Survey on Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Information Technology (IT) Solutions

Formative Data Collections for Program Support

0970 – 0531

Supporting Statement

Part A - Justification

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A1. Necessity for the Data Collection

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks approval for administering the Information Technology (IT) Solutions Survey to Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) state grant recipients.

Background

The IT Solutions Survey seeks to capture whether states already have IT Solutions, are working on them, or want to learn more about them. It helps OCS further implement the recommendation made by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) in a study that examined how LIHEAP, among other programs, uses data sources to verify applicant eligibility in ways that increase program integrity and potentially reducing client burden. In that report, GAO recommended that ACF "review the electronic data sources used by state LIHEAP grant recipients and assess whether additional information could be provided to grant recipients on data sources not currently or widely used to verify income in order to enhance LIHEAP grant recipients' data verification efforts."

Legal or Administrative Requirements that Necessitate the Collection

There are no legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. ACF is undertaking the collection at the discretion of the agency.

A2. Purpose of Survey and Data Collection Procedures

Overview of Purpose and Use

The purpose of the IT Solutions Survey is to obtain data on the types of IT solutions that state LIHEAP grant recipients, including the District of Columbia, use to improve the quality and validity of program data and to reduce the participation burden for applicants, intake staff, and energy vendors. The survey will document, for each state grant recipient, whether they have an IT solution for each program requirement of managing their programs (e.g.: outreach, client intake, data verification, etc.).

The goals of the survey are to:

- Document grant recipient needs to support Office of Community Services (OCS) training and technical assistance (T&TA) planning.
- Facilitate a peer-to-peer network that will allow grant recipients to share insights about the IT solutions they use for managing their programs, and that is expected to result in improved grant recipient performance.

This proposed information collection meets the following goals of ACF's generic clearance for formative data collections for program support (0970-0531):

- Delivery of T&TA and/or workflows related to program implementation or the development or refinement of program and grant recipient processes. This could include the development and refinement of recordkeeping or communication systems.

Processes for Information Collection

The survey instrument consists primarily of multiple-choice questions, with some free-response items. The intended respondents are state LIHEAP grant recipients. Respondents can complete the survey online independently or have it administered by one of our staff via a teleconference call. Regardless of the method chosen, all respondents will answer the same set of questions. If the survey is administered via teleconference, the survey administrator will read the questions aloud and record the responses in the online system.

A3. Improved Information Technology to Reduce Burden

We will be using Qualtrics, an online survey platform, to streamline data collection and reduce respondent burden. Qualtrics incorporates logic that ensures respondents are only presented with questions relevant to them, minimizing unnecessary responses. Additionally, we plan to pre-code answers whenever possible based on each state grant recipient's model LIHEAP plan and other available documentation, including publicly accessible information about their IT systems or details they provide to us. These measures help reduce the time and effort required for respondents to complete the survey while ensuring accurate data collection.

We will also use teleconferencing software to further reduce respondent burden by offering an alternative survey administration method. If respondents choose, we can administer the survey via a video call, during which the survey administrator will read the questions aloud and enter responses on their behalf. To ensure transparency and accuracy, we will use screen-sharing functionality so that respondents can see the question text and verify their answers as they are being recorded in real time. This approach provides flexibility for respondents who may prefer verbal communication while maintaining data integrity.

A4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

The information collected through this survey is not available elsewhere in a comprehensive or standardized format. While a similar survey was conducted in 2014, that earlier effort—the "IT Capacity Survey[1]"—included information already captured in State Model Plans and primarily focused on the logistical implementation of business requirements and how state IT systems supported those processes, without fully addressing the effectiveness of those solutions or unmet IT needs. Additionally, it is important to note that informal discussions with grant recipients have shown that there have been significant changes in the IT systems implemented for the management of the LIHEAP program since 2010, making the previous survey results obsolete.

