



## Alabama Power Digitized Smart Financing Processes with Appian

See how they increased revenue by \$4 million and reduced processing times by 75%.

### Customer profile.

Supplying electricity and utility services to 1.5 million homes, businesses, and industries, Alabama Power, a subsidiary of Southern Company, was founded in 1906 with the goal of transforming the state's economy and improving the quality of life of its citizens.

Alabama Power provides services directly to its customers, but it also partners with local businesses, called "allies," to finance and provide services, like replacing a heat pump or completing repairs to residential commodities. For 35 years, Alabama Power has offered their Smart Financing program, which creates a centralized process that makes it easier for customers to access products and services provided by ally businesses. If a customer's application is approved by an ally, Alabama Power rolls those payments into the customer's monthly electricity bill. The program results in more revenue for ally businesses, as it makes their services more accessible to customers, and also offers residents a quicker and simpler way to apply, receive, and pay for services.

### The challenge: a lengthy, paper-based process.

Prior to Appian, the entire Smart Financing process was extremely labor intensive and managed by a six-person team. From helping a resident fill out a credit application to documenting ally approvals, the whole process was manual and paper-based, taking up to three weeks.

"It was a very mundane and antiquated process, which had very minimal changes made to it. We finally sat down one day and decided to digitize the process, putting it all online," explained Marty McElrath, Smart Financing Account Manager, Alabama Power Company.

Alabama Power knew that if they were to build an app with mobile capabilities that would streamline and automate their Smart Financing processes, they could improve their residents' livelihoods.

"Your home is where your family needs to be safe. If insurance rejects a claim for a new roof or a new AC unit, families often start panicking. We get calls from a parent in tears because they're scared that they won't be able to provide a solution to their problem. Building an app to digitize Smart Financing would allow us to help more families while driving revenue for local business owners."



### Industry:

Energy services

### Size:

Enterprise

### Headquarters:

Birmingham, AL

### Highlights:

- Fully digitized and streamlined a previously paper-based financing program.
- Integration with external systems, including Oracle, Equifax, Docusign, and more.
- Mobile application providing flexibility and administrative reporting.
- Increase in revenue, partner acquisition, and end customer satisfaction.

## The solution: a mobile-ready Appian application.

When evaluating platforms to build their Smart Financing application on, Alabama Power's top priority was the ability to develop and go live with a mobile-ready app as quickly and efficiently as possible. They selected Appian, and from start to finish, the process took only about six months, including all implementations.

Since all Appian apps are automatically mobile-ready, mobile usability was a non-issue. McElrath noted, "We're able to offer access through any device for our end-users. This includes phones, laptops, tablets, etcetera."

In the words of a highly active ally, "The part that made the old financing process painful was keeping up with the paperwork that needed to be completed, processed, and signed in-person by the end customer. Now Smart Financing is a quick and easy app that I have on my team's tablets where I'm able to see everything my team is doing and so is Alabama Power through the administrative account. We can have a customer approved within 10 minutes, have the equipment installed the same day, and receive payment within 72 hours. It truly is the easiest thing in the world."

Because Appian is an open platform, Alabama Power was able to seamlessly integrate the Smart Financing application with several other key platforms—no data migration required. "When a customer is approved for financing, the app automatically pulls their contact info and account number to then merge the new loan payment with their monthly service billing," says McElrath.

Alabama Power integrated their Smart Financing app with the following external systems:

- **Oracle:** For processing and tracking payments.
- **Customer Service Solutions (CSS) application:** To house customer data.
- **Equifax:** For real-time credit checks, getting approvals within three to five seconds at any time of day.
- **Docusign:** To digitize the signature process, instead of getting all signatures physically on paper.
- **Uniform Commercial Code (UCC):** For when a customer misses a payment—the application will automatically file with the UCC.
- **Quantalytics:** A performance matrix displaying health analytics regarding sales, outstanding revenue, and potential complications, tracking arrears, and more.



The app built with Appian is just so much more efficient. We have more providers on the program, we have better management of the data, removing the need for rows of filing cabinets. Everything has been pulled together into a single source of truth—the Smart Financing app.

