



# Entry Form 2017 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

**Entry Deadline: Thursday, June 15, 2017, Midnight ET**

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).**

**Entry Title:** Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

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**Category:**

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**Subcategory:**

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**Entry Summary:** A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

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**HFA:**

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**HFA Staff Contact:**

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**Phone:**

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**Email:**

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**Visual Aids:**

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF?    Yes        No

**Payment:**

My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.  
My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).

**Summary:**

Improvements to the *Marketing Handbook* guidelines to ensure a more fair, transparent, and effective process.

**Entry Description:**

In October 2016, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC) and New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) announced important changes to the policies and procedures for affordable housing lotteries designed to ensure the affordable housing application and lottery process is fairer, more transparent and more effective. The *Marketing Handbook* (a new version of the former *Marketing Guidelines*) contains important updates to the requirements and processes developers, marketing agents, and HPD/HDC follow throughout the affordable housing marketing and applicant screening process.

Developers using HDC and HPD-financing to construct affordable housing are required to adhere to the marketing and tenant selection policies and procedures. About 7 months before the construction of affordable housing developments is projected to be completed, developers must submit a marketing plan to HDC or HPD for approval. The *Marketing Handbook* provides developers and designated managing agents with useful information and direction for preparing its marketing plan and developing procedures consistent with HDC and HPD’s policy objectives.

The primary objective of the marketing, lease-up, and sales effort is to ensure that the process is fair and provides equal opportunity to all applicants, regardless of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. In addition, the process should affirmatively further fair housing by promoting racial, ethnic, income, and geographic diversity among residents and within the neighborhood, and by providing applicants with mobility, vision, or hearing disabilities that require accessible/adaptable units priority for those units.

Important changes to the policies include ending developers and leasing agents ability to deny applications based solely on credit scores; new standards for homeless shelter referrals to account for special challenges faced by these individuals and families; strictly limiting the ability of landlords to deny an applicant based only on their exercising due process rights in housing courts; and imposing limits on personal assets to ensure that the affordable programs serve those in greatest need.

By standardizing all selection criteria, the new guidelines ensure that households who have the ability to pay rent, and by all other indicators, can be expected to be responsible tenants are not rejected solely on the basis of a low score or solely because a tenant has previously appeared in housing court.

The policies now also promote greater language accessibility at all stages of the application process, require consistency in how developers and marketing agents communicate with applicants and apply credit criteria and other standards and increase transparency of the appeal process.

The new policies and procedures make the affordable housing application process more inclusive to reach New Yorkers most in need by:

- Standardizing and limiting use of credit and housing court history in the selection process so that applicants are treated consistently and fairly across all projects.
- Accounting for the special challenges residents of homeless shelters face in meeting eligibility criteria, including victims of domestic violence, to improve the chances that households will be placed in permanent housing.
- Increasing access and opportunity to more New Yorkers to rent affordable housing units.
- Tightening guidelines to ensure those who qualify for affordable housing will use their new home as their primary residence.
- Ensuring that interview locations be accessible and clearly marked, and that interviewers provide interpretation services, including American Sign Language.
- Ensuring developers’ outreach and advertising efforts include diverse communities citywide.
- Reforming the appeal process to make the process more transparent and provide additional protections to the applicant.
- Revising interview standards to ensure more privacy and security of personal information.
- Prohibiting home visits, which are too subjective to be fair.

### **Background on NYC Housing Connect and the Marketing Handbook**

Since its 2013 launch, the *NYC Housing Connect* lottery application tool has simplified the City’s housing lottery process. The website allows New Yorkers to fill out a single online profile, which can be used to apply to multiple new housing lotteries. That profile can be saved and edited, eliminating the need to fill out individual paper applications for upcoming lotteries. HPD and HDC encourage people in need of affordable housing opportunities to take advantage of the convenient online application, as application periods for new affordable housing lotteries open regularly.

The NYC Housing Connect website serves English, Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish speakers. Each existing housing lottery advertisement and all upcoming lotteries are also available in each of the above listed languages.

### **Benefits**

NYC Housing Connect and the *Marketing Handbook* are coordinated in partnership between HPD and HDC. This cross-agency approach reduces overall costs and is an effective use of resources. The updated

guidelines also put resources to more effective use by streamlining electronic processes at every step of the application process.

The new marketing policies are replicable by other state and local regulatory agencies. These policies increase access to an innovative resource that contributes to furthering the strategic objectives of the New York City’s affordable housing plan, *Housing New York: A Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan*, to create and preserve 200,000 affordable homes. The new policies and procedures help to ensure the new homes financed under the plan will reach New Yorkers who need them most.

The updated guidelines and Housing Connect lottery system increase accessibility and transparency, ensuring that more New Yorkers in need of housing are aware of what affordable housing projects are accepting applications; that applicants have improved access to information regarding eligibility requirements and the application process; that applications are treated with greater consistency; and applicants are treated more fairly throughout the lottery selection and criteria review process. The updated guidelines will encourage more applications overall, and more electronic applicants on the Housing Connect lottery system, which currently stands at more than 1 million registered users, with over 98% of applications now submitted electronically. We have seen applications for projects increase to approximately 1,000 applicants for each affordable unit available.

The updated guidelines address feedback received by applicants, affordable housing advocates, elected officials, marketing agents and for-profit and not-for-profit developers. These were the first updates to the *Marketing Handbook* since the 2013 launch of Housing Connect.

**The updated *Marketing Handbook* can be found here:**

<http://www.nychdc.com/content/pdf/Developers/Marketing%20Handbook%2010-04-2016.pdf>