



## Global Web information portal (proposed)

A Web-based, freely accessible, edited compilation, a premier destination providing relevant information on housing finance -- research, systems, experience -- of countries around the world.

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**User type:** Policy maker, trade association, researcher, journalist, student.

**Challenge facing the client:** As the world rapidly urbanizes, slums proliferate; to tackle them, as contemplated by the Millennium Development Goals, requires creating housing finance systems to mobilize domestic entrepreneurial and home investment capital. Each nation's housing finance ecosystem is unique, yet they are linked by economic and policy principles and can benefit from knowing each other's experiments, successes, failures, and lessons learned. Housing policy designers in countries around the world can use these insights -- best practice, lessons learned, tools and concepts -- *if* they can locate it.

The world has a wealth of experience ... but it is dispersed, with no centralized library, no common information base, nor even a common language for policy makers and practitioners alike to use. There is little useful, quantitative, reliable *wisdom* (as distinct from mere data); nor is the information available vetted for credibility, nor presented accessibly. In microfinance, the Microfinance Gateway <http://www.microfinancegateway.org/> addresses this need, but in housing finance, those who want to learn have nowhere to turn.

### What AHI has created (in demonstration prototype) and seeks to take to useful scale

AHI has created a skeleton portal, [www.hfgateway.org](http://www.hfgateway.org), that hints illustratively at what can be done. AHI has further created a Table of Contents of critical areas, and recruited an Affiliate panel of the world's experts who are prepared to become subject editors. If established, the web portal will include:

1. *Web site*, a globally recognized nexus where best information can be contributed, organized, displayed, and tapped, for free, by anyone in the world. The Housing Finance Gateway will be a quality-assured continuously updated portal.
2. *Thought leadership information*, including papers, studies, symposium proceedings, statistics, references, and pointers to other information sources and libraries. Within a year of its formation, the portal aims to cover 20 subjects and 30 countries.
3. *Editors for each subject*. Content will be governed by a committee that appoints an expert editor for each subject or country page; editors will identify, post, categorize, and manage each content section. Editors will be drawn from the world's leading academic institutions, recognized as pre-eminent in their fields.
4. *Subjects and index* for rapid reference lookup.
5. *Country editors or correspondents*, who will post articles from local media, connecting them to subject area and providing commentary as appropriate, to enable interested viewers to compare theory and ever-changing reality.
6. *Dialog forums*, including bulletin boards to post questions and solicit input, added as demand and funding permit.

### Creating the portal

There is no point in creating a portal that is under-sized, poorly edited (or not edited at all), or incapable of being properly sustained. Having spent over \$75,000 of its own capital to this point, AHI has developed a sustainable budget (including contracted editors plus all posting and Web updating costs) of roughly \$200,000 annually. AHI is prepared to commit to portal development if we can secure 2 years' worth of full funding and a basis for having confidence of sustainable funding thereafter.

### How the portal will be used: follow-up activities

Network effects are powerful: a free, useful, ever-expanding portal, once created, will rapidly become a self-improving resource that will serve to further program development even as it gives research greater visibility and use.