



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

Entry Name eBusiness Strategy

HFA Virginia Housing Development Authority

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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 Virginia Housing Development Authority

Entry Name eBusiness Strategy

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional Materials and Newsletters <input checked="" 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 <input type="checkbox"/> NO

“The eBusiness initiative has made it easier to work across functional business lines on efforts such as our new mobile website and the launching of our blog. The team is comprised of staff who represent different areas of the organization, varying ages and backgrounds, and interests that allow us to challenge each other and promote creativity and innovation.”

Kathy Natale, Associate Director of Business Solutions and Enterprise Architecture

Description of Program

VHDA constantly evaluates changes occurring in the HFA/mortgage lending industry and is able to adapt to those changes through technology in order to remain competitive and successful in carrying out its mission. The eBusiness team was created to evaluate and make recommendations to executive leadership regarding the effective use and implementation of business initiatives and electronic/digital media to achieve VHDA’s strategic objectives.

Why It Was Undertaken

In 2010, the VHDA Board of Commissioners recognized the need to improve our online presence, and the eBusiness team was created to be a think tank or working Innovation Center to identify opportunities and generate ideas to leverage technology, create value, and keep VHDA informed of current trends in technology and marketing. The three goals of this program are:

1. Facilitating rapid adoption of new technologies to meet changing market conditions,
2. Gaining efficiencies and effectiveness through process improvements, and
3. Staying relevant and meeting expectations of current and future consumers entering the workforce and marketplace.

What eBusiness Has Accomplished

To date, VHDA has completed over 15 projects, with another 16 in progress, under the eBusiness Strategy Program. Below are some of the recently completed efforts:

1. Board Papers Implementation
2. Distribution of iPads to all associates and board members
3. Implementation of the VHDA Blog, discuss.design.develop
4. Expanded Use of Social Media
5. VHDA.com Mobile Site
6. Redesign of Internal Communications, TheZone (Intranet)
7. Expanded Use of Web/Video Conferencing
8. Single Family Online Interactive Learning
9. eBusiness Strategic Team Single Family Consulting Engagement

VHDA’s implementation of Board Papers, an iPad application, improved processes and reduced the need for hundreds of paper copies. Large binders with tabs and paper copies no longer had to be created for each Board Meeting. Board members and VHDA staff are able to access all documents in a single application where they can annotate and highlight important items.

eBusiness also defined the strategy and championed the expansion of VHDA’s social media presence. This year, the blog, discuss.design.develop was unveiled to cover topics of interest to our business partners and other constituents. VHDA’s Facebook page has been redesigned with increased housing and general interest content. In addition, VHDA has created a mobile, optimized version of its internet site for smartphone access. This affords users the flexibility of choosing how they would like to access VHDA.com’s content.

In addition to updating and expanding its external web presence, VHDA has redesigned its internal communications with the rollout of TheZone, VHDA's new intranet. The home page contains important links, calendars, announcements of upcoming events, and news. This is now the focal point for internal communications for all associates. In addition, this group has been charged with being the governance body for all of VHDA's websites.

In order to reduce travel and training costs, eBusiness recommended the expanded use of video and teleconferencing for large meetings, seminars, and training. This has afforded many attendees the ability to take advantage of training opportunities without having to leave their offices. To increase usage, staff conducted lunch and learn training sessions to teach associates how to use the technology and give them opportunities to practice with video and audio presentations. For the first four months of 2013, VHDA hosted 88 webinars with over 341 participants. Use of this technology has expanded to almost all divisions of the authority.

VHDA's online Homeownership Education course, offered in English and Spanish, has been redesigned to be more interactive and geared to a first-time homebuyer audience. All content was revised and the course material reorganized for prospective homebuyers. The class contains audio narrations, interactive exercises, and section quizzes to measure learnings, and students can complete the course according to a schedule and a location that fits their needs.

The eBusiness Strategic Team facilitated a successful collaborative effort between ITS and the Single Family business groups to explore the current market and technical trends. This was a two-day, facilitated engagement that included three industry specialists from across the country to identify gaps and opportunities for VHDA. One of the outcomes of this session was the creation of a roadmap of opportunity and true business needs for the team to use in prioritizing efforts and creating business cases for future project work.