This new survey, now called the “IT Solutions Survey,” serves a distinct purpose by identifying not only the IT solutions currently in place but also the perceptions of their effectiveness and any unmet needs. It provides a structured inventory of IT solutions used by state LIHEAP grant recipients, as well as insights into areas where additional capacity is needed. The survey also informs potential next steps for deeper analysis with grant recipients who have implemented

[1] Approved under OMB #0970-0442

successful solutions and are willing to share their experiences. No other existing data collection effort fully captures this level of detail on IT solutions and needs across LIHEAP grant recipients.

A5. Involvement of Small Organizations

No small businesses will be involved with this information collection.

A6. Consequences of Less Frequent Data Collection

This is a one-time data collection.

A7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances for the proposed data collection efforts.

A8. Federal Register Notice and Consultation

Federal Register Notice and Comments

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR Part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), ACF published a notice in the Federal Register announcing the agency's intention to request an OMB review of this information collection request to extend approval of the umbrella generic with minor changes. The notice was published on January 28, 2022, (87 FR 4603), and provided a sixty-day period for public comment. ACF did not receive any comments on the first notice. A second notice was published, allowing a thirty-day period for public comment, in conjunction with submission of the request to OMB. ACF did not receive any comments on the second notice.

Consultation with Outside Experts

No consultations have taken place with experts outside of the project team. However, the project team was assisted in the development of the survey instrument and the survey administration procedures by an informal working group of grant recipients.

A9. Tokens of Appreciation for Respondents

No tokens of appreciation for respondents are proposed for this information collection.

A10. Privacy of Respondents

Information collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. Respondents will be informed of all planned uses of data, that their participation is voluntary, and that their information will be kept private.

The information will be used by OCS, including LIHEAP grant recipients, and GAO if that organization requests. It will be accessible by LIHEAP grant recipients through a secure database application, which will present the survey results in a structured and useful format. That database

will allow recipients to identify other recipients might have an IT solution that they need.

A11. Sensitive Questions

The only potentially sensitive question in the survey pertains to relationships with IT vendors. This question is included to better understand the nature of these relationships and their impact on IT system implementation and effectiveness. Respondents are not required to disclose proprietary or confidential information.

A12. Estimation of Information Collection Burden

Burden Estimates

The survey will be sent to the state LIHEAP grant recipients, including the District of Columbia, and is expected to take approximately two hours to complete, based on the average completion time observed across nine pre-tests.

Cost Estimates

The table below summarizes the estimated burden hours and costs for this data collection. The cost to respondents was calculated using the average hourly wage used in the LIHEAP-2020 RECS Data Match data collection[2] and adjusting that rate by the annual increase from OPM's salary table[3] (i.e., 3.53% annually) for four years.

Instrument	Total Number of Respondents	Total Number of Responses Per Respondent	Average Burden Hours Per Response	Total Burden Hours	Average Hourly Wage	Total Annual Cost
IT Solutions Survey	51	1	2	102	$82	$8,364

A13. Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers

There are no additional costs to respondents.

A14. Estimate of Cost to the Federal Government

The total cost for the data collection activities under this current request will be approximately $40,000.

A15. Change in Burden

This is for an individual information collection under the umbrella formative generic clearance for program support (0970-0531).

A16. Plan and Time Schedule for Information Collection, Tabulation and Publication

[2] See Supporting Statement A for the LIHEAP-2020 RECS Data Match OMB Information Collection Request.
[3] See https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2024/DCB_h.pdf

Information collection is expected to take place over about 3-4 months following OMB approval. Information will be tabulated and entered into a database within two months of the completion of information collection.

Under this umbrella generic IC, information is meant to inform ACF activities and will be entered into a database application that will only be accessible to OCS and LIHEAP grant recipients. GAO may also access that information if it requests.

A17. Reasons Not to Display OMB Expiration Date

All instruments will display the expiration date for OMB approval.

A18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.

Attachments

- Attachment 1: Survey of LIHEAP IT Solutions