

# MSHDA Portal

## Michigan State Housing Development Authority

Management Innovation: Technology

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## **Overview**

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) has implemented new software for its program application process. Between the initial programs utilizing this application portal as well as our current iteration of the portal for the American Rescue Plan programs, this application portal platform has helped to distribute over a billion dollars in various aid throughout the state of Michigan. Partnering with Kinotech Cloud, MSHDA implemented a Low-code solution that takes in program applications from Michigan residents, validates the address to determine the location of the applicant, and then distributes the application to partner agencies for processing based on geographic locations. Additionally, the software provides the ability to parse data and display it in a dashboard style to show things such as the amount of assistance provided or a breakdown of how the assistance has been allocated for the program. Overall, this application portal creates a standardized application process across all partnering agencies and allows MSHDA and its partners to process submitted applications more quickly.

## **The Challenge and Opportunity**

As MSHDA continues to develop and provide more and more housing related programs to the people of Michigan, MSHDA required a more robust way of getting applications in from the general public so we needed to figure out a technology solution that was flexible and offered the ability for residents to electronically apply to a program. We also needed to be able to have applicants attach documents and electronically sign the application as well. On top of that, since we do partner with other organizations throughout the state, we needed a system that would distribute completed applications to the correct agency based off the location of the resident. Along with collecting and distributing applications, MSHDA also needed to compile the collected data and provide a dashboard interface outlining program information and get any necessary data needed for state or Federal reporting requirements. Out of these challenges, MSHDA was able to really look at its current capabilities and assess the future needs of the Agency in how to manage program applications. This led us to determine that we had an opportunity here to modernize our application process and look to make it overall easier for everyone involved.

## **The Innovation**

Working with Kinotech Cloud, MSHDA harnessed the power of Mendix, a Low-code platform, and created a program application portal that provided all the requirements we were looking for. The portal was not just web accessible but very mobile friendly as well so that we could have applicants easily apply using their phone. The portal was also developed to be intuitive, so it walked the applicant through the application process in various steps. Additionally, the portal also allowed the applicant to upload files or pictures from their phone for any necessary supporting documentation. It also provides a way to have the applicant look up their submitted application to find out the status of where it is at in the process.

Another aspect was the ability to tie in the data and utilize application program interfaces to connect the portal to an address cleanser so that the system could process and verify addresses submitted on program applications. This allows us to make sure the address is an actual address and then funnel the application to the appropriate partner agency that would be processing it. The system also provides real time reporting so MSHDA we can identify any processing backlogs. If any backlogs are identified,

MSHDA can add other partner organizations or change how the applications are distributed by the system so we can ensure they are being processed in a timely and efficient manner.

The portal also has the logic needed to have MSHDA or our partner agency log in and use it to process applications. Through an internal workflow, applications can be assigned to staff within MSHDA or the partnering agency to track the progress of applications through the processing stage. This has helped to fully centralize the process and the data regarding the programs being ran. It has also let MSHDA better partner with external agencies in having them help process and distribute funding of these programs.

With each application, the portal also has an internal and external dashboard feature that allows easy reporting out of program information, such as number of applications and total amount of funds distributed. These dashboards can be configured and customized based on the program itself. It also provides needed information for any State and Federal reporting needs.

### **Replicability**

MSHDA has been able to utilize and re-use the technology with many different programs being implemented from within MSHDA. The first iteration was with the COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program, then we were able to utilize the similar platform with the Michigan Homeowners Assistance Fund (MIHAF) program. Additionally, with the American Rescue Plan (ARP) programs, we have been able to use this software platform to quickly spin up application portals for the Michigan Housing Opportunities Promoting Energy Efficiency (MI-HOPE) and MSHDA Investing in Community Housing (MICH) programs and are also in the process of adding more Housing and Community Development Fund (HCDF) programs.

### **Measurable Improvements in Operations**

Now that MSHDA has a centralized application portal system we can now monitor the progress of application submissions. This also allows us to quickly identify any bottlenecks in processing submitted applications as this can now be seen in real time. MSHDA then can alleviate these identified bottlenecks to help in optimizing the number of applications being processed. Additionally, having one single standard application used across the entirety of the program makes the process much less confusing for the applicants applying for a given program. Before this, none of this was possible. This improvement also affects over a hundred partner agencies as they are provided with a centralized system to process the program applications as well.

### **Benefits versus Cost**

The benefit of having a straightforward way to have Michigan residents apply for the various programs that MSHDA offers has been invaluable in getting funds to the people who need help or assistance and easily justifies the cost of the software. Having the ability to quickly initiate needed portals has helped us to distribute assistance more efficiently in a timelier manner as well. Additionally, as we have been able to utilize much of the same code base in building out additional portals, this has become economical as it reduces the amount of development time, which is greatly beneficial in keeping administrative costs low helping to ensure more funding goes to the residents of Michigan.


### **Results – Achieving Strategic Objectives**

The implementation of this technology has helped MSHDA continue with its mission and vision of making Michigan a place where all people have quality affordable housing as a foundation to reach their full potential. The software has made a dramatic impact in how we collaborate with other partner agencies as well as how we ensure a better user experience in applying to these programs.

Through the course of using the application portals, we have processed over three hundred thousand applications and distributed over a billion dollars of various aid based on those program applications. The portal continues to provide an updated technological experience for both applicants and the agencies using it.

## Visual Aids

### Application Portal Example:



MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

American Rescue Plan (ARP) MSHDA landing page

Login

MSHDA

**MI-HOPE**

Michigan Housing Opportunities Promoting Energy-Efficiency (MI-HOPE)

Select Apply Now to authenticate & begin your application.  
Preferred Language / Idioma Preferido

English

Apply Now

MSHDA is pleased to announce a statewide competitive funding round to obtain subrecipients for an energy-efficiency program. The first funding round will provide up to \$10 million dollars statewide via the Michigan Housing Opportunities Promoting Energy-Efficiency (MI-HOPE) Program which will be an extension of the Neighborhood Enhancement Program. This funding will be made available in conjunction with \$15 million dollars allocated directly to the City of Detroit and \$5 million dollars allocated to The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW). MI-HOPE is a federally funded program utilizing United States Department of the Treasury American Rescue Plan (ARP) Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF). This funding will be made available statewide based on a formal subrecipient award structure to 501(c) nonprofit agencies and units of government with award determinations based on competitive funding rounds and subsequent obligation and expenditure performance.

The MI-HOPE online application is now available. Applications can still be submitted. Any applications received after 3/28/2023 will be held and not processed until after 7/1/2023 – subject to the availability of funding.

This is the first step in the MI-HOPE application process, once completed the application will be forwarded to a subrecipient agency based on zip code, that subrecipient agency will utilize its written program guidelines to establish funding priorities and their individual selection process and criteria. Each subrecipient agency may elect to collect additional documentation at their discretion.

You will have only 14 days to complete the application process!

Please note that each applicant receives an individual link and that should be used instead of creating a new application or you will receive a duplicate address error.

+ Michigan Residents Apply Now

Check App Status

View Dashboard

THE MISSING MIDDLE

The Missing Middle

COMING SOON

HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND (HCDF)

HCDF

COMING SOON

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Policies

## Dashboard Example:

