



HCV LANDLORD STRATEGIES GUIDEBOOK FOR PHAs



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HCV LANDLORD GUIDEBOOK INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) responded to declining trends in landlord participation in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program by creating a Landlord Task Force. The mission of the Task Force is “to explore common barriers experienced by landlords and develop strategies to address, and tools to alleviate, those barriers.” The HCV Landlord Strategies Guidebook for PHAs is one outcome of this mission.

THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The HCV Program is the largest subsidized rental housing program in the United States, administered by 2,100 of the nation’s 3,300 public housing agencies (PHAs) and housing nearly 2.3 million households. PHAs administer the program in a wide variety of housing markets and communities. PHAs oversee and administer the program with direction and funding from the federal government through HUD. The local PHAs provide voucher families support in their search for housing. Beyond a voucher briefing, where PHAs let voucher holders know how to use their vouchers, PHAs determine their own search support activities based on the availability of affordable

housing in their local market, the size of their voucher program, and budget and staffing considerations.

Private market landlords partner with PHAs to supply decent, safe, sanitary, and moderately-priced rental properties for voucher families. HCV landlords screen voucher families, maintain units, implement leases, and interact with voucher families throughout the tenancy. The landlord receives a portion of the rent from the voucher family and the remaining portion through a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) from the PHA, which subsidizes the family’s rent to make it affordable.

DECREASE IN LANDLORD PARTICIPATION

Unfortunately, the number of landlords participating in the voucher program has declined in recent years. In a review of administrative data, HUD found that in 2008, 38.3 landlords participated in the program for every 100 households, but in 2018 that number had dropped to 34.2 landlords for every 100 households. [Another study](#) estimated that between 2010 and 2016 this downward trend amounted to roughly 60,000 fewer landlords participating in the program. A reduction



in participating landlords has far-reaching consequences both for families and housing authorities.

CONSEQUENCES OF DECLINING LANDLORD PARTICIPATION

The most obvious negative consequence of declining landlord participation falls on voucher families. Some people receive vouchers after waiting for years on a PHA's waiting list. With fewer landlords participating in the HCV program, options for voucher holders searching on the private market may be much more limited. The families who might benefit most from the voucher program are those who likely have the hardest time finding landlords who will accept them: people with disabilities, formerly unhoused people, people with little or no income, and people with large families—even though discrimination on the basis of disability and familial status is illegal, and some states and localities prohibit discrimination against HCV holders. If a family with a voucher is unable to locate a landlord willing to accept their voucher within a certain period of time, the voucher expires and the family loses the subsidy. Some PHAs operating in particularly competitive markets extend their clients' voucher expiration dates up to a year to provide families additional time to locate appropriate housing.

The lack of landlord participation in a locality's HCV Program has both direct and indirect consequences for PHAs as well. When fewer families succeed in using their vouchers or when the lease-up process is significantly slowed, the PHAs' voucher utilization rates can decline, which negatively affects their Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) score. When voucher families take longer to lease up or fail to lease up, the prolonged process costs the PHA in time and resources. PHAs only get paid administrative fees for leased units.

Fewer landlords participating can also have a negative effect on a PHA's efforts to recruit new landlords. Potential new landlords may be wary of giving the program a try if not many of their colleagues participate. A stigma about the program can develop in the local market, which can further hinder the PHA's voucher lease-up rates.

When the program is not able to recruit or retain adequate numbers of landlords, more voucher holders fail to find housing. They may remain unhoused or in precarious living situations. The situation harms individual families and harms local communities through increased demand for scarce resources, overcrowding, and decreased community investment.

When the program is not able to recruit or retain adequate numbers of landlords in higher opportunity neighborhoods, voucher families may be concentrated in high poverty, low-opportunity areas within the PHA's jurisdiction where landlords cannot find qualified market-rate tenants. When this happens, the program both fails to create housing choice and does not allow families to access the potential benefits of living in higher opportunity neighborhoods. A PHA whose vouchers are concentrated in low-opportunity racially segregated areas may be in noncompliance with its fair housing and civil rights obligations.

PHA-LANDLORD GOALS BASED ON ADDRESSING LANDLORD AND PHA CONCERNS

Through the HUD Landlord Task Force, HUD has taken steps to increase landlord participation and retain landlords already working with the program. To gather data for recommendations and goals for increasing participation, the HUD Landlord Task Force first conducted a series of Landlord Listening Sessions across the country in Washington, DC; Atlanta, GA; Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; Philadelphia, PA; Los Angeles, CA;





Salem, OR; and Salt Lake City, UT. These sessions engaged 330 landlords and representatives from industry groups in large listening sessions as well as several smaller focus groups. The Task Force also engaged with 23 PHAs through three focus groups with large, medium, and small voucher programs and conducted in-depth solo interviews to hear landlord engagement strategies. Several HUD-funded research studies also provided insight into why landlords may choose not to participate in the program, largely echoing what was learned during the listening sessions, focus groups, and interviews. The table that follows outlines goals for PHAs aimed at increasing landlord participation and retention in the program. The goals reflect concerns identified through Task Force research activities.

PHA-Landlord Goals	Identified Concerns
<p>Improve PHA landlord support: Landlords should have accurate expectations of PHA support and know how to access these supports when they have an issue the PHA can help them resolve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of concern for landlord’s needs • Lack of support in tenant-landlord conflicts
<p>Improve communication: Good communication means landlords’ inquiries are responded to in a professional and timely manner. All landlords receive the same information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord phone calls, emails, mail receiving no response • General poor customer services skills • No specific point of contact for landlord-related issues
<p>Clarify and improve consistency of inspection procedures and scheduling: Expectations about inspections should be clear and inspections should be consistent across inspectors. Inspections should be scheduled to efficiently utilize inspectors’ and landlords’ time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in inspections • Long windows for inspections appointments • Seemingly punitive deficiencies • Abatements • Lack of guidance on why a unit failed inspection • Lack of uniformity between inspectors or between policy and practice
<p>Improve tenant-landlord relationships: HCV voucher families and landlords who have clear expectations about their roles and responsibilities may experience fewer complaints and less turnover of units.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voucher families lack understanding of their responsibilities to keep up the property • Voucher families tend to pay rent late compared to market rate tenants



<p>Reduce landlord burden in tenant-caused damages: If voucher families damage units, landlords may have difficulty collecting payment from voucher families for the repairs. Reducing the costs of tenant-caused damage offers landlords peace of mind and makes the voucher program a smarter financial choice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding for tenant-caused damages • Lack of ability to remove voucher families who caused damage • Failed inspections due to tenant-caused damages
<p>Reduce lease-up delays leading to lost rental income: Faster lease-ups mean landlords can start generating rental revenue more quickly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional required paperwork • Lack of electronic options for paperwork filing • Time to process Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) • Scheduling of initial inspections and re-inspections
<p>Improve understanding of affordability and rent reasonableness: When voucher families and landlords understand affordability and rent reasonableness, they are more likely to choose units and voucher families that can be subsidized by the HCV Program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to understand how much rent a tenant can afford • Unclear what the voucher family's rent portion will be • Confusion regarding difference between rent reasonableness and affordability • Confusion around utilities and how they relate to voucher amount
<p>Increase rent competitiveness: When more units are affordable for voucher families under a PHA's HCV Program, more landlords may be willing to participate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord can get higher rent with market rate tenant • Rent reasonableness not reflective of the market • Confusion over pricing for small area Fair Market Rent (FMR) boundaries
<p>Minimize bureaucracy: Reducing processes or making them easier to navigate helps to more closely align the HCV Program with the private market, decreasing a potential trade-off for landlords in accepting voucher families instead of market-rate tenants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General bureaucratic process causes lack of control over their business • Too many delays due to lack of technology • Paperwork procedures take too long
<p>Attract new landlords: As old landlords exit the market, PHAs need to continually attract new landlords to rent their units to HCV tenants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downward trends in landlord participation across the country • Downward trends in HCV families' lease-up success rates

HUD INITIATIVES TO INCREASE LANDLORD PARTICIPATION

Utilizing this feedback from landlords across the country, HUD has undertaken a range of steps aimed at improving landlords' experiences with the voucher program. These include making more information easily accessible to landlords, developing new flexibilities for PHAs, creating new spaces for landlords, PHAs, and HUD to connect, and developing this Guidebook. In developing the Guidebook, the Task Force identified strategies that address these common concerns and outlined associated goals to help PHAs increase and maintain landlord participation. These strategies can be replicated and adapted to fit the circumstances of many PHAs.



Process Improvements

Each chapter categorizes how the strategies can improve high-level process areas across PHAs. The process improvements are broadly defined below:

Increase Recruitment – Develop and carry out methods of locating and attracting new landlords or landlords who left the program.

Increase Retention – Implement policies, activities, and incentives to increase the satisfaction of landlords currently participating in the program.

Improve Responsiveness – Listen and respond to landlords in ways that recognize what the landlords' interests are, while not devaluing the perspective of the PHA and the voucher family. It can involve communication, policies, forms, processes, and outreach.

Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship – Implement strategies that help set expectations of landlords of leasing, tenancy, and termination of tenancy; educate on roles and responsibilities of landlords and voucher families; and offer supports for voucher families and landlords.

Improve the Inspection Process – Implement strategies to improve landlords' experiences around inspections, including scheduling appointments and delays; inspector-landlord relations; housing quality standards and other HUD-approved physical inspections standards guidance; inspections responsibilities; deficiencies, reporting, and remedies; costs of inspections, inspection delays, and deficiencies; and abatement.

Minimize Bureaucracy – Working with the HCV Program necessarily requires compliance with PHA and program rules, regulations, and legislation to ensure that the program operates legally, fairly, transparently, and consistently. There are, however, forms that can be more clearly explained, processes that can be streamlined, and information that can be more readily accessible to remove excess bureaucracy.

The following chapters are a product of these efforts. PHAs of all shapes and sizes can find useful strategies and insights in the Guidebook to increase and maintain landlord participation in their communities. Chapter Two, *Choosing the Right Strategies for Your Community*, offers considerations for PHAs to keep in mind while choosing from the many suggested strategies to develop a strategy implementation plan that fits the PHA's specific needs and resources. The remaining chapters outline strategies grouped by topic areas:

- [*Education and Outreach*](#)
- [*Technology*](#)
- [*Landlord-Focused Customer Service*](#)
- [*Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements*](#)
- [*Inspections*](#)
- [*Matching Local Rental Markets*](#)
- [*Partnerships*](#)

As the table on the next page shows, there are strategies that can be effective across multiple process improvement categories. For example, the Landlord Point of Contact strategy and the Landlord HCV Webpage strategy can be used for process improvements in all six categories.



Strategy by Process Improvement

Chapter	Strategy	Increase Recruitment	Increase Retention	Improve Responsiveness	Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	Improve Inspections Process	Minimize Bureaucracy
<u>Education and Outreach</u>	New Landlord Orientation	X	X	X		X	X
	Landlord Outreach Events	X	X	X		X	X
	Tenant Education		X		X	X	X
	Expanding your Network	X	X	X			
	Information Sharing		X			X	X
<u>Technology</u>	HCV Landlord Webpage	X	X	X	X	X	X
	HCV Landlord Portal		X	X	X	X	X
	Inspections Technology		X	X		X	X
	Landlord Point of Contact	X	X	X	X	X	X
<u>Landlord-Focused Customer Service</u>	Landlord Customer Service Responsiveness	X	X	X	X		X
	Call Center		X	X			X
	Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements	X	X				
<u>Inspections</u>	Inspections Guidance for Landlords		X			X	X
	Consistent Inspections		X	X	X	X	
	Inspections Scheduling		X	X		X	X
	Administrative Inspections Flexibilities		X			X	X
<u>Matching Local Rental Markets</u>	Matching Local Rental Markets	X	X				X
<u>Partnerships</u>	Relationships and Resources	X	X		X		X
	PHA Collaboration	X	X		X		X



This Guidebook is the culmination of a variety of projects aimed to increase recruitment and retention of landlords in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. With topic areas ranging from customer services and technology to partnerships and matching local rental markets, PHAs of all shapes and sizes can find guidance and best practices to improve their performance with landlords within the Guidebook.

RESOURCES

Evidence Matters: Landlords and Vouchers: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/EM-Newsletter-Winter2019.pdf>

Landlord Participation Study: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/Landlord-Participation-Study-Final-Report.pdf>

Urban Landlords and the Housing Choice Voucher Program: A Research Report: https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/Research_Report_HCV-Program.pdf

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Housing Choice Voucher Program Landlord Listening Forums and Focus Groups, September – October 2018: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/ListeningForumsPublicSummary012320.pdf>







CHOOSING THE RIGHT STRATEGIES FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

This Guidebook contains multiple strategies that can improve a public housing agency's (PHA's) relationship with landlords. When choosing a strategy to implement, PHAs should consider which of their goals have the highest priority and which strategy or strategies might have the greatest impact. This chapter is designed to help PHAs think through which strategies aimed at improving landlord participation might be the best fit for their Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program.

The first section of this chapter briefly discusses how to determine which goals a PHA may be ready to tackle and the associated strategies that might fit best. The second section provides PHAs with a set of considerations when weighing costs and benefits of each strategy. Finally, PHAs that want to dig a bit deeper into the decision-making process and program evaluation can also read the case study in this chapter and [Appendix A](#). Put together, this chapter helps guide PHAs towards choosing the right strategies for their PHA based on the PHA's unique circumstances.

WHERE TO START: SELECTING GOALS

Making a change should begin with PHAs identifying their PHA-landlord goals as

described in the Introduction of the Guidebook. These goals were compiled as a result of landlord listening sessions, PHA focus groups and interviews, and research on the HCV Program. For a definition of each PHA-landlord goal, see the PHA-Landlord Goal by Strategy table in this chapter. The PHA-landlord goals include:

PHA-LANDLORD GOALS

- Improve Landlord Support
- Improve Communication
- Clarify and Improve the Consistency of Inspection Procedures and Scheduling
- Improve Tenant-Landlord Relations
- Reduce Landlord Burden in Tenant-Caused Damages
- Reduce Lease-Up Delays Leading to Lost Rental Income
- Improve Understanding of Affordability and Rent Reasonableness
- Increase Rent Competitiveness
- Minimize Bureaucracy
- Attract New Landlords



Some PHAs may already have a set of PHA-landlord goals they have established and tracked over time. For example, PHAs may already track items that impact landlords' ability to lease and collect rent for units, such as the following:

- Lease-up time for voucher holders
- Bottlenecks in the lease-up process
- Cancelled inspections appointments due to landlord or voucher family failure to grant access

Other PHAs may have a less clear picture of the PHA-landlord goals they want to focus on to improve landlord experiences with their HCV Program. Some easy ways to begin understanding potential issues are to survey landlords at events, ask for feedback as part of your other communication with landlords, and talk with PHA staff who interact with landlords on a regular basis.

For PHAs that want to gather more detailed information on their landlord relations indicators, see [Appendix A](#) for suggestions on how to measure performance on PHA-landlord goals. PHAs may choose to select specific markers of improvement in order to identify when they have achieved their goal. For example, a PHA may choose to indicate that they have achieved their goal to "Reduce Lease-up Delays Leading to Lost Rental Income" when the average time between receipt of a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) to scheduled inspection time is reduced to an average of 2 business days and inspections are scheduled an average of 1 week in advance of the inspection.

PHAs might alternatively consider aligning their selection of strategies to the types of PHA process improvements identified at the beginning of each strategy chapter in the Guidebook:

PHA PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase Recruitment• Increase Retention• Improve Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship• Improve Inspection Process• Minimize Bureaucracy

PHAs should review their goals and their strategies to achieve those goals on a regular basis. Periodic reviews help PHAs stay up to date on the latest business practices and methods to engage with landlords and voucher families. PHAs should remember that today's challenges and solutions may not be the same as those down the road.

STRATEGIES FOR EVERY GOAL

Following the identification of goals, PHAs should identify the strategies that can help them achieve those goals. The strategies, outlined in the following chart, are grouped by PHA-landlord goal. Some strategies can help PHAs pursue multiple goals, whereas others are more singularly focused on attaining one goal. The links in the strategy description will take the reader straight to the full strategy within its Guidebook chapter.



PHA-Landlord Goal by Strategy

PHA-Landlord Goals	Guidebook Strategy	Guidebook Chapter
<p>IMPROVE PHA LANDLORD SUPPORT Landlords should have accurate expectations of PHA support and know how to access these supports when they have an issue the PHA can help them resolve.</p>	<p>Landlord Point of Contact – Have a staff member dedicated specifically to landlord-related issues where landlords can quickly get in touch with the PHA.</p>	Landlord-Focused Customer Service
	<p>Relationships and Resources – Partner with a local organization that can offer landlord point-of-contact services for landlords.</p>	Partnerships
	<p>PHA Collaboration – Coordinate paperwork and policies with a neighboring PHA to make the process easier for landlords.</p>	
	<p>Landlord Outreach Events – Offer educational sessions that help landlords understand who to contact and set reasonable expectations regarding support and services.</p>	Education and Outreach
<p>IMPROVE COMMUNICATION Good communication means landlords' inquiries are responded to in a professional and timely manner. All landlords receive the same information.</p>	<p>Landlord Point of Contact – Have a staff member dedicated to responding in a timely manner to landlord inquiries.</p>	Landlord-Focused Customer Service
	<p>Call Center – Implement a call center with knowledgeable staff that can answer questions and direct callers.</p>	
	<p>HCV Landlord Webpage – Create a landlord-focused webpage with information on frequently asked questions.</p>	Technology
	<p>HCV Landlord Portal – Implement an online portal where existing HCV landlords can fill out documents, check their payments, and see inspection results.</p>	
	<p>Information Sharing – Select from a range of methods to get relevant information out to landlords and sometimes prospective landlords.</p>	Education and Outreach
<p>IMPROVE CONSISTENCY OF INSPECTIONS PROCEDURES AND SCHEDULING Expectations about inspections should be clear and inspections should be consistent across inspectors. Inspections should be scheduled to efficiently utilize inspectors' and landlords' time.</p>	<p>Inspections Guidance for Landlords – Provide easily accessible information to landlords.</p>	
	<p>Consistent Inspections – Implement practices to ensure consistency across inspections and inspectors.</p>	Inspections
	<p>Inspections Scheduling – Implement changes to make scheduling practices more efficient.</p>	
	<p>Administrative Inspections Flexibilities – Update PHA policies to use options to make inspections more efficient.</p>	
	<p>Inspections Technology – Use advances in technology to make inspections more efficient.</p>	Technology
	<p>Administrative Flexibilities – Review allowed flexibilities for options to make inspections more efficient such as using photos to identify corrected deficiencies.</p>	Administrative Flexibilities to Enhance Landlord Satisfaction
	<p>PHA Collaboration – Align policies and practices that deal with inspections with neighboring PHAs.</p>	Partnerships



PHA-Landlord Goals	Guidebook Strategy	Guidebook Chapter
<p>IMPROVE TENANT-LANDLORD RELATIONSHIPS Tenants and landlords who have clear expectations about their roles and responsibilities may experience fewer complaints and less turnover of units.</p>	<p>Tenant Education – Ensure that voucher families understand their responsibilities under the lease and other HCV Family Obligations.</p>	<p>Education and Outreach</p>
	<p>New Landlord Orientation – Ensure landlords understand their responsibility in screening and enforcing the lease.</p>	
	<p>Relationships and Resources – Refer landlords and voucher families to mediation services provided by nonprofit community organizations to keep voucher families housed and landlords in the HCV Program.</p>	<p>Partnerships</p>
<p>REDUCE LANDLORD BURDEN IN TENANT-CAUSED DAMAGES If voucher families damage units, landlords may have difficulty collecting payment from voucher families for the repairs. Reducing the costs of tenant-caused damage offers landlords peace of mind and makes the voucher program a smarter financial choice.</p>	<p>Inspections Guidance for Landlords – Provide information to ensure that voucher families and landlords understand their responsibilities on inspections.</p>	<p>Inspections</p>
	<p>Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements – Offer a mitigation fund for landlords seeking to cover damages or security deposits to voucher families.</p>	<p>Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements</p>
	<p>Relationships and Resources – Work with local or state agencies to create a mitigation fund for landlords of subsidized voucher families.</p>	<p>Partnerships</p>
<p>REDUCE LEASE-UP DELAYS LEADING TO LOST RENTAL INCOME Faster lease-ups mean landlords can start generating rental revenue more quickly.</p>	<p>Monetary Incentives and Reimbursement – Pay landlord holding fees or lease-up bonuses to support keeping a unit available for voucher family.</p>	<p>Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements</p>
	<p>HCV Landlord Portal – Implement an online portal where landlords can fill out and submit documents, and see inspection results.</p>	<p>Technology</p>
	<p>Inspections Technology – Use technology to make inspections more efficient, which can improve the average lease-up time.</p>	
	<p>Inspections Scheduling – Use different scheduling practices to streamline the inspections process leading to faster inspections.</p>	
	<p>Administrative Inspections Flexibilities – Speed up the tenancy process with options such as alternative inspections for units in properties that have passed inspection during the last 24 months, permitting occupancy before correction of deficiencies that are non-life-threatening, or moving to a biennial schedule for periodic inspections to free up inspectors' time for initial inspections.</p>	<p>Inspections</p>



PHA-Landlord Goals	Guidebook Strategy	Guidebook Chapter
<p>IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF AFFORDABILITY AND RENT REASONABLENESS When voucher families and landlords understand affordability and rent reasonableness, they are more likely to choose units and voucher families that can be subsidized by the HCV Program.</p>	<p>New Landlord Orientation – Inform landlords about how the rent is set on a unit.</p>	<p>Education and Outreach</p>
	<p>Information Sharing – Select from a range of methods to get relevant information about how rents are set and what payment standards are to landlords.</p>	
	<p>Landlord Point of Contact – Have a staff member dedicated to answering landlord questions, including how the rent is set.</p>	<p>Landlord-Focused Customer Service</p>
<p>INCREASE RENT COMPETITIVENESS When more units are affordable for voucher families under a PHA's HCV Program, more landlords may be willing to participate.</p>	<p>Matching Local Rental Markets – Setting payment standards that are competitive for moderately-priced housing by neighborhood so landlords are less likely to encounter issues with their rents being unaffordable for HCV voucher families.</p>	<p>Matching Local Rental Markets</p>
<p>MINIMIZE BUREAUCRACY Reducing processes or making them easier to navigate helps to more closely align the HCV Program with the private market, decreasing a potential trade-off for landlords in selecting voucher families over market-rate tenants.</p>	<p>HCV Landlord Portal – Implement an online portal where landlords can download and fill out documents, check the status of their requests and payments, and see inspection results. Consider making forms fillable with an option to submit electronically.</p>	<p>Technology</p>
	<p>HCV Landlord Webpage – On a landlord webpage, list contact information, deadlines, forms, and policies available for download. Consider making forms fillable with an option to submit electronically.</p>	
	<p>Landlord Point of Contact – Have a staff member dedicated specifically to landlord-related questions and issues.</p>	<p>Landlord-Focused Customer Service</p>
<p>ATTRACT NEW LANDLORDS As old landlords exit the market, PHAs need to continually attract new landlords to rent their units to HCV voucher families.</p>	<p>New Landlord Orientation – Teach landlords about benefits of the program, how to reach voucher families, what to expect.</p>	<p>Education and Outreach</p>
	<p>Expanding Your Network – Network with industry groups and reach out to large landlords to increase landlord participation.</p>	
	<p>Landlord Outreach Events – Host periodic events for landlords and attend trade organization events to tell new landlords about the program.</p>	<p>Partnerships</p>
	<p>Relationships and Resources – Meet new landlords through relationships with other agencies.</p>	<p>Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements</p>
	<p>Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements – Use incentives to encourage landlords to participate in the program.</p>	<p>Matching Local Rental Markets</p>
	<p>Matching Local Rental Markets – Set payment standards that are competitive for moderately-priced housing by neighborhood to encourage landlord participation, particularly in areas of opportunity and areas without a concentration of subsidized housing.</p>	



WEIGHING COSTS AND BENEFITS

Most PHAs will not have the resources available to implement all the strategies described in this Guidebook that might help them achieve their goal(s). To narrow the list of strategies that may work best for the PHA's unique circumstances, staff should weigh the costs and potential benefits of strategies under consideration. Some strategies are short, simple, and low-cost. Others are more time consuming, complicated, and expensive. The ease or challenge associated with implementing a particular strategy does not necessarily indicate the strategy's potential to improve landlords' participation or satisfaction. After considering the strategies that may impact a PHA's goals, below are some items that PHAs may want to factor into their decision on selecting strategies.

EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION

When considering strategies to improve their landlord relationships, PHAs should consider how easy or difficult any given strategy may be for their organization to implement. There are a variety of factors that contribute to the ease of implementing a strategy:

- **Timeframe for Action:** Consider whether there is any urgency to accomplishing the PHA's goals. Strategies that require a substantial infusion of cash may have the longest lead times due to the need to secure funding. Additionally, strategies that require partnerships or rely on outside entities may take longer to implement. The PHA may also consider layering strategies to implement smaller, less time-intensive strategies while working towards a strategy that takes longer to implement.

Cost and Benefit Considerations

Ease of Implementation	Potential Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeframe • Scope • Resources • Cost • Roll-Out • Training • Alignment with Other Goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of Impact • Length of Usability • Trends • Overlap with Other Goals • Additional Benefits

- **Scope:** Is the PHA seeking a one-time action or to implement a longer-term change in how a process is carried out? Larger organizational changes are more complex and tend to involve more time, effort, and resources. One-time actions may involve varying degrees of upfront effort, but often require little ongoing effort. Preparation time may need to be built into both one-time and long-term activities.
- **Resources Already Available:** Consider the capacity of staff to add activities to their current workload. Added staff efforts to improve landlord satisfaction would be difficult to sustain if the staff working with the HCV landlords are already overburdened. Consider reviewing PHA policies and procedures to see if updates or a reorganization of tasks might make it possible to more effectively work with landlords without increasing staff workload. Look for untapped resources. For example, see if staff have writing, social media, networking, or other skills the PHA has not yet utilized for the benefit of landlords and tenants. Outside partners may also have resources to assist in the development of a strategy.



- **Financial Costs:** Consider the monetary costs associated with the strategy. This may include, for example, dedicating staff time, adding new staff members, purchasing new software and hardware, working with outside consultants, or contracting with a new company. One-time costs may be easier to raise funds for; ongoing costs need to be forecasted into future budgets. At the beginning of each strategy in the Guidebook chapters, a legend informs the reader of the range of relative costs involved. Some strategies discuss cost variations in greater detail in the implementation section.
- **Roll-Out Process for Stakeholders:** Consider how the PHA would communicate changes to landlords or tenants. Strategies will be easier to implement if they require little effort for stakeholders to become comfortable with or will be easy to communicate to stakeholders. This process might be a single effort, or require a multi-pronged communication approach.
- **Training Requirements:** Consider how long it would take to train staff on the new strategy and how easy or difficult adoption may be from the perspective of staff training. Analysis should include the number of staff involved in the training, who would train staff, and the length of training required. PHAs should also plan for continued staff training to address changes in policy or regulations. Consider whether landlords may also require training for the strategy to be effective and how the PHA would accomplish that training.
- **Alignment with Other Strategic Goals:** If the strategy is similar to a strategic goal the PHA is already working towards, a slight pivot in resources may be easy to incorporate into the strategy. On the other hand, if the strategy is significantly different from other strategic goals, more resources may need to be devoted to the strategy.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Decisions to pursue a new activity are commonly made by estimating the potential impact of the action. It may be challenging to accurately assess the impact of some of these strategies prior to implementation. Even so, there are points PHAs can consider to help with the decision-making process. PHAs may choose to reach out to PHAs who have already implemented a strategy to get their feedback on the activity's impact for their pool of landlords.

- **Degree to Which the Strategy May Solve a PHA's Concerns:** Some strategies may be useful, but they do not fully address the problem underlying a chosen goal. PHAs should consider which strategies are most worthwhile when no single strategy fully addresses a PHA's goals. For example, a PHA that has identified improving communications as a goal may choose to create a HCV landlord webpage if that is the best option available. The PHA chooses this strategy recognizing that the strategy will probably improve communications, but it may not allow the PHA to fully reach its goal.
- **Length of Usability:** Questions surrounding how long a strategy might remain useful may be particularly important in considering technology-related strategies because of the potential cost and intensive training involved.
- **Trends in the HCV Program:** Some of the strategies described in this Guidebook, including those in the [Administrative Flexibilities to Enhance Landlord Satisfaction](#) insert, involve implementing relatively new regulatory flexibilities or procedures made available by HUD. PHAs may want to check PIH Notices to ensure they are taking advantage of all available flexibilities or procedures that can strengthen their HCV Program's relationship with landlords.



- **Overlapping Goals:** If the PHA is pursuing multiple goals, selecting strategies that affect more than one goal may have a bigger impact on the PHA's overall goals for improving landlord satisfaction.
- **Benefits to Other Operational Areas:** The strategy being considered may also benefit other operational areas. For example, moving to an online portal system will create initial development costs, but may save the PHA in staff time, supplies, and postage when they will no longer need to send communications through the post office to existing landlords. Over time, this strategy may become cost-neutral.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are other factors that a PHA may consider in addition to weighing the costs and benefits of a strategy. These may help a PHA determine what strategy to select or how to adapt it to the PHA's specific requirements.

- **Same Strategy, Different Price Point.** PHAs may want to consider how a strategy of interest might be implemented using fewer resources if they are concerned with the implementation costs. Many of the strategies described in this Guidebook can be implemented at varying degrees depending on the PHA's resources and impact goals.
- **Testing the Waters.** For high-cost implementation strategies, PHAs may choose to engage with staff and stakeholders prior to implementation to help shed light on the strategy's potential impact on their voucher program. This engagement could serve to evaluate interest, help avoid potential pitfalls, and educate landlords and industry groups about a potential change. Working with HCV staff on planning processes can also

help administrators gauge the level of buy-in amongst staff and estimate what kind of training staff might require.

- **Demonstration of Strategies.** PHAs may be able to pilot a strategy prior to full implementation to test out the strategy's success and fix any glitches in the roll-out process.
- **"Lights, Camera, Strategy!"** PHAs should spend time planning how to successfully roll out the strategy. A new tool, program, or policy can only be successful if the relevant parties are aware of it.
- **Side Effects.** In considering the potential impact of the strategy and planning for the roll-out, PHAs should reflect on what assumptions they may be making in choosing a strategy or focusing on a particular issue area. What are the potential negative consequences of choosing a strategy? How might the activity effect other areas or processes for the PHA? PHAs should consider these factors before making a final decision.
- **Measuring Progress.** For the more costly strategies to implement, PHAs may want to consider developing quantifiable goals to measure progress. Measuring outcomes will allow the PHA to report their progress back to stakeholders, including landlords, voucher families, staff, board members, and community residents. It will help the PHA determine if a strategy is providing the desired impact and can help the PHA determine if the expense is cost-effective. For options around measuring outcomes, see [Appendix A](#).



CASE STUDY:

Anytown PHA's Goal to Reduce Lease-Up Delays Leading to Lost Rental Income

A medium-sized PHA with 2,000 vouchers in the inner suburbs of a large city, Anytown PHA, is concerned about landlord participation. Through surveys with existing landlords and informal interviews with large landlords who recently left the program in their jurisdiction, Anytown PHA learned that landlords' primary issue with their HCV program was the extended length of time between landlords choosing a voucher family and the voucher family moving into the unit. Landlords indicated that the longer lease-up times cost them too much money and created too much uncertainty with HCV voucher families compared to market rate tenants, so landlords preferred market rate tenants and some landlords stopped taking HCV tenants altogether.

Based on this feedback, Anytown PHA decided to consider strategies that work towards the PHA-landlord goal to "Reduce Lease-Up Delays Leading to Lost Rental Income." After reviewing their lease-up data, Anytown PHA found that the average number of days from RFTA receipt to move-in in the HCV program was 45 days. Anytown PHA set the goal of reducing their average lease-up time to 20 days to measure their progress in meeting their new goal.

ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES

Anytown PHA is ready to invest resources towards meeting this goal and is considering strategies. The analysis options for strategies are summarized below.

Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements: This strategy suggests paying landlords holding fees or lease-up bonuses in order to reduce the lost rental income landlords could otherwise collect for tenants who can move in more quickly.

Ease of implementation: Anytown PHA does not currently offer any sort of financial incentive to landlords, so this strategy would be expensive and require some time to plan, roll out, train staff, and notify owners.

Potential impact: While the implementation might be difficult, the potential impact of this strategy is probably high because it directly resolves landlords' primary complaint that leasing to HCV voucher families causes them to lose money. On the other hand, the high ongoing cost of this strategy could interfere with some of the PHA's other goals that also require financial resources.

HCV Landlord Portal: Online portals allowing landlords to review information online and, in some cases, submit paperwork.

Ease of implementation: Anytown PHA already has a landlord portal where owners can review inspections results and Housing Assistance Payments (HAP), but it does not allow



landlords to submit paperwork electronically. Creating this one-time change would not be a huge system change for the agency, but it would involve up-front costs. Since the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, more landlords have become accustomed to using online platforms, so training landlords in how to submit paperwork may not require heavy staff resources.

Potential impact: There is a potential impact for this strategy because it will save the PHA the time it takes to scan in a RFTA themselves and they can more easily alert landlords to errors in the RFTA that the landlord could fix online prior to submission. The strategy could also decrease the amount of staff time involved in processing RFTA packets. Anytown PHA estimates this activity could reduce their average RFTA to lease-up receipt time by a couple of days.

Inspections Technology: This strategy suggests using advances in technology to reduce lease-up times such as inspections reminders, real-time inspections results, using software to automatically route inspections, and using photos to verify corrected deficiencies that are non-life-threatening.

Ease of implementation: Anytown PHA already has inspections reminders and real-time results. Routing inspections automatically or using photos to verify corrected deficiencies would be new to the agency. Automatically routing inspections would probably require adopting new software and integrating it into their inspections process. It would also take some time to train staff. Using photos to verify corrected deficiencies, on the other hand, would only require the PHA to purchase some additional storage space and update their administrative plan. Anytown PHA thinks that most landlords in their portfolio own smart phones and they could integrate the feature into their landlord portal.

Potential impact: Anytown PHA does not think an automatic scheduling system would significantly improve inspections timeframes since they already have a system that works well. However, significantly reducing the number of re-inspections by allowing for photo evidence of corrected non-life-threatening deficiencies could significantly reduce inspections timeframes and free up inspectors' time to more quickly perform initial inspections. Anytown PHA estimates they could free up inspectors' time by up to 25 percent.

Inspections Scheduling: This strategy suggests changing the way inspections are scheduled so inspections are completed more efficiently.

Ease of implementation: Changing their scheduling practices would require a significant amount of planning and potentially more training for the inspection staff. Depending on the strategy chosen, this activity would not incur significant costs.

Potential impact: Anytown PHA is generally happy with their scheduling practices and does not see how updating their current practice would significantly improve efficiency.

Administrative Inspections Flexibilities: This strategy describes ways in which alternative options can speed up the inspections process. Alternative options include using alternative

inspections, allowing HAP contracts prior to passing HUD-established physical inspection standards for non-life-threatening deficiencies, moving to a biennial inspections schedule for periodic inspections, and self-verification of remedied deficiencies.

Ease of implementation: Anytown PHA already moved to a biennial inspections policy several years ago. It had not considered alternative inspections or a self-verification process for units that would otherwise require an inspector to come out and reinspect the unit. Neither of these options would be very costly, but they would require some time to roll out, both to notify landlords of the changes and to update internal processes. Allowing voucher families to move in prior to a unit passing inspection if there are no life-threatening deficiencies poses some significant implementation challenges in terms of scheduling and going out to inspect units after a family moves in. Anytown PHA is also concerned about families moving in and then having to move out quickly because the landlord fails to make repairs.

Potential impact: Implementing the alternative inspections option would certainly allow voucher holders to move into units and the owner start collecting rent more quickly; however, Anytown PHA has identified some potentially negative outcomes. The municipal inspections department does not have the same standards as the HUD-established physical inspection. Anytown PHA is concerned that allowing families to move in early or move into a unit that does not pass the initial HUD-established standards physical inspection could lead to dangerous or unhealthy conditions. On the other hand, Anytown PHA could implement self-certification of corrected deficiencies and this would significantly free up inspectors' time to conduct initial inspections.

Anytown PHA decides to move forward with the strategies that are relatively easy to implement and where they can also anticipate some measurable impacts:

- 1. HCV Landlord Portal:** Allowing PHAs to upload RFTAs online will save the PHA and the landlords time in processing RFTAs and making adjustments.
- 2. Administrative Inspections Flexibilities:** Anytown PHA hopes the flexibilities that allow landlords to self-certify corrected deficiencies for units that failed their first inspection will significantly reduce the time it takes for units to pass re-inspection, thereby freeing up inspectors to more quickly conduct initial inspections.
- 3. Inspection Technology:** Anytown PHA anticipates that allowing landlords to use photos to verify corrected deficiencies will reduce the time it takes for units to pass re-inspection.

Anytown PHA expects that these strategies will help them achieve their goal to reduce their average lease-up time to 20 days from RFTA receipt to move-in. Anytown PHA will meet regularly to ensure the strategies are implemented correctly and to track any obstacles to implementation. They will also decide what data to collect to determine if the strategies are reducing lease-up times. They plan to collect this data for a year.

Anytown PHA considered developing a lease-up bonus program for landlords who rented to their voucher holders. Because of the significant financial cost involved, Anytown PHA wants to see how the other strategies work first, then they will reassess the incentives strategy.





REFERENCE GUIDE:

Public Housing Agency (PHA) Administrative Flexibilities to Increase Landlord Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program

HUD has made administrative flexibilities available for PHAs to reduce administrative burden and optimize service provision within their HCV programs. Some of these flexibilities, if adopted by PHAs, may speed up the inspections and lease-up process, increase landlord participation by addressing concerns about fair market rent and tenant screening, and increase coordination between PHAs in neighboring jurisdictions. Adopting these flexibilities also addresses some of the concerns landlords shared during HUD's landlord listening sessions.

Flexibilities Related to the Inspections Process

The inspections process can be time consuming, which can impact the amount of time that it takes for tenants to be allowed to move into a unit. It also increases the amount of time landlords must wait to start receiving housing assistance payments (HAP). There are administrative flexibilities PHAs can adopt to ease the challenge of scheduling and conducting re-inspections, as well as speed up the overall process, making inspections less costly for landlords.

PIH Notice 2013-17 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program – Review of Existing HQS Requirements and the Use of Photos to Improve HQS oversight

[PIH Notice 2013-17](#) provides information on how PHAs can allow landlords to demonstrate that they have fixed items that failed during a HUD-established standards physical inspection. Landlords may verify their corrected deficiencies by sending photographic evidence of the correction to the PHA. Taking photographs of corrected deficiencies and

submitting them virtually, for example via email, can be an effective approach for improving physical inspection oversight. This oversight may include documenting specific deficiency corrections and verifying HUD-established physical inspection standards have been met.

Without adopting this provision, PHAs likely require landlords to be available for a re-inspection, which can be time consuming for both parties. If a PHA adopts this flexibility, a re-inspection of a unit may not be necessary if the PHA can obtain sufficient verification of the corrected deficiency through other means, such as emailed photographs.

PIH Notice 2017-20 Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016 (HOTMA) – Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Implementation Guidance

[PIH Notice 2017-20](#) includes two provisions PHAs can adopt that also address challenges related to inspections.

- 1) Implementing the non-life threatening (NLT) provision: The first provision allows a PHA to approve the assisted tenancy and make housing assistance payments (HAP) on a unit that fails to meet HUD-established physical inspection standards, provided the unit only has NLT deficiencies. The owner must then correct the NLT deficiencies within 30 days.

PHAs that choose to implement this provision must:

- Amend their administrative plans to adopt HUD's definition of NLT as well as life-threatening deficiencies.



- Amend their administrative plans to explain the specific details on how the provision will be applied. For example, the PHA will apply the NLT provision to all or a portion of their initial inspections.
- Inform owners and families of the new policy and procedures.
- Notify HUD via email of their choice to implement the provision at least 30 days before implementation.

2) Implementing the alternative inspection provision: The second provision allows the PHA to approve an assisted tenancy of a unit prior to the HQS inspection if the property has passed an alternative inspection within the past 24 months. Examples of alternate inspections may include HOME Investment Partnerships Program and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program inspections. All PHAs that implement this provision must conduct the initial HUD-established physical inspection standards inspection within 15 days of receiving the Request for Tenancy Approval or RFTA (Form HUD-52517). Although the landlord and the PHA will enter into a HAP contract, the landlord will not receive payments until the unit is inspected and determined to meet HUD-established physical inspection standards. At this point, the landlord will receive retroactive HAP for the period prior to the inspection determination. For more information on how this process can work, please review pages 14 and 15 of [PIH Notice 2017-20](#).

PHAs that choose to implement this provision must:

- Amend their administrative plans to include the specific alternative inspection method(s) that will be used.
- Amend their administrative plans to explain how the PHA intends to use the alternative method(s), including details around specific properties or types of properties for which each method will be employed.

- Inform owners and families of the new policy and procedures.
- Notify HUD via email of their choice to implement the provision at least 30 days before implementation.

24 CFR §§ 982.405, 982.406; 85 Fed. Reg. 11318 (Feb. 27, 2020)

All PHAs are permitted to conduct periodic unit inspections biennially rather than annually. Small rural PHAs may begin conducting periodic unit inspections triennially following the next regularly scheduled inspection after Feb. 27, 2020. Small rural PHAs are PHAs that administer 550 or fewer combined public housing units and vouchers, and predominantly operate in a rural area, as listed on HUD's website. All PHAs are still required to conduct an initial inspection before landlords may receive HAP. The above discussion of [PIH Notice 2017-20](#) offers additional information about initial inspections. All PHAs are also required to conduct interim inspections if a family or government official notifies the PHA of a unit's failure to comply with HUD-established physical inspection standards. For more information on adopting biennial inspections, see [PIH Notice 2016-05, Attachment K](#). For more information on adopting triennial inspections, see [85 Fed. Reg. 11318 \(Feb. 27, 2020\)](#).

All PHAs may rely upon alternative inspection methods, such as those conducted under the LIHTC or HOME programs or performed by HUD, to meet the periodic unit inspections requirement. A PHA that uses alternative inspection methods for periodic inspections must amend its administrative plan prior to employing this option. For more information on adopting this flexibility, see [PIH Notice 2016-05, Attachment K](#).

