

# Appendix A. Topic Guide for Interviews with PHA Staff

This guide presents the topics to be addressed through interviews with the HCV Director, HCV program staff, and other PHA staff as needed. The specific staff to be interviewed will be determined based on the structure of each PHA. In some PHAs, particularly the smaller agencies, we expect that single staff members will perform multiple functions. The interviews—along with the discussions with program partner agencies and file review—are designed to provide the information needed to evaluate each HCV’s performance and cost drivers. The interviews will also provide information on basic program operations and cost structures needed to design the national study.

The guide covers the following topics:

- Voucher allocations and program components.
- Staffing
- Utilization and success rates
- Program monitoring
- Quality control
- Wait list management
- Intake
- Recertification and termination
- Tenant moves and portability processing
- Housing quality inspections
- Rent reasonableness
- Expanding housing opportunities and deconcentration
- Customer service
- Use of automation
- Program costs and overhead costs
- Questions for the HCV Director
- Beta test follow-up

***Note: The training materials for the site visits will include a glossary of key terms used in the interview guide.***

## **Introductory Script**

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with us. The information we are collecting today is part of a new HUD study of administrative costs in the Housing Choice Voucher program. The goal of the study is to estimate the cost of administering a high-performing voucher program and to use that cost information to inform the development of a new administrative fee study.

Your agency is one of 60 agencies across the study participating in the study. We selected the 60 agencies from among 877 agencies that received high performer ratings in SEMAP in 2007, 2008, and 2009 or that were nominated by HUD Field Office staff. We divided the 877 agencies into six size categories based on number of vouchers and then selected agencies randomly within each size category.

The study has two phases. The first phase, which we are in now, is a reconnaissance phase with the goal of collecting information on voucher program administration and cost drivers. We will use this information to design a rigorous national study of voucher program administrative costs. This full national study will be the second phase of the study. We expect it to start in early 2012.

We hope that you will be candid in the information you provide about how you administer the voucher program and aspects of program administration that you see as cost drivers. Nothing we learn will be held against your agency in any HUD performance assessment or funding decisions. In the unlikely event that the study uncovers an area where the program is not being operated according to the regulations, HUD will notify the agency but will not take further action unless the agency continues to operate the program in violation of the regulations.

Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?

## Voucher Allocations and Program Components (To be asked primarily of HCV Director)

**Rationale:** Information on programs operated by the PHA is needed to describe the context in which each PHA's HCV program is operating. This information is also needed as a starting point for analyzing the allocation of overhead costs across programs.

1. What type of organization is your PHA? Is it a standalone agency or a unit of government?
  - If the PHA is a unit of government, how does the PHA fit within the government structure?
  
2. **Review the PHA's allocation of vouchers from VMS and the percent leased.** Confirm or update the numbers.
  
3. **Review administrative data on the other HUD programs (besides HCV) administered by the PHA.** Confirm or update that data.
  
4. Do you administer any state or locally funded programs? If so, describe.
  
5. Does your organization manage any project based vouchers (PBV)?
  - If so, what role does the agency play in the development of PBV units (developer or PHA design, targeting special populations requiring service enriched housing, who is responsible for tax credit applications, review process if there is an identity of interest)
  
6. Do you operate an HCV FSS program?
  - Yes
  - No
  
  - a. Is the PHA required to operate the FSS program because of FSS incentive award funding or additional vouchers received in prior years?
    - Yes, mandatory program for PHA
    - No, not mandatory program for PHA
  
  - b. If so, how many participants does the program have?
    - Number of participants:\_\_\_\_\_

- c. How many FSS slots does the program have?
    - Number of slots: \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - d. In the past 12 months, how many participants met their goals and completed their FSS contracts?
    - Number of completions: \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - e. How many/what percent of FSS participants have an escrow account?
  
  - f. How many are actively accruing escrow?
7. Does the agency administer any of the following resident services to all or some portion of HCV participants? Do not include programs and services provided by partners.
- Mobility counseling
  - Financial literacy
  - Education
  - Job placement
  - Job training
  - Homeownership training
  - Youth services
  - Elderly services
  - Health programs
  - Housekeeping
  - Housing search assistance

**Staffing (To be asked of HCV Director and other HCV program staff as needed)**

***Rationale:** It will be important in designing the full national study to understand how staffing relates to voucher program size and how PHAs differ in their staffing arrangements for the HCV program. The organizational structure of the program may affect administrative costs. It is important to know if programs think they are under-staffed and why if they will be used to model program costs. Request an organization chart and salary roster for the entire agency and walk through the positions/people with the HCV Director. A staffing chart is presented in the Cost section below (p.23). It can be reviewed at this point when Question 1 is answered.*

1. How many full-time staff (or full-time-equivalents) are included in the Housing Choice Voucher budget? Complete the following staffing table:

<b>Position</b>	<b>Number of FTEs (could be less than 1)</b>
Director/Deputy Director	
Administrative Assistant/Secretary	
Supervisor/Team Leader	
Technical staff (housing specialists)	
Technical staff (inspectors)	
Clerical staff	
Finance staff	
Quality control	
Customer service/call center	
Hearing officer	
FSS Coordinator	
IT	
Human resources	
Other (describe)_____	
Other (describe)_____	
Other (describe)_____	
Total	

2. How are program tasks assigned? (Walk through each activity on the PHA timesheet and identify which staff perform each.)
  - Do the same staff perform occupancy and inspection tasks?
  - Does your agency have support staff for clerical functions? What functions do they perform?

