Data Management System Acquisition: Stakeholder Engagement

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THE INDIANA HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

- The Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA) is a government agency with a goal to **provide housing opportunities**, **promote self-sufficiency**, and **strengthen communities** across the State of Indiana

- **Our vision** is to create a sustainable quality of life for all Hoosiers in the community of their choice

- IHCDA **administers both the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for Indiana**

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PRESENTERS

Emily Nash: Energy and Utility Programs Special Projects Analyst

Joely Pope: Energy and Utility Programs Special Projects Manager

- IHCDA created the Special Projects Team to **increase capacity** to support large projects in both the EAP and Weatherization program

BECAUSE OF BIL

- BIL provided an opportunity for IHCDA to **increase its weatherization staff and capacity to take on a large project**

- This additional capacity allowed IHCDA to have a **robust stakeholder engagement process** leading up to the development of a software RFP

- This helped us **explore other software options** to acquire a new system that meets the unique needs of various WAP stakeholders

- It also created an opportunity to **rethink how data is shared** across the state

Without this added capacity, we are unsure if we would have been able to successfully manage the engagement process and the tech changeover itself

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AGENDA

1. **Project Overview**
   - Tech Change Timeline
   - Why We Chose an Evaluator
   - Project Tasks

2. **Goals for Stakeholder Engagement**
   - Roles and Responsibilities
   - Guiding Research Questions

3. **Stakeholder Engagement Process**
   - Identify Stakeholders
   - Tools for Stakeholder Engagement

4. **Data Systems Research**

5. **General Outcomes**
   - Identified Data System Challenges
   - Priority Software System Features
   - Implementation Findings

6. **Lessons Learned and Next Steps**
   - Project Challenges
   - Measured Success
   - Future Stakeholder Engagement

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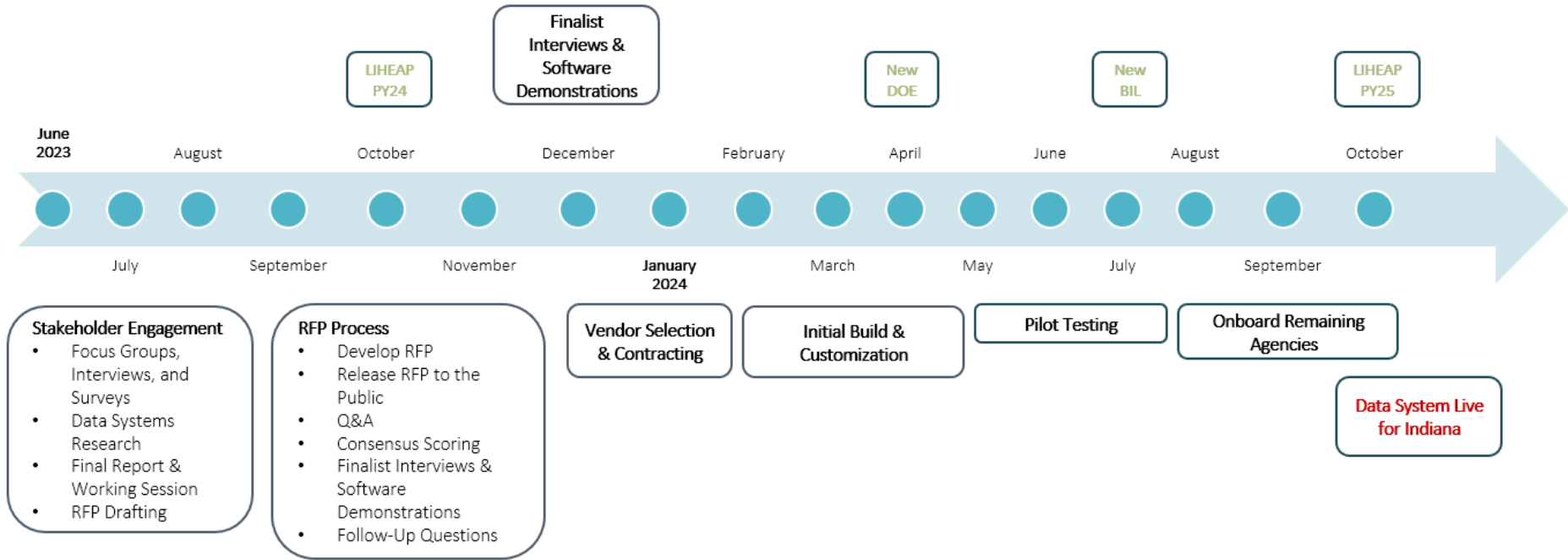Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority

