

# NCSHA 2016 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

**Deadline: Wednesday, June 15, 2016**

Visit [ncsha.org/awards](http://ncsha.org/awards) to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

**Instructions:** Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org) or 202-624-7710.

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

**Entry Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**HFA:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Submission Contact:** (Must be HFA Staff Member) \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

\_\_\_\_\_

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page:

**HFA:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Entry Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.**

<b>Communications</b>	<b>Homeownership</b>	<b>Legislative Advocacy</b>	<b>Management Innovation</b>
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
<b>Rental Housing</b>	<b>Special Needs Housing</b>	<b>Special Achievement</b>	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			

# MaineHousing 2015 First Home Loan Marketing Campaign: Co-Branding is “Green Key”

[www.mainehousing.org](http://www.mainehousing.org) and [www.mainehousing.org/homeloan](http://www.mainehousing.org/homeloan)

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## OVERVIEW

The aftermath of the 2008 housing crisis was a competitive, rate-driven marketplace among mortgage lenders to capture hesitant clients and loans. MaineHousing, with its mission to help income-eligible households achieve their goal of homeownership, unfortunately became just another participant trying to gain traction and name recognition.

In 2008, we purchased 1,163 loans, by 2012, our loan numbers had dropped to 318.

MaineHousing’s first-time homebuyer program is available through more than 40 lender-partners statewide. We purchase the loans from participating lenders. In recent years, our lender-partners offered comparable rates for their mortgage products, so MaineHousing’s first-time homebuyer loan program was rarely presented as an alternative. In 2014, MaineHousing purchased 287 first home loans from our lender partners.

In 2015, a decision was made to set us apart from our lending partners, but not scare them away. We wanted to create a healthy customer balance between our loans and our partners’ mortgages. In mid-January 2015, we upped our Advantage program to \$3,500 for down payment and closing costs assistance and set our rate at 3.5% with zero points on our 30-year fixed rate mortgage. Research showed that eligible first-time homebuyers, particularly millennials, would consider homeownership as an alternative to increasing rents if they had help covering down payment and/or closing costs.

The \$3,500 Advantage would be our hook over our lender-partners’ loan products. Our challenge would be to educate first-time homebuyers about MaineHousing’s first-time homebuyer loan program, where they could get it, and tell them to ask for it by name. We asked eight advertising agencies to submit bids on how they’d market the program with a budget capped at \$100,000, and were turned down by all but two. One agency showed us that a successful campaign could run ten times as much. The marketing strategy was focused on designing a brand, with about a third of available funds to be directed towards actual marketing. Social media would become our inexpensive way to get the word out as television, radio, and online newspaper ads were cost prohibitive. Also, to save money, MaineHousing would implement or edit most of the design work that was created.

With a goal of 750 mortgages by the end of the year, co-branding with our lender-partners, real estate professionals, and hoMEworks homebuyer education program would be our “green key” to success.

## CAMPAIGN

### Creating Components

MaineHousing's First Home Loan program is available to first-time homebuyers, returning homebuyers who have not owned a home in the last three years, and active duty and retired military. In Maine, first-time homebuyers are 23-35 years old (mostly in their 30s). Our goal was to attract their attention. We developed a brand that included a program name, a logo, names for our partners, and social media tools such as tags and hashtags.

Our campaign, which continues to evolve and run on a daily basis, has a theme, and each post includes our rate and the \$3,500 Advantage towards down payment or closing costs. Our components are:

- **Theme:** *Opening the Door to Your Future.* Campaign imagery shows a door with a green key chain that opens up to photographs of what a homebuyer could experience with a home of their own during the four seasons in Maine.
- **Program name:** We call it the First Home Loan, and it has a fresh logo that uses two of our agency's already-established four colors.
- **Lender-partner name:** For lenders, we incorporated the green key chain from the campaign imagery into a name. We call them Green Key Lenders. Homebuyers could ask banks or mortgage companies if they are a "Green Key Lender," and lenders watch for its use.
- **Real estate professionals' name:** Through a review of loan applications, we found almost 60 real estate professionals who sold at least three houses using a MaineHousing First Home Loan. We call them "First Home Finders." We developed a logo, made window clings for their offices, and put their names and contact links on our website.
- **hoMEworks:** To receive the \$3,500 towards down payment and closing costs, buyers were required to complete a hoMEworks-approved homebuyer education class. Its logo and website was redesigned by MaineHousing in partnership with hoMEworks.
- **Website:** The importance of the First Home Loan program needed to be evident on our homepage. The *Open the Door to Your Future* theme with a seasonal image and a text overlay that states the rate plus the \$3,500 Advantage program was placed prominently at the top. Also, the page was freshened up to highlight our most-frequented programs and make it easier to read.
- **Landing pages:** A First Home Loan landing page was created specifically to market the program. The interest rate and the \$3,500 Advantage is at the top. All of the campaign components are featured. Another landing page was created for the active duty and retired military part of our First Home Loan program.
- **Let's Connect card:** We designed a card that was sent to First Home Finders on how to use social media to connect us with them and their clients. It includes lists of our social media sites, hashtags, and tags for them to use in their posts.
- **Collateral Materials:** A new display for trade shows, including a pull-up banner, was created, as were tablecloths with the new logos, lanyards for our annual housing conference, and green key chains.

