

Emergency Home Repairs Virgin Islands: *Creating the Program Identity to Achieve Success*

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Mother Nature Deals a Serious Blow...

– Hurricanes Irma and Maria left in their wake extreme devastation of the US Virgin Islands – *September 2017 was not a good month*

- St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John and the smaller inhabited islands all were impacted
- 33,000 people applied for FEMA assistance (one third of the Territory population)
- Tourism – the Territory's economic lifeline – ground to a halt
- Lack of power, clean water, and basic services to survive left Virgin Islanders in dire straights



AECOM's Immediate Response...

- At the Governor's request and within 48 hours of Maria's landfall, AECOM disaster response experts, architects, and engineers were on the ground conducting damage assessments
 - Initially focused on impacts to schools
 - Daily coordination with FEMA, Bloomberg Philanthropies and the US Army Corps of Engineers



AECOM's Immediate Response...

- Scope of work expanded to include rapid assessments of other government facilities under a competitively awarded Master Service Agreement
- 500 government buildings, hospitals and other critical facilities
- Follow-on work awarded to AECOM to further the Territory's recovery:
 - Kindergarten through 12th Grade Modular Schools Program
 - Sheltering and Temporary Emergency Power Program, or STEP
- *Today's presentation will focus on STEP*



The Communications Challenge...

- Rapid response needed to quickly and safely get homeowners back into their homes before the next hurricane season
- How to raise awareness about the program when the usual ways to communicate and share information severely constrained
- Information overload – many, many offers to help – how to make sure STEP is a credible program to help homeowners



Overcoming the Challenge...

- Working with the US Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority, AECOM played a key role in raising awareness and encouraging participation. First we....

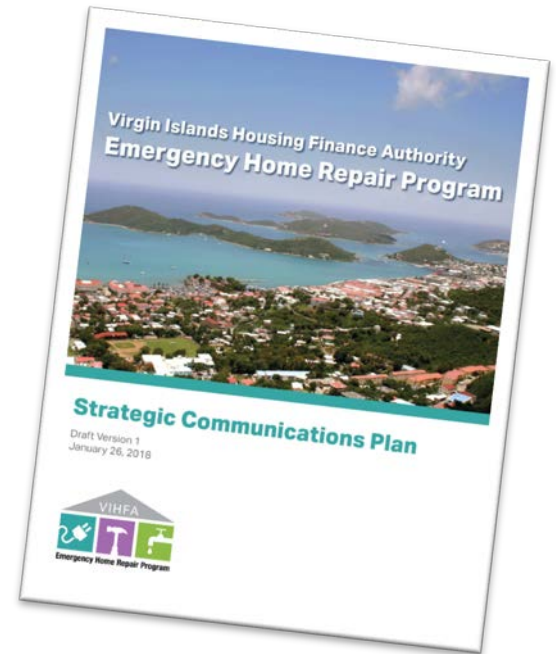


(what would you do?)

Overcoming the Challenge...

...Developed an outreach plan that served as the “roadmap” for all communications and outreach activities going forward. Key plan elements included:

- *Goals and objectives.* Simply put, we needed to:
 - Raise awareness
 - Get homeowners enrolled in the program (target 10,000)
 - Help meet eligibility requirements
- *Primary target audience.* Another straightforward one:
 - Single family homeowners
- *Secondary target audiences.* Not as simple – influencers who would encourage program participation:
 - Faith-based organizations
 - Non-governmental organizations
 - Elected officials



Overcoming the Challenge...

- Next out of the gate...establish the program identity and brand!
 - STEP acronym meaningless to homeowners
 - Visual “marker” coupled with key messages better communicated purpose and intent (increase awareness first, then understanding)



Overcoming the Challenge...