Flexibilities to Match Local Rental Markets

PHAs may have difficulties recruiting and retaining landlords for participation in the HCV



program in communities where the Fair Market Rents (FMRs) may lag behind current market rents. PHAs having difficulty with achieving market-based rents may want to consider adopting payment standard increases in high opportunity areas or adjusting the method in which rent reasonableness is calculated.

24 CFR § 982.503(b)(1)(iii), (c)(2)

PHAs may adopt, or request to adopt, exception payment standards for desirable areas in the jurisdiction, in order to reflect the market cost of rental housing and enable voucher holders to lease units in those area(s). Under [24 CFR § 982.503\(c\)\(2\)](#), a PHA may adopt an exception payment standard above 110 percent (up to 120 percent) of the published Metropolitan Area FMR for an area, upon approval from the local HUD field office. Under [24 CFR § 982.503\(b\)\(1\)\(iii\)](#), a PHA may establish an exception payment standard for a ZIP code area of up to 110 percent of the Small Area Fair Market Rent (SAFMR) for that ZIP code area. HUD approval is not required; the PHA must simply send an email to SAFMRs@hud.gov. PHAs that have SAFMRs may be eligible for exception payment standards under [24 CFR § 982.503\(b\)\(1\)\(iv\)](#), subject to HUD guidance. For more information on adopting these flexibilities, see [PIH Notice 2018-01 § 4\(d\)](#).

24 CFR § 888.113(c)

SAFMRs are FMRs established at the ZIP code–area level as opposed to the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) level. They are a tool for PHAs to tailor their payment standards within their jurisdiction to reflect the market cost of rental housing in specific area(s). PHAs that administer vouchers in metropolitan areas where the adoption of SAFMRs are not required may inform HUD that they will adopt SAFMRs, following the procedures in [PIH Notice 2018-01 § 5](#). SAFMRs are intended to provide local families access to high opportunity (low poverty) areas by allowing higher rents to reflect differences in neighborhood rental pricing.

24 CFR § 982.54(d)(15)

PHA policy sets the method of determining that the rent paid to the owner is reasonable, as compared to rent for similar unassisted units in the marketplace. PHAs have the flexibility to adjust the method so it is appropriate to the local market in order to safeguard against HCV rents to owner being inappropriately low. For more information, see the [HCV Guidebook Rent Reasonableness](#) chapter.

Flexibility to Screen HCV Tenants

PHA may opt to screen applicants for family behavior or suitability for tenancy, and the PHA may offer the owner information in the PHA's possession ([24 CFR § 982.307](#)). These efforts may be helpful in addressing landlords' concerns about whether HCV voucher families will be good tenants.

24 CFR § 982.307

While screening and accepting tenants is ultimately the role of individual landlords, some landlords may have misconceptions about voucher holders. PHAs may decide to implement some screening activities to minimize concerns about HCV families, thus improving landlord retention in the program. PHAs must screen in accordance with their administrative plan and must inform the landlords that they are still responsible for screening and selecting tenants.

Flexibility to Coordinate with Neighboring PHAs

Landlords may own properties in multiple PHA jurisdictions and, therefore, may need to work with multiple PHAs when participating in the HCV program. When those PHAs require different forms or procedures from one another, landlords experience confusion and frustration that may lead to dissatisfaction with the HCV

program. The flexibility below can be used to enable PHAs to align certain policies or procedures, possibly resulting in less confusion for landlords working with multiple PHAs.

PIH Notice 2012-15
Streamlining Administrative Practices in the Housing Choice Voucher Program- Consolidation of Administrative Tasks

PHAs who are in the same geographical area can consolidate administrative functions, for example, one agency may have a strong group of inspectors while another agency has a strong landlord relations staff. These agencies could divide tasks, which may address landlords' concerns about a lack of consistent policies and procedures between PHAs with overlapping jurisdictions.

ENTRY POINTS INTO THE GUIDEBOOK

The HCV Landlord Strategies Guidebook explores a range of strategies that PHAs, based on program size, strategic goals, and budget considerations, may implement to recruit new landlords or retain current landlords in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program.

PHAs may use the Guidebook Introduction and the chapter Choosing Which Strategy Is Right for Your PHA as entry points to navigating the Guidebook and selecting strategies. Both offer important information on how to identify goals the PHA may select to address any decrease in landlord participation in specific communities and which strategies may prove the best fit for individual PHAs.

PHAs may also experience times that call for quick-to-implement, low-cost actions to support the landlord partnership within the HCV Program. This section highlights some of the easiest and lowest-cost fundamental activities covered in the Guidebook. This section cannot take the place of the Guidebook, which provides more thorough descriptions of many strategies. Instead, this section offers activities that most PHAs should be practicing as additional low-cost activities that can increase landlord satisfaction and promote landlord participation.

- **Provide an inspection checklist for landlords** to use prior to having an inspector come inspect a unit. This will help the landlord prepare for the inspection and reduce the need for a reinspection. This tip is noted in the [Inspections](#) chapter and the [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) chapter.
- **Create response templates and how-to sheets for common landlord questions** so staff can quickly, accurately, and effectively respond to inquiries. Using templates will also help staff to use common language so all landlords hear the same information



no matter the PHA source (see the [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) chapter for more information).

- **Maintain a landlord email list.** If there are regulatory or PHA policy changes to announce, having landlords' email addresses is a fast way to get information to them. Free email management applications will also track the rate of opened emails (see [Education and Outreach](#) chapter for discussion). PHAs might also consider posting changes to social media.
- **Set up an e-mail address for landlords** that is monitored by a staff member so landlords do not have to search around the PHA's website for the appropriate person's contact information. The landlord email address that does not rely on a specific staff person's name (such as landlords@AnytownUSA.org) is also helpful if multiple people typically respond to inquiries or if there is staff turnover (see the [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) chapter for more tips like this).
- **Include information for landlords online** to reduce the number of direct inquiries the PHA receives and make it easier for landlords to access information. Such information might include how to market to a HCV tenant; staff contact



information; FAQs; and payment standard schedules. Offering PDFs of materials for landlords, such as informational materials or Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) packets, on a website can help landlords answer their own questions and free up PHA staff time. Suggestions on including information relevant to landlords online can be found in the [Technology](#), [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#), and [Matching Local Rental Markets](#) chapters.

- **Review policies and written communication.** Ensuring that written instructions and forms are clear, accurate, and consistent can go a long way in reducing landlords' confusion and making processes run more smoothly. Reviewing internal policies periodically ensures program compliance and helps PHA staff carry out their work to support landlords effectively and consistently (as seen in the [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) and [Inspections](#) chapters).
- **Internal inspections trainings.** Perform ongoing inspections trainings such as mock inspections to ensure that inspectors across the PHA inspect units similarly. This activity is especially relevant for PHAs who receive complaints about inspection consistency (see the [Inspections](#) chapter for more on this topic).
- **Network and form partnerships.** Supportive service agencies, non-profits that work with similar populations, the local Chamber of Commerce, and foundations are all great organizations to connect with over shared goals. Many agencies with strong programs are looking to serve populations that may overlap with

the HCV Program. Partnerships can lead to positive benefits for landlords including access to additional services such as mediation or to incentives such as tenant security deposits, as described in the [Education and Outreach](#), [Partnerships](#), and [Monetary Incentives and Reimbursement](#) chapters.

- **Video recordings.** PHAs can record webinars or live instructional events and post them on their website for landlords to access any time. Examples of useful topics to film include recruitment, creating a user profile or log-in for a landlord portal, or HUD physical inspections standards. Videos should be captioned in order to be accessible for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Video recording activities are also discussed in the [Technology](#) and [Inspections](#) chapters.
- **Reminders about upcoming inspections.** Phone call, email, or letter reminders shortly before a scheduled inspection can serve as a reminder to landlords and voucher families. They reduce wasted time and the need to reschedule when an inspector arrives to an appointment when no one is present (see the [Technology](#) and [Inspections](#) chapters for a discussion of this activity).
- **Landlord-dedicated day.** As described in the [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) chapter, the landlord-dedicated day is a day of the week or the month when PHA HCV staff focus on responding to landlord's inquiries. This activity may include staff making themselves accessible in person for landlords to drop in to the PHA to ask questions and turn in paperwork.





EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

INTRODUCTION

Education and outreach to landlords and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) families are valuable strategies that public housing agencies (PHAs) can use to recruit new HCV landlords and retain current landlords. PHAs can provide education and outreach in a variety of ways. Some strategies include hosting or attending events targeted to landlords or affordable housing providers. Education and outreach can also include activities like newsletters, presentations, briefings to community groups, one-on-one appointments, or other ways of sharing information or creating relationships between PHAs and landlords. PHAs can scale these activities up or down based on the staffing available to plan and facilitate the activities. PHAs can increase the number of activities when there is a strong need to recruit new landlords or implement other types of activities when they debut a new service, such as a landlord portal.

The following strategies are included in this section:

- New Landlord Orientation
- Landlord Outreach Events
- Expanding Your Network
- Tenant Education
- Information Sharing

Related strategies include:

- Landlord-Focused Customer Service
- Technology
- Partnerships

The education and outreach strategies identified in this chapter address the following areas:

Education and Outreach Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	New Landlord Orientation	Landlord Outreach Events	Tenant Education	Expanding your Network	Information Sharing
Increase Recruitment	X	X		X	
Increase Retention	X	X	X	X	X
Improve Responsiveness	X	X		X	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship			X		
Improve Inspections Process					X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X	X			X



EVENT PLANNING 101

Three of the education and outreach strategies are event-based: new landlord orientation, landlord outreach events, and tenant education. Since the broad planning steps required to carry out these events are largely the same, this section outlines general steps and tips for planning that can help make events successful.

Of course, events also have specific needs and requirements. A weekday orientation event includes some considerations that are different from those in an annual appreciation event, for instance. After the Event Planning 101 section, the Guidebook describes each of the event-based education and outreach strategies in detail, and provides additional recommendations unique to each strategy. Use this Event Planning 101 section together with the information provided in each education and outreach strategy to plan events.

EVENT FRAMEWORK: When planning an event of any type, it is important to first establish a clear objective and purpose by answering the questions **WHO, WHAT, HOW, WHY, WHERE** and **WHEN** the PHA is holding the event.



WHO, WHAT, HOW, WHY: During the framework planning, it is important to clearly identify **WHO** is the target audience, **WHY** the event is being held, **WHAT** information will be delivered or received, and **HOW** the event will be structured. By answering these questions, the PHA should have a better understanding of what the event will look like and how the PHA will meet event objectives.

It is important to answer these questions before beginning the planning process. The answers to these questions drive all of the subsequent planning. The PHA should revisit the framework throughout the planning process to ensure that the intent and focus of the event is still consistent. If the intent or focus has changed, evaluate, and adjust as needed.

EVENT FRAMEWORK	
WHO	Who is the target audience? Both landlords and tenants? Will the event be open to partner organizations and/or the general public? How many participants does the PHA anticipate?
	Who will present the information? PHA staff? A group panel? An outside moderator?
WHAT	What information will be presented?
HOW	How will the information be delivered? Is this a series or stand-alone event? Is the event lecture- or discussion-based?
WHY	Why is this event important? What is the objective? Is the goal to update participants who already know the basics or provide training on brand-new information?
WHERE	Where will the event take place?
WHEN	When will the event take place? What is the date and time? How often will this event be offered?

Now, PHAs can address **WHERE** and **WHEN** the event will take place.

WHERE: Location can have a direct impact on attendance levels. Locations should be in a central or convenient location and be in close proximity to parking or public transportation. If the event will take place during lunch hours, PHAs should consider a location that has restaurants within walking distance.

To keep costs down, consider using free or low-cost meeting space. Locations might include PHA conference rooms or PHA-partner meeting space, but PHAs should also look into public libraries and community or recreation centers. For occasional events with a much larger audience, the PHA might need to look at options such as conference spaces, like hotels or convention centers.

Things to consider: Does the selected location have enough space to accommodate the anticipated number of participants? Does it have the audio-visual (A/V) equipment needed for presentations and microphones, if needed?

Civil Rights Requirements: Physical Accessibility

All events including, outreach activities, training sessions and meetings must be held in facilities that are physically accessible to persons with disabilities. Where physical accessibility is not achievable, PHAs must give priority to alternative methods of product delivery that offer programs and activities to qualified individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate in accordance with HUD's implementing regulations for section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794) at 24 CFR Part 8.

WHEN: The frequency and length depends on the nature and objectives of the event. Some types of events might be most effective by having multiple sessions on a set schedule. Other types of events might be better suited to be held on an annual basis. In the sections of this chapter that discuss individual strategies, there are recommendations for frequency based on the nature of the event.

Things to consider: Are certain times of the year or days of the week better than others? Will attending the event interfere with participants' jobs—should the event be held during or after business hours?

EVENT LOGISTICS

Establishing the framework helps the PHA establish the purpose and goals of the event. Logistics planning and implementation ensures the purpose and goals are met by executing a well-run event. After the event framework has been established, the PHA should begin executing the logistics planning and implementation.

Logistics planning and implementation do not always follow a linear process and some elements take place at the same time. A number of meeting planning activities involve confirming and re-confirming key elements of the event. For instance, the staff member in charge of the event asks an inspector to attend a meeting and discuss common inspection fail items. She agrees and is emailed the date, time, and location of the event. The PHA markets the event and landlords sign up, eager to get more information about the program. The staff member in charge of the event should plan to follow up with the inspector to make sure that the date is on her calendar and that she prepared for the event. Another good idea would be to request materials the inspector plans to use in order to make copies in time for the event.



Staffing

Most events can be planned by one person, but that person needs to be able to set aside time to plan and execute. A large event like a landlord symposium or landlord recognition event could require the assistance of additional staff.



STEP 1: CREATE A TIMELINE

Creating a realistic timeline with due dates is critical to success. When thinking about timeframes, keep the following in mind:

Tentative Date: The PHA should set a target date and time for the event based on the Where and When established in the framework. The PHA should allow for enough time to complete Steps 2 and 3. Note: The date and location are typically not firm at this stage. PHAs should consider waiting to market the event until Step 2.

If the date is flexible, estimate the amount of time required for each step and then set the date based on the timeline. This approach gives the PHA more flexibility in delivery.

However, if the date is firm, it is helpful to back into the timeline starting with the event date and then estimating the time needed for the previous step and so on. Adjust the due dates accordingly.

Larger events will require a longer planning process than smaller events. Sample timelines for large and small events are shown to the right.

Venue: The PHA should also have a list of alternates in mind if the preferred venue or presenter(s) is not available. Many PHAs have available space at their location. If the usual options for hosting group events are unavailable, PHAs should keep in mind what other alternate locations might be available to them at no or low cost.

Presenters: Presenters could include PHA staff or outside organizations.

Finalizing the location and presenters may involve some back-and-forth before a final date and location can be set. Remember if the date changes, adjust the timeline to match.

Materials: Revising and developing materials can be time consuming, especially new material development. The PHA should ensure that enough time is dedicated to developing or revising, formatting, and reproducing materials.



Effective Communication

PHAs must ensure that notices of and communications during all outreach events are provided in a manner that is effective for persons with hearing, visual, and other communications related disabilities consistent with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (24 CFR 8.6), and as applicable the Americans with Disabilities Act. This includes ensuring that materials are in appropriate alternative formats as needed, e.g. Braille, audio, large type, sign language, interpreters, and assistive listening devices, per section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (24 CFR 8.6), and as applicable the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Furthermore, PHAs must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to programs to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP), pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166. This may mean providing language assistance services to ensure meaningful resident and community involvement for persons with LEP as a result of their nationality. The Department published Final Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons (72 Fed. Reg. 2732; January 22, 2007) to aid recipients of HUD assistance in identifying language assistance needs and developing language assistance plans.

Marketing: The PHA should aim to market the event 1-2 months prior to delivery. For larger events, at least 2 months is recommended.

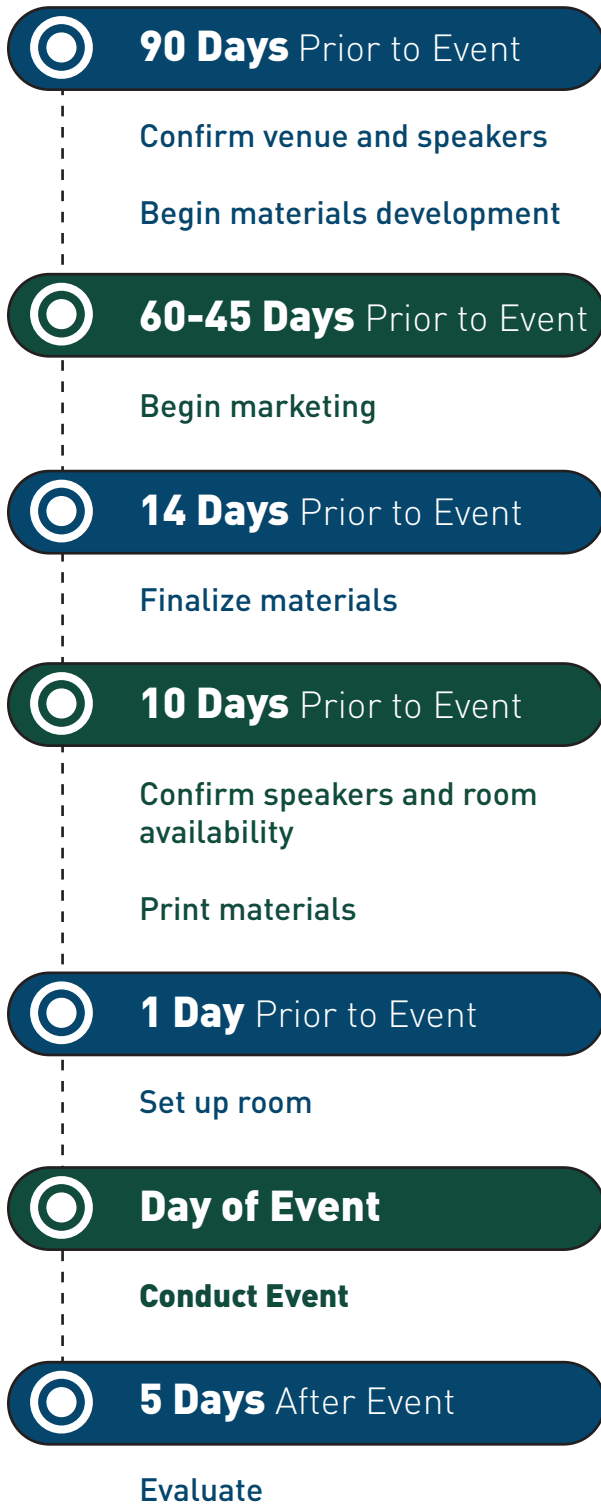


TIP: The timelines provide deadlines and activities in an ideal world. If you don't have as much time as recommended, don't let that stop you.

Rarely are event timelines perfect. The most important elements are to provide relevant and accurate information in a reasonable timeframe, and to provide an opportunity for landlords to engage directly with the PHA.

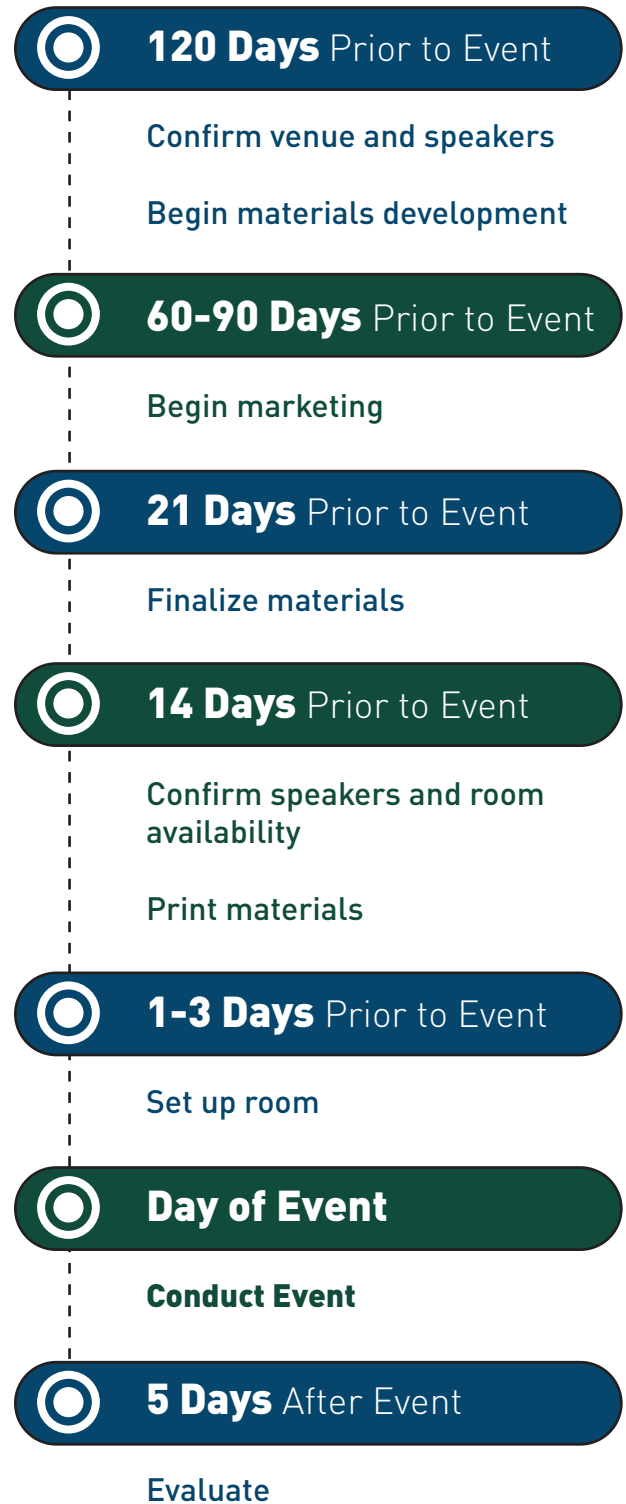
SAMPLE TIMELINE 1

Small event held at PHA.



SAMPLE TIMELINE 2

Large event held at a community building.



STEP 2: VENUE AND PRESENTERS

Once the PHA has established a timeline and set a tentative date, the PHA should begin contacting location options and possible presenters to understand their availability.

For events that cannot be accommodated in PHA properties or public partner spaces, the process for securing a space and making sure the space has the necessary amenities will require more time.

There are several ways to set up a meeting space. Some common set-ups are listed below.

Theatre-style: This set-up is typically used for lecture or presentation-based events. Participants are seated in rows facing the speaker.

Crescent Rounds: Participants are seated at round tables. To ensure that all participants can view the speaker, only a portion of each table has chairs. This set-up is useful if participants will network in a small group, take notes, or eat a meal.

Classroom Style: Participants are seated in rows with long tables. This set-up is particularly useful if participants will be taking notes.

STEP 3: MATERIALS, MARKETING, AND OTHER DETAILS

In the lead up to the event, some activities happen at the same time. There can be a lot of follow up. One way of tracking that tasks are completed when needed is to develop checklists.

Materials: The nature of the session and the information to be presented will often dictate what materials are needed. They might include PowerPoint presentations, marketing materials for landlords, or hard copies of handouts explaining program rules.

The PHA should develop an agenda for the event which should be made available on the PHA's website or as a component of the marketing materials. PHAs should ensure that materials are in appropriate alternative formats as needed, e.g. Braille, audio, large type, sign language, interpreters, and assistive listening devices per section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (24 CFR 8.6), and as applicable to ADA.

Market: To ensure that the event makes it on to the desired audience's calendar, aim to market events at least 1 to 2 months in advance. Marketing strategies could include advertising on the PHA's website or social media, reaching out to local apartment associations and other community partners with similar missions and goals (minimal cost) or placing ads (higher cost). Flyers for the event can be included as part of any newsletters or other materials that the PHA already sends to landlords such as monthly remittances or checks to landlords. If PHA staff hold meetings or attend meetings, they can hand out flyers there. If the PHA uses social media, PHAs might post about the event more than once. The marketing materials should include the subject, target audience, date, location, time, and registration information, if applicable. The PHA should consider including information on transportation options, including parking, the agenda and speakers, and any other relevant information.

Before expending any money, PHAs will want to thoroughly review allowability under Federal regulations. PHAs may use administrative fees and administrative fee reserves to cover the cost of materials and marketing for events directly related to administration of the voucher program per 24 CFR §§ 982.152, 982.155. (For further guidance on the allowable use of administrative fee reserves for such outreach and education purposes, PHAs can refer to [PIH Notice 2015-17](#).)

NOTE: PHAs should consider maintaining a landlord email list.

Ongoing Logistics Support: Throughout the planning process, the PHA will need to provide ongoing support and monitor progress. The PHA should:

- Confirm A/V needs and equipment,



including any special requirements for persons with disabilities

- Confirm details with presenters and venue
- Be available to answer questions from participants
- Provide ongoing marketing
- Print materials

STEP 4: CONDUCT EVENT

Depending on the size and nature of the event, PHA staff should arrive early to set up. Setup may include include organizing and staffing a registration table, distributing materials and handouts, greeting participants and presenters, and setting up A/V and tables and chairs.

Whether there is a formal registration table or not, there should be a sign-in sheet (see [Appendix B-Sample sign-in sheet](#)). All participants should be encouraged to provide contact information or business cards so the PHA can conduct follow-up efforts. If the PHA has enough staff on hand, the PHA can sign in participants using an Excel spreadsheet to ensure accuracy and completeness. If the participant is filling out contact information on a form, the form needs to have enough space to allow for neat handwriting. The PHA cannot follow up if phone numbers or email addresses are not legible.

The PHA should collect information that fits with how the PHA plans to follow up with the participant. For example, in a session that

seeks to recruit new landlords, will the PHA send out a follow-up mailing? If not, the PHA may not need to request addresses on the sign-in sheet. Contact information typically includes: company name and title, phone number, email address, and address.

STEP 5: EVALUATION

One of the most important components of an event is evaluating its effectiveness. There are multiple ways the PHA can gauge how successful the event was in meeting the goals they set out in their framework. These include:

Attendance: PHAs can measure the level of attendance immediately during the event by observation and after the event by reviewing the sign-in list.

During the event, the evaluation can be conducted by asking for a show of hands “How many in the room are landlords who have rented to HCV tenants? How many would like to see a speaker on landlord-tenant law?” This relies on participants’ willingness to comment and the host’s ability to quickly count hands and judge the response. Although this exercise may not gather much information, it will help the PHA quickly understand the composition of their audience. The PHA staff might also ask a few participants after the meeting if they felt that the goals had been met or what they’d like to see at future meetings.

After the event, the PHA can analyze the sign-in list to evaluate whether the target audience attended the meeting.

These attendance indicators can, over time, give the PHA an idea of how often to hold similar meetings, where to hold the meetings, and what content is most relevant for the target audience.

Evaluation Forms: PHAs can request participants complete formal evaluations, which should be no more than a page in length and offer some check-off questions. These questions might include:

- Was this meeting too short, too long, or the right length?
- Did the meeting provide the information the landlord was looking for?
- Did attending this meeting positively impact the landlord's willingness to rent to HCV holders?

The PHA should provide options for some open-ended comments, as well.

Direct Outreach from Participants: The PHA staff could also call participants after the meeting to ask their opinion on how the event went. The PHA staff that attended the event could debrief what went well at the event and what may need to be improved for a future event.

Data: The effectiveness of an event can also be measured through data that may become available over time. For example, the PHA may want to see if the number of landlords renting to HCV families has increased or if more landlords are marketing units to HCV tenants after the event.



Key to hosting successful events

Evaluate attendance trends and feedback from participants.

RESOURCES

[Appendix B-Sample sign-in sheet.](#)

STRATEGY: NEW LANDLORD ORIENTATION

Providing new or potential landlords with information on how to participate in the HCV program. The goal of this strategy is to provide education on the HCV program, ensuring landlords have a thorough understanding of and feel comfortable with the HCV process.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: FEW MEDIUM DIFFICULT

New Landlord Orientation PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	New Landlord Orientation
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



expectations, highlighting program benefits for landlords, countering misperceptions, and demonstrating an investment in a productive landlord-PHA relationship.

As noted in the chart, new landlord orientations have the potential to improve multiple aspects of the HCV process.

Related Strategies:

- Landlord Outreach Events
- Landlord-Focused Customer Service

IMPLEMENTATION

As noted in the Education and Outreach Introduction in Event Planning 101, the new landlord orientation strategy is event-based. On the following page are specific suggestions and recommendations on how to plan a new landlord orientation event.

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: New landlord orientation consists of PHA-hosted informational workshops for new or potential HCV landlords.

Participants at orientation workshops have already expressed interest in the program as evidenced by their attendance. Therefore, this is a prime opportunity for PHAs to further encourage participation by laying out clear



Orientation Workshops

Landlords who attend orientation workshops are noted to have fewer errors in their paperwork (HCV focus group sessions). An orientation is a good way to answer lingering questions about paperwork and policies.



EVENT FRAMEWORK

WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

Target Audience: The target audience for landlord orientations is new or prospective landlords.

WHO WILL PRESENT?

Presenters: For the PHA, staff in attendance might include the primary HCV contact for landlords (such as the landlord liaison, the HCV director, or senior case manager) and inspections staff. Consider having someone who is familiar not only with the HCV program, but the PHA as a whole.

The presenters should be prepared to answer questions on a range of HCV and PHA topics.

First impressions are important! This may be one of the first interactions a landlord will have with PHA staff. The involvement of key staff, in addition to PHA management, shows a commitment to improving PHA-landlord relationships and can set the tone for future encounters.

WHAT WILL BE PRESENTED?

An orientation that covers the HCV program from A to Z provides new landlords with an understanding of the overall process and an accurate expectation of what the program, tenants, PHAs, and they themselves can and cannot do.

Standard topics might include:

- Overview of the PHA and HUD
- HCV Program Overview
- Benefits for Landlords
- Landlord Roles and Responsibilities
- Rent Determination and Payment Process
- Request for Tenancy Approval and Specific Application Paperwork for Landlords
- Tenant Screening
- Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract Overview
- Inspections
- Questions and Answers (Q&A)

Orientations should allow plenty of time for Q&A and networking. Allowing time for landlords to ask questions and receive information can be a particularly critical strategy to both combat misinformation about the HCV program as well as to gather feedback on how the PHA can better serve landlords.

When determining what information will be presented, PHAs should remember that some landlords may be coming to the orientation with no knowledge of HUD, PHAs, or the HCV program. Be sure to spell out common abbreviations and offer short, clear descriptions of practices like accessing the landlord portal or having a HUD-established standards physical inspection.



EVENT FRAMEWORK

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE DELIVERED?	<p>A new landlord orientation is typically presented in a lecture-style format, lasting approximately 2-3 hours in length. Some PHAs also have presenters from multiple departments present on different topics.</p> <p>A PowerPoint presentation and an agenda will help the PHA and speakers organize time and maintain momentum, cover needed topics, and include time for questions. PHAs may also want to provide handouts to help participants understand the topics being presented.</p>
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	<p>New landlord orientations have the immediate goal of providing new and prospective landlords with the information that will help them be successful in program participation.</p> <p>Orientation can set the stage for successful program participation and a positive PHA-landlord relationship.</p>
WHERE WILL THE EVENT TAKE PLACE?	<p>Orientations are typically low-key events that do not have extensive A/V or set-up needs. Presentation requirements for this type of event would typically be an LCD projector, screen, and laptop for visual; and a podium and theatre-style seating. Speakers and microphones may be necessary if the event includes playing a video or requesting input from a large group of participants.</p> <p>PHAs might find that their anticipated attendance numbers allow them to host the orientations in PHA meeting space. Public libraries or other local government or community facilities might also have space that meets the A/V and set-up requirements.</p>
WHEN WILL THE EVENTS TAKE PLACE?	<p>The frequency of meetings will vary based on the need to recruit more landlords for the program or the level of interest from new landlords in attending an orientation. The PHA should look at the numbers of new landlords on the program, as well as the interest they have received in the program to help determine how often to hold orientations.</p> <p>PHAs in larger service areas with a higher number of new and interested landlords may host multiple meetings throughout the month. PHAs with smaller service areas or smaller voucher programs, may find that monthly or quarterly meetings are sufficient.</p> <p>Offering orientation workshops on the same day each month may help staff remember to inform potential landlords and also will help landlords plan to attend. For example, the PHA may decide that a landlord orientation workshop will be held the last Thursday of every month. Offering Saturday or evening sessions periodically might also be valuable, particularly for landlords with smaller portfolios who may work other full-time jobs.</p> <p>When first implementing this strategy, the PHA may consider offering quarterly orientations and evaluating the frequency and content of the orientation after the first one or two orientations.</p>



If the PHA finds that current and experienced HCV landlords are significantly represented in new landlord orientation meetings, the PHA may consider finding out what current landlords are getting or hoping to get from these sessions. Is this the only way they think they can communicate directly with PHA staff? Is this meeting their primary means of networking with other landlords? The presence of seasoned landlords could be a positive – providing them a refresher on the HCV program and an opportunity to discuss their experiences with the HCV program with prospective landlords. If the PHA notices that many orientation participants are current HCV landlords, the PHA might consider hosting separate meetings for existing landlords to meet their unmet needs, which is discussed further in the Landlord Outreach Workshops Strategy section. The PHA could also consider adding additional topics such as recent changes to the state or city building code that would be of interest and helpful to current landlords.



EVENT LOGISTICS

Some specifics related to new landlord orientations are noted below. For additional information on event logistics, see [Education and Outreach](#) chapter.

TIMELINE

The sample timeline for smaller events held at the PHA included in the Education and Outreach Introduction section can be used as base for orientations since these events are typically smaller in scale and scope.

VENUE AND PRESENTERS

Due to their size and scope, orientations are good events to hold at the PHA and to use PHA staff to conduct the orientation. This will reduce not only the planning and implementation time, but significantly reduce potential costs.

MATERIALS, MARKETING, AND OTHER DETAILS

The majority of the orientation will be lecture-based. Suggested materials include a PowerPoint presentation and a landlord handbook produced by the PHA. The PHA will need to ensure that there is a way to project

SET THE TONE!

This may be one of the first times landlords have heard directly from PHAs about the program. PHAs should use this opportunity to spread positive messages about the program and provide information on issues that have historically caused confusion.

- The role of the landlord, voucher family, and PHA
- The relationship between the housing assistance payments (HAP) contract and the owner lease
- PHA and landlord screening
- Fair Housing Rights and Responsibility of a Landlord
- Benefits of the HCV program including guaranteed rent, assistance from the PHA in marketing vacant units, assistance with ensuring property is well-maintained, and offering families affordable housing

the presentation and have printed handbooks available. Additional materials could include an agenda and list of PHA contacts. Avoid reinventing the wheel: sample materials including PowerPoint presentation, agenda, and a landlord handbook, are coming soon from HUD!



TIP: “Is that really all there is?” Consider bringing a sample packet of forms the landlord is likely to encounter when they participate in the program. Landlords might be surprised at how little paperwork needs to be completed.

Sample PHA forms can be found at:

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/landlord/forms



Scale it Down!

PHAs that do not offer regular orientations might instead create an orientation packet or offer individual appointments for interested landlords. PHAs might even record a landlord orientation and post it on YouTube to maximize accessibility.

Market: Often PHAs market orientations to landlords who contact the PHA with inquiries. Other minimal cost marketing strategies include advertising on the PHA’s website or social media, passing out flyers at outreach or other events, and reaching out to local apartment associations. PHAs might place ads, at a higher cost. The PHA might also include notices about upcoming events in their regular communications with landlords, like in monthly HAP remittances.

Marketing materials should also include information about parking and/or transportation options.

Evaluate: Keep track of participation in orientation workshops – how many participated? How many units do they own? Do they become landlords with the PHA? Are they already landlords with the PHA? Where are their properties located?



REMINDER: If during the framework discussion, see Education and Outreach Introduction, the PHA chooses to hold orientations in outside locations, the PHA should ensure that it has time to seek, negotiate for, or sign contracts with free or low-cost settings like school auditoriums, libraries, community center meeting rooms or partner organizations’ meeting rooms. If it pursues a location with a cost, the PHA should ensure that it has a clear understanding what funds are eligible for paying for meeting space under what conditions. To enter into an agreement with a venue that involves a cost, the PHA must follow its procurement policy, local law, and 2 CFR Part 200, which require sourcing multiple venues. The PHA may use administrative fees and administrative fee reserves to cover the cost of a venue for events directly related to administration of the voucher program per 24 CFR §§ 982.152, 982.155. See [PIH Notice 2015-17](#).

Not only does evaluating data trends and gathering feedback from landlords guide a PHA on adjusting the frequency and location of workshops, it may also identify trends in landlord participation. This information might be useful for PHA Board members and other departments as well.

RESOURCES

[Appendix B-Sample sign-in sheet](#)

Sample HCV Landlord Forms:

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/landlord/forms

REGULATIONS

Procurement: [2 CFR Part 200](#).

Administrative Fee: [24 CFR §§ 982.152, 982.155](#). See [PIH Notice 2015-17](#).





STRATEGY: LANDLORD OUTREACH EVENTS

Providing information to current landlords and recruiting new landlords. The goal of this strategy is to encourage information sharing between current and potential landlords and the PHA.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ○ MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Landlord Outreach Events PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Landlord Outreach Events
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



with PHA staff, ask questions, and receive answers can go a long way to bridge the perceived information gap. If the PHA has added documents or tweaked processes in response to landlord concerns, this is an opportunity to let landlords know how the PHA responded to the landlord comments. It also provides the PHA with valuable insight on frustrations and issues with the HCV program which could be contributing to lower participation.

- Providing information about new programmatic or legal changes that will affect HCV landlords: Being current on programmatic changes can alleviate the fear of the unknown when new programmatic changes take effect. This can include both changes from federal (i.e. HUD), state, county, or local enforcing agencies. For example, if a city has recently changed to source of income (SOI) laws, this is a change where myth-busting and sharing information could be especially helpful to landlords.

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHA-hosted landlord outreach events engage with and educate the landlord community. Unlike new landlord orientations, which are targeted at providing new or prospective landlords with information needed to join the program, landlord outreach events can draw a varied audience and address a multitude of topics. They have the potential to both attract new landlords and increase the satisfaction of current landlords.

Goals for these events include:

- Listening to issues and concerns: Landlords have expressed that they want PHAs to consider them valued partners. They also would like greater ability to connect with PHA staff when questions or issues arise. An opportunity to interact





- Building and strengthening partnerships between the PHA, landlords, and other entities and resources: Networking can create a support system among stakeholders and provide information on untapped resources that can assist landlords, voucher families, and the PHA.

POTENTIAL PHA PARTNERS

The below list provides partner organization types that the PHA could invite to participate in outreach events as participants, speakers, or vendors.

- Local non-profit organizations
- Local foundations
- Utility companies that offer energy upgrade rebates or weatherization
- Inspection companies
- Home security companies
- Banks
- City or county organizations with an interest in landlords or tenants such as building codes departments
- Housing developers
- Landlord associations

- Recruiting new landlords to participate in the HCV program: Outreach events demonstrate a commitment by the PHA to making landlords valued partners. The New Landlord Orientation strategy

provides information for building a strong foundation and relationship with the new landlord from the beginning. This landlord outreach strategy demonstrates a commitment by the PHA to continue to engage with landlords, hear their concerns, and work with them as valued partners. In addition, outreach events that focus on topics that interest all landlords may draw non-participating landlords, who did not have a prior interest in the HCV program. These events provide an opportunity for them to learn about the benefits of the HCV program and other rental housing management-related resources in the community.

Related Strategies:

- [New Landlord Orientation](#)
 - [Expanding Your Network](#)
 - [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#)
 - [Partnerships](#)
-

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Just as this strategy can meet a number of goals, it can take shape as a number of different events. These have a variety of framework and logistic needs. The event framework on the following pages can be applied to most outreach events. See the [Education and Outreach](#) chapter for Event Planning 101.

FRAMEWORK: OUTREACH EVENTS

WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

Target Audience: The target audience for landlord outreach events is current and prospective HCV landlords.

WHO WILL PRESENT?

Presenters: Outreach events focused on education of landlords will want to bring in expert presenters in topics of interest to landlords. The Potential PHA Partners graphic on the prior page offers ideas.

Events that are focused on supporting current landlords through informing, listening, and enhancing the relationship between landlords and the PHA would also benefit from a strong PHA staff presence.

WHAT WILL BE PRESENTED?

Outreach events are a great way to address challenges faced by current HCV landlords and to connect with new landlords. The topics below are broken into categories by audience.

- **Current HCV Landlords:** Current HCV landlords may have specific challenges, or require different information, than prospective landlords. PHAs should consider asking landlords what information they would like to see on an agenda. PHA staff may also have heard of common issues or trends. Topics may include: common inspections fails, regulatory changes, payment abatement policies, procedure for requesting rent increases, enforcing tenant obligations, and explanation of Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMR), if applicable.
- **Current and Non-HCV Landlords:** By offering seminars on topics that are helpful to the landlord community, regardless of their HCV participation status, outreach events can connect with those landlords who might not attend an “HCV-only” event. Topics might include presentations from legal aid and/or the sheriff’s department on evictions, the difference between service, assistance and emotional support animals, new housing regulations that would affect all landlords, presentations from city or county departments, and the county tax assessor’s office.



TIP: The PHA might want to consider including a brief overview of the HCV program and have information on how to participate in the program available to those landlords who become interested in the program. The PHA may also want to have a list of the local PHAs and their contact information.

Landlords with small portfolios and corporate landlords may have different interests and needs. PHAs should try to tailor their outreach events to consider the needs of different types of landlords in their community.

FRAMEWORK: OUTREACH EVENTS

<p>HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE DELIVERED?</p>	<p>Some PHAs plan outreach events as formal workshops, social or networking events, or annual recognition events. PHAs may want to mix and match topics and formats based on their target audience, needs, and financial constraints. PHAs should also consider having multiple types of outreach events to meet multiple needs and goals.</p> <p>Some variations discussed in detail below are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown Bag Lunch and Learn • Annual Appreciation Event and Social Hour • Listening Session
<p>WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?</p>	<p>These events support current landlords as valued PHA partners. They can also attract potential landlords who had not known about or considered working with the PHA.</p>
<p>WHERE WILL THE EVENT TAKE PLACE?</p>	<p>Outreach events can vary greatly in size and complexity. Suggestions for locations are noted below in the discussion of individual variations. As with all events, PHAs should consider utilizing free space such as PHA meeting space, partner organizations, and community buildings. For larger events such as an annual appreciation event, if no other adequate space is large enough, PHAs may want to consider renting meeting space. If the PHA rents space or amenities with a cost, the PHA should ensure that it has a clear understanding of what funds are eligible for paying for costs, and under what conditions.</p>



REMINDER: It is important to note that if the PHA makes use of space or amenities with a cost, the PHA should ensure that it has a clear understanding of what funds are eligible for paying for costs, and under what conditions. The PHA must follow its procurement policy, local law, and 2 CFR Part 200, which require sourcing multiple venues. The PHA may use administrative fees and administrative fee reserves to cover the cost of a venue for events directly related to administration of the voucher program per 24 CFR §§ 982.152, 982.155. See [*PIH Notice 2015-17*](#).



