

Community Connections:  
A Viable Marketing & Community  
Engagement Initiative  
**Louisiana Housing Corporation**  
Communications: Creative Media

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Establishing a viable marketing and community engagement strategy is vital for government entities. Earning the trust among one's constituency and stakeholders requires implementing practical approaches and concepts that prioritizes meeting their needs first.

Recognizing that effective marketing and community engagement strategies strengthen and expand constituent relations, the Louisiana Housing Corporation embarked upon a journey to refine and refresh its strategy to raise awareness about affordable housing and better meet the housing and community demands of Louisiana residents.

### **PHASE 1: DISCOVERING LHC'S VOICE AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION**

LHC conducted an extensive analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) that consisted of a series of employee, partner, and stakeholder interviews coupled with a comprehensive assessment of its digital footprint, which helped them gain a better understanding of its value proposition, brand promise, values, and how each aligns with the mission.

The research revealed that LHC's employees were their greatest asset, because of the immense pride they expressed in their roles of helping communities. However, collectively they struggled with how to explain the "Five W's" of the LHC, because (1) the messaging around the mission was convoluted, (2) they didn't understand how to differentiate between LHC and the competition, (3) while many employees shared an affinity for the brand, far less could explain what it represented, and (4) the website was visually disjointed and lacked a clear navigation path for readers, limiting the ability and desire to refer traffic.

LHC's vast and diverse target audience also posed a communications challenge since it serves 10 primary audiences with varying needs: Homebuyers, Renters, Realtors, Lenders, Developers, Property Managers, Public Officials, NonProfit Representatives, and Louisiana Residents at Large.

The interview process revealed six words used most frequently used when referencing the LHC: Helpful, Positive, Collaborative, Approachable, Reliable, and **Connections**.

### **PHASE 2: ESTABLISHING AND IMPLEMENTING A VIABLE STRATEGY**

Armed with data from the first phase, LHC realized it was time to: (1) Update the brand to better communicate its unique impact within the community, (2) Overhaul the website to make it more intuitive and user-centric, (3) Leverage the depth of its relationships within the community to establish and cement its reputation as a **Connector**.

#### **STEP 1: Brand Standards Update & Guidelines**

The research indicated that LHC's presence in the community was strong and grounded, with partnerships and programs that overlap to provide opportunity and relief, as well as strengthen what home means for Louisiana residents. Therefore, LHC created a brand that reflected LHC traits as: a Connector, Human-Focused, Supportive, and Approachable. The calming blue and teal color palette represents empathy, compassion, knowledge, trust and honesty.

The logo is a visual illustration of two home structures, single-family and multi-family, that overlap to create a figure that resembles a person and an open door. The logo and branding also incorporates modern font families that better represents LHC as a 21st century state agency.

Brand Guidelines were created to provide a standardized framework for consistently and cohesively developing LHC's communication tools. The guidelines can be used as a resource and a guide, and it explains why following the guidelines are important, "The way we collectively communicate the LHC story is a reflection of who we are. It is how we express our value to everyone we come in contact with across all mediums."

**Timeline:** Approximately 4 weeks to complete.

## STEP 2: Website Design & Build

According to a study commissioned by Stanford University, 75 percent of people judge the credibility of a website by its design. With this eye-opening statistic in mind, LHC completely overhauled its website to create a more visually appealing and user-friendly experience.

The redesign aimed to achieve five objectives: (1) Reorganization - prioritized answering the most common questions quickly and highlighting top service areas, (2) Functionality - created event registration, speaker request system, and searchable resource library, (3) Content - established a regular and robust blog, (4) Photography - incorporated imagery represented the feeling of home, (5) Content Marketing System (CMS) - selected a more powerful and easier platform.

**Timeline:** Approximately 15 weeks to complete.

## STEP 3: Digital & Print Collateral

LHC created templates for common assets that were visually appealing, clear and concise, with the ability to update in a pinch: (1) Email - created universal and target emails, (2) Social Media - Updated profile images and post templates, (3) Digital Documents - created a series of digital templates for quick in-house production, (4) Brochures - mass produced printed materials, and (5) Presentation Template - designed a visually engaging template that to reiterate human-focus. (6) Paraphernalia - invested in value-added promotional items.

**Timeline:** Approximately 10 weeks to complete.

## STEP 4: Marketing Technology Integration

HubSpot replaced the existing CMS and email service because it offered a centralized platform for email templates, social media postings, data analytics, track integrated campaign, and connect third-party platforms for surveying, project management, and team communication and collaboration.

