

Emergency Rental Program Marketing Campaign

MaineHousing

Communications: Integrated Campaign

HFA Staff Contact

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In 2021 MaineHousing, along with many other housing agencies across the country, launched a rent relief Program funded by the American Rescue Plan Act in an effort to offset the financial hardships of the COVID-19 pandemic. Maine was in the fortunate situation of having previously launched a state funded relief program during 2020. Building off the exhausted state-funded program, MaineHousing was able to open our program quicker than many other states. At the same time, we were left with the predicament of how to reconceive a closed and widely advertised program with the same name and purpose --but with far more funds available to a wider pool of applicants.

Working in conjunction with our advertising agency, Rinck Advertising in Lewiston, Maine, we adopted the following campaign.

The state-funded program was called the “Rent Relief Program.” In an effort to build upon the existing public awareness of the closed program, we chose to call the new federally funded program the “Emergency Rental Relief Program.” We retained the original program colors, iconography, and collateral to further link the recognition between the two programs.



Traditional Marketing Efforts:

- Before launching the program, we created an email signup form for program updates. We first announced our March 1 launch on Friday, February 26 through that email list (over 5700 recipients) and with a post on our social media channels. We boosted the post on Facebook and Instagram.
- With the launch of the program, we distributed a press release which resulted in eight published reports.
- A simple graphic announcing the opening of the program and acceptance of applications was posted and boosted to Facebook/Instagram.
- We created an animated PSA that ran in several different mediums throughout 2021.
 - The PSA ran as a television ad on the local ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC affiliates during news hours: early morning, noon, evening, and late night. The ad ran in two segments: an initial segment for two weeks segments in March and April each, and then again in September, October, and November of 2021.
 - The PSA ran as a bumper advertisement on YouTube.
 - Using static creative images based on the PSA videos, a social media ad campaign ran on both Facebook and Instagram
- A search engine campaign ran from August through November 2021 to ensure people searching for any type of rental assistance would see the ERA Program in their search results.
- See Appendix A for examples of Traditional marketing efforts.

State Agency Support:

- Information about the program and how to apply went out in the MaineCare (Maine’s version of Medicaid) email list of nearly 80,000 participants in March of 2021.
- We actively worked with the Maine Department of Health and Human Service’s Office for Family Independence (OFI), to get the word out to TANF and SNAP recipients. This included information on OFI’s website, phone recordings for incoming calls and calls in queue, and information provided to ASPIRE (Additional Support for

People in Retraining and Employment) program participants via the online portal they use to connect with their case managers.

- We worked with the Maine Department of Labor and all 68,000 unemployment claimants received an email about the program. The program was highlighted on the ME Joblinks homepage and a login message for job seekers on DOL's online platform. CareerCenters around the state were provided with program flyers.

New Mainer Communities

- Our application, website materials, and several flyers were translated into 10 languages – Arabic, Dari, French, Khmer, Lingala, Pashto, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
- We contracted with the Ethnic Community Based Organizations United Somali Women of Maine and Prosperity Maine to provide outreach for the ERA and housing stability services to Maine's immigrant and refugee communities.
- We wrote responses to a Q&A about the program for the Maine immigrant newspaper, Amjambo Africa, and continue to advertise the program in that publication.

Utilities Companies

- We worked with both Versant and Central Maine Power Company, the electrical suppliers in Maine, on outreach. Both companies provided information about the program to their customers, including (but not limited to) in utility statements and bills, via email, as a phone recording when a customer is on hold, and through their social media platforms.
- In addition, all utility customers, even those whose accounts were not in arrears, received a physical mailing discussing the ERA Program and its utility payment benefits. See Appendix B.

Community Outreach & Material Distribution

- We provided information about the program to Maine legislators with images and sample language to include in their constituent mailings and on social media.
- We provided information about the program to our Housing Choice Voucher landlords and encouraged them to support their tenants' applications.
- We hosted three landlord forums where we had approximately 150 landlords and property managers in attendance. The forums included a program overview and time to ask questions about the program or discuss related issues or concerns. We also presented at the Biddeford Area Landlord Association in early May.
- Our outreach materials (including flyers, social media images and caption language, and information for newsletters and websites) were provided to a number of affiliated and partner agencies. See Appendix C for a full list of partner agencies we contacted.