Advisory Boards

Get feedback directly from landlords! The Public Housing Agency of the City of Saint Paul has an owner advisory board that provides feedback on landlord issues and the HCV program. This feedback guides the PHA's agenda for landlord workshops. Originally, all current HCV landlords were invited to participate during the landlord workshops. The group has remained the same for the past few years and, as members begin to leave, the group will extend an open invitation at landlord workshops and replace outgoing members with new members. Currently there are about seven landlords that represent multiple properties. The group meets twice per year on weekdays. An advisory board may be appropriate for most PHAs, regardless of size.

Variations: While the WHO, WHAT, WHY for outreach events remain similar, the HOW, WHERE, WHEN vary based on the type of event. Below are three different variations on how a PHA might conduct outreach events.

BROWN BAG LUNCH AND LEARN	
HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE DELIVERED?	Lunch and Learn events provide 1-2-hour daytime opportunities for PHAs to share information with, and receive feedback from, landlords. Lunch and Learn events take place over lunch hours with participants bringing their own lunch. These events are typically less formal than a seminar or workshop. The format might be a mix of formal presentation, information dissemination, Q&A, and open discussion.
WHERE WILL THE EVENT TAKE PLACE?	Lunch and Learn events can take place in a variety of locations as the A/V needs are typically very minimal due to the informal nature. The PHA should note that attendees will be eating lunch. Room set-up could be in classroom-style or crescent rounds, both of which include tables. PHAs may want to consider whether the event location is close to restaurants where participants can get take-out lunches to bring to the Lunch and Learn.
WHEN WILL THE EVENTS TAKE PLACE?	Available resources and interest may dictate the frequency of these events. Additionally, landlords in a particular area might not be able to attend events frequently during business hours. If there appears to be substantial interest in the landlord community, the PHA may benefit from hosting a Lunch and Learn on a routine basis, monthly, bimonthly or quarterly for example. Offering these informal events on a schedule may increase participation and interest if landlords experience the value of the sessions and start putting these events as a standing appointment on their calendars.
ADDITIONAL NOTES	Marketing materials should make it clear that participants should bring their own lunch. Marketing materials need to be clear about what will be available for participants since the event will be held during lunch time.



Vendors

Having outside groups or organizations attend meetings benefits current HCV landlords and also has the potential to draw in prospective landlords.

ANNUAL APPRECIATION EVENT AND SOCIAL HOUR	
HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE DELIVERED?	Annual appreciation events bring landlords together in a more formal or celebratory setting to network, honor accomplishment, provide awards, and appreciate contributions. Although they are not primarily intended to be an educational event, having a keynote speaker for an awards ceremony could be appropriate. Similarly, landlord social hours focus on networking and social activities. They may be less resource-intensive to plan and the PHA may benefit from partnering with various organizations to implement the social hours. Social hours may attract non-participating HCV landlords – raising awareness about the program.
WHERE WILL THE EVENT TAKE PLACE?	To encourage a lighthearted networking atmosphere, these events should take place in more comfortable spaces. These spaces may be available at a PHA-property community room, a nicely finished public space, or at a rented space.



ANNUAL APPRECIATION EVENT AND SOCIAL HOUR

WHEN WILL THE EVENTS TAKE PLACE?

Because of the possible cost and time investment to plan an appreciation event, it is likely to be annual or occur every other year. Since social hours are less formal, it may be appropriate to partner with a food/beverage establishment for the event, and let landlords know food/beverage will be available for purchase. With this format, a social hour could take place as often as the PHA would like to arrange it. Setting a regular schedule and/or recurring day may help boost attendance, with participants being more likely to remember the time and date of the event.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

PHAs may want to engage local funders or partners to see if they will sponsor an annual appreciation event, a dinner for example, or a social hour. Prior to engaging local partners, PHAs should review their gift and conflict of interest policies for any potential conflicts.

LISTENING SESSION

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE DELIVERED?

Hosting a landlord listening session can seem daunting for PHA staff. However, several PHAs have noted that listening sessions provide landlords with the opportunity to share valuable feedback to the PHA which can, ultimately, increase landlord satisfaction with the program. Although listening sessions have the potential to discourage new landlords who hear complaints aired at the session, the information sharing and willingness of the PHA to hear critical feedback may be more impactful and longer lasting than the negative feedback.

Engaging a moderator or facilitator can decrease PHA staff stress by having a neutral party that can also help keep the meeting on task and on time. Assigning someone from the PHA staff, such as a case worker, to record issues and suggestions may be useful. It might also be helpful to have other case workers on hand who can resolve specific landlord issues after the session. For example, if a landlord complains she hasn't heard whether her unit passed inspection, a case worker could answer that question before the landlord leaves after the listening session.

Use of an agenda or series of guided questions might also serve to keep conversation moving. Conversation might begin with PHA on HCV process improvements or updates, setting a positive tone for the session. The session could then move through a series of questions: What do you like about the program? What is not going so well? What changes would you recommend? Letting participants know up front that there will be time dedicated to discuss each of the topics on the agenda keeps conversation on track and in the appropriate vein. PHAs should also be prepared to provide information and facts to counter any misperceptions about the program.



TIP: Stick with it! One PHA noted that when they first began holding landlord outreach events, the meetings were complaint sessions, especially about the inspections process. The PHA listened to the feedback, made changes to address concerns where appropriate, and saw the inspections process dramatically improve. According to the PHA, over time, sessions have become more constructive and are no longer contentious. Landlords who attend say “they are learning something new” at every meeting.

LISTENING SESSION

WHERE WILL THE EVENT TAKE PLACE?	A listening session is most likely to take place at the PHA or a landlord industry group space.
WHEN WILL THE EVENTS TAKE PLACE?	A listening session could be a one-time event or occur regularly. This may depend on what topics are motivating the PHA-landlord community to meet and the goals set by the PHA. Something to be cautious of is that landlords will expect the PHA to take some action based on the feedback provided in the listening sessions. In order to give PHAs time to address some of the concerns, the PHA may choose not to host listening sessions more than once or twice per year.
LOGISTICS NOTES	To support a constructive tone in a listening session, set a clear goal and establish ground rules for contributing.

MARKETING STRATEGY: CAST A WIDE NET!

When the city of Mesa Housing Authority (MHA) planned their first landlord seminar, similar to a landlord recruitment event, they took a multi-pronged approach to bringing new landlords to the event. MHA sent a marketing invitation to their full email contact list, but also relied on a hands-on, personal approach. Staff was encouraged to personally invite as many landlords as possible. For example, staff would stop at complexes they drove by on their way home and let property managers know about this event open to landlords who were not currently partnered with them. One inspector invited landlords he met during the course of his day. The event speakers appealed to a broad base of landlords, discussing changes resulting from the State Landlord Tenant Act, compliant eviction process, service animals, and ADA compliance for landlords. They also had vendors such as animal control and a group that works with multi-family rental housing. Five regional housing authorities answered questions. The mayor attended, raising the profile of the event. The event brought in 150 participants including 90 landlords.



TIP: Start simple! Host a small landlord outreach workshop and use it to gauge the level of interest and types of events that would be most beneficial.

RESOURCES

[Appendix B-Sample sign-in sheet](#)

Resource for program updates and potential topics:

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/post/announce

REGULATIONS

Procurement: [2 CFR Part 200](#)

Administrative Fee: [24 CFR §§ 982.152, 982.155](#). See [PIH Notice 2015-17](#).





STRATEGY: TENANT EDUCATION

Providing current or future voucher holders with information and training on basics of the HCV program and tenant rights and responsibilities.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ○ MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Tenant Education PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Tenant Education
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	



WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: Tenant education does not directly involve landlords. Landlords across the country have expressed interest, however, in having PHAs provide tenant education in an effort to improve the landlord-tenant relationship.

IMPLEMENTATION

As noted in the Education and Outreach Introduction, this strategy is event-based. Below are specific suggestions and recommendations on how to plan a tenant education event.

EVENT FRAMEWORK

WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?	Target Audience: The target audience is potential or current voucher holders.
WHO WILL PRESENT?	Presenters: For the PHA, staff in attendance might include case workers and the primary HCV contact. Additionally, it might be helpful to have speakers who can lend insight to the agenda topics.



EVENT FRAMEWORK

WHAT WILL BE PRESENTED?	<p>Current tenants may have different agenda needs than prospective tenants; however, a range of standard topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of HCV program • How to search for units • How to complete rental applications and what landlords look for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Guest speaker opportunity: property owner or manager • How to improve credit scores • Tenant and landlord rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Guest speaker opportunity: legal aid • Common unit preventive maintenance and when to contact the landlord or request inspections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Guest speaker opportunity: housing inspector • Renter’s insurance 101 • The tenancy addendum alongside a sample lease • How to be a good neighbor • Tips for getting to know a new neighborhood
HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE DELIVERED?	<p>Tenant education would typically be presented in a lecture-style format, approximately 2-3 hours in length.</p> <p>A PowerPoint presentation and an agenda will help the PHA and speakers organize time and maintain momentum, cover needed topics, and include time for questions. What handouts do participants need to understand the topics?</p>
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	<p>Tenant education can set the stage for a successful relationship between voucher families, landlords, and the PHA.</p>
WHERE WILL THE EVENT TAKE PLACE?	<p>Tenant education is typically low-key and does not have extensive or high-tech A/V or set-up needs. Presentation requirements for this type of event would typically be an LCD projector, screen, and laptop for visual; and a podium and theatre-style seating. Speakers and microphones may be necessary if the event includes playing a video or requesting input from a large group of participants.</p> <p>PHAs might find that their anticipated attendance numbers allow them to host the workshops in the PHA’s office meeting space. Public libraries or other local government or community facilities might also have space that meets the A/V and set-up requirements.</p> <p>Some PHAs offer tenant education at several locations throughout their service area, others choose to utilize the same space.</p>

EVENT FRAMEWORK

WHEN WILL THE EVENTS TAKE PLACE?

The PHA should look at the numbers of voucher holders, as well as those on the waitlist. Providing training in advance can make the tenant-landlord relationship start off well prior to move-in.

Two variations are below:

- **Program Overview:** Some PHAs choose to incorporate tenant education in the HCV process. PHAs could encourage voucher holders to attend a training to help them navigate the HCV program. These sessions might last 3 hours and would provide more high-level information than a course in which the voucher holder would receive a certificate.
- **Trainings on How to Be a Good Tenant:** These courses are voluntary and can result in the voucher holder receiving a certificate of completion which they can present to a landlord during the housing search and application process.



TIP: Letting landlords know that the PHA offers tenant education can motivate both voucher holders and landlords. Landlords can feel reassured to know this training exists. Voucher holders may have increased motivation for completing the training if they know landlords will be looking for it.

Offering trainings on the same day each month may help staff remember to inform voucher holders and also will help voucher holders know when they can attend. For example, workshops will be held on the last Thursday of every month.

See [Appendix C-Sample Tenant Training Certificate](#)

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS AND EVENT LOGISTICS

Although tenant education trainings have similar implementation considerations and steps as new landlord orientations, PHAs may find it challenging to implement tenant education due to limited resources and competing events. PHAs may want to consider whether in-person training or online trainings better suit the needs of the PHA and its voucher families. Regardless of the approach, the PHA should determine if the PHA will issue certificates of completion.

In-Person Training

- **Prepare Materials:** Materials might include a PowerPoint presentation, voucher family FAQs, and resource lists. Keep in mind that participants will have a variety of educational backgrounds and experiences.



Partner!

Tenant trainings may be offered by partner organizations in your region. PHAs should reach out to local government agencies and non-profits that might be providing this service.

- **Identify presenter(s):** Consider having someone present who is familiar not only with the HCV program, but with the PHA as a whole. Other presenters might include landlords, legal aid, and the local fair housing organization.
- **Determine the initial frequency and timing of training:** quarterly trainings might be a good place to start to evaluate voucher holder interest.



- Identify and secure a location: Locations will also depend heavily on the availability of resources and the geographic service area. There may be options for free meeting space either at the PHA, partner locations, or public buildings. The availability of parking or public transportation is another factor to consider.
- Market: Marketing strategies could include advertising on the PHA's website and social media. The simplest marketing might be to include a message about the training in a mailing already scheduled to be sent to voucher holders.
- Evaluate: Feedback should be an important factor in determining the frequency, location, and content for trainings. These factors may change periodically.
- Sign-in sheets could include name, contact information, and a way for the participant to request additional information or follow-up.

Online Workshops

- Identify content that may be conducive to online workshops. Consider where and how the training will be made available. Options include posting on the PHA's website or through a web application.
- Prepare materials: Materials might include PowerPoint presentations, voucher family FAQs and resource lists. Partners: PHAs should reach out to other state and local agencies who might have online learning platforms that the PHA could utilize at little to no cost.
- Determine the online format for the training: PHAs should investigate different means of delivering the training. Options include webinars and training applications.
- Certificates: Issuing certificates for online training is more challenging than for in-person trainings. The PHA must decide how completion of the training will be determined. Will the voucher holder self-certify? Take a quiz? Will completion be monitored through a web application? This may inform the remaining decisions on how the training will be offered.

TIPS

Level of Commitment

Be mindful of time! When developing materials, the PHA should carefully consider voucher family and PHA time commitments. PHAs that offer tenant education opportunities noted that their programs had difficulty when the time commitment for participants was too great. For example, one PHA noted that their program was too time intensive and consisted of multiple sessions taking more than 20 hours to complete in order to receive a certificate of completion. This proved to be too much of a time commitment and the program was ultimately not successful.

Sonoma County Housing Authority offered a multi-part tenant education workshop. The PHA lined up a partner so that voucher families who had to miss a day could make up a class with the partner to receive certification.

Partners

PHAs should look to partner with other agencies and non-profits that might be interested in providing tenant training. PHAs should identify barriers that might prevent attendance. For example, childcare or assistance with transportation costs might make it easier for tenants to attend.

RESOURCES

[*Appendix C-Sample Tenant Training Certificate*](#)

REGULATIONS

[*24 CFR § 982.301*](#)



STRATEGY: EXPANDING YOUR NETWORK

Reaching beyond HCV-centered events to find opportunities to provide outreach to current HCV landlords and recruit new landlords.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ○ MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Expanding Your Network PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Expanding Your Network
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHAs can participate in a range of activities to recruit or retain HCV landlords that do not require the PHA to plan and host the events themselves. Typically, these events and activities are less costly and easier to implement. For example, the HCV staff can partner with and attend other organizations' events, or even schedule and meet with an individual landlord. The complexity of the outreach does not dictate effectiveness—a phone call has the potential to have an impact on a landlord's willingness to participate in the HCV program, and it is very cost effective.

This strategy also includes ways that PHAs can utilize their own data and coordinate internally to identify and reach prospective landlords.

Related Strategies:

- Landlord Outreach Events
- Landlord-Focused Customer Service

EVENTS HOSTED BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

On the following pages are two examples of opportunities where PHAs might partner with other organizations to deliver information about the HCV program to a variety of audiences. While the events listed in this section are hosted by other organizations and, therefore, do not require the same level of logistic considerations as events hosted by the PHA, a level of planning and development is still required.

Depending on the nature of the event and the audience, the PHA will need to prepare materials to present, hand out, or have available.

Another area where the PHA might decide to devote some planning and development is marketing. Although the events described are hosted by other entities, the information provided at the event by the PHA, as well as by other organizations is likely to have appeal for the PHA audiences including landlords and tenants.





The strategies: New Landlord Orientation, Landlord Outreach Events, and Tenant Education in this chapter offer additional information on types of materials a PHA might consider and marketing tips.

Housing Industry Group Meetings

Local apartment associations, industry and investor groups, and real estate associations can be valuable partners with PHAs. They can help to disseminate information about the HCV program to their members and serve as a resource for gathering feedback from the landlord community at large. Many apartment associations hold regular meetings with their members, who may include owners and landlords, property or fee management companies, and housing developers or builders.

PHAs should consider strengthening relationships with apartment associations and similar organizations and requesting, if not already invited, to participate in apartment association meetings. Attending these meetings or events provides the PHAs with an opportunity to recruit from and strengthen ties with a large pool of landlords, both current and prospective landlords in the HCV program. It also offers a key opportunity for the PHA to combat myths and stereotypes about the HCV program and HCV voucher families.

The PHA might participate by presenting information about the PHA and its programs, the HCV program, and new policies and regulations as well as listening to concerns from participants.



TIP: Be prepared with facts to counter common myths and negative stereotypes if landlords push back with stories of bad experiences! Changing perceptions of the program can be easier than it might seem. For example, several PHAs stated that one of the common myths they hear is that HCV tenants damage units. When asked, landlords acknowledge that they have had HCV and non-HCV tenants who have caused damage to units. PHAs do not always need to be on the defensive; many times people will debunk their own myths when provided with additional information.

While PHA staff may be apprehensive about the potential of hearing complaints about PHA performance or the HCV program, landlords have indicated that being heard and making contact with PHA staff is greatly valued. Additionally, PHAs have said that changes made as a result of landlord feedback have had some of the greatest impact in changing landlord perception of the HCV program. Being open to hearing feedback can change adversarial relationships into partnerships.

Housing Fairs

Housing Fairs or other convention type events are another great opportunity for PHAs to interact with current or potential HCV landlords without requiring the PHA to carry out all of the planning, logistics, and hosting duties.

There may be a cost for the PHA to rent an exhibit or table space. While these types of events lack formal presentations, they provide the opportunity for substantial one-on-one interaction with those who are curious about the PHA and its programs.



TIPS:

- Make the PHA booth appealing! Have a jar to collect business cards.
- Bring informational sheets about PHA programs, including HCV.
- Bring sample paperwork and business cards.
- Bring “mythbusters” fact sheets.

APPOINTMENTS, MEETINGS, PHONE CALLS

Outreach does not necessitate hosting or even participating in an organized event. Outreach to prospective or current landlords can be done effectively through one-on-one interaction.

The desire to be heard by PHAs is commonly voiced by landlords. Meeting directly with landlords in a one-on-one or small group appointment can open lines of communication that supplement the PHA’s outreach through organized workshops, forums, or other events.



Wheel Of Fortune!

It can be easy to get lost in the mix at conventions. To make their booth appealing, Sonoma County Housing Authority took an innovative approach to draw people to learn about the HCV program—Wheel of Fortune Mythbusters. Using a dry-erase table-top Wheel of Fortune-style game, the PHA landlord liaison wrote common myths about the HCV program on the wheel. Convention participants spun the wheel and had the opportunity to “bust the myth” to win a piece of candy. Examples of myths are: There is only one PHA, which is HUD; Once a landlord agrees to accept a voucher family, that voucher family cannot be evicted; Landlords do not get to choose their tenants.

By using this game, the landlord liaison created positive images and made the information appealing and fun when presenting it to groups.

In a one-on-one meeting with a landlord, the PHA has an opportunity to address the individualized concerns and needs of the landlord. Perhaps most importantly, the small scale allows landlords to ask questions that they might not feel comfortable asking in a public setting. Additionally, speaking face-to-face with landlords can help de-escalate situations.

“ Meeting with a landlord is not just about what we want but also what they want. ”

- PHA Landlord Relations Supervisor



TIPS

- Consider scheduling appointments with similar landlords in groups. For example: meet with landlords who operate large apartment complexes one month, and with landlords with small portfolios the next. Groups of landlords may share common issues and concerns. If an activity, for example, the passage of new legislation, affects a certain type of landlord, the PHA might want to schedule a meeting with the landlords most impacted by this type of issue versus scheduling based on the portfolio size of the landlord.
- Before setting a schedule or attending an appointment, take time to talk to other departments within the PHA to gauge if there are specific issues that have been more common over a period of time. Example: The Inspection Department may note they have seen a change in the number of abatements over the last 6 months. The HCV landlord contact may be able to address the issue directly with landlords or, at least, enter the appointment with an understanding that the issue may come up in discussion.

IDENTIFYING AND REACHING PROSPECTIVE LANDLORDS USING PHA DATA AND PROGRAMS

The following are additional ideas targeted at recruiting new landlords using data and programs already collected or in place. These efforts do not necessarily qualify as strategies, but PHAs could use these as a starting point when developing an overall outreach strategy.

PHA Data Analysis

PHAs may want to consider a variety of tools and resources to identify prospective landlords.

Many landlords post rental listings online at a number of websites, and the most-used website may vary by city and state. PHAs may want to consider reviewing rental listing postings on a weekly or monthly basis and identify any landlords they may not currently be working with. Calling landlords proactively with rental listings on behalf of the PHA to develop a relationship could help identify new landlords. Consider inviting these landlords to a new landlord orientation.

Another idea is to conduct outreach to all Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties that are required to take HCVs. It can be helpful to remind these properties of their obligation to take HCVs. It also can be helpful to establish a relationship with landlords of these properties to see if they own other communities that voucher holders may also be interested in renting.

Similarly, PHAs may want to run a listing from their line-of-business software of all current landlords and properties that rent to voucher holders. In some areas, PHAs have found that landlords only allow voucher holders to live in some of their properties, and not all. Analyzing whether the PHA has an existing relationship with a landlord that currently owns more properties may result in additional properties being open to voucher holders.

Another way to use data on current landlords and properties is to see if there are major landlords that are not currently participating in the program. PHAs may want to develop an outreach plan, coordinated with key leadership, to make a pitch to those landlords to learn more about the program.

And finally, PHAs that are particularly data savvy could access local tax records to see what landlords own the most units in their area and target those landlords. When conducting analysis, PHAs should note that over the past decade, many single-family properties are now owned by a company.



New Markets!

In Columbus, the landlord liaison attended young professional networking events, where she heard many of the participants mention that they or their friends had inherited a housing unit and were not sure of how to deal with it. At approximately the same time, she noticed that the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority showed a change in ownership trends. Many of the PHA's owners had primary sources of income unrelated to their ownership of rental housing. Participating in these networking events helped this PHA employee tap into a new group of potential owners.

Another PHA, Sonoma County Housing Authority, has begun talking to developers about the HCV program. They are reaching out to developers and attending city hall meetings with developers and investors to "start the conversation" with the goal of reaching new and untapped markets.

and the VASH manager spoke about the HUD-VASH program. The show ran for approximately one month. HACP is now considering hosting a show dedicated to the HCV program. The show was taped and broadcast at no cost to them; it was seen as a community benefit.

- During the MHA's outreach for HUD-VASH, MHA prepared a letter to be sent from the mayor to current landlords stating that the mayor supported HUD-VASH and working to end veteran homelessness. The mayor challenged landlords to set aside one unit each for a veteran.
- Another PHA, which has a HUD-VASH designated inspector, has had great success in marketing both the HUD-VASH and the HCV program. The inspector is a veteran and is very effective at recruiting landlords to participate in the HUD-VASH program. Many of these landlords have gone on to also rent to HCV holders. In addition to being a veteran, the inspector has been successful because he has been able to establish a personal connection with landlords. They see him face-to-face more than any other PHA staff.

Combine Efforts with Other PHA Programs

When PHAs can piggyback the HCV program on to efforts of other PHA programs, they can promote awareness of the HCV program to a new audience, which is already familiar with the PHA and its programs. These shared efforts also optimize funding or staff resource use. For example, the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program challenged mayors nationwide to end homelessness among veterans. The PHAs below each took a different approach to using the buzz surrounding HUD-VASH to increase awareness of the PHA and HCV.

- During the outreach for HUD-VASH, the Housing Authority of the City of Pocatello (HACP), with the mayor's assistance, hosted a show on the local public broadcasting TV channel. Both the mayor





STRATEGY: INFORMATION SHARING

Providing updates, news and information on HCV and other PHA programs through the portal, websites, social media, mailers, columns or articles, and newsletters.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Information Sharing PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Information Sharing
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHAs use information-sharing strategies to connect landlords with new and important information, provide timely reminders that can fine tune processes and increase satisfaction, and build the relationship between landlords and the PHA. In the past, newsletters may have been the most common way of disseminating information. Requiring some investment of time, design, and other resources, newsletters can create a focal point that landlords know to expect. Creating an electronic newsletter can be a way of keeping the product while decreasing some of the required investment. Today, though, PHAs also have access to a wide range of tools to get out periodic or time-sensitive information that require fewer resources and can be implemented more quickly. Website or portal information, social media posts, and emails or texts can be a



quick way of spreading important and time-sensitive information. Certain ways of sharing information – through the mail, email, and text – are certain to reach the landlord audience as long as the PHA is diligent about keeping contact information current. Social media posts such as on Facebook or Twitter can get the word out instantaneously as long as the audience uses those forms of media. Certain ways of sharing can also be tracked effectively, offering the PHA a way to quantify what works.

Related Strategies:

- Technology

CONTENT

A PHA may use a range of information-sharing tools and may very well use more than one strategy for the same piece of information. To



determine which tools are the most appropriate and useful, the PHA will want to start by defining **WHAT**, as in, what type of information needs to be shared. The type of information will usually make clear **WHO** the audience is.

What type of information needs to be shared?

- Urgent, time-sensitive information will require the quickest ways of connecting with an audience, and may also be a good choice to promote through more than one communication means. This might mean social media, but if the information has the ability to have an immediate financial impact on the landlord, it will be important to ensure that the information has the best opportunity to reach all landlords.
- If the information is something that the audience might want to print off and keep, it might be best as a website post, newsletter item, or flyer.
- If the PHA has a number of items that have a longer time frame, a newsletter might be a good fit.

Specific types of content that a PHA might want to communicate about include:

- New policy, guidance, regulation, or law that would impact current landlords
- Hot topics or areas that the PHA has seen landlords struggling with. Example: reasonable accommodation, Fair Housing
- New PHA tools or resources
- How and where to list available housing units*
- PHA events*
- Benefits of voucher programs for prospective landlords and how to participate
- Partner resources
- Seasonal reminders, for example, smoke detector or battery changes
- Spotlights on partners
- New updates to PHA technology or resources. Example: Portal
- Where to find landlord resources*

- Client or landlord spotlight
- Requests that PHAs have of landlords such as brief surveys, satisfaction questionnaires, or contact information updates
- Information that landlords have asked for the PHA to address. Especially landlord inquiries that the PHA has needed time to look into.

* It might be helpful for these items to be recurring.

Who: PHAs should make decisions about distribution based on the content that will be shared. For example, seasonal reminders will be most useful for current landlords. Client and landlord spotlights, on the other hand, might be of interest to a wider range of recipients, including current and prospective landlords.

INFORMATION-SHARING METHODS

Some methods that PHAs might consider using to share their content include:

-
- 1 Newsletters
 - 2 Recurring columns in other publications
 - 3 Information posted on the PHA portal
 - 4 Information posted on the PHA website
 - 5 Social media posts
 - 6 Emails or mass email, also called email blasts or bulk email
 - 7 Texts or bulk multimedia messaging service (MMS) or short messaging service (SMS)
-



REMINDER: When posting on social media, be sure to monitor the comments received for opportunities to engage with responders by answering questions, referring to resources, or countering negative stereotypes.



TIP: Evaluate success with tracking data. If using a delivery method that works through emails or text and SMS messaging, the company

may allow the PHA to see the number of recipients who open the message or in some way interact with it, such as by clicking a link or sharing the content. This analysis can help the PHA determine if the method is reaching the audience and, perhaps, whether the audience is interested. Based on this data, the PHA may consider altering the frequency, content, subject line, etc. A PHA can also find out when an address was not deliverable, which can help guide contact update outreach. Keeping contact information current is the most important way of ensuring that the PHA can reach its landlords when needed.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS/STEPS

To determine the appropriate information-sharing methods, look at the **WHY** and the **WHEN** as well as an important **HOW**.

Why does the PHA need to share this information? Some examples of reasons include:

- To inform of a change in HCV-related programs or policies.
- To let an audience know of time sensitive information like an event, other opportunity, or other deadline.

- To offer a positive story to remind landlords of benefits of working with the HCV program.
- To create a regular line of communication with current landlords.
- To ensure that current program forms, information, and policies are easily available.

When does the audience need to receive the information?

- Yesterday! Aim for the speediest ways of communicating.
- By a specific deadline. Select the strategies that fit the timeline.
- On a regular basis. Select strategies that the PHA can easily and regularly repeat.
- Anytime.

How does the PHA reach the audience of choice?

As mentioned before, the most significant limiting factor is contact information. If the audience is current landlords, does the PHA have their up-to-date contact information? What will it mean if the information disseminated does not get to the landlord? How does the PHA update landlord information?

If the audience is landlords who are not yet associated with the HCV program, how will the PHA increase the likelihood that they will come across and interact with the information? Consider reaching out to industry groups these landlords might belong to. The PHA might consider placing information at a location frequented by prospective landlords, such as where landlords place advertisements for available listings.



NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters, both electronic and print versions, can require a higher level of resource investment than other information-sharing strategies. Before deciding to develop a newsletter, ask the questions that follow. These questions will inform the newsletter audience, purpose, content and more.

- What is the purpose of the newsletter? Is a newsletter the best way to reach that goal?
- Who is the target audience? General public, tenants, HCV landlords, partnering agencies?
- How often will the newsletter be published? Monthly, quarterly, yearly?
- How will the newsletter be distributed? Hard copy, online?
- Who will decide what is included in each newsletter? Or how will each newsletters content be decided?
- Who at the PHA will gather the content and draft it for publication?
- How much design does the PHA want to incorporate into a newsletter? Remember that all images should have the appropriate alt-text. Color contrasts, charts, and graphs must also be compliant with section 504/508.
- Will the newsletter articles or items need to be approved within the PHA? What is that process?

As an exercise to determine how often to publish, list the 12 months (or the 4 quarters, etc.) and brainstorm what items the PHA might report on each month and who will develop these items. If the list developed does not have two items in every month or the staff person(s) who would be assigned has concerns about the time demands, consider publishing fewer issues.



TIPS:

- PHAs should consider maintaining a landlord email list.
- Readers of web-based or email-based news may read it on their phone's small screen – make sure titles are clear and compelling, and keep content short.
- Regularly updating contact information increases PHA options in selecting methods that will reach all current landlords.
- While providing information is helpful, over messaging can cause reader fatigue. PHAs should be mindful of the amount of information they send and target information to the audience who benefits from it. Information that is not useful for a particular audience may also cause readership to decline.



TECHNOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Technology facilitates multiple options for public housing agencies (PHAs) to improve their relationships with landlords, provide landlords with access to information previously only available by request or mail, and ease the concerns and frustrations surrounding the inspections process. Technology-focused strategies can range from simple, low-cost options such as adding information to a PHA website to high-tech software applications that can optimally route inspections appointments and provide real-time arrival updates to landlords.

The following strategies are included in this section:

- HCV Landlord Webpage
- HCV Landlord Portal
- Inspections Technology

Related strategies:

- Inspections
- Education and Outreach

The strategies in this technology chapter address the following areas:

Technology Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	HCV Landlord Webpage	HCV Landlord Portal	Inspections Technology
Increase Recruitment	X		
Increase Retention	X	X	X
Improve Responsiveness	X	X	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X	X	
Improve Inspections Process	X	X	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X	X	X





STRATEGY: HCV LANDLORD WEBPAGE

Providing information to landlords about the PHA and the HCV program on the PHA's website.

Who: PHAs with a mid-sized or larger HCV program that already have a PHA website. PHAs located in areas where landlords are used to finding information online.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal for PHAs that already have and maintain a website.

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ○ MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

HCV Landlord Webpage PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	HCV Landlord Webpage
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



participation, how the program works, what to expect, what forms are required, and steps to participate!

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: While many PHAs have websites, and many of those websites include information specific to the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, the typical audience for HCV information has been voucher families. PHAs should consider designating a section of their websites specifically for HCV landlord-related information. Making information available and easily accessible to landlords can serve multiple purposes. HCV landlord information on a website can:

- Encourage landlord participation in the HCV program through readily available and easily digestible information. PHAs can make joining the HCV program easier by providing basic information about the HCV program, including benefits of



TIP: Landlord-oriented information can answer many questions, but it is still important to provide ways that landlords can contact someone at the PHA if there are further questions. Be sure that someone regularly monitors the landlord website emails and/or telephone messages to provide timely responses.

- Address landlord questions up front: Providing landlords with easy access to information can save PHA staff time – a direct benefit to PHAs. Enabling landlords to access information via a PHA website could allow PHA staff to redirect time previously spent fielding inquiries from landlords toward other outreach and engagement activities.



- Empower landlords: By making landlord-specific information available on the web, landlords can obtain information quickly and easily, any time of day. Furthermore, providing information that is developed for landlords and, therefore, is presented in a way that makes sense for landlords, helps to highlight the importance of the landlord's role in the HCV process. The information provided will help build the knowledge base of HCV landlords so they are more comfortable with the program and their role.

Related Strategies:

- Landlord Portal
 - New Landlord Orientation
 - Information Sharing
-

IMPLEMENTATION AND DESIGN

This strategy will primarily address HCV landlord-specific information and features that PHAs should consider including on their landlord-specific webpage rather than focusing on the PHA's general website design. However, below are a few things PHAs should consider when thinking about general PHA website design.

PHA Website

While many PHAs already have websites, they vary in design and complexity depending on the resources of the PHA. PHAs that do

not currently have websites should consider setting up a simple website that contains basic information such as contact information and the programs the PHA offers. Websites do not have to be complex — even a simple webpage with minimal graphics can be effective in delivering information. There are even several website platforms that are very user-friendly and would allow PHA staff to quickly design and publish a website at minimal cost, without having to engage an outside vendor.

Designated HCV or HCV Landlord Webpage(s)

Depending on the size of the PHA's HCV program, PHAs should consider dedicating a webpage to the HCV program and, specifically, an area for landlords. If the PHA frequently receives inquiries from landlords regarding certain aspects of the program or requests for particular forms, a page dedicated to landlords providing that information might be especially useful. Navigation to these pages should be prominently placed and easy to find from the PHA website's homepage.



TIP: Make your website easy to use! For PHAs that provide lots of information, a prominent main navigation menu for key topics with easy-to-find subtopics will help website users quickly locate the information they need. When deciding how to organize a website, PHAs should imagine they are completely unfamiliar with the HCV program and consider what headings and links from the main page would be most helpful to a new user.

More and more, users access websites from their mobile telephones. Developers should test how a webpage will look on the smaller screen. Is text readable; can the user click through?

Webpages must also meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements.



NOTICE: For the purpose of this strategy, **website** refers to the online collection of webpages linked together. The term **webpage** refers to a specific page with specific content located on a PHA's website. A website is typically comprised of multiple webpages.



Updates and IT Content Development

The content on a webpage may need to be changed quickly! PHAs should identify who will be responsible for developing and updating content. Additionally, PHAs should have a plan for updating webpage content. For example, will this be an internal function or will the PHA contract these services to an outside vendor?

Web content must be accessible for persons with disabilities, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA. The obligation to ensure web content accessibility for persons with disabilities includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that all images, including graphs and charts, include appropriate alt-text.

CONTENT

The content on a PHA's landlord-specific webpage is generally focused on meeting the needs of two groups of individuals:

- New or prospective landlords: Those who are interested in becoming an HCV landlord or have recently joined
- Current landlords: Landlords who currently participate in the HCV program

While some information will be applicable to both groups, each will have unique reasons for visiting the PHA's HCV webpage. The information below will discuss content that should be included to address the needs of both groups, as well as content that is of interest to a wider audience.



TIP: Information should be written with landlords as the audience. Not all landlords or website viewers will be familiar with the program.

Don't reinvent the wheel! The **HUD HCV Landlord Resource webpage** has many resources that PHAs can use or link to:

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/landlord

New or Prospective Landlords

A PHA website might be one of the first exposures a potential landlord has to the HCV program. PHAs should develop content based on the reasons why a prospective landlord might visit a PHA website. What programs or PHA services would interest a prospective landlord? The PHA's website design and content can make it easier for the landlord to locate HCV program information rather than, for instance, other PHA programs or general operations. The table on the following page is framed with potential headings the PHA could use on its website or HCV webpage to point landlords toward the information they seek. This content could be organized into an informational hierarchy using sub-navigation menus.



SUBJECT	CONTENT
HCV PROGRAM OVERVIEW	Potential landlords who are interested in the HCV program may have little to no knowledge of what the program is, why they should participate, and steps they should take if they are interested in participating. PHA websites should contain a concise overview of the program. This is also a great opportunity for PHAs to promote participation by including benefits to landlords.
STEPS TO BECOMING A LANDLORD IN THE HCV PROGRAM	Landlords may seek different information on becoming a landlord based on where they are in the process. If a voucher family has viewed a vacant unit, the landlord may want information about required forms, the lease and Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract, and inspections. Other landlords will benefit from information about how to market vacant units to voucher families and list units with the PHA, if that is an option. If possible, the PHA should provide links to required forms, information on how and where to submit completed forms, how to request additional information and how to join the PHA's list of participating landlords.
HCV ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	If not included in the program overview, PHAs should include the roles and responsibilities of the PHA, the landlord, and the voucher family. Information should include required actions as well as the limitations of each party.
HCV PROCESS OVERVIEW	<p>Providing information on the HCV process can help landlords feel more comfortable. It also sets and manages expectations. Based on the information provided in this section of the website, landlords should be able to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How a voucher family is briefed and searches for a unit • When the PHA accepts a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) form and inspects • How a landlord joins the program, lists units, and accepts a voucher family as a tenant <p>If possible, information about the inspections process and requirements, as well as general timeframes for all steps mentioned above, should be included.</p> <p>Some of these topics can be elaborated upon in greater detail in other areas of the website. PHAs can link to these sections in order to keep the process overview section brief.</p>
CALENDAR AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES	PHAs should include important deadlines and, if offered, opportunities for landlords to learn about the program. If the PHA has an online calendar, a link should be provided or the PHA should list landlord events.

See [Appendix D](#) for sample language or additional information related to the content tables for PHA landlord websites.



Current Landlords

Landlords that currently participate in the HCV program are most likely seeking targeted, issue-specific information about the HCV program. If the PHA has a landlord portal, some of this content might also be made available there (see the Landlord Portal strategy in this chapter). Keep in mind, this information could also be useful for prospective landlords who are seeking more detailed information about the HCV program up front.

SUBJECT	CONTENT
<p>INSPECTIONS INFORMATION</p>	<p>The inspections process can be an area of confusion and frustration for landlords. PHAs should include information on the typical inspections process at their agency, including timing and scheduling, as well as general HUD-established physical inspections standards. PHAs might also want to include information on unit deficiencies that frequently cause units to fail inspections. This information can help manage landlord expectations and minimize the number of re-inspections.</p> <hr/> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p>TIP: Consider making information, such as a checklist, about inspections available in PDF format on the webpage so landlords can print the information and take it with them to their unit.</p> </div> <hr/> <p>PHAs can provide checklists or materials they developed specifically to help landlords prepare for inspections or link to the HUD HCV Landlord Resources webpage inspection checklist and form or the HUD Housing Quality Standards webpage.</p>
<p>PAYMENT STANDARDS AND UTILITY ALLOWANCE SCHEDULES</p>	<p>A common question from landlords is, “How much money will I receive?” PHAs should provide information on their agency’s payment standards, including an explanation of what payment standards are, and how they are calculated by explaining concepts like Fair Market Rents (FMRs) or Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs). PHAs might also want to include a chart of payment standards to indicate the maximum amount of rent landlords could receive or provide a way for landlords to request and receive a reasonable rent estimate.</p> <p>To ensure that expectations are managed, PHAs should be sure to explain that PHAs must determine the amount of rent that is reasonable for a specific unit in comparison to similar units. Therefore, the landlord may be offered a rent amount that is lower than the payment standard or the landlord can sometimes get a rent amount that is more than the payment standard, if the voucher family is willing to pay the amount above the payment standard.</p> <p>Some PHAs post their utility allowance schedules on their website. They may post a link to allowance schedules with a breakdown by utility type and bedroom size. They may discuss the methodology behind the schedule. Some PHAs also provide a utility calculator. PHAs should explain that their payment standards are meant to cover the rent to owner and utility costs.</p> <p>PHAs should consider providing information on how to request a rent increase as this is a commonly misunderstood process.</p>



PROPERTY LISTINGS	The HCV program can provide an opportunity to fill vacant units quickly. PHAs should offer information on how landlords can market vacant units based on local practice.
NEWS	The Information Sharing strategy in the Education and Outreach chapter discusses the types of information that PHAs might want to share with landlords. One potential method mentioned is sharing information via the PHA's website. Designating a section of the website to landlord and HCV-specific news is a cost-effective way of making news available to landlords as well as the general public.



REMINDER: The amount that a PHA determines is necessary to cover the resident's reasonable utility costs is the **utility allowance**.

FORMS

PHAs should consider making common forms available via a website. When possible, adding processes that allow forms to be completed, signed, submitted, and processed digitally can be a good long-term investment. These processes make it even easier for landlords to complete required documents from a location and at a time of the landlord's choosing. They can type in the information and then send via email or print and submit a paper copy. Several common forms are available on the [HUD HCV Landlord Resources webpage](#).

Electronic forms related to federal housing programs must conform to HUD Section 504 accessibility regulations.

STRATEGY: LANDLORD PORTAL

Providing information to landlords about their individual profile, units, payments, and tenants in a secure electronic website portal.

Who: PHAs that already use a vendor that provides portals, and PHAs that are considering investing in a portal (which includes voucher families and PHA elements as well as landlord elements).

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Moderate for PHAs that already work with a vendor offering web-based services. May be more substantial for PHAs that do not currently work with a vendor, or would like to develop this feature in-house.

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

HCV Landlord Portal PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	HCV Landlord Portal
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



In addition to reducing the number of inquiries received, PHAs might also see a reduction in postage costs as a result of distributing information electronically.

While a PHA website with a landlord page offers information relevant to all landlords, a portal provides current HCV landlords with secure access to information specific to their portfolio. Commonly, this includes useful payment information including the dates and amounts of payments broken out by tenants and units. This information is especially helpful for landlords with multiple units in the program.

Note: Providing payment information online typically requires that landlords accept direct deposit of housing assistance payments (HAP). For some PHAs and some landlords, switching to direct deposit may be an extra first step in implementing a portal.

