

Software Was Out of Date

The Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) Section 8 Performance-Based Contract Administration (PBCA) team was dependent on the original Contract Administration Tracking (CAT) software application to manage many aspects of the business. While considered “cutting edge” when originally developed, many features weren’t included in the original application that were needed to meet the growing requirements and complexity of successfully administering IFA’s Section 8 Annual Contributions Contract (ACC) with HUD.

- The technology used for the original CAT application was three generations out of date.
- The nightly back-up of the data could be compromised if a user failed to exit out of the application thus locking the Microsoft Access database.
- The contact data (owners, agents, HUD personnel, business associates) was not integrated with the rest of Iowa Finance Authority data.
- There was frequent need for IFA’s programmers to “fix” the data due to user errors or programming issues.
- Tracking of HAP Voucher Payments was a manual process utilizing multiple spreadsheets and thus increasing the risk of errors.

Rewriting CAT

In 2008, it became obvious that the original CAT software system needed to be re-written to meet the needs of the Section 8 PBCA team and to allow for enhancements to successfully accomplish all of the performance based tasks required under the ACC. Rewriting the original system allowed IFA to use up-to-date web technology and common libraries to integrate CAT with the rest of IFA’s software systems. The new CAT website went live in July 2009 with significant enhancements following throughout 2010 and early 2011.

A Reinvigorated CAT

The new CAT is a web-based system that allows for access by internal IFA team members, in-the-field inspectors, and other business partners (on a limited basis). CAT is a combination of workflow, scheduler, tracking, payment processing, survey tool, e-mailer, document imaging, and management reporting.

The new CAT application provides numerous management functions including tracking monthly voucher reviews, tracking authorized rent and utility allowance adjustments, tracking contract renewal due dates, approving and monitoring payment of special claims, monitoring timely Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) to owners, and automatically creating an Automated Clearing House (ACH) transaction for each monthly HAP payment. CAT ensures that payment of Section 8 HAP vouchers and special claims to owners are timely, authorized and paid only for eligible units.

Why CAT is Innovative and Meets the NCSHA Award Judging Criteria

Innovative

The Question and Answer Module (QNA) offers the ability to create input screens for any purpose. The variety of question types, conditional control over the flow (example: “skip to question X”), nested child surveys and other features provide the cornerstone for any screen input the business unit can imagine. Possibilities for users creating their own presentation layers are without limit.

Automation is the foundation of the system. With a single click of a button the enhanced CAT system can project the workload of every staff member for a year in advance, compare projected to the actual performance, and historically recreate any invoice.

Replicable

The CAT system was designed using a collection of Common Libraries to aid in reuse throughout the Iowa Finance Authority.

The projection, scheduling and completion of tasks are designed with automation rules that are configurable from within CAT. Wish to reschedule next year’s rent review two weeks before the end of the contract? No problem. Wish to automatically have an email notification sent two days prior? No problem. The Tracking Module allows the scheduling of assignments and the tying in a wide variety of action items from the automated printing of reports to taking a snapshot and the saving of a critical document.

CAT’s Workflow and QNA modules have been utilized in other IFA business areas with only minor configuration needed due to the generic nature of their design. The workflow engine is oblivious to the data or what process is being designed, built and maintained by the business unit.

Respond To Management Challenge

The system was built in response to management’s challenge to provide a system that would assist in the daily operations of the Section 8 program, affect savings in staff time by streamlining processes, and help ensure the successful re-bid of the Section 8 Annual Contributions Contract with HUD. The requirements included designing a system that would be flexible, user-maintained, secure, and provide effective enforcement of policies and processes.

Measurable Improvements In Operations

Reduction in labor hours is gained with every module. Some of the largest achievements have been realized by field staff. The system is capable of offering remote users the ability to submit a multitude of actions and then track them, thus empowering our customers while freeing staff time. One notable example was the design of the HAP Voucher Payment module which provided IFA with the opportunity to reduce one full-time staff position and allow the realization of an annual savings of over \$100,000.

Iowa Finance Authority

Reinvigorating CAT

Where it once took days to complete the monthly invoice it is now reviewed and approved in a few hours. This was made possible by linking the monthly invoice directly with CAT's workflow module. The accuracy of process measurement and financial calculations are 100 percent based on the actual completion times of IFA Staff.

Provide Benefits That Outweigh Costs

CAT's web-based design allows IFA users to access their information 24-hours per day. This was accomplished by utilizing the existing web server environment. The system was coded by just one programmer and can be configured by the users. We met our goal of making the system flexible enough so the users could configure changes in workflow and setup new information gathering modules without Information Technology involvement - a truly self-maintaining system. For example, the QNA module puts the power into the hands of the business unit to create their own question-and-answer inspection report, mapping it to a formal reporting document (for example a specific HUD form) and deploy the data to mobile field inspectors.

