



LIHEAP Partnerships with Community Based Organizations

Introduction

LIHEAP grantees are given significant discretion in developing and running their programs. They and their local administering agencies may wish to develop partnerships with outside organizations in order to maximize their impact in the community, reach populations that are difficult to connect with through traditional LIHEAP outreach efforts, and leverage resources that are available outside of the grantee's social service network.

Community Based Organizations (CBO) may serve as valuable partners for LIHEAP grantees hoping to expand the reach of their grants. This report discusses some of the opportunities presented by CBOs, how LIHEAP grantees can take advantage of those opportunities, and examples of existing partnerships between LIHEAP offices and CBOs.

What are Community Based Organizations?

Community based organizations, also sometimes referred to as social justice organizations, are groups that engage various levels of the government, protect their target population from corporate abuses, or seek to educate communities on issues that matter to them. CBOs may be population-based or issue-based; some CBOs serve specific target groups such as the elderly or young families, while others focus on single issues such as housing or food safety.

Some examples of well-known national CBOs include:

- ◆ Consumer Financial Protection Board
- ◆ Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
- ◆ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- ◆ National Council on Aging
- ◆ National Fair Housing Alliance
- ◆ National Urban League
- ◆ Veterans of Foreign Wars

There are many local and state-level CBOs as well that serve as valuable resources for their communities. They may include associations of food banks, centers for aging or the elderly, youth assistance or engagement networks, local veterans groups, and others.



Resources: Partnerships with CBOs

- ◆ LIHEAP Clearinghouse, [Engaging Hard-to-Reach Clients](#), November 2016
- ◆ Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, [Your Money, Your Goals](#)
- ◆ LIHEAP Clearinghouse, [Promoting Self Sufficiency for Low-Income Clients](#), March 2014

What CBOs Can Offer LIHEAP

CBOs can offer a wide range of services, so LIHEAP offices interested in partnering with these organizations should select ones that will help them meet the specific goals of their program.

Referrals/Intake

Some CBOs, such as those serving the elderly, veterans, or youth populations, may have extensive networks including populations that are hard to reach through typical LIHEAP outreach activities. In particular, potential clients who are homebound, disabled, or otherwise find it difficult to make appointments to apply for various assistance programs may be best served through a partnership with a CBO. The example below referencing Ohio's CBO partnership demonstrates how successful collaborations with food banks and agencies assisting the elderly allow the Ohio LIHEAP office to meet people where they are and increase applications from vulnerable populations.

State Example - Ohio

The Ohio Office of Community Assistance has partnerships with a wide range of CBOs to improve outreach and increase applications for LIHEAP assistance. These partnerships include working with the Ohio Benefit Bank, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, and the Ohio Department of Area Agencies on Aging, which are provided funding out of the administrative budget of the Ohio LIHEAP grant to extend the reach of LIHEAP by meeting applicants where they are and streamlining intake for multiple programs at one time.

Ohio's 12 Area Agencies on Aging and 12 Feeding America food banks offer LIHEAP applications at their offices and assist visitors with filling out the applications. Some locations offer an integrated application and eligibility program called the "Benefit Bank" to help visitors gain access to a

Dates: Ongoing

Partners: Ohio Association of Foodbanks
Ohio Area Agencies on Aging

Services: Outreach and LIHEAP
application assistance

wide variety of programs, including workforce development, assistance program applications such as LIHEAP, SNAP and TANF, tax filing, veteran's benefits, student aid, Supplemental Security Income, and more. The Benefit Bank automatically screens applicants for potential eligibility for each program and assists with the application process. The applications are then sent to the appropriate office for approval. According to Ohio's 2016 State Plan, these partnerships resulted in more than 14,000 completed LIHEAP applications by older and disabled adults, including 1,405 homebound individuals, in Fiscal Year 2015.

The [Benefit Bank](#), which is also available in Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, is one of a variety of platforms available to states wishing to aggregate services and provide one-stop intake for multiple programs. Other platforms include IBM's Cúram and state-developed systems.

Resources/Education

Other CBOs may be able to provide educational materials or counseling services that could benefit LIHEAP clients. Local financial literacy groups may have resources for providing financial education, including pamphlets, workshops, and/or educators. The [Your Money, Your Goals](#) toolkit, discussed below, is an example of a comprehensive literacy training program that may be of interest to LIHEAP grantees.