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: One of the major challenges facing PHAs is responding in a timely manner to landlords' requests for information. The HCV program is the largest rental housing assistance program in the United States and, for many PHAs, their single largest program. As a result, the number of landlords who participate can be quite large and the volume of requests for information can be challenging, at times, for PHAs. In an online portal, current landlords log into a secure website where they can access a broad range of information specific to their HCV housing portfolio. This 24/7 access to information may decrease the volume of inquiries PHAs receive.



Many portal accounts also provide inspection appointment dates, inspection reports, and results. When the inspection and portal software are compatible, these reports and results may be sent from a mobile device, such as a mobile phone, and uploaded to the portal in real or near-real time.

Some portals are designed to allow forms, other paperwork, or messages to be sent between landlords and PHAs.

Related Strategies:

- [Inspections Technology](#)
 - [Landlord Outreach Events](#)
 - [Information Sharing](#)
-

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

A landlord portal is an investment for PHAs. PHAs should carefully consider whether the information they want to share with landlords is best provided through the PHA website and/or through a dedicated portal. To get a sense of the types of information that portals can provide, PHAs may want to review the products of different software vendors.

If a PHA has a portal for voucher families, the information provided there to assist voucher families with navigating the process may offer the PHA ideas about what to offer from the landlord's perspective. Also, the experience that voucher families or case managers report in using the portal may offer the PHA areas of interest to follow up on when researching the landlord portal.

Understanding what a portal can provide can help PHAs decide whether they want to implement a portal by using vendor software or by developing one in-house. PHAs must also consider how they will roll out their new portal, including providing training to their

current landlords who may have varying levels of comfort with technology and with passwords or user names.

Is a Portal Right for Your PHA?

Below are ways PHAs can evaluate if a landlord portal may be a good fit:

- **Talk to staff:** Review the number of inquiries received that could be addressed in a portal. Ask staff if they think landlords would utilize a portal. Does the PHA have IT staff to maintain the portal? Does the PHA have staff available to train landlords on the new portal, including some hands-on assistance for those less familiar with technology? If a portal is an additional module on vendor-supplied software, training and support may be part of that contract, but PHA staff will still find situations where they will need to provide support to some users.
- **Ask landlords:** Consider doing a formal, or even an informal, poll of landlords to gauge their level of interest in a portal and their comfort level with online technology. The PHA could administer a poll at an upcoming PHA event or via email. When designing the poll, PHAs should have an idea of the range of portal functions and what the PHA would be open to implementing.

Note: Portals do not serve prospective landlords. Information that the PHA wants to provide digitally to a prospective landlord would be more accessible from a website, rather than a secure portal requiring a username/password for access.



Tip: Talk to other PHAs, your industry group(s), and local government agencies to see if they utilize a landlord portal and ask them about start-up costs, operational costs and needs, and the successes and challenges.

Portal Selection

A PHA that has determined a landlord portal would be beneficial will next examine whether they will design and create a portal in-house or whether they will contract with a vendor.



Costs

PHAs should note that they may see a slight cost savings due to the reduction of printing and postage expenses. A landlord portal may also result in savings of staff time answering questions.

Using a Software Vendor

Since portal software typically interacts with other PHA information such as HAP amounts, inspection appointment dates and results, and direct deposit dates, the most important characteristic of any portal software is that it can interact with existing PHA computer systems to share the information the PHA wants to have available on the portal. PHAs will want to check with any portal software vendor to see if that software can function as a standalone module if that software vendor is not the PHA's primary vendor. Costs vary depending on the vendor and the services offered. Be sure to review what services commercial vendors offer and compare start-up and operational costs before deciding to develop an in-house portal. It is important to understand the ongoing support or training that a vendor may offer, the associated cost, and what in-house IT staff may need to learn to supplement the vendor in operations or emergencies.

The PHA will need to devote some resources to evaluating which software and/or services fit best and what offerings will provide the PHA the greatest return on investment. The PHA should also consider what features will help landlords do their jobs effectively. PHAs should ask how the potential portal features interface with current and desired PHA practices. For instance, will it allow PHAs to move to direct deposit of HAP? Will landlords be able to

receive inspection results through the portal the same day as an inspection or quicker than they normally would? How might a portal impact PHA staff time beyond fewer landlord requests for information? Is the portal similar to neighboring PHAs' portals, so landlords that own units in both jurisdictions do not have to learn to use very different portal designs?

Portal features PHAs have noted are helpful to their landlords or that they hope to add to their existing portals include features where landlords can:

- View HAP history and remittances
- View inspections results and deficiencies
- Submit photos of corrected deficiencies to meet HQS requirements
- See previous and upcoming inspection dates
- Request rent changes
- Review status of rent increases
- Receive notifications and send messages
- Download forms
- View electronic copies of signed forms including contracts and leases
- Submit completed forms with electronic signature
- Download 1099 tax forms

Whether the product of a vendor or designed by the PHA, access to the portal and content on the portal must be accessible for persons with disabilities, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA. The obligation to ensure web content accessibility for persons with disabilities includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that all images, including graphs and charts, include appropriate alt-text.



Procurement

PHAs must follow their procurement policy if they contract with a vendor.



If the PHA implements any feature that allows for the submission of forms or inquiries, the PHA will need to plan for staff to process the forms and requests in a timely manner. It will also want to ensure that the feature provides the landlord with a confirmation that the item was submitted. Ideally, the confirmation should provide the landlord with a brief message about what he or she can expect as next steps. These actions help to build satisfaction for the user, in this case, the landlord.

Whether a portal is developed using vendor software or in-house IT resources, the PHA must develop and implement policies and procedures to ensure the security of data on the portal. Data requiring security includes, for example, personally identifiable information and bank account information of voucher families and landlords. The PHA should post information in the portal to let landlords know what these policies and procedures are.

In-House Portal Development

Some PHAs develop their own landlord portals if they have robust IT support and specific items they want to share with landlords that commercial vendors do not provide. To ensure that development costs, including updates and modifications to the initial version, are kept within a budget, the PHA will need to invest substantial time in planning to ensure that the portal can access needed information from other PHA computer systems and operate in an intuitive manner for landlords. A portal that serves the entire housing authority may be most cost-effective, since costs can be spread among departments, but, naturally, the planning process is more extensive. At the same time, creating a budget for a project that spans departments could also be quite complex since different departmental funding sources could have varying commingling constraints. It is important to allocate adequate staff time to planning so that the portal meets expectations, is useful to landlords, and does not require costly frequent changes. There will, of course, be operational

updates that are regularly or periodically needed and the PHA will need to budget for these.



Tip: Some PHAs develop their own portal. Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority noted that they chose this approach because they wanted the portal to serve their entire PHA and their departments were organized differently than vendor software allowed. It is important to note that the development time and financial investment were significant.

Training

Introducing a portal as an information resource may be a big change for PHA staff and landlords. Although the increased access to information is likely to improve landlord satisfaction in the long term, in the beginning, staff and landlords may experience some confusion and frustration. Offering training to familiarize landlords, including some initial intensive hands-on assistance, may lessen the learning curve – just be sure that PHA staff members are also comfortable accessing the features of the portal. If the PHA uses vendor software, be sure to explore all of the virtual webinars or other training opportunities available through the vendor.



REMINDER: Report on the implementation of a portal in the PHA newsletter or post on the PHA's website. This is an opportunity to highlight the PHA's commitment to landlord support and how the portal can increase PHA staff's ability to provide requested information more quickly and effectively than in the past. If the PHA decides to implement a portal based on a discussion with another PHA, briefly profile that PHA's experience in the newsletter or in social media.

Staff needs and concerns should be thoroughly addressed prior to introducing the portal to landlords. Staff members need to understand what landlords will see and experience to be able to offer the best assistance. When the portal is new, it may not always function as imagined, and staff will be able to meet expectations better if they can confidently say, “I don’t know the answer, but let me check and get back to you.”

Some training options include:

- In-person trainings: PHAs can include portal demonstrations in large and/or small group trainings. This may be offered as part of an already-scheduled education and outreach event. Staff should test the portal in the training location prior to the event to ensure smooth access. Staff should be prepared to walk landlords through the log-in process one by one and answer questions. Individual meetings can also be beneficial for landlords who may have limited experience with technology.
- Webinars: Hosting a virtual event through a webinar is a cost-effective way to train groups and individuals. A benefit of virtual events is that they can be filmed or recorded and, thus, available for landlords to review on their own timeframe.
- Pre-recorded demonstration: The PHA can post a video demonstration of a staff person logging in (password hidden) as a landlord, navigating through the features in the portal while explaining what she or he is doing, and providing tips such as noting whether log-in or password information is case sensitive or how to search on the portal, if appropriate.

No matter what option the PHA chooses for providing training, landlords will have questions when they access the system for the first time. During any training session, PHAs should provide information on how to contact the PHA for assistance, specifying contacts that are appropriate for portal questions. Ensure that

replies and assistance are thorough and prompt to overcome reluctance or concerns.

Although support needs will lessen as landlords become used to the portal, there will always be some support required, particularly for new landlords that join the program. PHAs that currently have portals noted there can be challenges with staff turnover, especially at large property management companies, and new staff may need assistance with new passwords and usernames.



Benefits of a Portal

To encourage the use of the portal, PHAs may consider highlighting incentives related to portal use like receiving payment more quickly through direct deposit or quicker access to inspection results. When landlords log into the portal for information that was typically mailed – HAP history, for example – landlords may have access to other useful features of the portal. They will have the opportunity to discover information that might replace the need to call the PHA. The PHA should balance these benefits against the risk that some landlords might be unable or unwilling to use the portal and may be deterred from participating in the HCV program.





STRATEGY: INSPECTIONS TECHNOLOGY

Utilizing technology to improve the inspections process.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Inspections Technology PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Inspections Technology
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	



WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHAs are using technology to improve the inspections process including:

- Helping both landlords and PHAs to schedule and track inspections using scheduling and notification apps and direct electronic communications. Technology can be used to alert landlords to an appointment date, offer available windows of time, and update the landlord via text or email with changes to appointment times or an inspector’s expected arrival time.
- Providing inspection results quickly – sometimes in real time – to landlords through portal and inspections software applications. This may include conducting an inspection with the HUD-established physical inspection standards form on a mobile device that can be submitted

to an inspection company website or a PHA portal as soon as the inspection is completed. It might also include conducting a video inspection of a location using a mobile device and interacting with a remote inspector who may request certain photos be submitted during the inspection. The adoption of new technology to facilitate inspections can require changes to PHA procedures and policies. Some of these strategies require specific equipment and some require additional costs of vendor software or third-party inspections contracts. Others may require in-house IT or other staff resources.

Incorporating strategies like these into the PHA’s HCV inspection process may make the process more predictable and streamlined. This may save the landlord time, energy,



and money, which increases the landlord's satisfaction with the HCV program.

For information on additional strategies PHAs can use to improve their inspections process, see the [Inspections](#) chapter.

Related Strategies:

- Landlord Portal
 - Education and Outreach
 - Inspections
-

MINIMIZE THE NUMBER OF RE-INSPECTIONS

HUD has made administrative flexibilities available to PHAs to reduce administrative burden and optimize service provisions within their HCV programs. One of these flexibilities, outlined in [PIH Notice 2013-17](#), provides PHAs with the ability to use photographs to verify corrected deficiencies to minimize physical re-inspections, saving time and money for both landlords and PHAs, while still ensuring housing safety and quality. See the [Reference Guide](#) for information about this administrative flexibility.

To use this flexibility, the PHA would follow [PIH Notice 2013-17](#) and create a process to include these actions: After a unit fails inspection due to non-life-threatening deficiencies, the landlord has the correction completed. The landlord provides proof of the corrected deficiency by electronically sending a labeled photograph to the PHA. If the photo provides adequate evidence of the corrected deficiency, the PHA notifies the landlord that no re-inspection is required and saves the photo to a secure location.

Please note, there are instances when PHAs are required to conduct re-inspections. [PIH Notice 2013-17](#) provides additional information on when a re-inspection of a unit must occur.

Implementation Considerations

To determine whether using photographs to minimize physical re-inspections would be beneficial to landlords and PHAs, PHAs should consider the following questions:

- Do the parties who would be responsible for taking the photos and approving the photos want to use this flexibility?
- Will it save the PHA and landlords time?
- Does the PHA have the staffing and computer storage or software to carry out this strategy?

PHAs should consider talking with landlords to gauge their interest in utilizing photos to verify corrected deficiencies. The landlords would need to have a way of taking photos and sending images. This may be done on a smart phone or tablet with a data plan or internet access, for example. They would also need to understand and have the technological ability to label the electronic photos in a manner that would match specific deficiencies (as outlined by the PHA), and transmit the photos via email, text, or other electronic means to the PHA. With landlord interest, the PHA can implement a session to train landlords on photo submission.

PHAs should also discuss the types of deficiencies that commonly cause units to fail inspections with inspections and PHA staff:

- Could those corrections be documented in photos?
- Would a process that uses photos to decrease re-inspection visits save time for inspectors and landlords?

If the PHA finds there are administrative or systematic barriers to using photographs, other strategies may be more useful in addressing landlord concerns with inspections (see the Inspections chapter). As noted in [PIH Notice 2013-17](#), there are several steps PHAs must take before using photos to document inspections. PHAs should follow guidance in the notice, but PHAs must plan on how they will



store and label photos, match photos to specific deficiencies, and match photos submitted by landlords appropriately.

Procedural and Technology Consideration

If the PHA allows for landlord-submitted photos, the PHA must provide a process for how the landlord submits the photos and how the PHA will verify the photographic proof. This may include providing an instructional handout to landlords during the initial inspection and creating an email address for receiving pictures. Procedural changes to the HUD-established physical inspection standards process should be documented in the PHA's Admin Plan per 24 CFR 982.54.

It is important for the PHA to evaluate how it will store these photos or photo files. As digital files, the photos would take up computer storage space and may require an upgrade of PHA technology. Printing the photos would also require storage space and attention to ensuring that the labeling stays with the photo. Whether storing digital or physical photos, PHAs also need to ensure that photos are maintained securely and do not violate the privacy of tenants.



Tip: Burlington Housing Authority noted that inspectors may use a video call to confirm that minor corrections were completed.

PROVIDING QUICK RESULTS TO LANDLORDS

PHAs may use software programs or contract with third-party inspections companies to notify landlords of inspections results quickly or in real time. Both the services and the software involve inspectors conducting their inspections through a software application on a mobile device or laptop computer. In some cases, results are emailed to landlords and/or uploaded to a housing authority's computer system or landlord portal. PHAs that have this

capacity via a landlord portal have noted that it is one of the features that landlords utilize the most often.

Implementation Considerations

PHAs need to identify software or companies that can receive and upload mobile inspection results. If the software desired is not an optional module on the PHA's current software, then the PHA will want to ensure that the software it is considering for purchase can be used as a stand-alone module. PHA inspectors also need access to appropriate technology including a wireless connection to be able to upload inspection results. This may include purchasing equipment, such as cameras, smart phones, and/or tablets, as well as providing remote internet access to upload locations service to inspectors (for example, via a large data phone plan or hot spot).

SCHEDULING

Inspections scheduling poses challenges to PHAs with internal inspection staff, landlords, and third-party inspection companies. Landlords can lose time and money when they receive an inspection date without an associated time. A landlord with a different full-time job may have to take a day off to wait for the inspector. Landlords, PHAs, and inspectors can lose time and money if a scheduled inspection is cancelled at the last minute.

PHAs can improve the appointment and scheduling process through expectations and resource management (see the Inspections chapter). PHAs can also use software modules and applications to make the process more predictable and reliable, improving the experience for all involved.

Some automated inspection scheduling letters will offer the PHA the ability to set a potential window of time during which the inspector will arrive. The software may allow the letter to designate the appointment for a morning



or afternoon slot as defined by the PHA. Others provide even shorter windows. Some inspection scheduling software modules can assign appointments in half-hour to one-hour increments on the inspection scheduling letter for a given set of appointments on a given day. Of course, having such a very specific appointment time sets an expectation the inspector may not be able to meet due to traffic and any number of other factors. If a PHA chooses to set specific times, they may want to include a note in the letter stating that circumstances might cause the time to change and ensure the inspector can communicate scheduling changes to the landlord in a timely manner. Improvements PHAs can make to provide better estimates for when the inspector will be at a property can go a long way in improving PHA and landlord relationships.

It can also happen that the inspector arrives for an inspection to find no one present at the unit. A PHA can use a calendar application to create an alarm to remind PHA inspection staff to call residents or landlords in advance of an inspection. A PHA might also use software that automates scheduling reminder calls. One benefit of a reminder call application is that the software creates a contact list that offers the PHA a record of its attempted outreach.

The same software applications that create appointment letters can group these appointments by proximity to allow for some scheduling efficiency. For example, the PHA can select all inspections that are located in a certain section of town or all the inspections due in a particular building. These appointment software applications generally have the capability to interact with mobile inspections software (if that is not a built-in feature) to populate the appointments, including a map and unit contact information, onto a mobile device. The mobile inspections software does not typically offer an option to email the landlord automatically through the software. The inspector may have the ability to see contact information on the appointment notification. The PHA may decide to have the

inspector text or email a landlord when the inspector is on the way or if an inspection is delayed as a way of improving the inspections process.

Most HCV inspection software does not have the capability to create a route of the inspector's appointments through the course of a day or to optimize the routing based on current circumstances or most efficient trips. The inspector more often maps the day's schedule appointment-by-appointment using a map application. Software is available for purchase that uses artificial intelligence, which can help create optimal routes for inspectors and provide changes in real time based on traffic. The application also offers real-time updates to landlords on when inspectors will arrive; PHA management can access the application from their own devices to view statistics or inspector progress. PHAs might want to consider partnering with other PHAs to obtain better pricing for this software.





LANDLORD-FOCUSED CUSTOMER SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

The dictionary definition of customer service is the assistance or advice provided by an organization to people who use its products or services. For public housing agencies (PHAs), the primary customers of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program are voucher families and landlords. PHAs may have a longer history of recognizing voucher families as their customers and orienting their customer service toward these families. This Guidebook, and this chapter, focus on what can happen if the PHA adds an intentional focus on landlord customer service.

The following strategies are included in this section:

- Landlord Customer Service Responsiveness
- Landlord Point of Contact
- Call Center

Related strategies:

- Education and Outreach

The strategies in this Landlord-Focused Customer Service chapter address the following areas:

Landlord-Focused Customer Service Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Landlord Customer Service Responsiveness	Landlord Point of Contact	Call Center
Increase Recruitment	X	X	
Increase Retention	X	X	X
Improve Responsiveness	X	X	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X	X	
Improve Inspections Process		X	
Minimize Bureaucracy	X	X	X



The dictionary definition leaves unspoken a critical element of customer service that this chapter seeks to emphasize. Customer service is as much about the way customer service is delivered as it is about the information or advice offered. PHAs with strong and effective customer service promptly and courteously work with landlords and voucher families to answer questions and resolve issues. Providing effective customer service to landlords has the potential to enhance any strategy that a PHA undertakes to improve landlord satisfaction. These strategies can have the potential to increase landlord familiarity and comfort with the HCV Program and can create process improvements in all six areas as seen in the chart on the previous page.



TIP: Providing effective customer service to landlords has the potential to enhance any strategy that a PHA undertakes to improve landlord satisfaction.

This chapter describes three strategies that directly address customer service. (Remember, most of the chapters and strategies in this Guidebook involve customer service). In this chapter, the Landlord Point of Contact and Call Center strategies may require additional financial and staffing resources. The Landlord Customer Service Responsiveness strategy, however, outlines steps that any PHA can undertake with minimal costs. Each strategy offers options for PHAs to make organizational changes that promote customer service.

STRATEGY: LANDLORD CUSTOMER SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS

Implementing a culture or mindset that prioritizes responsive customer service among HCV staff toward landlords and landlord issues.

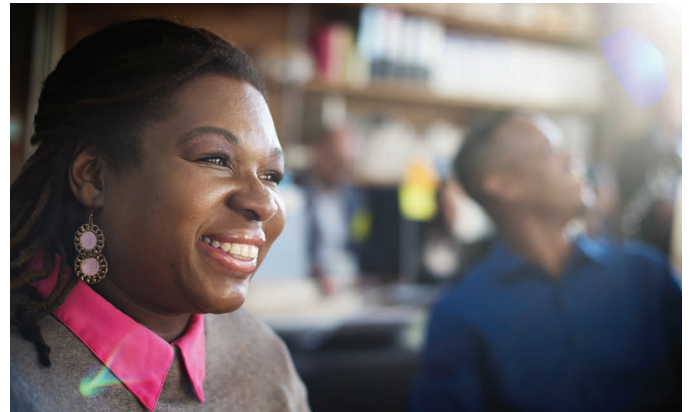
Who: All PHAs.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal to moderate.

Implementation Considerations: LOW MEDIUM DIFFICULT **May require designating or re-allocating staff time. Minimal implementation barriers.**

Landlord Customer Service Responsiveness: PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Landlord Customer Service Responsiveness
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



TIP: A culture of customer service starts at the top. If staff do not think that customer service is a part of their job, it is less likely that they will prioritize it in their everyday interactions. PHAs that motivate staff to offer superior customer service are more likely to see positive results.

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: Customer service is a point of pride for many PHAs who are dedicated to meeting the needs of their program participants and other audiences. At the same time, PHAs are not always aware of when their customer service may not be received as intended. As mentioned previously, PHAs may have a history of orienting customer service toward voucher families rather than toward landlords. HUD Landlord Task Force activities identified landlord concerns about difficulties in reaching HCV staff, having landlord issues addressed, and receiving correct information in a timely manner. The disconnect, in some instances, may be a perception on the part of the landlord or the PHA that landlords are not truly a PHA audience or PHA partner. A PHA can take steps to address this disconnect by exploring how customer service would look

from the perspective of HCV landlords. The PHA can incorporate into its existing customer service culture some principles that prioritize responsive customer service among HCV staff toward landlords and landlord issues. These principles do not decrease the customer service focus on voucher families, but allow HCV staff to consider landlords as essential partners within the HCV Program.

Note: this strategy focuses on a culture shift among PHA HCV staff rather than an increase in staffing or a re-organization of staffing. The PHA may determine that an increase or re-organization of staff is warranted to support changes in the customer service perspective or



gaps in service capacity that emerge as a result of examining customer service operations.

Some of these recommendations have been described in other chapters, but here they address how the ideas can be used to improve customer service within PHAs, especially when working with landlords.

IMPLEMENTATION

PHAs should carry out a review of, or reflection on their customer service practices as they pertain to landlords through an internal, self-directed process. PHAs might also consider having a third-party vendors conduct customer service training. They can also do both; an internal process may lead the PHA to determine that enhanced customer service training will improve delivery of service.

When carrying out an internal process, the PHA may want to consider that different staff at the PHA may interact with landlords at different points in the HCV process and bring different perspectives that may be critical to increasing landlord satisfaction. Some of these staff might not be in the HCV department, such as

the front desk reception staff. These staff may have their own frustrations about working with landlords on issues, such as not having access to the information that landlords are asking for. While change to long-practiced procedures can be challenging and raise feelings of defensiveness, the goal of this strategy is to expand perspectives; it is not to reduce focus on the traditional clients of the housing authority. Through the process of reviewing customer service practices, PHA staff may also find opportunities where HCV families may be more supported.

Some principles of responsive customer service from an HCV landlord's perspective to help guide either an internal discussion or the provision of customer service training may include:

- **Communicate with professionalism:** Written and oral information through e-mails, in-person interactions, phone conversations, and voicemails should maintain a professional tone and demeanor. Emails that include a signature line with an email address and phone number enable landlords to follow-up with PHA staff.
- **Create a welcoming environment:** Entrances and lobbies should present as inviting through clear signage. Frontline staff that offer a positive attitude and warm welcome help landlords develop a sense of ease that their needs will be met. First impressions set the tone for the rest of the person's experience.
- **Practice active listening skills:** Active listening includes avoiding interruptions, making eye contact (if in person), and providing feedback that shows the listener is paying attention. It helps landlords feel like they are being heard and that the listener empathizes with their concern. Note: empathy and understanding do not necessarily mean agreement.
- **Respond to inquiries in a timely manner:** Consistent and prompt responses to questions and concerns is a hallmark of good customer service. PHAs that adopt and enforce a phone and email inquiry return policy—within 1 to 2 business days if possible— build trust with landlords and

Third-Party Training

The PHA may want to consider seeking outside training in customer service to decrease any potential for internal conflict and since cultural change can be challenging.

If a third-party training is incorporated, the PHA should know that the trainer may not focus on customer service that is landlord-centered. It may be possible to provide information about some of the specifics needed that will help the trainer tailor customer service training. The PHA may have to provide direction to staff on how to use the training offered to address landlord-specific issues.



diminish concerns that landlord concerns will go unanswered. The timeframe is less important than setting an expectation for the landlord that the PHA will meet (see next bullet).

- Provide realistic timeframes: When the PHA has the flexibility to offer a due date for returning a call or responding to information, the best due date to promise is the due date that can be met with certainty. That due date may not be the quickest that might be possible. If the PHA meets the selected due date, the landlord continues to be satisfied with the timing. Exceeding the due date is a big plus. Overpromising and missing the due date may create dissatisfaction where none existed before.
- De-escalation: Engaging in de-escalation techniques such as active listening, responding with a calm voice, and acknowledging a landlord's concerns may reduce emotional reactions and allow all parties to turn to resolving the issue at hand.
- Understand the "product:" The HCV Program can be confusing, both for landlords and for less experienced staff. PHA staff who are likely to encounter landlords should be provided training to answer basic questions about the HCV Program and direct landlords to staff who can provide more information. Offering confusing or wrong information can be worse than no information at all.

Putting these principles into practice can be challenging. PHAs can help staff practice good customer service by providing staff with periodic customer service training opportunities and holding staff accountable to good customer services practices. Customer service training that is content-specific and interactive is most likely to lead to improved staff performance. Frontline staff should be encouraged to discuss where the biggest opportunities for improvement are so they feel empowered and take ownership of the PHA's customer-service culture. Encouraging and reinforcing good customer service practices includes supporting staff in settings outside of formal training sessions too.

Review Written Communication

In addition to reviewing and implementing internal customer service practices, the PHA will want to support good customer service through clear and direct communication through emails, written guidance, or instruction such as forms and landlord packets. Inaccurate and outdated communication can foster confusion, sometimes leading to frustration, lost time, and lost money.



TIP: PHAs that have a landlord FAQ webpage can save time and increase consistency across employees by directing email inquiries to the answers on the FAQ page.

PHAs should ensure that their materials are accessible and easy to understand. For example:

- Does the PHA ensure effective communication for landlords, participants, and applicants with disabilities? Are the PHA's website and all electronic communications and documents provided in accessible formats in accordance with Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)? Does the PHA offer auxiliary aids and services including sign language interpreters?
- Does the PHA comply with its Title VI obligations to ensure meaningful access for landlords, participants, and applicants with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) including by translating materials into other languages in accordance with HUD's LEP Guidance¹ and providing qualified interpreters?
- Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) packet: While the RFTA form is HUD-generated, PHAs do have the ability to edit other documents they require from program participants and landlords. Do

¹ "Final Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons," 72 FR 2732, 2740 (2007), available at: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/FINALLEP2007.PDF>.



the forms make sense? Is information missing? Is information current? Is there information that does not need to be included? Are there clear instructions on what information needs to be completed and where to send the completed forms?

- Form accessibility: Are landlord forms available for download on the PHA's website? Are forms available in other languages in accordance with HUD's LEP Guidance for local populations? Are the forms available in plain language, rather than regulatory or formal language?
- Is the landlord orientation packet, if any, clear and complete? Are the materials in a format that can be easily sent to landlords or posted on the PHA's website?
- Do notifications of changes in rent portions explain the reason for changed rent, such as tenant income change, payment standard change, or change in voucher size?
- Has the PHA recently examined options for landlords to return materials? Can remote return methods be added, such as allowing landlords to scan and email materials?

PHAs should ensure that staff who interact with landlords are familiar with the forms and understand what information and actions are needed.



Resources

Don't reinvent the wheel! HUD's HCV Landlord Resources [webpage](#) has both standard forms and descriptions of non-standard forms that PHAs develop internally. While each PHA's forms may look different, the descriptions provide a general sense of the purpose and information that may be collected on each form.

PHAs are encouraged to bookmark this site as additional information is continually being added.

Set Reasonable Expectations

Customer service is a balancing act. Some of the conflicts that arise in retaining and developing relationships with landlords stem from a difference of perception between the PHA and the landlord with regard to roles or responsibilities. Landlords may, at times, view themselves as the "customer" in their relationship with the PHA, anticipating that the "customer is always right." The PHA will want to take steps to maintain and improve the landlord's satisfaction as feasible, but landlords have responsibilities too. One of the best ways that PHAs can provide landlords with good customer service is by setting expectations up front about what type of customer service or services that landlord may be entitled to. Orientations for new landlords provide the perfect opportunity for the PHA to provide new landlords with information that will help them navigate the process of becoming an HCV landlord. Orientations shape the way that landlords view the HCV Program and the PHA, their understanding of their own role and responsibilities, and the type of support that they can expect.

As a result, PHAs should be mindful of how the information is delivered. Choosing the right person to hold sessions is key to success. The person not only needs to be familiar with the HCV Program, but also have the ability to effectively train landlords and make landlords feel comfortable asking questions.

PHAs should make sure to allow ample time for Q&A as well as provide ways for landlords to reach out with questions following the session.

The New Landlord Orientation Strategy in the Education and Outreach chapter provides additional information on planning and implementing orientation events.

Accept Unit Listings

As part of approaching customer service from a landlord's perspective, PHAs should consider elements of the landlord-PHA relationship that they might not have considered as "customer service." When working with available units,

PHAs may focus their attention on the voucher families and their search, but they can also provide a service by assisting landlords in connecting more easily with voucher holders by making sure that information on how to list a unit for HCV applicants is readily available to landlords. PHAs may ask the following questions and revise their processes accordingly:

- Is unit listing information available on the PHA's website as well as included in the HCV orientation packet?
- If the PHA lists units, does it offer an easily accessible method that landlords can use to list a unit?
- Is the information regularly updated to avoid stale listings?
- Do the listings specify whether the units are accessible for individuals with physical or hearing/vision disabilities or contain accessibility features?
- If voucher families regularly seek units through a specific online service, are the links accessible on the PHA's website?
- Does the PHA regularly review the search sites it recommends to voucher families to ensure that a range of neighborhoods are represented?





STRATEGY: LANDLORD POINT OF CONTACT

Having a single point of contact (or a team of staff) designated to provide outreach and education to landlords and respond to landlord inquiries.

Who: Smaller PHAs may be able to partner with other organizations in the area to support one position. Medium and larger PHAs may consider adding this position to their internal organizational structure.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal to moderate.

Implementation Considerations: ○ LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT Consider current and future staff capacity and funding.

Landlord Point of Contact PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Landlord Point of Contact
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: Offering a dedicated, single point of contact for landlords is a strategy that has the potential to positively impact all of the PHA process improvements shown in the above chart. This strategy improves PHA responsiveness to landlords by offering a clear path for landlords to connect to a person in the PHA. By having a position or team whose primary responsibilities are focused on landlord support rather than having to carve out time to conduct landlord-focused activities, PHAs can support consistent and efficient responses leading to:

- Recruitment of new landlords



Get the Most from this Strategy

PHAs identified this strategy as having the greatest positive impact on landlord recruitment and retention. Here's a guide to the major topics in this strategy:

Typical Responsibilities 94
Job Qualifications 101
Funding Sources 102

- Retention of current landlords through education, outreach, and responsiveness
- Mediation/conflict resolution
- Assistance for landlords in navigating the program, including inspections

OVERVIEW

When discussing best practices, some PHAs describe having a landlord point of contact as the strategy that has improved their landlord services the most. While assuming different titles and variations of roles at different PHAs, a single point of contact is exactly that—one person (or a team



of staff) dedicated to interacting with, responding to, and providing information to HCV landlords. The position may be part- or full-time.

To enhance the effectiveness of this position, landlords need to know that the resource is available to them for issues that might arise. Landlord points of contact not only provide landlords with a person to address their concerns, but also with a feeling of being valued partners of the PHA. Landlords notice when PHAs invest resources in the quality of their experience.



TYPICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As a result of being a primary resource for all things landlord-related, the landlord point of contact is typically assigned roles and responsibilities covering multiple areas. This is one of the reasons PHAs have noted this position as having such a positive impact! They may function like a “one-stop shop” for landlords. While each position is unique and tailored to the needs of the PHA’s HCV Program, typical responsibilities, described below, include responding to landlord inquiries and providing outreach for new and existing landlords. Also discussed are typical qualifications for the landlord point of contact role and sources of funding to support the position.

Responding to Inquiries

Many of the landlord points of contact interviewed as part of the Guidebook research described responding to landlord inquiries as

What’s in a Name?

PHAs across the country have different names for their landlord single point of contact. While some PHAs prefer the title *landlord liaison*, others use *housing locator* or *navigator*. Some PHAs have a staff person who serves in this capacity without a title that implies they are the single point of contact.

Typically, the landlord liaison has responsibilities focused on landlord service. The housing locator or navigator may work with landlords, but may also focus on assisting voucher families in finding housing and negotiating with landlords.

For the purposes of this chapter, this role will be titled as “landlord point of contact.”

one of their primary assigned responsibilities. In fact, for some people in this position, talking with existing or potential landlords, has accounted for a good portion of their workload. PHAs will want to take into account that landlords may have preferences for making inquiries via different modes of communication, most notably the phone or email. PHAs should ensure that the preferred option(s) are available and that the point of contact has response procedures in place for each. Landlords may also visit the PHA in person, for example, to drop off applications or requests, and request to speak with the point of contact. The PHA approach to handling these different methods can vary:



TIP: One landlord point of contact noted that her relationship with landlords was built from the beginning—when the landlords joined the program, and has grown over time.

Phone: There are a range of ways that PHAs choose to ensure that landlord inquiries by phone are answered:

- Provide landlords with a direct line to the landlord point of contact.
- Have calls routed from a main PHA or HCV department line to the landlord point of contact.
- Dedicate a line for landlords that is answered by staff.

Some landlord points of contact may also have PHA-supplied cell phones that enable them to easily respond to landlords via text message.

Regardless of how communications are routed, landlords should be able to connect quickly with a landlord point of contact who can address their questions. While answering every call from every landlord without any calls going to voicemail is not realistic, PHAs should set a reasonable and responsive timeframe for returning calls, and ensure that there is adequate staffing to be able to enforce the timeframe. Voicemail greetings that landlords hear should include the timeframe for a response and provide an alternate number in the case of emergency.

Email: PHAs may choose to have landlord-related emails sent directly to the landlord point of contact, to a general landlord email address, or both. As a good customer service technique, the PHA should consider having an auto-response that provides the response timeframe, a phone number in case of emergency, and links to general landlord resources such as a PHA landlord website and FAQ page. If receiving only a small number of emails, a PHA might respond with similar information on an email-by-email situation. An auto-response may still save time. The immediate initial response sets a reasonable expectation for the landlord – as long as the PHA has a process in place for its landlord point of contact to monitor and respond to the incoming emails.

As noted in the Landlord Customer Service Responsiveness strategy (the first strategy in this chapter), the landlord point of contact

Standardized Supports

Response templates, FAQs, and fact sheets are methods that the landlord point of contact can use to enhance consistency and meet landlord needs while reducing their workload.

Standardized response templates might include information addressing:

- Change of Owner
- Rent Increase
- Inspections Appointment Process
- Source of Income Rules (as applicable)
- Use of Credit and Criminal Background Information in Tenant Screening
- Tenant Lease Compliance and Eviction
- When to Expect Payments
- Fair Housing Protections, Accessibility, and Reasonable Accommodations

Useful FAQs may Include:

- Resolving Deficiencies
- How to List Units
- Steps to Becoming a Landlord
- How to Use the Portal



TIP: The landlord point of contact can also use this standardized information to inform landlord training topics.

should consider creating email response templates for common inquiries. An email response might combine more than one template, depending on the landlord's request. Templates expedite the response, saving time for the busy landlord point of contact. Just as important, an email template ensures that responses are accurate and consistent. When every landlord receives the same information, the opportunity for misinterpretation decreases. The PHA should review email templates and

update them periodically to ensure they are up to date with PHA policy and practice. In addition, the landlord point of contact should consider adding additional templates as they notice new questions appearing on a regular basis.

While email templates have many advantages, the landlord point of contact should keep in mind that some queries will require customized support from them. The ability of the landlord point of contact to ensure that inquiries receive the level of support needed in a timely manner is one of the reasons this strategy can be so effective.



TIP: Emails may come in that are not related to landlords or the HCV Program. The landlord point of contact should maintain contacts in other PHA departments so that emails can be forwarded appropriately.

Walk-In: A point of contact may not always have time to meet in person with a landlord who walks in. If at all possible, even in these situations, the point of contact should speak directly with the landlord to learn about the inquiry, ask that the landlord make an appointment to arrange for answering the inquiry later. An appointment may take place over a range of modes of communication: in person, over the phone, or via a video platform.

If the point of contact does have time to meet with the landlord, the point of contact will want to keep any answer templates in mind when

responding to the landlord's inquiry to avoid misinterpretations. If the inquiry requires further research, the point of contact should be honest about the delayed response time, rather than guessing a response. The landlord is more likely to accept the delay, knowing that it will lead to accurate information. The point of contact should also provide the landlord with concrete next steps on when and how the landlord will be contacted.

Conducting Outreach

In addition to being responsive to landlord inquiries, landlord points of contact are often assigned to conduct outreach to current and prospective landlords. Outreach for current landlords can include support, problem solving, or education, resulting in continued (or increased) satisfaction and participation in the HCV Program. Outreach may occur through hosting events, participating in events, one-on-one meetings, and by identifying and connecting with new landlords via existing listservs and data (e.g. PHA and local government property assessor data, outreach lists from associations) as described below. Outreach to prospective landlords must be done in a manner that complies with fair housing and civil rights requirements, including by using effective communication methods for individuals with disabilities and conducting outreach in other languages in accordance with LEP requirements. Additionally, PHAs should seek to recruit landlords with physically accessible units and units located in areas of opportunity and areas that do not already have a concentration of subsidized housing.

Outreach through Education and Events:

Education and events for current landlords include any type of event providing landlords with information to improve their ability to serve as HCV Program landlords and to maintain compliance with related program and civil rights requirements so as to improve their satisfaction. As the primary contact for landlords, landlord points of contact are the obvious choice to plan and deliver workshops to HCV landlords. Landlord points of contact are often the best



Problem Solving

Sonoma County Housing Authority noted that the ability for landlords to connect directly with their landlord point of contact encourages problem solving and communication, many times resulting in solutions. If landlords faced greater barriers to reaching a person who could address their issue, the PHA theorized that the situations might have resulted in landlords leaving the program.

PHA representative to hold education and outreach events for a variety of reasons:

- Landlord points of contact hear first-hand from landlords about the types of issues landlords are experiencing with the HCV Program and are able to use this knowledge to create events that address current issues or topics.
- Landlord points of contact can use this knowledge and take advantage of large gatherings of landlords to address common misconceptions about the program.
- The landlord point of contact is best positioned to hear landlord concerns and help with resolution, allowing the landlords to feel their perspective is valued.
- Workshops or events led by the landlord point of contact reinforces that they are available to assist—putting a face with the program.



TIP: See the [Education and Outreach](#) chapter for information on how to plan a successful event.

Attending Events: As discussed in the Education and Outreach chapter of this Guidebook, attending events throughout the PHA's jurisdiction is another great way to generate new opportunities and increase the visibility of the PHA in the community. Attending events as the landlord point of contact may be especially fruitful for generating interest amongst new landlords. Activities related to attending events can include:

- Setting up a booth at trade shows
- Requesting to be a guest speaker at meetings of:
 - » Industry organizations such as real estate investor clubs and apartment associations
 - » Neighborhood associations
 - » Community development corporations
- Handing out brochures or fact sheets
- Exchanging business cards

As a follow-up activity to such events, the landlord point of contact can write follow-up thank-you emails to landlords they met. The thank-you emails may offer evidence of the type of easy communication and good customer service the landlord would receive should they choose to work with the PHA and accept HCV tenants. Landlord points of contact may also follow up with developers who attend city meetings on housing development to explain program incentives and begin building a relationship with landlords in developments that are not yet occupied.

One-On-One Outreach: As part of outreach efforts, the landlord point of contact would also be the natural choice to conduct one-on-one or small group outreach with current or prospective landlords. Similarly to Education and Outreach events, this is an opportunity for the PHA to give the program a personal touch and demonstrate an investment into furthering the PHA-landlord relationship. The smaller settings can also be conducive to defusing topics with the potential for tension. Landlord points of contact who carry out these small-scale landlord meetings find them cost effective. It increases business with new landlords and helps to retain current landlords.

Many landlords appreciate the opportunity to meet with the PHA representative in person, as feasible. Taking the time to meet with landlords individually makes them feel like they are valued partners. In a one-on-one setting, some existing landlords may feel more comfortable discussing issues or items that they might not raise in a group setting. It can be a good way to get referrals to other new landlords as well. "Rolling out the red carpet" does not hurt either. This might include, for example, using a big conference room, offering the landlord coffee, or having a high-level administrator drop by the meeting to thank the landlord for participating in the program.

Accessing Databases to Identify and Contact Other Landlords: Aside from hosting and attending events, some PHAs use databases to find and contact individual landlords. A great place to start with data is to look at the PHA's data on landlord participation. Has landlord



participation in the program gone up or down in the last 3 to 5 years? Are there landlords with a large number of properties that have slowly been reducing the number of voucher families in their portfolio? Contacting dissatisfied landlords or landlords who previously worked with voucher families and learning more about their past concerns can help to regenerate interest in the voucher program, especially if the landlord point of contact position is new. A new landlord point of contact may also use PHA databases to identify the landlords who have large HCV portfolios so the landlord point of contact can conduct periodic check-ins with these large providers.

Some PHAs also use data to identify and contact new landlords. PHAs might email their current HCV landlords and ask them to encourage their colleagues to join the program. PHAs may also be able to use their municipal assessor data to identify big landlords that do not currently accept vouchers and request to meet with them. Many cities offer assessor data that is accessible online or by connecting with the local assessor office. PHAs can run a frequency query to identify the landlords with the largest number of units in their jurisdiction and cross reference the list with landlords that are active with the HCV program.