3. How are new employees trained/prepared to complete the day to day functions of their positions?
4. Does your agency have an on-going training plan? If so, please describe. (in-house vs. external providers, frequency of trainings, etc)
5. What methods do you use to ensure your staff maintains current knowledge of the requirements of the HCV program?
6. What has the staff turnover rate been over the past three years?
7. Is staff turnover higher for any particular position/staff function? (If so, note the qualifications required for this position.)
8. Is staff turnover an issue in your ability to run your program effectively? If so, explain.
9. How many positions are currently vacant? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Which positions? \_\_\_\_\_
  - How long have the positions been vacant?
  - Will they be filled? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How much staff time is spent/allocated for overtime?
11. Are staff represented by a union or are civil service positions? If so, what implications does that have on program costs?
12. In the past three years, have you carried out any cost savings measures related to program policy, processing changes, staffing or other changes in the program? If so, please describe.
13. If you have data from FY 2003 – can you provide the ratios of caseworkers, inspectors, and managerial staff relative to number of vouchers in that year (so it can be compared with current ratios)?

## Utilization and Success Rates (To be asked primarily of HCV Director)

**Rationale:** Utilization is a key measure of program effectiveness. The utilization of funds and units should be between 95 and 100 percent, but we may have agencies whose utilization has changed since the most recent administrative data available from HUD. If an agency is under-utilized or over-utilized, it is important to know why and what steps the PHA is taking to address the issue. We also want to know whether and how PHAs monitor program success rates (defined as the total number of families that receive a voucher and are successful at leasing up before the voucher expires / the total number of families receiving a voucher during the same period) and what actions they take if success rates are low, or low for certain types of households.

1. What is the current (year to date) utilization rate in your HCV program, in dollars and in units? What is the basis for this estimate (ensure the responded excludes dollars and unit associated with vouchers from opt outs or incremental awards in the first 12 months)?
2. *If PHA is under-utilized on units (below 95%):* What are the reasons the agency is under-utilized? What steps is the agency taking to get to full lease up?
3. *If PHA is over-utilized on budget:* What are the reasons the agency is over-utilized? What steps is the agency taking to bring the program into balance?<sup>1</sup>
4. What is the initial search period on vouchers issued by your agency? What is the PHA's policy regarding extending search times?
  - a. What percent of successful voucher holders are successful within the initial search period versus what percent require an extension of search time?
5. Do you use HUD's projection spreadsheet for tracking utilization or an alternative tool? Does your agency take action based on findings from the utilization tool?
6. Out of every 100 applicants, your PHA pulls from the top of your waiting list, how many households respond?
  - Of the households who respond when their name comes to the top of the waiting list, how many are determined ineligible?
  - Of the households determined ineligible, how many file for an informal review?

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<sup>1</sup> The intent of this question is to evaluate agency actions to balance the requirements of dollars and units. The HCV Director can give his/her opinion as to why the program is in its particular situation (dollars compared to units).

- Of the above households, how many are determined eligible after an informal review?
  - Of the households who respond when their name comes to the top of the waiting list, how many are determined eligible, including those households deemed eligible following an informal review?
  - Of the households who are eligible and briefed, how many leased successfully with their voucher (includes within the PHA's service area as well as port-outs that lease through billing only)?
7. Therefore, out of every 100 applicants your PHA has on the waiting list what percentage of applicant households lease a unit with their HCV voucher?
  8. Do you calculate success rates for different types of households (e.g., by voucher size, households with disabilities or large families), for different neighborhoods, or considering some other factor?
    - a. If so, explain how success rates differ by the factors analyzed.
  9. Are you satisfied with the current success rate in the context of all the other goals you are trying to pursue? If not, why not, and what steps are you taking to increase success rates?
  10. At what percent of Fair Market Rent are your payment standards set? How was this determined? What effect has the payment standards had on your agency's success rates?
  11. What is the current rental vacancy rate? When did you last do a rental market study?
  12. Review leasing rates obtained in the Voucher Allocation and Program Components section. For allocations less than 95% leased:
    - a. What factors do you think are impacting your ability to fully lease these allocations?
    - b. What has your agency done to impact the leasing rate of these allocations?



**Program Monitoring (To be asked of HCV Director and other HCV program staff as needed)**

**Rationale:** High performing PHAs regularly monitor key aspects of program administration and make data-driven decisions.

1. What are the key reports used to monitor program performance in the HCV program? (Check all that apply.) How often to you receive the report?

Report Type	Frequency	Frequency
<input type="checkbox"/> Leasing and turnover	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Voucher success rates	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Portability	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> HAP funds and voucher utilization	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Inspection results including HAP abatements for non-compliance with HQS	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Timeliness of inspections	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Timeliness of annual recertification processing and interim recertifications	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> EIV Reports (deceased individuals, income discrepancy, multiple subsidy, immigration, alternate ID, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> PIC Reports	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> QC Reports	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Informal review and informal hearings	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Report Type	Frequency	Frequency
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

2. How do you use these reports?
3. What are the key things you look for in them?
4. How do you use the information to monitor and improve the program?
5. How do you evaluate the impact or effectiveness of any discretionary policies your agency has implemented? (Examples of discretionary policies include income and household change reporting requirements and inspections for non-life threatening complaints.)?
6. How does your agency detect and prevent fraud, waste, mismanagement and abuse?
7. Does your agency have a Conflict of Interest policy and/or Code of Conduct? If so, how do you monitor compliance with them?
8. How is EIV used to detect un- or under-reported income?
9. What are your policies and procedures for handling tenant unreported and under-reported income? Do you terminate assistance, offer repayment agreements or both? Are the policies written in the Administrative Plan?
10. How do you recapture overpaid HAP from owners?
11. Who in your agency is responsible for ensuring recapture/return of overpaid HAP? What about repayment of tenant overpayments (unreported income, household composition changes, etc)?

