

How the Morning Makeover Saved MaineHousing \$45,000

MaineHousing

Management Innovation: Internal Operations

HFA Staff Contact

Amanda Ouellette

aouellette@mainehousing.org

How the Morning Makeover saved MaineHousing \$45,000

The old saying that many hands make light work was the basic embodiment of MaineHousing's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Department's "Morning Makeover." The name alone makes you want to participate, as Senior Director of Government Relations and Communications Erik Jorgensen put it. All joking aside, the Makeover was a creative and team-based solution that not only achieved an important task but also saved MaineHousing an estimated \$45,000 in costs.

The challenge - digitizing tenant files

The relocation to a new building in June of 2020 prompted the need for MaineHousing to place into digital storage a towering stack of existing hard-copy tenant files held by the agency's Housing Choice Voucher Department. An initial estimate from a vendor indicated that the total cost to contract for the project would be around \$45,000. The department managers saw this and then wondered whether it would be feasible to do the project in-house, and if so, how best to manage the daunting task.

To achieve this, the department created the Electronic File Lean Team, aimed at creating a plan to reach the goal of digitizing without excessive new costs. Jamie Johnson, MaineHousing's first lean process improvement expert, and then a department manager in the Housing Choice Voucher department, lead the project. Adapting the Lean approach of "Plan, Do, Check, Act", the team created a plan.

In January of 2021, the department began implementation with parallel strategies. They created a process flow for new files to be stored electronically, while tackling the large challenge of organizing, scanning, and storing around 4,000 existing tenant files. By March of 2021, the department had their first "Morning Makeover" - their name for a new dedicated time when all department staff would take a 4-hour break from their regular duties to focus solely on the backlog of existing tenant files.

Morning Makeovers then took place on a monthly basis – and with each one, around 50 existing files were made electronic. It was an ambitious goal, but as the work progressed the number of files remaining in the storeroom continued to shrink. And on December 15, 2022, the final paper records had been digitized.

Now the department has over 51,000 fully electronic document packets.

In all, 26 four-drawer filing cabinets, laden with thousands of paper records, were reduced to their much easier to search and manage digital format. To put it into perspective, stacked on top of one another those filing cabinets would be as tall as a 10-story building.

This effort:

-Was Innovative

In all, 26 four-drawer filing cabinets, laden with thousands of paper records, were reduced to their much easier to search and manage digital format. To put it into perspective, stacked on top of one another those filing cabinets would be as tall as 10-story building. Instead of looking to an outside vendor or contractor, the Housing Choice Voucher department concluded the fastest and most cost-effective solution was simply to set a focused time for everyone in the department to roll up their sleeves and chip in. This effort was not only innovative in its adaptation of Lean Team principles and the simplicity of the application, it also helped strengthen HCV as a team, so was in part a solution to a problem at hand and an example of teamwork in action, helping to strengthen the HCV team as a cohesive unit of professionals.

-Was Replicable

This effort is easily replicable with support from upper-level management of Lean principles and a willingness of staff to embrace a cost-effective solution that involves only a short disruption to their regular work. Bringing the team together to seek out a collaborative solution to operational problems is also easily replicable. Organizational leaders need only embrace and support the concepts of group problem solving and bottom-up communications.

Setting a clear goal, an objective for completion is also replicable. Whether it's digitizing miles of paper files or some other specific goal, a clear finish line will make those working towards it more willing to join hands in the effort.

-Achieved Measurable Results

Taking 26 filing cabinets and 51,000 records and converting them into digital files that are far easier to search, manage, and share is an easily measurable result. This effort has not only freed physical space while creating a more reliable and robust filing system, it has undoubtedly saved countless hours of staff time, creating a more efficient department that is better able to more quickly serve both internal and external clients.

This change also allowed the HCV team to transition fully to a hybrid work model providing virtual access to all the files staff need when working remotely.

-Provided Benefits That Outweigh Costs

The once-a-month investment of staff time for four hours had no measurable cost on agency operations. The compounded time that will be saved because of this digitization far outweighs the initial investment of staff time to do this work in increments over several months.

-Was an Effective Use of Resources

What would have otherwise been a mundane task for one employee over several months was turned into a once-a-month event that allowed the department's entire staff to pull together to achieve a specific goal. This was not only an effective use of resources, it preserved resources and morale by allowing the team to all pull together. No one worker was faced with being temporarily reassign - all other work remained on schedule and on task.

