

ELEVATOR PITCH



When we meet new people, one of the questions we're asked most is: *What do you do?*

As affordable housing professionals, that's not always the easiest question to answer. We live in a world of jargon, acronyms, and HUD forms – but the rest of the world does not. When we're explaining our jobs and organizations to our friends, family, clients, and the community, it's important that we make sure they understand who we are, what we do, and why it's important.

You can help break down barriers to understanding by crafting an **elevator pitch**.

WHAT IS AN ELEVATOR PITCH?

A simple, 30-second introduction to your work and its importance. That's it!

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Depending on your role, your answer to "What do you do?" might be vastly different than your Executive Director, or a member of your board. Regardless of who is talking about your organization – and to whom they're talking – there should be some consistency in the answer.

Your organization is a brand, and you work hard to provide high-quality service to your community. Consistent messaging (in this case, the elevator pitch) will help ensure there are never any questions about who you are, what you do, and the services you provide for your community.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

As you fill out this worksheet, think of ways you can simplify your description so that it makes sense to anyone, regardless of how familiar they are with your organization.

Elevator pitches aren't meant to replace the long paragraphs in your brochures or on your website – they're meant to spark a conversation. Think of this like an appetizer, rather than a full meal. For those who are hungry for more, they'll ask questions to gain deeper understanding. If they're ok with just the appetizer, you'll know that another member of your community is properly informed on you, your organization, and your mission.

There are three basic sections to the elevator pitch. The first two sections are specific to you – the person who is speaking. That means it'll be slightly different from your coworkers – that's ok! It's meant to be that way. The third section, however, should be the same. This is where you'll put your **mission**, or the reason your organization is in business. This will ensure that there is message consistency, regardless of who is speaking and to whom they're speaking.

ELEVATOR PITCH



A stronger Illinois begins at home.

Hey, my name is _____, and I work at

_____.

You know how (*state the problem*) _____

_____?

Well, what I/we do is (*state how you solve it*) _____

so that (*state the benefit*) _____

because (*state your mission*) _____

_____.

EXAMPLE

Hey, my name is Timm, and I'm a Marketing Capacity Building Specialist at Housing Action Illinois. All nonprofits need to market themselves to their community but, too often, they lack the time, staff, or budget to do it. So, what I do is create sustainable marketing programs with housing counseling agencies, so that they can reach their communities more efficiently and effectively, because everyone in Illinois deserves access to safe, decent, and affordable housing.

Wait – why does yours look different?

I've changed my elevator pitch slightly to match how I speak – I want it to sound natural, not forced. Start off by using this template as a guide, then edit it slightly to match the way *you* speak. Just remember: everyone should have the same last line!