



## 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](mailto: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.

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**Category:**

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**Subcategory:**

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**Entry Summary:** A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

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**HFA:**

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**HFA Staff Contact:**

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**Phone:**

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**Email:**

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**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](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).

**MassHousing**  
**MassHousing's 2017 Annual Report: Housing for a New Era**  
**Communications / Annual Reports Category**

**Situational Analysis**

MassHousing is the affordable housing bank of Massachusetts. The Agency has a public mission to lend money to support rental and homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents of the Commonwealth.

Since MassHousing's creation in 1966 by the Massachusetts Legislature, it has provided more than \$22 billion in financing for the production and preservation of affordable rental housing and home mortgage loans – all while being self-funded and not using taxpayer dollars.

During fiscal year 2017, the Agency was still under new senior leadership (a new CEO, Tim Sullivan, having been named in January 2016). MassHousing had been working to reinforce its reputation as a thought leader in housing. Senior management took a strong interest in making sure our 2017 Annual Report reflected this objective.

Rather than list the Agency's annual accomplishments by business lines and divisions as was done in past reports, the Marketing team was tasked with reimagining a new structure and concept for the report.

Additionally, senior leadership indicated the publication date needed to be moved up to October 31 from its previous years' publication date of January 1. Their thought was that once the calendar year had passed, the report would seem less relevant.

Lastly, we needed to engage and inspire Agency staff, even if we couldn't catalogue or represent all the work across all departments completed during the previous fiscal year.

**Statement of Objectives**

The Annual Report is an opportunity to catalog and communicate MassHousing's commitment to its mission: confronting the housing challenges facing Massachusetts. It highlights the Agency's accomplishments with its customers, business partners - both non-profit and for profit - stakeholders, policymakers, government officials and the people we serve across the Commonwealth.

It is also an important publication to share internally with Agency staff to vividly chronicle what was collectively achieved over the past fiscal year.

We wanted a concept that would underscore the Agency's thought leadership about current housing issues with a stepped-up deadline, while still producing a publication that was informative and inspiring, both for external and internal audiences.

### **Program Planning and Strategy**

The Executive leadership team placed a high value on collaboration and input from senior management. As such we developed a highly interactive work plan in which we:

- Engaged the entire senior leadership team in the concept development and ideas.
- Presented four concepts for senior leadership to consider.
- Developed a new structure for the report based on the selected concept, "Housing for a New Era," which presented a series of "new era" housing challenges that the Agency was confronting – challenges that may not have existed a decade ago. This approach drew a direct line between the Agency's day-to-day work and real-world issues to reinforce our reputation as a thought leader and creative problem solver.

In addition:

- Our accomplishments for the year were aligned with real-world issues rather than organized by our internal Agency structure.
- We decided to incorporate an Agency photo of all 350 staff members, which had not been done before.
- We limited each topic or "new era challenge" to a one-page spread to give a rhythm to the report.
- We organized each spread with a strongly crafted headline, succinct body copy, four large numbers with corresponding icons and short blurbs of MassHousing's achievements across business lines.

We thought deliberately about imagery, since so many readers of annual reports skim the book rather than read every word:

- Imagery for each spread was carefully chosen and layered to generate visual motion – connoting the energy that is behind the Agency's work and the fast pace of its "new era."
- Icons were used to give the reader a quick visual indication of what each fact/blurb was about without much effort.
- The cover image was selected for its motion, striking nature and relevance to MassHousing's efforts in Gateway Cities (small to mid-size cities that are working to rebound economically).
- We sourced images from low-cost stock photography sites, from photos taken by MassHousing staff, and from professional photos we commissioned. This kept our costs down and accommodated our deadline.

Because the deadline for publication had been shortened we:

- Devised a new, more efficient way of collaborating to meet the deadline – the Marketing team members worked together in "sprints," generating content, tone and visuals simultaneously.

- Made sure the report was substantial in size without being cumbersome.
- Conceptualized, designed and proofread the entire report in-house, saving expense and giving more control over the deadline and number of edits.
- Elected to design the report as a printed piece as opposed to a digital-only format to give more flexibility and longer shelf life. This way we could publish and post digitally, but have a current and comprehensive handout for in-person events.

Lastly, as we prepared to print and distribute the report, we:

- Gave careful attention to print quality, including using a “soft touch” coating on the cover that is very tactile and appealing.
- Enlarged our reach by publishing the report online using free digital publishing software called Youblisher. We posted the report on our websites both internally and externally, promoted it in MassHousing's e-newsletter and on social media.
- Performed a very thorough procurement and bidding process with three different vendors, ensuring we received the best possible price.

### **Results Documentation**

While it is hard to quantify the results of an annual report, MassHousing's was well received. We met the shorter deadline for production. We experienced a lot of positive feedback from business partners and industry peers.

We emailed the report to more than 1,000 constituents digitally via MassHousing's e-newsletter and to 1,100 stakeholders through direct mail.

The Agency's social media sites, including, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, generated 6,378 unpaid impressions and garnered 94 post engagements.

The report was also well received by Agency staff and senior leadership. Many were excited by and felt valued because of being pictured in the publication, and they went out of their way to say so.

Senior leadership cited the report at several Agency-wide meetings.

The report continues to be handed out at external meetings and used as a marketing piece, demonstrating the value of producing a printed copy in addition to digital publication.