

Last year, South Dakota Housing Development Authority (SDHDA) moved into our new LEED Certified building and decided that it was also a great time to update our housing partner information database and transition into the “green” era of going paperless. Upon analysis of the information, it was concluded that with the increase in the number of emails it was time to discontinue mailing a quarterly newsletter and start emailing a new monthly e-news, so information was delivered more timely.

An eye-catching, e-news format was designed and created by the marketing staff. It features a bright blue sky and green grass on the top informational header inviting you to read more. On the left column, five or six summarizations of articles are displayed with bold titles and easy to read text. The summarizations are provided instead of the whole article to peak interest for those that want to read more and to not bog down those in which the information does not pertain. Should an article want to be read, a click of the text will take the reader to the full article. The latest housing events, ribbon cuttings, trainings or conferences, and the current mortgage rates are featured in the right hand column.

Articles are written with each audience member in mind so that there is something noteworthy and interesting whether it be a lender, realtor, developer, investor or property manager/owner.

The e-news is sent out using email marketing software. Through the software, we are able to track who it reaches, whether or not it has been opened, how many articles are read if it is opened, and if it was forwarded to other individuals. By tracking the information we are also able to gauge which information is perceived as important and what information is not so that we can better write articles going forward.

Besides the initial cost of the software, which is used for more purposes than just the e-news, the ongoing costs incurred are the time of one staff member to research and write the articles, format into the designed template, and to send out to our partners. On a monthly basis this amounts to 15 hours of time.

Because of the e-news, our partners have benefited by receiving more timely information in an easier to read format. They have direct access to more information through links within the e-news articles that leads them to the informational page on our website or to a direct person to email, thus cross referencing information.

SDHDA has received many benefits too. We are able to track and adjust according to information we gather, the cost involved in sending an email is free, but most importantly we have measurable results that let us know that our information is reaching our targeted audience.

The success of the e-news can be measured many ways. Although information about whether or not the e-news has been opened or how many articles have been read is helpful, our greatest measurement of success is by the requests we receive to add more individuals to our e-mail list so more people have an opportunity to receive the next e-news and stay current on information and events.