Summary

As of April 13, 2022 the campaign produced over 8.9 million impressions, 395,218 visits to the ERA page on our website and over 22,000 unique applications amounting to \$163,764,664 in benefits paid. By using multiple

channels including television, social media, YouTube, web content, and paid searches, MaineHousing was able to build a large-scale campaign that targeted potential clients and influencers while also making sure clients understood the program had changed to increase their eligibility for a wider applicant pool.

Appendix A Traditional Marketing Efforts

Before Program Launch

 **MaineHousing**
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The Emergency Rental Assistance Program will begin accepting applications on Monday, March 1 at 12 pm. We know many are in need of this program and there are several important new program details to note. Read the updates: mainehousing.org/covidrent.



👍❤️😬 Peggy Ni... 90 Comments 470 Shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

 **MaineHousing**
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The Emergency Rental Assistance Program is now accepting applications for residents across Maine. Find important program details and application info here: mainehousing.org/covidrent



👍❤️😬 Amy St... 259 Comments 981 Shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

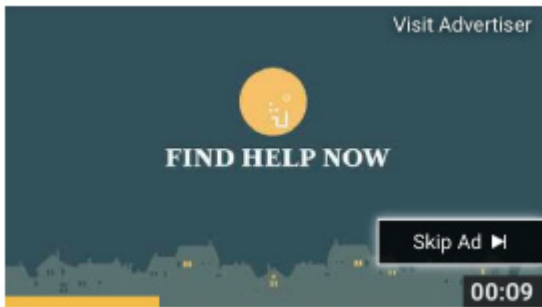
PSA on Youtube

Version 1 - ERA 1



<https://youtu.be/DOITofcB3SM>

Version 2 - ERA 2



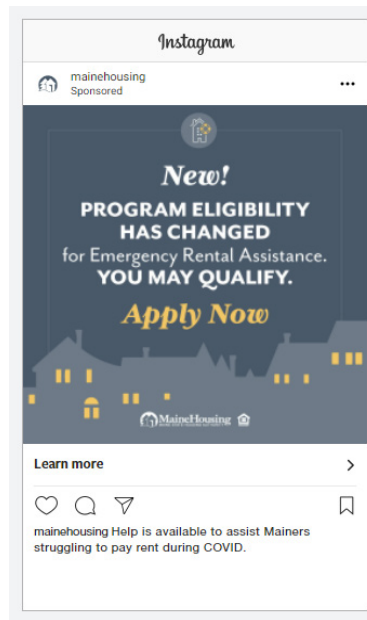
15s - <https://youtu.be/2gjEEplrNBs>
https://youtu.be/oH_5DGLSIY

