

# **Tips on Preparing Entries for the Awards for Program Excellence**



# Agenda

- Panel Discussion
- Categories & Subcategories
- Entries
- Entry Process
- Submission Portal
- Online Entry Payment
- Q&A

# Panel

- **LeiLani Barney**  
Assistant Director of Strategic  
Communications | Oregon Housing and  
Community Services
- **Nathan Hall**  
Senior Account Administrator,  
Communications and Marketing Services  
| Kentucky Housing Corporation

# Categories | Subcategories

## ① Advocacy

## ② Communications

- Annual Report
- Integrated Campaign
- Special Event Marketing

## ③ Homeownership

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

## ④ Management Innovation

- Human Resources
- Internal Operations
- Technology

## ⑤ Rental Housing

- Encouraging New Construction and Promoting Preservation
- Supporting Property Management and Renter Needs

## ⑥ Special Achievement

## ⑦ Special Needs Housing

- Combating Homelessness
- Housing for Persons with Special Needs

# Subcategory Descriptions

Help you determine where your program or practice fits.

## Homeownership Category

### 1. Empowering New Buyers

Recognizes an HFA for a new or enhanced program that best provides homeownership financing to HFA targeted customers.

### 2. Encouraging New Construction

Recognizes an HFA for a new or enhanced program that best encourages the new construction of affordable ownership housing.

### 3. Home Improvement and Rehabilitation

Recognizes an HFA for a new or enhanced program that best provides 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

# Judging Criteria

Entries are evaluated on the degree to which they meet these criteria.

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## How many entries can an HFA submit?

The answer is 15: One entry in each subcategory.

HFAs are encouraged to enter any subcategory including any you won the previous year.

The entry must meet the eligibility criteria for the category in which it's entered.

What does  
a winning entry  
look like?

## 2025 Winner

### Illinois Housing Development Authority



### Washington State Housing Finance Commission



## 2025 Entries

### Arizona Department of Housing:

#### Arizona is Home Mortgage Assistance Program

Owning a home has always been an integral part of the American Dream. Arizona made that dream a reality for many in 2024, and increased homeownership across the state, with a new mortgage assistance program for first-time homebuyers called 'Arizona is Home.'

### Colorado Housing and Finance Authority:

#### CHFA FirstGeneration

In 2024, CHFA launched a program to support first generation Colorado homebuyers, defined as those who have not previously owned a home and whose parents or guardians were not

## Annual Awards

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- Human Resources
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- Special Achievement

### Special Needs Housing

- Combating Homelessness
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# Examples: Writing to the Judging Criteria

California: [Dream For All Shared Appreciation Loan Portal](#)

Minnesota: [Contributing to Housing for the Mission \(and a Tax Credit\)](#)

New Jersey: [Flipping the Fate of Foreclosures Through the Foreclosure Intervention Pilot Program](#)

# What is the selection process?





National Council of State Housing Agencies

ANNUAL AWARDS  
FOR  
PROGRAM EXCELLENCE



# ANNUAL CONFERENCE • NEW & SHOWPLACE • ORLEANS



# Entry Preparation Checklist

- Review the category and subcategory descriptions to determine where your program or practice fits.
- Review the category's judging criteria and write your entry description to respond to those criteria.
- Prepare your entry following the directions under "Submission Guidelines and Rules" in the Call for Entries.
- Submit your entry by **11:59 pm ET on April 1** via NCSHA's Awards Submission Portal.

# Submission Guidelines & Rules

- Follow the directions on pages 4 and 5 of the Call for Entries.
- Prepare the **entry description** outside of the Awards Submission Portal.
- Include supporting **visual aids** if appropriate (optional!).
- When completed, combine your entry description and visual aids into **a single PDF**.
- In the Awards Submission Portal, complete **entry form** and upload the corresponding entry PDF when prompted.

# Entry Description



This is your explanation of how your HFA's program or practice fulfills each of the category's judging criteria.



**TIP:** Write to the judging criteria.

# Entry Description: Format

**Length** Not to exceed three single-spaced, “typed” pages with one-inch margins

Text only — include any visual aids after page 3

**Font** Minimum 11-point font

# Entry Description: Header

On every page include:

- a. HFA Name
- b. Entry Title
- c. Entry Category & Subcategory

# Visual Aids

- Put all visual aids AFTER page 3 of the entry description — devote those first three pages to describing how your entry meets the judging criteria.
- Include photos, graphs, charts, etc. to help the jurors better understand your program or practice.

# Entry Form

The entry form is completed online in the Awards Submission Portal. Among the information you will be asked to provide:

- **Entry Title:** Enter the title of your entry exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the press release. No need to include the HFA's name in the title.
- **Category and Subcategory:** Not sure where your entry best fits? Call NCSHA for assistance.
- **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 with your entry.



## Entry Summary

This is the elevator  
speech for your entry.

# Entry Summary Example

## **Kentucky Housing Corporation: Rebuilding Western Kentucky: Historic Housing Recovery Initiative**

In the wake of devastating tornadoes that swept through Western Kentucky in December 2021, communities were left devastated, with countless families displaced and homes and businesses leveled. What followed was not just a recovery effort, but a transformative initiative from The Department of Local Government (DLG), Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC), and the Commonwealth of Kentucky that would become the single largest housing development undertaking in the history of Kentucky.



# Entry Summary Example

## **Minnesota Housing: Contributing for the Mission (And a Tax Credit)**

Minnesota's State Housing Tax Credit and Contribution Fund gives individuals and businesses a way to contribute their own funds to rental and homeownership developments of their choice and receive an 85% tax credit in return. The contribution program has grown in popularity after three years in operation, raising over \$30 million in contributions and fully meeting the program's cap of \$11.6 million in contributions in 2024 and 2025.



# Entry Deadline

**Wednesday, April 1, 11:59 pm ET**

- You will receive an automated email confirmation of the successful upload of your entry. **Contact NCSHA if you do not receive that email.**
- You may return to the portal to edit your entries any time up until the deadline.
- NCSHA staff will review each entry for completion and will contact you with any questions.

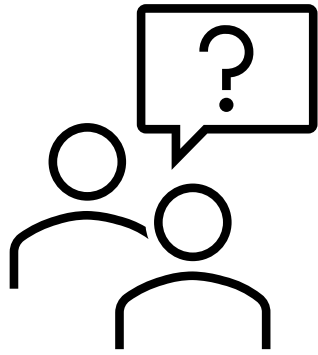


# Submission Portal



# Online Entry Payment





# Questions?

[ncsha.org/awards](https://ncsha.org/awards)



Need  
Help?

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

or

202-624-8469