- **Email Marketing:** (1) Segmented the email list. (2) Created a weekly email newsletter for housing policy and trends in the state, (3) Created a drip content campaign for homebuyers, based on response to interactive content or a downloaded guide. (4) Prepared prospects for homeownership and vet them as leads. (5) Received a comprehensive view of how readers consume content.
- **Blog:** (1) Created Louisiana Housing Connections Blog as the centralized content hub to provide relevant and timely content on housing, which is organized by audience needs. (2) Articles written by LHC subject matter experts focus on: Housing Trends, Events and News, Inspiration and “How Do I...”
- **Social Media:** Segmented audiences for organic and paid social media promotion.

**Timeline:** Approximately 10 weeks to complete.

## STEP 6: Employee Engagement Activities

**Pre-Brand Launch:** A group of employees were selected to serve as Brand Ambassadors because they demonstrated sincere enthusiasm for the new visual identity. This team was responsible for: (1) expressing their sentiments about the rebranding initiative with colleagues and partners, (2) sharing status updates with team members, (3) answering the 5W's about the brand, (4) provide creative input on how to fully integrate the new brand, (5) assist with the brand roll-out, (6) attending regularly scheduled meetings to receive updates and provide insight on next steps, and (7) promote the new brand by wearing the Brand Ambassador paraphernalia.

**Brand Launch:** An all-employee meeting was held as a soft launch activity and to provide training on how to access and utilize the new brand materials. Insight was also shared on how to communicate the brand message. To foster an environment of esprit de corps, LHC hosted fun and non-traditional team building activities, such as Field Day and Karaoke. New “swag” was also distributed to every employee to generate further excitement.

### Step 7: Community Engagement Initiative

To further expand its role as a “Connector,” LHC launched Community Connections, an initiative designed to bring the full capacity of state, federal and local governments together to address community revitalization.

#### (A) Brand Launch

LHC utilized Community Connections as the umbrella to launch its new brand by conducting outreach during two of the highest attended events in the city - the University of Alabama vs. Louisiana State University football game and Southern University and A&M College vs. Jackson State University - both are rivalry games. Participating in pre-game activities presented a unique and cost-effective opportunity to re-introduce the LHC brand to diverse audience that consisted of thousands of residents from across Louisiana communities.

#### (B) Municipality Involvement

LHC established a team of professionals to work with municipal leaders to explore ideas, techniques and solutions to determine best concepts and approaches to address their housing issues and revitalize the community. The first municipal meeting was held on December 5, 2018, and since then, LHC has visited 15 cities in each Metropolitan Statistical Area within the state. Visiting these communities has given the LHC the ability to build brand awareness and promote it suite of services and products as well as promote the Louisiana Housing Conference.

#### (C) Louisiana Housing Conference - “Connections”

LHC hosted Connections, Louisiana’s first all-inclusive housing conference April 2-4, 2019. Attendees had the unique opportunity to connect with a diverse group of professionals and advocates from all housing sectors in the state. It was divided into six tracks that examine and discussed housing from an individual, regional and statewide perspective. Connections, which is **LHC’s first-ever conference**, was attended by 601 housing and community development professionals representing 50 of Louisiana’s 64 parishes and spanning more than two dozen states who participated in a total of 35 sessions led by 65 speakers. Louisiana’s Governor John Bel Edwards joined the conference for a Fireside Chat with LHC Executive Director E. Keith Cunningham, Jr, and NFL Veteran, Hall of Famer and New Orleans native Aeneas Williams shared an inspiring keynote speak about vision and community.

**Timeline:** Approximately 52 weeks to complete.

### PHASE 3: ANALYSIS DATA ANALYSIS

LHC has been vigilant in its quest to switch from a marketing strategy that was centered on channel and sender to one that centers on the audiences they’re serving, yet grounded in its unique expertise and positioning. By creating a two-pronged approach for each audience (brand awareness and lead generation) and prioritizing quality over quantity, LHC has been able to retain and expand engagement as illustrated why the following analytic data sets.

CHANNEL	AUDIENCE	CONTENT TYPE	KPIs	PAST	GOAL	ACTUAL
WEBSITE	ALL	NEWS/UPDATES, EVENTS, HOW-TO's	VISITS	16,000/MTH		
EMAIL	B2B & B2C	NEWS & UPDATES	SUBSCRIPTIONS	5,152	10,000	10,304
FACEBOOK	B2C	ADVICE & INSPIRATION	FOLLOWERS	3,609	4,000	4,211
TWITTER	B2B	NEWS & UPDATES	FOLLOWERS	475	525	528
LINKEDIN	B2B	NEWS & UPDATES	FOLLOWERS	303	350	380

### SUPPORTIVE DOCUMENTS

- [Brand Guidelines](#)
- [Website & Blog](#)
- [Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn](#)
- [Presentation Template](#)
- [About LHC Video](#)
- [Digital Assets](#)
- [Printed Collateral](#)
- [Stock Photography](#)