



CALL FOR ENTRIES

ENTRY DEADLINE: APRIL 30, 2021, 11:59 P.M. ET

2021 AWARDS FOR PROGRAM EXCELLENCE

NCSHA's Annual Awards for Program Excellence honor member state Housing Finance Agencies for their outstanding public purpose programs and practices. The mission of this prestigious program is to recognize exemplary HFA efforts, facilitate information sharing among HFAs, identify industry best practices, and encourage innovation.

HFAs are encouraged to enter their COVID-19 response programs/practices and efforts to expand housing opportunity for households and communities of color and other historically underserved groups. (If your COVID-19 program does not fit in an established subcategory, you may enter it in the COVID-19 Response subcategory under Special Achievement.)

Winners will be announced and awards presented during NCSHA's 2021 Annual Conference & Showplace in Detroit September 25 – 28. All entries will be posted on ncsha.org/awards.

■ WHY ENTER?

- To share your HFA's successful programs and practices with member HFAs nationwide to advance the industry
- To communicate your program design and implementation experiences for the benefit of your peers
- To benchmark your results with those of HFAs around the country
- To establish your team as innovators in the affordable housing community
- To recognize your employees' hard work

In addition, member HFAs may be invited to present on their entries during breakout sessions at NCSHA's 2021 Annual Conference & Showplace.

Winning HFAs will receive recognition:

- during the Awards presentation at the Annual Conference
- on the NCSHA website
- in announcements to NCSHA's members and partners
- in a press release sent to industry media

Award recipients also will receive:

- an attractive award to display in their offices
- the opportunity to have a complimentary professional photo taken during the Annual Conference for use in promoting their achievement

2021 Entry Deadline: Friday, April 30, 11:59 p.m.

Not certain in which subcategory your entry belongs?
Contact awards@ncsha.org for assistance.

■ AWARD CATEGORIES

NCSHA is accepting entries in the following seven categories. Refer to pages 6 – 9 for subcategory definitions and judging criteria.

1. Communications

- Annual Report
- Integrated Campaign
- Special Event Marketing

2. Homeownership

- Empowering New Buyers
- Encouraging New Construction
- Home Improvement and Rehabilitation

3. Legislative Advocacy

- Federal Advocacy
- State Advocacy

4. Management Innovation

- Financial
- Human Resources
- Internal Operations
- Technology

5. Rental Housing

- Encouraging New Construction
- Multifamily Management
- Preservation and Rehabilitation

6. Special Achievement

- COVID-19 Response
- Special Achievement

7. Special Needs Housing

- Combating Homelessness
- Housing for Persons with Special Needs

■ ELIGIBILITY

- All HFA members of NCSHA are eligible to enter the Awards for Program Excellence.
- Entries may include new programs and practices or qualitative improvements to existing programs and practices in all subcategories.
- Programs or practices must have been undertaken and/or operational between May 1, 2020, and April 30, 2021.
- An HFA may not submit an entry in a subcategory in which they won an award the previous year. For reference, the list of 2020 winners is available at ncsha.org/awards.
- An HFA may submit only one entry in each subcategory.
- An HFA may not submit the same entry in more than one subcategory.

Any entry that does not meet the eligibility criteria or entry deadline, or does not follow submission guidelines, will be disqualified.

■ JUDGING

Judges are chosen by NCSHA based on relevant expertise, experience, and impartiality.

Executive directors are encouraged to participate as judges for the subcategories in which their HFAs won the previous year; they may designate senior staff members to represent them, if necessary.

One HFA may be recognized per subcategory. Upon the recommendation of the judges, NCSHA reserves the right to name two award recipients in a subcategory if the judges determine the entries are equally meritorious. Based on the recommendation of the judges, NCSHA reserves the right not to name an award recipient in a subcategory.

■ ENTRY DEADLINE

Each entry must be submitted as a **single PDF** via NCSHA's Awards Submission Portal by **11:59 p.m. ET on Friday, April 30, 2021**. You will complete the entry form within the portal prior to uploading your entry.

Upon successful upload of your entry to the Awards Submission Portal, you will receive an automated confirmation email. If you do not receive an email, please contact NCSHA at awards@ncsha.org.

As the judging will be conducted virtually, all visual aids must be submitted as part of the PDF. Please do not mail or ship visual aids to NCSHA.

■ ENTRY FEE

The entry fee is \$35 per entry.

To pay by credit card, download the [Credit Card Authorization Form](#) at ncsha.org/awards, complete the form, and email it to awards@ncsha.org by the April 30, 2021, entry deadline.

Please make your check payable to NCSHA and mail it to:

NCSHA 2021 Annual Awards
444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 438
Washington, DC 20001

Checks must be postmarked by the April 30, 2021, entry deadline.

If you need to make a payment after April 30, please contact awards@ncsha.org or call 202-624-8469.

■ SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND RULES

**Submit all entries via NCSHA's Awards Submission Portal
by 11:59 p.m. ET on Friday, April 30, 2021.**

Once in the portal, you may save your submission(s) and return later to work on incomplete submissions, edit submitted entries, or submit additional entries until the April 30 deadline.

Submitting an Entry

Step 1. Create a New or Log into Your 2020 Portal Account: Go to <https://app.reviewr.com/s1/site/NCSHA Awards2021> to create a new account or to log into the account you created for the 2020 Awards program. (Forgot your password? You can reset it directly from the portal.)

Step 2. Follow the Submission Process: Once you have created your account, complete the online entry form, pressing **Save and Advance** at the end of each section.

A. HFA CONTACT INFORMATION

Provide the name, email, and phone number of the person at your HFA whom NCSHA should contact with any questions about this entry. The contact must be an HFA employee.

B. ENTRY TITLE/CATEGORY/SUMMARY

Entry Title: Enter the title of your entry exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the Awards Program.

Category and Subcategory: Select the category **and subcategory** you are entering.

Note if your entry is a **new** program or practice or a **qualitative improvement** to an existing program or practice.

Entry Summary: Provide a 500-character (maximum) summary of the program or practice you are entering; **this summary will be posted on NCSHA's website to describe your entry to viewers.**

C. ENTRY FILE UPLOAD

Upload each entry as a **single PDF** that includes a **three-page (maximum) description** of your HFA's program or practice and any **supporting visual aids** (optional).

Entry Description: Explain how your HFA's program or practice fulfills each of the category's judging criteria. Follow this format when developing your entry description:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Length | Not to exceed three single-spaced, typed pages with one-inch margins; text only* |
| Font | Minimum 11-point font size |
| Header | The header on each page of the entry description must include the following information: <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. HFA Nameii. Entry Titleiii. Entry Category and Subcategory |

**Images/graphics that support your narrative are encouraged. However, because of the three-page limit, we recommend including them in a Visual Aids section behind the entry description.*

Visual Aids: Photos, publications, weblinks, etc. are encouraged but not required. Some subcategories lend themselves to visual aids (e.g., Communications: Annual Report), while others may not.

Place any visual aids behind your entry description in the PDF; visual aids cannot be uploaded as separate PDFs.

Note: Entries become the property of NCSHA and will not be returned.

D. PAYMENT

Indicate whether your HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA or emailing the [Credit Card Authorization Form](#) to awards@ncsha.org. That form can be download at ncsha.org/awards.

Step 3. Confirmation: After you press **Submit**, you should be directed to a confirmation screen and receive an email confirming successful submission of your entry.

Submitting Additional Entries

To submit another entry, press the **Submit Another Entry** button on the confirmation screen (followed by **Back to Listings** and **Add Another Submission**) or in the left-hand navigation of your account screen.

Editing Your Entries

To edit your submitted entries:

1. Log in to the Awards Submission Portal using the same credentials used to submit your entry.
2. Click **My Submissions** in the left-hand navigation.
3. Find the entry you wish to edit and click **View**.
4. Click the second blue **Edit** button on the right side of the page.
5. Scroll through and make your revisions.
6. Click **Save & Logout** or **Submit** to save your revisions.

■ CATEGORY AND SUBCATEGORY DEFINITIONS | JUDGING CRITERIA

Communications Category

New — as well as qualitative improvements to existing — programs and practices are eligible for entry in these three subcategories.

1. Annual Report

Recognizes an annual report that most effectively communicates an HFA’s achievements and mission.

2. Integrated Campaign

A comprehensive, multi-channel campaign that takes place over an extended period of time to promote a specific HFA message, program, or project. The campaign will include a combination of tactics and channels (e.g., print, digital, social, multimedia).

3. Special Event Marketing

A campaign designed to promote an HFA event, including but not limited to an anniversary, groundbreaking, dedication, or conference.

Judging Criteria

Entries in the Communications category will be judged on the degree to which they:

- Are innovative
- Are replicable
- Engage targeted audiences
- Achieve measurable results
- Provide benefits that outweigh costs
- Demonstrate effective use of resources
- Achieve strategic objectives

Homeownership Category

New — as well as qualitative improvements to existing — programs and practices are eligible for entry in these three subcategories. In each subcategory, entries that describe agency efforts to expand homeownership for households and communities of color and other historically underserved groups are especially encouraged.

1. Empowering New Buyers

Recognizes programs that best provide homeownership financing to HFA targeted customers.

2. Encouraging New Construction

Recognizes programs that best encourage the new construction of affordable ownership housing.

3. Home Improvement and Rehabilitation

Recognizes programs that best provide home improvement and rehabilitation financing to HFA targeted customers.