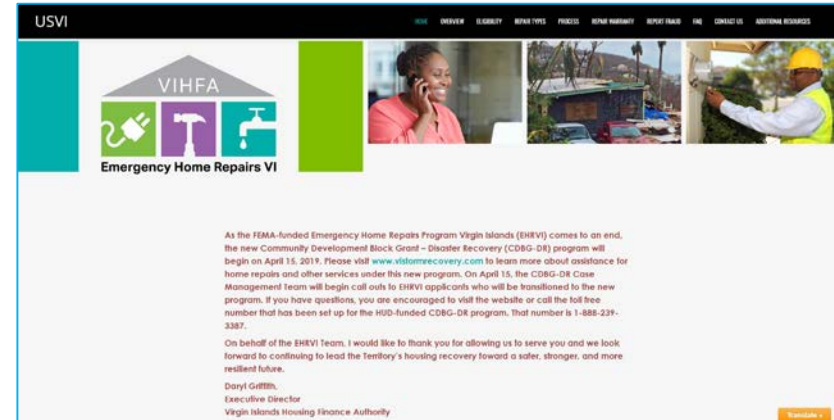
- Along a parallel path we aggressively implemented a 15-day “fast start” plan – *communications and task execution closely linked*

	Pre-Award		Day 1	Day 2	Day 7	Day 15
Call Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish toll free program number. Develop Call Center scripts. Develop Call Center Training manual. Secure Atlanta office space. Secure IT hardware and software. 	NTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call Center scripts ready for USVI review. Train call center staff. Test equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go live. Call Center staff size approx. 5 CSRs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call Center staff size approx. 10 CSRs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call Center staff size approx. 20 CSRs.
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure URLs. Mock-up initial draft of website. Develop navigation and site map. 	NTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website is operational. Website review and approval by USVI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go live. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online applications available. 	
Site Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm Disaster Response Center Locations. Complete DR and office space layouts. 	NTP				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disaster Response Centers open. Begin taking walk-in applications. Completed Eligibility form.
Case Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure IT hardware (toughbooks, and communication devices). Develop Case Manager Training Manual. Integrate with outreach strategy. 	NTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train Case Manager staff. Test equipment. Cross train Case Managers with call center equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate Case Managers. Perform eligibility verification and application QA/QC. Case Manager staff size approx. 5. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin scheduling inspections. Case Manager staff size approx. 10. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case Manager staff size approx. 20.
Subcontracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compiling sub-contractor information. Coordination of subcontractor info in AECOM database. Review T&Cs. Review Scope. Review rate and fees. 	NTP			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure and finalize contracts with subcontractors. 	
Program Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft program guide. Draft Process for intake and eligibility. 	NTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft PMP ready for review. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall Menu of Project Control systems dashboards and links ready for review. 	

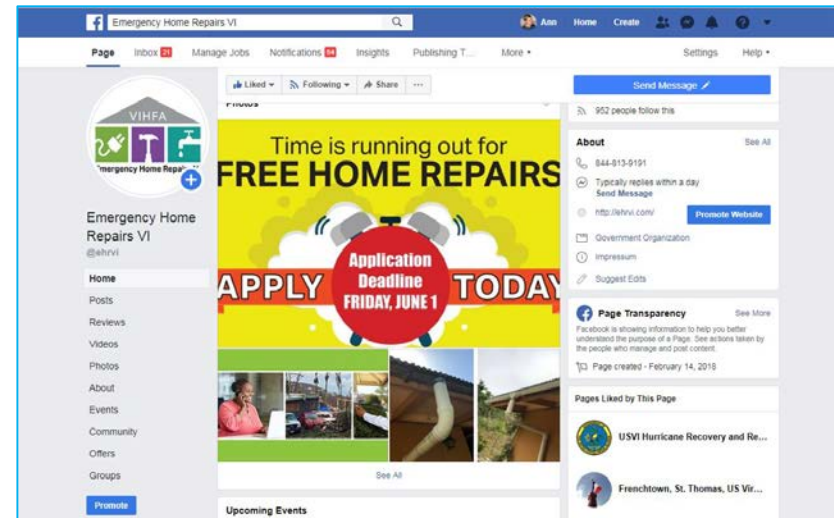
Overcoming the Challenge...