PROJECT OVERVIEW

- IHCDA planned to release an RFP for a new data system for the WAP program
  - The new system would **replace an outdated reporting system**
  - Since IHCDA was not looking to simply enhance their current software, the stakeholder engagement process had to focus on **dreaming big and solving challenges**, not just system improvements

- A **third-party consulting firm was hired** to:
  - **Complete stakeholder engagement** to inform what would be needed in a new data system
  - **Research** what software capabilities are available and used by other WAP programs

Stakeholder Engagement	Data Systems Research

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TECH CHANGE TIMELINE

Note: Not included here is the months of preparation to create the scope of work for the stakeholder engagement process and the selection of a third-party evaluator

PROJECT TASKS

DATA SYSTEM RESEARCH

FOCUS GROUPS

INTERVIEWS

SURVEY

REPORT

WORKING SESSION

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GOALS OF THE PROJECT

- **Understand various stakeholders' needs** in Indiana's WAP Network

- **Reimagine how IHCDA's data system operates**

- Explore different ways we could **utilize a new data system to make the weatherization process more efficient**

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WHY AN EVALUATOR?

- An evaluator allowed for candid feedback due to the **anonymity of quotes and thematic summaries** reported to IHCDA

- Stakeholders could express current software and programmatic challenges

- **IHCDA received unbiased results** from the evaluator

- Even with an evaluator, IHCDA still had to work as a partner during this process

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ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Consultant

- Researched Available WAP Software on the Market

- Conducted Research Interviews with Other States

- Conducted WAP Stakeholder Interviews

- Facilitated Focus Groups

- Administered Online Survey

- Provided IHCDA with Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Report

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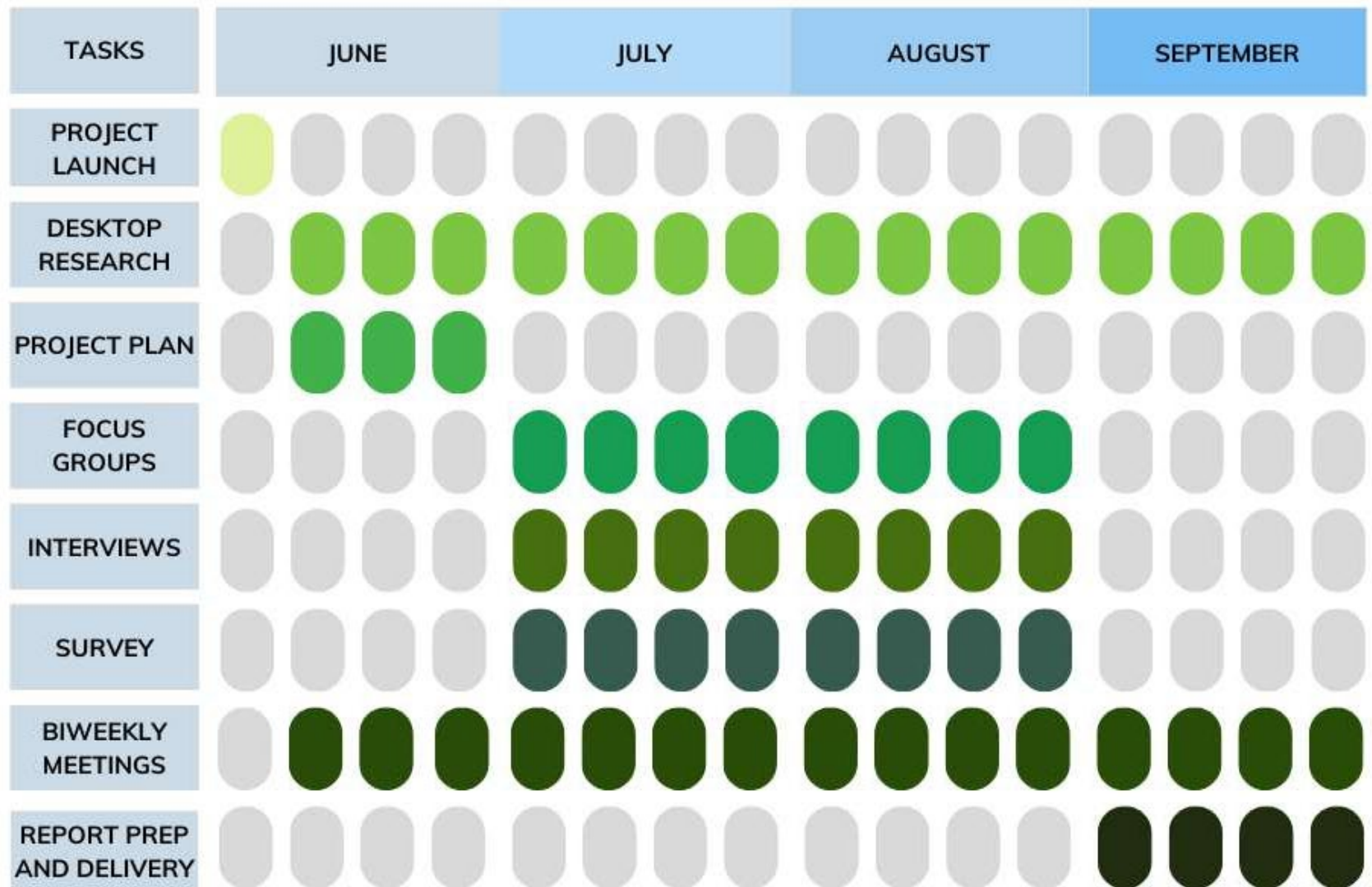- Met with Consultants Bi-Weekly