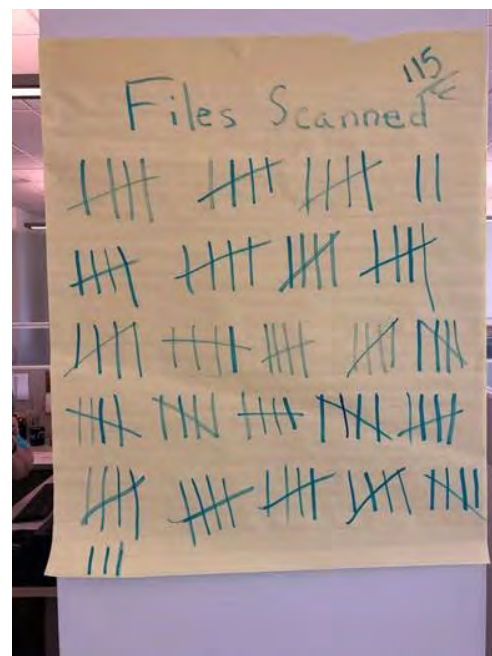
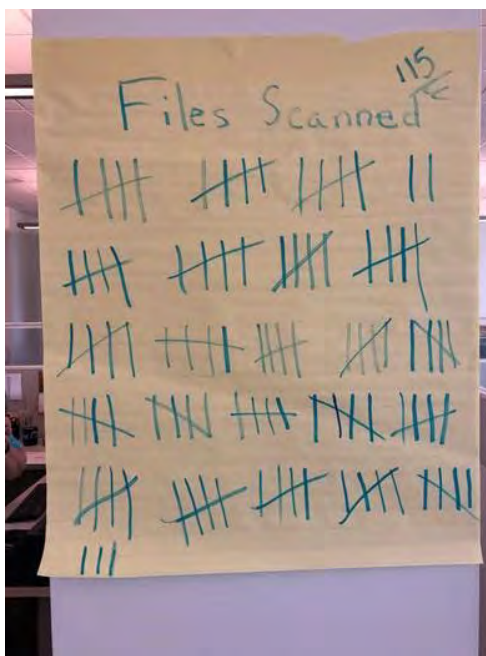
-Achieved strategic objectives

Fifty-one thousand records are now digital.



Appendix A

Project Images



A sample set of tally marks made during several Morning Makeover session.



Housing Choice Voucher Department with Director Dan Brennan celebrating completion of the project.

Appendix B

Project Files

Several files are attached to help detail the planning stages of this project.

1. Project Charter

The project charter started this project by describing the work and defining what the project was intended to do.

2. Electronic Tenant File Map

The file map detailed how each physical file would become a digital file and where it's information would be saved.

3. Electronic Files Retention Policy

The project laid out the retention policy for each type of document in a tenant file at the very beginning of the project.

Charter			
The Charter describes the work and defines what you intend to do. It documents the needs and expectations of the team and the key stakeholders.			
Project/Problem Name:	Electronic Tenant Files		
Sponsor:	Allison Gallagher	Date Last Revised:	3/1/2021
Project Overview/Problem Statement			
Describe the background and context for the project/problem and why it is being undertaken. Speak to the business value of the work being performed. Clearly describe the current problem and justify how this project and the proposed solution will solve the stated problem.			
<p>The HCV Department has retained paper files for around 3,800 tenant since the start of the program. By moving electronic for permanent files there will be a substantial decrease in waste of both paper and time. In addition, staff will be able to access documents while telecommuting.</p>			
Objectives and Alignment to Priorities & Goals			
Objectives describe what the solution will achieve from a business perspective. Project success will be determined based on successfully achieving the project objectives. Each objective should be action-oriented and should align to an agency priority or goal.			
MaineHousing Priorities and Goals	Objectives (Write "N/A" where applicable)		
Expand Affordable Housing Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number and quality of First Home Loans Increase affordable housing development 	N/A		
Improve and Preserve the Quality of Housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure long term sustainability of multifamily portfolio Help Maine people stay safe and warm in their home 	N/A		
Help Maine People Attain Housing Stability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce length of time and number of Maine people experiencing homelessness Improve housing stability for Maine people at risk 	This project will help HCV serve tenants faster and more efficiently.		
Provide Leadership in the Housing Field: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote inclusive, sustainable communities that support viable affordable housing Lead and support collaborative efforts to address Maine's housing needs 	This project will contribute to MaineHousing utilizing technology that lends to them providing leadership in the housing field.		
Ensure Continued Organizational Viability and Capability to meet state's housing needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the long-term financial viability of MaineHousing Become an efficient, effective organization that people want to work for and do business with. 	N/A		
Scope – Deliverables – Use these to build Project Plan			
List the major deliverables and describe the high-level characteristics (features and functions). The detailed requirements will be gathered later in the project.			
The Following Deliverables are In-Scope for this Project			
Major Deliverable	High-Level Characteristics		
Streamline processes to utilize electronic files moving forward.			
Transition the backlog of paper files to electronic.			