Landlord points of contact can also ask the local apartment association to share outreach information with their association members. Landlord points of contact with a Realtor's license can access the multiple listing services to gain quick access to new rental units and their landlords.

Recruitment

Making the Sales Pitch: Meetings with landlords really do require a sales pitch. Most landlords choose to participate in the HCV Program because it is cost effective for their business. A strong sales pitch includes a discussion of how the HCV Program is a solid business opportunity. Common talking points might include:

- Reliable rent
- Long-term tenants

- Helping families in need
- Liaison services for leasing-up

Depending on the PHA's services, additional talking points might include:

- Connecting with the voucher family's HCV case manager
- Mediation services
- Financial incentives for landlords (such as a lease-up bonus or a mitigation fund)

The sales pitch is often accompanied by dispelling common misconceptions about participation in the HCV Program, such as clarifying the role of the PHA in the lease-up process and voucher family's tenancy.

The sales pitch is also about developing rapport with the landlord. Landlords want to feel assured that if they do have an issue relevant to the PHA responsibilities, they would be able to go to the landlord point of contact to get assistance.

A helpful reference is the [myth-busting sheet](#) available on the HUD HCV Landlord Resource webpage.

Cold Calls: Having a well-honed sales pitch is perhaps the most useful for landlord points of contact who make cold calls. Cold calls are phone calls where the landlord point of contact calls a landlord who does not have a prior relationship with the PHA. Typically, landlord points of contact who are most likely to make a cold call are those whose job functions include connecting voucher families with available units. Another reason for making cold calls includes reaching out to landlords with available units listed on a rental search engine website to connect with



TIP: Landlord points of contact should consider reaching out to landlords who have left the HCV Program. This approach may be particularly effective if the PHA has added an incentive or implemented a strategy geared towards landlord satisfaction since the landlord left the program.

new landlords. Cold calls are probably most useful for outreach geared towards small “mom-and-pop” landlords where there is no higher-up decision-maker who would need to be contacted to decide if the company would consider HCV applicants for their units. A great way to follow up a cold call for a landlord on the fence is to follow a call with a thank-you email with links to additional information about the program. If the landlord’s mailing address is available, follow up may include mailing an HCV fact sheet. This reinforces the good customer service that the landlord would receive should they choose to work with HCV tenants.

NOTE: In some states and localities, it is illegal for landlords to refuse to rent to voucher families because they receive a HCV. In that case, if landlord points of contact encounter an unwilling landlord, they can follow the enforcement process identified for the specific law.

Mediation

A common function of landlord points of contact is to intervene in conflicts the landlord has with other offices within the PHA or between the landlord and a voucher family. PHAs with landlord points of contact find this activity to be extremely effective at maintaining current landlords who otherwise might choose to leave the voucher program out of frustration. Some PHAs may avoid tenant-landlord conflicts because of their relationship with both parties. PHAs with landlord points of contact are committed to keeping voucher families housed and landlords in HCV Program. This leads to an opportunity for some mediation activities. To provide mediation services, a PHA should:

- Maintain neutrality in a dispute between parties.
- Affirm PHA policy and procedure while also allowing parties to voice their opinions.

The issue may not always be resolved, but having a point of contact or other PHA representative available to explain the processes and policies to landlords allows them to realize their concern is taken seriously and often defuses the situation.

Tips for Landlord-Tenant Mediation

- Schedule an appointment with both parties.
- Recount the description of the conflict as told by both parties.
- Describe the PHA policy or policies that apply to the issues including the lease.
- Usually when presented with the policy, the parties have a better understanding of roles and responsibilities in the conflict.
- Often when presented with the policy in black and white, the voucher family and landlord are able to come to an agreement.
- If the situation is irreparable, the parties sign a lease rescission.
- If there is evidence the voucher family was not complying with Family Obligations, the information is documented and the primary caseworker is notified.
- If there is evidence the landlord is not complying with obligations, the PHA may take steps to hold the landlord accountable. Steps can vary depending on whether the voucher family wants to move, the severity or duration of the infractions, etc.
- If there is evidence the voucher family is not complying with the landlord’s lease agreement, the landlord may have cause to terminate the voucher family’s lease if remediation steps cannot be identified and completed by the voucher family.

NOTE: These tips are not intended to replace consultation with a mediation professional.



Mediation with Other Offices within the PHA:

Although the landlord point of contact is the primary person the landlord works with, the landlord may also work with other departments and multiple people for inspections, payment, or other administrative services, including the Disability Rights Coordinator (24 CFR 8.53(a)) on fair housing and civil rights issues. The landlord point of contact may learn about landlord concerns from the landlord directly or from other departments or staff within the PHA.

Common issues the landlord point of contact might hear include: “My HAP portion is wrong;” “I didn’t receive my HAP this month;” “The inspector did not show up for my inspection;” “I don’t understand why my rent was negotiated down;” “I turned in the RFTA a week ago and I haven’t heard back, what is going on?” and “I am locked out of my portal account.”

The landlord point of contact can investigate the concern, advocate for the landlord within the agency to ensure that their problems are resolved quickly, or identify departmental staff authorized to address the landlord’s request. Other PHA staff members are trained to respond promptly to inquiries by the landlord point of contact as well to ensure that issues are resolved quickly. By offering prompt responses and quickly helping landlords to resolve their problems or directing the landlord to staff who can resolve their problems, the landlord point of contact helps defuse situations and improve landlords’ satisfaction with the HCV Program.

Mediation Between Landlords and Voucher Families:

Mediation between landlords and voucher families can be a tricky function to perform, but when done correctly, can provide benefits for both landlords and voucher families. Some PHAs choose not to advertise their role as mediators, but may step in to help resolve issues that would otherwise lead to greater conflict. PHAs want to avoid outcomes such as eviction or the landlord exiting the program. Landlords who have had negative past experiences with voucher families might



TIP: PHAs should give their landlord point of contact the freedom to try new strategies that have the potential to increase landlord satisfaction. Not every new strategy will work, but some might have a big impact.

find this benefit particularly appealing when considering if they would be willing to work with the HCV Program in the future. Mediations can help avoid hardships for voucher families and keep both parties, voucher families and landlords, accountable to upholding their responsibilities as participants in the HCV Program and the lease.

Inspections Support

Some PHAs may also choose to have their landlord point of contact become more involved in the inspection process to make it an easier experience for landlords. For example, at some PHAs, landlord points of contact are also certified in housing inspection (HUD-established physical inspections standards) so they can offer the landlord a “soft inspection” prior to having a formal inspection. The landlord point of contact can meet with the landlord in the unit and conduct a walk through to see if there would be any issues with the unit that would lead it to fail an inspection. By offering the soft inspection, the landlord has the opportunity to repair items ahead of the inspection, avoiding a failed inspection and the time required to schedule a re-inspection. With the reduced inspection turnaround time, the landlord can lease up the unit more quickly and start generating rental revenue.



REMINDER:

View the Inspections Chapter for more information on how PHAs may improve the inspection process to benefit landlords.



JOB QUALIFICATIONS

Finding the right person for the landlord point of contact position is important. Specific job responsibilities can vary between PHAs, but there are a primary set of qualifications and attributes that can make excellent landlord points of contact.

PHAs with successful landlord point of contact positions suggest that personality plays a large role in recruiting the right person for the job. PHAs should look for someone who is outgoing, with great customer service and people skills. This person should enjoy public speaking and networking so they can easily speak about the HCV Program and make positive connections with landlords. A landlord point of contact may work with people from all types of backgrounds and sometimes works in stressful situations requiring someone with adaptability, de-escalation skills, and the ability to improvise.

Prior experience in all aspects of the HCV Program at the PHA is preferred in the landlord point of contact, although the PHA can provide training for staff without that experience. When the landlord point of contact is familiar with all of the functions of the voucher program, they can more easily assist landlords in solving problems and answering questions. This knowledge set will be particularly useful when it comes to answering questions regarding



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority recently created a landlord liaison position and hired a person who had worked in several other departments within the agency, so they were well aware of how processes worked across departments.

voucher families, including voucher families' responsibilities with the voucher program and how they interact with the PHA. To be consistent with all landlords, the point of contact will need to be able to provide each landlord the same policy information, even when inquiries might seem to ask the point of contact to speculate or interpret information.

Some PHAs may also find it useful to hire a landlord point of contact with a background in real estate or social services. Landlord points of contact who have worked in real estate may know how to “close” a deal and understand what landlords are looking for in their business partnerships. Landlord points of contact with a background in social services often have experience with helping voucher families to problem solve, navigating bureaucratic processes, and practicing conflict resolution or de-escalation.



Finally, landlord points of contact should have sufficient knowledge of, and be trained on, fair housing and civil rights requirements so as to assist HCV landlords in complying with their fair housing and civil rights responsibilities.



TIP: PHAs may not have sufficient admin fee dollars to fund a full-time new landlord point of contact position, but they might be able to fund 50% of the full-time position and find another agency to partner with or a grant to fund the other half of the position.

FUNDING SOURCES

PHAs can choose to fund their landlord point of contact through their administrative fee dollars or come up with more creative ways to fund the position. For example, particularly when PHAs are administering Special Purpose vouchers such as Mainstream and HUD

Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (VASH) and offering connected housing search services, a PHA may partner with other organizations that are a part of the local Continuum of Care to fund a landlord point of contact position. That single landlord point of contact then

Alternative to a Landlord Point of Contact: Create Landlord-Specific Spaces and Connections

A landlord point of contact might not be feasible or a good fit for all PHAs; however, there are other ways that PHAs can create and foster relationships with landlords.

As discussed in the subsequent strategy focused on customer service, making it easy for landlords to connect with the PHA creates a solid foundation upon which to build. At every opportunity, starting with the landlord orientation, the PHA can create a real and also a symbolic connection, where landlords have a face to associate with the PHA and contact information that will allow them to get answers to their questions.

Another way to create connection and provide good customer service for PHAs with a steady volume of landlord questions is to dedicate a day to responding to landlord inquiries in-person, by phone, or via a video platform. (If using a video platform or conference call line, confidentiality of participating families and landlords should be protected by not recording, allowing cameras to be turned off, and not revealing identifying information such as social security numbers or addresses.) A dedicated-day schedule could fit the typical volume of inquiries and available staff; it could be weekly, every Thursday, monthly, or the first and third Thursday of every month, for example. Landlords would know they could contact the PHA on that day and get a response from the PHA. (Naturally, some staff would continue to carry out their typical responsibilities. Only a select person or persons would be designated to landlord inquiries.) A dedicated day is a way to show a focused commitment by the PHA to respond to landlords as valued partners in the HCV Program.

See the Technology chapter for other ways to connect with landlords through landlord-dedicated webpages and landlord portals.

NOTE: PHAs that implement a dedicated landlord day(s) still need to commit to address questions from landlords in a timely fashion outside of the dedicated days since questions and emergencies don't follow a schedule.

helps HCV participants, families with Shelter Plus Care vouchers, and families with Rapid Rehousing funds search for housing. Similarly, some landlord point of contact positions may qualify for funding under Emergency Solutions Grants, which are HUD funds that are administered by the local municipality to address homelessness.

Some PHAs fund a landlord point of contact through local or state dollars, such as a housing trust fund. Other PHAs invest in fundraising efforts and get their landlord point of contact funded through philanthropic grants or their local [*United Way*](#).

To fund a full-time position, PHAs can bundle multiple funding sources or share a landlord point of contact with another agency. To apply to fund the position through grants, PHAs can describe desired measurable benefits the position can be expected to influence such as:

- Increases in landlord satisfaction measured through surveys
- A reduction in voucher family inspection requests
- An increase in the number of units listed as available to HCV families

PHAs find the landlord point of contact very useful, not only in increasing landlord satisfaction and encouraging new landlords to participate in the program, but also in reducing the burden on other staff who would otherwise spend time responding to landlord inquiries.





STRATEGY: CALL CENTER

Shifting a large volume of phone calls for the entire PHA or specific departments within the PHA to a centralized reception with staff assigned to answer calls related to specific programs such as the HCV Program.

Who: Large PHAs.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Moderate to high.

Implementation Considerations: LOW MEDIUM DIFFICULT **May require staffing and funding considerations.**

Call Center PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Call Center
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



Keeping lines of communication open and accessible is critical to the success of a PHA as much as it is to any enterprise. During the research conducted for the Guidebook, several PHAs identified that they were establishing call centers for their HCV Programs to respond to inquiries from landlords, applicants, and voucher families. Landlords and voucher families reach out for information using a variety of methods, but they continue to conduct significant outreach

to PHAs through the telephone, in part, because they are seeking the ability to ask their unique question to a human voice. And, certainly, when that approach is successful, skilled direct human interaction can offer advantages in efficiently de-escalating frustration and sharing information since the speakers can ask questions and target the needed information or clarify terms immediately.

Especially for larger PHAs who experience a large volume of calls, pinpointing the right mix of information, staff, phone numbers, and contacts can be challenging. Not being able to access information and connecting with a person, much less with a person with the correct information, can be a frustrating experience that can discourage landlords from participating in the HCV Program. Larger PHAs may assign one or more points of contact to answer calls or other types of inquiries to maintain a direct human connection, but if those



REMINDER:

A PHA's phone system, including any call centers, must be accessible for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, by providing a TDD/TTY or videophones with ASL translation.



points of contact have other responsibilities and are away from their phones for a period of time, returning landlord calls in a timely manner can be difficult. In those situations, a call center can be a way to ensure that landlords have quick telephone access to the necessary information. Although an initial call may be answered through an automated message or call center staff, the call center can also ensure that landlords with complicated issues do have a way to speak to a member of the HCV Program with the appropriate level of expertise.

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: A call center is a method of organizing and answering a large volume of incoming phone calls. Typically, calls come in to an initial automated menu, interactive voice response (IVR), or to a specific team of employees. The automated menu may route calls to call center staff or it may offer the caller the opportunity to select from certain standardized topics for answers to questions typical for the industry or organization. Automated prompts for the caller might include hours of business, opening status, or location. Automated prompts for a call center might also include other information such as inspection appointment days/times, status of accounts, and dates of payments received or sent. An effective call center can help landlords get back to their other responsibilities in a timely manner.



TIP: Some of the most common questions landlords need answers to can be standardized or automated. See the [Technology](#) chapter for another way to present this information in a landlord portal or online.

Call centers can be successful when staff have access to knowledge about many aspects of the HCV Program, its procedures, and paperwork. Staff can answer many common program questions directly. As a source of satisfactory customer service, call center staff can fulfill a task that HCV Program staff describe as common: they are not always called to provide new information, but to confirm (or correct)



Alternatives to Call Centers

A smaller PHA may not have the call volume to make a call center a cost-effective option. They may still face similar issues of staff unable to answer landlord questions or unable to return calls in a timely manner. The PHA could experiment with options for placing a staff member, or a rotating number of staff trained in landlord-focused issues, on telephone duty. Another option discussed earlier is to create a dedicated landlord day when landlords know they can contact the PHA and get a knowledgeable person to answer their questions.

Some phone systems also allow for call routing or call trees. PHAs who have these types of phone systems already available to them may want to investigate if updating the routing system or phone tree might help create more efficiencies for customers calling in to their main numbers.

information that a landlord has heard from another source, just as much offering validation and assurance, as accurate information.

When the call center takes on the primary responsibility of answering common questions quickly and efficiently, other HCV Program staff may carry out their responsibilities with fewer interruptions. When questions are more complex or if a frustrated caller cannot be satisfied with the call center staff, the call center staff are trained to connect the person with a higher-level staff member with advanced expertise or authority. This routing system also allows more complicated questions to more efficiently reach the people with the right level of expertise to assist the landlord. Offering landlords a dependable process can increase landlords' confidence and assurance that the PHA is interested in the landlord's situation.

An IVR portion of the call center might be available 24 hours to provide the landlord with



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles with over 40,000 vouchers was experiencing an overwhelming number of calls from applicants, voucher holders, and landlords. They are implementing a call center to more efficiently route inquiries and improve the response times for customers. They expect both landlords and voucher holders will see improvements in being able to reach PHA staff and to get their questions and concerns answered.

some standard information at any time, similar to a landlord portal. The call center may also include an option to leave a message either after hours or if all call center staff are busy with other calls, with a notification to the caller that the call will not be returned until the next business day, or whatever the PHA determines is a feasible practice. Additionally, to operate a successful messaging feature, the PHA must also ensure that messages are monitored and returned.

Call centers may decrease the number of telephone inquiries that any particular staff member encounters, and might be organized to also monitor email inquiries as staffing resources allow. A call center will not eliminate landlords (or voucher families) who reach out for assistance as walk-ins. The PHA will still need to consider how to meet the needs of landlords who pose questions through other methods.

Call centers may represent a solution for larger PHAs with an overwhelming call volume. Many PHAs may choose to retain a landlord point

of contact telephone strategy. The section Alternatives to Call Centers on the previous page offers some tips on how to organize telephone resources effectively without implementing a call center.

Implementation Considerations

The PHA will need to determine the scope of the call center. The PHA may determine that the most cost-effective scenario is to have the call center serve as the “lobby” of the entire PHA or it may choose instead to have the call center work with just the HCV Program, with both voucher families and with landlords. Since a call center may be a big organizational shift in how business is conducted, how landlords (and voucher families) receive certain support, and how staff time and responsibilities are spread out, the PHA may choose to carry out this activity for a set time period, such as a year, while collecting data to determine if the change is successful. Data collection may include call volumes by landlords and tenants, main topics requested, and the number of calls requiring a secondary referral to other PHA staff. If a PHA operates a call center within a specific program, such as the HCV Program, with success, it may determine to expand operations into other program areas such as public housing.

Set-Up

The PHA will determine with its software provider how to customize the IVR menu to create useful selections to direct callers to the right location, including routing them to people who can answer questions or refer them to persons with specific expertise or greater authority. The call center should reduce the number of steps it currently takes for a landlord to reach a knowledgeable voice. Through staff training and call center management, the call center can set priorities to elevate certain urgent or complex queries to receive a transfer or a callback from a higher level PHA program representative. In this way, the PHA retains a hands-on, tailored element.



TIP: Consider reaching out to local government agencies or service providers, such as electric companies, that have implemented call centers or IVR systems to see what challenges they have faced or tips on implementation.



In addition to transitioning PHA staff to an IVR system, PHAs adopting an IVR will need to invest time in acclimating landlords (and voucher families, as appropriate) to the new call center. They will want to assist landlords in:

- Assuring landlords of the PHA's commitment to landlord relations.
- Understanding how to contact the call center.
- Understanding what information the call center offers.
- Understanding how to access additional specialized information.
- Ensuring landlords know all of the methods of contacting the HCV Program for information.

Staffing

Because the call center requires staff who are well-versed in common HCV Program situations, it may require either:

- A departmental reorganization to shift existing experienced staff into call center positions.
- Extensive training to support a steep learning curve for call center staff who are new to the PHA and the HCV Program.

New staff, in particular, require access to and training on a thorough set of scripts as they develop program knowledge. When a PHA shifts existing staff into the new positions, the intent is that the HCV Program staff who remain in case management or other positions will have additional undisturbed time to carry out their responsibilities without the continued distraction of the telephone.

In addition to having a deep knowledge of the HCV Program, call center staff benefit from having substantial customer service training. Call center staff will frequently deal with contentious callers; having a strong set of customer service skills to rely on can help defuse situations, quickly turn to resolving problems, and improve callers' satisfaction.

Call center responsibilities can be emotionally draining and the pace of calls can be taxing. Adequate and ongoing staff training can reduce burnout and improve employee satisfaction. PHAs should also consider how to offer breaks or support for staff to lessen job-related stress.

Costs

The costs of a call center are typically high. PHAs should consider the initial startup costs, including purchasing the IVR system, setting up the system, and training and/or transition staff to operate the IVR. Additional ongoing costs might include an IVR subscription, additional phone lines, and new staff salaries. Keep in mind, staff who previously spent a large portion of their time responding to incoming inquiries, will be more productive, offsetting the costs of implementing a call center.



NOTICE: When the PHA informs landlords about a change to the way calls are received, they may want to consider marketing the call center by emphasizing the enhanced service experience, shorter wait times, increased ability to speak with a person rather than a voicemail, and that call center staff are trained, local PHA staff since call centers may evoke a negative association with unresponsiveness.

If the negative association is still a concern, consider naming the call center something that emphasizes its advantages. Names may include a centralized or virtual reception; an information, resource or customer service center; help line; or in-house answering service.



MONETARY INCENTIVES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

STRATEGY: MONETARY INCENTIVES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

Offering payments, usually one-time, that may encourage participation in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, or may mitigate perceived risk of being an HCV landlord.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location. This strategy tends to be particularly effective in competitive rental markets.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal to high, depending on source of funding.

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	

Related strategies:

- Partnerships

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS:

Monetary incentives and reimbursements for landlords can be used to respond to reluctance to join the HCV Program by addressing delays in leasing and costs for repairs.

While there are many tools a public housing agency (PHA) can use to encourage program participation, monetary incentives and reimbursements are often more visible to landlords.



OVERVIEW OF MONETARY INCENTIVES AND REIMBURSEMENT FUNDS

Targeted Issue	Sample Incentive or Reimbursement
UNIT VACANCY/FINANCIAL LOSS	<p>Signing Bonus: Offers a financial reward to the landlord for joining the program or for adding more units to the program.</p> <p>Vacancy Fund: Can offset the financial burden of a unit sitting vacant and awaiting initial inspection.</p>
DAMAGES TO UNITS	<p>Security Deposit: Assistance with a security deposit, while provided to a voucher family, also serves as a way to reduce landlord concerns about damage and repairs above and beyond normal wear and tear.</p> <p>Damage or Mitigation Fund: Vacancy and damage mitigation funds can be used in certain circumstances to repay a landlord for losses incurred as a result of a program-related delay or damage to a unit above and beyond normal wear and tear.</p> <p>Rehabilitation: While not targeted to address damages, funds to improve units can help landlords maintain and improve their housing stock.</p>

In addition to any financial benefit these incentives and reimbursements offer, landlords recognize them as a symbol of support for some of the financial burdens posed by renting housing. Damage claim or damage mitigation funds may be administered by a PHA, but are more likely to be funded and operated through other entities. This may be because these funds tend to be created alongside the passage of source of income (SOI) legislation to address landlord concerns. The availability of these funds alleviates concern for actual or perceived financial risks regardless of whether the funds are paid out.

ARE THESE RIGHT FOR MY PHA?

If the PHA wants to increase the number of landlords it is working with, expand into new neighborhoods, or address specific landlord issues, it may wish to explore whether financial incentives and reimbursements will motivate landlords to overcome their possible reluctance



Incentives offer more than money

While some PHAs noted that their incentive programs were not frequently accessed, the existence of the programs acknowledges the importance of landlords in the HCV program. The programs lessened landlord concerns about potential financial burdens.

to rent to voucher families or satisfy concerns expressed by landlords. The funding source is critical to the PHA determining whether such a program will be a good fit. The PHA may wish to directly fund and administer financial incentives or reimbursements based on careful analysis of any grant or funding restrictions. The PHA may also work with or refer landlords to other organizations that fund and administer

incentives and reimbursements. These may include state, county, or local government entities. Social service nonprofit agencies may also administer some incentives. It is important to note that these incentives are often designed for tenants, including voucher families.

The PHA may decide that implementing monetary incentives and reimbursements is the right course of action at a particular point in time. The PHA may want to monitor funds expended and levels of landlord participation to decide whether monetary incentives and reimbursements will be temporary or will remain part of the PHA's toolkit on an ongoing basis.

IMPLEMENTATION

When considering how to add monetary incentives or determining what monetary incentives might be most beneficial, PHAs should examine the following questions:

How can a PHA identify monetary incentives that already exist or take steps to assist in the development of incentives?

- Identify areas of concern that might be improved or resolved with a monetary incentive. At what point does a prospective landlord decide not to work with the HCV program? Is there a juncture where more voucher families are unable to use their vouchers? Why do existing HCV landlords leave the program?
- At meetings or conference calls, pay attention to how other PHAs, localities, or organizations have dealt with similar issues. Ask those organizations how they got started.
- See the Partnerships chapter for a discussion of how to inventory local organizations and programs, identify resources, and reach out to link these programs with the PHA's landlords and voucher families.



NOTICE: Websites or forms related to federal housing programs and the application process administered by the PHA for an incentive program must comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. The obligation to ensure web content accessibility for persons with disabilities includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that all images, including graphs and charts, include appropriate alt-text.

If a monetary incentive or reimbursement program doesn't already exist, what are steps a PHA can take to locate funding for such a program?

- Being a visible entity in the community can bring unexpected partnerships and funding sources to a PHA. One PHA with a highly engaged executive director and a number of outreach programs designed to educate and employ PHA residents regularly received calls from area nonprofits. These nonprofits had identified a problem, secured funding, and developed a program to address it, but needed a reliable community-based partner for implementation.



Start the Conversation!

After reaching out to foundations or nonprofit organizations, the Housing Authority of the County of Chester (HACC) noted that these traditional funding sources held the misconception that PHAs were adequately funded. They also hesitated because HACC was not a 501(c)(3) organization, unlike most of their other grantees. The PHA explained their mission and their eligible nonprofit status, how their goals aligned and how their funding worked, for example, administrative funding restrictions. This education process took about 6 months. Now they have established formal relationships with multiple foundations and have been awarded funding.



- Developing partnerships and serving on boards can alert PHAs to funding sources outside of HUD or known partners. See the [Partnerships](#) chapter for more ideas on ways to connect to outside funding sources.
- **Educating organizations who may not understand how a PHA is funded, what restrictions PHAs face in funding, or how the PHA's mission aligns with that of the organization may help open new funding streams. See the [Partnerships](#) chapter for more information on working with foundations and other nonprofit organizations for funding.**

The remainder of this strategy will discuss some of the types of monetary incentives that PHAs have implemented or located to attract new landlords and increase satisfaction for existing HCV program landlords.

PHAs must also carefully consider how to market their monetary incentives. For example, if offering a signing bonus for new landlords in high opportunity areas, PHAs need to ensure marketing strategies reach low-poverty/high opportunity markets. In this case, PHAs could advertise locally or spread the word through apartment associations or real estate groups.

MONETARY INCENTIVES AND REIMBURSEMENTS TO ADDRESS UNIT VACANCY/ FINANCIAL LOSS

SIGNING BONUS

A signing bonus is typically a one-time payment that the PHA will make to a landlord who has rented a unit to a voucher family. The PHA sets the conditions of the payment. It may be offered to:

- Landlords who have never participated in the program
- Landlords who may have participated before but have not participated for a specific period of time

- Landlords who rent a unit for the first time in a low-poverty/high opportunity neighborhood where voucher families tend to have a more difficult time finding units

The PHA sets the terms of when during the tenancy the landlord receives the funds and whether a landlord may be eligible for an additional bonus.

VACANCY FUNDS

The process of moving a voucher family into a rental unit can take longer than the process of moving a market-rate tenant into a rental unit. A move-out with excessive tenant damage may also delay a landlord from moving in a new voucher family in a timely manner. To encourage landlord participation in assisted housing programs, vacancy funds provide a monetary incentive to landlords to compensate for missed days of rental income. These funds pay the landlord all or a portion of rent the landlord would have been able to collect if renting to a market-rate tenant, but could not receive while awaiting the move-in of a voucher family. The incentive is a recognition that the inspection and paperwork, as well as a move-out with excessive damage, can slow the move-in process. The following are ways that three PHAs have implemented this incentive.

Example 1: The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) offers landlords a range of incentives to house voucher holders connected with local homelessness programs. These incentive programs include holding fee (vacancy incentive), security deposit, and damage mitigation. The amount HACLA can spend on monetary incentive programs for an eligible client from the county is capped at \$4,500. The holding fee and security deposit programs are most often used. Landlords are eligible to receive money for the time it takes HACLA to process a new client and have them move in. They can receive up to 1 month's rent per vacant unit held, based on the number of bedrooms and fair market rent. Landlords receive money even if a voucher family does not move in. The landlord does not have to wait for a known delay in move-in to apply because the holding fee is included as part of the standard landlord





application under the Homeless Incentive Program. The security deposit offered by the housing authority or its partnering organizations to homeless voucher families is impactful with landlords. The voucher families can be eligible for additional support, including utility assistance and furniture essentials, depending on the needs of the voucher family.

Example 2: The City of Mesa Housing Authority, which administers HCV, used 1-year grant funding to create a landlord incentive for vacancy payments and application fees. The housing department will pay up to \$500 (for a pro-ration of 7 days of rent) to:

- Landlords who lease to a voucher family upon the move-out of another voucher family
- Landlords who have not been active in the program and have a voucher family ready to move into a unit

To apply, landlords must provide a W-9, a signed lease agreement, dates of move-in, number of days the unit has been vacant, and the rent amount.

This incentive is funded through a somewhat unique source that should remind PHAs to look widely for funding sources. When asking their city grants specialist for funding opportunities, the housing authority learned about a grant available through a tribe. As part of a gaming compact, Arizona tribes that operate casinos must share 12 percent of their revenue with local government services, which they provide in the form of a grant. This housing department

also uses HUD HOME funds for security and utility deposit assistance.

Example 3: An additional example of a vacancy incentive program involves a PHA working with multiple organizations. As part of a long-term goal to increase the number of affordable housing units in a tight housing market, a working group of county officials, Marin Housing Authority, and landlords passed an SOI ordinance for landlords in unincorporated areas of the county. They then created a set of landlord incentives. Funded by the county but administered by the PHA, the incentives include damage mitigation, vacancy loss coverage, security deposit, and waiver of permit fees for landlords in the unincorporated area of the county with participation in HCV. The PHA provides landlords with access to fair housing and HUD-established physical inspection standards training. The vacancy incentive provides up to 1 month's rent (up to \$3,000) to the landlord while extensive repairs are taking place with the commitment to rent the unit to another voucher holder.

MONETARY INCENTIVES AND REIMBURSEMENTS TO ADDRESS DAMAGE TO UNITS

SECURITY DEPOSITS

Security deposit incentives are typically made to the voucher family, but they end up providing a benefit to the landlord as well as to the family.





Tip: There are HUD funds that a PHA may use for security deposit initiatives:

- PHAs or partnering agencies who receive HUD Continuum of Care Rapid Rehousing funds may use those funds to pay for security deposits, first and last month rent payments, utility deposits and payments, and help with moving costs. PHAs must ensure that no rent or utility payments are paid as a duplicative subsidy to HCV Housing Assistance Payments (HAP).
- HUD HOME funds may be used for security deposits.
- HUD Emergency Shelter Grants, available to PHAs and other organizations through local government entities to prevent homelessness, can provide financial assistance including rental application fees, security and utility deposits, utility payments, last month rent, and moving costs.
- A PHA could use reserve funds for security deposits.

Under the HCV program, voucher families are responsible for most of the additional costs associated with renting a unit. These costs can include security deposits, application fees, first and last month rent deposits, and utility deposits. If the family lacks the funds, the landlord decides whether to forgo the deposit or seek another family. Accepting a tenant without a deposit increases the landlord's financial risk. Although it is not an incentive where a landlord is guaranteed to receive additional money since the unit may not be damaged, security deposits are a popular incentive with landlords.

Typically, the deposit is returned to the incentive fund if the tenant moves without incurring damages to the unit above normal wear and tear.

Damage Claim or Mitigation Funds

Many landlords are concerned about unit damages. Payment for tenant-caused damages is typically the responsibility of the voucher family as stated in lease agreements. This concern can be increased when a landlord

houses voucher families who may not be financially able to provide a security deposit – such as a low-income family receiving housing assistance from HUD.

Damage claim or damage mitigation funds can pay the landlord for excessive tenant-caused damages beyond normal wear and tear when the landlord has been unable to collect payment from the voucher family. Note: Damage fund programs can successfully increase landlord satisfaction even when the landlord does not need to use them. When landlords have access to an initiative that helps pay for repairs, landlords may feel more secure knowing they have funds available if needed for repairs.



NOTICE: When marketing a damage or mitigation fund, PHAs should be mindful to not inadvertently continue the narrative that HCV families will damage units. PHAs can use this opportunity to bust this myth with fact: HCV families do not cause more damage than market-rate tenants.

PHAs might consider marketing this as a mitigation fund to assist landlords with making needed repairs versus making repairs that result from tenant-caused damage.

Elements of damage claim program may include:

- A time frame for submission. For example, landlords are required to apply within 21 days of the voucher family moving.
- Submission of evidence that damage exceeds normal wear and tear such as photos and repair estimates.
- Proof that the unit was occupied by a family with a voucher.

Below are examples of three mitigation fund incentives.

Example 1: Homes for Good Housing Agency created a mitigation fund, paid through state general funds, when they enacted a source of income (SOI) protection law. The fund

reimburses landlords of HCV voucher families for the following:

- Unpaid rent including late fees
- Lease-break fees
- Loss of rent due to repairs for qualifying property damage
- Property damage above normal wear and tear
- Repair expenses in excess of \$500 but less than \$5,000
- Other costs related to lease violation

To access funds, landlords must submit an application with supporting documentation. This streamlined process no longer requires that landlords pursue a small claims judgment. The earlier requirement was intended to increase accountability by having a judge review the claim. However, since not all judges have expertise with move-in/move-out checklists and reconciliation reports, there were criticisms that this step was an extraneous formality. The cost and time associated with the small claims court process may have deterred landlords from pursuing amounts under \$1,000.

Example 2: Everett Housing Authority replicated this program, extending it to landlords who serve any subsidized tenant or who will take rental payment from another organization. This mitigation program also removed the small claims judgment requirement, citing it as an obstacle to access. To further support housing stability, landlords may apply for mitigation funds at any time during the tenancy, not just when a tenant moves out. They may also apply more than once, but the total for all claims may not exceed \$5,000 per lease agreement and any claim must be for at least \$500. The program uses internal staff to review the claim applications, which require proof of subsidy, a move-in report, a subsidized housing inspection report, and photos and receipts documenting the damages. The landlord may not then pursue any additional funds from the tenant. More than \$3 million has been paid to landlords across the state.

This program also includes a pre-inspection claim to repair existing damages that would cause a unit to fail an initial housing assistance inspection. The landlord is responsible for the first \$500 in costs, then the landlord can receive up to \$1,000 in reimbursement for additional costs of repairs. Landlords may also claim rent loss for up to 14 days if caused by the needed repairs or inspection.



Partnership Opportunity

While some incentive programs may be run and managed by other organizations, this does not mean there are not ways for PHAs to be involved.

For example, while a state may manage a mitigation program, PHAs may have the opportunity to partner with the state agency to create the processes that facilitate fund access for HCV landlords. This could include obtaining needed forms from the state that the PHA then distributes to landlords or creating a guide for landlords on how to access funds. PHAs with an established relationship with their state agency are also in a position to offer feedback on how the process is, or is not, working for their landlords.

The Partnerships chapter offers additional information on how to establish such a relationship.

Example 3: The Housing Authority of the County of Chester receives yearly funding from a national nonprofit, United Way, for a damage mitigation program. Under the program, the PHA will set aside 1-month's rent or \$1,000 for a year for mitigation of damages to a unit, should it be needed. At the end of one year, the option to access the funds is closed and the funds are returned to the program. The PHA has only had to access these funds once.



Typically, they are able to intervene and resolve issues in time.

Municipal or local governmental funding sources for damage claim funds have included:

- Sales tax increase
- Recording fees on real estate transactions
- State general funds
- Municipal bonds



Tip: If a PHA's state is developing a damage mitigation program, here are a few promising practices:

- Keep the application process accountable, but not overly complex. It should be accessible for landlords with small or large portfolios who may have differing resources and levels of experience in filing claims.
- Clearly post information and educate landlords about how to apply. If landlords will be required to submit move-in paperwork at the time of requesting move-out damages, they need advanced notice to collect this information. If they need inspections or proof of subsidy from the housing authority, provide contact information.
- Set clear timelines and deadlines.

No Mitigation Fund? Other Ways to Help:

If there is no damage mitigation fund in your state, there are some other ways that PHAs can help to alleviate concerns about tenant damages.

- **Landlord-Tenant Mediation:** This is a way to resolve a complaint between landlords and voucher families outside a court setting. Landlord-tenant mediation services may be available through government departments, nonprofit organizations such as fair housing or tenants' organizations, and local bar associations. PHAs typically do not provide these services because of their connection to both parties. See the [Partnerships](#) chapter for additional information.
- **First and Last Month Rent Assistance (sometimes called Down Payment Assistance):** Many landlords require first and/or last month rent payments before renting a unit. Typically, these funds can be used to cover the cost of damages above and beyond normal wear and tear upon move-out. If there are no damages, the funds are returned to the voucher family. Low-income families, including voucher families, may not have access to two extra months' worth of rent when they are moving into a new unit. A program that offers this money reduces the landlord's financial risk and this may increase the landlord's willingness to rent to a voucher family. Note: These funds would be used for a deposit and cannot provide rent for months that the PHA pays HAP.
- **Tenant Education:** Tenant education efforts may provide information on how voucher families might increase their housing stability and meet landlord expectations regarding maintenance and condition of the rental unit.

REHABILITATION

Helping landlords to rehabilitate or improve the energy efficiency and longevity of their housing is another incentive that PHAs can help landlords access. Some PHAs administer support directly. For example, for landlords with properties in Marin Housing Authority's unincorporated county areas, the housing authority offers a pro-rated waiver on building and planning permit fees related to repairs and improvements. To be eligible, the landlords must participate in rental assistance programs with at least half of their rental units. The program is funded through the county under a partnership of county officials, housing authority representatives, and landlords. The Landlord Partnership Program was created to expand affordable rental housing options in a community with a low-vacancy rate.

Other PHAs partner with organizations to increase the availability of housing units for voucher families. NeighborWorks organizations throughout the United States offer mixes of loans and grants for qualified landlords of (often 1-4 unit) rental properties to upgrade the property. In at least one municipality, landlords who are above the program income requirements can still qualify for a rehabilitation loan if they advertise vacancies with the housing authority.



Tip: Let landlords know about energy-efficiency upgrade incentives for which landlords (and PHAs) may be eligible through states, counties, and utilities. These are listed in the [*Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency*](#).





INSPECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Inspections play a large and important role in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program for public housing agencies (PHAs), landlords, and voucher families. Inspections are required by law and periodic inspections take place throughout tenancy, in addition to the initial inspection. Issues with the inspection process may reduce the safety of the residence and have financial repercussions for landlords. Inspection timing and results can determine how quickly a resident can move in and determine whether a landlord will receive a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), or cause a delay or stoppage of HAP. Landlords may have to make repairs or keep a unit vacant to resolve deficiencies. With so much riding on inspections, it's easy to see why they can be a source of confusion and tension between landlords and PHAs.

The following strategies are included in this section:

Strategies to ensure consistent inspections:

- Inspections Guidance for Landlords
- Consistent Inspections

Strategies to facilitate efficiency in the scheduling and completion of inspections:

- Inspections Scheduling
- Administrative Inspections Flexibilities

Related strategies:

- Technology
- Education and Outreach
- Monetary Incentives and Reimbursement Funds
- Partnerships

The strategies in this inspections chapter address the following areas:

Inspections Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Inspections Guidance for Landlords	Consistent Inspections	Inspections Scheduling	Administrative Inspections Flexibilities
Increase Recruitment				
Increase Retention	X	X	X	X
Improve Responsiveness		X	X	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship		X		
Improve Inspections Process	X	X	X	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X		X	X



In this chapter of the Guidebook, strategies and their associated activities are grouped in two categories of PHA goals to increase landlord satisfaction by ensuring:

- Inspection requirements and execution are shown to be carried out consistently
- Scheduling and completion of inspections are efficiently facilitated

Many of the PHA activities involve an internal review of current inspection policies and procedures, followed by administrative changes. There are also several existing flexibilities PHAs can choose to implement which may require administrative changes but can dramatically reduce the administrative burden on both landlords and the PHA. The majority of the activities are low-cost to implement and can be combined with other strategies throughout the Guidebook to maximize the PHA's return on investment in time, staffing, procedure changes, and financial costs.

These strategies, as a whole, aim to help the PHAs make the inspection process more transparent and efficient for landlords. They offer PHAs additional options for some of the more cumbersome elements of the inspection process. Landlords who know what to expect will be better equipped to take appropriate and timely steps when faced with challenges in the process—including a failed inspection. Well-informed landlords may also be able to avoid these challenges by acting proactively and making repairs prior to an initial inspection.

Note: These strategies may combine well with some of the [Administrative Flexibilities to Enhance Landlord Satisfaction](#) available as part of the HUD HCV Landlord Strategies Guidebook.

OVERVIEW

This chapter will examine ways PHAs can improve the inspection experience for landlords, beginning with an overview of the inspection process. While many may be familiar with the process, this information is helpful to keep in mind while reviewing the strategies presented in the remainder of this chapter.



NOTICE: TERMINOLOGY

- Units inspections are conducted using HUD-established physical inspection standards, which some may know as Housing Quality Standards.
- Units fail these inspections because they had an item, or combination of items, that did not meet the standards. These individual deficiencies can also be called “fails” by PHA staff.

Why Are Inspections Important?

The purpose of inspections mirrors the goal of PHAs to ensure decent, safe, and habitable housing. Inspections provide opportunities for PHAs to visit a unit and monitor adherence to HUD-established physical inspection standards. It's also important to note that inspections provide the same opportunities for landlords—a time when landlords can receive an outside evaluation on the condition of their property. While some landlords may view these visits as a bureaucratic inconvenience, they can be used to prevent potential maintenance issues that might not be caught until move-out.



News

In late 2019, HUD began a 2-year voluntary demonstration to better identify potential adjustments to standards, protocols, and processes of the National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE) model prior to nationwide implementation. One of NSPIRE's core objectives is to align standards across programs in order to provide the same expectation of housing quality for all residents of HUD-assisted housing units. Additional information on NSPIRE and its applicability to HCV can be found here: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/react/nspire

The Different Types of Inspections: A Refresher

Initial – All units entering the HCV program must have an inspection. In many circumstances, but not all, the initial inspection must take place before the HAP contract is executed.

Periodic Inspection – PHAs are required to conduct regular additional inspections. They may conduct these annually or biennially, which needs to be clearly stated in the PHAs' policy documents for consistency and transparency. Additionally, PHAs designated by HUD as "small rural" may decide to carry out inspections on a triennial basis. The final strategy in this chapter offers additional information on incorporating administrative flexibilities.

Special/complaint – When the PHA receives a complaint regarding a unit from a tenant or a government official, the PHA must conduct an inspection to investigate the complaint. The timing of the inspection is determined by whether the complaint is for non-life threatening or life-threatening concerns. If the concerns raised are life-threatening, PHAs must call this an emergency inspection and the deficiency must be addressed within 24 hours.

