

# Marketing "Avenues for Hope"

**Idaho Housing and Finance Association**

Communications: Special Event Marketing

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## Marketing “Avenues for Hope”

In 2020, Idaho Housing and Finance Association’s nonprofit entity, the Home Partnership Foundation, organized its tenth-annual [Avenues for Hope Housing Challenge](#). Avenues for Hope is a three-week-long, online campaign fueled by the power of social media and collaboration. Created in 2011 to enhance resources for housing nonprofits and services throughout Idaho, Avenues for Hope has blossomed into a significant fundraising event upon which dozens of Idaho nonprofits rely for unrestricted operating dollars. In its first year, Avenues for Hope helped raise \$46,000 for 27 organizations. In 2020, it raised nearly \$2.6 million for 78 organizations.

### Innovation

Through the Avenues for Hope Housing Challenge, IHFA enlists partners statewide to contribute to a coordinated, efficient, and intentional homelessness response. The effort builds philanthropic networks that organizations would struggle to create on their own, enhancing resources for nonprofit service providers with housing-related missions throughout Idaho.

In addition to being a traditional giving campaign, Avenues for Hope offers valuable [financial incentives](#) (prizes and matching funds) to stimulate philanthropic giving, which is an innovative and game-changing step to building broader community support. Avenues for Hope also strategically involves its corporate partners, which include financial institutions, the real estate industry, and local businesses: partners support the prize pool with matching funds, push out information about the event on their social media, and encourage their employees to donate and promote the campaign.

IHFA also provides extensive resources to nonprofits to make taking part in Avenues for Hope as simple as possible. Resources include [training](#) on peer-to-peer fundraising and [tools](#) and tips for building donor engagement and board support and involvement. IHFA also provides branded Avenues for Hope [logos](#) and [social media tools](#), as well as [printable materials](#), including flyers and “thank you” cards.

### Replicability

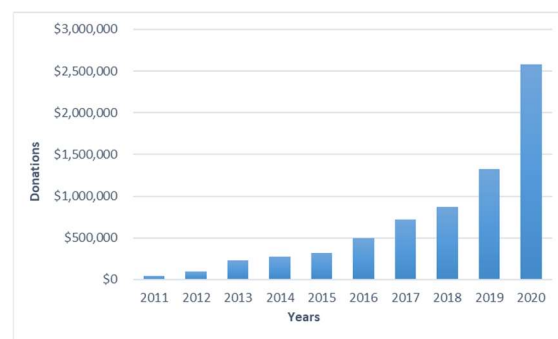
“Giving days” are becoming very popular as nonprofits seek innovative ways to increase their funding. The methods and tools that have made Avenues for Hope increasingly successful over the past decade are highly replicable. IHFA invested in a software service provider to create a dedicated website for the Avenues for Hope Housing Challenge. The technology behind Avenues for Hope allows each participating nonprofit to track donations, matching funds, and prizes on a real-time [leaderboard](#), as well as to have a uniquely branded, secure donation site for its organization. Donations are deposited directly into nonprofits’ bank accounts so they can be put to immediate use. The online fundraising platform can be customized by any organization, and IHFA’s branding, training, toolkit, and additional materials can serve as models for other campaigns. With minimal campaign costs (see ‘Benefits Outweigh Costs’), HFAs are appropriately positioned to leverage their net revenue to stimulate additional giving from their partners (banks, realtors, lenders, title companies, and more) and fundraising through each state’s non-profit network.

### Engage targeted audiences

Avenues for Hope uses a number of different channels to engage targeted audiences. It provides nonprofit participants with a powerful software platform, [social media tools](#), [advertising materials](#), [video promotions](#), and features. In 2020, IHFA co-sponsored social media ads with participating nonprofits (IHFA paid for the ads and tagged nonprofits so they received added exposure) and carefully monitored the ads in order to refine them (locations, demographics, wording, graphics, etc.) based on the results. All of these tools helped drive the 2020 event to new heights, with a record number of donations made through Facebook, highlighting the effectiveness of peer-to-peer fundraising. Sponsors also played a key role in engaging target audiences, pushing out the campaign on their social media and in communications to employees.

### Achieve Measurable Results

Since its inception in 2011, the Avenues for Hope Housing Challenge has raised nearly \$7 million. From a modest start, raising \$46,000 in 2011, it has grown quickly, increasing community donations, corporate sponsorships, and nonprofit beneficiaries. In 2019, the campaign topped the \$1 million mark for the first time, raising \$1.3 million. And in 2020, its tenth year, the campaign far surpassed its goal of \$1.5 million—and nearly doubled the amount raised in 2019—with a total of just under \$2.6 million disbursed to 78 organizations. In 2020, those organizations reported that collectively they serve more than 80,000 people annually throughout Idaho.