The Following Deliverables are Out-of-Scope for this Project

Roles

Outline the project roles and which individuals are playing those roles: stakeholder, project team members, subject matter experts, vendors, consultants, IT support and any other roles required by this project.

Name	Department	Position Title	Project Role
Allison Gallagher	HCV	Director of HCV	Project Sponsor/Team Member
Jamie Johnson	HCV	Housing Manager – Homeless Priority	Project Manager
Jennifer Grant	HCV	Occupancy Specialist	Team Member
Laurie Glidden	HCV	FSS Coordinator	Team Member
Melissa Cloutier	HCV	Housing Manager	Team Member
Roxanne Meader	HCV	Intake Assistant	Team Member
Jackie Millet	HCV	Inspection Assistant	Team Member
Carol Bernard	IT	Help Desk Analyst II	SME
Sheila Nielsen	Director of IT	Director of IT	SME
Jessica Everett	RMC	Account Executive	Vendor
Kasie Pellerin	Waterville Housing	HCV Program Supervisor	Consultant
Laura Hebert	Westbrook Housing	HCV Program Officer	Consultant

Assumptions

Assumptions are statements that you believe to be true (but are not 100% certain). Document the relevant assumptions here.

- We will be utilizing Docuware for electronic files.

Constraints

Constraints are conditions that are 100% certain. Constraints need to be identified and managed around. For example, not being able to implement a financial solution during quarter-end closeout would be a constraint that would need to be worked around.

- Time – dedicated time will be needed to transition the hard paper files to electronic.

Schedule Estimates

Summarize preliminary project milestone schedule.

July 2020 – August 2020

- Phone conversation with Jessica with RMC:
 - They prep the documents (remove staples, etc).
 - The computer does the scanning and naming.
 - Quality control process.
 - Weekly turning around but access to specific file electronically within an hour Monday – Friday.
 - Can send through a sharefile and then give us everything on USB.
 - Documents usually are in PDF format which we could drag and drop into Docuware to be indexed.
 - Will want to have a meeting to look at sample files to give quote on cost.
- Reach out to Waterville HA and Westbrook HA for their experience and lessons learned.

September 2020 – October 2020

- Set up meeting with project team to determine current state
 - Laurie, Jen, Roxanne, Jackie, Allison, Melissa and Jamie
- Meet to determine current state
- Plus – Delta 9/14/2020
- Meeting with Jessica Everett from RMC to review files
- Received estimate from RMC
- Provide sample file to IT to test naming identification
- Time how long it takes to breakdown file and scan (1 hour and 20 minutes)
- Scan FSS tenant files to test
- Scan Annuals to test

November 2020 – December 2020

- Testing in Docuware
- IT purchase and install adobe for staff

January 2021

- Preview files in Docuware with the team
- Project Team review annual recertification storing process and provide feedback
- Schedule Adobe training for staff
- Distribute electronic file map
- Begin building files according to electronic file map

February 2021

- Annuals stored in Docuware beginning with effective date 4/1/2021
- Inspectors purging and organizing hard paper files according to electronic file map
- Adjusted file map to include special program documents
- Started storing interims, new admissions and change of unit files in Docuware 2/15/2021

- Completed quality control on documents being stored and provided feedback to staff for adjustments needed
- Provided procedures for clipping in Docuware and procedure for when a change occurs but does not warrant an interim
- Review Retention Plan with IT and ensure automatic purging in Docuware

March 2021

- Implementation
- Morning Makeovers

March 2021 to completion

- Quality Control
- Regular metric updates to staff

Risks

List major risks associated with this effort and the initial risk plans to manage each risk.

