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LOUISIANA SHOWCASES INDUSTRY LEADING HEALTH CARE SOFTWARE TO CDC

The Louisiana Environmental Public Health Tracking Program and its Health Data Portal were recently highlighted on a webinar hosted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and IT and health professionals from other states.

The Louisiana Department of Health's (LDH) Bureau of Health Informatics, the LDH's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program (Tracking), and GCR Inc. have been collaborating on the Tracking project since 2016. GCR is a technology consulting firm that develops public sector software. The team has recently published substantial portal updates that were rolled out to the public in February 2018.

Louisiana's Health Data Portal, <http://healthdata.ldh.la.gov/>, is an example of a successful public/private partnership. Through a collaborative network of experts, data and tools, the Environmental Public Health Tracking Program connects environmental and public health information.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS AND SOLUTIONS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THIS FEDERAL COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT ARE PROTECTING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF COMMUNITIES IN LOUISIANA AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

After learning about LDH's portal enhancements, the CDC invited LDH Tracking to showcase their portal during the March 1, 2018 Standards for Network and Development (SND) Workgroup call. The SND Workgroup is comprised of representatives from the CDC's Tracking Program and their grantees from state and local health departments who have expertise in information technology, epidemiology, biostatistics and other public health disciplines.

LDH's Tracking Program was one of three Tracking grantees invited to demonstrate their portal during the SND call. Each grantee was given 15 minutes to highlight their portal's new features, particularly dual-screen views, and to elaborate on their portal development process.

Prior to the call, Kate Friedman, LDH Tracking's principal investigator, contacted Nick Wissler, a GCR senior manager to participate on the presentation with the Tracking staff. Both coming from Geographic Information Systems backgrounds, Friedman and Wissler have developed a good rapport working on the comprehensive data update to the portal, which included rigorous user acceptance testing procedures.

During her online presentation, Friedman mentioned that LDH had developed an Open Data Portal. She provided the audience with the Department's justification for making their data freely accessible to the public with supporting information. She demonstrated how Louisiana's Health Data Portal is capable of aggregating multiple, disparate datasets from varying sources and years, including US Census Bureau data, within dual, linked views. She also demonstrated a wealth of features and tools that include the ability to ingest environmental data as map layers, layer transparency, a time slider tool, U.S. and state rate benchmarks and pop-out windows among several others. The response was overwhelmingly positive. In fact, a member of Florida's tracking team immediately reached out to LDH to obtain additional information regarding some of the portal developments.

Goals for the portal include data transparency and access and the ability for the public to explore an expanding list of datasets. Ultimately, these efforts will lead to an improved understanding of the environment as it relates to health.

"Together with the CDC, our partners and developers, we are building a tool that can help us move forward to protect both our health and the environment in which we live," Friedman said.

Wissler and GCR Inc. see the impacts on a larger scale. "Crowd-sourcing health care information that was once confined to doctors, nurses and researchers will empower the state to find creative solutions to health care challenges. The health data portal and its analytics technology can bring actionable intelligence to big data and provide clear information to pressing health care issues like cancer, air quality, and the opioid crisis," Wissler said.



For more information about the Louisiana Health Data Portal, please visit <http://healthdata.ldh.la.gov/> or contact LDH Tracking at tracking@la.gov or toll free at 1-888-293-7020. For more information about GCR's health care technology, please visit gcrincorporated.com or contact Nick Wissler at nwissler@gcrincorporated.com.