state has already accomplished. If no one has contacted a specific vendor, perhaps one coordinator could take the lead to schedule a meeting with all impacted state coordinators and the vendor to develop a reporting mechanism that works for all the states and the vendor; much like Xcel Energy did. By working together all states will get consistent data and it should save time for the coordinators and vendors involved.

**"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."**

-Harriet Tubman

## Get Connected

*The Discussion Forum*, on the performance measures website at <https://liheappm.ncat.org/>, has been renamed *The Connection*. The new name better describes the purpose of the site; to provide a space for grantees to connect with and learn from one another. It is the place you can go to ask questions about performance measures. It's also a place where you can share your success stories, best practices, and feedback with other grantees.

Why recreate the wheel? If you've got a question or something you want to share, use *The Connection*. By helping one another, implementation of the new Performance Measures can be easier for all of us.



## Baltimore or Bust This June

If you haven't heard already, there will be many training and networking opportunities available to you this June in Baltimore including national LIHEAP training sponsored by OCS/ACF, the National Energy Assistance Director's Association (NEADA) summer meeting, and the National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference.

The National LIHEAP Training, sponsored by OCS/ACF will be held June 17-19 and will cover a number of topics including performance measures. The first day of the training, June 17, is being devoted to training for new program managers and those who never received any training and want to learn the ins and outs of administering LIHEAP. It is strongly recommended states attend.

The cost for this training can be paid out of your administrative dollars providing you have enough admin money left without going over your admin cap. The benefit of attending is that you not only get the training but also get to learn from others' questions and the answers and have the opportunity to network with your peers. For more information on this valuable training, go to [www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/liheap-conference](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/liheap-conference).

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## Best Practices - Spotlight on Wyoming

Wyoming is well on its way to collecting data for the new performance measures. They've met with their vendors, developed strategies to exchange usage information, worked with their sub-grantee, and have included new questions on their application.

Wyoming started talking with their vendors in 2012 about the proposed performance measures. In August of 2013 they invited all their fuel vendors to a meeting to discuss the proposed measures and the best way to collect the required data. While not all the vendors attended, they had a good turnout that included several vendors who flew in representatives from their corporate offices located in other states. Attendees discussed best practices for collecting the required data, vendor agreements, confidentiality, and improvements they'd like to see in the LIHEAP benefit process.

The group met again in 2014 to review a mock-up of the data collection sheet and to provide input for the final product. When they meet in August of 2015, the State will give the vendors a preliminary list of customers to collect the data on so that they can test the process and discuss any glitches that still need to be worked out.

According to Brenda Ilg, Wyoming's LIHEAP Program Manager, vendor negotiations went very smoothly. She feels that one of the reasons for this is that she included the vendors in brainstorming and developing the final product that will be used to collect data. Additionally, Wyoming began the process very early in the game, and Ilg believes that this proactive approach helped both the State and the utility vendors plan, prepare for, and implement the steps necessary to begin collecting data for the new performance measures. Ilg noted, "It's go-time in Wyoming. We're already at the starting line. Our focus now is on testing, fine-tuning, and improving to ensure a strong finish."

Vendors in Wyoming have different abilities to transfer data to the State. The State will provide client data on one standardized form that will be sent to all vendors. The vendors will decide how they are going to transfer the data back, depending upon the vendor's size and capabilities.

Some will use a secure file server to transfer the data while others will use other secure means to send back information for the State to manually input. Data will be collected after the end of the season.

Wyoming added questions to their application to collect restoration and prevention of service disconnect data. Their eligibility system was also updated to include information relating to:

- If the benefit applied to a deposit for new service or to restore service.
- If the household's furnace is broken or in need of repair.
- If the household has a disconnect notice or are disconnected.

The State has updated the client waiver language on their application to include permission to collect the performance measures data.

Wyoming uses one centralized sub-grantee for intake, eligibility verification, and application processing. The current sub-grantee, Align, inputs applicant data directly into the State's LIEAP computer system. Utility data will be sent to the State and the sub-grantee will assist with any necessary manual utility data entry into the State computer system.

Wyoming has a centralized, oracle-based IT system that was built by a state programmer who still does most of the upgrades. The system captures some weatherization data and interfaces with the SNAP and TANF systems. The LIEAP sub-grantee has access to the Wyoming SNAP and TANF eligibility system for added verification of income and identity. This summer they will be testing the collection and compilation of data for reporting on the new performance measures.

If you have any questions about Wyoming's efforts and steps they've taken to collect performance measures data, Brenda Ilg can be reached at [brenda.ilg@wyo.gov](mailto:brenda.ilg@wyo.gov).

