



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

Entry Name Housing Network Capacity Building Initiative

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 Housing Network Capacity Building Initiative

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Special Achievement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

Virginia Housing Development Authority Housing Network Capacity Building Initiative

“There are still over 1,300 chronically homeless persons in the State who need supportive housing; there is no shortage of demand for our services. Thank you to VHDA’s past support that helped Virginia Supportive Housing to provide capacity building to others in the State on developing and providing supportive housing”

– Alice Tousignant, Executive Director, Virginia Supportive Housing

Brief Description

As Virginia’s state housing agency, VHDA is oftentimes looked upon as a catalyst to effectively mobilize talent and resources among multiple partners and stakeholders in addressing important housing-related issues. VHDA’s ongoing commitment to assisting non-profit organizations and public entities in increasing affordable housing opportunities for low income households led the Authority to examine what viable resources were available and how the utilization of those resources could be maximized during these challenging times.

The foundation of this support initiative began when VHDA began funding specific projects from non-profit organizations that contributed to our mission and directly impacted key customer markets. After working relentlessly with local governments, developers, advocacy groups and local housing agencies, VHDA was able to establish a pool of resources for non-profit housing organizations related to addressing homelessness, revitalization, affordable housing preservation, housing for people with disabilities, and green building. Organizations were required to demonstrate their need based upon the breadth of impact, capacity building, or organizational support for the non-profit housing organization. VHDA’s support funding allocates up to \$5,000 for capacity building efforts.

Meeting an Important State Housing Need

Addressing the housing needs of extremely low and very low income residents has always required creative methods and an ability for finding and maximizing available resources. Effectively addressing these needs has become more challenging as a result of the recent economic downturn, which has led to significant budgetary constraints for many housing programs that have historically provided resources to help alleviate some of the critical issues faced by these individuals.

For example, HOME and CDBG program budgets for FY 2014, as compared to the FY 2011 amounts, have seen decreases of 41% and 11%, respectively. Although the FY 2014 Housing Counseling budget proposal is greater than the 2011 enacted amount, which was reduced to zero, it is 38% less than the original FY 2011 proposed budget amount. These ongoing reduced funding levels are expected to continue, and place added importance on the ability of organizations to strategically plan for the future and position themselves to remain a viable housing resource partner.

The review of options led VHDA to the conclusion that while there were a number of partners with the available resources and a desire to improve the availability of affordable housing opportunities, these organizations did not always possess the necessary skills and abilities to successfully develop, operate, or preserve these opportunities. To address this need, VHDA established the *Capacity Building Grant Program*.

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VHDA's Innovative Efforts with Capacity Building Grants

The grant funds are being made available to agencies with a demonstrated vision and strategic plan to extend their mission and/or geographic coverage area, resulting in the significant enhancement of their current capacity. Funding is being made available to qualified applicants for a number of funding activities, including strategic and business planning, program evaluation and design, management systems and board development, and other activities to enhance organizational skills. Rather than providing a subsidy for ongoing operations, it is expected these awards will allow our strategic partners to improve their abilities in a manner which will help ensure the long-term viability of their affordable housing programs.

Why VHDA's Innovative Approach is Meritorious

Replicable

Any HFA should be able to replicate the model incorporated by VHDA in providing these capacity building grants. Once a determination is made that capacity building support is an important strategic objective for the HFA, the decision then becomes how much funding can be allocated as well as the type of capacity building to be supported that best aligns with the respective HFA's strategic objectives.

Benefits Outweigh Costs

Since the inception of the grant program, VHDA has provided in excess of \$3 million of support for capacity building initiatives to over 100 affordable housing organizations in Virginia. This support has allowed the recipient agencies to enhance their organizational capacity and strengthen their mission for long-term sustainability. VHDA has a formal and informal process of monitoring and measuring successful outcomes through staff interaction, benchmark deliverables, annual evaluations, and a contractual agreement.

Effective Use of Resources

Responding to significant housing needs at a crucial economic time for non-profit organizations required a non-conventional strategy, especially when dealing with the intricacies of budgetary constraints from federal and state level resources. VHDA determined that the most effective use of resources would be to create a capacity building grant program rather than directing resources towards an operating subsidy. This approach allows organizations themselves to identify specific organizational objectives that they decide are most important in achieving the desired results and successful outcomes. A maximum of \$60,000 distributed over a span of three years is available for organizations to significantly enhance their organizational capacity in the areas of technology enhancement, technical training, and board development.

Effectively Employs Partnerships

By partnering with these organizations, VHDA was able to discover new needs that required additional resources beyond the scope of our traditional non-profit support funding. These needs included the following:

- Developing strategic planning with an organizational consultant.
- Succession planning for key senior staff level positions.
- Developing practices to maximize organizational results by developing leadership capacity strength for the staff.
- Identifying internal organization development training for board members.

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Achieves Strategic Objectives

VHDA's primary strategic objectives for this program provide the following:

- Maximizing the capacity of non-profits in real estate development, property management, and asset management.
- Implementing a Housing Stability Initiative statewide, thereby providing greater benefit to our partners and stakeholders.
- Expanding programmatic collaboration between VHDA and these organizations.
- Creating strategic opportunities for synergy in program development and fundraising.

With the creation of this grant, VHDA is able to provide technical assistance for non-profit housing organizations for stronger and more viable housing networks in Virginia.

Conclusion

There is a major need to expand the capacity of organizations serving extremely low and very low income households. As a result, VHDA's Housing Network Capacity Building Initiative was created to strengthen the development and preservation of affordable housing opportunities across the state. The grant funding provided by this initiative assists organizations with the capacity to extend their mission and/or geographic coverage as well as to ensure long-term sustainable development. As Virginia's state housing agency, VHDA is oftentimes looked to as a catalyst in being able to effectively mobilize talent and resources among multiple partners and stakeholders in addressing important housing related issues. This initiative serves to strengthen VHDA's commitment to assisting non-profit organizations and public entities to increase affordable housing opportunities for low-income households in communities across Virginia.

Please see the attachments below.

Virginia Housing Development Authority Housing Network Capacity Building Initiative

Mike Hawkins,
VHDA Director
of Community
Housing,
conducts
neighborhood
revitalizing
training.



VHDA's
Housing
Partners learn
capacity-
building
strategies.



Virginia Housing Development Authority
Housing Network Capacity Building Initiative



Non-Profit Partners attend a Strategic Planning Training Session at VHDA.