

# CHFA's Renovated Mobile-First Website

**Colorado Housing and Finance Authority**

Communications: Integrated Campaign

## **HFA Staff Contact**

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In February 2022, CHFA launched a new [mobile-first and mission-driven website](#) to better serve our customers, partners, and staff. The seed was planted for this re-platformed/renovated website in 2020, when it was determined that there was no viable upgrade path for CHFA's existing website. To improve user experience, accessibility, uptime, security, and a laundry list of other enhancements and integrations, CHFA was in search of a cloud-based web solution that could keep us continually updated with advances in technology.

When CHFA last updated the website in 2014, it was a full overhaul of content, navigation, and style. Content was rewritten, designs were created, personas were implemented, and hundreds of hours were spent updating everything top-to-bottom in (what was then) a cutting-edge, responsive-design website.

Annual website feedback was favorable, and the website content held up well, but the mismatch of our non-upgradable platform with ever-evolving technology made it clear that it was time for a website improvement project. While we didn't need to rewrite content or revamp our approach to audiences, we did need to modernize, add a new line-of-business section, address feedback, and move it all into a new platform.

After extensive research, and the guidance of Gartner's annual Magic Quadrant report, several right-sized platforms were identified, vetted, and tested over several weeks. This helped CHFA to select the Kentico Digital Experience Platform (DXP) and a local Denver implementation vendor partner in Blue Modus.

## **Innovative**

Armed with a robust new platform, survey feedback, lessons-learned, and a knowledgeable implementation partner, we wanted to take a thoughtful, mission-driven approach to developing an inclusive customer experience for our website visitors. Rather than continue to habitually play catch-up with new compliance requirements, we tactically built accessibility into our processes to help us innovate better solutions for a continually improving website experience.

### **Inclusive Customer Experience**

With a mutual desire for a mobile-first and accessible design incorporated into the foundational fabric of our website, Blue Modus' expertise helped us create an optimized site from back-end code development to front-end page templates. The mobile-first approach helps deliver a consistent experience regardless of the type of device used to access CHFA's website.

### **Structured Data, Reusable Content, and Improved Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

One of the major transformations was the adoption of structured data. Structured data is information delivered in a standardized format. Rather than flat information on a page, each chunk of content must be classified and organized to help search engines understand the context of that information. It also helps facilitate the reuse of content throughout the website, streamlining communication processes like advertising, marketing, and social media campaigns. It also impacts user experience, by improving search results, accessibility, and usability.

### **Better Analysis, Control of Marketing Campaigns, and Future Digital Growth**

This upgrade has given us better control of our online content. It enables us to better manage redirects and create unlimited aliases (also known as "smart URLs") per webpage so that we're able to pinpoint

specific marketing campaign traffic and results. We are also positioned to phase-in additional supporting features when time, need, and budget allow.

## Replicable

This process is replicable and succeeds with dedicated resources, organizational support, and a strong commitment. Any HFA that has undergone a website redesign can surely relate. First, we recommend determining your goals. For example, our list of must-haves included finding a right-size cloud-based platform, the expertise of an experienced implementation partner, incorporating accessibility, improving customer experience, addressing survey feedback, and better showcasing CHFA's work throughout the state. Cross-divisional collaboration was key—the Information Technology Division and Marketing and Community Relations Divisions researched platforms to determine best fit from both perspectives. After conducting our research, interviews, and trials, we identified a platform and then vendor partner to help us implement our desired digital experience.

Leveraging an experienced vendor's expertise is what will set you up for success, and having at least one dedicated staff resource to work directly with the vendor is crucial. The vendor will help build and implement the platform and the dedicated resource will validate and migrate your organization's content to ensure that it is properly architected and structured. While incorporating creative staff talent to convert the site initially is important, we also recommend working frequently post-launch to continue to enliven the site with your brand's style and visual stories, i.e., examples of your "mission in action."

## Engaging the Target Audience

To best serve our state's diverse and dispersed audience, we wanted to provide an optimized user experience leveraging technology, accessibility, user-feedback suggestions, and an engaging design.

### Address Customer Feedback

CHFA conducts an annual website feedback survey through email and a website pop-up. We use this feedback to continually improve our website, but the limitations of the prior platform led us to maintain a list of future improvements. Our new website platform enabled us to address these most-requested updates:

- ***"Make it easier to use on a phone."***  
We built the new site with mobile-first design to help inform a more inclusive customer experience regardless of device.
- ***"I just want to make my payment."***  
We've included all portal logins prominently in our global navigation. A persistent "login" button is available at the top of every page of the website so all customer types can easily access their accounts.
- ***"It takes me too long to get to the page that I need."***  
We streamlined navigation by using years of Google Analytics to make our most popular content navigable from the top of any page. We also improved page breadcrumbs and interior pages to help users navigate once within a certain section. Previously, visitors had to either scroll down to a "super-footer" or make several clicks to get to popular interior pages.

- ***“I have a hard time finding the documents and forms that I need.”***

Leveraging the structured data and the use of sitewide content categories, documents and forms are served up faster and cleaner. The implementation of these categories and structured data has also improved search.

In addition to addressing customer feedback, we were able to implement improvements from our own wish list. We added a section for our new line of business: Community Partnerships. It highlights our regional engagement, innovation projects, technical assistance, and corporate giving. We're able to better share a resource library, success stories, photos, and our impact in Colorado communities.

To improve the customer's experience and increase security, we have implemented submittable contact forms. The benefits are two-fold: users no longer need to launch an email program to contact us, and CHFA email addresses are no longer exposed, cutting down on spam and data-collecting bots.

Our new organization-wide calendar of events and improved newsroom better showcase CHFA news and happenings throughout the state. We were also able to incorporate our extensive photo library of customers and partners by making photography and storytelling an integral part of our website experience.

## **Achieve Measurable Results**

We wanted to deliver on our organizational value of inclusion by optimizing our content for accessibility rather than just basic compliance. We built a foundation to make sure it's included in all aspects of our pages.

And, we have seen immediate results. The site speed is faster, the feedback is positive, we have clear call-to-actions, and publishing is more efficient. Our proudest achievements are scores of 94/100 for accessibility, 92/100 for Performance, 92/100 for SEO, and a 100 for Best Practices on the website's post-launch Lighthouse Report.

## **Demonstrate effective use of resources**

Researching the right product and partner was essential in establishing a budget and scope that worked for our goals and for our available resources. Re-platforming took a considerable amount of labor and time but selecting a cloud-based product sets CHFA up in a technological maintenance mode, and when we're ready, we can implement additional features and integrations easily.

## **Achieve strategic objectives**

Our site is now on a platform that is “future-proofed”—designed to be perpetually improved and updated with technological advances. Investing in this type of technology and utilizing diagnostic tools helped us create a framework to continually improve processes and digital experiences.

To further our vision of everyone in Colorado having the opportunity for housing stability and economic prosperity, CHFA chose a website technology to help us create an engaging and inclusive user experience. Building it helps us reach and engage with more Coloradans, supports and showcases our mission-based work, and gives us ever-evolving ways to innovate our digital messaging.