

B. Statistical Methods

B.1 Potential Response Universe

The universe of public housing agencies—all 4,085 agencies—will be invited to participate in the Study of PHAs Engagement with Homeless Households web-based census.

B.1.1 Study Participants

The primary respondent from each PHA will be the executive director. However, in many instances we anticipate that multiple respondents may be necessary to complete the census. Particularly in larger agencies, it is likely that the Executive Director will complete some parts of the census, but staff from within the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs may need to complete the parts of the census related to their respective programs. Thus, it is possible to have from one to three respondents per PHA working on the census.

B.2 Statistical Methods

B.2.1 Sampling Plan

This Study of PHA Engagement with Homeless Households PHA Census does not require a sampling plan, as the universe of public housing agencies will be invited to participate in the census. The census invitation will be sent to the executive directors of all 4,085 PHAs using contact information provided by HUD. The approach to maximizing response is presented below in Section B.3.

B.2.2 Justification of Level of Accuracy

The study will report on the census results mainly using analytic techniques such as descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations that describe the extent and types of PHA engagement with homeless households. Because this is a census and we anticipate a high response rate, the resulting estimates should have a high level of accuracy. However, we will conduct analysis for non-response bias to decide whether to weight the data to be representative of the universe of PHAs. The non-response analysis will focus on characteristics of PHAs that we anticipate may affect the extent to which the PHA makes efforts to engage with homeless people, the key outcome we are seeking to measure with these data. For example, we will test for differential non-response based on the size of the PHA, whether it serves a metropolitan area, whether the area has a large number of homeless people, and the PHA's program type (whether the PHA has both Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing programs, only a Public Housing program, or only an HCV program).

B.2.3 Unusual Problems Requiring Specialized Sampling Procedures

There are no unusual problems associated with this sample. The study seeks responses from the entire population of Public Housing Agencies rather than sampling from that population.

B.2.4 Any Use of Periodic (less frequent than annual) Data Collection Cycles to Reduce Burden

Not applicable to this study.

B.3 Maximizing Response Rates

HUD will introduce the study through an email message to PHA executive directors. HUD maintains and frequently updates a list of PHA email addresses. Later on the same day that HUD sends out its message to PHAs, HUD’s contractor will send out a separate email invitation with a link to the web survey. This will include the URL for the web census, the log in information, and a deadline date. If a respondent prefers to complete the census over the phone, a toll-free number will be provided that he/she can call.

We are aiming for an overall response rate of 80 percent, and we consider this to be achievable based on recent experience with similar studies that survey program administrators. We would like to achieve an even higher response rate from the largest PHAs and from large PHAs that serve jurisdictions with a substantial portion of the Nation's homeless population, for two reasons: 1) we want to be able to report on those PHAs separately, despite the fact that they constitute a relatively small percentage of all 4,085 PHAs, and 2) we want to focus the follow-up telephone survey on specific PHAs within this group based on how they respond to the census. Exhibit B-1 below shows a distribution by size of all PHAs.

Exhibit B-1. Distribution of Size of PHAs in Universe, 2011

Frequency	0 PH Units	< 250 Units	250-1,249 Units	1,250-6,660 Units	> 6,660 Units	Total
0 HCV units	90	1,493	143	5	1	1,732
1 - 49 units	83	91	3	1	0	178
50 - 249 units	390	404	106	0	0	900
250 - 499 units	173	152	114	4	0	443
500 - 1,249 units	149	134	147	14	0	444
1,250 - 9,999 units	96	41	135	82	1	355
10,000 or more units	8	3	1	12	9	33
Total	989	2,318	649	118	11	4,085

Source: Inventory Management System (IMS)/ PIH Information Center (PIC), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, updated 10/1/2011. Includes only PH units currently under management.

We will utilize a dynamic follow-up protocol. This allows for quick reaction and adoption of effective methods in raising response rates overall and for specific groups of PHAs. These methods will include monitoring of response rates for different groups of PHAs on a weekly basis and alter that approach on the basis of that information. Interviewers assigned to the phone follow-up effort will be drawn from the contractor’s senior level interviewer group with experience in handling gatekeepers and other challenges associated with interviewing busy professionals. Priority cases will be assigned to the most senior among the executive interviewer corps, or to refusal conversion specialists as needed.