- a. How are repayments (owner and tenant) monitored?
  - b. How many repayment agreements (owner and tenant) does your agency enter into in a month? How many are in effect in any given month?
  - c. What is the cost associated with monitoring and enforcing repayment agreements with owners and tenants?
12. Describe your agency's process for monitoring and resolving various PIC and EIV reports, including multiple subsidy, deceased individuals, immigration, alternate ID and income discrepancy reports?
  13. How do you complete your utility allowance analysis each year? What additional costs do you incur by using this method? How do you determine the payment standard each year? Do you incur any additional costs determining your payment standards?

**Quality Control (To be asked of HCV Director and other HCV program staff as needed)**

***Rationale:** High performing HCV programs have strong quality control (QC) procedures, providing timely feedback to staff and taking appropriate follow-up action. We will request copies of the last three months of QC reviews and results. These would likely include initial eligibility, all inspections, interim and annual recertifications, or a review of a random sample of files. These questions should be asked of the manager of the HCV program, preferably with both interviewer and interviewee viewing a copy of the QC reports for the past 3 months.*

1. Please describe the major systems and procedures you employ to ensure compliance with HUD rules and PHA procedures. Describe your quality control procedures for (including sample size and frequency):
  - Admissions and Occupancy
  - Rent reasonableness
  - HAP processing
  - Inspection and HQS enforcement
2. How effective do you believe these systems and procedures to be? Describe your agency's procedures/protocols to ensure that cited deficiencies are corrected fully and timely?
3. Do you systematically collect data or information on the results from these review systems? If yes, how often? What do you do with the information (training, internal guidance/procedure/AP updates)?

4. Is feedback provided to the person responsible for errors? Is the person required to correct his/her errors or does someone else correct the error?
5. Are the results used to create training programs for the entire staff?
6. Describe how the quality control information is used in performance assessment.
7. How do you use information from quality control in operating and program decisions?
8. Do you use HUD's regulatory required sample size for QC? If not – in which cases do you use different samples? And why?

### **Wait List Management (To be asked of HCV Director and intake staff)**

***Rationale:** High performing HCV programs have waiting lists that the PHAs open periodically and also update appropriately—often enough so that the names on the list remain current, but not so often that there are not enough people on the list to issue vouchers to. The list should be accurate (i.e., a scan of the list should not reveal people with application dates out of range). If preferences are used to order people on the waiting list, the process for evaluating whether people meet the preference criteria should be efficient and transparent, confirmed by file review, so that the waiting list is functioning as described in the HCV Administrative Plan.*

1. How many people are currently on the HCV program waiting list?
2. (If applicable) How many people are currently on all your waiting lists for Public Housing?
3. (If applicable) Do you maintain a combined waiting list for HCV and public housing?
  - If yes, do people who are offered public housing lose their place on the HCV list if they refuse the public housing unit?
  - Do you “cross list” public housing and HCV applicants?
4. If you administer any Section 8 project-based vouchers, do you have a separate waiting list for that portion of the program?
5. Does the agency have any selection preferences for special populations (homeless veterans, youths aging out of foster care, etc)?

- a. Does the agency have separate waiting lists for any special populations?
  - b. Does the agency incur added costs from these preferences?
6. Is the HCV program waiting list shared with one or more other PHAs? If so, describe.
7. Is the HCV waiting list currently completely closed, open for some groups, or completely open?
  - If the list is open only for some groups, what groups?
  - If the list is not completely open, when was it last open?
8. How often is the HCV list completely open? How is the decision made to open (and close if applicable) the HCV waiting list?
9. How often do you contact people on the waiting list to verify continued interest and contact information (and drop people who are no longer interested or cannot be reached)?
  - How are people contacted?
  - When did you last contact people on the waiting list to verify continued interest and contact information?
  - If you don't conduct periodic contacts—why not?
  - On an annual basis, what percentage of waiting list households are removed from the waiting list for failure to respond to your agency's request for information?
10. How do you accept applications, and order them on the waiting list (date and time of receipt, date and time determined by lottery system, preferences, other)?
  - a. If program has selection preferences, describe what these are and how priorities are assigned. How is eligibility for the preference verified and at what stage(s) in the process?
11. What percentage of your waiting list applications are provided electronically and what percent by paper/manually?
12. For purposes of getting on the HCV waiting list, do you use a pre-application and then a full application later in the process? If so, please describe your two-tier process.

13. How many applicants are typically considered in order to result in a positive eligibility determination? How often are informal reviews requested for denied applicants? What are the results of these reviews? What is the impact on staff workload of these reviews?
14. Describe any other interactions your staff has with applicants on the waiting list prior to being selected off the waiting list.
15. Does your system of record support your waiting list policies and procedures?

### **Intake and Briefings (To be asked of intake staff)**

**Rationale:** *To understand intake processes compared to other PHAs in the sample. The information will be used to inform the national study design and to assess the efficiency of the programs in the sample.*

1. Describe the intake process.
  - Is the eligibility determination done in person or by phone?
  - How many times must clients come to the office, call in, and meet with staff? What is the purpose of these meetings/discussions?
2. Describe the process that intake staff uses to screen clients and verify income.
3. Do you use your discretionary authority to obtain reports for violent, drug-related criminal activity? If yes, what criminal activity and how many years back results in denial or termination?
  - Has this affected workload or costs?
4. Do you require additional verification of citizenship beyond a signed declaration?
  - a. How has this affected staff time dedicated to the program?
5. Do you run an EIV report 120 days after admissions?
6. Describe your agency's process for briefing applicants at the time of voucher issuance.
  - a. Do you brief applicants individually or in groups?