## **Execution**

Our campaign is cemented in repetition. Repetition is imperative to educate buyers and keep our lender-partners on board with us.

While our target audience is first-time homebuyers, our most important clients are our partners. To convince our Green Key Lenders to help first-time homebuyers secure a MaineHousing First Home Loan, and to help them understand that we are partners and not competitors, we created a schedule of Green Key Lender posts for each of the more than 40 participants. The posts run across social media platforms on Mondays and Fridays, and include tags to the lenders' social media sites as well as their web page. We include campaign components – the First Home Logo, the green key chain, the interest rate and the \$3,500 towards down payment and closing, and instruction for homebuyers to talk to our featured lender to learn more. We sought testimonials, but found that the Green Key Lender posts were better received.

It takes little time and no money to post and share a partner message regarding our partners. Very little effort is required of our lenders' communications departments to share the posts. They only asked for the dates when they'll appear on our pages.

Our First Home Finder campaign with real estate professionals is a work in progress, and is promoted to them by citing the success of our Green Key Lender partnerships. We've changed it, though. We're finding it's easier for real estate professionals to share our posts with individual clients. We're asking that they take it one step further and post pictures of first-time homebuyers who purchased a home with our First Home Loan, and to include tags. Our Let's Connect card shows them how to do that.

MaineHousing did not have established social media accounts other than Facebook at the start of 2015, and our Facebook page had less than 250 followers. It's now more than 1,600. We also have Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest accounts. Our social media analytics show that we are above the national average for click-through rates on every platform, and advertisements. We did spend approximately \$20,000 on digital ads targeting specific audiences, Google Adwords, and Facebook ads during the busy home-buying season plus "like us" ads to increase followers. These, too, performed above the national averages.

## **SUCCESS!**

Our annual holiday party happened to coincide with the last day our Homeownership Department was to purchase mortgages for the year. Our Communications and Homeownership departments already were exchanging compliments for the effort put in to building a solid program, but we were aware that it looked like we would be short of our goal.

Shortly after 2 p.m., when desserts were being served and MaineHousing administrators were sharing holiday wishes, word came from Homeownership that additional mortgages were sold. We hit 750 exactly. Right on the nose.

And this year, unbeknownst to us, one of our biggest lenders is airing radio spots on Maine Public Broadcasting (MPBN) that says they are proud to be a MaineHousing Green Key Lender.

MPBN sent us the audio. We posted it on social media.

MaineHousing  
2015 First Home Loan Marketing Campaign:  
Co-Branding is “Green Key”

www.mainehousing.org and www.mainehousing.org/homeloan

MaineHousing home page

The screenshot shows the MaineHousing website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for ABOUT US, PROGRAMS, NEWS & EVENTS, POLICY & RESEARCH, RESOURCES, and CONTACT US. Below the navigation is the MaineHousing logo (Maine State Housing Authority) and a secondary navigation menu with links for Homebuyers, Renters, Energy, Homeowners, Homeless, Developers, and Partners. The main content area features a large banner with the headline "Opening the door to your future even wider!". The banner includes the First Home Loan logo, a green key chain, and promotional text: "We're celebrating National Homeownership Month with a special low rate 2.99%/3.966% APR 0 Points/30-Year Fixed Rate Mortgage Plus \$3,500 towards closing!". A "START HERE" button is prominently displayed, along with the text "Hurry! Offer ends June 30.". Below the banner are three call-to-action boxes: "Need help finding an affordable rental? START HERE", "Trouble paying your energy bills? You may be eligible for help. START HERE", and "Are you having trouble making your mortgage payments? START HERE".

Our homepage prominently features the First Home Loan program. Our marketing campaign components are displayed: the First Home Loan logo, the green key chain, the rates plus the \$3,500 towards closing costs, and a link to our First Home Loan landing page, which is on the next page.