- Kept Project On Track

- Connected Consultants to WAP Stakeholders

- Helped Create Tools & Resources for Stakeholder Engagement

- Mapped Project Timeline

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IHCDA PROJECT TIMELINE
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

TASKS	JUNE				JULY				AUGUST				SEPTEMBER			
PROJECT LAUNCH	●															
DESKTOP RESEARCH		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
PROJECT PLAN		●	●	●												
FOCUS GROUPS					●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●				
INTERVIEWS					●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●				
SURVEY					●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●				
BIWEEKLY MEETINGS		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
REPORT PREP AND DELIVERY													●	●	●	●

RESEARCH GUIDING QUESTIONS

The following questions guided the WAP Stakeholder Engagement Project:

- What features are **necessary** for a new WAP reporting system to be functional for users?

- What features must be **prioritized** for users to employ the new system effectively?

- What design and user experience aspects are **most reasonable** to include in the new data system, given the experiences of stakeholders in Indiana and other states/entities?

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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

To **build trust with our network and collect honest feedback** regarding our data system, we contracted with a third-party to help facilitate the Stakeholder Engagement Process

Focus Groups

- Stakeholders were put into similar groups based on their use of the system

- Groups allowed for idea sharing and semi-structured conversation

Interviews

- Stakeholders with specialized roles were asked to participate in individual or small group interviews

