

Appendix B. Telephone Script

Hello, this is _____ calling from Abt Associates Inc. The Department of Housing and Urban Development has contracted with us to carry out a study of administrative costs in the housing choice voucher program.

You should have received a letter from HUD describing the study a few days ago. Do you recall receiving that letter?

[IF PHA RECEIVED THE LETTER]: Good. Why don't I start by asking if you have any questions after reading the letter? [ANSWER QUESTIONS THAT COME UP.]

[IF PHA DID NOT RECEIVE THE LETTER]: No problem, it should be coming soon and I can also forward you a copy by e-mail.

The goal of this study is to estimate the cost of administering a high-performing HCV program. The study will provide HUD with insights into the factors that affect HCV program administrative costs, which will enable HUD to develop a new formula for providing agencies with administrative fees. We expect that the new formula will reimburse agencies for the full spectrum of tasks they carry out.

The study is being carried out in three phases. The first phase involves identifying a sample of up to 60 high performing HCV programs to participate in a national study of administrative fees and costs. The sample is designed to reflect the diversity of high performing HCV programs by size, location, voucher types administered, and other factors that could affect the cost of administering the program. Through site visits conducted in 2011, we have identified approximately 35 programs that met the study's criteria for high performance and are sufficiently large to be included in the study. However, we need to identify additional PHAs to achieve the desired sample size of up to 60. Once the study sample has been identified, the next phases of the study involve testing the data collection approach for the full study (this is currently underway) and then implementing it at up to 60 sites. The full national study is expected to begin in late summer 2012 and continue through 2014.

Your PHA has been selected for consideration for the study because of a consistent pattern of SEMAP high-performance over the past few years. We randomly selected 45 agencies from among the approximately 755 agencies that received a High Performer designation on SEMAP in three of the past four years (2007-2010) or in all years in which the agency was scored (if it was not scored in all four years). We will be conducting site visits to these 45 agencies, including your agency should you agree to participate, to determine whether the HCV programs meet the criteria for inclusion in the full national study.

Your participation will involve allowing us to visit for two days to talk to staff at your agency about your program. Topics will include: program size, tenant characteristics, leasing goals and activity, waiting list, selection preferences, briefing, issuance, search assistance, market conditions, HQS, rent reasonableness, landlord outreach, expanding housing opportunities, and financial capacity. While on site we will also a review a sample of intake files and a sample of participant files. Prior to going on

site, we will also ask to review written documents related to HCV program administration, such as the Administrative Plan, as well as HCV program staff rosters and budget documents.

While your PHA will not be compensated for these visits, we expect that your agency will receive compensation if selected for the next phase of the study. Up to 60 PHAs will participate in the full national study, which will involve two months of data collection at each PHA starting in summer 2012. By agreeing to participate in this first phase of the study, you are agreeing to participate in the next phase as well, barring any unforeseen circumstances at your agency.

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.

Do you have any questions about the study? [ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS]

Would your agency be willing to participate in the study?

[IF AGENCY SAYS NO:] Would you like me to provide more information on what will be required so you can think about it further?

[IF YES, SEND THE SITE VISIT ADVANCE PACKAGE.]

[IF NO]: Thanks very much for your time.

[IF AGENCY SAYS NOT SURE:] I will send you some more information on what will be required of your agency. Then we can schedule a time to talk again.

[SEND THE SITE VISIT ADVANCE PACKAGE AND SCHEDULE NEXT CALL.]

[IF AGENCY SAYS YES:] Great, the next step is to start to schedule the site visit. I will send you a list of the items we will be covering in the interview and the documents we'd like to see on site, and then we can talk again about when to schedule the visit and which PHA staff need to be involved. Are you the right person to be the main source of contact for the study, or would you like to designate someone else?

[IDENTIFY MAIN SOURCE OF CONTACT AND NEXT STEPS – E.G., TIME TO CALL BACK TO DISCUSS FURTHER ONCE PHA HAS REVIEWED THE SITE VISIT ADVANCE PACKAGE.]

Thank you very much. We look forward to working with you on this study.