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NATIONAL ENERGY & UTILITY AFFORDABILITY COALITION



Lessons Learned from COVID Supplemental LIHEAP Funding

A Case Study

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Executive Summary

NEUAC's mission in ending energy poverty includes increasing awareness of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)¹. LIHEAP is not an entitlement program. Benefits are provided each fiscal year subject to funding availability. LIHEAP is a fundamental tool in eradicating energy poverty throughout the nation. This program allows for energy assistance, including heating, cooling, weatherization, etc., to be distributed as a block grant to states. The COVID-19 pandemic caused some state agencies to transition to completely remote application processing systems, leaving state administrations to scramble to tackle how to best serve households in a time of extreme need.

This case study provides insight into how states responded to the pandemic, as well as how supplemental funding (CARES Act, Supplemental LIHEAP at \$900 million, State and Local Funds at Varied amounts, Consolidated Appropriations Act, Emergency Rental Assistance at \$25 billion, Low Income Household Water Assistance Program at \$638 million, FY21 Regular LIHEAP Funds at \$3.765 billion, American Rescue Plan, Supplemental LIHEAP at \$4.5 billion, Emergency Rental Assistance an additional \$20.25 billion, Homeowners Assistance Fund at \$9.961 billion) was utilized to reduce energy burden between 2019-2022. Data provided by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) LIHEAP Data Warehouse² and data provided by RMI³ was used to explore currents amongst states with increases to certain programs, decreases to certain programs, and crisis-related trends amongst the five regions. Interviews were conducted with LIHEAP state directors and LIHEAP administrators from five states—New York, Illinois, Colorado, Washington, and Texas—in spring 2024 to dig deeper into these trends and better understand the decisions made and ways funding was spent during a time of crisis. These interviews provided a robust understanding of lessons learned from supplemental funding increases throughout the pandemic, what worked and didn't work, what processes are expected to continue even after pandemic funding ends, and what processes are being kept as emergency protocols. This case study aims to provide context on how LIHEAP functions, especially during the pandemic, and the power the program has in alleviating energy poverty across the United States.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed greater issues than many could imagine at the time. LIHEAP helps families across the country by supporting them with household weatherization and helping alleviate energy burdens. While this has always been true of the program, the importance for LIHEAP was proven tenfold when COVID-19 hit and the program received billions in supplemental funding.⁴ With unemployment rates skyrocketing⁵ and energy companies taking financial hits⁶, American families were at risk of bearing the burden of this unforeseen circumstance. COVID-19 underscored the fundamental need for the program, and because of the ongoing pandemic, that need would only continue into the years ahead.

While LIHEAP is a federal program, each state, tribal, or territory grantee is tasked with determining the most effective way to administer the program⁷, whether it be strictly for heating/cooling assistance, a percentage to pass through to weatherization (up to the federal limitation of 25 percent), or an amalgamation of various subsets of assistance. There are noted differences between regions. For example, states in the South may tend to apply more toward cooling assistance than those in the North,

or coastal states may put more toward weatherization to better protect homes against unpredictable weather phenomena compared to their Midwestern counterparts. There is no one “correct” way to use LIHEAP funds, but by taking a closer look at sample states from each region, it is possible to better understand how LIHEAP addresses energy insecurity across the United States.

About LIHEAP and the Need for Additional Funding

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a critical, life-saving program that serves eligible households in all 50 states plus U.S. territories and tribes; including those persons most susceptible to illness or death resulting from unsafe indoor air temperatures. The program has been crucial in serving vulnerable populations in need of energy assistance. However, each year, roughly 83% of federally eligible households go unserved, largely because of funding limitations (see table 1)⁸.

LIHEAP is housed under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Lack of access to utilities can contribute to human health or safety crises. These include toxic air quality in homes that have inadequately operating furnaces, hypothermia and other illnesses as a result of going without heat, or heat-related illnesses from being exposed to extremely high indoor air temperatures⁹. LIHEAP helps address health and safety issues in the homes of eligible recipients. The interviews with LIHEAP state program managers confirmed that LIHEAP is a valuable resource to address these types of emergencies at the household level.