- b. How much time is allocated for each briefing? How frequently do you brief applicants?
- c. Which staff conduct the briefings? Are there dedicated briefing staff? How many staff participate in each briefing?
- d. How are briefing materials updated, maintained and produced?
- e. How is the required material covered in the briefings (videos, scripted presentations, etc)
- f. Are your briefings conducted in multiple languages? Are the briefing materials translated into multiple languages?

### **Recertification and Termination (To be asked of recertification staff)**

**Rationale:** *To understand recertification processes compared to other PHAs in the sample. The information will be used to inform the national study design and to assess the efficiency of the programs in the sample.*

1. Describe recertification procedures.
  - How often is recertification done? How far out from the planned effective date do you begin the process?
  - Are recertifications done in person, by mail or some other method?
  - How many times do clients come to the office, call in, and meet with staff?
  - On the average, how many annual recertifications do you do on a monthly basis?
  - How many interims are requested on a monthly basis? How many interims are completed on a monthly basis? Under what circumstances do you do interims?
  - Do you require third-party verifications? Under what circumstances?
  
2. Does your agency exercise its discretionary authority to obtain reports for violent, drug-related criminal activity (if allowed under state law) at annual or interim recertification? If so, what is the cost per assisted household?
  
3. How is EIV used at recertification to detect unreported or under-reported income, potential multiple subsidy, etc?
  
4. What percentage of voucher holders report zero income? Does your agency require more frequent recertifications for zero income participants? If yes, how often?
  
5. Describe your agency's policy on contract rent increases? Are there any limitations of frequency or timing of requesting contract rent increases? On an annual basis, how many contract rent increase requests are received? How many are approved and how many are denied? How many result in new HAP Contracts (utility change)?

6. What is your average annual turnover rate of units, that is—what percent of your leased units terminate assistance each year?
7. What percentage of terminations is voluntary? What percentage is initiated by the PHA? What are the main reasons for non-voluntary terminations?
8. For those that are terminated based on PHA initiation, what percent of tenants request an informal hearing? What are the results of these reviews generally (continued assistance or termination)?
9. Is there an active Legal Aid organization in your community? What is your relationship with that organization?
  - a. Is your workload impacted by the legal agency's involvement?
  - b. What types of interactions do you have?
  - c. About how many lawsuits do they pursue each year?
  - d. What is your estimate of the workload and cost that result from these cases?

**Tenant Moves and Portability Processing (To be asked of HCV Director, intake staff, and other HCV program staff as needed)**

***Rationale:** To evaluate whether the HCV program is processing portability (in-ports and out-ports) and tenant moves efficiently*

1. On an annual basis, what percentage of tenants give notice to move from their unit and attempt to relocate to another unit within your agency's jurisdiction? How many of these are successfully moved to a new unit?
2. How many port-ins have you had in the past 12 months? Do you bill for these households or absorb them into your program? Why have you chosen this approach?
3. How many port-outs have you had in the past 12 months? What percentage of those were billed to your PHA versus absorbed by receiving housing authorities? How many days on average does it take your agency to return the completed Family Portability Information Form to the receiving PHA?
4. What information do you provide to voucher holders and tenants about portability?



5. Do you monitor tenants searching in other communities? If yes, how do you monitor them?
6. Do you have a cooperative arrangement with any area PHAs for processing portability between your jurisdictions?
7. What is the average number of days between receipt of an RTA and the first inspection? Are you satisfied with this timeframe? If not, what is your agency doing to improve?

**Housing Quality Inspections (To be asked of inspection staff and program director, if needed)**

***Rationale:** High performing and efficient agencies conduct HQS inspections in a timely manner and take actions to minimize failed inspections, especially at initial and annual inspections. In addition, the size of the PHA's jurisdiction and the quality of the housing stock may be important drivers of program costs.*

1. What is the size of the HCV program service area in square miles? *(May need to get this information from the program Director or other source).*
2. How would you describe the program's housing stock in terms of the types of units and the quality of units?
  - a. Are there any features of the housing stock that result in common HQS failures or make the inspection process more costly or time-intensive?
  - b. What percentage of the housing stock would you estimate was built prior to 1978? Is lead-based paint a big problem?
3. Has the PHA or locality adopted a higher quality standard than HQS for the HCV program? Within the service area in which your agency operates, do other branches of government have other inspection requirements outside of HQS? If so, do these other requirements contribute to housing quality conditions in your community's housing stock?
4. Describe the PHA's process for scheduling inspections. Are inspections done based on recertification date, lease anniversary date, or geographic area, multi-family building with multiple voucher-assisted households, or some other way?

5. How do you route each inspector's itinerary for the day? Do inspectors come into the office every day?
6. How many miles are driven by inspectors each month on average? (Alternatively, what percentage of their time do inspectors spend driving?) Do inspectors drive their own vehicles or does the agency have vehicles that inspectors use?
7. Approximately how many inspections are completed each day per inspector? How many are new unit inspections, annual inspections, and re-inspections? Approximately how many units are visited each day (including no-shows)?
8. Approximately what percent of new units pass on the first inspection? How many times on average are units inspected before passing HQS for new unit inspections? What percent never pass? What share of failures result from no access vs. unit quality?
  - a. What about for annual inspections (owner vs. tenant fails)
9. For annual, complaint and QC inspections, how often are fail items attributed to the owner? How often are fail items attributed to the tenant?
10. How often do units fail for lead-based paint (all inspection types)? What percentage of your units have gone through lead-based paint clearance and assessments?
11. After the first failed inspection, do you require a reinspection or allow for landlord certification? (If allows certification, ask for the PHA's certification protocol.)
12. What is the average number of days between failed inspection and re-inspection?
13. On average, how many different units are inspected per voucher holder before a lease is signed (for both applicants and participant movers)?
14. What steps, if any, have you taken to reduce the number of failed inspections? How successful have those efforts been?
15. Do inspectors use hand-helds to record inspections? If yes, is it an efficient system?