- Stakeholders not able to participate in focus groups were offered the opportunity to be interviewed
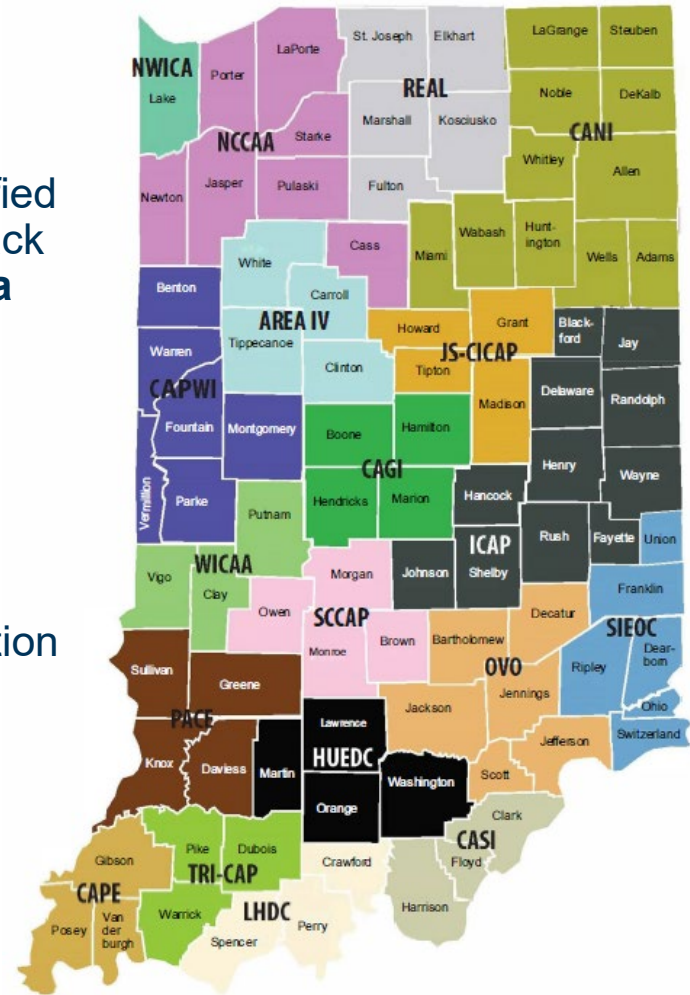
Survey

- Open to all stakeholders to prioritize options presented from previous engagement through focus groups and interviews

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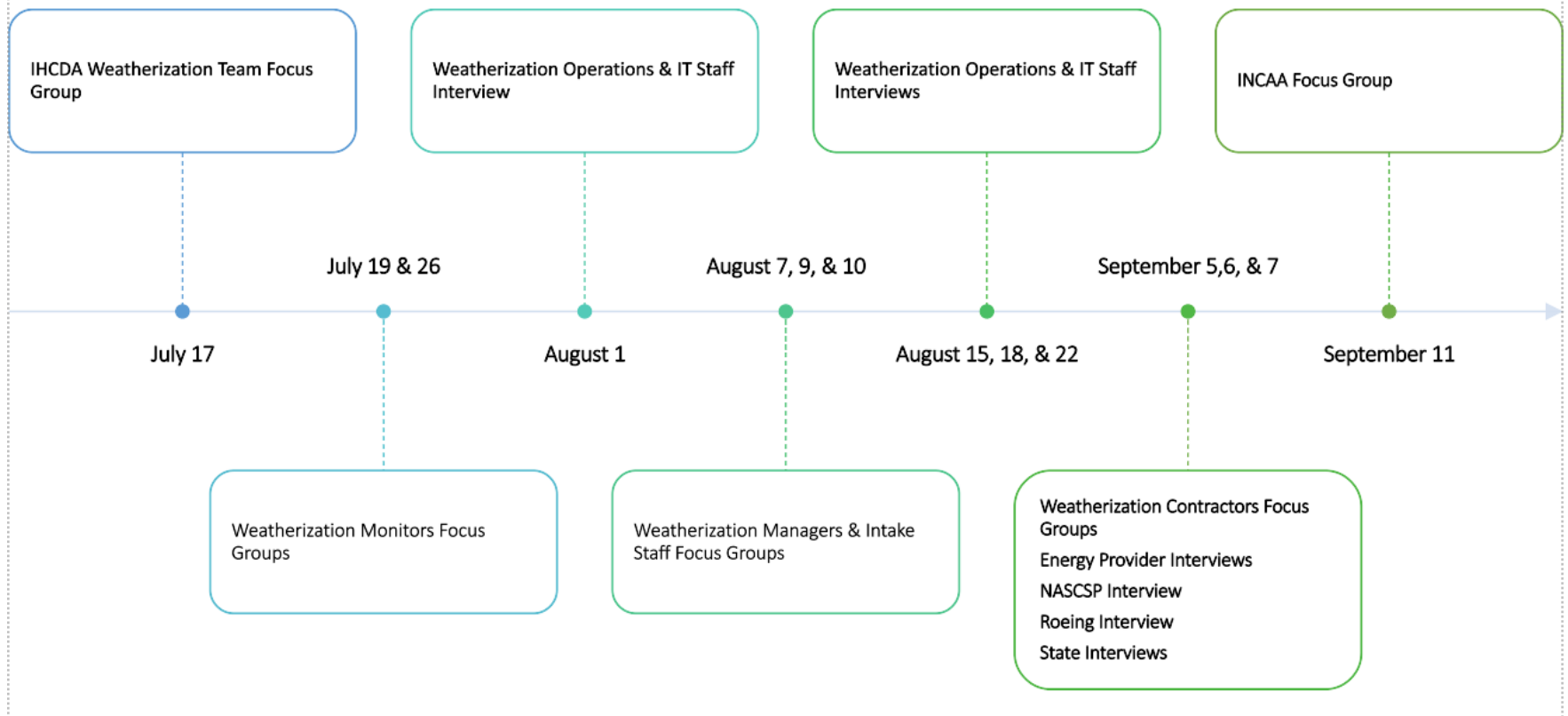Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

