



# Entry Form 2018 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

**Entry Deadline: Friday, June 15, 2018, Midnight ET**

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).**

**Entry Title:** Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

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**Category:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Subcategory:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Entry Summary:** A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

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**HFA:** \_\_\_\_\_

**HFA Staff Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Visual Aids:**

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF?    Yes        No

**Payment:**

My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.  
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## **Federal Legislative Advocacy: Building Partnerships and Making Impacts**

[Click here to watch the synopsis video for the entry.](#)

### **Overview**

States created housing finance agencies (HFAs) to meet the housing needs of families and individuals who might not otherwise have access to affordable housing in the open marketplace. Over several decades Congress has recognized the important role of HFAs and has created various housing programs to make housing more affordable and accessible. HFAs rely on those programs to fulfill our missions on behalf of the people we serve. Because millions of Americans remain inadequately housed, HFAs must remain vigilant about protecting these vital federal resources. In the current political environment protecting housing dollars necessitates legislative advocacy.

Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) took a very aggressive approach to legislative advocacy at the federal level over the past twelve months, not just for KHC's mission of investing in affordable housing solutions, but for our nation, and ultimately the individuals and families who most need affordable housing as the foundation for other successful life outcomes, such as education, health, and jobs. Fortunately, these efforts have produced very positive outcomes that benefit affordable housing interests in Kentucky as well as nationally.

The KHC executive management team formulated an ambitious plan to meet personally with each member of Kentucky's congressional delegation multiple times. The overall goals of this effort are to keep affordable housing issues on the forefront, to explain the impact on our communities of legislative and executive actions related to housing, and to compel favorable responses that produce adequate funding and provide administrative flexibility. Under this plan in fiscal year 2018, KHC staff and members of our Board of Directors have met, in person, with all members of our federal delegation at least once and have met with most members over five times. We have even been able to secure important visits with legislators from other states to fortify our message to Congress. **We began the fiscal year with zero co-sponsors of H.R. 1661, The Affordable Housing Improvement Act, and now have four co-sponsors.**

Kentucky's effort was built around a series of visits to Congressional offices on Capitol Hill on three separate occasions. Executive leadership believed that it was important to visit Capitol Hill once per quarter to build relationships and build the reputation of the leading expert for all affordable housing issues in Kentucky. Staff carefully crafted messages for each representative and each senator and prepared materials to share with them, presenting the needs, challenges, and showing investment impacts. For example, one important piece of information that we shared was an analysis of the direct and secondary economic impact of the use of private activity bonds and 4 percent Low Income Housing Tax Credits in each congressional district and the entire state.

In June of 2017, KHC's new executive director and general counsel, along with a key Board member of KHC's, visited congressional offices in Washington, D.C. During this visit, KHC officials discussed the importance of maintaining HUD's HOME Investment Partnerships Program and expanding and strengthening the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. They also discussed concerns with HUD's Project-Based Contract administering rental assistance vouchers. This messaging focused specifically on the impact of losing the PBCA contract on critical programs offered in Kentucky. This visit included meetings with Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul, Congressmen Hal Rogers, Brett Guthrie, John Yarmuth, Andy Barr, and the staff of Congressman James Comer.

## Kentucky Housing Corporation

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Later in the year KHC's executive director again traveled to Washington, D.C., for meetings with legislators during the mark-up of tax reform legislation. This was a critical time to be on Capitol Hill, as the House version of the tax reform bill eliminated private activity bonds for housing, thereby eliminating the 4 percent LIHTC. KHC engaged NCSHA during these visits as a national partner and to offer perspective from other states. This visit included meetings with Congressmen Andy Barr, Brett Guthrie, Thomas Massie, the staff of Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul, and the staff of Congressmen Hal Rogers and John Yarmuth.

KHC staff also took advantage of the opportunity afforded by NCSHA's Legislative Conference. Activities during this time included [direct meetings](#) with several Kentucky legislators, including Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul, Congressmen Brett Guthrie, Andy Barr, and John Yarmuth. In addition, KHC staff conducted personal meetings with Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Representative Trey Hollingsworth of Indiana.

The meetings listed above are in addition to several meetings with legislators at home in Kentucky.

