Appendix B

Appendix B: Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP2) Tracking Panel Baseline Site Visit Topic Guides

The site visit interviews will follow topic guides that will allow for flexibility to accommodate the diverse range of NSP2 strategies involved. Each visit will include at least one interview with the program manager, the data manager, and some combination of interviews with key partners and stakeholders. Interviewers should attempt to cover the topics with all respondents to the extent that they are knowledgeable about the topics given their role and function within the organization. The specific interviews conducted and the types of information gathered at each site will necessarily vary according to the activities being conducted, as well as the respondent's position and role.

Below are three topic guides for the baseline interviews with: 1) Primary Grantees' high-level managers and staff responsible for overall program design; 2) Primary Grantees' day-to-day managers involved in program operations; and 3) Partner organizations.

Primary Grantee Organization – Program Design Staff

Name of Organization:

Interviewee Position:

Date of Interview:

Interviewer:

Prior to interview, check all that apply:

☒ **Grantee has NSP2 partner(s)**
☒ **Grantee was an NSP1 grantee**
☒ **Grantee's target area includes more than one county**

Personal introductions and assurance of privacy: Hello, my name is _[name of researcher]_. I am from the NSP2 evaluation team. As part of our contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development we are visiting NSP2 grantees to assist us in understanding how NSP2 has been implemented and gather data to help us measure the impact of the program on neighborhoods. _This data collection has been approved by OMB (Control Number XXXX-XXXX, expiring on MM/DD/YY). Your participation in this interview is voluntary._

We appreciate your willingness to take the time to talk with us about your strategies and activities to stabilize neighborhoods affected by the foreclosure crisis. The individuals we interview will not be identified by name in any public reports.

Brief description of the evaluation: HUD commissioned a study to evaluate NSP2 with researchers at Abt Associates and the University of Southern California. The overall objective of this project is to evaluate the impacts of NSP2 by tracking outcomes in neighborhoods where NSP2-assisted activities occur.

Purpose of the visit: We are interviewing grantees and partner organizations to gain a baseline understanding of NSP2 grantees' early implementation processes and overall NSP2 strategies. Today we would like to cover several topics regarding program design including: overall NSP2 strategies, approaches to selecting NSP2-targeted tracts, coordination with other community development efforts, use of other funding sources, partner roles, staff experience and capacity, lessons learned from NSP 1, and expectations regarding NSP2 outcomes and impacts.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Overall NSP2 strategy

1. Thinking in broad terms, please describe your organization's overall approach to NSP2, including the activities/projects that your agency is pursuing and the types of neighborhoods that you've decided to target.

2. Staying on the big picture, what factors most influenced the design of your overall approach? For instance, was your approach shaped by specific economic factors, past experience, resources, political influence, and other organizations (partners, government agencies or neighborhood associations)?

3. Does your organization's NSP2 strategy differ across tracts within a county? Across counties [where applicable]?

    3.1.   **If yes**, please describe how the strategy differs and why it's necessary to tailor the strategy.

4. What was the process for designing your NSP2 strategy? Who was involved, over what period of time? Who led this effort?

5. What have been the greatest challenges to implementing your NSP2 strategy? Have you been able to fully overcome these challenges?

    5.1.   **If so**, how?

    5.2.   **If not,** why not?

6. Are there NSP2 program rules that have or are expected to hinder your progress? To support your progress?

    6.1.   **If so,** how?

Partnerships [For grantees with partner organizations]

7. [For grantees with partner organizations] According to your application and action plan, the following organizations are contributing to your NSP2 efforts [populate from the application and action plan]:

    Partner 1_____

    Partner 2_____

    Partner 3_____

    Partner 4_____

    Partner 5_____

    Is that still correct?

       7.1.   **If not**, what changes have been made, and why?

8. [For grantees with partner organizations] What is your organization's role in the partnership, in terms of:

   - Communicating with and managing other organizations?

   - Monitoring progress?

   - Conducting NSP2 eligible activities?

9. [For grantees with partner organizations] Please describe the roles and responsibilities of each partnership organization [populate from application/action plan if possible – check all that apply].