- “Feeding the beast”...how to make people aware and enroll – target 10,000 applicants by June 1, 2018!
- Game on! “Surround sound” approach to communications:
 - EHRVI.com website
 - Social media (primarily Facebook)
 - Paid and earned advertising
 - Radio (talk shows, spots)
 - Printed materials (English, Spanish, Braille)
 - Outreach and intake events
 - “Boots on the Ground”
 - Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and Faith-Based outreach

<https://www.ehrvi.com/>



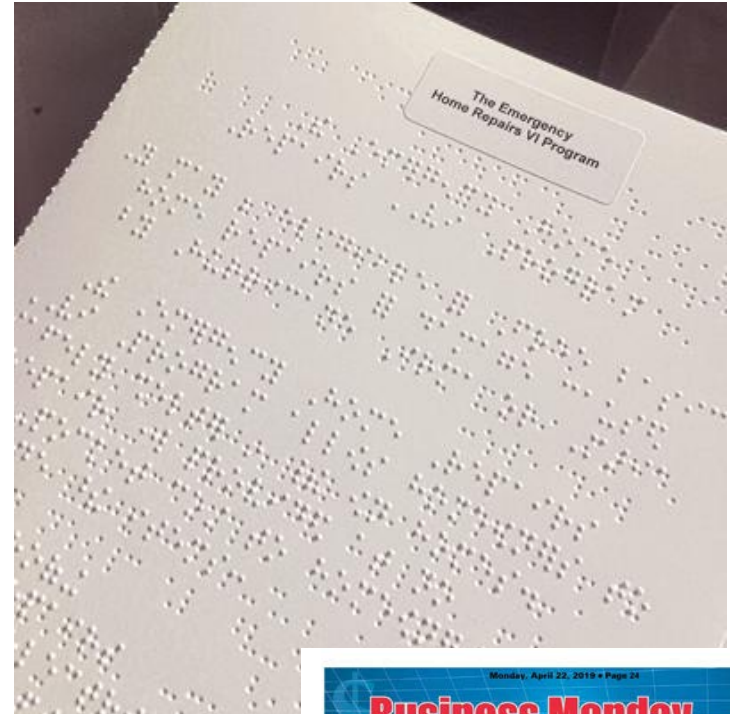
<https://www.facebook.com/ehrvi/>



Overcoming the Challenge...

– Engaged local award-winning PR talent – MLB Creative

- Leveraged local contacts/relationships
- Mobilized locals to staff temporary intake centers within 24 hours of NTP
- Assisted with product development and ad placement (newspapers, theater)
- Braille piece won an Addy!



A few examples...



At every turn...



Important initiatives critical for Program success...

– “Boots on the Ground”

- Aided enrollment and eligibility
- Direct outreach to homeowners

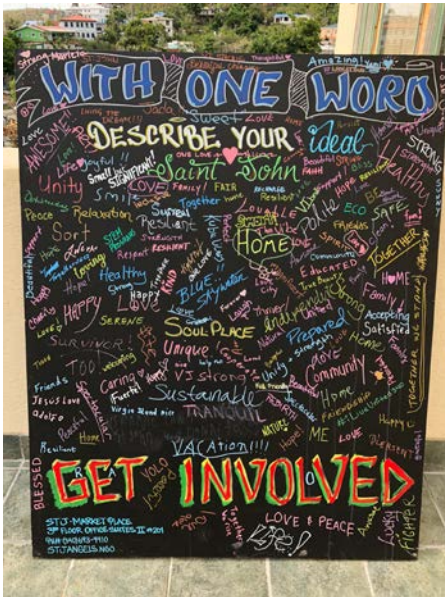


– Walk-in Centers

- Stood up within days of NTP
- Staffed with caring staff, many of them local

Important initiatives critical for Program success...

- Faith-based and NGO outreach
 - Worked within established networks
 - Third party endorsement



- Outreach/Intake Events
 - High traffic areas (banks, grocery stores)
 - Special events

Mission accomplished...

- Program outcomes a measure of outreach success
 - By June 1, 2018 the Program received 10,353 applications
 - Over 8,500 homes were inspected to determine eligibility
 - Almost 7,000 homes received repairs, including basic and permanent roof repairs (authorized by FEMA)
- Lessons to be learned along to the way
 - Engage local resources to better ensure credibility
 - Intake and case management
 - Public relations and outreach support
 - Faith-based and NGOs
 - Respond rapidly to issues and concerns as they come up – don't delay!
 - Plan early and stick to the plan – be prepared for curve balls
 - To sum it up...



(Play Video)