Program documents can now be stored in CAT and tied directly to the appropriate property. Users can check out a HAP Voucher for a particular month and view all of the imaged documents supporting the voucher without having to navigate to a shared folder somewhere on the network. This provides added security for documents, ensuring users won't have the ability to accidentally delete stored documents.

Effective Use Of Resources

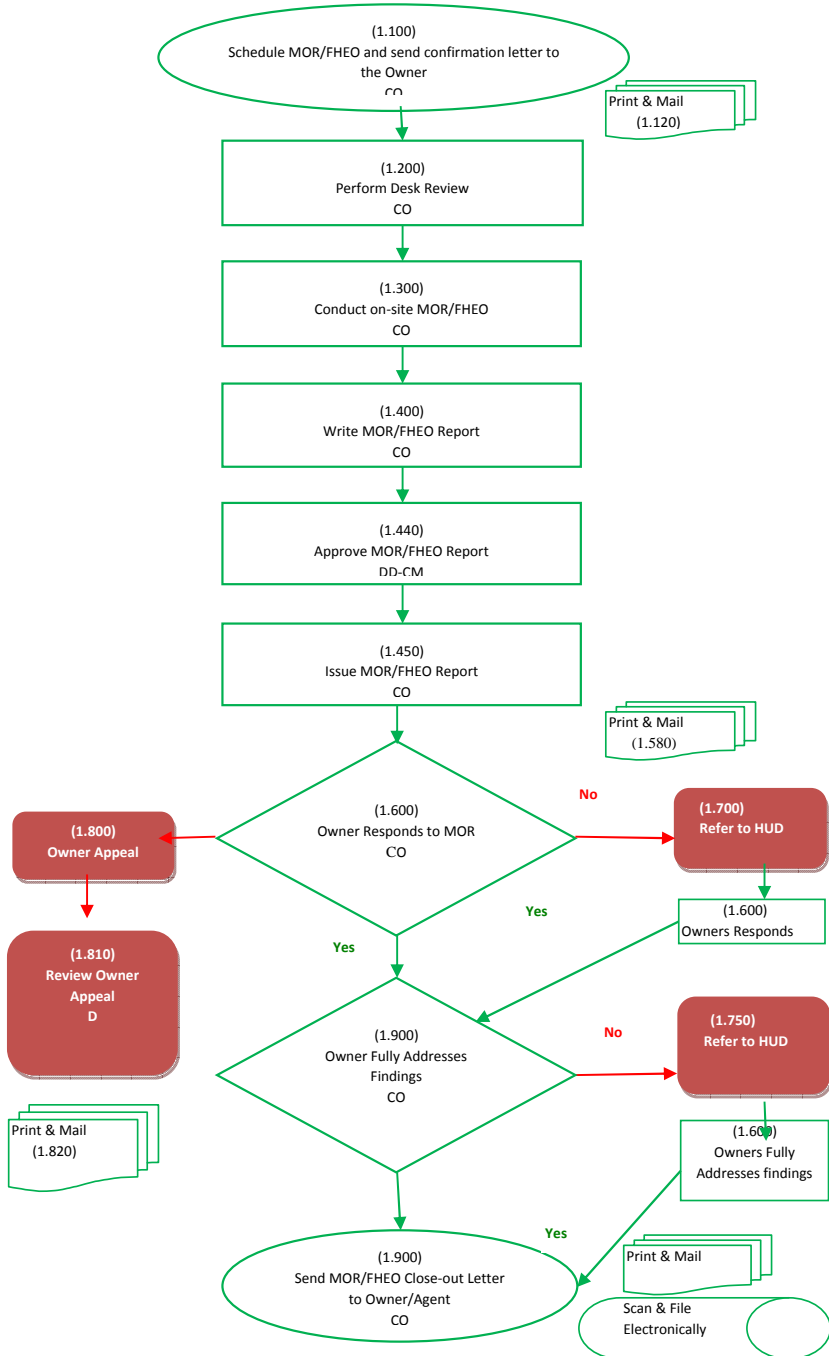
The heart of the newly enhanced CAT software system is the workflow management engine that tracks all tasks associated with the PBCA responsibilities, ensures deadlines are met, and projects tasks into the future. Many assignments are scheduled automatically as prior tasks are completed by IFA team members. Workflow management is tied directly into the Invoice reports so that all PBCA requirements are reported based on the actual performance of IFA staff.

