

NCSHA 2009 Awards

Entry Name: Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness Website

Category: Special Achievement

HFA: Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) made a commitment in 2006 to lead a 10-year effort to end homelessness in Michigan by 2016. The Campaign to End Homelessness is driven by public and private groups across the state working together to provide access to stable, sustainable, affordable housing for everyone in Michigan. This single objective guides our more than 60 partner organizations that lend coordinated support for individuals and families so they can live in permanent, affordable housing. This work requires integrated planning, coordination, inventive programs and focused energy of all those working to help end homelessness in Michigan. To assist with this mission, MSHDA has developed a new website that can engage a wide range of audiences and provide powerful tools and resources to help achieve this goal.

INNOVATION

- Michigan is the only state that is addressing homelessness on a statewide basis. This website is a unique and effective tool that allows local and state partners to share information, work better together, and coordinate efforts both regionally and statewide.
- The website is a complete site for reporting, data delivery and collaboration. It enables users to report progress, access data by region, connect with resources, share information, and share successes. This site is the meeting ground for our campaign – the Campaign to End Homelessness.
- This website provides powerful data engine tools for analysis and advocacy:

- To access the data for a specific region or Continuum of Care (CoC), or to view a region's contact information, users can interact with the regional map (see attachment Page 3)

The Michigan State Homeless Management Information System (MSHMIS) is a single database platform that provides an unduplicated count of homeless persons living in each region of Michigan. The system also measures patterns of service use and the effectiveness of the services delivered, providing the ability to assess progress across programs and regions. It was developed to improve consistency of reporting among Michigan's Continuum of Care (CoC) network and includes information from all the service organizations in each region, a total of 524 organizations statewide

- A unique feature of the site is a customized data report engine, accessed via a special login for each partner organization. This section of the Website allows partners to interact with the fields and options available and generate reports specifically relevant to each organization, their needs, and their audiences. Knowing the importance of advocacy and fundraising to partner organizations, we designed this tool to assist them in promoting the campaign in the most effective, specific and targeted manner. (see attachment Page 5)
 - Data for the MSHMIS is gathered from more than 500 safety-net organizations that provide services to homeless persons across Michigan. This interactive tool allows Campaign participants to compare and contrast summary information on homeless persons at the CoC, regional and statewide levels.
- The site provides a forum for community building and interaction as well as a place for uploading meeting minutes and highlights for sharing and public archiving.

NCSHA 2009 Awards

Entry Name: Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness Website

Category: Special Achievement

HFA: Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)

RESPONDING TO AN IMPORTANT STATE NEED

Homelessness is a problem with a solution. As the economy has faltered, jobs have been lost and many families and individuals have become increasingly vulnerable in every community, large and small, across our state. Michigan's social service systems are working mightily to meet the challenge and will continue to work, but they needed a place, a platform, where they could share information and learn from each other. This website allows all organizations and individuals an opportunity to access important tools and resources.

ACHIEVING INTENDED RESULTS

Websites are communication tools. But their effectiveness can be measured by how well they are organized and structured to address the needs of the stakeholders and individuals who will interact with it. MSHDA worked collaboratively with a digital communication consultant and its external partners to ensure that this site would be both responsive to users needs and exciting to their sensibilities. This process began with research that included audits of more than 50 benchmarked sites designed to empower advocacy communities, together with extensive user interviews to better understand needs, functionality, and uses. Content is clearly organized and prioritized. Navigation is consistent, intuitive and transparent. MSHDA is continuing to add content to create an even more robust and fresh place for everyone concerned with the issue of homelessness to learn, explore and connect.

PROVIDING BENEFITS THAT OUTWEIGH COSTS

The success of programs and strategies to end homelessness in each region of Michigan can effectively be measured by data. The MSHDA Homelessness Website provides the benefit of one place and one tool for the 524 organizations statewide to access data, to advocate, to educate, and to build awareness of Michigan's goal to end homelessness. This has never been achieved at this level – statewide distribution in a user-friendly format.

Every homeless person has a story, and the Campaign to End Homelessness is working to help those individuals and families write a positive chapter about long-term success. Similarly, successful programs have stories to teach about what is working and what can be replicated.