

IHDA Core Values

Illinois Housing Development Authority
Management Innovation: Internal Operations

HFA Staff Contact

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Core Values and Affordable Housing

The world of Housing Finance Agencies is highly specialized, requiring deep knowledge, experience, and an unwavering commitment to the mission of financing the creation and preservation of affordable housing. While it's easy to reduce affordable housing to finance and planning, the reality is that multifamily developments, single-family mortgages, and other housing initiatives would not be possible without the dedication of every employee who helps drive this work forward.

Recognizing the importance of this shared commitment to helping residents, the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) began the process of identifying its organizational Core Values beginning January 2024. Although IHDA had long operated with a clear sense of purpose and shared principles, leadership recognized the merit of formally memorializing Core Values for current and future employees. As a result, IHDA created an ad hoc staff committee to conduct research, interview employees, and get employee buy-in as it was critical to ensure the entire organization understood and believed in these Core Values.

Through their hard work, IHDA created foundational Core Values that now shape our culture, influence our decision-making, and provide guidance on how employees should interact with each other and our stakeholders. These Core Values are more than just words on a piece of paper, they represent what IHDA stands for and aspire to embody every day.

The Campaign

To raise awareness and encourage staff engagement from the start, IHDA launched an internal marketing campaign introducing the Core Values initiative. The campaign began with a welcome message from Executive Director Kristin Faust, expressing her strong support for the effort and highlighting its importance to IHDA's mission and culture.

To give the campaign a unifying identity, a hashtag "**#BuildTogether**" was created and used throughout the agency. It served as both a symbolic title and a visual reminder, with #BuildTogether integrated as the permanent screen saver visible on all IHDA laptops. To further reinforce the message, IHDA purchased and distributed a variety of branded items featuring the #BuildTogether logo, providing staff with tangible, everyday reminders of the campaign and its purpose.

The hashtag also anchored a new internal microsite that housed background information about what were Core Values, educational resources, committee member introductions, and regular updates about IHDA's Core Values process. Another key feature of the page was a series of short videos showcasing different staff members sharing the importance of values in the workplace and what it meant to them personally and professionally. A new interview was published each week in IHDA's Tuesday Times, an internal newsletter and later archived on the intranet. A total of seven videos were produced and at its peak, the page received more than 500 views in a few short months, impressive for an agency with just over 360 staff members.

Lastly, an additional aspect of the campaign launch was an all-staff lunch and learn session introducing the initiative, outlining opportunities for staff involvement, and showcasing available resources.

Engaging Staff & Gathering Insights

IHDA was intentional in ensuring the process was collaborative and inclusive because values cannot be forced on someone, employees need to be part of the process. A cross-agency ad hoc committee was formed, with department directors nominating members from their teams to participate. Ultimately, 18 IHDA staff members were selected to serve, under the leadership of an executive team member.

The committee developed and hosted a series of “Ideas and Inspiration” workshops, where staff engaged in structured activities designed to draw out the values that guide their work, both individually and collectively. These workshops began with broad discussions and gradually focused on specific themes, ultimately surfacing potential Core Value descriptors. One workshop included department directors and executive leadership, creating a space for cross-level dialogue and shared reflection on IHDA’s guiding principles. By the conclusion of the workshops, nearly half of IHDA staff had taken part in at least one session demonstrating a significant level of employee engagement across the organization.

Following the workshops, the data gathered was used to design a staff-wide survey, inviting all employees to vote on the values that resonated with them most. The survey received a 60% response rate, double the typical average, demonstrating strong staff engagement. Results were ranked, analyzed, and used by the committee to draft IHDA’s proposed Core Values. The draft was reviewed and refined by IHDA leadership, vetted by the Authority’s legal department, and ultimately presented to the IHDA Board of Directors at their July 2004 meeting.

IHDA’s Core Values

- **People** - *We prioritize our team members by fostering a safe work environment and supporting their professional development and overall well-being, enabling healthy, well-rounded lives.*
- **Teamwork** - *We embrace collaboration by recognizing the unique skills and strengths each person brings, enhancing our collective ability to achieve shared goals—internally and externally.*
- **Equity and Inclusion** - *We strive to build an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued, empowered, and able to contribute their unique perspectives to support our mission of equitable resource delivery.*
- **Innovation** - *We are responsive to a dynamic financial landscape, using data-informed strategies to develop new programs and processes that meet the evolving needs of our stakeholders.*
- **Respect** - *We promote a culture of kindness, integrity, and transparency in all interactions, reinforcing accountability and trust across the agency and with the public.*

Adoption and Integration

The process of identifying and uplifting IHDA's Core Values unfolded over eight months. To honor the time, energy, and dedication invested in this important work, IHDA hosted a celebratory event in August 2024. Staff were invited to join the occasion, which featured an address by Executive Director Faust, the official unveiling of the finalized Core Values, and a special congratulatory video message from Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, and a Resolution of Core Values that was signed by IHDA's leadership. One of the event's highlights was the debut of IHDA's official Core Values anthem, an original song created and professionally recorded by two talented IHDA staff members. It was a powerful and memorable celebration of IHDA's shared values which served to further elevate our sense of community.