Workflow management also provides IFA's management a tool to track the progress of tasks throughout the month to ensure that all assignments are scheduled for completion in a timely manner. The Workflow Module provides collaboration on documents and the ability to manage tasks. The business unit gains consistent processes, efficiency and productivity by managing the tasks and steps involved in the workflow thread. Staff can focus on performing the work rather than managing the workflow.

Achieve Strategic Objectives

The Annual Contributions Contract with HUD was recently put up for a competitive, nationwide re-bid process. It was imperative that IFA's Information Technology Department develop a system which streamlined processes, improved accuracy, reliability, and timing, while at the same time reducing overall staffing needs. The CAT system accomplishes this and much more, allowing IFA to continue successfully administering the Section 8 program!

Management and Occupancy Review Process



Performance Based Task (PBT) # 1

Task Timeline	HUD ACC Performance Standard	Source (Tracking Tool)	Performance Summary
Task 1.100 14 days, or more, prior to the performance date of the MOR.	Tasks 1.100 - 1.300 Conduct on-site MOR review at each project in the assigned portfolio annually during the term of the ACC.	Task 1.100 Annual Work Plan, Schedule Review, MOR Tracking.	Tasks 1.100 - 1.900 Performance Summary & Incentive/Disincentive Reports, Monthly Reports.
Task 1.200 1 - 14 days prior to the performance date of the MOR.	Task 1.400 - 1.450 The form HUD-9834 Summary Report is transmitted to the owner within 30 Calendar days of completion of the on-site MOR.	Tasks 1.200 - 1.450 MOR Rating Report, MOR Tracking, Annual Workplan, Monthly Performance Summary Report.	
Task 1.300 14 days, or more, after scheduling the MOR.			
Task 1.400 1 - 28 days after conducting the on-site review.	The form HUD-9834 Summary Report utilizes HUD's written rating policy.	Tasks 1.600 - 1.900 MOR Tracker spreadsheet, MOR Tracking Report .	
Task 1.440 1 day after receiving written report.	The form HUD-9834 Summary Report is substantiated by the appropriate supporting documentation (HUD form 9834 and tenant file review forms.)		
Task 1.450 1 day after receiving approved report.			
Task 1.600 1 - 30 days after issuing the MOR report.	The MOR complies with HUD handbooks and Rent and Income Determination Quality Control Guide for Multifamily Housing Programs.		
Task 1.800 1 - 45 days after receiving owner appeal.	Task 1.700, 1.750 Review and respond to owner response to the form HUD-9834 Report findings, within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt.		
Task 1.900 1 - 30 days after receiving response from Owner.			
Task 1.900 1 day after all findings have been fully addressed.	Task 1.810 Respond to owner appeal within forty -five (45) calendar days of receipt.		

Tasks List > Task Details > Package Details

Package Created on 7/13/2009 8:38:00 PM by
Changes last saved 7/13/2009 8:38:00 PM by

Package

Task Name: 01 - Management and Occupancy Reviews

Package Name: MDR / FHED Package

Single Threading Package:

Steps

Add New Step

Step Name	Work Plan?	Auto Schedule?	Start Point?
1.100 Schedule Management Occupancy Review	True	False	True
1.110 Confirm contact information listed in IREMs	False	False	False
1.120 Send Owner/Agent appointment confirmation packet	False	False	False
1.199 Update IREMs 'Management Reviews' tab (Scheduled date)	False	False	False
1.200 Complete form HUD-9834 Desk Review	False	False	False
1.210 Review TRACS, EIV, and EPS reports to select files	False	False	False
1.220 Contact HUD Project Manager to request on-site follow-up	False	False	False
1.230 Review IREMs and property documents to determine follow-up	False	False	False
1.300 Perform MDR / FHED Review	True	False	True
1.310 Review Operating policies and procedures	False	False	False
1.311 Complete checklist: (TSP, Lease, House Rules, Pet Rules)	False	False	False
1.320 Verify compliance with occupancy issues	False	False	False
1.330 Verify correct documentation is in Resident file	False	False	False
1.331 Determine need for 100% file review	False	False	False
1.340 Review Owner compliance with FHED	False	False	False
1.341 Obtain FHED documents (Owner portion of Addendum B)	False	False	False
1.342 Complete FHED documents (Reviewer portion of Addendum B)	False	False	False
1.380 Review REAC inspection to ensure items have been corrected	False	False	False
1.390 Conduct close-out interview	False	False	False
1.395 Notify HUD of potential violation of law	False	False	False
1.399 Update IREMs 'Management Reviews' tab (Performed date)	False	False	False
1.400 Complete HUD-9834 Summary Report	False	False	False
1.410 Complete rating scorecard	False	False	False
1.420 Submit report to BHCS for review	False	False	False
1.430 Complete accuracy review submit to HCS	False	False	False