National Level Data: Who is Eligible vs. Who is Served

Fiscal Year	Grantee (All states, tribes and territories)	Federally Income-Eligible Households - Total	% of Income-Eligible Households Served by Any Type of LIHEAP Assistance
2015	All grantees(summed)	35,537,739	17.571%
2016	All grantees(summed)	35,230,008	16.755%
2017	All grantees(summed)	35,229,190	16.738%
2018	All grantees(summed)	34,913,301	16.673%
2019	All grantees(summed)	33,837,324	17.087%

2020	All grantees(summed)	33,441,251	16.837%
2021*	All grantees(summed)	34,161,280	15.783%
2022*	All grantees(summed)	33,968,239	17.871%

Table 1, National Data provided by LIHEAP Data Warehouse. *Data for years marked with an asterisk are preliminary pending final data validation.

The national data demonstrates the need for increased funding, as there is a clear gap in how many households are eligible compared to those able to be served with the amount of funding received, historically. This data translates to a state level as well. The key states that this case study will be focusing on are New York, Illinois, Colorado, Washington, and Texas (see figure 1). These states were chosen to provide regional perspectives¹⁰ and create a balanced representation of the ways supplemental funding was expended and the unique challenges faced during the pandemic.

Featured States

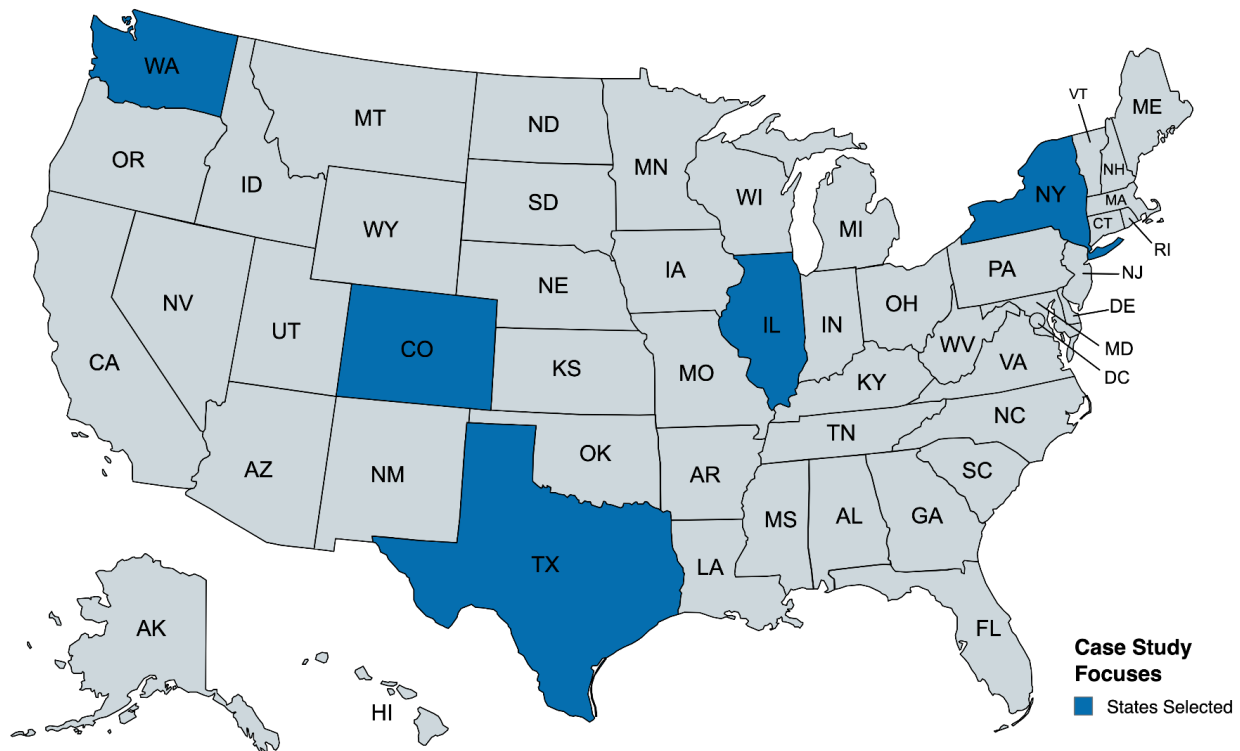


Figure 1, made with MapChart.net

The data from each state mirrors information derived from the national data. The tables below (see tables 2-6) show the percentage of households that were eligible compared to those served between years 2019 through 2022. These years were chosen to highlight any significant differences between

