

Southeastern States Housing Conference

**Georgia Department of Community Affairs/Georgia Housing and
Finance Authority**

Communications: Special Event Marketing

HFA Staff Contact

Davia Rose Lassiter

communications@dca.ga.gov

NCSHA Awards Submission

Category: Special Event

Title: Southeastern States Housing Conference

Summary (Full):

The Office of Portfolio Management (OPM) at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has long ensured statewide compliance with requirements of many state and federally mandated restrictions. OPM tracks the overall fiscal and physical condition of the affordable multifamily housing in DCA's portfolio. The Asset Management team reviews and recommends actions regarding Requests for Project Concept Changes, Preliminary Eligibility and Final approval for Qualified Contracts, and reviews and assesses property financial audits. They also process requests for disbursements from various reserve accounts related to properties in our portfolio and work closely with our loan servicing team.

Following the 2018 Southeastern States Housing Conference, the DCA OPM Team was slated to host the 2019 event in Georgia. This conference allows for housing professionals from across the country to come together and workshop new and improved ideas and best practices surrounding affordable housing opportunities. The decision was made to provide an experience than had ever been offered by any other state who had hosted this event. Attendees had the opportunity to connect with industry powerhouses up close and personal, dive deep into the important topics in our industry, enjoy unique opportunities for fun with discounted rates to popular Atlanta attractions, and participate in roundtable discussions throughout the conference. Dare we say that this not only stepped up to the challenge but propelled this annual event into the future of affordable housing. Join us on a journey "Back to the Future!"

Theme / Branding

When members of the OPM team met with DCA's Marketing and Communications Team (MarCom) back in January of 2019, the plan was already to go where the Southeastern State Housing Conference had never been before. They wanted fresh and new ideas that would not only meet the training needs of their attendees but would also excite and equip them to return to their states ready to move the needle of affordable housing. They wanted the event to focus on INNOVATION...and the idea of a "Back to the Future" themed event was born.

From the [first announcement](#), the DCA MarCom Team took the theme and ran with it. Color schemes, signage, swag, [blog posts](#), email blasts, etc. were created and used to promote and brand the event. You can view the many creative collateral items [here](#).

Links to the emails and the schedule are as follows:

July 17, 2019	SE States Housing Conference
July 31, 2019	Housing Innovation in Atlanta
August 9, 2019	Conference Tips, Tools and Surprises
August 29, 2019	Conference Speaker Spotlight
September 11, 2019	Speaker Spotlight: HFA Roundtable
September 16, 2019	Speaker Spotlight: HFA Roundtable
September 30, 2019	Thank you for Innovating with Us!

The [welcome video](#) was a crowd favorite, and attendees commented on how innovation was evident from the very kick-off of the conference.

Mobile Event App

The [DCA Mobile Event App](#) made its debut during the 2019 Southeastern States Housing Conference. It was a useful tool that kept all conference information in one place: conference agenda, personalized attendee calendars, venue maps, speaker/presenter bios, surveys, audience participation platforms, etc.

The DCA Marketing and Communications (MarCom) Team set up an app resource table where personal assistance was provided to attendees. Whether it was help with finding and downloading the app, or a quick app usage tutorial, the MarCom Team provided the necessary assistance.

Location

The venue chosen for this event was intentional, as the [Embassy Suites Atlanta Centennial Olympic Park Hotel](#) is located in a very central part of the city. The hotel sits near multiple public transit stops and is walking distance to a variety of restaurants. There were ample activities and museums within walking distance that allowed DCA staff to showcase the vibrant and diverse adventures that Atlanta has to offer to its out-of-town guests. To encourage exploration, an optional activities list including personalized discount codes was included in the attendee packet.

Due to the event venue's ideal location, attendees were able to hop on the Atlanta Streetcar and visit [The Awethu House](#). This mobile tour allowed participants to see firsthand what Georgia is doing to provide more affordable housing opportunities.

Speakers

With the integration of technology, speakers shared updates about housing policies, discussed what various states were doing to provide housing solutions, and more.

Jennifer Schwartz, Director of Tax and Housing Advocacy for National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA), delivered the opening address by defining what innovation is and how it relates to the NCSHA legislative direction. She also talked about the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act of 2019 (AHCIA) and how the new and improved legislation will help address affordable housing throughout the country.

Meaghan Shannon-Vlkovic, Enterprise Community Partners VP and Market Leader, led a panel discussion about innovative deals. She introduced information about how various regions are solving multiple housing issues. Representatives from various states discussed their previous and current priorities such as revamping residential spaces to accommodate housing for families, building in rural areas, and incorporating choice neighborhoods to name a few.

DCA staff members were also among the list of those who presented.

Attendee Participation

This event allowed for complete attendee participation. The goal was to create an opportunity for attendees from each state to display their innovation. Attendees participated in surveys prior to, during, and after the event and presented ideas for solutions in a non-competitive environment. This was met with extremely positive feedback.

Attendees were also offered the opportunity to participate in roundtable discussions and a "Table Topics" session. Throughout these periods, they shared their experiences, results on various projects, and exchanged tips for developing more homes to accommodate community needs.

Summary

Overall, the [79 attendees](#) and DCA Staff who attended and participated in the 2019 Southeastern States Housing Conference came away with new ideas and innovative ways to create more affordable housing options and continue portfolio management innovation. We do not yet know which state will be hosting the 2020 event, but we do know they have some big shoes to fill.