

Executive Summary

Low Income Home Energy Assistance
Program (LIHEAP)
State Grantee Survey Results
2010



Performance Measures Implementation Work Group

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Executive Summary

This executive summary provides a preliminary analysis of the survey conducted to determine the current and prospective ability of Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) State grantees to implement the proposed LIHEAP performance measures¹.

Methodology

Data was collected through a 216-item, online survey developed by the LIHEAP Performance Measures Implementation Work Group (PMIWG). The survey contained questions about grantees' data collection capacity, LIHEAP program administration and composition, as well as information technology (IT), funding, staffing, and technical assistance needs. The survey received a 90 percent response rate (46 out of 51 State grantees).

Data was not collected on Tier 1 measures because all states should be able to currently report outputs for these measures. Tier 1 measures provide information on the number of households applying for and served with LIHEAP funding, including crisis and weatherization clients, and the ability of states to reach their target groups populations.

Findings

Tier 2 Performance Measures

A substantial amount of State grantees can report on some or all of Tier 2 performance measures. These measures provide data on energy burden, energy crisis mitigation, energy service restoration, heating equipment operability, energy education, and benefit leveraging. Survey data indicated the following:

- 90 percent or more collect income and annual benefit of recipients;
- 78 percent collect unduplicated number of households who received any type of LIHEAP assistance;
- 65 percent collect total leverage resources and receipt of benefit within crisis timeline;
- 82 percent or more do not collect home energy advocacy data or measured savings one year after LIHEAP weatherization assistance;
- 67 percent more do not collect data on the notice of disconnection or nondelivery prior to LIHEAP, equipment present or working at first inspection, or effective energy use post LIHEAP weatherization assistance; and
- Connecticut, Montana, and Minnesota collect 75 percent or more of Tier 2 data elements.

Regardless of whether grantees indicated an implementation timeframe of either less or greater than two years, grantees reported that they need funding for IT system and software changes in order to implement the proposed performance measures.

¹ LIHEAP Performance Implementation Work Group, (2010). "Proposal for LIHEAP Performance Measures: Draft Report."

Tier 3 Performance Measures

A majority of State grantees do not collect Tier 3 performance measures. These measures provide data on outcomes such as consistency of payments on energy bills, reduction in arrearages, number of interruptions after receiving benefits, and the impact of energy education on usage. Survey data indicated the following:

- 37 percent collect data on actual cost of energy per unit;
- 91 percent or more do not collect data on disconnection or no fuel after benefit, working equipment post receipt, arrearages post receipt, or payment plan maintenance;
- 73 percent or more do not collect data on amount of energy used, energy savings one year post weatherization, or consumption of energy post receipt; and
- Connecticut, Maine, and Ohio collect at least 50 percent or more of Tier 3 data elements.

The data suggested that the Tier 3 measures are greatly affected by (a) the amount of information that can be gathered by outside agencies, such as utility companies, and (b) the coordination between those outside agencies. State grantees indicated a need for funding for IT staffing in order to collect these measures.

IT, Partnering, Utility Information, and Weatherization

- Although system capabilities vary greatly among States, the majority of grantees report a computer system in place and some access to agency or state IT staff.
- Most grantees are interested in learning from other grantees in areas such as data collection processes, procedures for recording, storing, and compiling data, and computer systems and software.
- Data related to utility information is largely obtained from the applicant household or a collateral contact. Eighty-nine percent of grantees make payments directly to the utility company or fuel supplier, and 74 percent have agreements with vendors regarding payment credits, refunds, and transfers.
- Most State grantees use subgrantees for weatherization purposes. Of these grantees, 84 percent of their subgrantees are reporting required or requested data. Most of the reports submitted by subgrantees are done through centralized databases, paper reports, or a computer program compatible with the state's.

Implementation Issues

Issues identified as possible barriers to implementation include:

- LIHEAP as a one-time benefit,
- Frequently moving population is difficult to track,
- Households may use multiple suppliers,
- Lack of staff necessary to do appropriate follow-up,
- Data not relevant to client's needs,

- Lack of central reporting system for data collected at sub-recipient level,
- Too time consuming,
- Lack of coordination with weatherization assistance agency, and
- Lack of coordination with a large number of utilities.

If implementation is mandatory, 59 percent of grantees anticipate they are likely to implement the performance measures; 16 percent indicated they are unlikely to implement the measures; and 74 percent indicated implementation would have a significant or extreme impact on staff.

Conclusions

- Ninety percent of the states took the time to respond to the survey which demonstrates a high level of cooperation and an interest in what can be done to facilitate implementations of the measures.
- More than 65 percent of the states collect some Tier 2 measures and several states are already collecting some Tier 3 data. These states are a valuable resource that we can go to for ideas, to learn about their best practices, and for IT guidance.
- Every state operates their program differently. We may not come up with a one-size-fits-all solution or methodology but we will be able to identify various methods for reaching the same data collection goals.
- Collaboration with outside resources is crucial to collecting some data required to report on specific measures and at the same time cooperation with these same entities is a barrier for many states. Outside resources include vendors, utilities, weatherization contractors, energy educators, and programs designed to improve client payment behaviors.
- This process is going to take time. There are barriers to overcome, partnerships with outside agencies need to be built, and software/IT changes need to be made. Changes in software and IT infrastructures will require funding from states and through federal demonstration grants to help offset the costs of these upgrades and changes.

Recommendations

The PMIWG will continue to identify ways of overcoming barriers, to ascertain and share successful best practices currently being used by states, and to provide templates and tools to facilitate adoption of the performance measures by all states.

Survey Accuracy

This study has several limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results. Respondents may have over or underreported. Questions may have been misunderstood and answered incorrectly. Therefore, additional research is needed in order to clarify certain issues and to determine what factors are statistically significant.