2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic compared to 2020-2022 during the pandemic, as well as demonstrate that even with supplemental funding, only a fraction of eligible households were able to be served. Also, geographically, some smaller states were able to serve a higher percentage of the income-eligible population¹¹. It is important to note that the number of households served during the pandemic is but one indicator of the ways additional funds were utilized. In some cases (see XXX state), average benefits increased in order to address growth in arrearages during extended moratoria in place during the pandemic. This depth of services replaced breadth of services, in some cases.

New York

Fiscal Year	Grantee	State Income-Eligible Households - Total	% of IEH Served by Any Type of LIHEAP Assistance
2019	New York	2,281,482	46.163%
2020	New York	2,251,793	46.001%
2021*	New York	2,291,897	45.062%
2022*	New York	2,280,066	52.406%

Table 2, State Data provided by LIHEAP Data Warehouse. *Data for years marked with an asterisk are preliminary pending final data validation.

Illinois

Fiscal Year	Grantee	State Income-Eligible Households – Total	% of IEH Served by Any Type of LIHEAP Assistance
2019	Illinois	932,467	16.523%
2020	Illinois	916,805	18.916%
2021*	Illinois	1,280,791	14.615%
2022*	Illinois	1,221,576	18.721%

Table 3, State Data provided by LIHEAP Data Warehouse. *Data for years marked with an asterisk are preliminary pending final data validation.

Colorado

Fiscal Year	Grantee	State Income-Eligible Households - Total	% of IEH Served by Any Type of LIHEAP Assistance
2019*	Colorado	377,432	12.23%
2020*	Colorado	542,815	14.116%
2021*	Colorado	539,159	14.364%
2022*	Colorado	550,596	15.274%

Table 4, State Data LIHEAP Data Warehouse. *Data for years marked with an asterisk are preliminary pending final data validation.

Washington

Fiscal Year	Grantee	State Income-Eligible Households - Total	% of IEH Served by Any Type of LIHEAP Assistance
2019	Washington	349,933	9.334%
2020	Washington	340,243	10.79%
2021*	Washington	424,862	9.949%
2022*	Washington	401,083	12.624%

Table 5, State Data provided by LIHEAP Data Warehouse. *Data for years marked with an asterisk are preliminary pending final data validation.

Texas

Fiscal Year	Grantee	State Income-Eligible Households — Total	% of IEH Served by Any Type of LIHEAP Assistance
2019*	Texas	2,109,662	5.771%
2020*	Texas	2,092,327	5.521%
2021*	Texas	2,097,264	4.612%
2022*	Texas	2,715,064	4.399%

Table 6, National Sata provided by LIHEAP Data Warehouse. *Data for years marked with an asterisk are preliminary pending final data validation.

The information provided in these tables paint a clear picture that a lack of overall funding oftentimes leaves a majority of income-eligible households without assistance. This assistance is critical, especially during heating and cooling seasons. The recipients of these benefits are targeted toward households with low incomes, elderly citizens, disabled citizens, and those with young children¹².

This data underscores the ever-urgent need to maximize regular LIHEAP funding. While supplemental funding is beneficial, having a consistent stream of funding that implementing agencies can rely on from year-to-year improves program and household stability. Expanding and contracting the program in a short time frame creates difficulties in administering an already complex federal assistance program, including challenges with work force, public perception of the program offerings, and continuity of programming. This is not only difficult for eligible recipients of these funds who become accustomed to the availability of certain assistance, but the administrations operating these programs. It takes time to formulate and implement LIHEAP; and when funding is unstable and insufficient, enormously helpful programs¹³ are forced to be deprioritized.