See [24 CFR 982.405](#) and [85 FR 11381](#).

Marketing and Roll-out

Some changes to the inspection process – such as incorporating administrative flexibilities or standardizing deadlines in policy – will improve the inspection process, but may change an experienced HCV landlord's accustomed inspection routine. The PHA should inform all landlords of changes to the inspection process that require changes on the landlord's part. The PHA may need to provide information on how to make this change or who to contact for additional information. The PHA may wish to make major changes to its inspection process on a trial or limited basis until it has an opportunity to assess any impact these changes make on landlords, voucher families, or PHA staff time or other resources.

Certainly, the PHA will want to make certain that landlords are fully informed about any guidance materials on the inspection process or standards that the PHA makes available.

Some changes to the inspection process may improve efficiency without requiring actions on the part of the landlord. These could include changes made by PHA internal staffing including inspectors. In those cases, once the PHA has determined that a change will be incorporated on a permanent basis, the PHA may wish to let the landlords know what the PHA is doing behind the scenes to improve landlord satisfaction and the efficiency of the inspection process.

Evaluation

PHAs should build in ways to evaluate changes for effectiveness. For example, PHAs that are making improvements to scheduling could review the average time it takes from a request for inspection to the inspection being conducted. Allowing for start-up, the amount of time between the request and the actual inspection should decrease over time.





STRATEGIES TO ENSURE CONSISTENT INSPECTIONS

In 2018, HUD organized listening forums for landlords to learn more about how to make the program more effective for them. One of the highlights in these meetings was the demand for fair and consistent assessments in inspections. Some landlords said that inspection deficiencies can seem punitive in nature. While some of the frustration experienced by landlords can be attributed to concerns about the cost of repairs combined with a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of the regulations, it cannot be discounted that there are inspectors who are not conducting inspections consistently and/or not relaying information to landlords in an effective manner. The goal of these strategies is to help PHAs ensure that inspectors use consistent standards to conduct inspections, make landlords aware of these consistent standards, and communicate these practices in a way that reassures landlords.

There are two main strategies designed to target different elements of this issue:

1. Inspection Guidance for Landlords

2. Consistent Inspections

These activities can be implemented separately, but they are designed to work in tandem. By providing clarity on the inspection process to landlords and tenants as well as ensuring inspectors are trained to fairly, accurately, and consistently apply inspections regulations, PHAs can decrease negative perceptions of the inspection process. These activities require an up-front investment of time, but that investment will pay off in the long run.





STRATEGY: INSPECTION GUIDANCE FOR LANDLORDS

Providing landlords with clear written and verbal guidance to increase their understanding of the inspection process.

Who: All PHAs; Some activities are targeted to PHAs that have inspectors on staff.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal to moderate.

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ○ MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Inspection Guidance for Landlords PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Inspection Guidance for Landlords
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



what the inspector is looking for and teach common-sense ways of getting ahead of the inspection process by carrying out preventative maintenance. If landlords conduct preventative and routine maintenance and fix items before the units are inspected, this should lead to an increased number of approved units within a shorter timeframe. It is also important that landlords understand the terminology of inspections, the HUD HCV inspection form, and correction requirements the same way HUD and inspectors understand these items.

There are three primary ways that PHAs can inform and educate landlords:

- 1 Written Guidance
- 2 Training and Education
- 3 Customer Service

Related Strategies:

- Landlord Orientation
- Landlord Website

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: Providing landlords with information on inspection standards, the inspection process, and common HUD-established physical inspection standard deficiencies creates more informed landlords who will have an increased ability to carry out their responsibilities under the inspection process. This, in turn, can reduce overall dissatisfaction with the inspection process. It can also minimize the perception that inspectors are enforcing inspections inconsistently, when they are, in fact, correct in the application of policy. If an inspector is inconsistent or strays from policy, informed landlords will also be able to articulate the issue instead of voicing a broad complaint of unfair treatment. This will enable PHAs to expedite a resolution and target further training efforts for inspectors.

Checklists, visual aids, and inspection training can offer landlords an understanding of



IMPLEMENTATION

A successful inspection program is built on a clear understanding of the inspection process. Without this knowledge base, confusion about why and how the process is carried out can arise, leading to misunderstanding and a perception that inspections may be unfair. By providing information, through training or other means of communication to landlords, PHAs can lay the foundation for a more successful inspection program.

The activities outlined in this section are targeted at providing landlords with clear written and verbal guidance on inspections. For new landlords, this activity sets the stage for how they view and approach inspections by providing clear and up-front information about the process. For landlords who have been in the program, education efforts can help to correct any misinterpretations of how inspection policy has been applied in the past. Thus, it is a critical part of improving landlord perception of how inspections policy is applied and assisting landlords to both prevent and manage a failed inspection.

WRITTEN GUIDANCE

Providing landlords with written guidance is integral to clarifying the inspection process. Forms and materials should be made available to landlords throughout the process so landlords can refer to them when confusion might arise. Inspection staff can also point to these forms when confronted with a question since the forms are based on policy. Staff should use these as tools to clarify the process, rather than to shut down conversation.

There are existing documents that PHAs should consider providing to landlords including:

- **Inspections Form:** Receipt of the inspections form (HUD-52580) prior to an inspection allows landlords to make needed repairs and avoid failing an inspection. PHAs might consider creating a user-friendly checklist to assist landlords who would like to conduct their own pre-inspection.



Review Policies

PHAs should review their existing policies and procedures to ensure they are clear, up to date, and consistent. Inconsistent and unclear policies and procedures can result in improper application by inspectors and uncertainty for landlords. When updating policies and procedures, PHAs should check with inspectors to see if they can identify any areas that would benefit from additional clarification or instruction. Be sure to also update any associated information such as the PHA website and forms.

- **Inspections Flowcharts:** Both an HQS Initial Inspection Flowchart and a Biennial HQS Inspection Flowchart are available on HUD's [Landlord Resource webpage](#). These flowcharts provide an overview of each type of inspection and can help a landlord understand the different ways they can reach a pass. PHAs should confirm that the flowcharts follow their processes and consider creating an amended PHA flowchart to distribute if the PHA's process differs.

Some PHAs may also take these materials and tailor them to fit their program, adding in information such as contact numbers to receive additional guidance.

More information is not always better!

PHAs should be mindful that while information is useful, too much can also be overwhelming and result in landlords not reviewing materials or not taking away the key points that the PHA is trying to communicate. While the PHA may have additional resources such as training materials from a new landlord orientation course, for example, these might be listed as supplemental resources that landlords can review should they wish to learn more.

Materials can be made available to landlords on the PHA's website, as part of any orientation materials provided to landlords, or distributed by inspectors. Existing landlords could receive materials through a portal.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Through training and education, in-person or virtual, PHAs may provide in-depth information on inspections that cannot be adequately conveyed through printed materials. Interactive methods also offer landlords an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers.

This section will primarily focus on two types of education efforts:

- **Inspection 101:** A primer for all landlords, but particularly for those new to the program, that presents an overview of the inspection process. This material is well-suited for incorporation into workshops such as “New Landlord Orientation.” See the [Education and Outreach](#) chapter for additional information.
- **Inspection Modules:** These efforts can be used to target common questions or issues that landlords are experiencing. Modules can be inserted, as needed, into outreach efforts for landlords such as a Lunch and Learn or posted as a video on the PHA's website.



Tip: The Education and Outreach chapter of this Guidebook provides information that can help PHAs manage training events for landlords, including tips on determining the location and frequency of the events, as well as considerations such as marketing.



Voucher Family Education

Providing training to voucher families on the inspection process and routine maintenance can minimize inspections issues in general.

PHAs could consider adapting the Inspection 101 materials for the voucher family experience of inspections. PHAs might also consider offering or referring voucher families to courses locally available on topics related to renter readiness, navigating the rental process, and maintaining a home.

The Education and Outreach and Partnerships chapters have additional information on voucher family education.

INSPECTION 101

As noted previously, “Inspection 101” is an introduction to the inspection process, tailored to the landlord's perspective. Training and education on “Inspections 101” might include the following topics:

- **Inspection Overview:** PHAs should review why inspections are required and the benefit not only for voucher families but also for landlords. Information should be included about the roles and responsibilities of the landlord, tenant, and PHA. This will be particularly helpful for landlords who are new to the program or those that might not have received a formal orientation.
- **Process:** PHAs should review the inspection process including when and how often inspections will take place, how the landlord can schedule an inspection, what will happen when the



inspector arrives, what happens if an item is deficient, and how to correct deficiencies. The PHA's own timeline for these activities should also be addressed. If the PHA allows for landlords to self-certify that deficiencies have been corrected or has adopted any alternative inspections requirements, the PHA should also review how these processes can benefit the landlord. Additionally, if the PHA uses a landlord portal or other technology in the inspections process, the PHA should discuss how to access the inspections-related information included on the portal, and how landlords can get additional assistance with portal access if needed.

- **Common Deficiencies:** While PHAs may want to address the inspection checklist in its entirety, PHAs should also provide information on common deficiencies they see in area inspections conducted under HUD-established physical inspection standards.



Tip: Photos may be particularly helpful to convey different reasons items are found deficient and what corrections might look like.

Inspection Process

PHAs may want to review additional information on two components of the inspection process where confusion can arise: roles and responsibilities for landlords and voucher families and the abatement process. *A Deeper Dive* at the end of this strategy offers additional information.

INSPECTION MODULES

In addition to Inspections 101, PHAs may consider offering more in-depth training on certain aspects of inspections. These modules should be based on trends—questions frequently asked by landlords, or issues, such as common deficiencies, that the PHA is seeing. PHAs should ask landlords and PHA staff, including inspectors, for input prior to developing modules to ensure that they are reflective of current issues or trends.

Examples of module topics might include:

- Common inspection deficiencies and how to correct them.
- Preventive maintenance.
- Self-certifications: How to submit photos of corrected inspection deficiencies.



Tip: When determining what information will be presented, PHAs should remember that some landlords may come to the orientation with no knowledge of HUD, PHAs, or the HCV program. They may also be new to being a landlord. Be sure to spell out common abbreviations and offer short, clear descriptions of practices like accessing the landlord portal or HUD-established physical inspection standards.

As the content for inspection module trainings can vary greatly, the method of delivering the information may change based on the content. For example, discussion on common inspection deficiencies could be a 5-minute segment in an outreach event or it could be expanded to a 15-minute instructional video.

DELIVERY METHODS

Training and education on inspections is not limited to traditional in-person training opportunities. This information can be delivered through a variety of methods.

The chart below shows different delivery methods for both Inspections 101 and Inspection modules, but PHAs are free to think of new and creative ways to provide this information. Each PHA and its landlords are unique—training and education methods can be altered or created to meet the need!

	In-Person Training or Webinar	Video
INSPECTIONS 101	A good fit to add to a Landlord Orientation Workshop. It could also be a stand-alone workshop.	Could be designed for a video that could be posted on the PHA's website. If the audience trends towards new landlords, the PHA should provide a way for landlords to ask follow-up questions.
INSPECTION MODULES	A good enhancement to a landlord event such as a Lunch and Learn. Several modules could be combined for a stand-alone or "Inspections 202" workshop.	Well-suited for videos; topics such as preventative maintenance or common fails are enhanced by visual aids.



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

A PHA is creating educational videos on inspections after hearing about challenges in the process from landlords. The goal of the videos is to help make the inspection process easier by letting landlords know what to expect and how to prepare in advance. The PHA will produce the first video in-house but, if the pilot is successful, they may look into collaborating with local high schools to produce subsequent videos.

Written Guidance: It is recommended that any effort include written materials that can serve as a reference guide and supplement the education efforts. The earlier section on Written Guidance offers more information on types of guidance.

VIDEO TIP!

Videos can also be especially useful when addressing common inspection deficiencies or preventative maintenance techniques because they allow for hands-on demonstration and real-life examples. A PHA could, for example, record a walk-through of a unit, noting areas of interest.*

With advances in technology, PHAs can record and edit videos using smartphones, eliminating the need for specialized equipment. There are also several platforms PHAs could use at no cost to post videos. While videos may need to be updated when policies change, they allow the PHA to provide detailed instruction with minimal ongoing cost.

Videos do not need to be long or of "professional" quality to be effective. Short video clips may be more effective and encourage more landlords to view them compared to longer videos. To help landlords use the video, focus on showing the item under inspection in good lighting and from more than one angle if possible. A flashlight can assist with lighting. Be sure to point out the reason the example would be found deficient or not.

Online media platforms such as YouTube offer videos of varying lengths and quality about HQS inspections (additional search terms include "HCV inspections" and "Section 8 inspections"). Another source of inspiration might be videos from home inspection industry groups, keeping in mind the housing they inspect is regulated under different standards and their audience is the inspector.

NOTE: HUD does not promote any inspection videos. PHAs should evaluate the accuracy of any video prior to posting.

*PHAs should request permission to film and ensure that personal and identifying items are not recorded.





CUSTOMER SERVICE

Any training and education strategy would be incomplete without the means for the participant to follow up and ask questions. While PHAs should be sure to incorporate a strong element of customer service into all aspects of the HCV program, the inspection process is an area that creates a lot of questions for landlords.

There are a variety of ways to provide efficient customer service related to inspections, including:

- Adding Q&A time into all inspection training and education opportunities whether these events are in-person or virtual.
- Providing an email or phone number that landlords can call with inspection questions. This contact information should be included as part of inspection notifications, during training events, at the end of any presentations (including recorded videos), and on the PHA's website. Inspectors should provide this contact information at the inspection too. As always, any contact email or phone number should be monitored and messages should be responded to in a timely manner.
- Ensuring inspectors are trained to not only provide consistent and correct application of inspections policy but also to represent the PHA. They should be equipped to handle challenging situations.

- Answering questions is important, but can be challenging. Staff that are tasked with answering questions about inspections should be knowledgeable in applicable policy. When confronted with a tough question, however, staff should feel comfortable in letting landlords know that they will need to seek additional clarification. Staff should then make sure to get back to the landlord!

Interactions between staff and landlords, particularly surrounding inspections, are an important part of building trust and creating positive relationships.

The Consistent Inspections strategy in this chapter offers specific information on customer service training for inspectors.



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

A dedicated landlord point of contact at Sonoma County Housing Authority is trained in HUD-established standards and inspections. The point of contact does not conduct official inspections, but does often perform a “soft inspection” at the properties of landlords who have questions about the inspection process. The point of contact may be able to identify potential issues so that landlords can prepare for inspections. This interaction both assists the landlords with their physical inspection and strengthens the PHA-landlord relationship.

A DEEPER DIVE: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND ABATEMENT

While designing educational materials for landlords, there are two areas where PHAs may want to take a deeper dive: roles and responsibilities and the abatement process. These two areas are commonly a source of confusion for landlords and can also play a huge part in how satisfied a landlord might be with the inspection process, the PHA, and the HCV Program as a whole. The below offers some additional information for PHAs to consider including in their outreach efforts.

Roles and Responsibilities

Some landlords experience frustration and confusion regarding who is responsible for inspections, especially annual (or biennial) inspections and certain repairs they identify as fixes to tenant-caused damages.

The landlord's responsibility in streamlining the inspection process includes:

- Taking preventative action to keep units safe, clean, and habitable.
- Responding in a timely manner to voucher family requests for repairs.
- Repairing deficiencies identified in the inspection within required timeframes.
- Informing the PHA when deficiencies are completed in accordance with the PHA policy for submission of certification or scheduling a re-inspection.
- Enforce any lease requirements for tenant maintenance and payments.

The voucher family's responsibilities in the inspection process includes:

- Allowing an inspector into their unit for an annual inspection.
- Rescheduling an inspection or informing the landlord if they cannot be available for an inspection.
- Notifying their landlord about a major repair, which could otherwise lead to more damage.
- Following the lease requirements for keeping units clean and maintained to avoid failed inspections due to tenant action or inaction, such as mold or rodent infestations due to poor housekeeping, overgrown yards, large holes in walls, or broken appliances.
- Paying for tenant-caused issues that go beyond regular wear and tear.
- Repairing tenant-caused deficiencies identified in the HUD-established physical inspection standards inspection within required timeframes.

The PHA's responsibilities may include:

- Ensuring that inspections are conducted as required including conducting an inspection when alerted to a potential deficiency.
- Ensuring that the landlord and voucher family are informed of an upcoming inspection.
- Educating voucher families on family responsibilities including tenant-caused damages to units and consequences as a part of family briefings.
- Verifying that inspection deficiencies have been remedied.
- Enforcing the housing assistance payments (HAP) contract and family obligations including through abatement and termination, respectively.

In addition, there are a variety of good practices that PHAs can employ to improve landlords' satisfaction with inspections.

1. Send out reminder notices to landlords and voucher families about annual or biennial inspections 1 or 2 days ahead of the scheduled appointment. The landlord or adult voucher holder must allow the inspector in the unit for an inspection to take place. PHA policy determines who must be present for an inspection. Missed inspections may lead eventually to abatement or program termination.



2. Offer easily accessible information on the timelines and policies for missed inspections and re-inspections, and at what point the PHA abates HAP and terminates assistance to a unit or voucher family.
3. Provide clear and concise information on the roles and responsibilities of voucher families and landlords in the inspection process.
4. Provide a flow chart or timeline of expectations and consequences related to the inspection process.
5. Develop and implement specific inspection policies related to tenant-caused damages. Include these in landlord briefings and landlord-facing materials. Refer to the section on inspection inconsistencies for training inspectors on this policy.

Some PHAs may also be able to offer additional programs or services to voucher families and landlords that help alleviate frustrations around tenant-landlord responsibilities for inspections. See the chapter [Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements](#) for information on mitigation or damage funds for landlords to make claims for tenant-caused damages to units where repair costs exceed security deposit funds. See the chapter [Education and Outreach](#) for information on voucher family education including classes on how to be a good neighbor or tenants' rights and responsibility classes.

Unfortunately, even with easily accessible and concise language and instruction, some landlords will still contact PHAs with complaints around voucher family and landlord responsibilities during inspections. Here are some suggestions on managing these complaints:

1. Validate the person's concerns without assigning blame. Example: "I am sorry to hear this happened; that sounds very frustrating."
2. Refer to the documents that help identify the next course of action. These may include the HAP contract, the lease between the voucher family and landlord, or the Administrative Plan.
3. Whenever possible, give the person background information on why this policy exists so they understand the policy's intent, even if it is not realized in their current situation.

The Abatement Process

A source of frustration for landlords is lost rental income due to abatements. Under abatement, the PHA stops payment of HAP because the landlord has failed to correct inspection deficiencies within the allowed time period per 982.404(a)(3). Landlords may be caught off guard when the rent for their unit is abated, especially when the landlord perceives the issue as trivial, such as forgetting to schedule a re-inspection of a minor corrected deficiency. Thankfully, there are a variety of methods that PHAs can pursue to help landlords avoid abatement or better navigate the abatement process:

1. As a starting point, review all current PHA communications such as existing letters and emails to landlords regarding abatements for clarity and continuity of instructions.
2. Similarly, review the timing of these notices. Do the notices give landlords adequate time to take corrective action or to contact the PHA?
3. Provide reminder and/or warning communications to landlords several days before their lack of action will lead to abatement.
4. Remind landlords of the consequences of abatement: (1) The owner will not be paid back rent after the corrective action is taken; (2) Further inaction will lead to termination of the HAP contract for the unit.
5. For units that fail inspections for emergency conditions, make all reasonable attempts to make contact with the landlord so that corrective action can be taken expediently, both for the benefit of the voucher family and the landlord.
6. Prioritize re-inspections for units that are in abatement to minimize the amount of lost rental income the landlord will experience.



STRATEGY: CONSISTENT INSPECTIONS

Evaluating internal changes that PHAs can make to ensure that inspections are conducted in accordance with HUD-established physical inspection standards and in a consistent manner.

Who: All PHAs; Some activities are targeted to PHAs that have inspectors on staff.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal to moderate.

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ○ MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Consistent Inspections Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Consistent Inspections
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	



WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: This strategy focuses on what PHAs can do internally to change landlords' perceptions that inspectors are not conducting inspections consistently.

These measures serve two purposes. First and foremost, they improve consistency in the inspection process. The implementation of these changes can help repair negative perceptions around the inspection process. Not only do these measures – such as providing additional training to inspections staff – confront the issue of inspections being conducted inconsistently, they can also aid in changing negative perceptions, regardless of whether or not the perception is accurate.



Customer Service: A Key to Success!

Even if inspectors are conducting inspections that are fair and compliant with HUD-established physical inspection standards, improved customer service may help change the negative perceptions that some landlords may have. *Good customer service goes a long way to prevent miscommunications and misunderstandings. Customer service is the key to success!*

While changing perceptions can be a tricky objective, PHAs can take steps to address landlord concerns with inspections and inspectors leading to an overall improvement in satisfaction.



These activities are discussed below in greater detail (and within other strategies in this chapter), and they are listed here as they are part of an integrated approach:

- 1 Schedule and Conduct Inspections in a Timely Manner
- 2 Train and Share Information
- 3 Perform Quality Control
- 4 Simplify Inspections Across PHAs
- 5 Review Policies and Procedures

Related Strategies:

- Inspections Guidance for Landlords
 - Administrative Inspections Flexibilities
 - PHA Collaboration
-

IMPLEMENTATION

This strategy has multiple activities that are designed to complement each other and address multiple processes. While largely unseen by landlords, the activities will greatly impact how landlords perceive the inspection process and the HCV program as a whole. Some of these activities involve gathering information from staff across multiple departments and others might rely on partnerships with other PHAs.

PHAs should consider reviewing their entire internal inspection process in the areas identified below to ensure the process is consistent and accurate.

Schedule and Conduct Inspections in a Timely Manner

Making sure the inspection process in its entirety runs efficiently is crucial to changing perceptions about the consistency of inspections. Timely inspections also result in more timely payments. Change begins with setting the tone as early in the process as possible which, for many, begins with scheduling.

Summary of Activities

Be Timely! Schedule and conduct inspections in a timely manner.

Train Staff. Make sure all inspectors receive consistent training opportunities and time to share common issues and brainstorm solutions.

Gather Information Firsthand. Have supervisors accompany inspections staff periodically. This is especially important for PHAs that contract out inspections.

Work Together. Consider forming a PHA working group in your region to make policies more consistent where possible.

Internal Review. Review existing policies and procedures to minimize any inconsistent implementation.

Opportunities to increase the timeliness of an inspection will be examined in greater detail in the Inspections Scheduling strategy in this chapter. In this context, it is important to note that a delay in scheduling and conducting inspections can negatively influence a landlord's experience. It may lead to feelings that the inspection, once conducted, has been carried out unfairly.

PHAs should make sure to let landlords know how long an inspection will take to schedule and conduct—and then make sure to adhere to these timeframes. Landlords have noted that the uncertainty and inconsistency of scheduling is just as frustrating as long timelines.

Train and Share Information

Changing the perception that inspections are conducted inconsistently starts with ensuring that inspections are conducted in compliance with HUD-established physical inspections standards. Continuing education opportunities for currently certified inspections staff ensures that inspectors have the right information and



understand the requirements and importance of performing their duties consistently and fairly.

When reviewing inspections staff training procedures, PHAs should consider the following:

- How often will training be offered? While PHAs will already have training and certification in place for new inspectors, PHAs should determine the need for refresher courses. If a PHA has received an increase in the number of complaints against inspection staff, multiple issue-focused courses might be a good way to get inspectors back on track and make sure they are familiar with all aspects of the inspection process.
- What types of information will be discussed? PHAs should use refresher courses to examine areas where landlords have expressed specific concerns.
- How can customer service be improved? While some areas might be best addressed by a review of policy and regulations, many landlord complaints could be minimized or resolved through enhanced customer service. This is also a good opportunity for inspectors to share issues they have encountered and ways these issues have been successfully resolved. PHAs with only one or two inspectors may want to consider incorporating them into a discussion of customer service techniques with other PHA staff. They might be surprised that many issues can be de-escalated by providing additional information to



Perform Mock Inspections

One helpful method for PHAs to improve consistency is to have inspectors review an inspection together, after which they will be asked to compare results and discuss differences. Inspectors could be presented with photos or video of a real or mock inspection or visit a unit as a group.

landlords. For example, if a landlord feels frustrated due to a unit's failure in an inspection, providing a clear explanation of next steps and referring the landlord to resources such as a PHA video on common deficiencies may reduce frustration.



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

Inspectors are among the PHA staff with whom some landlords interact most frequently. This provides inspectors with a prime opportunity to improve the relationship between the PHA and the landlord. Inspectors who can provide landlords with information above the pass/fail status of their unit may find that a potentially contentious interaction turns out to be positive.

For example, at City of Mesa Housing Authority, the inspector was able to market other PHA programs and opportunities because he had such a friendly relationship with landlords. Inspectors are uniquely positioned to improve relationships with landlords and market other PHA programs. Because of this, it may be useful for inspectors to be familiar with other programs and opportunities that might help landlords.

Perform Quality Control

As a component of training, PHAs should ensure that inspectors are properly implementing what they have learned. This can be accomplished through periodic ride-along visits, where supervisors join inspectors on a number of inspections, as feasible. Quality control inspections are required under 24 CFR 982.405(b). PHAs may want to conduct additional quality control inspections beyond the regulatory minimum to ensure inspectors are consistently performing inspections if the PHA has noticed



inconsistencies between inspectors. Note that this can cause additional burden to the landlord or family who would need to be present. PHAs can also monitor and check in with landlords to see if there have been improvements in areas previously identified as problematic. Areas that continue to be issues can be re-addressed through subsequent training or individual supervision.

Simplify Inspections Across PHAs

Landlords may own properties in multiple PHA jurisdictions and, therefore, may need to work with multiple PHAs when participating in the HCV program. When PHAs require forms or procedures that differ from another PHA, landlords experience confusion and frustration that may lead to dissatisfaction with the HCV program. The flexibility discussed below can be used to enable PHAs to align certain policies or procedures, possibly resulting in less confusion for landlords working with multiple PHAs.

Inspections can be particularly complex for landlords that work with multiple PHAs. Differences in forms, processes, and requirements can add a layer of frustration and sense of unfairness when PHAs appear to have different “rules.” If PHAs determine that a group of their landlords often have property in other PHA jurisdictions, the PHAs might consider meeting to discuss ways to make inspections a seamless process for landlords, regardless of the responsible PHA. PHAs could:

- Utilize the same or similar inspections forms.
- Share updates about changes to policies or requirements.
- Make their inspections processes similar. For example, both PHAs could enable landlords to certify or otherwise document correction of the same types of deficiencies rather than having a re-inspection. The Administrative Inspections Flexibilities strategy offers additional information.
- Pool inspection resources.

These approaches vary in complexity, ranging from fairly simple to requiring changes to administrative policies and formal memoranda of understanding (MOUs). PHAs that are considering making substantial changes to their inspection process should be sure the changes are allowable and the administrative plans are updated accordingly.

Review Policies and Procedures

As noted in the strategy, Inspections Guidance for Landlords, PHAs should periodically review their inspection policies and procedures.

Policies and procedures should be reviewed for:

- **Accuracy:** Are the policies accurate and up to date? Have new policies or regulations been issued that would necessitate a change? PHAs should check the HUD website for new notices or guidance.
- **Clarity:** Confusing policies can lead to improper and inconsistent application. PHAs should ensure that their procedures are clear and easy to understand.
- **Consistency:** Is the material provided to landlords consistent with the PHA’s policies and procedures? Is the training provided to inspectors consistent with the PHA’s policies and procedures?



STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE EFFICIENCY IN THE SCHEDULING AND COMPLETION OF INSPECTIONS

A critical component of a successful inspection program is ensuring that inspections are scheduled and conducted in a timely manner. The speed in which inspections can be scheduled and conducted can have financial implications for landlords. Long wait times can cause units to remain vacant, causing landlords to lose income. Landlords also spend time and money waiting for inspectors to arrive at their units. These strategies address internal changes that PHAs can take to reduce the amount of time it takes to both schedule and conduct inspections.

There are two main strategies designed to address this issue:

- 1. Inspection Scheduling**
- 2. Administrative Inspection Flexibilities**

These strategies are designed to target different elements surrounding inspection scheduling, but both are rooted in internal change. One is targeted at streamlining the scheduling process, the other at simplifying the overall process. The strategies depend on PHAs reviewing their practices to see if they can be optimized and, if so, making changes. While landlords might not see the changes being made, if successfully implemented landlords will see a reduction in the time it takes to schedule and conduct inspections.

When approaching these changes, PHAs should gather information on the areas targeted for improvement and then compare them against current policies and procedures to identify areas for change. PHAs might consider focusing on one area at a time. For example, are landlords experiencing greater delays with initial or annual inspections? Are inspections being scheduled in a reasonable timeframe, but inspectors not arriving to the unit at the appointed time? While some activities will address multiple areas of concern, others might be targeted at a single issue.





STRATEGY: INSPECTION SCHEDULING

Analyzing how PHAs schedule and staff inspections for patterns or gaps and making administrative changes to improve efficiency.

Who: All PHAs; Some activities are targeted to PHAs that have inspectors on staff.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ○ MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Inspection Scheduling Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Inspection Scheduling
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	X
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHAs that have long delays between the time an inspection is requested and subsequently scheduled may find that a slight change in how inspections are scheduled can lead to significant improvements in efficiency. This strategy requires the PHA to gather and analyze internal data, which can be a time-intensive process. Once compiled, however, the data can provide insight into how PHAs can maximize the time spent scheduling and conducting inspections.

Related Strategies:

- Inspections Technology
- Alternative Inspections Policies

IMPLEMENTATION

If the PHA uses an inspection software module or a third-party inspection service, much of the data below may be available through a report and data can be queried to analyze a longer period of time, up to a year or more, to gain big picture trends. PHAs should begin by gathering the following information:

- How are inspections scheduled? Are initial or re-inspections scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis? Are landlords able to select dates and times that work best? Are inspectors assigned by area? By inspection type? How often are re-scheduled inspections requested?
- On average, how much time passes between when an inspection is requested and when it is conducted? Does this vary by the type of



inspection? Are these timeframes in line with the timeframes that the PHA has told landlords they can expect?

- How many inspections are conducted on a weekly basis and what is the breakdown by type? PHAs should review data going back a couple of months to get an accurate picture.
- Are inspectors having issues making it to the property on time? Why are there delays? How often do inspectors encounter no-shows?

Once this data has been gathered, PHAs may be able to see certain trends or issues.

The PHA may identify that inspectors are spending significant portions of their day commuting. This minimizes the number of inspections that can be completed daily and also increases the risk of delays and missed inspections windows due to unexpected traffic delays. The activities below offer ways that PHAs can minimize the amount of time spent commuting to maximize inspectors' and landlords' time.

Group Inspections: Grouping inspections by ZIP Code or by buildings can minimize travel time for inspections, reducing the potential for travel-related delays. This can help keep inspections on time as well as increasing overall efficiency. Account for whether the PHA will perform annual or biennial inspections early to accomplish grouping and, if so, communicate these impacts to landlords.

Use Software to Optimize Inspection Routes: PHAs can also invest in software that can create optimal routes for inspections. While software can pose a significant upfront cost, PHAs with large service areas and a large number of units, might find manual grouping by ZIP Code or building challenging. Software is available that can group inspections, optimize travel routes based on real-time traffic, and update landlords with arrival times.

Grouping Inspections by Type: Some PHAs may find that dedicating certain days or times for certain types of inspections may streamline the scheduling process. For example, if a PHA finds that their numbers of initial inspections are low and infrequent, they could dedicate a portion of the day for these, keeping the remainder of the day open for other types of inspections. It should be noted that this type of scheduling is based on current trends and should be adjusted as needed. In the example above, should the PHA see an increase in the number of initial inspections, an adjustment to the scheduling process might be needed. PHAs should also make sure to allow time for emergency inspections.

Inspector Assignments: Depending on the volume and frequency of different types of inspections, PHAs might consider assigning certain types of inspections for individual inspectors. Similar to the activity above, a PHA with a high volume of annual inspections could assign two of their inspectors to conduct annual inspections and leave their remaining inspector available to conduct initial and emergency inspections. Assignments should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they are in line with the current inspection trends.

Create some flexibility in inspectors' schedules with some extra open appointment slots. These would allow for emergency inspections or last-minute landlord appointment requests. They would also allow for people who forgot about an inspection but who may still be available. Make sure inspectors can easily contact the tenant and the landlord so an inspection does not need to be rescheduled if the inspector is still in the area.



STRATEGY: ADMINISTRATIVE INSPECTION FLEXIBILITIES

Reviewing the PHA's current inspection policy to identify where implementing existing administrative flexibilities can simplify the process.

Who: All PHAs; some activities are targeted to PHAs that have inspectors on staff.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ○ MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Administrative Inspection Flexibilities Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Administrative Inspection Flexibilities
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: There are several flexibilities that PHAs can implement to simplify and expedite the inspection process. PHAs should routinely review their policies to determine if a change might improve and simplify the process both for the PHA itself, landlords, tenants, and inspectors.

The following is a list of flexibilities that PHAs can implement. Incorporating any policy change to the inspection process will necessitate changes to written PHA policies and procedures. Additionally, the flexibilities listed below all have impacts for landlords, whether in the timing/frequency of inspections or the ways that they can conduct inspections and certify repairs. PHAs will need to consider how any change will be communicated to landlords and build adequate time for notification into their implementation timetable.

Related Strategies:

- Administrative Flexibilities to Increase Landlord Satisfaction

Alternative Inspections: [PIH Notice 2017-20](#) Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016 (HOTMA) – Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Implementation Guidance includes a provision allowing PHAs to approve an assisted tenancy of a unit prior to the inspection if the property has passed an alternative inspection within the past 24 months. The initial inspection must still take place and the landlord will not receive HAP until the unit is inspected and determined to pass. However, once it is determined that the unit



meets HUD-established physical inspection standards, the landlord will receive retroactive HAP for the period prior to the inspection determination. This can reduce the time that a landlord is not receiving HAP while awaiting an inspection. PHAs that implement this provision must take certain actions regarding their administrative plan and how they notify HUD and landlords. See [PIH Notice 2017-20](#) for additional information.

If an inspection has non-life threatening (NLT) deficiencies, the landlord has 30 days to correct the deficiencies. The PHA may adopt policies that allow for a certification of corrected deficiencies through an alternate means of certification rather than requiring a re-inspection. The alternate means may include submission of photographic evidence that deficiencies are corrected. Additionally, for initial inspections, the PHA may adopt policies that allow for the payment of HAP prior to the correction of NLT deficiencies only.

Biennial (and Triennial) Inspections: Per 24 CFR 982.405, HUD requires that PHAs inspect each unit at least biennially (or triennially for some small rural PHAs). While PHAs are still required to conduct an initial inspection before a landlord receives HAP, a change to biennial (or triennial) inspections can alleviate administrative burden on PHAs, and in turn, the administrative burden on landlords. Moving to biennial or triennial inspections also frees up PHA resources to conduct other inspections more quickly. For more information on adopting biennial inspections, see [PIH Notice 2016-05, Attachment K](#). For more information on triennial inspections, see [85 Fed. Reg. 11318 \(Feb. 27, 2020\)](#).

Remote, Video-Assisted, or Virtual Inspections: [PIH Notice 2020-31](#) describes flexibilities PHAs have for conducting inspections to meet HCV program requirements. With these flexibilities, a proxy, or person other than an HQS inspector or PHA staff member, utilizes video technology to show the HQS inspector around the unit, allowing the HQS inspector to complete the inspection

New Policy?

Implementing a new inspection policy is a great opportunity for PHAs to reach out to landlords. Whether instruction on the new policy is delivered via video clip, webinar, newsletter, or in-person training, PHAs use the opportunity to improve communication and demonstrate the PHA's commitment to landlord satisfaction.

PHAs can use this opportunity to let landlords know about other changes and also as an outreach opportunity to hear from and interact with landlords. Even if notification is delivered through a static delivery method such as a newsletter, PHAs should include ways that landlords can reach out with questions or concerns.

PHAs should notify landlords about upcoming changes with plenty of lead time to allow for questions.

See Education and Outreach for additional information on how PHAs can provide information on new policy to landlords.

remotely. While conducting inspections remotely would involve some upfront planning and training (for both inspectors and landlords), this would potentially allow PHAs to increase the number of inspections completed daily, as travel time would be eliminated. In turn, appointment times/windows could be predicted with greater accuracy minimizing the burden on landlords to set aside portions of their day.

Verifying Deficiencies are Remedied: HUD provided PHAs the flexibility to allow landlords of voucher families to self-certify or otherwise document corrected deficiencies for certain types of inspections. PHAs that have made use of this flexibility have been able to decrease the number of re-inspections. Although landlords are already responsible for making corrections, a policy that enables the PHA to use landlord-



provided information to verify that deficiencies have been corrected saves landlords time and money by eliminating the need to schedule and be present at a re-inspection.

PHAs are able to customize this flexibility to meet their needs. For example, PHAs can restrict self-certification to landlords who have a documented history of compliance with HUD-established physical inspections standards or to certain NLT deficiencies (or a maximum number of NLT deficiencies). A PHA may require landlords to submit work orders, bills, or photos as proof of repair. The decisions that the PHA makes must be incorporated into the Administrative Plan.

See [*PIH Notice 2011-29*](#) and [*PIH Notice 2013-17*](#) for additional information.







MATCHING LOCAL RENTAL MARKETS

STRATEGY: MATCHING LOCAL RENTAL MARKETS

Matching payment standards to align with various neighborhoods within a public housing agency’s (PHA’s) service area helps to make sure that the right number of units are affordable to voucher families throughout the service area. The goal of this strategy is to reduce landlord’s experiences with submitting a gross rent (utilities plus rent to owner) that is turned down because the amount exceeds the affordability limit.

Who: All PHAs, regardless of size or location, with a relatively high volume of families needing extended search times or failing to lease up with their voucher.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: LOW MEDIUM DIFFICULT

Matching Local Rental Markets PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Matching Local Rental Markets
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	X

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS:

Matching local rental markets using carefully tailored payment standards helps PHAs increase the availability of units affordable to voucher families in all of the neighborhoods within their jurisdiction. Landlords want to receive the same amount of rent through the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program as they would from a private market tenant. Ensuring that payment standards match the local market reduces the chances that PHAs will have to request the landlord to lower their rent for an HCV tenant. Matching local rents, as appropriate and feasible, increases the likelihood that the negotiated rent will more closely match the landlord’s requested



rent. This allows the landlord to experience more of the financial benefits of the voucher program.

However, in some cases, PHAs may consider reducing their payment standards in less expensive neighborhoods to better align with the local market.

HUD recognizes that there are many different rental markets across the country and offers a range of policy options to PHAs to set appropriate payment standards. These options enable local decision-makers to choose the payment standards that fit their service area's housing market.

BACK TO BASICS: WHY PAYMENT STANDARDS ARE IMPORTANT

Payment standards are the maximum subsidy that a PHA can contribute towards an HCV family's rent and utility costs. PHAs typically establish payment standards using the Fair Market Rents (FMRs) or Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs) that HUD calculates and publishes annually by metropolitan statistical area or by non-metropolitan county. Using the FRMs or SAFMRs as a foundation, PHAs have a variety of options to align their payment standards with the rental markets in their service area. See the regulations that outline these options, [24 CFR § 982.503](#), or the resources listed at the end of this chapter.

However, without close monitoring of a PHA's payment standards and the private rental market, payment standards can get out of alignment with the market. PHAs tend to hear landlord complaints when the payment standards are too low, but payment standards can be set too high for certain neighborhoods as well. There are consequences to payment standards that are both too high and too low, as detailed below.

Below Market Payment Standards

In some markets the published FMRs may lag behind the private rental market within a PHA's service area, which may result in lower negotiated rents proposed by the PHA than what the landlord could receive from a private-market tenant. Payment standards that lag behind the current private rental market create a range



DEFINITIONS:

Fair Market Rent (FMR): This is a calculation provided by HUD on an annual basis where HUD estimates monthly gross rent (rent and utility expenses) amounts across a metropolitan statistical area or by non-metropolitan county. FMRs, set by bedroom unit count, are calculated such that approximately 40 percent of all rental units in the FMR area have gross rents at or below the FMR value.

Small Area Fair Market Rent (SAFMR): SAFMRs are the same as FMRs except that the calculation is based on a smaller geographic area. Rather than calculating affordable rents based on data from the metropolitan area, the amounts are calculated by ZIP Code. SAFMR calculations are only available in metropolitan areas. Links to published FMRs and SAFMRs are available at the end of this chapter.

Payment Standard: This is the maximum subsidy amount a PHA can contribute monthly towards gross rent for a voucher family. PHAs establish their payment standards based on the FMR or SAFMR for their jurisdiction except in special circumstances with approval from HUD.

Payment Standard Schedule: The payment standard dollar amounts by bedroom size along with an effective date, published by the PHA. Procedures for establishing and revising payment standards schedules are published in PHAs' Administrative Plans.

Basic Range: PHAs typically set their payment standards within 90 to 110 percent of the FMR or SAFMR, known as the "basic range."



of issues for landlords, voucher families, and PHAs. These issues can cause frustration for landlords, hardship for voucher families, and administrative inefficiencies for PHAs.

If a PHA has set the payment standard for an area below the rental market, clients may select properties assuming that the rent is affordable. If this happens and the rent is actually higher than the combined payment standard and the family's portion, the PHA may ask the landlord to lower the contract rent. If the negotiation is not successful, the PHA will inform the voucher family that they must restart their search and find a unit where the rent is within the payment standard. This results in frustration for the landlord, family, and the PHA.

Indeed, when PHAs set the payment standard below the actual rental market, many landlords may not participate in the HCV program because they can receive higher rent through the private rental market.



Below Market Payment Standards: Anytown PHA

Based on the FMR, the Anytown PHA set the payment standard for Anytown, USA 1-bedrooms at \$800/month. Anytown is becoming a popular place to live and landlords are successfully renting average 1-bedrooms at \$875/month.

In this example, landlords are setting rents that reflect the market, but the payment standards for Anytown, USA do not align with the current rental market. Anytown PHA might benefit from examining whether a change in payment standards would benefit the program.

In addition to individual frustrations for landlords and families, having below market payment standards can limit the availability of affordable rental units in opportunity areas, which tend to have higher rents. These neighborhoods, with more resources and amenities, are shown to have a lasting, long-term, positive impact on the economic mobility

of children. Families may not search in high-opportunity areas because they may believe that rents in those locations are unaffordable with their voucher. Similarly, landlords may refuse to rent to voucher families in these high-opportunity neighborhoods because they know they can charge private market tenants higher rent.

