

Connecticut Superstorm Sandy Recovery

ICF Connect Drives Recovery Efforts



Courtesy of graphs.net

Thirty days after the start of the contract, ICF established an application call center, intake centers, and mobile intake units to contact approximately 12,000 Connecticut residents affected by Superstorm Sandy.

- Within three months, ICF reviewed and evaluated more than 1,000 applications.
- Provided crucial support to applications which resulted in completion and submission of 80% of all applications initiated in the database. The remaining 20% were applicants that decided to not complete their applications.
- Had an acceptance rate of 99% of all applications submitted to DOH.

Need

Getting families back into their homes was a top priority for Connecticut state officials following the widespread devastation of Superstorm Sandy. Property owners whose homes were damaged or destroyed needed urgent help to rebuild, and the State needed to manage the allocation of federal funds as quickly and accurately as possible. Connecticut was awarded a \$71.82M grant through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, \$30M of which was allocated to the Owner Occupied Rehabilitation and Rebuilding Program to address unmet housing needs.

In September 2013, ICF was engaged by the Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH) to apply its considerable experience in disaster recovery and information technology to the State's need to process very large numbers of homeowner financial assistance claims. Effective help for displaced residents had to include a claim application intake and evaluation process that would not be onerous for citizens who were trying to figure out how to rebuild. Equally, the State was required to monitor the claim process for compliance with funding regulations, entailing extensive, ongoing data collection and analysis.

Solution

To help address Connecticut's critical housing situation in Sandy's aftermath, ICF delivered a financial claim application system tailored to the specific needs of the State and its residents. ICF Connect was designed, developed, and implemented to manage the claim process from application through review and appeal. An accessible and user-friendly online tool to complete secure, accurate grant applications, ICF Connect accurately files claims that reflect the complex and variable requirements of each citizen's specific situation.

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ICF Connect Application Home Screen



New applications register or returning applicants login using the buttons in the top right corner. Hyperlinks are provided, allowing customers to navigate directly to frequently visited areas.

Because ICF has extensive experience in large-scale disaster recovery and thorough knowledge of CDBG-DR funding requirements, ICF Connect was designed to adjust requested information based on a user's answers to previous questions, presenting customized steps that allow for uploading required documents and easy review for incomplete or missing information by claimants, officials and the ICF Quality Review team. The accuracy of the process is reflected in the 99% acceptance rate for applications submitted to the DOH for final review and subsequent financial award determination. State officials were able to access data as needed for monitoring each application end-to-end, including grant disposition, and, as appropriate, the property inspection company, architecture firm, and construction contractor. The ease with which data could be accessed allowed for monitoring and reporting that kept the program compliant with CDBG-DR requirements.

In addition to the online system, ICF established an application call center, five intake centers, and mobile intake units staffed by individuals trained to assist property owners through the application process. Reflecting the urgency of returning storm victims to their homes, these resources were available within 30 days of ICF's engagement. They offered a lifeline for homeowners who didn't have—or had lost—their computer/internet or those who simply wanted guidance. As a further effort to engage and inform those affected by the storm, ICF conducted extensive outreach to contact approximately 12,000 potential eligible applicants, through outbound calling, mass mailing, and an email campaign.

Benefit

At a time of unprecedented need, ICF implemented a reliable, efficient, effective system for inputting claim information, moving it through the necessary steps, then tracking its history and disposition. With claim data stored securely in a centralized database for easy review and assessment, DOH was relieved from the sizeable effort of collecting data by other means for its monitoring and reporting requirements. The system is not only cost-effective, it minimizes the security risks associated with manually transferring sensitive data.

A citizen-centric approach made it easier for citizens to understand the CDBG-DR program and apply for funding. ICF knew that reaching out and educating a shaken public was an important step in making sure all eligible residents knew about the system and how to use it. Further sensitivity to the situation was demonstrated by ICF's recommendation to staff the mobile intake centers with people from the impacted communities who understood the culture as well as the storm's impact.

About ICF International

ICF International (NASDAQ:ICFI) provides professional services and technology solutions that deliver beneficial impact in areas critical to the world's future. ICF is fluent in the language of change, whether driven by markets, technology, or policy. Since 1969, we have combined a passion for our work with deep industry expertise to tackle our clients' most important challenges. We partner with clients around the globe—advising, executing, innovating—to help them define and achieve success. Our more than 5,000 employees serve government and commercial clients from more than 70 offices worldwide. ICF's website is www.icfi.com.