

# VHDA Annual Report FY19

## **Virginia Housing**

Communication: Annual Report

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*“By incorporating shorter, more ‘snackable’ content into our annual report, and peppering in infographics, animation and stories of real people, we’ve created a more engaging and meaningful experience for our stakeholders.”*

— Kyla Goldsmith-Ray, Virginia Housing Communications Director

### **Brief Description**

For FY19, Virginia Housing decided to take our annual report to the next level with an overall refresh to its look, feel and format. We had been publishing our annual “Report to the Community” on our website since 2011, featuring a video of our executive director sharing highlights from the year. This format provided information in a clean and efficient way, without the high cost of producing a printed report. However, we had a concern that the feature video was not being watched in its entirety due to its length. Our goal for the FY19 report was to keep the efficiency of a digital report, but present the information in a more dynamic and interactive way, allowing users to select (or skip) content based on their interests.

### **Why/When it was undertaken**

As Virginia Housing’s fiscal year came to an end on June 31, 2019, we began the process of compiling data for the annual report, and discussing how we might share this information in a more meaningful and engaging way with our stakeholders. We came up with a plan:

- First, we realized that a single video covering the year’s accomplishments would be too long to hold the attention of an online audience. So, we decided to replace the single video with shorter videos which could be watched or skipped, according to a viewer’s interest.
- Next, we would design this year’s report to be more visually impactful. We would accomplish this by using a different format: instead of embedding a single, long video at the top of a webpage followed by the year’s facts and figures, we would design an eBook filled with short, skimmable stories, short videos and animated infographics. This would allow us to still present our information in a clean and efficient manner, but in a more interactive way, allowing users to choose the content they want to view.

### **What it has accomplished**

With the new look and format, we now have the ability to present our accomplishments in a more impactful way. The eBook opens with an interactive table of contents, allowing users to jump directly to the section or story of their choice, or they can simply click through from beginning to end using the navigational arrows on each page or the arrow keys on their computer. By using an interactive format and shorter stories and videos, we can share our information in a clean, simple and “skimmable” way, which is an important consideration when thinking about our busy stakeholder audience.

### Why it is meritorious and meets NCSHA award judging criteria

- **Innovative:** We took advantage of a relatively new technology available to us through our existing Adobe Creative Cloud software, to produce and publish an eBook that could be viewed on any device, with no special software needed to view the interactive content including the embedded videos (this is something that's not currently possible in a simple interactive PDF).
- **Replicable:** The approach we took in our FY19 annual report could be replicated by any organization, using in-house marketing staff or contractors. The ability to publish online documents is included with an Adobe Creative Cloud subscription, which is the industry-standard graphics suite used by creative professionals. Images used in infographics can be produced by in-house creative staff, or licensed from one of the many online image libraries. Videos may be professionally produced, or shot and edited by in-house staff. We used a combination of the above in our FY19 report.
- **Engage targeted audiences:** The audience for Virginia Housing's annual report is generally limited to our stakeholders (government officials, nonprofit agencies, developers, lenders, REALTORS® and other housing partners). When our annual report was ready, we shared it via a link on our homepage and an announcement in our December eNews, which is distributed to our stakeholder email list. This was the most efficient way to reach our specific audience, and at no additional cost.
- **Achieve measurable results:** The FY19 annual report reached our target audience effectively and received positive feedback both internally and externally. After the report was published on Nov. 18, 2019, we shared the link via our December eNews and it was viewed 1,314 times. One significant outcome of the FY19 annual report is that we now have a new tool for telling our story, with all the interactivity and functionality this format provides. This exceeded our objective of simply giving our annual report a new look; it provided us with a platform to produce more engaging reports in the future.
- **Provide benefits that outweigh costs:** The only cost we incurred was for videography on one of the videos, which cost only \$1,275 (since editing was done in-house). Other videos and images in the eBook were either pre-produced as part of other projects, or were shot and edited by in-house staff. Some of the still images came from our existing image library, or were provided by developers at no additional cost to us. Overall, the cost to produce our FY19 report was much less than it would have been to professionally produce a longer, feature video or hundreds of printed annual reports. The minimal production cost is far outweighed by the benefit of having our FY19 story presented in a more interactive, engaging way than was possible in the previous format.

- **Demonstrate effective use of resources:** Since mostly in-house staff was used to produce the FY19 report, the cost was minimal. The eBook design and most of the graphics were created in-house by the Creative Team. We paid a professional videographer to shoot part of one video that required special equipment. All editing was done in-house with the Adobe Creative Cloud software we had already licensed.
- **Achieve strategic objectives:** Our strategic objective was to provide Virginia Housing’s annual report in a way that would tell our story in an efficient, yet more engaging way. In comparing the look and functionality of our previous year’s report with our new FY19 report, the FY19 report is a definite upgrade. It offers more interactivity and visually engaging content — and provides viewers with the option to click through from start to finish, or choose specific content according to their interest.

### Conclusion

Audiences today are busy and have short attention spans — but they still want good information. Virginia Housing’s stakeholders are no different. Our goal was to provide them with important information about Virginia Housing, without boring them or making them work too hard to find the content they are most interested in. Our FY19 annual report was designed to be interactive, visually engaging and informative, without wasting the user’s time. It presents short videos, easy-to-skim stories and animated infographics — all designed to tell the story of how our work is making a difference in the lives of Virginians who need affordable housing.

View Virginia Housing’s FY19 Annual Report: [vhda.com/FY19](http://vhda.com/FY19)