> >>

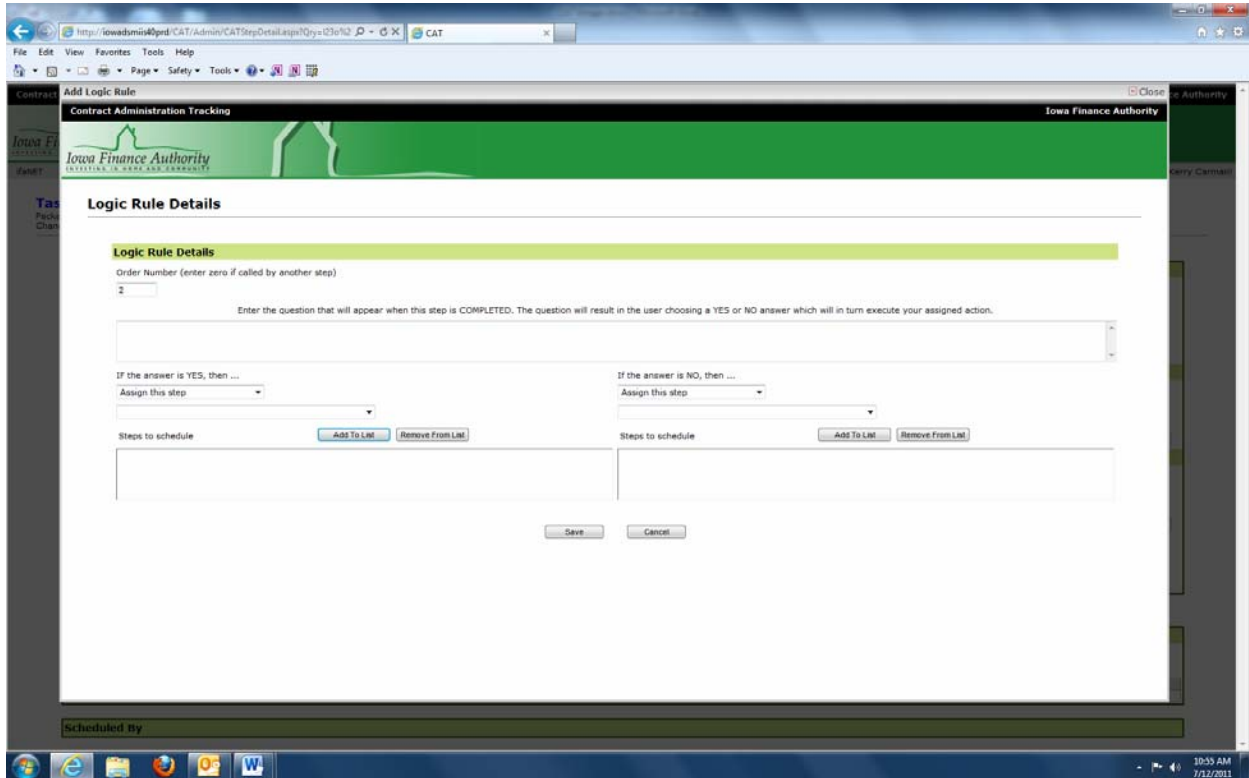
Save Changes

WORKFLOW MODULE

The workflow is organized by Task, Package and Steps. Below is a screen snapshot of the Step Details which shows the flexibility of the workflow engine. The workflow module allows for projected workload scheduling, actual scheduling, and completion. Upon any of these actions a series of Logic and Flow Rules determine the automated steps to do next. For example, upon completion of the MOR inspection one or more ensuring steps may be scheduled or an email notification could be automatically sent.



The follow snapshot shows the details for a Logic Rule. The workflow is based upon True or False conditions such as “Is the report completed?” This provides for a level of granularity so that any step can be time stamped and measured.



QNA MODULE

The QNA (Question and Answer) module allows for ease of inspections, surveys and any other actions that consist of questions and answers. The snapshot below shows a number of sections within the survey to allow for quick navigation. All answers are mapped to specific locations on the final report so that rewrites and reviews are no longer required of staff. This allows for a copy of the report to be presented immediately to the property manager and owner.

The screenshot displays the 'Survey Builder > Survey Detail' page in a web browser. The page is titled 'Survey Detail' and shows various configuration options for a survey. Below the configuration fields, there is a 'Survey Sections' table with 8 rows, each containing an 'Edit' link, a 'Sequence' number, a 'Description', a 'Remove' link, and a 'Move' link.