Role/Responsibility	[Partner 1]	[Partner 2]	[Partner 3]	[Partner 4]	[Partner 5]
Securing and managing non-federal funds					
Managing NSP grant and/or other federal funds					
DRGR reporting					
Acquisition					
Rehabilitation					
Redevelopment					
Demolition					
Land banking					
Financing					

10. [For grantees with partner organizations] Have these roles changed since the application and/or action plan?

        10.1. **If so**, how and why?

11. [For grantees with partner organizations] How are program activities coordinated across the partner organizations?

        11.1. Do you have a formal arrangement with partner organizations (e.g., a Memorandum of Understanding) or is it more informal (e.g., personal relationships)?

        11.2. How are decisions about the program (e.g., its focus and planned activities) made? Do partner organizations meet on a regular basis?

Target Area and Properties

12. According to the action plan, you are targeting the following areas: [populate from action plan]. Is that correct? [*Interviewer*: could be yes <u>and</u> no, depending on the tract. Ask follow-up questi0ons accordingly.]

    12.1. **If yes**:

- What criteria, beyond the HUD requirements, did you use to select these targeted tracts?

- Were there any external factors affecting the target selection process (e.g., political pressures that reduced the intended degree of concentration or a lack of opportunities to acquire properties)?

    12.2. **If no**:

- What areas (tracts) are being targeted?

- Why did you make these changes?

13. How do the target tracts' characteristics differ from other NSP2-eligible tracts in the county (especially in terms of characteristics not observed in tract-level data such as neighborhood quality, the public service package, quality of schools, and presence of neighborhood associations)?

14. Are there other tracts in [the MSA] that are very similar and might have also been included in the NSP2 proposal?

    14.1. **If so**, which ones and why weren't they included?

15. Within these targeted tracts, do you purposively select specific properties for NSP2 assistance?

    15.1. **If yes**, can you:

- Describe the process for selecting these properties?

- What factors influence your selection process?

    15.2. **If no**, can you describe how your organization determines where to invest NSP2 assistance?

16. Are activities focused within particular portions of the targeted tracts? Why or why not?

17. [For grantees who received NSP1 grants] Did you address any of the same target areas in NSP1?

    17.1. **If yes**:

- What activities were conducted as part of NSP1?

- How much funding was there for these activities?

- What were the outcomes of these activities?

Concurrent Neighborhood Revitalization Activities

18.   [If applicable] Another NSP2 grantee(s), [insert name of grantee(s)], also received NSP2 funds to conduct neighborhood stabilization activities in this county. Is there any coordination between your work and theirs, either in planning or implementing the program?

> 18.1.   **If so**, what form does this coordination take? What, if any, ongoing communication is there between [grantee] and [other NSP2 grantee(s)]?

19.   Are there other non-NSP2 organizations currently working on community development efforts in the targeted area?

> 19.1.   **If so,** which organizations and what activities are they pursuing?

> 19.2.   Is there any coordination between their work and your implementation of NSP2?

20.   Have other non-NSP funded community development efforts occurred in the target area just prior to 2008/NSP2 program?

> 20.1.   **If so**:

> - By which organizations?

> - What activities were conducted, and what was the outcome/impact?

21.   [If applicable] How do you think your organization's NSP2 efforts relate to these other efforts?

> *Possible probes: Are they working in concert, or perhaps at cross-purposes? Are the same properties targeted? Are the same populations benefitting?*

Funding and Leveraging

22.   According to your most recent QPR, you've allocated your total NSP2 budget of [insert total budget] to the following activities [populate from QPR]:

Activity	% of Budget (QPR)	% of Budget (Interviewee)
Acquisition		
Rehabilitation		
Redevelopment		
Demolition		
Land Banking		
Financial		

Is this correct?

22.1. **If no**, can you please provide the proper allocation percentages?

23. Do you foresee any changes to this allocation in the future?

23.1. **If yes**, how so and why?

24. According to your original application, your organization is leveraging the following non-federal resources: [populate from application].

Leveraging Source	$ Amount (Application)

Has that changed since the application?

24.1. **If so**:

- How and why?

- How is this changing your NSP2 strategies, plans, and activities?