Judging Criteria

Entries in the Homeownership category will be judged on the degree to which they:

- Are innovative
- Are replicable
- Respond to an important state housing need
- Use data, research, and analysis to demonstrate measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers and underserved markets
- Have a proven track record of success in the marketplace
- Provide benefits that outweigh costs
- Demonstrate effective use of resources
- Effectively employ partnerships
- Achieve strategic objectives

Legislative Advocacy Category

New — as well as qualitative improvements to existing — programs and practices are eligible for entry in these two subcategories.

1. Federal Advocacy

Recognizes agencies demonstrating the most efficient, effective, and creative use of resources to achieve federal legislative objectives.

2. State Advocacy

Recognizes agencies demonstrating the most efficient, effective, and creative use of resources to achieve state legislative objectives.

Judging Criteria

Entries in the Legislative Advocacy category will be judged on the degree to which they:

- Advance the overall mission of the agency
- Are innovative
- Are replicable
- Demonstrate coalition building
- Forge effective relationships with state and/or federal legislators
- Achieve strategic objectives
- Anticipate, identify, and prioritize legislative issues
- Reach target audiences
- Employ analytical skills to anticipate and identify the potential ramifications of issues
- Provide benefits that outweigh costs
- Demonstrate effective use of resources

Management Innovation Category

New — as well as qualitative improvements to existing — programs and practices are eligible for entry in these four subcategories.

1. Financial

Recognizes outstanding innovation in financial management to strengthen agency operations and achieve strategic objectives.

2. Human Resources

Recognizes outstanding innovation in human resources management to strengthen agency operations and achieve strategic objectives.

3. Internal Operations

Recognizes outstanding innovation in internal operations management to strengthen agency operations and achieve strategic objectives.

4. Technology

Recognizes outstanding innovation in the use of technology to strengthen agency operations and achieve strategic objectives.

Judging Criteria

Entries in the Management Innovation category will be judged on the degree to which they:

- Are innovative
- Are replicable
- Respond to a management challenge or opportunity
- Achieve measurable improvements in agency operations
- Provide benefits that outweigh costs
- Demonstrate effective use of resources
- Achieve strategic objectives

Rental Housing Category

New — as well as qualitative improvements to existing — programs and practices are eligible for entry in these three subcategories. In each subcategory, entries that describe agency efforts to expand housing opportunity for households and communities of color and other historically underserved groups are especially encouraged.

Note: Individual developments are not eligible for an award.

1. Encouraging New Construction

Recognizes programs that best support the new construction of affordable rental housing.

2. Multifamily Management

Recognizes outstanding innovation in asset management or compliance monitoring practices in affordable rental housing.

3. Preservation and Rehabilitation

Recognizes programs that best preserve or rehabilitate affordable rental housing.

Judging Criteria

Entries in the Rental Housing category will be judged on the degree to which they:

- Are innovative
- Are replicable
- Respond to an important state housing need
- Demonstrate measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers
- Have a proven track record of success in the marketplace
- Provide benefits that outweigh costs
- Demonstrate effective use of resources
- Effectively employ partnerships
- Achieve strategic objectives

Special Achievement Category

New — as well as qualitative improvements to existing — programs and practices are eligible in these two subcategories.

Note: Individual developments are not eligible for an award.

1. COVID-19 Response

Recognizes new programs and practices developed specifically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as emergency renter and homeowner assistance or agency remote work measures. COVID-19 responses that reflect revisions or expansions of pre-existing efforts are encouraged in any other Awards category.

2. Special Achievement

Recognizes HFA programs and practices that respond in an outstanding manner to an important state need; have a significant impact on a population, geographic area, or economy; and cut across traditional program lines.

Judging Criteria

Entries in the Special Achievement category will be judged on the degree to which they:

- Are innovative
- Respond to an important state need
- Achieve intended results
- Provide benefits that outweigh costs

Special Needs Housing Category

New — as well as qualitative improvements to existing — programs and practices are eligible for entry in these two subcategories.

Note: Individual developments are not eligible for an award.

1. Combating Homelessness

Recognizes programs that best provide affordable housing and services for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

2. Housing for Persons with Special Needs

Recognizes programs, other than those focused primarily on combating homelessness, that best provide affordable housing and services for persons with special needs.

Judging Criteria

Entries in the Special Needs Housing category will be judged on the degree to which they:

- Are innovative
- Are replicable
- Respond to an important state housing need
- Demonstrate measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers
- Have a proven track record of success in the marketplace
- Provide benefits that outweigh costs
- Demonstrate effective use of resources
- Effectively employ partnerships
- Achieve strategic objectives

Entry Preparation Checklist

- Review the subcategory definitions to determine which you want to enter.
- Review the judging criteria for each category you are entering and write your entry description to respond to those criteria.
- Prepare your entry following the directions under “Submission Guidelines and Rules” in this Call for Entries.
- Submit your entry by **11:59 p.m. ET on April 30, 2021**, via NCSHA's [Awards Submission Portal](https://ncsha.org/awards) at ncsha.org/awards.
- Send your entry fee to NCSHA by April 30, 2021.