Survey Detail Configuration:

- Survey Name: [Text Field]
- Description: Requirements of the Tenant Selection Plan
- Table View: [Dropdown Menu]
- Automatic Schedule: [Text Field]
- Highlight Required Fields:
- Display Automatic Numbering:
- Days Before Scheduled Date: [Text Field]
- Workflow Step: [Dropdown Menu]
- Status: In_Setup
- Buttons: Save, Delete Survey

Survey Sections Table:

Edit	Sequence	Description	Remove	Move
Edit	1	Project Eligibility Requirements	Remove	▲▼
Edit	2	Income Limits	Remove	▲▼
Edit	3	Procedures for accepting applications and selecting from the waiting list.	Remove	▲▼
Edit	4	Occupancy Standards	Remove	▲▼
Edit	5	Unit transfer policies	Remove	▲▼
Edit	6	Policies to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Fair Housing Act and o	Remove	▲▼
Edit	7	Policy for opening and closing the waiting list for the property.	Remove	▲▼
Edit	8	Eligibility of students	Remove	▲▼

TRACKING MODULE

The Tracking module allows managers to monitor progress of any Workflow Step. There are two main views provided: Assignments (shown below) by staff, and Projected Workflow for resource allocation. Tracking ties in closely with the Workflow and is then organized in this one Assignment screen.

Contract Administration Tracking Iowa Finance Authority

Support To: [Excel](#)

Record Count: 436 Page 1 of 18

Property Name	Task Name	Step Name	IREMS ID	Contract Num	Schedule Date	Staff Name	Edit
Cypress Pointe Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Send 1 year reminder to owner	800005393	IA05-R000-014	5/31/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Northgate Townhomes	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005391	IA05-M000-089	6/2/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Cedar Hills Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005233	IA05-M000-034	6/5/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
East Maquoketa Park Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005263	IA05-R000-029	6/5/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Edgebrook Park Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005271	IA05-M000-090	6/3/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
R.E. Schorg Manor	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005489	IA05-T861-004	6/5/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Valley View Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005505	IA05-R000-024	6/9/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Bluffs Towers Apartments	03 - Process Rental Adjustments	09 - Review voucher request for rent increase implementation.	800005216	IA05-L000-005	6/10/2011	Budget Manager	Edit
Northglen Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005292	IA05-R000-002	6/10/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Hawthorne Hills Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005315	IA05-M000-054	6/17/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Hersey Manor	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005321	IA05-T814-004	6/19/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Carmel Village	03 - Process Rental Adjustments	09 - Review voucher request for rent increase implementation.	800005227	IA05-T861-003	6/24/2011	Budget Manager	Edit
East Oak Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005264	IA05-R000-039	6/24/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Inglebrook Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005335	IA05-8023-006	6/24/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Lucas Hills Estates	03 - Process Rental Adjustments	09 - Review voucher request for rent increase implementation.	800005395	IA05-T872-005	6/24/2011	Budget Manager	Edit
Naples Park Apartments - Council Bluffs	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005367	IA05-0034-001	6/24/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Morning Hills Apartments	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005382	IA05-M000-005	6/24/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Mt. Carmel Elderly/Handicapped Assoc.	01 - Conduct MOR / FHEO Review	Review Owner MOR response	800005384	IA05-T861-002	6/24/2011	McClure, Scott C	Edit
St. Village II Apartments	01 - Conduct MOR / FHEO Review	Review Owner MOR response	800005383	IA05-T861-001	6/24/2011	McClure, Scott C	Edit
Palmer Apartments and Heritage Haven	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005272	IA05-T862-007	6/24/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Stone Crest Apartments	03 - Process Rental Adjustments	09 - Review voucher request for rent increase implementation.	800005473	IA05-0593-201	6/24/2011	Budget Manager	Edit
Woodbury Innes Townhomes	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Review voucher for Rent Increase implementation	800005530	IA05-0019-001	6/24/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Tipton Senior Park	14 - Renewals of expiring HAP contracts	Attachment 3 Contract Renewal Received	800005487	IA05-R000-056	6/29/2011	Funding Team	Edit
Acorn Acres Phase II	03 - Process Rental Adjustments	09 - Review voucher for rent increase implementation	800005192	IA05-0029-001	6/30/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit
Century II Apartments	03 - Process Rental Adjustments	09 - Review voucher for rent increase implementation	800005242	IA05-0011-013	6/30/2011	Mock, Susan E	Edit

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ... >>

11:03 AM 7/12/2011