Example – Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s *Your Money, Your Goals*

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) is a federal government agency that was created in response to the 2008 financial crisis to protect and educate consumers. CFPB partners with organizations nationwide to provide their *Your Money, Your Goals* personal financial management toolkit. The toolkit, which has been available since 2014, helps social service staff provide clients with financial management strategies including savings and spending plans, understanding credit, managing debt, selecting financial products, and accessing consumer protections.

The toolkit is divided into lessons that case workers and intake staff can use to quickly educate clients. Each lesson can be taught one-on-one during intake or in larger group settings. CFPB’s “train-the-trainers” process ensures that each partner organization has a group of trainers on site who are capable of training frontline staff on the use of the toolkit.

The *Your Money, Your Goals* initial partners included organizations in both the public and private sectors. In the public sector, partners included the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Regional Operations; the State of Minnesota Interagency Financial Literacy Work Group; the Sault Saint Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians; the District of Columbia Department of Human Services; and the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs. Private partners included Catholic Charities USA; the Community Action Partnership; the National Association of Community Health Centers; Community HealthCorps; and the United Way Worldwide.

In 2016 the *Your Money, Your Goals* program expanded to include 30 additional partners including

cities, states, nonprofits, legal aid organizations, labor organizations, community and development financial institutions. The [Your Money, Your Goals](#) toolkit is available for free online. During the 2015 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference, LIHEAP staff from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services mentioned that the toolkit was a good resource for intake workers when it came to dealing with client’s financial questions.

Emergency Assistance

Some CBOs serve at-risk populations and have housing, in-house services, or referral systems in place to help clients in need of emergency assistance. These types of organizations may be suited to serve LIHEAP crisis clients, or identify additional clients who may be eligible for energy crisis services. Using partnerships with these organizations may help LIHEAP offices identify and serve clients who would otherwise not be aware of LIHEAP heating, cooling, or crisis benefits. The example from Wisconsin below demonstrates how targeted partnerships with veterans and homelessness organizations can be used to provide services for specific needy populations.

State Example - Welcome Home Veterans Pilot, Wisconsin

The Welcome Home Veterans Pilot was a partnership between the Wisconsin Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources (DEHCR) and the Department of Veterans Affairs, Continuum of Care (a membership organization of groups combatting homelessness), County Veterans Service Office, and local administering agencies.

The pilot program set aside \$5 million in LIHEAP crisis benefits to assist veterans experiencing homelessness. That amount was allocated to the local administering agencies, with a total of \$4 million going towards “crisis benefits” and \$1 mil-

lion towards “crisis services.” Funding for the pilot was made available thanks to a mild winter that resulted in leftover funds from Wisconsin LIHEAP during the winter of 2015-2016.

The program consisted of a referral service: partners would identify potentially eligible veterans or spouses of deceased veterans and submit their information by fax or email to DEHCR for approval. Eligible veterans could receive assistance with first month’s rent, security deposit, energy assistance, or crisis energy assistance.

The program took a housing-first approach to veterans’ services. Once the veteran was in permanent housing, partners would provide additional services. In order to receive assistance with first month’s rent or a security deposit, the veteran’s landlord had to register with DEHCR as a vendor. Partners were encouraged to help landlords sign a vendor agreement.

Dates:	May 27 – September 30, 2016
Funding:	\$5 million in crisis funds
Partners:	Department of Veteran’s Affairs Continuum of Care County Veterans Service Office
Services:	Referral Service for First Month’s Rent, Energy Assistance, & Crisis

Funding Strategies

Since partnerships with consumer based organizations can take many forms, LIHEAP offices may want to fund such efforts from different parts of their grant.

Program or Administrative Costs – Depending on the nature of the partnership, grantees may wish to fund the program out of their regular LIHEAP heating or cooling program. The Ohio partnerships described below are line items in the Ohio LIHEAP’s administrative budget.

Assurance 16 Funds – Grantees with partnerships that include outreach, financial literacy education, energy efficiency education, or other eligible activities may wish to use Assurance 16 funds to pay for the efforts. For example, implementing the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit into a grantee’s LIHEAP counselling efforts could fall under Assurance 16.

Crisis Funds – Grantees partnering with organizations that provide shelter, emergency housing assistance, or other emergency services related to energy may choose to pay for the partnership out of crisis funds. Using these funds can increase the reach of an existing LIHEAP crisis program. The example from Wisconsin, below, was funded with money from the state’s crisis program.

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