NowApp
Tenmast's Online Application

NOWAPP ONLINE APPLICATION AT THE KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Challenge

With over 3,000 units of Public Housing and over 8,000 Section 8 vouchers, the King County Housing Authority (WA) receives a substantial number of applications when their waiting lists are open. The agency was looking for a streamlined method of collecting applications in 2011 for the upcoming opening of the Section 8 waiting list.

In 2007, King County Housing Authority (KCHA) custom-built an online housing collection process to accompany their paper process to allow for easier handling of the thousands of applications. Although the online program made the process easier on KCHA staff, there were still obstacles to overcome. With the absence of required fields, applicants could skip important questions; incomplete applications were routinely submitted and created a problem for the organization.

When KCHA prepared to open their waiting list in 2011, all agreed the online application process needed to be an option for applicants once again. With the expectation of 10,000-11,000 online applications, the agency knew their past solution would not be sufficient. The question detail on the application as well as the information it gathered had to improve. Incomplete applications also needed to be decreased, if not eliminated.

KEY RESULTS

- Customizable application that will work with existing software and website
- Decrease in incomplete applications
- Data pulls allow information to be reviewed while waiting list is still open
- No more overtime spent entering data
- Exact application and data requirements met

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The Role of NowApp

The King County Housing Authority found their solution in Tenmast's online housing application solution, NowApp. Since KCHA was not currently using Tenmast's main software system, the agency was surprised to learn that Tenmast offered a customizable application that would work with their existing software and website. Amazed at the customization Tenmast offered on their application, the agency worked with Tenmast to create an application that would provide more information than they had originally planned on gathering. Gary Leaf, Chief Information Officer for the King County Housing Authority, points to the ability to collect detailed demographic information of applicants as a big benefit of using the Tenmast NowApp program.

As soon as the waiting list opened in 2011, King County experienced a much better process for application collection than the 2007 event. Using NowApp, if an applicant skipped any required questions, they simply could not submit the application. The agency understood this as a necessity in decreasing incomplete applications, "**We absolutely had a decrease in incomplete applications**," David Tripp, Applications and Development Officer says. The system also automatically checked for any errors, ensuring all applications that entered KCHA system had complete and accurate information. The elimination of submitting incomplete online applications was a huge reward. The Tenmast NowApp program saved data on each step of the wizard, collecting information even for incomplete applications; although this information is saved, applications were not complete or valid until the applicant clicked the submit button at the end of the application.

The King County Housing Authority collected nearly 17,000 applications with the Tenmast NowApp program.

The agency was unaware of the data pull abilities Tenmast offered, "Their willingness to pull data was above and beyond," Leaf says. The agency had interest in the data that was collected from the beginning of the process, "We were interested in numbers early on. We had the information and could see from the get go what was being collected. **Everything met the requirements we had originally laid out to Tenmast.**" Tripp says.

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Saving time was a major benefit NowApp provided. Agency employees had to work overtime in 2007, while the HA also hired temporary workers to handle data entry. Tripp knows the process in 2011 was much easier on everyone and there was a reduction in the hours staff worked: "The elimination of scrubbing data and not having to figure out what to do with inaccurate applications saves a lot of time."

Online Applications are available using the NowApp Online Application program. The applicant can be basic or detailed to meet the needs of your agency. Waiting lists can be turned on/off as needed.

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Savings in time immediately translates into money. Not only did the agency save money, no longer having to pay overtime to staff, but **an estimated $10,000 was saved on notification letters alone**. KCHA chose to have applicants list their email addresses on the application. When the agency needed to notify applicants on the outcome of their application, they could now send an email instead of a letter. The elimination of using a mail service and replacing it with a mass email is very valuable in saving time and money. The email addresses will now serve as a great communication resource for the agency, which gathered 14,000 addresses through the online application.

Comforted by Tenmast's dedication to the project, Leaf describes the main benefit of NowApp, "We knew with Tenmast the system was ready to go when the waiting list opened. We were on a tight time frame, yet from the beginning we had high confidence the application changes we asked for would be completed." Tripp adds, "The responsiveness is refreshing based upon our experiences elsewhere."

Opening the Section 8 waiting list after 4 years can be a stressful time for any agency, yet the King County Housing Authority found comfort in knowing Tenmast was behind them. From the start the experience the agency had with Tenmast made the usual daunting application process enjoyable Leaf says, "Their willingness from the beginning to be flexible started things off on a good foot. There is always a modest risk with online applications, but we are glad we took it. It was clear in Tenmast's demo they had the experience to do this, and that left us feeling comfortable."

In the end, the agency had a dramatic increase in both paper apps and online applications in 2011:

- Nearly a 200% increase in online applications – 16,831 application submitted online
- 149% increase in overall number of applications

The team at KCHA cannot imagine what they would have faced without Tenmast's NowApp. The ease of implementation and simplicity of working with Tenmast made King County staff believers in not only online applications but NowApp, "**I am not sure how it could have gone better. Anything we needed Tenmast provided.** We nailed down all the details quickly, and in the end the data that was collected was exactly as we had specified."

For more information on NowApp or to see an online demonstration, please contact us, 877.TENMAST (877.836.6278) or info@tenmast.com.