## Opening the door **wider** to first-time homebuyers:

- Rates & Costs
- Find a Lender
- First Home Finders
- Income & Home Cost Limits
- Rent vs Buy Calculator
- Get Educated
- Purchase Plus Improvement
- Find a Home
- For Veterans
- Indian Housing
- [Full Program Details](#)
- First Home Loan Program



**2.99% / 3.966% APR\***  
**0 Points / 30-Year Fixed Rate Mortgage**

**Plus \$3,500 Advantage towards down payment & closing costs.\*\***

A **First Home Loan** from MaineHousing is the most affordable way to buy your first home or return to home ownership.



Our **First Home Loan** is available through our **Green Key Lenders** – banks, credit unions, and mortgage companies you already know.

**FIND A GREEN KEY LENDER NEAR YOU**

\*Rate applies to reservations made between June 1 and June 30, 2016.

\*\*The \$3,500 Advantage towards down payment and closing costs is included with the special rate. A hoMEworks homebuyer education class is required to receive the \$3,500 Advantage.



### Who's eligible for a First Home Loan?

Mainers who...

- Have never owned a home or have not owned a home in the past three years
- Meet [income limits](#)
- Meet [home cost limits](#)
- Qualify based on credit score and [lender](#) criteria
- Veterans & Active Duty Military, regardless of prior home ownership

### How do I apply?

- [Find a Green Key Lender](#) near you to see if you qualify
- A [homebuyer education course](#) is a great way to learn the ins and outs of borrowing and buying a new home, and is required if you use [Advantage](#) down payment and closing cost financing



Sign up to learn more

NAME

EMAIL

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE FIRST HOME LOAN PROGRAM?

SUBMIT

### Why First Home?

The First Home Loan program features:

- Below-market or competitive interest rates on 30-year fixed rate mortgages
- Little or no down payment. When a MaineHousing mortgage is combined with a government guaranty (FHA/RD/VA) or with United Guaranty private mortgage insurance, little or no down payment is required
- Low or no point options
- \$3,500 in down-payment and closing cost assistance (our Advantage program)
- Up to \$35,000 in additional loan financing for house improvements
- Financing of manufactured homes on owned or leased land
- Maine HOPE Payment protection for unemployment
- The mortgage stays in Maine

# Let's Connect: Guide to posting on social media

## Let's CONNECT

**Tagging**  
To tag a person or business simply type @ and start typing the username.  
@(MaineHousing)  
@(name of real estate agency)  
@(name of Green Key Lender)  
@(name of Buyer)

**Hashtags**  
Add one or more of these hashtags to your posts to highlight the First Home Loan Program.  
#FirstHomeLoan  
#FirstHomeFinder  
#3500Advantage  
#GreenKeyLender  
#NewHome  
#DearHuman  
#SaluteME  
#Homeworks

Together, we can use social media to share our stories with families, friends, and new clients!

- 1 Be Our Friend!**  
Find us and like us on one of these sites:  
f @MaineHousing  
t @MaineHousing1  
i @mainehousing  
p @mainehousing
- 2 Share What WE'RE Doing!**  
Think of a friend or client that may want to see a message we've posted? Share it.  
  
When you share it, you can add your own message and tag the person you'd like to see it.
- 3 Share What YOU'RE Doing!**  
Use our page to your marketing advantage.  
  
Do you have a client who purchased their home with MaineHousing's First Home Loan? Say Cheese! Take a picture together. Post it with a message and tag your client and tag us.

Our Let's Connect card provides information to our First Home Finders on how to include their clients and MaineHousing in their social media posts, with the goal to gain more exposure through several pages.

## Green Key Lender posts

Like Comment Share

Open the door to your future:  
Talk to our valued  
**Green Key Lender!**

**Camden National Bank**  
Everyone needs an anchor.

All of MaineHousing's Green Key Lenders are featured on social media according to a rotating schedule. The posts run on Mondays and Fridays.





## First Home Finder

Almost 60 real estate professionals sold at least three houses to first-time homebuyers who purchased their house with our First Home Loan. We call these professionals “First Home Finders,” and created a logo plus produced a window decal for each of them to display at their office. Also, they are listed on our First Home Loan website with a link to their sites.

## Homeownership booth



We updated our Homeownership booth that's used at trade shows with the First Home Loan campaign components, including rates, \$3,500 towards closing, Green Key Lenders, logos, and how to connect with us on social media.