Gaining access to U.S. representatives and senators on Capitol Hill can be extremely difficult. While it is typical for staff from state housing finance agencies to get meetings with congressional staff, it is particularly rare to sit down with the legislators themselves. KHC was able to leverage the experience and relationships of two individuals making this possible for KHC staff. First, Edwin King, who was appointed as KHC's executive director within the last year has several years of experience as a congressional staffer in Washington, D.C. He has worked in the U.S. Senate and served as professional staff on the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee for Senator Jim Bunning, where he worked on banking and housing policy. Second, one of KHC's Board members has been able to develop relationships with most of Kentucky's representatives and senators over years of advocacy efforts. The relationships developed by these two individuals from their prior work experiences were central to our ability to secure meetings with legislators in Washington, D.C.

These meetings were worthwhile in the end because they helped produce favorable results on several affordable housing issues that are vital to KHC and other HFAs:

- **We began the fiscal year with zero co-sponsors of H.R. 1661, The Affordable Housing Improvement Act, and now have four co-sponsors.**
- The fiscal year 2018 omnibus spending bill not only preserved the HOME program, but it also increased funding over the previous year's allocation.
- The Tax Cut and Jobs Act signed in December 2018 preserved the use of private activity bonds for housing, an important tool for obtaining private investment in affordable housing.
- Portions of the Cantwell-Hatch (Senate) and Tiberi-Neal (House) companion bills were enacted as part of the 2018 omnibus spending bill. This resulted in a 12.5-percent increase for the LIHTC program for the next four years – the first increase in over a decade. Newly adopted provisions also allow for an income averaging test, which spreads the 60-percent-of-area-median-income cap over all units in a development rather than requiring it to be implemented on a per-unit basis and allows LIHTC funded projects to serve populations earning up to 80 percent of area median income.
- KHC representatives championed the Project-Based Contract Administration issue early. On March 13, 2018, HUD cancelled the request for proposals and indicated that it would be revamping the solicitation.

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### Forging Strong, Effective Relationships

As with most other enterprises, one key factor for achieving such successes lies in establishing relationships. HFAs must develop relationships to get into the room with legislators. For KHC those relationships came from within, but only after individuals invested many years in building trust and rapport. In-state legislative staff can serve as an important resource, but it is unlikely that they will provide a direct conduit to the legislator in Washington, D.C. It is highly recommended that executive management look for extant opportunities among staff and/or board members who might already have connections. If an HFA lacks those natural linkages, they may wish to reach out to partner organizations within their state to identify other routes of access. HFAs can also look for important linkages in the resumes of prospective board members and staff.

After forging strong relationships, the HFA must create a clear strategy to leverage those relationships and deliver an effective message. KHC built its strategy around certain objectives on which we felt it plausible that we could gain some ground. It is important to present a specific and targeted message rather than aimlessly toss up multiple issues and simply settle on what “sticks”. Even if a legislator may not seem supportive of affordable housing, there are likely ways to secure support for certain provisions. Research what issues are important to each representative and senator so you can identify and prioritize the legislative issues that you will address. This information will arm you to identify ways to demonstrate that affordable housing is important to one or more of those issues. It will also enable you to anticipate philosophical stances so you can have responses prepared for potential questions. For example, if a representative’s district is composed largely of a rural area, the presentation can be couched in terms of using bond transactions to preserve rural housing as a determinant of job growth and economic viability within the district.

When approaching legislators, it can be important to demonstrate that there is consensus on the issues you are advocating. Staff may wish to emphasize that your HFA is part of a larger coalition that generally subscribes to the same viewpoints. The fact that most of KHC’s goals aligned with NCSHA goals suggested that there would be minimum opposition to our position. **Furthermore, collaborating with partner organizations and associations can help ensure that you understand all positions and can establish your HFA as a credible representative of the affordable housing industry within your state. For one of the meetings with legislators, KHC invited a development partner to participate. This allowed us to have an external partner in the room to talk about the efficiencies of having program funding administered by a single agency.**

For Kentucky Housing Corporation the benefits of our federal legislative advocacy efforts far outweighed the costs. The costs to KHC were nominal in comparison with the value of the gains. Much of the work to arrange appointments with legislators was done by an unpaid Board member. The financial costs to KHC essentially fell to travel expenses and staff time. Moreover, as relationships are developed with legislators, the costs decrease over time because the more direct contacts lead to greater effectiveness without having to incur the time and expense of travelling as frequently. KHC has been able to use corporate resources effectively by consolidating trips to meet with multiple legislators over the span of just two days. This gave us a much higher return on our investment in advocacy.

Supporting Documents

[Photos with Federal Legislators](#)