Bumpers - <https://youtu.be/adPRvkcw4Tg>
<https://youtu.be/SV4Br3Isi4o>

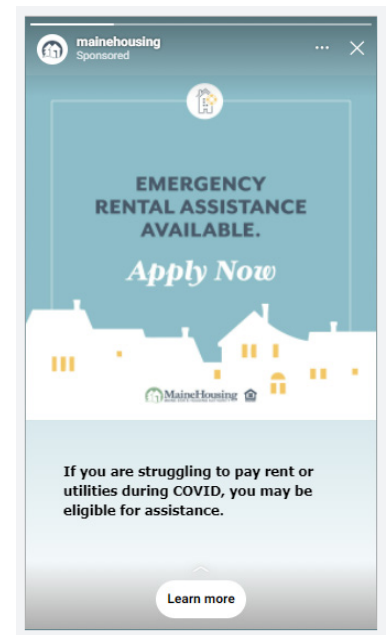
Facebook Ads/Posts



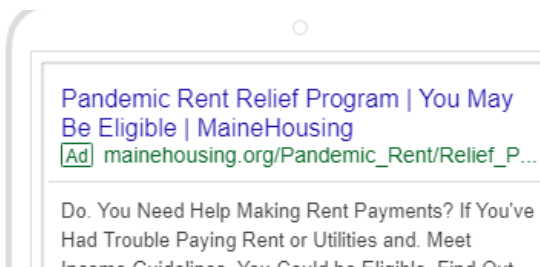
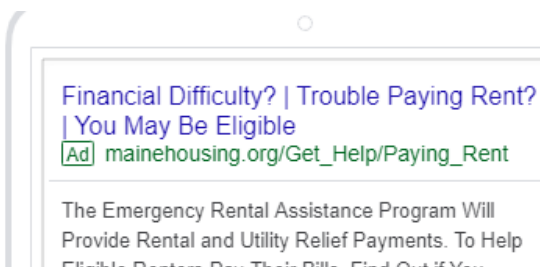
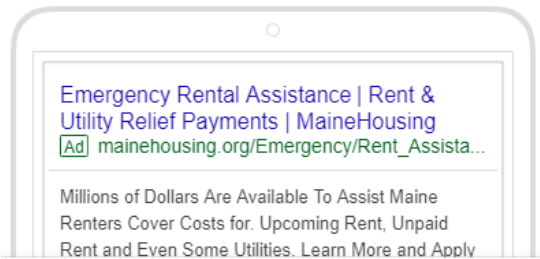
Instagram Ads/ Posts



Instagram Stories



Google Search Ads



Search Keywords Campaign



Appendix B Cooperative Efforts With Utility Companies



[View in browser](#)

Help is available

If you're having trouble paying your electric bill or rent, help may be available. MaineHousing can help eligible Maine renters receive up to 15 months of past due electric expenses, as well as past or future rent expenses through the **Emergency Rental Assistance Program**.

How Do I Qualify?

You may receive assistance if you meet all of the following:

- You rent your home, apartment, or lot that your home is on.
- At least one person in your household qualified for unemployment benefits, or had their income reduced, had significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due to the pandemic.
- Your household income is at or below 80% of the median income in your area.
- You are at risk for homelessness or housing instability.
- You are having a hard time paying your rent or utilities.

To learn more or start your application visit the [MaineHousing website](#) or call 800.452.4668 to speak with a MaineHousing representative.

More Help With Your Bill

If you can't pay your bill, please visit cmpco.com/helpwithbill to learn about programs that may help or call us at 800.686.4044 to establish an affordable payment arrangement.

You may be eligible for financial assistance to help you pay your bill:

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP): Financial assistance for income eligible customers to pay heating bills. Apply through your local Community Action Agency.

Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP): Assistance for qualified HEAP customers facing disconnection of service. Apply through your local Community Action Agency.

CMP's Electricity Lifeline Program (ELP): Provides bill credits to qualifying HEAP customers based on your annual cost of electricity and your household income. Apply through your local Community Action Agency.

CMP's ELP Oxygen and Ventilator benefit: Qualifying ELP participants may also be eligible to receive the Oxygen Pump/Ventilator benefit. Contact us at 800.750.4000 to discuss the certification process.

Arrearage Management Program (AMP): Customers who qualify for HEAP may also be eligible to participate in this arrears forgiveness program that provides credits to your past due balance when your current bill is paid on time. Apply through your local Community Action Agency, on our website or call us at 800.750.4000.

For more information about these assistance programs or to find the Community Action Agency nearest to you, visit cmpco.com/helpwithbill, call 211 or visit 211maine.org.

We are here to help, call us at 800.750.4000 to speak with a Customer Care representative about options that may work for you.

Sincerely,

Customer Care Center
Central Maine Power



Website



My Account



Contact Us

PPPE019 Rev 4.2021

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83 Edison Drive, Augusta, ME 04330

[Unsubscribe](#)

Appendix C

Partnering Agencies

- Family Child Care Association of Maine
- Maine Association for the Education of Young Children
- The Maine Afterschool Network
- Maine People's Alliance
- Good Shepherd Food Bank
- Maine Department of Education Communications and McKinney Vento Coordinator
- Maine Principals Association
- Maine Affordable Housing Coalition
- Central Maine Power
- Versant
- Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
- Maine Council on Aging
- AARP Maine
- Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition
- Maine Women's Lobby
- Maine Justice Action Group
- EqualityMaine
- Maine's Area Agencies on Aging
- Legal Services for the Elderly
- Maine Council for Elder Abuse Prevention
- Maine's United Ways
- Maine Primary Care Association
- NAMI Maine
- Maine Suicide Prevention Program
- Disability Rights Maine
- Maine's Public Housing Authorities
- MaineTransNet
- Maine Council of Churches
- Maine Health Equity Alliance
- Maine's United Ways
- Maine Municipal Association
- Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services