Risk Event	H/M/L	Initial Risk Plan
Items are not scanned at all or incorrectly.	M	Provide a detailed file map to staff and 100% Quality control initially and then incorporate into the normal QC procedures.

Electronic Tenant File Map

Docuware Store Fields	Documents
Last Name	Application
Middle Initial	
First Name	
SSN Last Four	
Document Name Application	
Document Date Application Received Date	

Bottom



Top

Docuware Store Fields	Documents
Last Name	Copy(s) of our correspondence with tenant/landlord related to certification action
Middle Initial	Issued Under Lease Voucher
First Name	Form HUD-92006 from certification
SSN Last Four	Other Releases
Document Name Certification	HIPPA Authorization Form
Document Date Certification Effective Date	DHHS Authorization to Release Information
	Form HUD-9886 Authorization for the Release of Information
	General Authorization to Release Information
	Authorization for Release of Information (STEP)
	Student Eligibility Checklist (if applicable)
	Household Information Form or Port in Form HUD-50058
	Expenses and/or Deduction Verifications
	Asset Verifications
	Income Verifications (DHHS, Wages, Etc.)
	EIV Income Report (annual only or 90 day)
	RR Certificate from Elite (if applicable)
	Resident Worksheet
	Contract Agreement

Bottom



Top

Docuware Store Fields	Documents
Last Name	Debt Letter
Middle Initial	Repayment Agreement
First Name	
SSN Last Four	
Document Name Debts Owed	
Document Date Letter Date/Signature Date	

Bottom



Top

Docuware Store Fields	Documents
Last Name	Program Warnings
Middle Initial	Termination Letters
First Name	Hearing Notices
SSN Last Four	Pictures
Document Name Documentation	Port Out Documents
Document Date Date letter sent/received	Correspondence not directly related to a certification

Bottom



Top

Docuware Store Fields	Documents
Last Name	SS cards
Middle Initial	Birth certificates
First Name	Photo ID
SSN Last Four	Declaration of Section 214 Status
Document Name Eligibility	Preference Verifications/Referral Letter (special programs)/Self Declaration of Housing Status (STEP)
	Housing Stability Plan
	STEP/HTS Addendums
	Pre/Original Application (excluding CWL) or Port-In form HUD-52665
	Waiting list updates and offer letter
	Consent to Screen for Criminal Activity and approval email

Bottom

Top

Docuware Store Fields	Documents
Last Name	Visit Notes
Middle Initial	Budgets
First Name	Resource Information Shared
SSN Last Four	Miscellaneous
Document Name FSS Client Interaction	Orientation Checklist

Bottom

Top

Docuware Store Fields	Documents
Last Name	Application
Middle Initial	Program Contract of Participation
First Name	Individual Training and Services Plan
SSN Last Four	Appointment Policy
Document Name FSS Mandatory	ReStart Head of Family

Bottom

Top

Docuware Store Fields	Documents
Last Name	Credit Report Release
Middle Initial	
First Name	
SSN Last Four	
Document Name FSS Renewals	

Bottom

Top

Docuware Store Fields	Documents
Last Name	Credit Report
Middle Initial	FICO Cover
First Name	
SSN Last Four	
Document Name FSS Credit Report	

Docuware Store Fields	Documents	
Last Name	Assessment for Eligibility	Bottom
Middle Initial	Signed Pledge	
First Name	Authorization for Release of Information	
SSN Last Four	Estimate of HAP determined/Voucher Letter to Lender	
Document Name Homeownership	Family Briefed on Program	
Document Date Certification Effective Date	Homebuyers Certification regarding Homeownership Counseling	<div> <div></div> <div>Top</div> </div>
	Mortgage Pre-Approval	
	Purchase and Sale Agreement	
	Addendum to Agreement of Sale	
	Environmental Review Approval	
	Professional Home Inspection	
	HQS Inspection	
	Final Financing/Calculation of HO Expense Worksheet	
	Utility Chart	
	Payment Standard Schedule	
	Statement of Homeowner Obligations	
	Copy of Appraisal	
	Mortgage Deed	
	Executed Promissory Note and Executed Mortgage Documents	
	HUD-1 Settlement Statement	
	First Payment Coupon	

