



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

Entry Name Web-Based Annual Reporting System

HFA Washington State Housing Finance Commission

Submission Contact Margret Graham

Phone 206.287.4409

Email [Margret.Graham@wshfc.org](mailto:Margret.Graham@wshfc.org)

Program Contact Melissa Donahue

Phone 206.287.4444

Email [Melissa.Donahue@wshfc.org](mailto:Melissa.Donahue@wshfc.org)

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: WSHFC

Entry Name: Web-Based Annual Reporting System

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO

## **Washington State Web-Based Annual Reporting System**

The Washington State Web-Based Annual Reporting System, or WBARS, is a comprehensive and innovative annual reporting, monitoring and asset management system shared by seven different public funders in Washington state. It allows more than 1,600 property managers and owners to easily meet reporting requirements, while giving funders a powerful oversight tool at a fraction of the time and resources previously invested.

### **Strategic Objective**

After many years of working closely together in a variety of capacities, housing funders in Washington state believed a coordinated, web-based reporting system was the logical next step to meet the needs of clients and funders in today's electronic world.

Our multiple objectives were to create a system that would reduce paperwork, improve accuracy of reports, meet the contractual needs of all participating funders, make our reviews easier through automatic calculations, and provide a "carrot" to owners and managers that would make them excited about using the system. We succeeded on all objectives.

### **Background**

Beginning in 1999, representatives of the largest statewide housing funders have met every other month as a Monitoring Coordination Task Force (MCT). The MCT group has spent years sharing resources, staff, and expertise to streamline and prevent duplication of effort, share information and maximize oversight leverage.

Formal and informal agreements allow the members to share reports, on-site inspections, asset-management oversight, and ownership and management transfer information, and to jointly invest in property funding and project workouts. The funders are the Washington State Housing Finance Commission; the cities of Seattle and Tacoma; the state Department of Commerce; King and Snohomish counties; the city and county of Spokane; the Seattle Housing Authority, Federal Home Loan Bank; USDA Rural Development; and the regional HUD office.

Meanwhile, the Commission has maintained crucial ties with property managers through board membership and participation with our state AHMA and CARH affordable housing management associations. Buy-in from these groups has been key to our success.

The public funders conduct joint annual-report training sessions for owners and managers. WSHFC also participates in AHMA and CARH trainings and annual conferences. Conducting joint trainings requires instructors from each agency to thoroughly understand how their requirements overlap or supplement those of their partner agencies.

## **Groundwork for a New System**

Building on earlier discussions, the Commission and the Washington State Department of Commerce began working on a jointly-funded web-based system that would automate seven of the above funders' joint Excel annual reporting forms to a more usable and automated system.

From the beginning, the goal was to create a system that would benefit all joint funders, property management staff, and owners as well. Scoping included a series of separate meetings at various levels, from program and IT staff to property managers. Showing property managers that the system would benefit them would be key to gaining their support.

Two WSHFC and two Commerce staff met with a contractor in a series of design meetings, with major design decisions approved jointly by WSHFC and Commerce and day-to-day decisions made by WSHFC. Other funders were kept up to date on major decisions and developments. Having one primary staff person at WSHFC who was able to make all final decisions was another key to our success.

WBARS was released to owners and managers in June 2009 and fully implemented within a year. To date, more than 1,600 properties with more than 90,000 units have successfully reported using the system.

## **Key Features**

Seven public funders have projects in the system including the Commission, Commerce, the city of Seattle, the city of Tacoma, King and Snohomish counties and the city of Spokane. Funders enter their individual contractual requirements by property.

National vendors currently uploading information include Boston Post, Yardi, E-site, Real Page, and Hi Tech Solutions.

WBARS contains four comprehensive annual reports:

- Table 1 – Rent roll with max and actual incomes, rents, subsidies, utilities, set-aside limits and WSHFC special-needs categories. Includes three sets of Income Limits for Tax Credits, HOME and Section 8.
- Table 2 and 3: Demographics – including race, ethnicity, and disability status; HOME report info and other funder special-needs categories.
- Table 4: Property income, expenses, reserves, and performance indicators such as Property Turnover Rate, Occupancy Rate, and Cash Flow.

## **Accomplishments**

WBARS has served thousands of property managers in multiple ways. First of all, paperwork is eliminated. Previous Excel reports ranged from 10 to 20 pages each—and any project with more than one funder also had to send separate reports to each. Now, property managers who have their own software systems can simply upload to WBARS – preventing the need for them to

create and submit a separate report. (Manual entry is also enabled.) WBARS also contributes to asset management by allowing owners and managers to see, at any time, whether they are in compliance with any and all funders in the system. Finally, it meets the most restrictive requirements of each funder and solves any questions on overlap of similar requirements.

For funders, WBARS has greatly improved the accuracy and ease of reporting. It offers a myriad of report functions to satisfy the needs of each funder. In addition, valuable asset-management property information, such as property income, expenses, reserves, debt service and performance indicators, can easily be called up, speeding up financial reviews. The Commission, for example, can easily compile information needed to report annually to HUD by electronically uploading to HUD's system. Staff can also quickly complete administrative reviews of basic compliance on income and rent set-asides, so they can focus on other, more important audit functions.

Funders can also more easily coordinate their efforts, as WBARS greatly reduced what had been countless phone calls and emails to verify and compare information. Finally, WBARS keeps thousands of property contacts (670 organizations with 1,600 contacts) up to date by allowing users to update their own emails, phone and staff members. Formerly, this was a monumental task for funders that required many hours.

### **Next Steps and Replication**

The WBARS model, or elements thereof, could be replicated in any state where funders want to streamline reporting, share information, and assist owners and managers. Several states have contacted us with interest in replication. The Commission has also been approached by another HFA interested in licensing WBARS from us.

Meanwhile, three other cities/counties would like to add their housing projects to WBARS—which would further extend the usefulness and convenience of this powerful tool.