25. What, if any, federal resources (CDBG, HOME, other) are being used to achieve the desired outcomes?

26. Please describe the process of obtaining these non-federal leveraged resources. Are you confronting any difficulties accessing promised funds?

Staff and Organizational Capacity

27. How many people within your organization work on NSP2 activities, and how are they organized?

28. Were any of these people hired specifically to conduct NSP2 activities?

28.1. **If so**, why (to increase existing staff capacity, or to add a new skill set to your organization's capacity)?

29. Was (or will) there any specific training held for staff members related to NSP2 or the specific strategies undertaken using NSP2 funds?

30. Has your organization received any form of technical assistance related to NSP2?

    30.1. **If so**, please describe:

        • The assistance your organization received?

        • Whether it has affected your ability to accomplish NSP activities?

31. To what extent does your organization use technological tools to help observe and locate target properties (e.g., some tools provide visual data like PolicyMap or GIS; others are coupled with structural arrangements such as the ability to bid on properties before other competitors through FirstLook).?

    31.1. **If used**, have these tools helped or hindered implementation? Please explain both how and why.

NSP1 Experience [For grantees who received NSP1 grants]

32. [For grantees who received NSP1 grants] Please describe your organization's role in NSP1.

33. [For grantees who received NSP1 grants] What were the primary challenges of NSP1? What were the primary successes?

34. [For grantees who received NSP1 grants] How did your NSP1 experience affect your NSP2 planning or implementation (e.g., staffing, staff training, partnerships, activities pursued, target area, monitoring process, technical assistance, technology)?

NSP2 Outcomes

35. According to your action plan, you originally hoped to accomplish the following outcomes [populate from action plan]:

Activity	# of Units (AP)	# Beneficiaries (AP)
Acquisition		
Rehabilitation		
Redevelopment		

Demolition		
Land Banking		
Financial		

Are these still accurate?

      35.1. **If no**, how and why have these expectations changed?

36.   Does the pace of NSP2 activities to date match the expectations outlined in your action plan? Why or why not?

37.   According to your application, you originally hoped to accomplish the following outcomes *outside of the five specific NSP2 activities*:

Additional Outcomes	# of Units (application)	# Beneficiaries (application)

Are these still accurate?

      37.1. **If no**, how and why have these expectations changed?

38.   Overall, how do you think the program's outcomes will result in neighborhood impacts?

Possible probes: beautification, job market, safety, surrounding neighborhoods, housing prices increase or decline, number of foreclosures increase or decline

Wrap-up/Conclusion

This concludes my questions for you. Do you have any other input you'd like to provide?

Thank you for your time.

Primary Grantee Organization – Program Operations Staff

Name of Organization:

Interviewee Position:

Date of Interview:

Interviewer:

Prior to interview, check all that apply:

- ☒ **Grantee has partner organizations in NSP2 activities**
- ☒ **Grantee was an NSP1 grantee**
- ☒ **Grantee's target area includes more than one county**

Personal introductions and assurance of privacy: Hello, my name is _[name of researcher]_. I am from the NSP2 evaluation team. As part of our contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development we are visiting NSP2 grantees to assist us in understanding how NSP2 has been implemented and gather data to help us measure the impact of the program on neighborhoods. _This data collection has been approved by OMB (Control Number XXXX-XXXX, expiring on MM/DD/YY). Your participation in this interview is voluntary._

We appreciate your willingness to take the time to talk with us about your strategies and activities to stabilized neighborhoods affected by the foreclosure crisis. The individuals we interview will not be identified by name in any public reports.

Brief description of the evaluation: HUD commissioned a study to evaluate NSP2 with researchers at Abt Associates and the University of Southern California. The overall objective of this project is to evaluate the impacts of NSP2 by tracking outcomes in neighborhoods where NSP2-assisted activities occur.

Purpose of the visit: We are interviewing grantees and partner organizations to gain a baseline understanding of NSP2 grantees' early implementation processes and overall NSP2 strategies. Today we would like to cover several topics regarding program operations including: specific NSP2 activities and progress as well as any obstacles you have encountered.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Overview of Activities

1. Thinking fairly broadly about your organization's NSP2 activities, based on your most recent action plan, your organization is currently pursuing [list appropriate activities]. Is this accurate?