Above Market Payment Standards

Payment standards that are higher than the private rental market rate mean that PHAs may pay more for some rental units, especially those in high-poverty neighborhoods, than the landlord could reasonably obtain on the private rental market. While the FMR is established such that 40 percent of all rental units have gross rents less than or equal to the FMR in the area, in less expensive neighborhoods the FMR and associated payment standard could make much more than 40 percent of the units affordable to voucher families.

PHAs must adhere to regulatory requirements surrounding rent reasonableness to ensure that the landlord is charging an appropriate rent for the unit given its location, number of bedrooms, age of the structure, unit and property amenities, and other factors. In some cases, rigorous rent reasonableness may serve the PHA's voucher families better than lowering payment standards, especially in complex urban markets, by maintaining broader rental neighborhood choice.

Alternatively, PHAs with mixed rental markets may want to consider adjusting their payment standards to a multi-tiered payment standard schedule to prevent over-subsidization of units in lower cost neighborhoods. See the [Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook](#), Rent Reasonableness chapter for additional information.



Tip: Research studies such as [this HUD-funded report](#) find that landlords in some markets perceive voucher rents as higher than what they would get on the private rental market, described as a “voucher premium.”



IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter discusses two options available to PHAs to set payment standards that fit their service area's housing market:

- Single-Tiered Payment Standards
- Multi-Tiered Payment Standards

The discussion below offers a summary of each option, with advantages and disadvantages, and steps to take when considering adjusting payment standards.

Single-Tiered Payment Standards

Traditionally, and without HUD notification or approval, PHAs may set their payment standards between 90 percent and 110 percent of the FMR, also known as the “basic range.”



TIP: PHAs may vary the payment standard basic range based on bedroom size. Thus, a 1-bedroom unit may be set at 105 percent while a 2-bedroom unit may be set at 100 percent.

For PHAs operating in a jurisdiction that does not have a diverse housing market, a single-tiered payment standard schedule is likely appropriate. A single-tiered payment standard schedule sets a single payment standard across the jurisdiction for unit bedroom size. PHAs exclusively operating in a less expensive area may choose to set the payment standards closer to 90 percent of the FMR whereas PHAs operating in an expensive area may choose to set their payment standards closer to 110 percent.

Additional circumstances exist in which a PHA may increase or decrease their payment standards outside of the basic range of the FMR under certain parameters. Some PHAs also have the opportunity to provide HUD with their own market analysis to set their payment standards above the basic range pending HUD approval. This option

may be particularly attractive to PHAs in rental markets experiencing dramatic changes. A comprehensive description of these options is detailed in the [Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook](#), Payment Standards chapter.



Tip: HUD publishes the new fiscal year FMRs and SAFMRs no later than September 1 of each year.

PHAs have 3 months after the new calculations go into effect on October 1st to make sure their payment standards are within the basic range of the FMRs (or SAFMRs where PHAs have fully implemented SAFMRs). Many PHAs use this opportunity to both update their payment standards and to consider if they need to raise their percentages up or down to keep up with the market. The Payment Standards Tools linked at the end of this chapter can help PHAs forecast increases or decreases in housing assistance payments (HAP) costs when changing payment standards.



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

Sonoma County Housing Authority, in partnership with a neighboring PHA, chose to conduct their own rental market survey, sharing the cost. They felt that the FMR was too low to make their voucher families competitive in their market. The rental market had become much more competitive due to the recent forest fires in the area (increasing the demand for housing and decreasing the supply of housing) and the increase in rent prices were not reflected in HUD's FMR calculation. Their survey led to a 9-percentage point increase in the FMRs and helped voucher families better compete in the tight housing market.

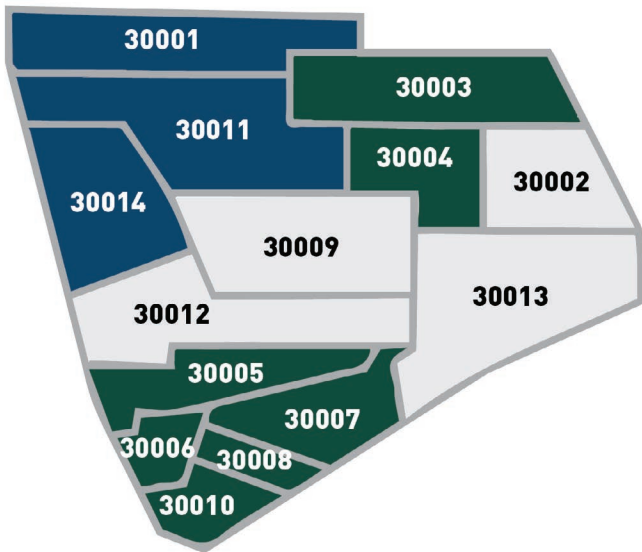
For more information on conducting a market survey, see the most recently available Federal Register notice of Fair Market Rents. The FY 2021 notice is linked [here](#).

Multi-Tiered Payment Standards

PHAs may also develop multi-tiered payment standards where the payment standard varies depending on where the unit is within their jurisdiction. A multi-tiered strategy enables the PHA to better match their payment standards to the various private sub-markets within their service area. This option may be especially useful for PHAs with both high- and low-income neighborhoods within their jurisdiction. There are multiple regulatory options available to PHAs to develop multi-tiered payment standard systems.

First, PHAs located in metro areas may choose to implement SAFMRs, where the payment standard is based on a rental market analysis at the ZIP Code level rather than by the metropolitan statistical area (MSA). This allows the payment standards to be more closely aligned with the local rental market within a ZIP Code. PHAs may adopt SAFMRs within the basic range, 90 percent to 110 percent, of the published SAFMR. There are currently 24 metropolitan areas where SAFMRs are required by HUD, but other metropolitan PHAs can choose to opt in to using SAFMRs. Fully adopting SAFMRs requires HUD approval prior to implementation. In the example below, Anytown Housing Authority grouped their SAFMR payment standards into three tiers using the basic ranges within each SAFMR ZIP Code.

Anytown, USA Payment Standard Map



**Anytown Payment Standard Schedule
1/1/2020-12/31/2020**

ZIP CODES	Voucher Bedroom Size				
	1	2	3	4	5
30001, 30011, 30014	\$738	\$804	\$1,031	\$1,346	\$1,584
30003; 30004, 30005, 30006, 30007, 30008, 30010	\$805	\$877	\$1,125	\$1,468	\$1,728
30002, 30009, 30012, 30013	\$891	\$968	\$1,243	\$1,617	\$1,903

PHAs may also choose to use SAFMRs as the basis for exception payment standards in their higher-priced ZIP Codes. Using SAFMRs for exception payment standards is a good option for PHAs who want to increase the affordability of units in low-poverty, high opportunity areas. Exception payment standards based on SAFMRs may be set within the basic range, 90 to 110 percent. The partial adoption method of using SAFMRs for exception payment standards only requires HUD notification. A PHA may lower their payment standards using SAFMR calculations without full SAFMR implementation as well, but if the payment standards fall below 90 percent of the metropolitan area based FMR, they have to meet certain conditions and receive HUD approval prior to implementation. For more information on SAFMR adoption see the [Implementing Small Area Fair Market Rents \(SAFMRs\) Implementation Guidebook](#).



Tip: Making payment standards easily accessible online and in informational materials will help HCV families choose units where the rent will be affordable for the area.



A third option for a multi-tiered approach to payment standards is to group payment standards within the basic range of the FMRs. For example, a PHA may service low-income, middle-income, and high-income neighborhoods within their service area and adopt payment standards at 90 percent, 100 percent, and 110 percent of the FMR, respectively, for each area. This method does not require HUD approval or notification. This third option may be useful for PHAs where the boundary lines between higher-priced and lower-priced neighborhoods do not fall along ZIP Code boundaries.

Lastly, a PHA may request exception payment standards to increase their payment standards above 110 percent of the FMR in areas where the rental market proves to require a payment standard above 110 percent of the FMR. This method requires approval from HUD and may be justified in several ways. For specific instructions on developing exception rents under this framework, see [24 CFR § 982.503\(c\)](#) or the [Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook](#), Payment Standards chapter.

Reviewing Payment Standards

There are several steps a PHA can take to see if adjusting their payment standards or moving to a single-tiered or multi-tiered approach might be a good option:

1. Review voucher lease-up times and lease-up success rates. If it does not take long for voucher families to find housing, and most voucher families successfully lease up, the PHA might be able to lower their payment standards and still maintain their good lease-up outcomes. On the other hand, if voucher families need extensions to search for housing or do not successfully lease up, the PHA may need to consider raising their payment standards.
2. Review affordability of incoming units. When considering raising payment standards, the PHA may also want to review the number of request for tenancy approval packets that are turned in where the unit is unaffordable and subsequently the rent has to be negotiated down or the voucher family has to find another unit.
3. See where voucher families currently live. If they are fairly evenly dispersed throughout the service area, the community probably does not have a diverse or mixed market, which indicates that using a singular payment standard system may be a good option. If voucher families are clustered only in high-poverty communities, the PHA may want to consider a multi-tiered payment standard system.
4. Review rent burdens for families currently under lease. If the PHA is considering lowering the payment standard, the PHA should examine how many families in that area would take on an additional rent burden. On the other hand, if the PHA raises the payment standards in all areas or certain neighborhoods, how many families will no longer be rent burdened, or pay less in rent? A PHA may use HUD's [Payment Standard Tool](#) to accomplish this analysis. The full website address to the tool is available at the end of this chapter.
5. Estimate the costs over the potential benefits. Raising payment standards will cost the PHA more money per family over time; however, it could also improve voucher families' lease-up success rates and reduce families' rent burdens. Lowering the payment standard may enable the PHA to save money and serve more families without having a huge impact on families' lease-up rates or rent portions. HUD's Payment Standard Tool, linked at the end of this chapter, can be used to forecast the costs of changes to payment standards.



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

PHAs should review their payment standards and payment standard policies on a regular basis to ensure that they continue to match rental market conditions within their service area. PHAs are required to review their payment standards at least annually when new FMRs and SAFMRs are published by HUD; however, some PHAs choose to review their payment standards with more frequency, especially those PHAs in markets with rapidly changing rents.

Moving to a multi-tiered payment standard system from a single-tiered system requires time and resources and should only be implemented after careful planning and review of available rental market data, trends in the geography of movers to and from low- and high-rent communities, and in concert with the PHA's strategic goals. There are significant start-up costs to developing such a system, including updating the case management

systems, training staff, and notifying voucher families and landlords of the changes. Further, depending on if the PHA chooses to increase or decrease their payment standards, HAP costs may go up or down – impacting the PHA's bottom line. A thorough discussion of the key items for consideration in moving to a multi-tiered payment standard system can be found in the [Implementing Small Area Fair Market Rents \(SAFMRs\) Implementation Guidebook](#), chapter 2.3, full website address available at the end of this chapter.

Despite the costs of implementing and utilizing a multi-tiered payment standard system, significant benefits may be realized by the PHA, by landlords, and by families. The most obvious benefit is that the rents offered by the HCV Program will more closely align with rents in the private rental market.

When payment standards are carefully aligned to a PHA's rental market, everyone benefits.

Not a Good Fit?

For PHAs that are not yet ready to take on the work of developing a multi-tiered payment standard system, there are still steps the PHA can take to educate audiences, namely landlords and families, about their payment standards and how they work.

- PHAs can make their payment standards easily accessible to landlords and voucher families online. Making the payment standards readily available to these stakeholders can help reduce sunken costs caused by overpriced units and help families understand what they can afford. Published payment standards should be provided along with information on contract rent versus gross rent, and rent reasonableness. Some PHAs take this information sharing a step further and offer voucher families and landlords an online affordability calculator tool. The tool allows voucher families to enter in unit information and find out if a unit is affordable for them based on their income and the payment standard of the area and voucher size. There are several PHAs with affordability calculators on their websites that serve as examples.
- PHAs can designate staff to answer questions and provide resources to landlords and families inquiring about payment standards, affordability, and rent reasonableness.





SMALL AREA FMRS: A TALE OF TWO PHAS

Two PHAs are considering implementing SAFMRs for their voucher programs. Both housing authorities have higher-rent and lower-rent neighborhoods within their service areas. They use the following processes to decide if implementing SAFMRs is right for them.

The Housing Authority of Tinley Town

The Housing Authority of Tinley Town is in a metropolitan area and oversees about 5,000 vouchers in an economically mixed housing market. One of the strategic goals of the Housing Authority of Tinley Town is to create more options for their voucher families, measured by a 5 percent increase in the number of voucher families moving to low-poverty neighborhoods. Only a small percentage of current voucher families in their program currently live in low-poverty neighborhoods, despite the program having long voucher expiration terms and a high lease-up rate. From engagement with frontline staff, the administration learns that voucher families are not able to find affordable units in the low-poverty neighborhoods. The housing authority works with their housing market analyst to review the availability of rental units in their target low-poverty neighborhoods. The analyst finds an adequate number of rental units in two target ZIP Codes that are right next to each other.

The PHA leadership reviews the SAFMRs for the two ZIP Codes. They are significantly higher, at about 125 percent and 132 percent of the metropolitan FMR. If the housing authority sets the payment standards for the two ZIP Codes at 110 percent and the other at 105 percent of the SAFMR, they can use the same payment standard amounts for both ZIP Codes. Only a very small number of voucher families, less than 10, already live in the two ZIP Codes. Tinley Town does a simulation of voucher families moving into the two ZIP Codes at the higher payment standards using HUD's estimation tool and their own analytic tools and estimates that the additional HAP cost of increasing the payment standard will be between \$20,000 and \$48,000 per year. The PHA leadership considers this cost, along with the administrative costs of implementing a two-tiered payment standard system, and decides that the benefits of implementing the two-tiered system outweigh these costs. They begin making plans for implementation.

The Scenic City Housing Authority

The Scenic City Housing Authority has a similarly sized voucher population in a slightly larger jurisdiction than Tinley Town. The Housing Authority enthusiastically began looking into the option of full implementation of SAFMRs. The PHA wanted to offer their voucher families more geographic options and to better align their payment standards with their rental market. Scenic City also wanted the change to be cost neutral, where communities with lower payment standards would create new savings to pay for increases in higher payment standard areas.

Scenic City leadership began their analysis by reviewing the SAFMR payment standards in their service area. The city includes 52 ZIP Codes in their service area, which would be a challenging number of tiers to administer. However, setting the payment standards within the basic range, Scenic City could reduce the number of tiers to just 8. From there, the PHA began looking at



where voucher families currently lived by tier using the HUD Payment Standard Tool to forecast changes over time.

The Scenic City Housing Authority was disappointed by the results. Eighty percent of current voucher families lived in ZIP Codes that would become the first tier or, to put it another way, the areas with the lowest payment standard. The SAFMR for those communities would have to be set at only 82 percent of the current FMR, making the rent burden higher for 55 percent of the voucher families living in those communities. PHAs can only reduce payment standards up to 10 percent per year, so the process would take several years to adjust the payment standard in those ZIP Codes. The regulations also require the PHA to maintain the higher payment standard amount for the first year (at the second annual re-examination) following a decrease in the payment standard and also allow PHAs, if they choose, to keep families at the same payment standard until they move out of their current unit or gradually decrease the payment standard. However, if Scenic City did not fully reduce the payment standards after the first year, their shift to SAFMRs might not become cost neutral. Scenic City was concerned about this potential big shift in rent burden for voucher families and their ability to adequately communicate such a change to voucher families and landlords.

Rather than doing a full adoption of SAFMRs, Scenic City briefly considered only changing the payment standards for a few of their most high-cost and low-cost ZIP Codes; however, they ultimately decided against the idea. Scenic City came back to the same concern for voucher families in the low income neighborhoods, where some of their most vulnerable voucher clients tend to reside. While a subset of voucher families in those areas were very transient and moved every 1 to 2 years, there was also a large population of elderly and disabled voucher families in those communities who would have difficulty with taking on an additional rent burden or moving into a new unit if they lowered the payment standards. Note: lowering payment standards outside of the basic FMR range also requires HUD approval and can only be done if certain conditions are met. Ultimately the Scenic City Housing Authority chose not to implement SAFMRs and to instead focus on landlord outreach in some of their middle-income neighborhoods and to review the rent reasonableness policies to ensure that they were not driving the market in their low-income neighborhoods. Scenic City will review the option again in several years.

RESOURCES

Fair Market Rents:

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>

Fair Market Rents for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Moderate Rehabilitation Single Room Occupancy Program, and Other Programs Fiscal Year 2021:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-08-14/pdf/2020-17717.pdf>

Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook, Rent Reasonableness Chapter:

https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/HCV_Guidebook_Rent_Reasonableness.pdf

Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook, Payment Standards Chapter:

https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/HCV_Guidebook_Payment_Standards.pdf

Implementing Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs) Implementation Guidebook:

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/SAFMRs-Implementing-Small-Area-Fair-Market-Rents-Implementation-Guidebook.pdf>

Payment Standard Forecasting Tools:

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/Tools

PIH Notice 2018-01

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/PIH-2018-01.pdf>

SAFMR Final Rule:

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmr2016f/SAFMR-Final-Rule.pdf>

Small Area Fair Market Rent Case Studies:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5680/small-area-fair-market-rent-case-studies/>

Small Area Fair Market Rents:

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/smallarea/index.html>







PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

Through partnerships, public housing agencies (PHAs) and other organizations collaborate for the betterment of their own organizations, their constituents and partners, and their communities. These partners may share or augment services, bring attention to mutual goals or underserved populations, access funding, and coordinate to create policy change. Partnerships between PHAs can additionally support administrative and policy efficiencies that improve services and landlord satisfaction. Keys to any partnership are shared values or mission and a commitment to making the partnership productive for all parties.

The following strategies are included in this section:

- Relationships and Resources
- PHA Collaboration

Related strategies:

- Monetary Incentives and Reimbursement Funds

The strategies in this partnerships chapter address the following areas:

Partnerships Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Relationships and Resources	PHA Collaboration
Increase Recruitment	X	X
Increase Retention	X	X
Improve Responsiveness		
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X	X
Improve Inspections Process		
Minimize Bureaucracy	X	X



PHAs may already be familiar with partnerships where social service organizations or departments refer clients into PHA programs like the Family Unification Program (FUP), but referrals and access to services can link PHAs and outside organizations in other ways. While many PHAs already offer supportive services and resources for landlords and voucher families that can be a draw to increase landlord participation in the HCV program, gaps may still exist. While there may be advantages to offering services in-house, PHAs may not always have resources or flexibility to expand their service offerings. Partnerships with outside organizations may be used to expand offerings, resulting in benefits for landlords and voucher families, the PHA, and, ideally, the partner.

As noted in the adjacent graphic, partnerships can range from formal partnerships to informal referrals for services. Additionally, the types of partner organizations can also vary. Private and nonprofit organizations may offer resources to the community that PHAs are not able to provide due to restrictions on the use or availability of funds.

This chapter will examine different types of partnerships. The Introduction will offer suggestions on how PHAs can identify the types of partnerships that would be most beneficial in addition to ways PHAs can identify and reach out to organizations that might be good candidates for partnership.



NOTICE: PARTNERSHIPS

For the purposes of this Guidebook, the term **PARTNERSHIP** refers to a relationship with another organization, regardless of the level of formality and whether services or funds are or are not exchanged.

Partnerships can vary and can be:

FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS: Established by a signed agreement by both parties. These can also range from a legally binding agreement such as a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to non-binding documents such as a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

INFORMAL PARTNERSHIPS: Although not established by an agreement, informal partnerships can include relationships and a shared understanding between the PHA and other organization(s). Referrals to another organization may be included in this category.



TIP: Some grant opportunities may give preference to PHAs and outside organizations if they have partnerships in place. This can be a great starting place when talking to other organizations.

EXAMPLES OF PARTNERS

- Other PHAs
- Continuum of Care (CoC)
- Local governments (state, city, or county)
- Local nonprofit organizations
- Community-based organizations
- For-profit developers
- Apartment associations
- Community Development Corporations
- Federally qualified health center

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS

- Work toward common goals
- Share and maximize resources of partnering organizations
- Gain access to outside expertise
- Minimize discrepancies between operations of neighboring PHAs
- Raise awareness of PHA and partner organizations

PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

- **CoC:** Partner to fund a landlord liaison position with a common goal of prioritizing the homeless and most vulnerable populations
- **City government:** Provide security deposits or a damage fund for HCV families, reducing the financial risk for landlords
- **Health and Human Services:** Provide referrals of foster youth for FUP/Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers
- **Nonprofit:** Coordinate a marketing campaign to encourage landlord participation or offer services such as housing counseling to voucher families
- **Local officials:** Raise awareness of a specific issue, such as a Veterans Day campaign to promote the HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program
- **Local board:** Join a board to increase interaction with other organizations with a similar mission and learn about opportunities and resources

GETTING STARTED

One of the first questions a PHA might ask is whether the PHA could benefit from establishing a relationship with another organization. Most likely, the answer is yes! Partnering with other organizations provides opportunities for PHAs to offer additional services to landlords and tenants, expand upon existing services, and increase awareness of the PHA and its programs, as well as share resources and save money. Even if a PHA does not have a need to offer additional services, there are many other useful ways that partnering can be beneficial. It's important for PHAs to remember that all partners should experience benefits in order for the partnership to be sustainable. In addition to thinking about how a specific partnership will enhance its own services, PHAs should consider reasons why the other organization may be interested in a partnership.



But how can a PHA decide what types of partnerships or organizations might be most beneficial? When looking to forge partnerships and identify new resources to support the HCV program, PHAs should:

- Identify gaps within the PHA's own landlord program
- Get to know the agencies serving the PHA's service area



- Be alert to opportunities to raise the visibility of the PHA's mission and the HCV program within the community or region
- Coordinate efforts with other organizations that share the PHA's mission and values



TIP: Being familiar with the HCV program and the needs and wants of landlords can help during the process of identifying partner

organizations. While an organization might not be focused on the PHA's number one area of concern, a partnership might address an additional or tangential concern.

PHAs should keep a list of potential partners since the needs and wants of landlords and PHAs change over time. An organization that might not be a good fit today could be a great fit down the road. A list can do double duty: staff can use it to refer tenants to needed services or to publicize PHA news to interested organizations.

Identify Areas for Improvement and Expansion

First, PHAs should identify areas where they need or would like to add or supplement service areas. Identifying these areas up front will help the PHA be more effective at recognizing partnership opportunities when they arise or can inform a strategy to seek out new relationships. Possible service areas could include underserved geographies in the jurisdiction, populations such as homeless veterans, or non-elderly persons with disabilities eligible for special purpose vouchers. Conducting a periodic examination is also good standard practice and can help PHAs improve efficiency and effectiveness as a whole. In addition to reviewing operations from a service focus, PHAs should consider the goals of this Guidebook: increase recruitment, increase retention, improve responsiveness, improve tenant-landlord relationships, improve the inspections process, and minimize bureaucracy. Where is the PHA seeing challenges? Could partnering with another

PHA introduce efficiencies that help improve the inspections process, for example, or reduce bureaucracy?

To begin identifying areas in which a PHA can improve landlord satisfaction, the PHA can talk with landlords and PHA staff through informal discussion, open discussion at a PHA or partner event, or even conduct an online poll to identify top concerns or issues. The Education and Outreach chapter offers several different options for landlord-PHA interaction. PHAs might also ask landlords if they are aware of services provided to market-rate tenants that would improve both the landlord and voucher family experience with the HCV program. PHAs should also ask staff who are involved with the HCV program to identify areas for improvement. This information should be compiled and reviewed on a periodic basis. While it may not be possible to improve all areas of concern through a strategic partnership, there may be ways the PHA can partner to reduce that concern, even if they cannot remove it completely.

For example, if landlords list damage to units as a primary concern, PHAs may be able to address this issue multiple ways. A PHA might:

- Consider starting a tenant education class. See the [Education and Outreach](#) chapter for the tenant education strategy.
- Partner with a local organization that is already providing a form of tenant education. PHAs could partner with or refer voucher families to this organization, saving time and money.
- Partner with an organization that assists with security deposits.



TIP: Some areas of concerns will be most effectively addressed by the PHA instead of through a partnership. For example, a PHA that has identified delays in inspections as an area of concern for landlords may find that implementing an element of flexibility – such as allowing landlords to self-certify for certain inspections repairs by providing documentation of the repair – may be beneficial.

Get to Know Agencies Serving the Area

Once a PHA has identified an area of concern that cannot be addressed by the PHA or is better suited to another entity, PHAs should begin to examine if there are partnerships or existing outside resources that could meet the need.

There are multiple ways to identify potential partner organizations:

- Ask PHA staff: PHA staff, not limited to HCV staff, may know of resources that, while not specifically targeted to HCV landlords, could be beneficial.
- Ask partner organizations: If the PHA has current partners, they might also be aware of additional organizations that could be potential partners or resources.
- Ask other PHAs, or city or county departments: Local PHAs, municipal or county housing or human services departments might share the names of their partnering organizations.
- Join the mailing list of community and partner organizations to hear about community needs or new initiatives and potential partners.
- Get involved in the community: Join a board or a committee of an interest group that includes some organizations the PHA would like to know better or that focuses on a topic close to your mission.
- Increase civic participation: Attend a meeting hosted by the city, county, or school district on a topic that would be of interest to landlords and make a point of introducing the PHA to other participants or speakers.
- Hold an informal meeting of organizations: Current partners or well-known resources, such as social service organizations, that share similar goals should meet to discuss how resources might be shared or to share information about existing resources. Ask these organizations to invite others that might be useful.
- Search the internet or dial 211 for untapped resources or potential partners.

The Inventory of Local Organizations

The network of public, private, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations in each jurisdiction varies. PHAs will need to familiarize themselves with organizations that operate in their service area. The first organizations to consider may include nonprofit service providers and governmental entities, academic institutions, financial institutions, philanthropies, healthcare systems, and other employers that have a stake in improving the quality of their neighborhoods. Many of these organizations have social responsibility requirements or missions that may overlap with the PHA's mission.

Reminder - this list is not exhaustive!

For example, if a PHA has landlords who would benefit from more detail on the inspections process, perhaps a local college has film students who would be willing to create an inspections video!



Get plugged in!

PHAs should make sure they are connected to their local community and local government. Attending local meetings is a simple, low-cost way of connecting with other groups and organizations that may have similar goals and be interested in sharing resources. It also allows the PHA to stay up to date with community needs and target services and resources accordingly.

Join Forces with Other Organizations

Establishing and Maintaining a Relationship

Creating partnerships is rarely a quick-fix strategy because it involves forming and building relationships. For the initial discussion, consider meeting in person or using an online meeting platform with video to be able to see each other. If the PHA is requesting the meeting, and it is in person, the PHA may want to offer to travel to the other organization's office space. This minimizes time and resource burden for the other organization.

Partnerships that benefit both the partner organization as well as the PHA may be easier to establish and maintain. Be prepared to discuss ways that partnering with the PHA can benefit the partner and further their mission. For example, an organization that provides emergency funds to help tenants avoid evictions might not consider helping landlords to be part of their mission to avoid homelessness; however, providing



Join a Board!

Serving as part of a board or committee is a good way to build name recognition, make connections with organizations of mutual interest, learn about funding opportunities, and develop relationships that can support PHA and HCV goals over time. Yes, it is a big commitment. The good news is that the PHA itself may already have staff members who are part of a board or a committee within a city or county department such as an affordable housing, public safety, or job creation board or committee. See if such a board or committee includes organizations and objectives that are relevant to HCV and its landlords.

landlords with funds to make unit repairs might help keep voucher families housed if those funds help keep landlords satisfied with the HCV program and renting to voucher families.

Build PHA and HCV Program Name Recognition

In order to establish partnerships, it is important for the PHA to have a good reputation and a strong presence in the community. Other organizations are more likely to be interested in partnering with a PHA when they know about the PHA, what it does, and the dedication exhibited by staff members. Like most activities in this chapter, making a name for the PHA is an ongoing process. The PHA is probably already carrying out some of the activities that will help it make connections in the community such as hosting promotional events for landlords or voucher families, networking, serving on committees and boards, attending meetings, promoting HCV programming through radio or television PSAs or advertisements, and scheduling meetings with organizations where there may be a common connection.

Once a potential partner has been identified, PHAs may reach out and request a meeting. PHAs should come to the meeting:

- Prepared to provide general information about the PHA and HCV program
- With a basic understanding of the potential partner's organization
- With specific topics or ideas for collaboration and thoughts on how the partnership could benefit all organizations involved

If this particular partnership does not meet the PHA's needs or vice versa, ask the organization if they are aware of any other organizations that might be able to assist. Additionally, whether a partnership is established or not, PHAs should ask whether the organization could promote PHA programs in instances where the target audience overlaps. Should a partnership be formed, PHAs can request that their programs be highlighted on the organization's website and return the favor.



Formalizing Relationships

The level of relationship building and subsequent interaction may also depend on the type of relationship the PHA has, or will have, with the organization. For example, identifying and setting up a few introductory meetings might be all that is necessary. Referrals to programs and services provide one example of how relationships can be more or less formal. PHAs may be familiar with relationships where the PHA receives referrals themselves into the FUP or other PHA programs from outside organizations. When the referral is from the PHA to the outside organization, the process might be similar: the PHA develops a relationship with the contact person at the service organization. The PHA and the contact may have periodic meetings or speak directly about referral applications. The process requires a hands-on level of interaction, but may not require any formal agreement. In other cases, the PHA has talked directly with the organization about services and how these might benefit PHA voucher families or landlords. The PHA might list the organization on its website or in written materials, but the PHA does not work regularly with the referral

contact. The organizations may prefer that the interested landlord or voucher family self-refer to indicate a level of interest. The relationship is indirect and less formal for the PHA, but the PHA should still continue to reach out to the organization periodically to check:

- Whether the services in question are still available to ensure the PHA is informing its tenants and clients correctly.
- If there are new ways the two partners can benefit from each other.

Some partnerships include financial responsibilities for both parties; sometimes partners are expected to meet specific responsibilities or deadlines. When the work of one partner depends in some way on another partner, the relationship might be strengthened through a MOU, MOA, or an intergovernmental agreement, in the case of governmental entities, to formalize responsibilities. Additionally, the involved partners might need to develop policies to regulate how services are provided. A PHA's legal team may want to review any agreements requiring signature.





STRATEGY: RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES

Identifying resources outside the PHA and building relationships that create avenues for connecting landlords to opportunities the PHA does not offer.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal to moderate.

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Relationships and Resources PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Relationships and Resources
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



specific neighborhoods or landlords meeting certain income or asset restrictions.

This strategy provides ways that PHAs can create informal relationships with organizations that provide services that might benefit HCV landlords or voucher families, resulting in a list of available resources. It also discusses how to best present and utilize these resources to improve landlord satisfaction.

This strategy outlines:

- Ways in which PHAs can identify landlord or voucher family-related resources provided by outside organizations
- Examples of different types of resources that address areas of concern commonly identified by landlords
- Suggestions for ways PHAs can identify and promote mutually beneficial outcomes

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHAs operate under limited budgets and may not have the resources or capacity to provide some of the services or programs that would promote improved landlord recruitment and retention. The Relationships and Resources strategy focuses on identifying organizations outside the PHA that currently provide services relevant to voucher landlords. Such services, programs, or incentives could include education on anti-discrimination efforts including Source of Income (SOI) laws, legal advice, tax advice, security deposit resources, damage mitigation funds, and repair or rehabilitation services. See the [Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements](#) chapter for additional information. Some services may be limited to landlords within



IMPLEMENTATION

As discussed in the chapter introduction, the first step is to identify needs or desires of landlords that the PHA is not currently able to address as well as it would like. Outside organizations, particularly local and nonprofit organizations, may have flexibility that allows them to offer services the PHA might not be able to provide due to a lack of funding or regulatory restrictions. So, when thinking about useful and helpful services, PHAs should think creatively about ways to improve the landlord experience and not limit their search to services they could provide, should they have additional funding. For example, organizations may offer tenant-landlord remediation services, something that many PHAs are not able to provide, which is a service that might help resolve conflicts and avoid a breach of the client's family obligations and a landlord that chooses to no longer work with HCV voucher families. Once an issue has been identified as one that other organizations may be able to address through existing services, PHAs should begin to research organizations in their area that might provide these services. Whenever there is a possibility for the PHA to link its landlords or residents to useful services that are already offered by government agencies and nonprofit organizations, the PHA should explore the possibility. Suggestions on how to identify potential resources are noted in the Getting Started section in the Introduction to this chapter.

Once identified, the PHA should initiate contact to ensure the organization offers the services the PHA is seeking and will provide the services to the audience the PHA would refer. The PHA should also determine the cost of services and confirm that the organization has the willingness and capacity to accept referrals. PHAs should establish a relationship to ensure that referrals from the PHA are welcome and the organization has the resources to handle a potential increase in requests for services. While this type of relationship might not necessitate a formal partnership, PHAs may want to explore the possibility of entering into a formal relationship to establish priority for the voucher families or



NOTICE: REFERRALS

For the purposes of this chapter, the term **REFERRALS** is primarily used to reference PHAs sending landlords or clients to outside organizations who provide additional services.

PHAs may traditionally think of referrals as client or landlord referrals *from* outside organizations to the PHA. These are critical partnerships and should continue to be fostered and strengthened. PHAs may want to promote their relationships with other agencies as some landlords have a particular interest in assisting individuals in a certain demographic. For example, PHAs that receive client referrals from their local Veteran's Affairs office may have landlords that are especially interested in and motivated to rent to veterans.

There is additional benefit for landlords who rent to tenants who receive case management support from other agencies. Case managers can help address issues that directly or indirectly help participants to be better tenants. Examples include HUD-VASH voucher holders and foster youth voucher holders with connections to child welfare services.

landlords that the PHA refers. This may benefit both the organization and the PHA, should the organization have a need for a limited preference for vouchers for families it serves. See [PIH Notice 2013-15](#) for additional information related to partnerships and agreements related to serving persons experiencing homelessness. If, through this outreach or relationship, the PHA can offer potential participants the name of a



TIP: Prior to reaching out to an organization, consider doing a quick search on the internet to see if the organization is well regarded in the community. Other organizations may also be able to provide feedback and serve as an informal reference.

point of contact at the organization or has the ability to explain any part of the referral process to potential participants, the referral is more likely to succeed. The PHA should also confirm the preferred method for making referrals. This interaction may also serve as the foundation for additional partnership opportunities in the future.

PHAs will also need to determine a method for maintaining a list of resources and how often they will update the list. Additionally, PHAs must carefully consider how they will let landlords and voucher families know about these resources. While resources should be made available to all voucher families and landlords, the PHA must be mindful of not overwhelming their partner with referrals.

RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES

The examples in this section highlight different ways PHAs might be able to address identified issues such as tenant damages or enhanced landlord training through relationship building and referrals to outside organizations. As shown, these referrals do not come at a financial cost to the PHA and can greatly expand the range of services available to landlords, promoting both recruitment and retention. It should be noted that these are just examples – organizations and the resources they provide vary from area to area and PHAs should not limit their search based on the following list.

This section is divided into two categories: resources for landlords and resources for voucher families. While resources for voucher families ultimately may end up benefitting landlords, the distinction is who is the immediate recipient of the service – landlords or voucher families. This is also a useful point to remember when approaching potential partners – benefits to voucher families also benefit landlords and vice versa!

Resources for Landlords

In recent conversations with HUD representatives, landlords identified several

areas where they would like to see additional services. While many PHAs are working to meet these needs, not all PHAs have the necessary funds or resources. Outside organizations, particularly those in the housing industry, may already be providing services that can help to fill the gap. Examples include affordable housing and tenant organizations that provide rental listings, local governmental or nonprofit organizations that offer landlord-tenant mediation, or local governmental organizations that administer incentives for landlords.

In states with new laws or regulations that may change how some landlords have recruited tenants in the past, PHAs may reach out to outside organizations to inform landlords about the new legislation. Laws may include nondiscrimination and fair housing laws, changes to construction or rehabilitation laws to mandate inclusionary zoning (for those landlords who are developers or who rehabilitate their units), changes to the tax code, or rent control laws that offer exceptions for renting to voucher families. For example, as of 2017, 12 States, the District of Columbia, and many localities had established SOL laws. These laws prevent landlords from discriminating against prospective tenants based on how they are paying their rent. PHAs may want to partner with legal aid societies or tenants' rights organizations or other organizations to assist landlords in fully understanding how any new laws will affect them, share best practices in recruiting and screening tenants, dispel myths, and assist them in compliance.

Another concern of landlords is the financial cost of repairing damages to housing units. As part of a broader effort to attract reluctant landlords and, thus, improve housing choices for voucher-assisted tenants, a state or local government may create and administer tenant damage mitigation funds. On the following page are examples of existing resources that PHAs utilized to address both damage mitigation efforts and SOL training. See the [*Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements*](#) chapter for more information on tenant damage mitigation funds.



THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Offer landlords education on newly implemented law	Apartment associations, housing rights organizations, community development corporations, local government civil rights offices	PHAs might consider sending staff to trainings geared toward landlords, so staff can answer questions. This would need to be coordinated with the organization providing the training to ensure appropriateness.
<p>EXAMPLE: The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles provides monitoring to ensure landlords are in compliance with the newly passed SOI law. They also provide training to landlords.</p>		

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Address landlords' concern about paying for tenant damages	State programs	Requirements differ. Some programs may require claims to be verified or processed through the PHA which would require staff time. The PHA should consider marketing this program to landlords.
<p>EXAMPLE: Washington State commerce department runs a statewide mitigation program for clients receiving a housing subsidy of any type, not just HCV participants. The program allows landlords to recover damages as a strategy to encourage them to rent to subsidized tenants. The program, which is funded through recording fees on real estate transactions, has distributed nearly \$1 million across the state. The PHA's limited involvement in the program entails offering family subsidy verification to the landlord upon request.</p> <p>NOTE: Additional information about damage claim funds is in the Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements chapter.</p>		

Resources for Tenants

Resources for voucher families may provide direct or indirect benefits to landlords by improving the landlord's perception of voucher families or the voucher family's ability to successfully maintain housing. In order to be effective at proactively easing landlord concerns, PHAs should inform landlords that these resources are provided to voucher families. PHAs might also consider providing a list of voucher family resources to landlords as they may be a referral source.

One type of assistance for voucher families is financial. Programs might include financial assistance with:

- Back rent
- Security deposits
- Application fees
- Utility deposits
- Utility debt



TIP: Assistance with furnishings can be invaluable. PHAs should seek out community and faith-based organizations that can fill this need.

For example, a community organization in Portland, OR, provides furnishings to HUD-VASH participants upon lease-up.

There are also partner organizations that provide resources for voucher families which are not financially based. Examples of resources might include:

- Mediation or dispute resolution programs
- Trainings or workshops that help families become good tenants (See the Tenant Education strategy in the Education and Outreach chapter)
- Donations such as furnishings or clothing
- Job seeking or job training support
- Ongoing behavioral health case management
- Assistance in applying for services such as nutrition programs and Social Security disability payments

Connecting voucher families with organizations and agencies that offer necessary support can lead to improved relationships between tenants and landlords. PHAs may also want to consider creating a resource sheet with information on agencies that provide assistance such as:

- Unemployment office
- Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
- Job training opportunities such as those available through the Department of Labor
- Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Veterans Affairs (VA)



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

When looking for additional space or ways to use space more effectively, PHAs may want to consider co-locating with partner organizations and/or resources. If PHAs have a free space in a community center or other location, they may want to offer that space to a partner organization. The PHA might also invite an organization staff member to work out of a shared space on a limited basis (for example, 1 day a week or 3 days a month) to make it easier for the organization and its audience to connect.

Hall County Housing Authority and Housing Authority of the City of Hastings identified a potential partnership when they noticed they shared an office building with a YWCA and a community organization that assists renters with deposits for application fees and utilities. According to the PHA, being in close proximity to these organizations is a big advantage. When voucher families need assistance, the PHA is able to “send people down the hall” to receive assistance.

THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Offer emergency funding to support housing stability for voucher families with limited budgets	State and local organizations	PHAs may need to research organizations that provide these services or funds. Each organization may have different requirements to access assistance. PHAs should maintain a current list and ensure the programs and funds are still available.
<p>EXAMPLE: Burlington Housing Authority is located in a community with several organizations that offer financial resources for back rent, eviction prevention, and security deposits. When the PHA receives notifications per the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract from the landlord of threatened evictions and non-payments, for example, the PHA will work to connect voucher families with organizations with financial resources to stabilize the family’s housing. The voucher families and landlords work to avoid the eviction process.</p>		



OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Resolve landlord-tenant disputes	Local or national organizations	<p>PHAs must be mindful of organizational familiarity with landlord-tenant laws and regulations when recommending them for HCV family and landlord dispute resolution and mediation services. PHAs should make clear that these organizations are not affiliated with the PHA and they provide independent services. There may be fees involved for voucher families or landlords.</p> <p>As it is not typical for PHAs to provide dispute resolution services, PHAs should consider providing referrals to organizations that provide these services instead of developing a more formal partnership.</p>

EXAMPLE: When landlord-tenant issues arise, Everett Housing Authority (EHA) makes use of a dispute resolution program run by Volunteers of America Western Washington Dispute Resolution Center (DRC). The longstanding program office, which provides services in a range of mediation situations, is located within walking distance of the PHA. EHA is able to refer voucher families to the center for assistance with state and local landlord-tenant law. EHA voucher families are not required to use the program. The program includes an application, service fee, and fee per mediation session. The landlord-tenant fee is \$200, but there is a fee waiver process. DRC is not a legal process and does not involve lawyers.

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Tenant education	Local or national organizations	<p>Tenant education can be a valuable tool to help voucher families learn skills that will help them maintain housing. Additionally, voucher families completing this type of training may decrease landlord concerns about negative tenant behavior. PHAs should consider informing landlords that tenant education courses are available and voucher families who complete the course will receive a certificate. This also serves as an incentive for voucher family participation as a certificate may help them locate a unit.</p>

EXAMPLE: In one community, the Volunteers of America holds monthly tenant education workshops. The program is funded by a county, run by a nonprofit, and benefits public and private sectors (PHAs and private market landlords), making it an excellent example of collaboration across government agencies and nonprofits. Renter Certification and Fair Housing Workshops are voluntary and open to all tenants, with topics including landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities, fair housing laws, protected classes, soft skills to help maintain housing, and tools for assisting tenants in obtaining housing. Tenants receive a completion certificate they can present to landlords and a credit toward Dispute Resolution Center services. Initially, Volunteers of America presented the program to EHA and now EHA makes referrals to the program.



