NCSHA 2015 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

Deadline: Wednesday, June 10, 2015

Visit 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 Matt Cunningham at mcunningham@ncsha.org or 202-624-5424.

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.

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
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
Rental Housing	**Special Needs Housing**	**Special Achievement**	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			

MassHousing
Communications – Creative Media
Mobile Website

As more and more consumers utilize their smartphones to access information, creating a mobile presence is increasingly important. Mobile devices differ greatly from PCs, laptops and even many tablets – in terms of screen size, content and expectations. In 2014, MassHousing launched a mobile-friendly version of the Agency's website targeted toward homebuyers to address these issues.

Background

Smartphone use and mobile internet access continue to grow. According to Pew Research, 64 percent of Americans own a smartphone. Ericsson Mobile has estimated that between 2013 and 2019, there will be a 10x increase in mobile data. Also according to Pew, 44% of smartphone users have used their phone to look up real estate information, and 40% to look up government services or information. And for many users – 15% of users age 18-29; 13% of households earning less than $30,000 annually; 12% of African-Americans and 13% of Latino-Americans – smartphones are the primary if not only way that they access information online (Pew).

Many organizations simply present their standard website on mobile devices, but this can have limited effectiveness and presents numerous challenges. Mobile devices have significantly smaller screens, so what displays may vary. Mobile browsers may also present the site differently. Fonts may be too small or may not scale correctly. Appearance may vary from device to device, and browser to browser. New devices are constantly being brought to market. This is not an insignificant issue. Smartphone users are savvy but some might argue they are also impatient. In a world where everyone is used to an instant response, a website that doesn't load properly on a mobile phone or is hard to read or navigate can be quickly dismissed.

Solution

Because of this growing appetite for content optimized for mobile internet users, MassHousing committed to creating a mobile-friendly version of the Agency website. The mobile site would cater to consumers, particularly homebuyers, who staff felt would most benefit from an experience designed for their smartphones. This allowed MassHousing to streamline content and navigation, which in turn made the mobile experience more manageable and navigable. The full website would be accessible via a single click from any of the mobile pages, in case the mobile website visitor also came seeking other Agency content.

Application versus Mobile Site

There may be some debate on the merits of a mobile-friendly website against those of a stand-alone application. MassHousing did consider the latter, but chose a mobile-friendly website for several reasons. First, developing an application would have created a significant expense for the Agency and required contracting with a third-party developer. The application would have required ongoing maintenance, again from a third party, as well as significant marketing to promote downloads and usage. The mobile site was created entirely in-house by existing staff using the same technology tools that power the Agency's websites. Only a minimal investment was required to subscribe to the list of mobile devices. Existing marketing efforts lead consumers to MassHousing's website, so no additional promotion was required.

Technical Challenges

Despite the Agency's decision to move in this direction, creating a mobile-friendly site did present several technical challenges:

- How could it be determined whether a website visitor was coming from a mobile device or a PC or tablet?

- How could the Agency stay current and test with new devices and browsers across different carriers and operating systems?

To answer these questions, MassHousing subscribed to a service that maintains a current list of mobile devices. That same service provided open source code to help the Agency's website identify mobile devices, which was then customized by its in-house developers. MassHousing also subscribed to a service called Browserstack, which provides emulators that mimic mobile devices and browsers on a PC.

The Mobile Experience

Any user who enters www.masshousing.com from a mobile device is now automatically directed to the mobile friendly version of the site. The site shares the colors, style and imagery from the Homeownership section of the full site, but there are several notable differences.

First, the site map is streamlined to 16 pages, which provide users only the most important information. Content has been condensed to be easily scanned. Like the full site, content is organized to appeal to consumers at various stages of the homebuying process; pages proceed logically from one step to the next. The most important information – participating lenders, homebuyer education providers, income and loan limits, and product descriptions – is easily accessed on all pages, as is a link to view the full MassHousing website and a link to call the Agency's Homeownership staff.

<u>Results</u>

Since it was launched in 2014, there have been 63,843 page views on the mobile site!
Daily page views on the mobile site increased from an average of 185 during the first three months after the site was launched to 270 during the three most recent months.

While there is an attachment here that shows what the site looks like on a mobile phone, the proof is in the proverbial pudding. If you have a moment – take out your mobile phone and go to MassHousing's website www.masshousing.com. We hope that you find the site as friendly and visually appealing as we do!

MASSHOUSING

Welcome to **MassHousing** HomeOwnership Mobile!

Whether owning a home is your dream, your reality or part of your past, MassHousing can help you move forward.

Can I?	How?
I'm not sure I can buy a home.	I'm thinking about my first steps.

Support	Challenges
I'm looking for support in the process.	I'm hitting challenges along the way.