    1.1. **If no**, can you describe (a) how the activities changed and (b) why did they change— for instance, did they change because of resources or budget constraints, shifting neighborhood needs, capacity issues, or some external influence?

Property Acquisition Process [Grantees doing acquisition and rehab, demolition, redevelopment, and/or land banking]

2. How are specific properties identified and selected? What factors influence the selection of properties for NSP2 assistance (e.g., is concentration of properties a factor)?

3. Are there properties that are identified by your organization but are not pursued?
    3.1. **If so**, why are they not pursued?

4. Are there properties that are pursued but that the program is not able to acquire?
    4.1. **If so**, why is the program not able to acquire them?

5. Is there a type of property (tax lien, short sale, foreclosure, etc.) that is easier for you to acquire than another?

    Possible probes: *complicated title issues that were cumbersome/expensive to address, property owners that would not reasonably negotiate, properties that required too much demolition/site work*

6. Does competition from other sources (e.g., investors) for the properties in your targeted tracts affect your ability to acquire properties?

7. Does the acquisition process for foreclosures differ from the process for short sales?

8. In general, how and when do you decide what intervention (demolition, rehab, or land banking) is suitable for a property?

Rehabilitation Process [Grantees doing acquisition and rehab]

9. Once a property is acquired, what are the steps that the property goes through in the rehabilitation process? Walk me through the process, from beginning to end, of what happens to a lot or unit when it is targeted for rehabilitation.

10. How long does each of these steps take? Establish a rough timeline.

11. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it at the start of rehab, completion of rehab, sign posted on property indicating acquisition by organization, other?

12. Who are the expected beneficiaries for the activity? [May need to ask for different target areas.]

Possible probes: Households with different income levels, demographics, existing neighborhood residents, owners vs. renters, will any activities benefit investors?

13. How are the beneficiaries selected? Specifically, how is the eligibility of renters/purchasers for NSP2 units determined?

14. What requirements or procedures are there for ensuring long-term affordability of the units?

Redevelopment Process [Grantees doing redevelopment]

15. Once a property is acquired, what are the steps that the property goes through in the redevelopment process? Walk me through the process, from beginning to end, of what happens to a lot or unit when it is targeted for redevelopment.

16. How long does each of these steps take? Establish a rough timeline.

17. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it at the start of redevelopment, completion of redevelopment, sign posted on property indicating acquisition by organization, other?

18. Who are the expected beneficiaries for the activity? [May need to ask for different target areas].

Possible probes: Households with different income levels, demographics, existing neighborhood residents, owners vs. renters, will any activities benefit investors?

19. How are the beneficiaries selected? Specifically, how is the eligibility of renters/purchasers for NSP2 units determined?

20. What requirements or procedures are there for ensuring long-term affordability of the units?

Demolition Process [Grantees doing demolition]

21. Once a property is acquired, what are the steps that the property goes through in the demolition process? Walk me through the process, from beginning to end, of what happens to a lot or unit when it is targeted for demolition.

22. How long does each of these steps take? Establish a rough timeline.

23. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it at the start of demolition, completion of demolition, sign posted on property indicating acquisition by organization, other?

24. How and when do you decide what should happen to the property once it is demolished (e.g., green space, redevelopment, land banking, sell to outside investors)?

25. Who are the expected beneficiaries for each activity? [May need to ask for different target areas].

> *Possible probes: Households with different income levels, demographics, existing neighborhood residents, owners vs. renters, will any activities benefit investors?*

Land Banking Process [Grantees doing land banking]

26. Once a property is acquired, what are the steps that the property goes through? Walk me through the process, from beginning to end, of what happens to a lot or unit when it is targeted for land banking.

27. How long does each of these steps take? Establish a rough timeline.

28. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it at the start of land banking, completion of land banking, sign posted on property indicating acquisition by organization, other?

29. What are your ultimate goals/expectations for the land banked property?

Financing Process [Grantees doing financing]

30. What type of financing are you providing (e.g., providing funding for development organizations, soft-second mortgages to individuals, rent assistance)?

