



Entry Form 2018 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

Entry Deadline: Friday, June 15, 2018, Midnight ET

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email awards@ncsha.org.**

Entry Title: Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

Illinois Housing Development Authority's Storytelling Initiative

Category: Communications

Subcategory: Promotional Materials and Newsletters

Entry Summary: A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering. The Storytelling Initiative is a campaign to strengthen IHDA's brand and programs through customer stories.

HFA: Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA)

HFA Staff Contact: Waldon Swenson

Phone: : 312-836-7476

Email: WSwenson@ihda.org

Visual Aids:

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF? Yes No

Payment:

- My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.
- My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to awards@ncsha.org.

Overview

At the Illinois Housing Authority (IHDA) our mission is to finance the creation and preservation of affordable housing in Illinois. To better achieve this mission, we recognized that we needed to create a greater brand awareness of IHDA and the programs we have created in order to reach people in need and provide housing opportunities throughout Illinois. So how do we elevate our brand awareness and achieve this goal? Through the implementation of the Storytelling Initiative.

The overall goal of the Storytelling Initiative is to strengthen IHDA’s Brand by transforming the way we create and deliver information both internally and externally, increasing our network and followership on social media, and driving potential customers to take the proactive steps to reach out to the Authority.

By utilizing a content marketing approach through storytelling, we are able to not only breathe life into our brand, but build trust in our organization and believability in our programs.

Strengthening IHDA’s Brand through Storytelling

How a person feels about IHDA’s brand can often be the deciding factor of whether or not they feel we offer something that can help them with their housing challenge(s). By turning our internal tool-kit (our programs and services) into a narrative book, we are sharing stories and housing solutions people can relate with.

So what makes storytelling effective?

- Stories cut through the clutter.
- Stories connect with authentic human experiences. They’re capable of connecting with us on a level standard marketing campaigns can’t.
- The goal is to make the viewer pay attention to the story, rather than the product. It provides third-party validation to the prospective home-buyer or homeowner that the product or service isn’t too good to be true.
- Storytelling is the oldest form of passing knowledge and many of our opinions are influenced by stories and how we interpret them.



By empowering individuals to share their home story and giving our audience a voice, we engage on an emotional level and find our voice by listening to the voices that exist at the intersection of our brand and our audience.

Illinois Housing Development Authority
Storytelling Initiative
Communications – Promotional Materials and Newsletters

Internal and External Storytelling Content

Messaging should be addressed both internally and externally in order to maximize the effectiveness of our brand through the Storytelling Initiative.

So how do we identify our internal brand through storytelling? We turn to the people who allow IHDA to achieve its mission each and every day—our employees. By opening the door to “who we are” and “what we do” we are accomplishing the following goals:

- Putting the focus back on the “people;” reminding our staff and consumers of the importance of our work and the difference we make for the most vulnerable in Illinois.
- Reinforcing our voice, brand, and mission; putting a “name to a face.”
- Establishing a new way of transferring relevant information.
- Driving Illinoisans to our social pages (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter); ultimately increasing followership and content viewing.
- Allowing potential applicants to see what makes IHDA an appealing workplace; attracting high quality candidates whom align with our employees and our mission.

We began the second part of our Storytelling Initiative on our external brand. Through local outreach, survey generation, and feedback collection, we connected with individuals across the state to learn about the impact of IHDA’s programs.

Our communications team went to the drawing board and launched a filming campaign where we were able to video individuals and families willing to share their IHDA story—ultimately, publishing this content on all IHDA social pages.

While we anticipated a few roadblocks, assuming not all participants would be eager to participate on camera, we were pleasantly surprised to learn these individuals had one thing in common—they wanted to help spread the word about IHDA programs to other residents. These stories don’t scream about the benefits; they subtly illustrate them, allowing other viewers to draw their own conclusions and potentially relate to the subject(s). We wanted the videos to speak for themselves; explaining real life circumstances that could translate to individuals across Illinois.

