

FY20 Annual Report

Virginia Housing

Communications: Annual Report

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VIRGINIA HOUSING

2021 NCSHA Award Submission

ENTRY NAME:

FY20 Annual Report

ENTRY CATEGORY:

**Communications -
Annual Report**



“By using an interactive format with infographics, animations and video clips, our FY20 annual report provided an engaging and meaningful experience for our stakeholders.”

— Kyla Goldsmith-Ray, Virginia Housing Communications Director

Brief Description

For FY20, Virginia Housing had several new challenges to address in our annual report. We had just completed a major rebrand, including a new name, new logo and new style guidelines which needed to be incorporated into the design. We also had an unusual mixture of stories to tell — from great successes in our affordable housing mission, to great challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Another consideration was feedback from our Board and stakeholders that we should be sharing more of our great success stories. Knowing our audience was composed of extremely busy housing partners, government officials and others with limited time, our goal was to share the highlights of the year in a clean, efficient and interactive way that would allow users to quickly select (or skip) content based on their interests.

Why/When it was undertaken

As our fiscal year came to an end on June 30, 2020, we began the process of compiling data for the annual report, and discussing how we might share this information in a meaningful and engaging way with our stakeholders. We decided to design an eBook filled with short, skimmable stories, short video clips and animated infographics. This would allow us to present our information in a dynamic and engaging way, and allow our audience to choose the content they wanted to view.

What it has accomplished

The goals we set for our FY20 annual report were successfully met: it was designed and written to reflect our new brand, and it covered the year’s highlights — stories of challenges and successes — in a dynamic and impactful way. It could also be easily skimmed, or read cover-to-cover, depending on the user’s preference. We included an interactive table of contents, allowing users to jump directly to the section or story of their choice, or they could simply click through from beginning to end using the navigational arrows on each page. Our stakeholder audience really needed a simple format that delivered bite-sized content, and this Annual Report accomplished that.

Why it is meritorious and meets NCSHA award judging criteria

- **Innovative:** We took advantage of 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, but with the eBook tools we used, even the embedded videos can be watched by anyone with a web browser).*

- **Replicable:** The approach we took in our FY20 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 (the industry-standard graphics suite used by creative professionals). Images used in infographics can be produced by staff, or licensed from one of the many online image libraries. Videos may be professionally produced, or shot and edited by staff.
- **Engage targeted audience:** The audience for Virginia Housing’s annual report is 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 and engage our specific audience, and at no additional cost.
- **Achieve measurable results:** The FY20 annual report reached our target audience effectively and received positive feedback both internally and externally. After the report was published in November 2020, we shared the link via our December eNews and it was viewed more than 900 times.
- **Provide benefits that outweigh costs:** Costs to produce our FY20 annual report were minimal. Many of the 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 stock libraries, or were provided by developers at no additional cost to us. Publishing the report as an eBook saved us the cost of printing hundreds of hard copies, and enabled us to share our FY20 story in a more interactive, engaging way with our stakeholder audience.
- **Demonstrate effective use of resources:** The FY20 annual report eBook was designed and written by our in-house Communications Team with input from our Leadership Team and internal business partners. Some of the videos and images were provided to us at no cost by developers or news media, and some were shot by our staff and edited in-house.
- **Achieve strategic objectives:** Our strategic objective was to offer Virginia Housing’s annual report in a way that would tell our story in an efficient, yet engaging way. Our FY20 report provided the interactivity and visually engaging content we sought — and provided viewers with the option to click through from start to finish, or choose specific content according to their interest.

Conclusion

Audiences today are busy, multitasking and have short attention spans — but they still crave relevant content. Virginia Housing’s stakeholders are no different. Our goal was to provide them with updates on the year’s accomplishments, without boring them or making them work too hard to find the content they were most interested in. Our FY20 annual report was created to be interactive, visually engaging and informative, without wasting the user’s time. It used 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 FY20 Annual Report: VirginiaHousing.com/FY20