Docuware Store Fields	Documents	
Last Name	Briefing Invite letter	Bottom
Middle Initial	Form HUD-92006 from original application	
First Name	Family Certification of Briefing/Obligations while in STEP Program	
SSN Last Four	Debts Owed to Public Housing Agencies and Terminations form HUD-52675	
Document Name Issuance	What You Should Know About EIV	
	Family Information Sheet	<div> <div></div> <div>Top</div> </div>
	Original Voucher issued at briefing/STEP Program Coupon/ Statement of Family Responsibility (Mod & PBV)	

Docuware Store Fields	Documents	
Last Name (Individual)	IRS Match	Bottom
Middle Initial (Individual)	ACH Transfer/Deposit	
First Name (Individual)	W9	
Business Name (Corp, LLC, Trust or Partnership)	Owner Information	
SSN Last Four	HAP Assignment/Transfer	
Document Name Owner Documents	Mod Rehab Damage Claims/Vacancy Loss	
Document Date Date of documents		

Docuware Store Fields	Documents	Bottom ↓ Top
SSN Last Four 0000	CBRS Map	
Business Name Unit Address		
Document Name STEP CBRS		

Docuware Store Fields	Documents	Bottom ↓ Top
Last Name	SS cards	
Middle Initial	Birth certificates	
First Name	Photo ID	
SSN Last Four	Declaration of Section 214 Status	
Document Name Terminated Application	Preference Verifications/Referral Letter (special programs)/Self Declaration of Housing Status (STEP)	
Termination Date Date of Termination	Housing Stability Plan	
	STEP/HTS Addendums	
	Pre/Original Application (excluding CWL) or Port-In form HUD-52665	
	Waiting list updates and offer letter	
	Consent to Screen for Criminal Activity and approval email	
	Briefing Invite letter	
	Form HUD-92006 from original application	
	Family Certification of Briefing/Obligations while in STEP Program	
	Debts Owed to Public Housing Agencies and Terminations form HUD-52675	
	What You Should Know About EIV	
	Family Information Sheet	
	Original Voucher issued at briefing/STEP Program Coupon/ Statement of Family Responsibility (Mod & PBV)	
	Terminated Application Letter	

Docuware Store Fields	Documents	Bottom ↓ Top
Last Name	Landlord/Tenant Declaration of the Relative Policy	
Middle Initial	Lead Based Paint Disclosures	
First Name	40% worksheet	
SSN Last Four	Request for Tenancy Approval/Request for Unit Approval (STEP)	
Document Name Unit Information	Program Lease Addendum (STEP)	
Document Date HAP Effective Date	VAWA Lease Addendum	
	Lease	
	RR Certificate from Elite	
	Security Deposit Request and Acknowledgement Form	
	Owner Information	
	HAP Contract/Rental Assistance Payment Contract/Tenancy Addendum (Mod & PBV)	

HCV – Docuware Retention Policy

Docuware Document Name	Retention Policy	Retention Trigger	Docuware Policy
Application	Applicant - 3 years from Terminated Application Date	Applicant – Termination Date entered into Docuware when application is terminated	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date
	Tenant - 3 years from EOP or Port Out Date	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of EOP or Port Out	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date
Certification	3 years	Document date entered at time of storing certification	Purged from Docuware 3 years from document date
Debts Owed	7 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware when payment is made in full	Purged from Docuware 7 years from Termination Date
Documentation	3 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of EOP or Port Out	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date
Eligibility	3 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of EOP or Port Out	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date
FSS Client Interaction	3 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of EOP or Port Out	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date
FSS Credit Report	1 year	Document Date entered into Docuware at time of storing report	Purged from Docuware 1 year from Document Date
FSS Mandatory	3 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of EOP or Port Out	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date
FSS Renewals	3 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of EOP or Port Out	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date
Homeownership	7 Years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of EOP	Purged from Docuware 7 years from Termination Date
Issuance	3 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of EOP or Port Out	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date
Owner Documents			N/A
PBV Project Files	7 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time that project goes offline	Purged from Docuware 7 years from Termination Date
Portability Billing	7 years	Document Date (billing month) enter at time of storing	Purged from Docuware 7 years from Document Date
Terminated Application	3 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of storing terminated application	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date
Unit Information	3 years	Termination Date entered into Docuware at time of EOP, Port Out or Move	Purged from Docuware 3 years from Termination Date