In the planning phase for this process, IHCDA identified key stakeholders that would provide valuable feedback to **inform needed features and capabilities in data management system acquisition**

- Feedback was collected from:
    - IHCDA Weatherization Program Staff
    - IHCDA Fiscal Staff and IT Personnel
    - Local Service Provider (LSP) Weatherization Managers and Staff
    - Contractors
    - Monitors
    - Indiana's Weatherization Training Center (INCAA)
    - Rebate Program Partners

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TIMELINE OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

IHCDA Weatherization Team Focus Group

Weatherization Operations & IT Staff Interview

Weatherization Operations & IT Staff Interviews

INCAA Focus Group

July 19 & 26

August 7, 9, & 10

September 5,6, & 7

July 17

August 1

August 15, 18, & 22

September 11

Weatherization Monitors Focus Groups

Weatherization Managers & Intake Staff Focus Groups

Weatherization Contractors Focus Groups

Energy Provider Interviews

NASCSP Interview

Roeing Interview

State Interviews

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FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

- Focus groups and interviews used **different facilitation guides for each stakeholder group**

  - Not all stakeholders use the data system the same way

  - The guides were designed based on the **different ways each group engages in the weatherization process** in order to identify challenges

  - Used messaging around "thinking beyond" the current capabilities of the system and allowing stakeholders to **dream big**

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FACILITATION GUIDES

Each of these groups had a different facilitation guide:
- IHCDA Weatherization Team
- INCAA Staff
- Weatherization Contractors
- Weatherization Managers and Intake Staff
- Weatherization Monitors
- Rebate Programs (CenterPoint and Duke had different ones)
- IHCDA IT and Operational Staff
- NASCSP
- Current Data System Provider
- Other States

- When possible, the groups were asked the same questions

- IHCDA also customized the order of questions in each guide to have a flow that would make the most sense given someone's role

The green indicates which facilitation guides were for interviews instead of focus groups

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TAILORED QUESTIONS

- It was important to make sure each identified stakeholder group were asked **questions that align with their use of the data system**

  - **Managers & Intake**
    - How could a new database and project management software better process or manage applications?

  - **Contractors**
    - What capabilities should the new database and project management software incorporate that would be useful in the field or to contractors on site?
      - What data entry fields, or other features, would be needed to easily perform common tasks, such as energy audits?

  - **Monitors**
    - What functions or features could be included in the new data system to help you to better monitor weatherization activities from the point of application to the point of completion?

SURVEY

- **The survey was informed by themes found through focus groups and interviews**

- Using feedback already gathered from the focus groups and interviews, the survey questions were designed to help respondents **prioritize software features** they would like to see in a new data system

- The survey was hosted on a **third-party platform** and was kept open for two (2) weeks

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NATIONAL AND STATE PARTNERS

- In addition to gathering feedback from Indiana's WAP Network, IHCDA wanted to connect with various national and state partners to **learn more about general data system functionalities that Indiana should consider to better serve WAP applicants**

    - NASCSP
    - Indiana's Weatherization Training Center
    - Rebate Program Partners
    - Other States