Uses for Supplemental Funds

States identified many uses for supplemental funding; while benefit increases did occur throughout the states studied, several other uses for these funds were noted. The list below demonstrates some ways supplemental LIHEAP funds were utilized to expand the program during the pandemic. The list, while comprehensive for the states interviewed, does not encompass all potential uses of LIHEAP funds during the COVID-19 pandemic.

States have the ability to decide and prioritize the most beneficial programs for their states and use the funding flexibly, within the broad parameters of the LIHEAP statute and regulations¹⁴. Many LIHEAP grantees were able to incorporate new programs as well as increase their overall bill assistance for customers, resulting in a deeper level of benefits¹⁵. Customers with outstanding arrearages were able to have the majority or all of those debts forgiven in some cases. Documented uses include:

- Creating cooling programs or funding cooling programs to their full potential
- Increasing the maximum benefit per household
- Creating arrearage forgiveness programs
- Increasing the weatherization funding allocation percentage
- Expanding energy crisis programs
- Creating or expanding online applications and systems
- Expanding partnerships with utility companies or other stakeholders
- Expanding eligibility

Bills and Supplemental Funding

CARES Act (2022)	Supplemental LIHEAP \$900 million	State and Local Funds Varied amounts	
Consolidated Appropriations Act (2021-2022)	Emergency Rental Assistance \$25 billion	Low Income Household Water Assistance Program \$638 million	FY21 Regular LIHEAP Funds \$3.765 billion
American Rescue Plan (2021)	Supplemental LIHEAP \$4.5 billion	Emergency Rental Assistance - add'l \$20.25 billion	Homeowners Assistance Fund - \$9.961 billion
Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (2021)	\$500 million for LIHEAP spread equally over the next five years		

Why Interview LIHEAP Managers?

The supplemental LIHEAP funding gave administrators a boost to start or enhance programs within states, tribes, and territories. Many grantees were aware of unaddressed energy affordability needs in their areas and already had expansion goals that were unable to be implemented because of a lack of both resources and funding. The LIHEAP managers provided a deeper look into how LIHEAP administration was affected by supplemental funding, as well as the repercussions of reduced funding.¹⁶ It is crucial to look beyond just numbers. Empirical data is a good resource to expose certain trends across all grantees, there is a bigger and more detailed story in the details provided by the LIHEAP managers for their individual states. Their contributions provided a better understanding of the challenges faced during the pandemic related to energy affordability and the ongoing challenges still affecting households today.

New York

Interview with Emily Urban, HEAP Bureau Chief, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Key Takeaways

Emily Urban, HEAP Bureau Chief, New York, manages one of the largest metropolitan populations in the country. As a port city and transportation hub, New York also happened to be one of the earliest and most affected areas by COVID-19 infections¹⁷. faced challenges with deciding how to allocate funding when supplemental funds were distributed between 2019-2022.

One critical difference between New York and some other states is that the state had a preexisting online application for all counties with the exception of New York City. In this way, New York was ahead of the curve when lockdown took effect. While many states had to devise remote application solutions while the pandemic was in progress, New York was able to instead focus on expanding its online application and streamlining it to make it a more simplified process for applicants. Additionally, New York allowed phone applications for LIHEAP, which provided another method of application for those who preferred not to apply online, but were unable to apply in person during shutdown periods or because of health concerns associated with in-person meetings.

- Very dense NYC population
- Allowed phone applications
- \$300+ increase for the heating program from 2021 to 2022
- Expansion of cooling programs throughout the state

One key issue in New York's HEAP benefits is determining the proportion of funding assigned to rental applications because New York City has a much higher percentage of renters compared to other locales.

Urban noted that rentals typically receive a lesser benefit as they typically have lower heating and cooling costs overall.

Arrearages throughout the state were a major concern during these years, and state agencies had to determine how best to distribute funds to keep arrearages down. HEAP benefits overall saw an increase of roughly \$300 million for the heating program from 2021 to 2022,¹⁸ as well as increasing emergency funding overall. Emily explained that the New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance provides annual benefits for homeowners to have their primary heating equipment cleaned and tuned. Weatherization in New York is handled by two state agencies, with 15 percent of LIHEAP funds allocated to weatherization. Cooling programs were expanded in New York as well to address rising temperatures during the summers.