Marty McElrath, Smart  
Financing Account Manager  
Alabama Power

One of the aspects of the application that has been most transformative for Alabama Power is its ability to record and track dealer data, such as how dealers leverage the app, what is being installed and where, partner growth, and more. Access to this data enables Alabama Power's demand side management to better track, predict, and scale the program.

McElrath says that "being able to tell which partners are doing what, seeing who has financed how much, and being able to report on anything is something we never had access to before."

Alabama Power is very satisfied with their adoption and implementation. "The app built with Appian is just so much more efficient. We have more providers on the program, we have better management of the data, removing the need for rows of filing cabinets. Everything has been pulled together into a single source of truth—the Smart Financing app," said McElrath.

### **The results: a win, win, win for all parties.**

The following is a summary of the benefits seen by Alabama Power, their allies, and residents of the state as a result of the Smart Financing app.

#### **Alabama Power.**

Since the Smart Financing application launched in 2018, Alabama Power has seen massive growth and savings

From application to approval, the amount of time it takes to process a customer through Smart Financing has decreased by about 75%. And in a matter of four years, the Smart Financing program has grown from \$2 million annual net income to approximately \$6 million.

With a digital Smart Financing application, Alabama Power has been able to connect more customers with providers. This has resulted in more revenue for both Alabama Power and their allies while decreasing the number of bills end customers receive by rolling payments into their standard utility bill.

Additionally, because the app has saved time and resources, Alabama Power has been able to broaden their financing offerings to include more energy efficiency products, such as roofing, insulation, generators, and more. Not only does this expand options for residents, but it allows them to become more energy efficient.

#### **Alabama Power allies.**

Within the first year of the Smart Financing application launch, Alabama Power onboarded 101 new allies, nearly doubling the number of providers in the program.



**Considering that the app is used by Alabama Power, end customers, as well as dealers, it's very important that the Smart Financing app is easy to use. The easier it is for dealers to use, the more customers they can help. They feel comfortable using the app, which helps them grow their revenue, while also helping our residents.**

Marty McElrath, Smart  
Financing Account Manager  
Alabama Power

Prior to Appian, Alabama Power would deliver customer payments to allies in 10 to 14 business days. With Appian's integration capabilities streamlining the entire financing process, allies now receive payment within 72 hours. This has raised ally confidence and satisfaction with the Smart Financing program.

"I work with small local businesses who have doubled their annual revenue through this program, which is so incredible to see," said McElrath.

### Alabama residents.

More residents have been able to acquire financing faster and, in some cases, when they previously believed it wasn't possible.

"Yes, it's a revenue driver, but for us it's something much larger than that. Applicants can now be approved in a matter of seconds at any time of the day, leading to our allies providing residents with a safer and higher quality of living. And because their hearts are in it, so are ours," says McElrath.

With ally confidence and satisfaction on the rise as well as faster customer processing times, far more residents have been able to apply, be approved, and receive a resolution for their utility financing plans—truly showcasing Alabama Power's drive to improve the quality of life of its citizens.

### The path forward.

Alabama Power plans to grow their use of Appian. McElrath states, "I'm so committed to strengthening our partnership with Appian. If Appian can duplicate what was done for us across other segments of our business, whether it be the regulated side or the unregulated, it'll only get easier for everybody and we can all be more efficient."

McElrath continues, "Appian has been a huge part of helping residents keep their homes safe. I can't pick one or two things that I like most about Appian. The people are great, we have awesome support, and the technology has been so impactful. Appian proves that people don't have to be intimidated by technology. Low-code is really the way to go if you don't have an in-house specialist that knows how to do more robust coding."



Appian is the unified platform for change. We accelerate customers' businesses by discovering, designing, and automating their most important processes. The Appian Low-Code Platform combines the key capabilities needed to get work done faster, Process Mining + Workflow + Automation, in a unified low-code platform. Appian is open, enterprise-grade, and trusted by industry leaders. For more information, visit [appian.com](https://appian.com).