At the end of the day, storytelling is not about the sell; it’s about resonating with our audience; allowing our consumers to see how our products solve problems. There is no denying, some content needs to be purely information, and storytelling isn’t solely about IHDA, our brand, or our products. It’s about emotions, experiences, needs and the written and unwritten images associated with these emotions and needs, in a relationship that our brand invokes.

Impact

Since the launch of our Storytelling Initiative, we have increased our brand footprint by growing engagement in each of our social media channels. In the last 60 days, we have seen an increase the following:

Followership

- Facebook followers have grown more than 5%

**Illinois Housing Development Authority
Storytelling Initiative
Communications – Promotional Materials and Newsletters**

- Twitter followers have grown more than 3%
- LinkedIn followers have grown more than 5%
- Instagram followers have grown more than 30%
- YouTube followers have grown more than 6%

Page Viewings & Time Watched on YouTube

- 2,952 video views
- 5,733 minutes of time watched

Job Applications

- 29% of job applicants directly referenced watching the IHDA Culture video prior to applying

These increases show that people are now actively seeking out IHDA stories and job opportunities as the content is both entertaining and informative. Through the Storytelling Initiative, viewers are responding to the positive impact of our organization and following us in order to learn more about the various opportunities that we provide.

Specifically in the first two months since starting the Storytelling Initiative, we experienced a 25% lift in Illinois Hardest Hit Program applications; social media program referrals have been a main driver in early results.

Homeowners George Mulcahy and Taliah Carter shared feedback about HHF through direct posts on Facebook—

“HHF is real! They also have grants that help with down payment and closing costs. You have to stay in your house for 5 years and the grant is over.”—George Mulcahy

“I'm a living testimony to this program (HHF), I THANK GOD.” – Taliah Carter

Not only are we building trust in our organization and believability in our programs through Storytelling videos, but with the help of direct posts from our customers, viewers are able to see organic feedback.

Future of Storytelling & Transferability

Storytelling is here to stay at IHDA. Since the launch of this campaign we have had overwhelming positive feedback from both our internal and external audience.

In addition to positive feedback, we have felt a greater sense of community developing within our workplace. IHDA staff members are not only eager to participate and watch our videos, but they are also thinking outside the box for future storytelling opportunities to enhance our brand and footprint across Illinois.

The concept of storytelling can be replicated well beyond the borders of IHDA. Undertaking a transformative shift in the way we market both internally and externally definitely has its challenges, but the Storytelling Initiative's rollout and success is not just unique to IHDA. If the usage of digital content to promote programs and services is sustainable and successful at IHDA, it can be replicated at other HFA's alike.

Illinois Housing Development Authority
Storytelling Initiative
Communications – Promotional Materials and Newsletters



Hope Manor Joliet - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NY8VUjvbmHU>

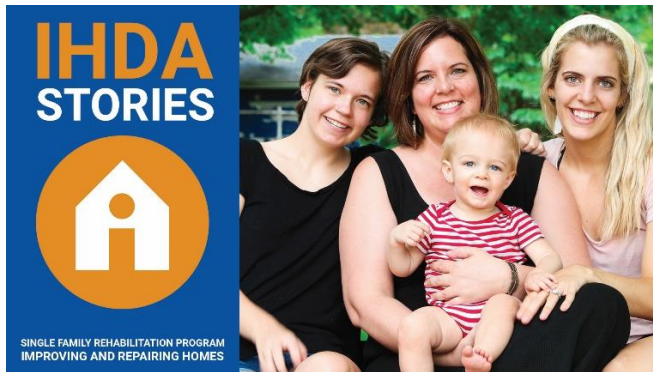


IHDA Culture - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqeqQFZ1FSI>



IHDA Welcome New Hires - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhzLluKJk48&feature=youtu.be>

Illinois Housing Development Authority
Storytelling Initiative
Communications – Promotional Materials and Newsletters



IHDA Single Family Rehabilitation Program - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXrUtgGY1a4>