Urban emphasized the importance of having funds dedicated specifically for water assistance, separate and in addition to the heating and cooling assistance funds. This would allow for more households to be served, as well as serving households more deeply with their overall and year-round utility needs, as agencies would not be forced to set aside already-limited LIHEAP funds to support water assistance. Administrative funding is limited for LIHEAP at 10 percent, and administering both energy and water programs creates a substantial challenge for providers of these services.

Lastly, a consistent funding stream would ultimately allow for these agencies and programs to more fully serve communities. Consistent funding would create a stable funding environment in which LIHEAP services are a fundamental and dependable component of household affordability strategies.

Illinois

Interview with Leslie Ann Lesko, LIHEAP Program Manager, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Key Takeaways

Illinois responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with a mandatory stay-at-home order set by Governor J.B. Pritzker. This was to ensure the safety of the citizens of Illinois, but posed a significant challenge for LIHEAP local administering agencies throughout the state. How were they to pivot? Leslie Ann Lesko, LIHEAP Program Manager for Illinois, provided more information about how LIHEAP was affected by the pandemic, and how the state used supplemental funds.

The pandemic demonstrated Illinois' ability to quickly respond and be flexible. Many of the practices initiated in response to the pandemic in 2020 remain in place to this day, specifically safety precautions that the agencies are

- Many practices implemented during the pandemic remain in effect today
- Eligibility of applicants changed to 200 percent of the federal poverty level
- An online application was created
- Key relationships with 6 utilities

prepared to take if needed. Flexible program options also are still being implemented for LIHEAP recipients. In response to the increase in need of assistance programs and the availability of funds, Illinois increased the income guidelines to 200 percent of the federal poverty level and 60 percent of State Median Income. LIHEAP statute dictates that eligibility is limited to 150 percent of the federal poverty level or 60 percent of state median income; however, where 200 percent of the federal poverty level is lower than 60 percent of the state median income, programs may adopt 200 percent of the federal poverty level as the highest category for determining household LIHEAP eligibility¹⁹.

Illinois increased Crisis Assistance benefits to fund up to \$5,000 per energy type (primary heating, and/or secondary electric). Traditionally, Crisis Assistance benefits paid only the 'minimum amount needed to reconnect,' which reconnected the energy source or prevented disconnection, but did not cover the outstanding balance, according to Lesko. These decisions made it more possible for recently unemployed people, a group that grew in numbers tremendously in 2020, to apply and receive LIHEAP benefits.

Lesko said that Illinois made the decision to "meet people where they are." This decision led to a push to create an online application. In response, an online pre-application was launched to help with earlier identification of potentially eligible households. Universal signature technologies were utilized to reduce the number of signatures required online, and phone applications were allowed, as people were mandated to shelter-in-place. These practices are still benefitting agencies throughout the state to this day.

Lesko stated how important it was to have in place cooperative relationships with the six largest utilities in the state. These partnerships fostered beneficial communication between LIHEAP agencies and the utilities who served those communities, and the utilities' work to inform and educate their customers about LIHEAP.

In 2024, all supplemental funding to LIHEAP has expired. The reduced level of resources has left some customers confused as to why they are no longer receiving the same benefits, according to Lesko. Access to cooling assistance is much-needed in Illinois, Lesko said, but is impossible without supplemental funding as the need for heating assistance takes precedence in the state.

Colorado

Interview with Theresa Kullen, LEAP Program Manager, Colorado Department of Human Services

Key Takeaways

Theresa Kullen, LEAP Program Manager, Colorado, said that Colorado faced unique challenges between 2019 and 2022 that compounded the effects of the pandemic on customers and need for utility assistance. Colorado's unique geography and dual-peaking climate make the program challenging to operate effectively and address the myriad of needs of energy consumers in Colorado. Supplemental funding during the pandemic allowed the state to expand LIHEAP in a way that was life-changing for eligible households, according to Kullen.

