



Case Study: The Lynn Housing Authority & Neighborhood Development

See how The Lynn Housing Authority is speeding access to affordable housing with automated document management from Ricoh.

About our customer

The Lynn Housing Authority & Neighborhood Development (LHAND) is a multi-service agency in Massachusetts, whose mission is to assist low and moderate-income families with safe, decent, affordable housing with an emphasis on fostering economic independence and home ownership opportunities. LHAND is the largest provider of subsidized housing in Essex County, as well as the largest administrative agency on the Northshore overseeing state and federal mobile voucher programs. With over 70 years' experience managing residential properties, LHAND believes in supporting a family holistically and is tackling housing instability and poverty through a multi-prong approach.



LHAND's Family Success Center brings the program's resources all under one roof. At two different locations, families have access to services for finding and maintaining housing, accessing childcare, growing their job skills, searching for employment, and many other services.

Challenge

- Need to digitize lease applications and related documents
- Maintain and up-level operations with hybrid workforce
- Required simple technology implementation
- Need to process a high volume of lease applications in challenging economy

“With our application processing workflow built into DocuWare, we’ve eliminated the challenges associated with inconsistently named files and status tracking. It’s all built right into the system, so the application flows from one person to the next — without skipping a beat.”

– Sara Johnson, Family Success Center
Programs Manager, LHAND

LHAND case workers process 800-1,000 housing applications per month — which have always required a large amount of manual data entry, transcribing information from paper forms to make it actionable in their systems. The process requires applicants to complete a series of forms such as the application, employment history/verification, rental and landlord agreements, and other related correspondence.

Not too long ago, most of these forms came into the agency as physical paper. More recently, the agency's online application process has grown in popularity — but it still required printing the application and forms from the intake system, reviewing them and keying information into another siloed system for document management and tracking.

Results

- Automated processing of 800+ applications/month
- Reduced weekly manual workload by 30%
- Transformed manual, paper-based workflow to a fully digital experience
- Simplified reporting and compliance with state and local regulations
- Achieved 99.9% uptime using the new workflow system

The implementation of DocuWare transformed workflows and significantly cut down many opportunities for human error that naturally occur when paper files are left on someone's desk, or a sticky note gets lost in the paper shuffle.

Before DocuWare, LHAND would often receive electronic applicant files that were named using all different conventions. This caused a lot of manual investigative work and renaming of files. DocuWare standardized all file naming, making the process of categorizing and tracking applicant paperwork much cleaner and more efficient.

DocuWare has also provided LHAND with much greater ease of reporting, which is critical for compliance requirements and qualifying for future government funding opportunities.

“We have a lot of time-sensitive reporting requirements. Being able to quickly export a CSV file from DocuWare and sort by status or date has dramatically improved the reporting experience, making it easier and much more efficient,” said Sara Johnson, LHAND's Family Success Center Programs Manager.

“With the implementation of DocuWare, we have gotten rid of almost all our file cabinets. That cleared up physical space while also reducing the possibility of a file going missing. We've also cut down on both paper consumption and print costs, which makes an impact on the environment and our bottom line,” she added.

“DocuWare has freed up our case workers to focus more time on the document review and approval process — and less time hunting and gathering documents. The result for our customers is quicker access to the safe and affordable housing they need.”

– Sara Johnson, Family Success Center Programs Manager, LHAND

How we did it

- LHAND sought an automation solution to convert paper-intensive processes to digital workflows
- The Ricoh team recommended the DocuWare cloud solution for workflow optimization
- Ricoh partnered with LHAND's IT team to develop a proof of concept for new workflows, and iterated together to ensure the solution would meet all the agency's needs

During the pandemic, the manual process was further complicated when LHAND case workers switched to remote work. The agency, which had been working in close partnership with Ricoh for nearly 30 years using our multi-function printers and a cloud fax solution, decided the time was right to tap into additional automation.

With a complete understanding of LHAND's needs, the Ricoh team recommended DocuWare to automate LHAND's management of information and improve the process to get applications processed more quickly. Our implementation lead worked closely with the LHAND team, developing a proof of concept for the new workflows considering all the team's document naming, tracking, and processing requirements. The team iterated together with a test-and-learn mentality until LHAND was ready to fully deploy.

"The DocuWare implementation was easy because our Ricoh rep understood our business and supported us through every step. We would simply tell them our workflow requirements, and they figured out how to make it all flow seamlessly in the system," said Johnson.

To learn more about the ways you can turn physical documents into actionable information with our document management solutions, visit [ricoh.ca](https://www.ricoh.ca).

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