## Working With Sub-Grantees to Collect Performance Measures Data

A number of states use sub-grantees for intake, eligibility determinations, and/or payment of client benefits. If you are one of these states, you will need to develop a methodology to collect the required data from your local agencies administering the program. In this article we will focus on two states, Alabama and Indiana, where they have agreements in place with their sub-grantees and look at what steps they took to bring the sub-grantees on board.

In Alabama, LIHEAP is housed in the Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). Alabama has 22 sub-grantees; 21 community action agencies and one non-profit. Every sub-grantee utilizes the state's web-based system, FACSPRO. This scenario allows the ADECA staff to view household data, awards, and expenditures in real time. This system also allows the generation of reports at both the agency and state level.

Alabama's sub-grantees complete the intake process through face-to-face appointments with clients. If all required documentation has been provided, the intake staff enters all the data into FACSPRO. The system determines eligibility and the client's award amount. Sub-grantees mail checks to energy vendors within 30 days of the award. Sub-grantees also participate in various outreach efforts, provide case management, and hold energy/financial counseling classes.

The sub-grantees do not collect energy usage at time of intake. They enter the client's vendor and account number into FACSPRO for payment purposes and maintain a signed copy of the LIHEAP application for their files. The release on the application contains a client waiver which allows ADECA to collect utility data at the end of the fiscal year. At that time, the state office intends to provide a list of clients to each of their top ten vendors and request energy expenditure data for the previous 12 months in electronic format that will be imported into FACSPRO.

Alabama first introduced performance measures to their sub-grantees at their sub-grantee training workshop in October 2012. They explained that OCS may begin requesting additional data to more accurately assess each State's program and the impact it has on clients. Required measures had not been identified or approved by OMB at that point, but Alabama felt it was important to share some of the proposed measures to give their sub-grantees an idea of what might be forthcoming. They continue to keep sub-grantees updated on performance measures through discussion at their annual training workshop and via email.

Alabama suggests: "If you haven't already started a dialogue with your subcontractors, it would be beneficial to begin as soon as possible, especially if it will impact their intake activities or workload. Once they are clear about what information is needed to report on performance measures and how it will be used to analyze the overall program, it can lead not only to consensus building, but could also be valuable in the development of best management practices for data collection."

Indiana also uses sub-grantees for intake, eligibility determinations, benefit notification and outreach. They currently work with 23 sub-grantees. Payments are processed by the state and sent directly to their utility/heating vendors.

In Indiana, the State will collect the utility data directly from the vendors. Sub-grantees provide information on the client's status, for example, was the client in crisis or shut off, via a statewide database. The State office uses the intake information to populate its lists which is sent to the vendors who then provide the data on cost and consumption of energy directly back to the State.

Indiana began discussing performance measures with their sub-grantees at the inception of the idea. They have used several vehicles to educate and update their sub-grantees including a series of webinars, informal conversations, bi-monthly program updates, and reminders during annual trainings. Performance measures data collection expectations are also included in the State's contract with their sub-grantees which is renewed annually. A copy of Indiana's Memorandum of Understanding with their sub-grantees can be found under "tools" on the performance measures website.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**June 17-19, 2015—National LIHEAP  
Training, Baltimore, MD**

**June 20 & 21, 2015—NEADA Summer  
Meeting, Baltimore, MD**

**June 22-24, 2015—National Energy and  
Utility Affordability Conference (NEUAC)  
Baltimore, MD**

## Attention all LIHEAP Grantees!

- **Interested in helping others become more familiar with LIHEAP?**
  - Become a mentor and share your experiences to help others with their program. It does not require a lot of time, but the impact you create is infinite.
- **Have you ever felt that you want to make your LIHEAP program stronger?**
  - Work with a volunteer mentor to ask questions of your colleagues and have a resource to talk with through changes and updates you want to make.



*Join as a mentor or mentee!*

**LIHEAP Peer Mentoring Program**

If you would like to participate in this program, please e-mail [LIHEAP.Mentoring@briljent.com](mailto:LIHEAP.Mentoring@briljent.com) for more information.

## Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Network

Share your expertise? Ask questions about LIHEAP? Recognizing the fact that the experience and expertise of current LIHEAP Directors is a valuable resource that needs to be shared, OCS has funded a contractor, Brilljent, Inc., to organize a process for sharing ideas, solutions and questions. The Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Network is a voluntary program designed to help connect grantees and build informal relationships through which they can seek assistance in implementing and administering LIHEAP. This network will provide an informal opportunity to share knowledge and skills and allow for networking with subject matter experts and other grantees. Become a mentor and provide professional guidance and share relevant experiences. Or, participate as a mentee to work with a mentor and talk through changes and updates you want to make in your own LIHEAP community.