TIP: PHAs that maintain a multitude of partnerships have the potential to become recognized as an integral part of their community and not, as is sometimes the case, an isolated housing authority. Landlords who encounter the PHA within its role in community partnerships may come to recognize the PHA and its work as a familiar and reputable presence in the community. These landlords may be more willing to join the HCV program. To encourage landlords to view the PHA in this positive light, highlight the effort the PHA puts into partnerships in the PHA's marketing and on its website. Ask partner organizations to highlight the PHA's good work, too.

STRATEGY: PHA COLLABORATION

Forming relationships with outside organizations (including other PHAs) to share resources, promote the HCV program, and collaborate on strategies that aim to increase opportunities for landlords and/or streamline PHA policies.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal to moderate.

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

PHA Collaboration Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	PHA Collaboration
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHA-formed partnerships do not have to result in landlords or voucher families receiving direct services to be of value to the HCV program and HCV landlords. This strategy focuses on relationships PHAs can form that improve the PHA's HCV program, and thereby can result in improved landlord participation.

The following two goals, which can be addressed by strategic relationships, will be examined in this chapter:

- Improvements to program administration
- Improvements to PHA and program perception and promotion

These relationships typically do not involve the exchange of funds, but may be more formal

than the examples presented in the Referrals strategy of this chapter.

IMPROVEMENTS TO PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

In addition to increasing awareness of the PHA and the HCV program, PHAs can form relationships with other organizations, including other PHAs, to increase housing opportunities and to minimize bureaucratic obstacles that might prevent a landlord from participating in the HCV program. Below, two different types of relationships are examined:

- Partnering with another PHA
- Partnering with another agency or locality



Partnering with another PHA

In recent conversations with HUD representatives, landlords stated that working with multiple PHAs caused confusion. Landlords may own properties in multiple PHA jurisdictions and, therefore, may need to work with multiple PHAs when participating in the HCV program. When those PHAs each have different forms or procedures, landlords may experience confusion and frustration that can lead to dissatisfaction with the HCV program. PHAs that partner with other PHAs in nearby jurisdictions may find advantages in coordinating some of their policies and administrative procedures related to HCV landlords.

In addition to minimizing bureaucracy resulting from working with multiple PHAs, combined PHA efforts can also result in sharing resources and costs, as well as increasing housing opportunities for voucher families. This strategy is best suited for PHAs that share jurisdictions or are in close proximity.

When considering partnering with other PHAs, a PHA should ask:

- Is there one or more PHAs in close proximity?
- Are there a number of landlords that own or manage properties in multiple jurisdictions?

If the answers to the above are no, issues with administration may be better addressed through other strategies. However, if the answer to either or both of the above is yes, there may be an opportunity to partner with one or more PHAs to minimize the administrative burden on landlords and expand the number of housing opportunities for voucher families.

PHAs should engage in conversation with other PHAs and begin to examine the potential for forming a partnership. Partnerships with PHAs range from informal – for example, agreeing to provide contact information for another PHA should a landlord contact the incorrect jurisdiction – to a more formal partnership that involves an MOU. PHAs should always ensure that a formal partnership such as consortia adheres to any applicable rules or regulations.

The following strategies in action provide suggestions that can be incorporated to enable PHAs to align certain policies or procedures to reduce confusion for landlords working with multiple PHAs.

THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Increase flexibility and staff efficiency by sharing administrative functions	PHAs in the same geographic area	PHAs sharing functions will have to ensure hours are charged to the correct line item within the correct PHA. PHAs will want to have MOUs for job-sharing functions. Communication between the PHAs will be critical for facilitating timely sharing of information and smooth flow of activities.
EXAMPLE: One agency may have a strong group of inspectors while another agency has a strong landlord relations staff. These agencies could divide tasks – one PHA does inspections for both agencies, and one PHA handles landlord relations for both agencies. This increases consistency in scheduling, inspections and other procedures, as well as helps PHA staff do more with less.		

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Creating a consistent PHA experience for landlords	PHAs in the same geographic area	Where PHAs may share the same pool of landlords in a similar geographic area, landlords may find it difficult to determine why boundaries, payment standards, policies, and paperwork may differ between PHAs. PHAs will actively increase their knowledge of each other's programs and identify operations and messaging they can align to improve landlord understanding and retention.

EXAMPLES:

- When a community enacted an SOI law that landlords cannot refuse to rent to HCV program participants solely because of their participation in the HCV program, landlords had many questions and there was concern they might leave the HCV program. Everett Housing Authority and a neighboring PHA that work with the same landlords began to meet to discuss ways to increase landlord engagement and address landlord questions with one voice.
- When Sonoma County Housing Authority and a neighboring PHA found that landlords mistook one PHA for the other PHA, they began working together to provide similar customer experiences. They meet every other week. They adopted similar paperwork and each accepts requests for tenancy approval forms from the other. They are developing an interjurisdictional agreement to allow voucher families to lease up in both jurisdictions. Because they know each other's programs, they can answer questions, provide information, and correct misinformation to landlords for either PHA. They are considering sharing costs for a landlord locator position.

Partnering with another agency or locality

In addition to working with other PHAs, a PHA might find that there are ways to partner with other agencies to expand housing opportunities. PHAs that have small service areas, limited housing stock, or are in close proximity to other PHAs might benefit from exploring opportunities to partner and expand. Similar to the considerations listed above, PHAs should examine whether there are agencies that perhaps own underutilized housing stock, or a jurisdiction that does not have a housing program in place, for example. When entering into a partnership to expand housing opportunities, PHAs should ensure that the agreements are legal and in adherence with any state or local laws or HUD regulations.



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

Hall County Housing Authority (HCHA) and Housing Authority of the City of Hastings facing challenges with low housing stock in their city identified a nearby property owned by the US Department of Agriculture that was eligible as PHA-assisted housing under 24 CFR § 982.352 and was having trouble filling all of its rental units. Unfortunately, the property was outside their service area. They obtained authority to expand their jurisdiction so voucher families could lease up at this high-quality property. This policy solution helped HCHA and Housing Authority of the City of Hastings, USDA, landlord, and HCV families.



IMPROVEMENTS TO PHA AND PROGRAM PROMOTION

PHA partnerships can offer PHAs, and their programs, intangible benefits such as increasing awareness of the HCV program within the affordable housing community and among the general public, changing the stereotypes of the HCV program, as well as allowing the PHA to gather information that can be used to further combat these myths. These changes to program visibility, attitudes, and beliefs can be great tools for PHAs to increase retention and recruitment of HCV landlords.

The following two strategies in action look at ways PHAs can spread information to landlords about the HCV program through partner events, as well as learn and share information with other organizations through networking. These strategies can typically be implemented with minimal cost to the PHA.

While this section is tied closely with the Expanding Your Network strategy in the Education and Outreach chapter, the content below focuses on, and provides additional examples of, the types of varied organizations that PHAs can partner with.

As with the other strategies in this chapter, this variation begins with identifying areas that could be improved by a strategic partnership, as discussed in “Getting Started” in this chapter’s introduction. However, as this variation is focused on increasing landlords’ and the general public’s awareness of the PHA and the HCV program, it could be argued that the majority of PHAs could benefit from these types of partnerships. Additional implementation considerations are included with each example below.

THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Increasing awareness of the HCV program to current or prospective landlords.</p> <p>Participation in events held by other organizations provides a way to interact with current or potential landlords and spread the word about the HCV program with minimal investment and planning by the PHA.</p>	<p>Local government agencies, apartment associations, nonprofits, housing organizations</p>	<p>PHAs will need to identify organizations and meetings which provide an opportunity to address potential landlords. Additionally, PHAs will need to reach out to these organizations to request to make presentations. PHAs should be prepared to discuss the reasons PHA participation might benefit the event. A good place to start is by identifying shared goals between the PHA and HCV program and the organization. For example, presenting at an apartment association might provide landlords in attendance with an opportunity to share concerns directly with the PHA, learn about new PHA or program policy, and ask questions.</p> <p>See Expanding Your Network in the Education and Outreach chapter for additional information on what types of information may be helpful to include.</p>

EXAMPLES:

- The Housing Authority of Cook County (HACC)’s service area encompasses multiple municipalities. A representative from HACC makes presentations at each of the municipalities’ meetings about the HCV program. For example, one of the municipalities asked staff from HACC to attend a crime-free housing meeting to discuss the HCV program.



- Another PHA partnered with its local Continuum of Care (CoC) to participate in the CoC’s housing fair for HUD-VASH and homeless families. This provided an opportunity for PHA staff to interact with landlords.
- Everett Housing Authority (EHA) partners collaboratively with the local YWCA on monthly meetings that cover a variety of types of assistance. The YWCA also holds two conferences that are attended by landlords. EHA assists with conference organization and facilitates a landlord forum at the conferences. They report that most of the questions in the landlord forum are about the HCV program. The questions asked and comments heard at these meetings and conferences have a direct impact on the resources EHA posts on its website, which is a key tool for communicating with prospective and current landlords. The information presented at the meetings and conferences helps manage landlord expectations related to the HCV program. These forums are especially important because there is not a strong industry group in the area to provide information; for example, a new law drew increased meeting attendance because participants were eager to learn what the new law would mean for them and this was the only public forum to get information.
- Sonoma County Housing Authority (SCHA) and the local chapter of the National Association of Residential Property Managers have large gatherings of landlords, property owners, and investors, which serves as a great opportunity to network. The SCHA staff member assigned to landlord engagement also participates in any community function they can attend to meet landlords, people looking for housing, as well as potential service providers. The goal of networking is for these individuals to learn about the program and spread information to others. The partners believe “any platform is a good platform” and that hearing about the positive aspects of SCHA and the HCV program is contagious.

THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Learning about new resources that can benefit landlords and tenants and information sharing with other organizations	Local government agencies, apartment associations, nonprofits, housing organizations	<p>PHAs should consider forging an ongoing partnership with other organizations to exchange information, promote current resources, or advocate for new support from outside entities. This partnership could take the form of a task force, board, or informal meetings.</p> <p>While the PHA may not be able to attend all partner meetings, they should commit to some form of continuous engagement.</p>
<p>EXAMPLES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority partners with other agencies within the city and attends joint meetings where topics include available funding for needs like security deposits. • Housing Authority of Salt Lake City (HASLC) with staff assigned to landlord engagement hosts quarterly meetings with other organizations that are client-focused and assist veterans and families in crisis situations. During these meetings, HASLC shares information about their programs and the availability of units. This exposure helps quickly connect at-risk families to landlords with vacant units. 		







CONCLUSION

The strategies profiled in this Guidebook are the culmination of listening sessions, focus groups, and interviews the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) undertook in the last several years to understand how to make the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program work better for landlords. Loss of landlords in the HCV Program presents an existential challenge to the program; however, as showcased throughout the Guidebook, public housing agencies (PHAs) around the country are finding new strategies to overcome challenges and promote more landlord participation in their HCV Programs.

To increase landlord participation, it is imperative for PHAs to continually review their HCV Program practices to help make it an attractive business opportunity for local landlords. Having a high level of landlord participation in a PHA's program leads to more housing options for HCV families, higher lease-up rates, and fewer resources devoted to voucher administration. This Guidebook offers strategies PHAs may pursue in response to identified PHA-landlord goals. Guidebook chapters cover a variety of topic areas, from technology and partnerships, to landlord-focused customer service and matching local rental markets.

In addition to the topical strategies in this Guidebook, discussion with PHAs and landlords revealed some overarching practices PHAs implemented that attract and retain landlords in their HCV Programs. These are practices PHAs may consider to strengthen their relationship to landlords participating in their HCV Program.

TREAT LANDLORDS LIKE VALUED BUSINESS PARTNERS

PHAs should review their HCV Program policies, practices, and communications to identify opportunities for including landlords or the landlord perspective.

The Guidebook raises the theme of landlords as valued business partners in various strategies and chapters.

- The [Technology](#) chapter describes technology upgrades that match the private market and make the program's processes easier for landlords to navigate.
- The [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) chapter discusses customer service basics and specific strategies PHAs have applied to improve their landlords' experiences of working with their PHAs.

- Both the [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) and the [Partnerships](#) chapters describe options for creating a landlord point of contact position to offer landlords timely communications, personal outreach, and proactive marketing.
- The [Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements](#) chapter provides examples of lease-up bonuses, damage mitigation funds, and holding fee programs PHAs have implemented in response to landlord concerns that it is more expensive to work with PHAs than the private market.
- The [Matching Local Rental Markets](#) chapter and [Administrative Flexibilities to Enhance Landlord Satisfaction](#) insert discuss solutions from HUD to make the voucher payments more closely align with private market rents, and make the lease-up process less burdensome for landlords.

improve landlords' experiences with the inspections and payment processes.

- The [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) chapter describes how PHAs can help landlords navigate the HCV processes by employing a landlord point of contact or implementing a customer call center.
- The [Education and Outreach](#) chapter describes events and education opportunities for landlords to learn how processes work.
- The [Inspections](#) chapter offers opportunities for PHAs to review inspections policies and practices to reduce the time commitment for landlords.
- The [Administrative Flexibilities to Enhance Landlord Satisfaction](#) insert discusses options for PHAs to reduce inspections frictions, reduce the number of required inspections, and coordinate with PHAs in adjoining jurisdictions to consolidate administrative functions.

MAKE BUREAUCRATIC PROCESSES EASIER TO NAVIGATE

From the Request for Tenancy Approval paperwork to inspections, to rent increases and getting paid, there is no shortage of steps landlords must complete to participate in the HCV Program. The easier a PHA can make these processes to reduce time and effort required by the landlord, the more closely the HCV Program mirrors the private market making the program a better business opportunity for landlords.

Improving processes can include eliminating redundant or outdated steps in a process, walking landlords through how to complete a process, making it simpler to ask a question about a process, or posting information in easy-to-access locations.

- The [Technology](#) and [Inspections](#) chapters describe how online portals can

POST INFORMATION ONLINE

To educate landlords, reduce bureaucratic delays, and make it easier to access information, PHAs should consider developing and posting online Frequently Asked Questions, forms, inspections checklists, payment standard schedules, and descriptions of landlord-facing processes.

- The [Technology](#) chapter discusses posting on webpages specifically geared towards landlords. PHAs that make forms fillable online take this activity a step further.
- [Education and Outreach](#), [Inspections](#), [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#), and [Matching Local Rental Markets](#) chapters also include significant discussions of making information available online.

When information and forms are available to landlords online, they can access these





items any time without needing to contact the PHA. This frees up PHA staff to perform other activities and provides landlords with access to information quickly.

REGULARLY REVIEW POLICIES, PROCESSES, AND MATERIALS

The HCV Program can be complicated and difficult to understand, but some landlord frustrations are due to a lack of clear and accurate communication about how the program works, what is required on a federal level or at a PHA level, and what is a PHA practice. It is critical to regularly review – for example, annually or biannually – policies, processes, and materials to check for changes to legislation and policy. HUD develops new policy flexibilities that PHAs can watch for and then review and consider for adoption. PHAs have recently been allowed these flexibilities via Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA) and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act waiver notices.

Updating or removing processes and policies that are outdated or unnecessary, and communicating those changes to PHA staff, helps PHA staff carry out their responsibilities more easily and with greater confidence. It ensures that PHA staff can provide landlords with thorough, accurate, and consistent information. Updating landlord-facing materials or processes reduces landlord confusion and increases the likelihood that landlords will navigate HCV processes such as lease-ups, inspections, or rent increase requests with ease.

Reviewing materials and practices is described in multiple chapters.

- The [Inspections](#) chapter discusses offering guidance to landlords and ensuring consistency between inspectors.
- The [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) chapter describes creating templates and ensuring that staff use the same language in describing program policies and procedures to clients and landlords.
- The [Matching Local Rental Markets](#) chapter provides information on how to review a PHA's payment standards with an example of a payment standard map and schedule.
- The [Administrative Flexibilities to Enhance Landlord Satisfaction](#) insert summarizes options HUD has made available for PHAs to tailor their HCV policies to their local community.

RESPOND TO CUSTOMER CRITIQUES

Outside of frontline staff, the audiences that best understand the benefits and challenges of the HCV Program are voucher families and landlords. Through their experiences of interacting with the voucher program, voucher families and landlords have constructive information on how the program can be improved to better their experiences. PHAs who seek, listen, and respond to voucher family and landlord feedback build more dynamic HCV Programs that create better outcomes for their customers. Responding to landlord feedback





not only creates a stronger HCV Program, but it also builds trust and rapport between PHAs and landlords, improving the partnership.

Strategies that include responsiveness to customer critiques can be found throughout many chapters of the Guidebook.

- The Choosing Which Strategy is Right for Your PHA chapter offers examples of common criticisms PHAs hear around HCV issue areas.
- The [Education and Outreach](#) chapter expands on the idea that PHAs should be active in their communities to better hear and respond to landlord concerns.

- The [Landlord-Focused Customer Service](#) chapter describes how to be responsive to landlord concerns and improve communication-related concerns.
- Strategies discussed in the [Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements](#), [Partnerships](#), [Inspections](#), [Technology](#), and [Matching Local Rental Markets](#) chapters reflect PHA responses to landlord concerns about the HCV Program and turn concerns to goals.

When a PHA responds to customer critiques, the PHA can build better HCV Programs that encourage and maintain landlord participation.

IN CONCLUSION

It takes time to create a strong landlord program within the HCV Program. PHA staff have many competing responsibilities that can make the idea of adding new activities or responsibilities challenging. Sometimes the economy makes the advantages of the HCV Program stand out, and sometimes the private market is far more profitable.

This Guidebook includes small, simple actions and more time-consuming, complex ones to allow PHAs to move at a pace that fits their resources and circumstances. By adopting practices that other PHAs have implemented and adding specific strategies that address concerns local landlords have voiced, PHAs can, over time, make the HCV Program more responsive, increase resilience of landlord outreach efforts, and strengthen landlord satisfaction with the program.

APPENDIX: A

DATA POINTS FOR MEASURING PROGRESS

For PHAs who already have a preferred planning method, below is a list of suggested output data points for measuring progress towards attaining each goal:

PHA-Landlord Goals	Output Measures
IMPROVE PHA LANDLORD SUPPORT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percent of families terminated from program for lease violations 2. Frequency of landlord complaints over time 3. Landlord attrition over time
IMPROVE COMMUNICATION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Front line staff communication with landlords audit <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of unanswered emails b. Percent of unanswered calls c. Average length of time from received communication to response 2. Review of readability and reading level of information easily accessible on PHA's website for various processes, including accessibility for persons with disabilities and limited English proficiencies, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Landlord, tenant, and PHA responsibilities b. Voucher family selection c. Lease enforcement d. RFTA paperwork e. Inspections and re-inspections f. Rent negotiation g. Voucher family move-in h. HAP contract i. How landlords get paid j. How to update information with the PHA k. Rent increases 3. Landlord customer service surveys
IMPROVE CONSISTENCY OF INSPECTIONS PROCEDURES AND SCHEDULING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Frequency of types of deficiencies 2. Number of days between initial inspection and re-inspection 3. Percent of annual inspections failing due to tenant-caused damages 4. Percent of incomplete inspections 5. Percent of missed inspections 6. Average commute time between inspections 7. Inter-rater reliability of inspectors 8. Rate of findings on quality control inspections



PHA-Landlord Goals	Output Measures
IMPROVE TENANT-LANDLORD RELATIONSHIPS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HCV landlord’s perceptions of their voucher family <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Overall perception of HCV voucher families compared to market rate tenants b. Timeliness of receipt of rent for HCV voucher families compared to market rate tenants c. Upkeep of their property compared to market rate tenants d. Length of stay compared to market rate tenants 2. Percent of families terminated from program for lease violations 3. Frequency of landlord complaints over time 4. Landlord attrition over time
REDUCE LANDLORD BURDEN IN TENANT-CAUSED DAMAGES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percent of families terminated from program for lease violations 2. Trends in types of families being terminated to gauge need for additional support <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Families with children/childless b. Income type c. Families from referrals 3. Percent of re-inspections failing due to tenant-caused damages
REDUCE LEASE-UP DELAYS LEADING TO LOST RENTAL INCOME	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Average number of days from RFTA to first inspection 2. Average number of days from RFTA to move-in 3. Percent of RFTAs returned for incomplete or incorrect information 4. Initial inspection fail rate 5. Re-inspection fail rate 6. Frequency of types of deficiencies 7. Number of days between initial inspection and re-inspections 8. Percent of incomplete inspections
IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF AFFORDABILITY AND RENT REASONABLENESS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of units denied or negotiated down because of affordability or rent reasonableness issues 2. Percent of units denied or negotiated down because of affordability or rent reasonableness issues 3. Audit of recently added units for adherence to rent reasonableness and affordability policies
INCREASE RENT COMPETITIVENESS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of units denied or negotiated down because of affordability 2. Percent of units denied or negotiated down because of affordability 3. Voucher saturation by census tract (number of vouchers/number of total households) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. High-rent areas b. Low-rent areas



PHA-Landlord Goals	Output Measures
MINIMIZE BUREAUCRACY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Average number of days from receipt of written communication to response <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. RTFAs b. HAP contract c. Rent increase requests d. Tenant issue 2. Degree to which technology usage matches private market landlords <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Online form options b. Online signature options c. Use of text message reminders d. Use of email correspondences
ATTRACT NEW LANDLORDS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percent of decrease or increase of number of participating landlords (measured by frequency of name, tax ID number, or business address) over 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years. 2. Number of units marketed by landlords at the PHA over time <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number in high-rent areas b. Number in low-rent areas c. Number of physically accessible and hearing/vision accessible units, and units with accessibility features d. Number of units in areas of opportunity and areas without a concentration of subsidized units





APPENDIX B: SAMPLE SIGN-IN SHEET

NO.	NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	EMAIL	CHECK IF YOU WOULD LIKE ADDITIONAL INFO/FOLLOW-UP
1	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	First Last Name	Organization	Phone	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>





APPENDIX C:
SAMPLE TENANT TRAINING CERTIFICATE

Certificate of Completion

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

TENANT

has completed all the requirements of the
Anytown PHA Tenant Education Course
October, 2019

Jane X.
PHA DIRECTOR



Paul Q.
HCV DIRECTOR

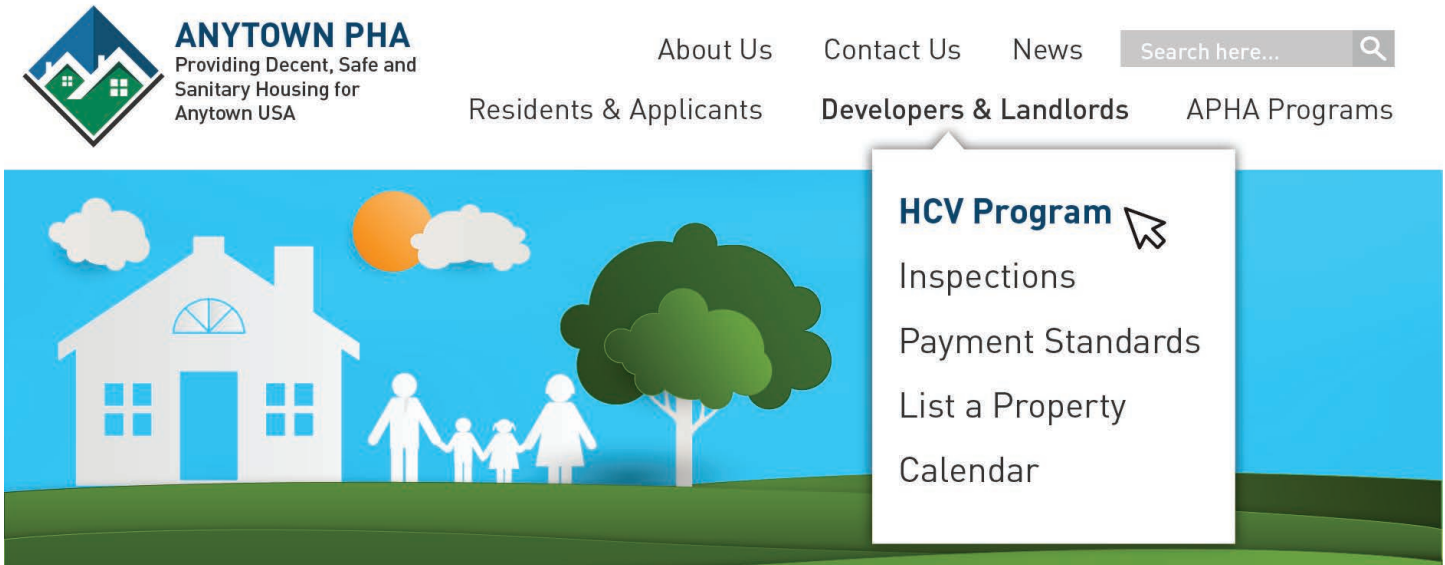




APPENDIX D: SAMPLE PHA WEBSITE

Sample PHA HCV Website Layout and Content

The below is a sample of how a PHA could lay out their website. Sample language or suggested content is also included below. PHAs can take this information and tailor it to their programs. Information that PHAs can utilize is also available on the **HUD HCV Landlord Resource page** at: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/landlord.



HCV Program

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is the Federal Government’s major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments.

The participant is free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program.

Housing Choice Vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies (PHAs) like Anytown PHA. Anytown PHA receives federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program.



NOTICE: This overview section should include a high-level description of the HCV program. The majority of this sample text is taken from the HUD HCV Landlord Resource page. The overview of benefits for landlords of participating in the HCV program include:

- Reliable, guaranteed payments and comparable rents.
- Ability to give back to the community through providing affordable housing for families.
- PHAs should include highlights specific to their HCV program.
- Services that the PHA provides such as free property listing, landlord portal, orientation sessions and other landlord events, direct deposit, and tenant screening.



A family that is issued a Housing Choice Voucher is responsible for finding a suitable housing unit of the family's choice where the landlord agrees to rent under the program. This unit may include the family's present residence. Rental units must meet minimum standards of health and safety.

A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by Anytown PHA on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by Anytown PHA.

Learn more about the HCV program below. When you're ready to sign up, see the "Steps to Becoming a Landlord in the HCV Program" section below or contact Ms. Jane Doe at anytownlandlord@apha.org or 111-111-1111.



NOTICE: Make sure to include information on how to reach the PHA.

Steps to Becoming a Landlord in the HCV Program

Becoming an Anytown Housing Authority landlord is simple! To become a landlord with the HCV program, you will need an HCV tenant. To get your property seen by HCV families:

1. **In your marketing materials, always mention that your property is available for voucher families.**
2. **Market your unit with us.** [\[Link to the Anytown PHA property list\]](#)
3. **Attend one of our outreach sessions to learn more about the HCV Program.** [\[Link to Anytown PHA calendar.\]](#)
4. **If a voucher family requests to rent your property:**
 - a. **Conduct your usual screening.**
 - b. **You and the voucher family fill out and submit the request for tenancy approval (RFTA), which the voucher family will have.**
 - c. **Prepare the property for inspection using the Housing Quality Standards checklist.** [\[link to the inspections page of Anytown PHA\]](#)
 - d. **You and the voucher family will sign your lease and you and the PHA will sign the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract.**



NOTICE: This information will be relevant to landlords who want to attract a voucher family and also to landlords who have already had interest from a voucher family. It will be PHA-specific. However, steps should be clearly outlined and, if possible, applicable forms should be linked.

Roles and Responsibilities

The HCV program has many partners. A summary of each party's role is below.

HUD: HUD provides funds to allow PHAs to make housing assistance payments on behalf of the HCV tenants. HUD also pays the PHA a fee for the costs of administering the program. HUD monitors PHA administration of the program to ensure program rules are properly followed.



NOTICE: This information is from the HUD HCV Landlord Resources webpage. PHAs can tailor this section, but should include the major roles and responsibilities of each party to set up expectations from the start.

Public Housing Agency: The PHA administers the HCV program locally and provides the HCV tenant with the housing assistance. The PHA must examine the tenant’s income and household composition, and ensure that the housing unit meets minimum housing quality standards. The PHA enters into a contract with the landlord to provide housing assistance payments on behalf of the family.

Landlord: The role of the landlord in the voucher program is to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing to a tenant at a reasonable rent. The dwelling unit must pass the program’s housing quality standards and be maintained up to those standards as long as the owner receives housing assistance payments. In addition, the landlord is expected to provide services as agreed to in the lease signed with the voucher family and the contract signed with the PHA.

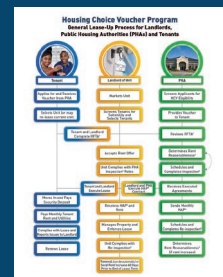
Tenant: When a voucher family selects a housing unit, they are expected to comply with the lease and the program requirements, pay their share of rent on time, maintain the unit in good condition, and notify the PHA of any changes in income or family composition.

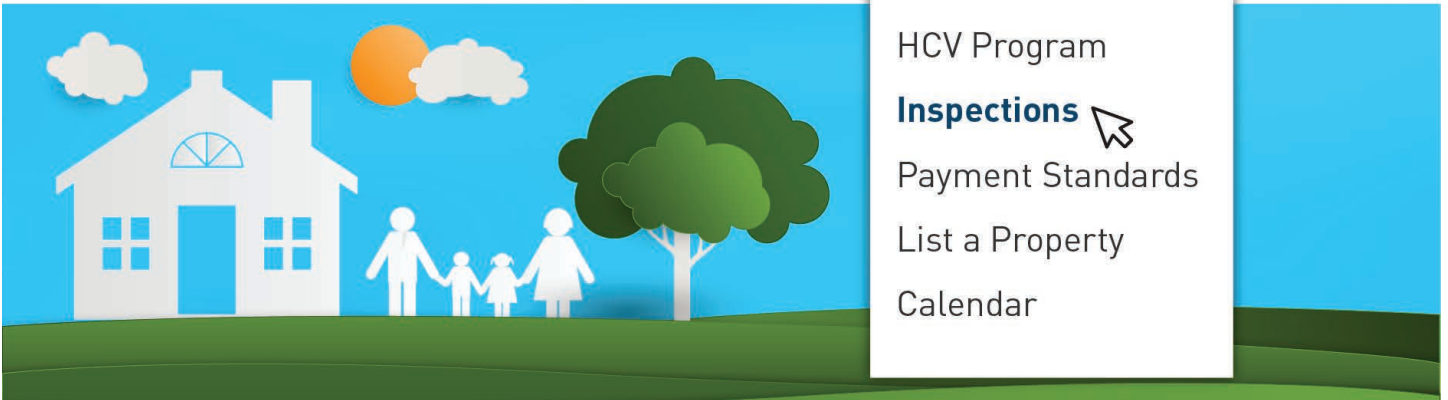
HCV Process Overview



NOTICE: This section may share some content with the “steps for becoming a landlord.” The PHA can include information in a narrative or graphics such as a flow chart. The narrative or graphics should reflect the process at the PHA.

The flowchart is available on the HUD HCV Landlord Resources webpage.





Inspection Information

Before a Voucher family can rent a unit, it must pass HUD-established physical inspection standards.

Initial inspections are usually scheduled within [] days of receipt of the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA). The PHA will provide a []-hour visit window. The landlord must be present for the inspection to take place. The inspector will conduct the inspection using []. The inspector sends the inspection results to the [] and the landlord can access the results via [].

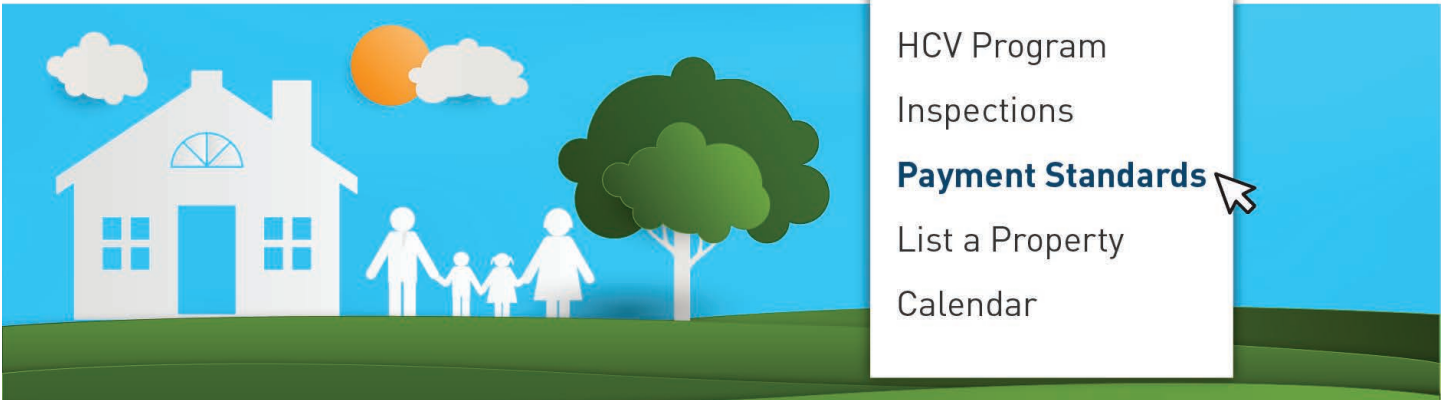
Any items that do not pass the inspection are called “deficiencies.” The inspector will provide information on what corrections are needed for the deficiency and the timeframe to make corrections.

Additional inspections are required on an [] basis or may be requested for emergency circumstances. For periodic or emergency inspections, if the landlord does not make corrections within the required timeframe, Anytown PHA may have to take enforcement action. For deficiencies which are non-life-threatening, Anytown PHA allows a landlord to provide evidence of the non-life-threatening correction by emailing a photo of the correction. Please contact the landlord liaison for additional instructions.



NOTICE: The PHA can include information about what is inspected under a HUD-established physical inspections standards inspection including a link to the inspection form, how inspections are scheduled, the process for correcting deficiencies, and when the landlord can expect to receive pass/fail results.

Inspections information is also available on the HUD HCV Landlord Resource webpage.



Payment Standards and Utility Allowance Schedules

A payment standard is Anytown PHA's maximum allowable monthly assistance toward a voucher family's gross rent. The gross rent is the total of the rent charged by the landlord and the utility allowance (for those essential utilities that are the voucher family's responsibility). PHAs determine the amount of rent that is reasonable for a specific unit in comparison to similar units. Follow [this link](#) to the payment standards, by submarket and bedroom size, for Anytown PHA.

Information is also available on the HUD HCV Landlord Resource webpage. [\[Include link\]](#)

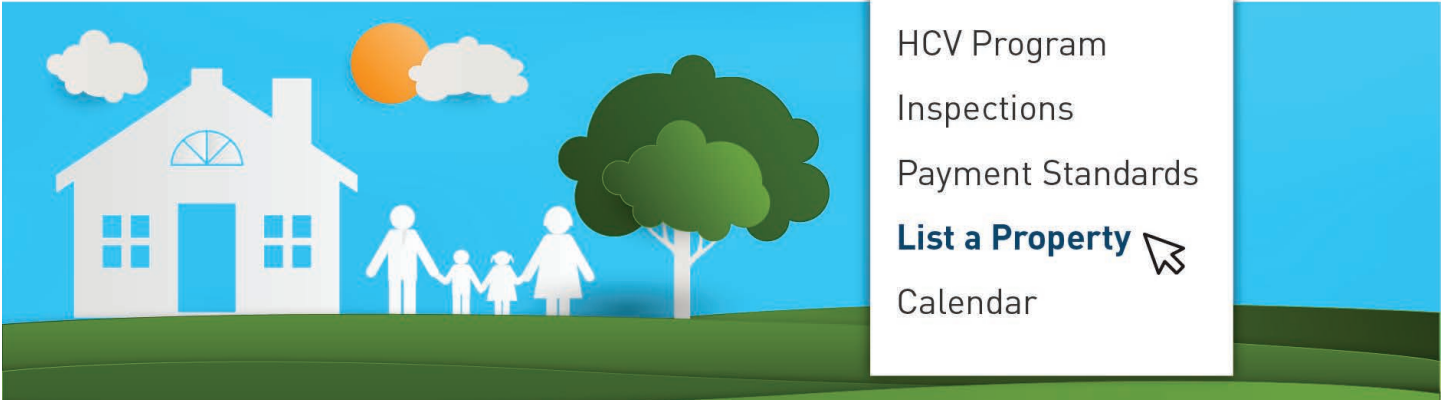
Please note the amounts listed are the maximum payments that the PHA may pay the landlord. PHAs determine payments based on an analysis of current rents for comparable units, preferably within the same submarket or within close vicinity of the unit. The landlord may be offered a payment amount that is lower than the payment standard or the landlord can sometimes get a rent amount that is more than the payment standard, if the voucher family can afford to pay the amount above the payment standard.

Payment standards do not limit the rent a landlord may charge. The maximum contract rent a landlord may charge is based on the reasonable rent for the unit and the family's income.



NOTICE: In this section, a PHA would include information on payment standards. Often, this is in the form of a table containing each submarket and the maximum payment standards for each bedroom size. Some PHAs include this information linked to a map so landlords can see where their property is located and the associated payment standard.





Property Listings

Anytown PHA posts property listings for landlords including up to five photos. Listings should include the number of bedrooms, the street address, information on who pays utilities, and contact information.

If you are interested in listing a property, please contact Ms. Jane Doe at anytownlandlord@apha.org or 111-111-1111.

Listings can be found here [\[LINK to property listings or search engine\]](#).



NOTICE: PHAs should use this section to offer guidance for landlords on what to include in HCV property listings.



ANYTOWN PHA
Providing Decent, Safe and
Sanitary Housing for
Anytown USA

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

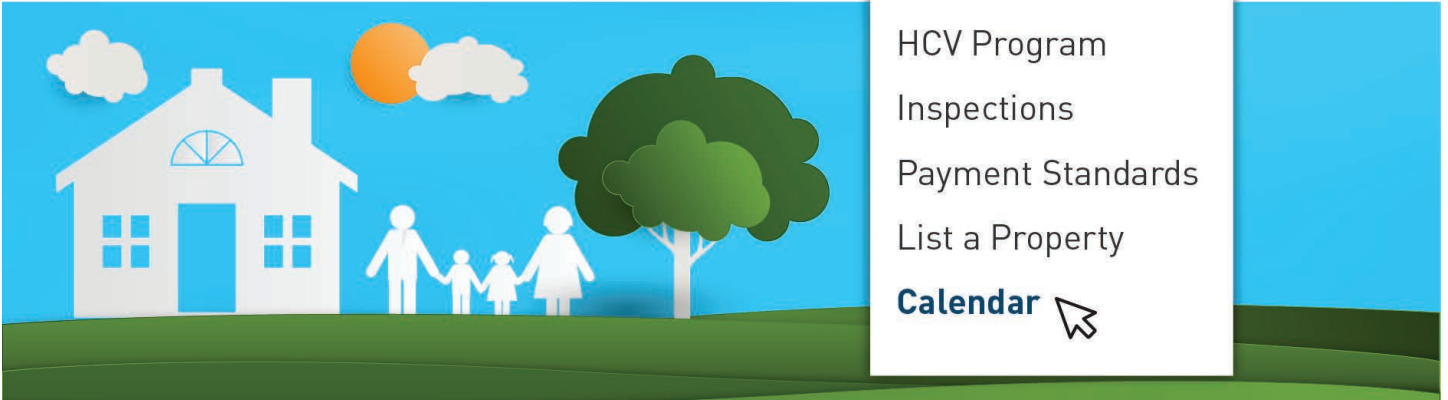
[News](#)



[Residents & Applicants](#)

[Developers & Landlords](#)

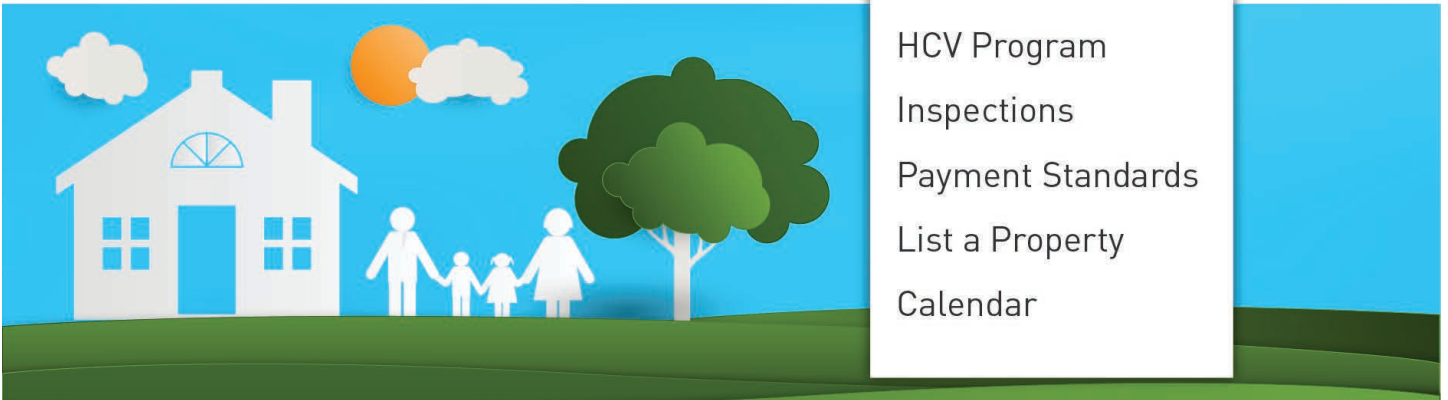
[APHA Programs](#)



Calendar and Training Opportunities

This is where the PHA can provide dates of importance and upcoming events. They can link to marketing flyers or registration sites.





News

The Anytown PHA has recently reorganized its HCV case manager department. If you need to speak with a case manager regarding an HCV family in your unit, please make use of the following new list

Client last name beginning with A – L, contact Ms. Hanes at [111-111-1111]

Client last name beginning with M - S, contact Mr. Jones at [111-111-1111]

Client last name beginning with T – Z, contact Ms. Weber at [111-111-1111]

All direct deposit statements are available to view on the landlord portal. Anytown PHA recently stopped mailing direct deposit statements. To register for the landlord portal, current HCV landlords may visit this [\[link\]](#).



NOTICE: If the PHA has important information or policy changes, that information should be posted here.

Website Organization

There might be limitations on a PHA’s ability to reorganize its website. For example, PHAs that do not have in-house staff dedicated to website development may need to work within an existing website template. The tips in this guide can help PHAs prioritize and organize information within an existing website framework.

Save time! Instead of creating new content from scratch, copy the content in this guide or use content already available on the HUD website: www.hud.gov