16. What processes are in place to ensure that HAP is not paid on units that do not meet HQS (fail items attributed to owner)? How many units are abated annually?
17. What processes are in place to ensure that prompt and vigorous action is taken against the tenant for units that do not meet HQS (fail items attributed to tenant)?
18. What is your agency's policy for complaint inspections? Are there any limitations on how often you will inspect a unit at the request of the owner or tenant (non emergency reasons)?

### **Rent Reasonableness (To be asked of inspection staff)**

***Rationale:** The HCV Administrative Plan should clearly describe the PHA's system for determining rent reasonableness. The system should include the use of comparables for units of similar size, type, and market area. Request to view the system if possible. Client files should include sufficient documentation to show that the policy is rigorously enforced.*

1. What system do you have in place for determining Rent Reasonableness? Do you perform this function in-house or contract it out?
2. Do you have a rent survey or maintain an ongoing database? How often is it updated?
3. How many comparable units do you use for rent reasonableness?
4. Are the comparables generally for the same market area? Housing type? Bedroom size?
5. Do you have any HCV or project-based voucher units for which you contract out to another entity to make rent reasonableness determinations? Why? Does it affect costs?
6. In the last 12 months have you completed rent reasonableness for any reason other than applicant/participant moves and contract rent increases/utility responsibility changes (e.g., FMR decreased, PHA initiated)? If so, how many of this type of rent reasonableness have you completed?
7. What percent of units do not lease under your program because the PHA and owner cannot agree on the final rent reasonableness determination? For ongoing participation? for new admissions?

## **Expanding Housing Opportunities and Deconcentration (To be asked of HCV Director and other HCV program staff as needed)**

***Rationale:** HUD believes that high-performing PHAs should be trying to provide housing opportunities for voucher participants in low poverty and opportunity areas. However, there may be PHAs with high SEMAP scores who have had little success at expanding opportunities, and we would like to learn about why. Also, efforts to increase housing opportunities may result in higher administrative (and HAP) costs and we want to understand these tradeoffs.*

1. How do you define a low poverty area?<sup>2</sup>
2. What steps (if any) have you taken to recruit landlords with standard units in parts of your jurisdiction that are not impacted by poverty?
  - What response have you had from these landlords?
  - Do you keep lists of landlords with units in low poverty areas?
3. How do you make families aware of opportunities to rent units in low poverty areas?
  - Do you have any special information, services, or counseling designed to help families take advantage of these opportunities? If so, describe.
  - Do you provide any search assistance for families willing to consider moving to a non-impacted area?
4. Can you show me a map that identifies the high poverty and/or low poverty opportunity areas where there is affordable housing? Please review.
  - How is the map used with staff, participants, and in landlord recruitment?
5. Are the payment standards in place adequate to gain access to units in low poverty areas?
  - If not, have you implemented higher payment standards for particular parts of the jurisdiction?
  - If you have not implemented higher payment standards, have you considered doing so? Why did you decide not to implement higher payment standards?

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<sup>2</sup> SEMAP defines a low poverty census tract as a tract with a poverty rate at or below the overall poverty rate for the principal operating area of the PHA, or with a poverty rate at or below 10 percent, whichever is greater. The PHA determines the overall poverty rate for its principal operating area using the most recent available decennial Census data.

6. What are the implications of your agency's procedures for expanding housing opportunities on staff time and budget?
7. Do you have a plan for Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing? What is the cost and staff time impact of developing and implementing this plan?
  - a. Does discrimination play a role in the concentration of vouchers? If yes, what steps have you taken to address this?
8. What protocols does your agency have in place to comply with reasonable accommodation requirements? What is the cost associated with these protocols?

**Customer Service (To be asked of HCV Director and other HCV program staff as needed)**

***Rationale:** The goal of this section is to understand the level and quality of service provided to PHA customers, taking as a starting point the assumption that high performing agencies serve their various customers well. Quick and effective resolution of issues prevents recurrence and increased cost. We understand that customers may disagree or be unsatisfied with the answer or resolution provided by the PHA, even if it is correct.*

1. Please tell me about the customer service protocols you have in place. Do you have standards for answering/returning calls from participants and landlords? If yes, describe. What happens when a person calls the HCV program main number?
2. Have you done any tenant or landlord surveys?
3. Customer service / client contact cost indicators:
  - a. On average, how many times per year does an HCV tenant need to come into your offices in person?
  - b. On average, how many times per year does a participating landlord need to come into your offices in person?
  - c. What is your call volume?

**Use of Information Technology (To be asked of technology and program staff)**

***Rationale:** To evaluate whether the HCV program (and PHA) is using information technology and software systems to improve performance and/or achieve cost savings.*

1. Describe any new information technology and software systems that you have introduced in the past three years.

- a. How, if at all, has it made your work more efficient?
- b. How, if at all, has it made your work less efficient?

2. What systems and processes (manual logs, computer tools, commercial or “home grown” software systems, other information technologies such as smartphones or Blackberrys) do you use for keeping track of tenant records, inspection records, reporting to HUD, etc.? How long have you had these systems and processes in place? Are there features that you want to use that are difficult or unavailable?