- It is helpful to hear from stakeholders who **do not** use your data system

    - Learn about other effective WAP data management systems
    - Advice and lessons learned from switching data systems
    - Prioritizing features and functionalities based on DOE reporting requirements

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CATEGORIZING SOFTWARE USERS

Identifying stakeholder groups also allowed for the **prioritization** of findings based on how each group would use the new data system

High Usage Stakeholders	Moderate Usage Stakeholders	Low/No Usage Stakeholders	Other Stakeholders Engaged in the Process
• Weatherization managers and intake staff • Weatherization monitors	• Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) Weatherization Team • Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) IT Staff	• Weatherization contractors • IHCDA Director of Financial Operations	• Rebate Partners • NASCSP • Indiana Community Action Association (INCAA) • External States • Current Indiana Weatherization Software System Developer

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DATA SYSTEM RESEARCH

- IHCDA also asked the Consultants to conduct data system research to **inform the selection and/or design of a potential Indiana WAP software system**

  - Provided insight into what available software most aligns to IHCDA Weatherization stakeholders' desired features

- The goal was to see **which data systems were used by states similar to Indiana**

- **Informational interviews with other states** allowed the consultants to theme which software feature characteristics would most align with the needs of our WAP network

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GENERAL OUTCOMES FROM THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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AFTER STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- After the stakeholder engagement process was completed, the consultant drafted a **report of findings**

- IHCDA staff reviewed the report and then participated in a **working session** facilitated by the consultants

- The **next few slides** will go over:

    - Challenges identified with the current software

    - Implementation findings

    - Recommendations for implementation

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CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

Below is a summary of the **nine (9) overarching challenges** associated with existing weatherization project management software as reported by all stakeholder groups

1. Lack of a user-friendly software interface and features to support core work
2. Lack of efficient data entry and data management
3. Lack of efficient documentation management
4. Limited Technical Processing
5. Limited customizability of metrics, data visualizations, dashboards and reports
6. Limited communication infrastructure
7. Lack of external system integration
8. Lack of stakeholder access
9. Data protection and safety

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PRIORITY SOFTWARE SYSTEMS FEATURES

- Presence of fast loading pages

- Presence of clear guidelines for what information to submit

- Ability to view, filter, and sort lists, including applications, contracts, waitlists, etc.

- Ability of system to generate dashboard with real-time information to support project management; for example, track the number of units in production

- Ability to search and filter based on various criteria (example: search for qualifying homes by region/county, filter data by homeowner type)

- Ability to electronically complete and store paperwork

- Presence of automated report generation at end of contract

- Ability for users to enter and update information into reports and save "as they go", rather than enter cumulatively at once with no opportunity to add information later

- Ability of system to integrate with EAPConnect (IHCDA's LIHEAP software)

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FINDING 1: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Stakeholders stressed the importance of a **customer-first orientation** to system selection, implementation, and sustainability

- The customer-first orientation should be centered around continued engagement with stakeholders

Key Recommendation 1
Continue to engage stakeholders in the weatherization software selection process

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FINDING 2: REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Stakeholders stressed the importance of not rushing the RFP process; and to use stakeholder feedback to directly inform its development

- Identifying how the software will optimize and streamline workflows (and workflows are) in the writing of the RPF (not after contracting)

Key Recommendation 2
Utilize NASCSP resources to plan and/or develop an RFP for the new weatherization software

Key Recommendation 3
Map all key weatherization work processes to plan how to optimize these processes with a new software

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FINDING 3: DATA MIGRATION PROCESS

- Stakeholders noted the need for historical data to be migrated over to the new system

Key Recommendation 4
Create a data migration plan for existing weatherization data so that it may be accommodated in the RFP

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FINDING 4: WEATHERIZATION SOFTWARE SYSTEM TRAINING

- Stakeholders shared ideas to optimize training on the new software:

  - Hands on in-person training (using computers) and online training options

  - "How To" video tutorials that can be accessed at any time

  - Train-the-trainer options

  - Annual training, given staff turnover

Key Recommendation 5:
Employ a multi-faceted training program to help staff learn new software processes

Key Recommendation 6:
Offer in-depth training options and use the support of INCAA to manage regular software trainings

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FINDING 5: MAINTENANCE, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT, AND ADAPTABILITY USAGE

