

Grants Management System Update

Michigan State Housing Development Authority

Management Innovation: Technology

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Overview

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) implemented a new grant management system utilizing the Intelligrants platform. As we developed the framework for our system, we initially required applicants to register prior to applying for available grants. However, after implementation, we found that this requirement created a barrier in some program areas – particularly for applicants that haven't yet been fully reviewed or registered in our grant management system, making them unable to submit grant applications. In response, we revisited the application process and implemented several changes to streamline how we accept and process grant applications.

The Challenge and Opportunity

As we transitioned to a new grant management system, we initially designed the process to require a review of applicants before they could submit a grant. However, after implementation, we found this approach to be limiting. To promote equitable access to grant opportunities, we explored the possibility of allowing applications to be submitted prior to a full applicant review.

This posed several challenges, including the need to bypass the existing review process while maintaining it for other program areas that still depend on it. During our review of the process, we also identified an opportunity to redesign the grant application itself to create a more flexible format that could be used across multiple grant programs rather than being limited to a single grant.

The Innovation

Working with the program area and our software vendor, we successfully redesigned the registration component by introducing a new user role. This enhancement allows new potential grantees to submit applications directly into the system. This gave us the functionality we were hoping for: now new and existing grantees can apply for grants in our system.

Additionally, the system was updated to support the applicant reviews during our annual profile review process *after* application submission so that all applications undergo a full review. We also preserved the initial applicant review structure so that it did not affect other areas that still require a potential grantee to be reviewed prior to applying.

We also created and implemented a dynamic all-inclusive grant application using question branching logic so that applicants only respond to relevant questions based on their eligibility. Using this dynamic application format, we can now use a single application for multiple grant opportunities and significantly streamline the system grant development in the future.

Replicability

The solution we implemented lays a strong foundation that can be applied to other program areas using the grants management system. Additionally, any new grant applications can be seamlessly added to the dynamic application.

Measurable Improvements in Operations

Improvements in operations can be seen on several fronts. One of the most significant is the drastic reduction in time it takes to submit a grant application as applicants no longer need to wait for a pre-application review before applying for a grant. This has allowed the program area to output more grant opportunities and streamline the review process as all the data is now centralized and paper files have been eliminated.

The grant application also now automatically guides the applicant to the grants they are eligible for, ultimately increasing access to more grant opportunities for people all over the State of Michigan. It also allows time savings and improves administrative efficiencies as we no longer need to maintain application periods for a grant application.

Benefits versus Cost

The implemented changes have led to cost savings. Maintaining a single dynamic system rather than multiple individual applications reduces future system costs for maintenance.

MSHDA staff now only review one comprehensive grant application instead of multiple separate applications, thereby saving staff time. The updated applicant registration and review process is now usable by all program areas within the agency.

Results – Achieving Strategic Objectives

These system enhancements support MSHDA’s strategic objectives by equipping program areas with more effective tools that help build equitable pathways to housing programs and services. They have also fostered improved collaboration to address housing needs in Michigan.

Application Example:

The screenshot shows the 'MI Neighborhood Application Access Request' form within the MSHDA Grants System. The header includes the MSHDA logo, 'DEMO-UAT', and 'MSHDA Grants System'. The form title is 'MI Neighborhood Application Access Request' with a sub-note: 'This registration form is for access to the MI Neighborhood Application.' The form is divided into two main sections: 'Person Information' and 'Login Information'. The 'Person Information' section contains fields for First Name, Last Name, Email, Phone, Title, Full Legal Name of Your Organization, No Abbreviations, Address, Address 2, City, State (dropdown), Zip Code, and County (dropdown). The 'Login Information' section contains fields for Username, Password, and Verify Password. A 'Save and Proceed' button is located at the bottom left of the form. The footer includes 'Go to the top', '© Copyright 2024 State of Michigan', and a 'Policies' link.