- Arrearage forgiveness, including some arrearages up to \$25,000
- Customer distress with LIHWAP ending
- Advanced online application system

In response to the pandemic and ensuing utility moratorium in Colorado, an arrearage forgiveness program was implemented with supplemental funding, allowing for arrearage forgiveness up to and including fully funding the outstanding balance for eligible households. This program was meant to give the customer a "clean slate," according to the Kullen. The average benefit was approximately \$800 and could be used toward electric, gas, or delivered fuels²⁰. Supplemental funding made it possible to establish a one-time arrearage program that wiped out thousands of dollars in arrearages, with the highest bill around \$25,000. This program was only able to be put into place because of the extra funding received. Knowing this, Colorado marketed the program as one-time-only forgiveness in order to set clear expectations for customers.

By contrast, customers did anticipate receiving assistance again through the federally established water assistance program known as the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). Kullen said customers have expressed confusion and concern about why water assistance has been discontinued. LIHWAP was administered by the same state and local administering agencies as LIHEAP in Colorado. Federal water assistance funded during the pandemic has not been appropriated funds to continue, at this point, resulting in a lapse of services that will not be available again until Congress takes action to continue to program.

Kullen explained that a major goal in Colorado during the pandemic was to simplify and expedite the application process. This was achieved by removing as many of the barriers as possible that applicants face when initially applying. One example of this was providing support for the verification processes required for eligibility. Kullen said by supporting customers in verifying employment/unemployment and income, processing applications was expedited and households received approvals and benefits more quickly. Colorado also opted to allow certain income to be self-reported; for example, gifted income.

Through these changes, applications were able to be more streamlined and therefore processed at a much quicker rate. This also was helped by a robust online application system that operates efficiently to assign applications to the appropriate local administering agency, and to approve and allocate funds to applicants. This online system initially sends applications to the state, then the correct county or municipality based on information provided.

During the pandemic, Colorado also utilized supplemental funds to expand the state's LIHEAP-funded furnace repair and replacement program. Now that program has been scaled back because of lack of funds. Kullen reported that it also was necessary to lower benefits for bill assistance to customers in response to funding reductions for LIHEAP. This places the burden of affordability for any unmet need on customers who are struggling to survive paycheck-to-paycheck, or making difficult decisions between paying for utilities and other needs, like housing or transportation.

Kullen said supplemental funding allowed Colorado to make the impossible possible, proving that when the funds are there, the state is able to use them to uplift customers and put them in a better financial position. Without this funding, customers are struggling to adjust to inflationary pressure and reduced benefits.

Washington

Interview with Brian Sarensen, LIHEAP Program Manager, Washington State Department of Commerce

Brian Sarensen, Program Manager at the Washington State Department of Commerce, said that the abrupt need to transition to virtual application processes created a hurdle during the pandemic for many state agencies. COVID-19 shelter-in-place mandates led to an increase in unemployment, and an ensuing uptick in LIHEAP applications. Applications grew from 67,209 applicants in 2019, to 90,191 in 2020, to 109,985 applicants in 2021.²¹ While the number of applications has leveled off, Washington is still seeing higher application rates than pre-pandemic, with 80,311 applicants in 2023.

In one of the more unique solutions devised during the pandemic, Washington partnered with Amazon to deliver cooling units to households. This was achieved by employing a voucher system where agencies received credit and customers could choose from a certain set of cooling units that adhered to state guidelines, and then Amazon delivered the appliance. The state paid Amazon directly for the units. This partnership allowed for households to have some autonomy over the units being placed in their homes, as well as an

Key Takeaways

- Increase of more than 40,000 applicants from 2020 to 2022
- Cooling equipment program through partnership with Amazon
- Emphasis on expanding funding to federally recognized tribes
- Challenges with running seasonal programs

expeditious turnaround time with Amazon’s delivery system. When supplemental funds were expended, this program was forced to discontinue.

An arrearage management program also was added using supplemental funds. This arrearage benefit, along with increased maximum benefits for households, allowed for many customers to receive increased overall bill assistance.

One thing Sarensen specifically noted was the inadequacy of funding allocated to federally recognized tribes. The LIHEAP program in Washington has benefitted from having a tribal liaison in the state office, as well as keeping in communication with two organizations that represent multiple tribes throughout the state.

Some challenges that the office continues to face are the obstacles that come with operating a seasonal program. When former employees don’t return and new staff must be trained, it can lengthen the application processing time for the agency.

Coming out of the pandemic, the state is continuing efforts on fast-tracking applications, retaining partnerships with contractors such as Amazon, continuing the crisis program to prevent evictions, and maintaining their 48-hour response time model for furnace replacement.

Texas

Interview with Michael DeYoung, Director of Community Affairs, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs

Key Takeaways

Michael DeYoung, the Director of Community Affairs for the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, provided insight into how Texas administered supplemental LIHEAP funding, as well as how Texas programs operate uniquely compared to many other states.

Some challenges faced by Texas prior to the pandemic included variability in funding and unique approaches to program delivery by local administering agencies. The variety of local approaches affected the speed of application processing in Texas, among other challenges.

Something remarkable that Texas implemented to combat the challenge of not having a centralized database throughout the state was to partner with a third-party systems administrator called Yardi. Approximately 50 percent of LIHEAP funds were handled by Yardi. Yardi handled the dispersion of funds from application to acceptance to getting the

- “Utility assistance” defining both heating and cooling, not a specific focus on heating alone
- Robust partnership with Yardi
- Increase the original maximum benefits
- Language changes to account for first time applicants

funds applied to energy bills. Yardi's system is solely accessible online, allowing for household applicants with smartphones to complete applications in as little as 30 minutes, and providing a 48-hour turnaround time for information on the status of their application. This was especially helpful to younger populations acquainted with using smartphones, according to DeYoung, and helped build accessibility for "gig workers" who were inordinately affected by the pandemic. Tiered benefits were increased with supplemental funds, with each tier receiving a \$100 increase. Customers at 0-75 percent of the income threshold could receive up to \$1,200 dollars in bill assistance, and customers at 76-125 percent could receive up to \$1,100 dollars in bill assistance. The utility bill balance was able to be paid with one benefit, also providing major relief for those experiencing arrearages.

DeYoung said that Texas saw a lot of need for short-term assistance because of layoffs. COVID-19 brought in people who had not previously received any form of government services. The state therefore modified their LIHEAP to address this new servable population. One way the state addressed this was by verifying income for the past 30 days to determine eligibility, as opposed to 3-month eligibility requirements prior to the pandemic. DeYoung said this was an eye-opening moment for many people about how easy it is for average families to slip into arrears during times of unexpected financial hardship.

DeYoung emphasized the importance of having a utility assistance program that is expansive enough to meet the needs for energy affordability in households that are eligible. Whether customers need heating or cooling, ideally, resources should be available to meet those needs. By addressing both heating and cooling needs in Texas, the state has created a program that can meet the needs of customers throughout the state, until resources are expended. This is important in a large state such as Texas where temperatures have a wide range depending on the household location.

Texas presented unique solutions during the pandemic, and because of this, they were able to deeply serve their customers, as well as form strong bonds with their partners that made it easier to expedite the application process for customers.

Key Outcomes

Across the five states, there were both similarities and differences in the administration of supplemental funding that resulted from the COVID-19 crisis. Many of these differences related to the *overall increase in funding, geographic differences, and online application capabilities.*

Climate, funding, and prior capabilities led to differences in the ways challenges were addressed by each LIHEAP grantee, but each state expressed a strong desire to support their communities during difficult times. Each state also expressed concerns about how they will be proceeding as supplemental funding fades.

Overall, key takeaways include:

- Online application systems provide ease to both the applicants and the administrations that use them by streamlining and expediting the application process to allow applicants to receive benefits more quickly.
- Partnerships with utilities or companies (such as Yardi in Texas or Amazon in Washington) can provide administrators with resources and expedite processes that provide more time and freedom to focus on other tasks for expanding or enhancing programs in their states, like workforce development and energy efficiency education or weatherization.
- Many states had to accommodate for new demographics applying for benefits, such as younger people who were furloughed and needed short-term assistance, compared to long-term assistance for those on fixed incomes, which was more common among LIHEAP applicants prior to COVID-19, according the state managers.
- Supplemental funding made it possible for states to implement and enhance preexisting programs, as well as create or put into place programs that were not fiscally possible without the extra funding.
- Increases in benefits nationally provided customers with a deeper level of assistance, and while this was incredibly beneficial during a national health crisis that economically affected families, many are now struggling as benefits are decreased or eliminated because of the lack of supplemental funding.