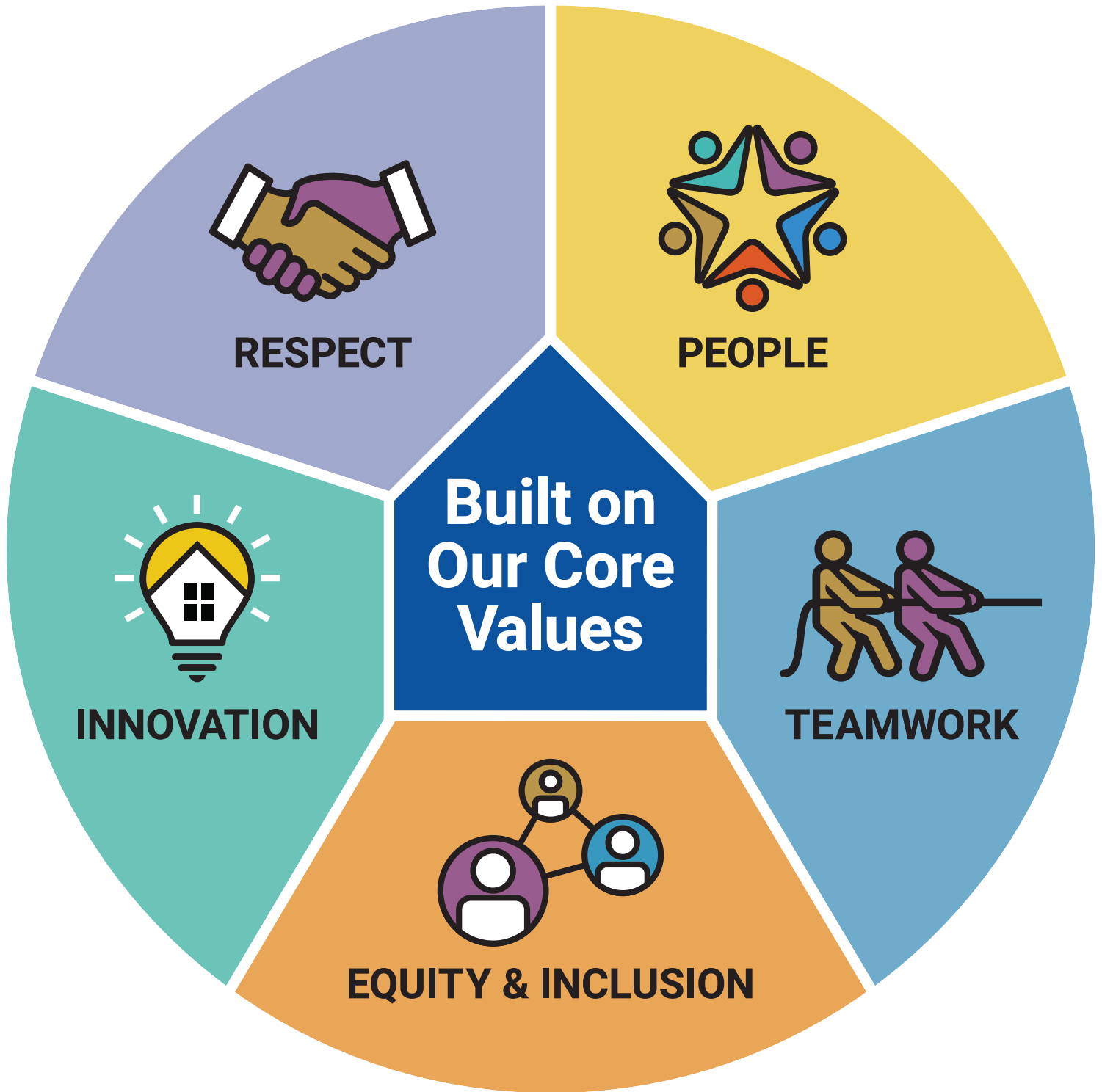
The final step in the process was to focus on institutionalizing these values across the organization to ensure they are reflected in daily operations and decision-making. The original staff committee continues to play an active role in this effort, with several key integration strategies already underway:

- **Departmental Integration** - Department directors are expected to demonstrate at least two ways each year in which their team has incorporated the Core Values. Some early examples include:
 - Highlighting the Core Values graphic as a header/footer on department agendas;
 - Updating job descriptions to reflect values;
 - Aligning department mission statements with the Core Values; and
 - Launching monthly peer recognition initiatives based on the values.
- **Human Resources Alignment** - HR has embedded an introduction to the Core Values in new employee onboarding and has integrated them into annual performance evaluations. It is also a required question during IHDA's interview process.
- **Intranet Page Maintenance** - The intranet page remains a living resource, regularly updated with new materials, stories, and value-based activities curated by the committee.
- **Ongoing Communication** - The committee contributes bi-monthly entries to the internal newsletter, highlighting the values' relevance and spotlighting departments that exemplify them in their work and operations.
- **Recognition Programs** - Staff will be recognized biannually for embodying IHDA's values in their work, while leadership will be recognized annually.

Conclusion

We are excited to continue witnessing the many ways our Core Values take shape across the agency—guiding our work, strengthening our culture, and ensuring that every staff member feels seen, heard, and valued each day they come to work. This initiative proved to be wildly successful which affirms what has always been true: IHDA has long operated with a strong foundation of shared values that drive our mission forward. More than just words on paper, these Core Values reflect IHDA's deep commitment, not only to affordable housing, but to building a workplace culture where values are lived, celebrated, and woven into everything we do for the residents of Illinois.

IHDA CORE VALUES



**#BUILD
TOGETHER**

IHDA CORE VALUES



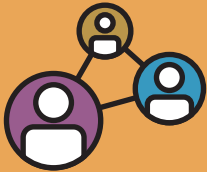
PEOPLE

We prioritize our team members by providing a safe work environment and opportunities for professional development and advancement while supporting their overall well-being to ensure they maintain healthy and well-rounded lives.



TEAMWORK

We create a spirit of collaboration by recognizing the diverse skills and abilities team members bring to the table thereby enhancing productivity and our ability to accomplish shared goals, internally and externally.



EQUITY & INCLUSION

We foster an inclusive work environment where every team member feels valued, included, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents to help us provide resources and assistance in an equitable and fair manner.



INNOVATION

We are continuously responsive to the dynamic financial landscape and take pride in our ability to employ data-informed strategies to develop new programs, products, and processes to swiftly meet the evolving needs of our stakeholders.



RESPECT

We work to ensure kindness and integrity are the foundation to all communications and interactions, both within and outside the agency, to maintain a culture of transparency and accountability.

**Illinois Housing Development Authority
Internal Resolution Recognizing Organizational Core Values
August 28, 2024**

WHEREAS, Core Values are the fundamental beliefs of an organization that guide everyday action and bond a team with a shared sense of purpose for achieving common goals; and

WHEREAS, on March 26, 2024, the members of the Illinois Housing Development Authority and staff embarked on a journey to create Core Values for the organization that would go beyond a simple list of principles, but address the need to authentically define the organization today and into the future; and

WHEREAS, through various activities including creating a staff steering committee, in-person and hybrid working groups, listening sessions, videos, and a survey, the IHDA team provided their insights, thoughts, and feedback to develop these Core Values; and

WHEREAS, taking all this insight, five Core Values emerged – Equity & Inclusion; Innovation; People; Respect; and Teamwork – as the collective result and voice of the IHDA members and staff; and

WHEREAS, each Core Value may seem simple, but all stand for something much bigger that encourages an inclusive work environment, one that is responsive to the changing needs of the state's population, embraces the spirit of collaboration, delivers a space for kindness and integrity, and where we prioritize our team members and support a healthy and well-rounded life for everyone; and

WHEREAS, today we gather to share the collective results, celebrate IHDA's new Core Values, and take the next step to create a workplace that embeds these five Core Values into its culture; and

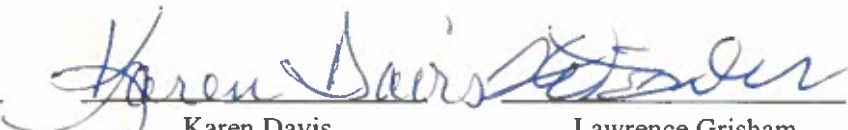
WHEREAS, IHDA is not only rooted in the understanding that affordable housing has the power to transform lives, neighborhoods, and entire communities across our state, but that those who perform its work and carry out the mission are also in a culture that understands that Core Values are a part of the success.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Leadership of the Illinois Housing Development Authority and staff wish to solidify this work and commit to incorporate Core Values into various aspects of the organization; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution of Recognition be the first step in this journey of creating a culture embedded in Equity & Inclusion; Innovation; People; Respect; and Teamwork.



Kristin Faust
Executive Director



Karen Davis
Deputy Executive Director

Lawrence Grisham
Assistant Executive
Director/Chief of Staff

IHDA Core Values Committee

