

Appendix D. Study Advance Letter

Dear [Executive Director]:

I would like to thank you for participating in the reconnaissance phase of HUD's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program Administrative Fee Study. Your participation has greatly enhanced the full national study of HCV program administrative costs and fees.

We have completed the reconnaissance phase of the study, and are now embarking on a pretest of the methods that will be used in the full cost study. We are selecting three high-performing HCV programs to participate in the pretest, and would like to invite your program to be one of the three.

The Department has contracted with Abt Associates Inc. and with subcontractors and consultants from Phineas Consulting and Research Systems Group Inc., and others to carry out this phase of the study.

The pretest will entail data collection at your PHA for a period of two months between November 2011 and February 2012. If you participate in the pretest, your HCV program staff will be asked to do one of the two activities over the two-month period: (1) Respond to daily periodic text messages from a smart phone device provided to them by the research team asking them to indicate what task they are working on at a given point in time, or (2) Complete daily timesheets documenting the programs and activities they worked on during the day.

We expect that these activities will take staff approximately 15 minutes per day to complete, plus up to 90 minutes of training provided by the research team at the start of the data collection period. In order to protect participating staff, the information collected through the text messaging and timesheets will not be shared with any other staff (including supervisors) at the PHA or HUD. We will also interview the HCV program director, finance department staff, and other HCV program staff as needed to learn about allocation of overhead and non-labor costs to the HCV program and the volume of program transactions (such as inspections and recertifications) over the course of a year.

Because we recognize that participating in the pretest will take time from your staff, we will provide \$10,000 in unrestricted funds to compensate your agency for the time spent on this pretest.

As a reminder, the information collected through the study will be used for this research study only and not for any other purpose. None of the information that you provide to the research team during any phase of the study will harm or count 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.

In addition, information from the timesheets and text messaging on the staff time spent per activity will be kept confidential by the research team and will not be shared with other PHA staff or supervisors.

We thank you for helping us. If you have any questions, please contact Meryl Finkel, the Abt Associates Principal Investigator (617-349-2380, Meryl_Finkel@abtassoc.com) or Dr. Marina Myhre from HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research (202-402-5705, Marina.L.Myhre@HUD.gov).

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.