Ask about software systems for:

- Waiting list
- Eligibility/continued occupancy
- HAP calculation
- HAP payments (holds, abatements)
- Inspections (including scheduling)
- FSS Escrow if applicable
- Financial transactions (direct deposit, etc.)
- Accounting and transaction management (e.g., Quickbooks)

3. How would you rate the effectiveness of these systems and processes and your ability to use them?

4. In what areas do you think your systems could be improved?

5. Do you have any plans to upgrade or modify your computer hardware, information technology, or other software systems this year or next year?

6. How much systems monitoring does your staff have to undertake (e.g., accuracy of data entry or automated processing)?

**Program Costs and Overhead Costs (To be asked of finance staff)**

**Rationale:** For the PHAs that will ultimately participate in the full national study, we will need to determine the full range of program-related costs and the overhead costs of the HCV program, as well as how those costs related to the overhead costs charged to the HCV program relate to the PHA’s actual overhead costs. We will test this full data collection at a small number of PHAs during the reconnaissance. The questions that are for this group of PHAs only are shaded in gray.

During the reconnaissance site visits, we will review program budgets with the finance staff at all PHAs. We will also ask a number of questions designed to understand better the current overhead charging practices for the PHAs. We also need to determine if the HCV program receives supplemental operating funds or uncharged services that contribute to cover the costs of HCV program operations, as well as if the HCV program provides funds, overhead support, or direct program services to other programs that are not charged to those programs.

1. Please complete the following table for each HCV staff and their salary assignment within the PHA and if applicable, other PHA(s). This includes any and all staff charged to the HCV program (full-time, part-time, and allocated staff) as well as all staff that are reported in the COCC (if applicable). The figures reported should be annualized.

Employee Name	Position	Salary (Without Benefits)	Benefits	Total Compensation (with Benefits)	Salary Assignment				
					HCV	COCC	Low Rent Projects	Other Programs	Other PHA(s)
	Executive Director	\$50,000	\$5,000	\$55,000	\$16,500	\$11,000	\$16,500	\$11,000	
	Deputy Director								
	Supervisor/Team Leader								
	Technical Staff (Housing Specialists)								
	Technical staff (Inspectors)								
	Clerical Staff								
	Finance Staff								
	Quality Control								
	Customer service/call center								
	Hearing Officer								
	FSS Coordinator								
	IT								
	Human Resources								
	Other (describe) _____								
	Other (describe) _____								
	Other (describe) _____								
	Other (describe) _____								
	Total								

- What employee benefit types are provided by the PHA that are included in the benefits amount in the above table (i.e. health, retirement, life insurance, etc)?
  - Are there other employee benefit costs associated with the HCV program that are not reflected in the benefit amounts in the above table, such as post employment benefits (OPEBs) for employees that are no longer active? If so what are the employee benefit costs associated with the HCV program are reported in the table above?
2. How do you determine the overhead charges made to the HCV program: (1) through a fee-for-service arrangement as allowed by HUD under Asset Management? or (2) through an allocation of costs?
3. If overhead costs are charged through a fee for service method, how is fee rate determined?
- a. For a HCV management fee, HUD allows a maximum rate of \$12.00 per leased voucher or 20% of HUD's administrative fee.
    - What option and rate is the PHA using?
    - How/why did the PHA choose this option and rate?
    - What was the latest annual HCV management fee that was charged to the HCV program?
  - b. For a HCV bookkeeping fee, HUD allows a maximum rate of \$7.50 per leased voucher.
    - Is the HCV program charged a bookkeeping fee and at what rate?
    - How/why did the PHA choose this rate?
    - What was the latest annual HCV bookkeeping t fee that was charged to the HCV program?
  - c. Is this management / bookkeeping fee more than, lower than, or about the same of the overhead costs charged to the HCV program prior to the establishment of a COCC?
  - d. Is the PHA's COCC producing a net income or net loss?
  - e. Can you please provide last year's COCC balance sheet and income statements and the current COCC budget to actual income statement?
4. If overhead costs are charged through a cost allocation system (allocated overhead FDS Line 91810) but as directed by HUD under the rules of assert management:
- a. How does your agency determine the amount of costs charged to the HCV program?
  - b. What costs are included in the cost pool that is allocated? Are these costs compliant with HUD's guidance as to the establishment of what constitutes front-line vs. fee expenses?
  - c. When your agency reports its financial data to HUD (FASS\_PH submission) does the PHA report its overhead on the allocated overhead FDS line item?
  - d. Can you provide a report that shows the detailed costs associated with the cost pool prior to the amount being allocated out to the different programs?