31. Who are the expected beneficiaries for this activity?

> *Possible probes: Different income levels, demographics, preference for existing neighborhood residents, owners vs. renters, will any activities benefit investors?*

32. What are the eligibility requirements for potential beneficiaries? (e.g., individuals: financial literacy training, proof of income levels, credit score; organizations: demonstrated capacity)

33. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it when individuals purchase homes, begin financial education program, other?

Obstacles and Challenges

34. What obstacles or challenges have you encountered to carrying out the action plan?

    Possible probes: Difficulty purchasing desired properties, difficulty finding qualified buyers for rehabbed NSP2 properties, difficulty achieving the intended degree of concentration of activities.

    34.1. **If so**:
    - How have you addressed these obstacles?
    - Have some of these obstacles or challenges been insurmountable? If so, why?

35. What strategies have worked well and why?

36. Are there NSP2 program rules that have or are expected to hinder your progress? To support your progress? If so, how?

    Possible probes: Is NSP2 flexible in allowing changes to the strategy or make budget revisions?

Wrap-up/Conclusion

This concludes my questions for you. Do you have any other input you'd like to provide?

Thank you for your time.

Partner Organizations

Name of Organization(s):

Interviewee(s) Position:

Date of Interview:

Interviewer:

Personal introductions and assurance of privacy: Hello, my name is *[name of researcher]*. I am from the NSP2 evaluation team. As part of our contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development we are visiting NSP2 grantees and their partners to assist us in understanding how NSP2 has been implemented and gather data to help us measure the impact of the program on neighborhoods. *This data collection has been approved by OMB (Control Number XXXX-XXXX, expiring on MM/DD/YY). Your participation in this interview is voluntary.*

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Do you have any questions before we begin?

Partnerships

1. I understand that you are partners with [primary grantee] in implementing NSP2. What is your organization's role in the partnership, in terms of:

    • Designing and implementing the strategy?

    • Communicating with and managing other organizations?

    • Monitoring progress?

- Conducting NSP2 activities?

2. Has your role changed since the original partnership agreement?

    2.1. **If so**, how and why?

3. How do you coordinate program activities with [insert lead organization]?

4. Have you worked with [insert lead organization] previously?

    4.1. **If so**, in what capacity/for what type of activities?

Staff and Organizational Capacity

5. How many people within your organization work on NSP2 activities, and how are they organized?

6. Were any of these people hired specifically to conduct NSP2 activities?

    6.1. **If so**, why (to increase existing staff capacity, or to add a new skill set to your organization's capacity?)

7. Was (or will) there any specific training held for staff members related to NSP2 or the specific strategies undertaken using NSP2 funds?

8. Has your organization received any form of technical assistance related to NSP2?

    8.1. **If so**, please describe:

- The assistance your organization received?
- Whether it has affected your ability to accomplish NSP activities?

9. To what extent does your organization use technological tools to help observe and locate target properties (e.g., some tools provide visual data like PolicyMap or GIS; others are coupled with structural arrangements such as the ability to bid on properties before other competitors through FirstLook)?

    9.1. **If used**, have these tools affected implementation? Please explain both how and why.

[If applicable] NSP1 Experience

10. Please describe your organization's role in NSP1.

11. What were the primary challenges of NSP1? What were the primary successes?

12. How has your NSP1 experience affected your planning and implementation process for NSP2 (e.g., staffing, staff training, partnerships, activities pursued, target area, monitoring process, technical assistance, technology)?

Property Acquisition Process [Partners responsible for doing acquisition and rehab, demolition, redevelopment, and/or land banking]

24. How are specific properties identified and selected? What factors influence the selection of properties for NSP2 assistance (e.g., is concentration of properties a factor)?

25. Are there properties that are identified by your organization but are not pursued?

> 25.1.   **If so**, why are they not pursued?

26. Are there properties that are pursued but that the program is not able to acquire?

> 26.1.   **If so**, why is the program not able to acquire them?

27. Is there a type of property (tax lien, short sale, foreclosure, etc.) that is easier for you to acquire than another?

> *Possible probes: complicated title issues that were cumbersome/expensive to address, property owners that would not reasonably negotiate, properties that required too much demolition/site work*

Does competition from other sources (e.g., investors) for the properties in your targeted tracts affect your ability to acquire properties?

