



HCCP Designee of the Year: Kelly Wakefield

*Executive Vice President
Preferred Compliance Solutions*

Kelly Wakefield is a seasoned professional in the affordable housing industry with a career that began in 2005 as a compliance specialist. Kelly has honed her expertise from designing effective compliance programs and simplifying complex regulations into clear, understandable concepts. Kelly is passionate about leveraging technology to drive progress and keep up with the latest industry trends. Education and advocacy are at the core of Kelly's mission. Kelly holds certifications such as the Housing Credit Certified Professional (HCCP) and Certified Occupancy Specialist (COS) and was recently named the 2024 HCCP of the year. She actively contributes to the industry by serving as a distributor of the National Association of Home Builders' (NAHB) HCCP exam and on the Education Committee. She is a founding board member and current Vice President of the Florida Chapter of the Women's Affordable Housing Network, where she helps advocate for women in the industry and supports initiatives to expand affordable housing access.

How has the HCCP designation impacted your career?

Prior to taking the HCCP exam I was very intimidated by the idea of it. My exposure to affordable housing at that point had primarily been related to compliance. After taking the course and the exam, I began to make the connection of how every person's role could impact someone else. Having the HCCP designation gave me confidence as well as a desire to learn more about each facet of the industry. This designation has made me passionate about education in the industry. I want everyone to have the resources to learn more, so regardless of someone's position they can better understand how their job fits into the big picture. I love to see concepts start to click and the excitement that they feel when they earn their HCCP.



How did you get into the LIHTC industry?

Like most people, this temporary job reviewing people's application for housing was never intended to be long term. After I finished school, I applied for a job with the State Department and was going through the hiring rounds. While waiting, I started in compliance... and just never left! I'm grateful for Jose Aponte's willingness to give me a 'temporary job' and teaching me compliance. He could see I was eager to learn more and has provided a lot of opportunities for growth.

What are your day-to-day responsibilities?

I get to do bits and pieces of a lot of different things that allow me to collaborate with many throughout the industry and make each day unique. While it doesn't feel like it was that long ago that I was reviewing applications on a daily basis, now I oversee our Asset Management division that does annual audits, on-site certification support, and syndicator or investor reviews. I also spearhead external training and stay updated on the latest regulatory changes. Another big focus is determining how we can utilize technology to help our team, the site staff and applicants facilitate a faster and more reliable compliance result. Our digital tenant application, CertifyMe, programmatically guides the tenant through the process based on state and program requirements.

What helped with your success in the LIHTC industry?

I have had champions mentoring me and cheering me on throughout my career. I am so grateful for those that have patiently answered questions, offered advice as well as opened doors and opportunities for me to continue to grow and learn. Beyond these people and the relationships, I have tried hard to stay curious and open to exploring other's viewpoints and perspectives.

What's your favorite hobby?

I love to learn! I've recently been taking advantage of local classes, discussions and events. This year I've done a flower arranging and junk journaling class, learned how to landscape using native plants and attended a panel on American foreign policy. This spring I'll be putting my design skills to the test with a planned remodel of the primary bathroom in my 100-year-old historic home.