Conclusion

This study provided an understanding of how supplemental funding benefitted LIHEAP-eligible households between 2019-2022. These findings demonstrate that with increased funding, administrators were able to expand energy assistance and weatherization programming to help their customers more deeply. A larger portion of eligible populations were able to be served. While supplemental funding provides for one-time immediate needs, it is not a durable solution for the long-term utility needs of American households. Supplemental funding is an important tool, but comprehensive, maximized, long-term stable funding is necessary to ensure the federal LIHEAP can more fully address the myriad of energy needs of vulnerable populations throughout the nation.

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I am grateful to have worked with every one of you to make this document possible!

Endnotes

1. An expanded version of NEUAC's mission can be found here, <https://neuac.org/mission/>.
2. Administration for Children and Families: LIHEAP Performance Management, LIHEAP Data Warehouse available at <https://liheappm.acf.hhs.gov/datawarehouse>.
3. The data provided by the Rocky Mountain Institute was internal at the time of writing this case study, and may be made publicly available upon publication. Their website is <https://rmi.org/>.
4. The exact amounts of supplemental funding received in a breakdown by year can be found here, <https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/Funding/funding.htm>.
5. This information was gathered from the Congressional Research Service in a report titled "Unemployment Rates During the COVID-19 Pandemic: In Brief," and the direct link to the document can be found at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46554/9>.
5. Funding for LIHEAP has historically been below the maximum allocation number, and almost every state runs out of funding during peak heating seasons, <https://www.publicpower.org/need-supplemental-funding-and-flexibility-liheap/>.
6. This information was gathered from the National Library of Medicine, and the link is <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8996045/>.
7. A breakdown of the way LIHEAP functions as a block grant can be found here, <https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/state#:~:text=LIHEAP%20is%20a%20block%20grant,client%20demographics%2C%20and%20other%20factors>.
8. This information was created from a custom report using two criteria for all grantees, Federally Income-Eligible Households Totals and Percent of Income-Eligible Households Served by Any Type of LIHEAP Assistance between years 2015-2022. 2022 was the most recent year available on the website. The custom report link can be used to input these criteria to access these results. https://liheappm.acf.hhs.gov/datawarehouse/custom_reports.
9. Information about LIHEAP guidance and limitations can be found at <https://www.hhs.gov/>.
10. The five regions throughout this document will be considered the Pacific Northwest (Washington), the West (Colorado), the South (Texas), the Midwest (Illinois), and the East Coast (New York).
11. This is based solely on information gathered from the five focus states for the case study, and is expanded upon further in interviews with LIHEAP managers.

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12. This information was from the *Target Population* section of the HHS LIHEAP Fact Sheet: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/fact-sheet/liheap-fact-sheet#:~:text=LIHEAP%20benefits%20target%20households%20with,and%20For%20a%20young%20child>.
13. The term “non-priority” includes a wide range of programs including arrearage forgiveness, percentages allocated to weatherization, etc. “Priority” is considered the heating program, the main program that is required to be funded as defined by HHS.
14. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/law-regulation/liheap-statute-and-regulations>.
15. This information was gathered from information provided by RMI.
16. It is important to note that supplemental funding has gone down in recent years, but many administrations accounted for this happening and set aside funds to account for this.
17. Reports found here back up this claim, <https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/covid-19-september-2-2020#:~:text=New%20York%20State%27s%20job%20count,nearly%20half%20the%20statewide%20total>.
18. This information was gathered from creating a report on <https://liheappm.acf.hhs.gov/>, and confirmed during the interview with Emily Urban.
19. This information is a direct quote from Maria Gallardo, the LIHEAP Assistant Program Manager of Illinois, as an email response to my initial writing sent to both her and Leslie Ann Lesko.
20. Rough approximation of the average arrearage forgiveness in Colorado, provided by Theresa Kullen during the interview.
21. Data provided by Brain Sarensen during the interview.