- e. Are there costs in the cost pool that are being allocated to the HCV program that should not (for example new MIS software upgrade that is for public housing)?
  - f. Can you provide a copy of your current cost allocation plan?
  - g. What was the latest annual overhead cost charged to the HCV program?
5. If overhead costs are charged through a cost allocation plan but does not use requirement of HUD's allocated overhead as required under asset management:
- a. How does your agency determine the amount of overhead costs charged to the HCV program?
  - b. Does your accounting system differentiate between allocated overhead costs and allocated costs that are considered front-line expenses of the program?
  - c. Can you provide a report that shows the detailed costs associated with the cost pool prior to the amount being allocated out to the different programs?
  - d. Are there costs in the cost pool that are being allocated to the HCV program that should?
  - e. Can you provide a copy of your current cost allocation plan?
  - f. What was the latest annual overhead cost charged to the HCV program?
6. Does the PHA provide direct operating services or overhead services to the HCV program for which it does not charge the program?
- a. What are these services or costs?
  - b. Why aren't these charged?
7. Does local or state government or another third party provide additional services or direct funding to specifically supplement the administrative fees of the HCV program?
- a. If yes, who?
  - b. What are these services or how much direct funding is provided?
  - c. For the direct funding, is it for a specific purpose or purposes, or to generally provide more funding for program administration?
  - d. If for a specific purpose, what is that purpose?
8. Other than your independent auditor, software vendor, or office supply vendors, do you use other contractors, consultants, or other PHAs to provide services for the direct operation of the HCV program? If so, for what services do you contract? Please check the services that apply and provide a description of the services that are provided, whether the service is provided by a contractor/consultant or another PHA, and the actual costs incurred for those services in the reporting period.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Service(s) Provided and Provider(s) of Services</b>	<b>Billing Arrangement (for Services Provided by Other PHAs)</b>	<b>Total Cost Charged to HCV Program [Reporting Period]</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer system maintenance			
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer training or support to help PHA staff better use office or program software			
<input type="checkbox"/> Inspections (if so, is it for all inspections or a portion of inspections?)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Activities related to opening the waiting list and receiving and inputting applications.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining the rent reasonable database.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Fee accountant (not auditor) to supplement PHA accounting staff.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal counsel			
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation services			
<input type="checkbox"/> HR or payroll services			
<input type="checkbox"/> Technical expertise (HCV Program)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Preparing the PHA plan or 5-year administrative plan			
<input type="checkbox"/> Preparing the 50058 submission			
<input type="checkbox"/> Printing or mailing recertification packages			
<input type="checkbox"/> Printing or mailing inspection letters			
<input type="checkbox"/> Translation services			
<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal background checks			

If any of the contracts listed above were also for other programs besides the HCV program, please specify the contract and how the cost charged to the HCV program was determined.

- Does any staff of your PHA, from the Executive Director down, provide any services to other PHAs? Check all that apply. For each service checked who is receiving these services, how is your PHA reimbursed for the service that is provided (e.g., flat fee, unit price, other in-kind services etc.), and the actual amount earned for the provision of these services for the reporting period?

<b>Service</b>	<b>PHA Receiving Service</b>	<b>Billing Arrangement</b>	<b>Total Fee Earned by the HCV Program [Reporting Period]</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer system maintenance			
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer training or support to help PHA staff better use office or program software			
<input type="checkbox"/> Inspections (if so, is it for all inspections or a portion of inspections?)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Activities related to opening the waiting list and receiving and inputting applications.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining the rent reasonable database.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Accounting/finance (not auditor) to supplement PHA accounting staff.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal counsel			
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation services			
<input type="checkbox"/> HR or payroll services			
<input type="checkbox"/> Technical expertise (HCV Program)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Preparing the PHA plan or 5-year administrative plan			
<input type="checkbox"/> Preparing the 50058 submission			
<input type="checkbox"/> Printing or mailing recertification packages			
<input type="checkbox"/> Printing or mailing inspection letters			
<input type="checkbox"/> Translation services			
<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal background checks			

If any of the services provided above were also for other programs besides the HCV program, please specify the service and how the cost charged to the HCV program was determined?

10. Do you receive any administrative fee revenue for portability billing to other PHAs? Do you pay a portion of your administrative fee to other PHAs who administer any port-outs from your PHA? *(Note: This question and the next may also be asked in portability section of guide but are more likely to be able to be answered by finance staff.)*
  
11. How do you handle PHAs that are delinquent in payment of HAP and their 80 percent share of their Administrative Fee?
  
12. In the past three years, have you carried out any cost savings measures or other changes in the program? What were the results of these measures?

13. Direct Costs of the HCV Program Other than Personnel Costs

Office building costs;

- What is the approximate square footage of space used by the HCV program, including file storage?
- Does the HCV program own its own building or does it rent space?

**Own**

- If the PHA owns its own building purchased through debt what is the annual principal and interest payment?
- Does the HCV program pay PILOT on this building and if so how much is the annual PILOT payment?
- If the HCV program owns its own building does it rent out space to other PHA programs or other outside entities and if so what is the rent charged?
- If the HCV program owns its own building, does the building have extra capacity that is not being leased to other programs or outside entities?

**Rent**

- If the PHA rents space, how much is the annual rent charged?

**Utilities**

- What utility types (i.e., water, sewer, electric, gas) are charged to the HCV program?
- How are these costs determined and what is the annual cost for each utility type?

**Building Maintenance and Upkeep**

- How is the HCV program charged for maintenance and upkeep costs (building/office repairs, maintenance expenses, grounds, janitorial services, garbage, etc) that are associated with the building?
- What are the average annual costs associated with capital expenses of the building and grounds that are “charged” to the HCV program?
- How are these initial capital outlays paid for and how does the HCV program get charged or contribute to funding these costs?
- What if any was the cost of retrofitting office access security due to EIV compliance requirements?

**Cost of security for PHA office and staffing**

- Are costs charged to the HCV program for security?
- Who provides the security (PHA employees or contract) and what security service are provided?
- What is the annual cost of security charged to the HCV program and how are these costs determined?

