

# NCSHA 2016 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

**Deadline: Wednesday, June 15, 2016**

Visit [ncsha.org/awards](http://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 [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org) or 202-624-7710.

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.**

<b>Communications</b>	<b>Homeownership</b>	<b>Legislative Advocacy</b>	<b>Management Innovation</b>
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
<b>Rental Housing</b>	<b>Special Needs Housing</b>	<b>Special Achievement</b>	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			

## **Supporting Senator Cantwell's LIHTC Advocacy**

Over the past two years, the Washington State Housing Finance Commission has proactively engaged with Senator Maria Cantwell and her staff to build federal support for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program. These efforts led to Senator Cantwell's very successful affordable-housing tour of cities around Washington state to call attention to the housing credit—culminating in her May 2016 bill to expand the housing credit by 50 percent. Because of her belief in the credit's positive impact on Washington residents and communities, and her commitment and skill in fighting for it, she has become the credit's most effective champion in Congress.

### **Laying the Groundwork**

The Housing Finance Commission and our affordable-housing partners in Washington state have long had a friendly relationship with our two senators, who have taken the time to visit project openings and groundbreakings around the state and frequently met with housing partners here and in D.C.

Fortunately, our state can point to a high rate of success in using the LIHTC program over the past 30 years: The credit has helped to create or renovate more than 1,000 properties and 75,000 units of housing in that time, many of which have won national awards for their innovative design and sustainability.

As Senator Cantwell began to be more focused on affordable housing issues in 2013, 2014 and 2015, she directed her staff to work with us to learn about tax-credit financing and its impact. We arranged several tours for her staff, including her senior policy advisor, of affordable housing in the Seattle area. Each tour featured a mix of three or four properties that showed the range of this program, from "housing first" for the chronically homeless in downtown Seattle, to transit-oriented development, to a large suburban apartment complex, to the renovation of a historic hotel.

We also were quick to respond to any questions from Senator Cantwell's office, sharing our perspective on how various issues in tax reform might affect the effectiveness of the credit. In this, we coordinated with NCSHA's policy staff, ensuring that Washington state's stories and data gave the Senator context as she considered the national view of the credit program.

In late 2015, Senator Cantwell landed a major victory for the housing credit: the permanent establishment of the 9% rate as part of the PATH Act. This long-sought change allowed affordable-housing developers and investors to plan with confidence in the amount of equity in their projects.

### **Leg Con 2016**

Because of the 9% fixed-rate victory and because the chances for tax reform in this Congress were remote, the Commission planned that the 2016 Legislative Conference would be a "thank you" year. Instead of making asks, our message would be a simple "thank you" for the passage of the PATH Act. We chose to catch our 12 members' attention, build goodwill, and remind them that we are a resource for

them by not only meeting with them personally, but also by bringing with us a box of themed cookies to each office.

We also offered to coordinate an event in the member's district to highlight affordable housing and to call attention to the member's support for affordable housing in Congress.

Senator Cantwell gave us a warm welcome in D.C., receiving our group in the President's Room at the Capitol. Meanwhile, her staff invited us for a smaller working meeting about an exciting new plan: a bill that would not only make improvements to the 9% credit but also increase its allocation by 50%. In this face-to-face meeting, we were able to contribute the allocator's perspective and help shape the policy.



### **Back Home in the Other Washington: Kicking Off a Statewide Campaign**

Our offer to coordinate a local housing event resonated with Senator Cantwell in a major way. We had barely returned to Seattle when her staff contacted us about holding just such an event during the Easter recess to highlight the tax credit and preview the Senator's forthcoming legislation.

With the objective of a major press conference in Seattle to kick off the ACTION Coalition campaign behind the Senator's bill, the Commission identified several local housing-credit properties as suitable locations, helped vet them, and connected the Senator's staff with the appropriate staff.

Meanwhile, we pulled data on the properties and units created or renovated by the tax-credit both statewide and in the Seattle area so that the Senator's staff could develop a report making a case for increasing the housing credit. Finally, we helped to compile a list of local housing providers and agencies to invite.



On March 24, the press conference was held at the Patrick Place Apartments, a new 9% property serving the homeless. Because the event fell on the day of our Commission meeting, we canceled our work session that morning and hired a bus to transport about 40 of our Commissioners and staff to the press conference. Flanked by the mayors of Seattle, Tacoma and Everett, as well as our executive director, Kim Herman, other housing partners and two residents of Patrick Place, Senator Cantwell delivered a passionate and effective speech calling on Congress to expand the housing credit.

The event drew media coverage from about 20 print, online, TV and radio outlets in Seattle and the surrounding area, including an Associated Press story that ran in 10 more outlets statewide. This was a huge boost—but we were already working with the Senator's staff to plan more events in other cities.

## Reaching Out: Housing Roundtables

The following week, Senator Cantwell began a series of local roundtable discussions about affordable housing that had less fanfare than the press kickoff, but were equally as important for gathering local support for the housing credit.

These began with roundtables in the inland city of Spokane and back on the west side in Tacoma, which the Housing Finance Commission once again supported by vetting locations; pulling local data on tax-credit properties so the Senator's staff to customize a housing-credit report for each region; and ensuring that local housing partners were included. Once again, local mayors participated and positive media coverage ensued.

Because of this success, Senator Cantwell has continued to add affordable-housing tour stops during almost every one of her trips home from D.C.—holding roundtables next in smaller but important cities further away from the Seattle hub: Bremerton, Walla Walla, Bellingham, and Vancouver, Wash. so far. In every case, the Housing Finance Commission has been a key partner in finding locations (all housing-credit properties), providing data and making local housing connections—sometimes with only a few days' notice.

On May 19, midway through this effort, Senator Cantwell introduced her long-awaited Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act in the Senate—with the powerful co-sponsorship of the Finance Committee Chair, Republican Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah.



## Results

As of June 2016, Senator Cantwell has held a total of seven local events focused on the housing credit, almost all of which resulted in positive local media coverage (there has been no negative coverage).

Significantly, these events didn't just spotlight the concept of "affordable housing," but specifically brought the housing credit to the attention of local elected officials and other community leaders who had not previously understood the impact of this resource in their communities. Even in traditionally conservative areas of Washington, the Senator was able to win many new friends for the housing credit.



For the Housing Finance Commission, and by extension our local and nationwide affordable-housing partners, this successful outreach effort has led to a closer working relationship with Senator Cantwell and her staff—one that ensures our perspectives will be solicited and considered. We are more strongly positioned than ever to support the credit through the work that lies ahead.