Helping States Deliver Critical COVID-19 Utility Assistance

Situation

A state public utility commission was tasked with quickly implementing a solution to ensure residents who had lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic would not lose electricity service. The state needed a new and rapid solution to process applications for this assistance program as the existing unemployment infrastructure was strained due to the crisis.

Objectives

- Design, create and implement a new system for intake and processing of applications for electricity assistance.

- Provide phone, internet and call center support for applicants.

- Rapid rollout needed to alleviate strain on existing system that managed unemployment.

Challenges

- Develop, test, integrate and launch several components of a new enrollment based program needed quickly to relieve strain on another system.

- Simultaneously supplement technolgy, Interactive Voice Response (IVR), with a team of trained Customer Service Represenatives (CSRs) ready to assist applicants.

Solution

- Launched initial phase of utility assistance program quickly by designing and deploying a hotline with an IVR system and by training 30 CSRs to manage hotline inquiries.

- An additional 30 CSRs were trained and added to the support team to manage heavy call volumes.

- Within a week after launching the hotline, built, tested and deployed an integrated website that allowed for the intake of applicant information and supporting documentation.

- Incorporated proven program design, processes and controls through experience in managing enrollment-based public programs, eligibility determination and controls that prevent waste, fraud and abuse.

Results

- Program debuted within three days with hotline, IVR and CSR support.

- Within a week after launching the hotline, built, tested and deployed an integrated website that allowed for the intake of applicant information and supporting documentation.

- 37,000 + calls handled and 20,000 + applications processed within first two weeks.