Check out [LIHEAP.Mentoring@briljent.com](mailto:LIHEAP.Mentoring@briljent.com) for more information and learn how you can participate. The forms you need to complete to be either a mentor or mentee can be found at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/resource/dear-colleague-notice-on-peer-to-peer-mentoring-program>.

## New Work Group Members

Keep reading for the latest scoop on our two newest members, Chuck Anderson from Connecticut and Cecil Daniels from Washington state.

**Cecil Daniels**  
**State of Washington**  
[cecil.daniels@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:cecil.daniels@commerce.wa.gov)



Washington State is currently collecting most of the required data except the annual electric usage. Washington has had preliminary conversations with their largest regulated vendors with the goal of collecting the usage data. Their biggest challenge will be to get the non-regulated vendors, smaller vendors, and perhaps the deliverable fuel vendors on board. They plan to continue with face-to-face meetings with vendors to build relationships and enlighten them about the benefits of providing the required data.

As Washington began this process they learned that they needed to improve communications and their relationship with their vendors. Up until this point, the local

### New Work Group Members Continued from Page 5

community action agencies had developed working relationships with local utilities but the state had not. Thanks to the new performance measures and the need to collect energy consumption data, that has changed and Washington is now engaged directly with their vendors as well as their subcontractors.

Cecil joined the work group to gain a better understanding of what is being proposed and to gain a better insight and ideas about ways to approach the new requirements.

**Chuck Anderson**  
**State of Connecticut**  
[Charles.anderson@ct.gov](mailto:Charles.anderson@ct.gov)

In Connecticut, a Performance Measures Work Group, composed primarily of state and community action agency (CAA) staff, was formed in the Spring of 2014 to assess what changes were needed to ensure that energy burden-related data would be collected beginning in FFY 15. By July, the work group, with approval of management, had developed a set of questions relating to the prevention or restoration of home energy services and integrated these questions into the software systems used by CAAs to take LIHEAP applications. Connecticut also added a procedural requirement that all households responsible for making direct-to-vendor payments for their heat would need to provide a current copy of their electric bill when applying for energy assistance, regardless of whether electricity was their primary or secondary heating source. Information relating to new Performance Measures requirements was also included in the FFY 15 LIHEAP allocation plan, as well as in FFY 15 vendor agreements.

Connecticut is nearing the end of the 2014/15 winter season, and will soon be collecting energy burden information from the software systems, and then securing consumption-related data from appropriate vendors. This information, along with an analysis of the home energy service prevention/restoration questions noted above, should be sufficient to complete the Performance Measures part of the Grantee Survey due in January, 2016. Connecticut may be challenged by the willingness of some vendors to provide consumption data, since they may not have adequate systems in place to track this information. Of course, results from this initial year's run will be assessed, and both processes and software will be modified as warranted to improve future results.

Lessons Connecticut has learned through this process are to be as inclusive as possible while implementing this

initiative and that maintaining good communications between all parties is key to obtaining reliable data.

Chuck joined the work group with hope that his involvement will lead to a better understanding of the struggles and success of other states as performance measures-related processes evolve, and that in the end, performance measures data in Connecticut can be used to better focus resources on households with the highest energy burdens.

### Farewells

We must also bid farewell to Kathleen Cruz from Arizona who has moved on to new horizons. Good Luck Kathleen in all your future endeavors!

### Baltimore or Bust This June Cont'd from Page 2

The National Energy Assistance Director's Association serves as the primary educational and policy organization for LIHEAP state grantees and represents its members in Washington, DC. Their meeting covers a range of topics from fraud prevention to appropriation updates to crisis program management and, once again, provides an excellent opportunity to meet other state coordinators and learn about what is going on with their programs, initiatives they have taken, and hear about the success they are having. This year's summer meeting will be held on June 20 and 21.

The National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference is an annual conference that focuses on programs and policies that help low-income households meet their home energy needs. It is an opportunity to learn new things and network with a wide range of people from state government, community agencies, utilities, and advocates for the low-income. A workshop on Performance Measures will be held on Tuesday at 3 pm. The conference runs from June 22 through June 24 at the Marriott in Downtown Baltimore. For more information on the NEADA meeting and the NEUAC conference, please go to <http://www.neuac.org/> and click on the 2015 conference.

