

NCSHA 2015 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

Deadline: Wednesday, June 10, 2015

Visit ncsha.org/awards to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

Instructions: Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact Matt Cunningham at mcunningham@ncsha.org or 202-624-5424.

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

Entry Name: _____

HFA: _____

Submission Contact: (Must be HFA Staff Member) _____ **Email:** _____

Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page:

HFA: _____

Entry Name: _____

Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			

Multifamily compliance monitoring and reporting is complex and highly detailed. In the past, we used multiple tools and processes to gather and analyze all of our required data. This was cumbersome for both our partners and our staff.

Four years ago, we started developing a one-stop compliance tool. We thoughtfully reviewed our customer and business needs, conducted thorough usability testing and implemented feedback over a span of three years.

In January 2014, we launched the Property Online Reporting Tool (PORT), which effectively consolidated our many compliance tools into one easy-to-use, web-based portal. PORT allows us to collect and analyze operating and compliance data on properties financed with deferred loans, tax credits and HOME funds. It's flexible, offering the option of adding additional funding sources in the future.

This project is a model example of collaboration between the business and IT, a partnership that has continued even after the product launched last year. It shows how streamlining complex processes can benefit internal staff as well as provide superior customer service to our partners.

The Strategy and Goals

We are in the midst of a division-wide remodel of our technology and customer service processes. Because PORT addresses both of these topic areas, we created two main goals for the project that fit into our overall Multifamily strategy:

- Enhance our Compliance Monitoring System in a way that allows us to verify properties with Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and/or deferred loans are operating in compliance with rules and regulations for that specific program.
- Incorporate the necessary business rules that allow a single property with multiple programs to be monitored and managed within the same system.

We also developed a set of business objectives that were integral to improving our internal staff experience and that the teams used throughout the development process:

- Maintain the existing framework that forms the basis for an agency compliance monitoring system in a way that agency can continue to add additional programs.
- Provide functionality that allows the business team to perform required compliance monitoring tasks in a way that insures properties are in compliance with LIHTC and/or deferred loan rules and regulations.
- Recognize that a property can consist of multiple projects encompassing multiple programs in a way that the proper hierarchy determines how to apply rules and regulations from different programs to the same property.
- Accommodate modifications to loans, including pay-offs, partial release, change in partners, etc. in a way that allows the business to change or end compliance activities accordingly when appropriate.

- Accommodate mandated (i.e., Legislative, Agency, etc.) changes and/or additions to existing program policy, rules, and/or regulations in a way that insure the business is monitoring compliance according to the proper rules and regulations.
- Incorporate required functionality from several stand-alone system(s) (e.g., FileMaker Pro) into one agency compliance monitoring system while still meeting the requirements of the business.

The Collaboration

In order to meet those goals and business objectives, we needed a development team that understood our work and our customers. We developed PORT 100% in-house by staff and a small number of IT contractors. Our business staff provided well-defined requirements to our IT team, and then worked hand-in-hand to plan, develop and test the tool.

While PORT purposefully looks like one system to the external user, it has many separate components. Our IT team created the global sign-on application, a maintenance application that controls usernames and passwords, the database, and its integration with the production software and accounting systems. The business team developed the rules, output reports, an internal viewer tool, and additional behavior they wanted from the system.

They also worked with outside partners – including other funders and customers – to gather input and feedback throughout the process. This partnership proved invaluable and continues today as the team refines and improves upon the tool on a regular basis. Our up front collaborative work with our external partners set us up to create a tool that provides better customer service and requires less staff time.

The Outcomes

The benefits of this new online reporting tool are substantial. Both our staff and our partners are satisfied with how PORT efficiently and accurately monitors compliance, collects, stores, and analyzes data, and tracks documents and findings.

Improved Customer Service

- Property owners now have **one** place to fulfill multiple reporting requirements, including completion of the annual owner certification forms.
- Minnesota Housing loan and compliance data can be viewed by both the people who need to comply with it and those who monitor it.
- Complex details about property, loan and tax credit information including the associated income and rent restrictions are now brought together in one location with unit and household data.
- Customers appreciate the transparency of the new process, as they can see exactly what information we're tracking and reporting.
- On the compliance side, owners can now give access to their managers and site managers to help complete and review required information.
- On the monitoring side, the status of compliance monitoring reviews, including inspections, is also available online.

Improved Internal Processes

- Identify HTC and/or deferred loan properties including associated entities, loans, properties, buildings, and units.
- Identify applicable compliance rules for each loan and its program, including affordability period, hierarchy of overlapping rules/regulations and be able to accommodate modifications to loan.
- Collect property, building, and/or tenant data for applicable units including secure transmission process, including analysis to determine what data must be collected.
- Evaluate collected data against rules to determine compliance and/or risk situations.
- Track day-to-day activities of a compliance officer, including dates of standard jobs (e.g., review of annual certifications and inspections) and their associated tasks and timelines, non-compliance and necessary follow-up actions.
- Identify accounting/financial reporting needs and providing accurate data to generate reports.
- Transmit tenant information to HUD according to newly defined federal reporting requirements.
- Create ad-hoc reports to meet frequent and unique information requests in a timely fashion through PORT Viewer, a separate desktop application created to work alongside PORT. It is a flexible and innovative reporting tool available only to Minnesota Housing staff.
- Provide owners and agents with a method to extract unit event data and send a Unit Event Summary report in Excel to other funders or equity investors.
- Calculate annual HTC compliance monitoring fees, generating invoices and documenting fees collected (limited to current practice).
- Provide our compliance staff manager the ability to maintain staff assignments within the system (e.g., compliance officers and/or HMO's assigned to properties and/or programs, staff assigned to jobs and/or tasks, etc.).
- Innovatively bridge data and processes between asset management and compliance monitoring through the Loan Portfolio Performance Tool in PORT.
- Communicate with property owners almost exclusively through email, cutting down on paper and postage costs and getting notices to the owner faster.

The enhanced system has increased efficiency for the business and the integration with our production and accounting systems has reduced duplication of data. This innovative approach means higher quality information and better communication between owners, managers, and compliance officers. With its collaborative development process and one-stop online portal, PORT has dramatically improved customer service, efficiency and transparency in multifamily compliance.