28. Does the acquisition process for foreclosures differ from the process for short sales? If so, how?

29. In general, how and when do you decide what intervention is suitable for a property?

Rehabilitation Process [Partners responsible for doing rehab]

30. Once a property is acquired, what are the steps that the property goes through in the rehabilitation process? Walk me through the process, from beginning to end, of what happens to a lot or unit when it is targeted for rehabilitation.

31. How long does each of these steps take? Establish a rough timeline.

32. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it at the start of rehab, completion of rehab, sign posted on property indicating acquisition by organization, other?

33. Who are the expected beneficiaries for the activity? [May need to ask for different target areas].

    Possible probes: Households with different income levels, demographics, existing neighborhood residents, owners vs. renters, will any activities benefit investors?

34. How are the beneficiaries selected? Specifically, how is the eligibility of renters/purchasers for NSP2 units determined?

35. What requirements or procedures are there for ensuring long-term affordability of the units?

Redevelopment Process [Partners responsible for doing redevelopment]

36. Once a property is acquired, what are the steps that the property goes through in the redevelopment process? Walk me through the process, from beginning to end, of what happens to a lot or unit when it is targeted for redevelopment.

37. How long does each of these steps take? Establish a rough timeline.

38. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it at the start of redevelopment, completion of redevelopment, sign posted on property indicating acquisition by organization, other?

39. Who are the expected beneficiaries for the activity? [May need to ask for different target areas].

Possible probes: Households with different income levels, demographics, existing neighborhood residents, owners vs. renters, will any activities benefit investors?

40. How are the beneficiaries selected? Specifically, how is the eligibility of renters/purchasers for NSP2 units determined?

41. What requirements or procedures are there for ensuring long-term affordability of the units?

Demolition Process [Partners responsible for doing demolition]

42. Once a property is acquired, what are the steps that the property goes through in the demolition process? Walk me through the process, from beginning to end, of what happens to a lot or unit when it is targeted for demolition.

43. How long does each of these steps take? Establish a rough timeline.

44. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it at the start of demolition, completion of demolition, sign posted on property indicating acquisition by organization, other?

45. How and when do you decide what should happen to the property once it is demolished (e.g., green space, redevelopment, land banking, sell to outside investors)?

46. Who are the expected beneficiaries for each activity? [May need to ask for different target areas].

Possible probes: Households with different income levels, demographics, existing neighborhood residents, owners vs. renters, will any activities benefit investors?

Land Banking Process [Partners responsible for doing land banking]

47. Once a property is acquired, what are the steps that the property goes through? Walk me through the process, from beginning to end, of what happens to a lot or unit when it is targeted for land banking.

48. How long does each of these steps take? Establish a rough timeline.

49. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it at the start of land banking, completion of land banking, sign posted on property indicating acquisition by organization, other?

50. What are your ultimate goals/expectations for the land banked property?

Financing Process [when applicable]

51. What type of financing are you providing? (e.g., providing funding for development organizations, soft-second mortgages to individuals, rent assistance)

52. Who are the expected beneficiaries for this activity?

> *Possible probes: Different income levels, demographics, preference for existing neighborhood residents, owners vs. renters, will any activities benefit investors?*

53. What are the eligibility requirements for potential beneficiaries? (e.g., individuals: financial literacy training, proof of income levels, credit score; organizations: demonstrated capacity)

54. When is the NSP2 investment visible to the community? Is it when individuals purchase homes, begin financial education program, other?

Obstacles and Challenges

55. What obstacles or challenges to carrying out your organization's NSP2 responsibilities have you encountered?

> *Possible probes: Difficulty purchasing desired properties, difficulty finding qualified buyers for rehabbed NSP2 properties, difficulty achieving the intended degree of concentration of activities.*

> 55.1.   How have you addressed these obstacles?
> 55.2.   Have some of these obstacles or challenges been insurmountable? If so, why?

56. What strategies have worked well and why?

57. Are there NSP2 program rules that have or are expected to support or hinder [grantee]'s progress?

Possible probes: Is NSP2 flexible in allowing changes to the strategy or make budget revisions?

Wrap-up/Conclusion

This concludes my questions for you. Do you have any other input you'd like to provide?

Thank you for your time.