For a state with small federal awards and no state-level funding, Avenues for Hope’s results are making a long and lasting impact. In fact, IHFA believes 2021 results will begin nearing the point where Avenues for Hope raises as much money as the state receives in federal funding for homelessness.

### Benefits Outweigh Costs and Effectively Use Resources

Occurring every December, the Avenues for Hope campaign was designed to take advantage of the trend of giving online late in the year.<sup>1</sup> The event is made possible by the involvement of many partners: the nonprofits themselves, corporate sponsors, community leaders, local media, the technology vendor, and thousands of donors. In addition to raising awareness of housing-related funding needs, Avenues for Hope also provides an opportunity for nonprofits to share stories of the important services they provide in their communities.

There is no charge for participating nonprofits to take part in Avenues for Hope: the administration, technology, and marketing expenses are covered by IHFA. The software platform costs IHFA less than \$4,000 per year, and in 2020, for the first time since the inception of Avenues for Hope, IHFA “boosted” Facebook posts with an advertising budget of \$5,000. Video production and graphic work are handled internally, and staff volunteerism also plays a critical role. For less than \$9,000 in hard costs, in 2020,

<sup>1</sup> According to Giving USA, a third of all online giving occurs in December, with 22 percent occurring in the last two days of the year.

IHFA and its partners generated nearly \$2.6 million for homelessness and affordable housing programs, broadened Idaho’s nonprofit donor network, and increased awareness of homelessness and affordable housing needs among Idahoans. Also, unlike federal grants, which impose certain limitations on how funds are spent, proceeds from Avenues for Hope are unrestricted for the nonprofits to use. This allows nonprofits to build operational capacity and to meet the greatest housing needs of their community.

In 2020, of the \$2,576,098 raised through donations, challenge grants, and sponsorship funds, more than 5,000 gifts were made totaling \$2,267,091 during the three-week campaign through the [online donation platform](#). Donations came not only from Idaho, but from across the United States, with 20 percent coming from 48 other states. All proceeds directly supported the nonprofit designated by each donor. In addition, campaign sponsors and IHFA provided the funding for 282 prizes and matching funds that amounted to \$309,007 awarded to participating nonprofits.

### **Achieve strategic objectives**

The Avenues for Hope Housing Challenge has helped diversify and stabilize critical funding for Idaho’s housing service providers. It has heightened awareness and increased private funding for homelessness services and affordable housing options throughout Idaho. As Idaho’s leader in homelessness response, IHFA ensures that the new funding strategically strengthens Idaho’s statewide homeless services network.

Nonprofit partners have expressed that they value the unique role and leadership IHFA provides to the nonprofit housing sector. IHFA directly supports efforts to prevent and combat homelessness by sustaining or enhancing resources for shelters and housing-service providers throughout Idaho and has now distributed nearly \$7 million through the Avenues for Hope campaign. In addition to dollars raised, campaign success has spurred a statewide annual homelessness report, media coverage of homelessness and local nonprofits, local funding authorizations for housing projects, and partnerships resulting in the development of new permanent supportive housing for homeless persons.

Prior to the launch of the first Avenues for Hope Housing Challenge in 2011, many partners had limited social media presence, lacked online donation processing capabilities, and didn’t have the staffing or experience to seek out new fundraising approaches. IHFA’s first objective was to use its resources and expertise to bolster the fundraising capacity among its nonprofit partners. A second objective was to provide tools, feedback, and coaching to help IHFA partners achieve greater visibility and showcase their important work in their communities. This visibility helped engage more staff members, volunteers, and board members in advancing the missions of these organizations. Now in its tenth year, partners’ social media and marketing savvy has increased significantly, and the Housing Challenge has become more successful than ever as a result.

Despite (or possibly in response to) the tumultuousness of last year, according to an [article](#) in the Philanthropy News Digest, on a year-over-year basis, charitable giving in the U.S. increased 10.6 percent in 2020. Donations to Avenues for Hope, however, actually increased by a whopping 97 percent in 2020, attesting to both the effectiveness of the campaign and the strength of IHFA’s nonprofit partners.

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**Marketing “Avenues for Hope” – Visuals**

Please click on the active links in the document to see visuals related to each section.