Why eBusiness Is Meritorious & Meets NCSHA Judging Criteria

Innovative – The world of housing finance has changed considerably over the last few years. VHDA's leadership realized that the organization has to do things differently in order to continue to be recognized as an effective and valuable business partner. VHDA took an all-encompassing approach with eBusiness – it is not just a part of our business; it is the *way* we do business. Our focus was multifaceted, focusing on all Authority websites, developing and deploying mobile applications, and enhancing social media usage and internal business applications. Multiple outlets exist to advertise, blog, host discussions or meetings, and generate potential business. This afforded the freedom to try new initiatives and to leverage technology to do business in different ways.

Replicable – HFAs that have a desire to increase their internet presence, improve their accessibility via mobile devices, and expand their use of social media can certainly implement an eBusiness program. The technological infrastructure and security must already exist and knowledgeable information technology and marketing professionals are key for the successful replication.

Respond to a Management Challenge or Opportunity – VHDA saw the efforts of the eBusiness program as an opportunity to reach our first-time, presumable younger, home buyer in a new and creative way by using technology. This group, also known as the Millennial or Generation Y demographic, uses internet and their smartphones for everything from an electronic airline boarding pass to ordering movie tickets to tracking calories and accessing fitness programs. All stakeholders who do business with VHDA have this demographic. This is such an important initiative for VHDA that a digital media specialist position was created and filled by an energetic associate. In many respects, this generation demands this

type of creativity and accessibility in personal and professional transactions; businesses need to adapt and respond in order to be viable and efficient in the current market place.

Achieve Measurable Improvements in Authority Operations – Many of these initiatives, including Board Papers and web/video conferencing, have realized a significant cost savings for the authority in terms of paper usage and travel costs. In the first quarter of 2013, VHDA hosted 88 webinars across the Commonwealth. This was an estimated savings of approximately \$40,000 in travel costs for the 341 participants.

It is also more efficient for users who can read, search, and annotate all documents from an iPad application and provides for a “greener” environment. Our use of web/video conferencing has drastically reduced travel costs and afforded more of our business partners, who could not travel to participate in meetings or training session, the opportunity to participate and interact with those attending the session. In addition, this team’s marketing efforts have provided many ways for the residents of the Commonwealth to access VHDA’s content.

Provide Benefits That Outweigh Costs – The eBusiness initiatives have streamlined business efforts and improved the ways that the authority communicates with Virginians about its programs and initiatives. Change is the only constant in the housing finance arena. VHDA’s leadership realized that the authority had to modify business processes and effectively use technology in order to stay current and continue to be a valuable business partner for our stakeholders. Without the efforts of the eBusiness team, many of our processes and methods of external communication would be outdated and underutilized.

Demonstrate Effective Use of Resources – Teamwork and collaboration among VHDA’s business units, information technology, and marketing departments made the most of a resource that we already had, our full-time associates. The eBusiness team was created as a working group to initiate efforts to improve our business processes and to ensure that VHDA remained a viable business partner. This team is an example of cross-departmental work relationships that function together to be nimble enough to implement new ideas and ways to do business in a timely manner.

Achieve Strategic Objectives – VHDA’s mission is to help Virginians attain quality, affordable housing. One of the most important ways we do that is by providing financing to first-time homebuyers. This demographic is typically the right age for technology-heavy opportunities. The eBusiness efforts in social media and with the mobile site, in addition to the homeownership education, have provided many ways for Virginians to access content about VHDA’s programs.

Conclusion

According to an internal user, “eBusiness allows Divisions to work efficiently, utilizing the latest technology and trends. From mobile apps to social media to business partner portals, work would be more challenging without eBusiness tools. You use them in everyday life, applying them to business just makes sense. We will continue to implement more eBusiness tools to make the flow of information increasingly accessible.”

The eBusiness team facilitates the rapid adoption of new technologies and recommends projects that improve efficiencies and effectiveness, while championing efforts to keep VHDA relevant and able to meet expectations of current and future consumers. This interdisciplinary think tank provides ideas and suggestions to VHDA’s leadership and strives to keep our programs competitive for the residents of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Please [click here](#) to view VHDA’s Business projects and process improvements.