



2013 Annual Awards Entry Form
(Complete one for each entry.)

Entry Name 2012 Annual Report: "Looking Back, Moving Forward"

HFA Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency

Submission Contact Scott Elliott

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Entry form with description, check(s), and visual aids (optional) must be received by NCSHA by **Monday, July 1, 2013**.

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

HFA Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency

Entry Name 2012 Annual Report: "Looking Back, Moving Forward"

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annual Report <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional Materials and Newsletters <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Empowering New Buyers <input type="checkbox"/> Home Improvement and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> State Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
<input type="checkbox"/> Multifamily Management <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Combating Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Housing for Persons with Special Needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Achievement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES One attached in PDF and one via mail. <input type="checkbox"/> NO

Introduction

The year 2012 marked the 40th anniversary of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency. As we worked on messaging concepts for the report, we knew we wanted it to be reflective, helping readers appreciate all the good work done by PHFA during those years. At the same time, we didn’t want to the report to be trapped in the past. Hence the title: “Looking Back, Moving Forward.”

We always strive for the introductory section of our annual report to be educational by informing readers about all the positive housing achievements by the agency during the prior year. The challenge, of course, is that “educational” content can be perceived by some to be boring. We address that concern by enlightening through the use of real-world stories that illustrate the wide variety of people we help through our affordable housing programs.

We are big supporters of NCSHA’s “Faces of Home” campaign. Like NCSHA, we believe in the powerful impact of storytelling. Using stories to communicate about housing programs draws the reader in by presenting information in a more inviting way than a traditional narrative citing facts and figures. In this year’s annual report, we were extremely pleased with how the photography and text came together to share with readers the important impact of our ongoing affordable housing mission.

Project Innovation

Our innovation is not so much in our commitment to storytelling, which is a proven communications approach, but rather in the execution of the final document. The cool colors of the cover and the circular cut-out catch the reader’s interest and invite her to explore the document. Early in the report we introduce timeline elements that run alongside the main storylines and provide the thread that ties it all together. The timeline serves the function of providing a “look back” at the agency’s many accomplishments over 40 years. The introductory stories of the people and families we’ve helped put our initiatives into a real-world context and suggest our unfinished work that remains underway – hence, “moving forward.”

The innovation in this report came from an optimal fusion of internal message conceptualization and composition combined with expert graphic design and photography provided by two outside vendors. This approach allows PHFA to control messaging while still tapping into creative ideas from outside the agency that, we feel, helps us reach a level of quality rivaling annual reports produced by corporate firms. Achieving this close teamwork from three different firms working in close harmony on this project is challenging, but we think it has resulted in an exceptional final product that produced a strong positive response from our public.

We believe this year’s annual report is effective because of the way we used larger photographs to invite reader engagement while including the right amount of text to tell our success stories. We did use an outside graphic design firm to help with execution, but the project concept and writing is all done entirely by the PHFA communications team. The photographs are taken by a vendor

Project Replication

All HFA’s take different approaches in the development of their annual report, depending on their available resources and other factors. PHFA’s blended approach to report development and production could easily be replicated. Using outside vendors to help with graphic design, photography, printing and mailing does add costs. The advantage is that it moves responsibilities to contractors that best fit their capabilities while keeping messaging in-house, where we believe it should be. Since PHFA has a

communications staff of just two people, we believe this approach frees up our employees to work on other projects that also are important to the agency.

Reaching Target Audiences

We have moved to a hybrid approach when preparing our annual report for distribution. Our desire to conserve natural resources leads us to increasingly share our annual report via a digital version posted on our website accessible at:

http://www.phfa.org/forms/annual_report/PHFA_2012_Annual_Report.pdf. However, we feel there still is value in sharing some reports in printed format. The moving stories in the report are more impactful, we believe, when the reader experiences them directly through our high-end publication. As a result, we still mail 2,500 of our annual reports to the state’s legislators, our business partners, housing advocates and others. Using both approaches allows us to reach the largest interested audience while still holding down our costs. Extra printed copies of the annual report also are shared during conferences throughout the year, and at other venues.

Achieving Measurable Results

We do not conduct any surveys of our annual report audience to gauge their impression of the material. However, the emails and feedback to our executive director and communications director confirm that this communications product – and especially the success stories in the front of the report – are well received. A sample of one such letter mailed to PHFA from a well-known developer in the state is included.

Providing Benefits that Outweigh Costs

The hard cost for designing, printing and mailing this year’s annual report was \$39,000. A total of 3,000 printed reports, and a Web PDF, were produced. Considering the influential audience that reads our annual report – including our investors – this is viewed as a solid investment.

It is worth noting that the affordable housing success stories presented in the front of our annual report are being repurposed as Animoto videos for use on our website. We are now in the process of reworking the stories from our 2012 annual report for sharing via our agency homepage, much as NCSHA does with its Faces of Home campaign. By taking this approach, we will gain additional value from this investment while presenting our stories via a medium that is even more accessible to the average state resident.

Effective Use of Resources

PHFA would not be able to achieve this high quality of printed publication relying only on the two people on our communications team. The best solution we have found is for our Information Resources Division to serve as project manager, defining the messaging and writing all the text for the report. Our graphic design firm and hired photographer add areas of expertise that we do not have in-house. Several creative concept meetings held during the report-development process – and countless emails in between – keep creative ideas flowing and ensure all efforts are well coordinated.

We have seen annual reports developed almost entirely by outside public relations firms. While nice looking, we are not convinced that such consultants understand the work of HFAs well enough to really nail the messaging. We believe our blending of internal and external resources produces the optimal result.

Achieving Strategic Objectives

Our annual report is our most important communications initiative for reaching key audiences, such as our investors, state legislators, business partners, and housing advocates within the state. Our annual report is of interest to the state’s residents, too, of course. But we have found more success reaching the broader public by gleaning the affordable housing stories from the annual report for use in other media, like our program brochures and on the agency website. In this way, our investment in our annual report provides valuable content that helps us tell the PHFA story in all our publications throughout the year.

The annual report serves a vital function with all the audiences noted above. Of course, it shares information about our financial health of interest to our investors. But more importantly, it confirms PHFA’s ongoing commitment to its affordable housing mission and reassures state and local government officials and our business partners that we are managing our housing programs in a responsible manner. It reaffirms the trust they have placed in PHFA to expand affordable housing options in Pennsylvania. We believe the 2012 report meets this objective well.



Glunt Development Co., Inc.

One of two visual aids.

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Received by

MAR 21 2013

Executive Division
PHFA

Mr. Brian A. Hudson, Sr.
Executive Director & CEO
Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
211 North Front Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101

March 16, 2013


Dear Brian,

I was pleased to receive the 2012 PHFA Annual Report. The very attractive and informative publication tells a wonderful story that demonstrates how PHFA has been of significant benefit to so many Pennsylvania residents.

I was especially pleased to see the photo of Karl Smith and the accompanying article. Karl was a great leader of PHFA and taught me much. I continue to call him my mentor and friend.

Congratulations to you and my many friends on your staff for a great report and the agency's many significant accomplishments.

Personal regards,



J. Roger Glunt

JRG/lg