- The consultants stressed the importance of the following when selecting a software developer:

  - Ongoing adaptability

  - Substantial IT support

  - Experience with weatherization programming

Key Recommendation 7:
Consider developers' responsiveness and timeliness during the RFP process

Key Recommendation 8:
Consider developers' experience with weatherization software in decision-making

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FINDING 6: ONGOING STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK PROCESSES

- Stakeholders emphasized the importance of **ensuring that stakeholder feedback is obtained** so that the data system is continually **responsive** to various stakeholders' needs

Key Recommendation 9:
Plan and implement annual stakeholder feedback processes

Key Recommendation 10:
Consider the development of formalized Collaborative Data Partnerships with Utility/Energy Providers, Community Action Agencies and IHCDA

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LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

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CHALLENGES OF THE PROCESS

- Working with a third-party evaluator can be challenging, especially if they are **not familiar with Weatherization**

    - Can delay stakeholder engagement process if they are not sure what questions to ask each stakeholder group

    - Difficulty in designing data collection tools and resources

- It can be difficult to get your WAP Network to **think outside of the box**

    - Expanding their needs outside of the capabilities of the current data system and how they currently use and collect data

    - Dreaming big, not just a reporting software

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CHALLENGES OF THE PROCESS (CONTINUED)

Stakeholders are **often hesitant** to get on board with major changes

- As part of the RFP Process, IHCDA asked software providers to submit a 10-minute video demonstration of their product to share with our stakeholders

- The videos ended up being quite overwhelming for the stakeholders to digest

    - Some members of our WAP Network became concerned and did not want to deviate from the old data system, despite knowing it was incredibly flawed

    - It is important to keep your stakeholders informed, but be strategic about how much information is shared and when

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MEASURED SUCCESS

- **Informed a Request for Proposals (RFP)** for a new Weatherization data system and project management software

- Allowed IHCDA to think through our own **priorities as an organization**

- Helped us navigate **which policy and technology issues should be prioritized**

- **Continued "buy-in"** from our stakeholders

APPENDIX E. Data System Features

The vendor's proposed data system should contain all of the following capabilities. Please indicate whether your product currently has each feature, if your company is currently building the feature, if you can build our desired features, or if the feature or capability is not possible to build. For each feature, select only one response by filling an X into the checkbox.

Key Weatherization Features	Currently Have	Currently Building	Can Build	Not Possible
Intake/Client Application				
Do you have a Weatherization application for clients?				
Is there an API to work with another system to collect applicant information?				
Do you currently have the data points necessary from clients to complete an application? (Example: client/household information)				
Can the system collect client income documentation?				
Does the system have the ability to collect utility account information/interface with Vendor Portals?				
Do dates auto populate when filling out any forms in the system?				
Can you see all actions on an individual application from a system audit?				
Eligibility Determination				
Does the system have Categorical Eligibility Options?				
Can the system determine income eligibility?				
Prioritization/Waitlist				
Does the system have a waitlist?				
Do you have a waitlist prioritization tool/process?				
Do you have a waitlist management tool/process?				
Can your waitlists be customized at the IHCDA or LSP level?				
Deferral/Walkthrough				
Does the system have the ability to upload pictures (forms and client information)?				
Does the system have the ability to upload different file types?				
Can applicants complete forms in the system?				
Does your product have a mobile application?				
Does the system list Deferral Reasons?				
Does the system auto populate dates? Show date of walkthrough?				
Energy Audit				
Can the system sync with NEAT/MHEA?				
Can it sync with other energy auditing/modeling software?				
Can work orders be created in the system?				
Deferral Remediation				
Does your system allow you to select measures called for?				

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FUTURE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- IHCDA recognizes how **valuable** the stakeholder engagement process was in fostering better working relationships with our network

- As we move forward with rolling out our new WAP data system, here are some of the ways we are planning to **continue stakeholder engagement:**

  - Pilot testing with a few volunteer agencies

  - Improved and more frequent communication with the network

  - Using a dedicated email to address technology issues for our network

  - Surveying technology training needs as the roll-out begins, in addition to using "pulse check" surveys to analyze how our network is feeling about the change

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THANK YOU!

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