Vehicle costs;

- Does the HCV program have any automobile and trucks? If so how many vehicles are in the fleet used by the HCV program?
  - What are the purposes of these vehicles and who use these vehicles?
  - Does the HCV program own or lease/rents these vehicles?
  - If the HCV program leases/rents the vehicles what is the annual lease payment?
  - If the HCV program purchases its vehicles, what is the typical cost of a vehicle and how many years on average does the HCV program keep the vehicle?
  - How are gas and insurance costs for these vehicles charged to the HCV program?
  - How are maintenance costs associated with these vehicles charged to the HCV program?
  - What are the annual costs associated with the HCV vehicle fleet?
- Insurance costs;
- What insurance costs are billed directly to the HCV program and how are the insurance costs charged against the HCV program determined?
    - Property Insurance
    - Liability Insurance
    - Worker's Compensation
    - Other Insurance (1) \_\_\_\_\_
    - Other Insurance (2) \_\_\_\_\_
    - Other Insurance (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- HCV program audit costs;
- What was total cost of PHA's last audit?
  - What was the cost of the audit charged to the HCV program?
  - How was this cost determined?
- Other costs;
- What are the annual costs associated with offices supplies and expenses to the HCV program? How are these costs determined?
  - What are the annual costs of office equipment, including new purchases, maintenance contracts on copiers, printers, and fax machines, etc and how are these costs determined?
  - What are the annual costs of telephones, blackberries, cells phones and other communication devices, including new purchases and maintenance contracts, etc and how are these costs determined?
  - What are the annual costs of servers, computers, software, software licensing, internet access, and other like costs and how are these costs determined?
  - What are the annual postage and other mailing costs associated with the HCV program and how are these costs determined?
  - What, if any, are the annual costs, if any associated with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), 504 compliance, fair housing laws, translation of documents, and interpretation services?
  - What, if any are the annual banking fees for the HCV program, including cost associated with services such as direct deposits, costs of check runs (both to property

owners and utility reimbursement checks to eligible tenants)? How many check runs are done each month on average?

- What, if any are the off-site storage costs for archiving and retrieval of records;
- What, if any are the costs of shredding sensitive records containing social security or other sensitive information?
- What if any are the annual costs of training / conferences / professional association affiliation; publications and administrative expenses associated with pertinent training, conferences and membership in affiliated associations for HCV staff? This cost should also include any amounts associated with travel costs.

### Questions for the HCV Program Director

**Rationale:** Responses to questions are used to evaluate the HCV Director’s knowledge of the HCV program, its status and current issues. Leadership by a strong HCV Director is believed to be an important factor in high performance in the HCV program. The questions also identify areas of efficiency and inefficiency as understood by senior management. Some questions may be addressed under topics above.

1. How long have you been the voucher program Director? Describe your experience with the HCV program before becoming HCV program Director.
2. What do you consider to be your primary responsibilities and duties as program Director?
3. What do you think are the major issues in the voucher program, either its design or local administration?
4. How do you believe the program is viewed in the community by participants? Landlords? Social service organizations? Local government leaders? General public? HUD?
5. The goal of this next question is to help identify the relative importance of the various and sometimes conflicting priorities you have in running the HCV program. If you were given an extra \$100 to spend as you like, how would you allocate the money? Please provide a dollar amount to each of the activities listed below, so that the total adds up to \$100.

Dollar Allocation	Activity	Explanation/Notes
\$ _____	Serving additional families	
\$ _____	Hiring more program staff	
\$ _____	Hiring more administrative/overhead staff	
\$ _____	Training current staff	
\$ _____	Improving office infrastructure (e.g., including	

	physical infrastructure as well as technology)	
\$ _____	Completing required program activities the agency is currently unable to complete	
\$ _____	Adding services or support for families served	
\$ _____	Other (explain)	
\$ <b>100</b> _____	<b>TOTAL</b>	

6. Describe your major challenges in meeting HUD requirements, local policy, and maintaining a productive and efficient work force.
7. What are the major goals of the program for the future?
8. Do you believe this is a high performing and efficient program? Why do you believe so?
9. In what areas do you think your program is particularly cost efficient?
10. In what areas would you like to improve the program's cost efficiency?
11. What aspects of program administration take the most staff time?
12. Are there particular characteristics of your program (such as the client population, the type of housing stock, the presence of an active Legal Aid, project basing or homelessness as policy priorities, etc.) that you think make it more expensive or cheaper for you to administer the HCV program relative to other PHAs? If so, describe
13. What didn't I ask that I should have? What haven't we captured that has a significant impact on the costs to run a high-performing program?

**Beta Test Feedback (To be answered by a sample of staff that participated in the Beta Test)**

***Rationale:** To obtain qualitative information on staff reactions to the different methods of time measurement. It is important to understand how staff react to the methods since staff compliance will be important for ensuring accuracy with the time sheet and random moment sampling methods.*

### **Questions Related to Use of Staff Time Sheets**

1. Did you have any difficulties figuring out how to classify any of your activities? If so – which?
2. How long did it take you to complete the time sheet each day?
3. Do you have any suggestions on how the process could have been made easier for you?

### **Questions Related to Random Moment Sampling (Use of Smart Phones)**

4. Did you have any difficulties figuring out how to classify any of your activities? If so – which?
5. How long did it take you to provide the responses each time the device signaled?
6. About how long did it take you to respond to the signal on average?
7. Do you have any suggestions on how the process could have been made easier for you?

### **Questions Related to Direct Observation**

8. Did the observer interfere with your daily work?
9. How did you handle conversations with clients with the observer present?
10. Do you think the observer was able to understand enough about what you do to be able to record your activities accurately?
11. Do you have any suggestions on how the process could have been made easier for you?

### **Questions for All Respondents:**

12. Thinking about the two approaches used to estimate your time per activity – which do you think was most accurate?
13. Which was least intrusive?
14. Which would you recommend for a national study of administrative costs that will estimate time over a two month period?