Based on previous experience, we expect roughly one-quarter of PHAs to respond to the census within a few days of receipt. Those PHAs that fail to respond to the census within 21 days of the start will receive the first reminder email, and by one month we would expect the response rate to climb to between 40-50 percent.

After the second email reminder, the targeting will be adjusted on a weekly basis, depending on which groups of PHAs are lagging behind in response rate, with a priority focus to get high response rates from the largest PHAs and from large PHAs that serve the jurisdictions with a substantial

proportion of the national homeless population, but still aiming for a large enough response from other PHAs to make reliable national estimates by size and type of PHA. To encourage response, we will enlist the help of the PHA industry organizations. We have worked with these groups on the content of the survey and on question wording. We will work with these organizations to develop a letter, email, or newsletter article in support of the census, encouraging the executive directors of PHAs to participate at various stages throughout the recruitment process. The messages sent out by these industry groups will echo and supplement HUD's messaging. We believe that strategically timed invitations from a few well-respected sources will be more effective than repeated invitations from the same source. We will ask industry groups to time their efforts at 10 days after the start of the census, and/or at any other time throughout the data collection period that is convenient for these groups.

The HUD contractor will send up to four email reminders to all invited PHAs who fail to respond after the first invitation.

- After the 2nd email attempt, all non-responders will receive a reminder phone call from professional interviewing staff.
- After the 3rd email attempt, a second reminder phone call will be made to priority PHAs and, to the extent needed to achieve a high response from all types of PHAs, to other groups.
- A 4th email reminder will be sent to all PHAs.
- Telephone administration will be attempted for all non-responders among priority PHAs and to other groups, as needed, after the email and phone reminders have been exhausted.

Using these techniques, along with encouraging emails from HUD and public housing industry groups, we expect to achieve an overall response rate of at least 80 percent to the PHA census and a substantially higher response rate for the priority groups.

The recent experience used by the HUD contractor with this recruitment approach has proven to be successful in achieving high response rates. In fact, in a recent HUD study of HPRP Homelessness Prevention with HPRP grantees and subgrantees, the HUD Contractor used a very similar approach. Although this study is still in the field, a response rate of 84 percent has been achieved for grantee respondents, and an overall response rate of 74 percent has been achieved. Similarly, the HUD Contractor programmed and fielded web surveys for over 6,000 respondents for a study under contract to the National Science Foundation. The contact protocol for that study consists of multiple modes: e-mail, phone call reminders, and US Mail invitations have been sent. Up to four e-mail invitations were sent to non-responders. The response rate is above 80 percent for this study.

B.4 Tests of Procedures or Methods

HUD personnel, staff from Contractor Abt Associates, and other project team members, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials and Council on Large Public Housing Agencies' staff reviewed draft versions of the PHA census instrument. Their comments are reflected in the version of the PHA Census included in this package.

During the review period of the request for OMB clearance, the study team completed a pretest with seven PHAs. Given the rapid turnaround required for pretest and revision, we were not able to pretest the survey on the web. Thus, we asked PHAs participating in the pretest to complete the instrument on paper. (A paper copy is somewhat similar in self-administration to a web-based instrument.)

When the PHA staff finished the survey, they included notes directly on the survey or completed a short debriefing questionnaire—either on the phone with an interviewer or on paper. This debriefing questionnaire was intended to capture their thoughts on the survey, any questions or sections that were challenging, their experience on the length of time to complete the survey, and any suggested improvements. It also captured feedback on the content of the advance letter and how useful it was in helping the respondent prepare for the survey.

We obtained feedback from all seven PHAs that pretested the survey. As a result of the pretest, we modified the wording of approximately ten of the optional responses to questions, in order to clarify and delineate between the answer choices for the user. The feedback indicated that the estimate of time to complete the survey, twenty minutes, was correct.

B.5 Statistical Consultation and Information Collection Agents

HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research will work with the contractor, Abt Associates, to conduct the proposed data collection. Anne Fletcher, a Social Science Analyst in HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research, Program Evaluation Division, serves as Government Technical Representative (GTR). Within Abt Associates, Dr. Jill Khadduri (the study’s Principal Investigator) and Dr. Judith Feins (the study’s Project Quality Advisor) contributed to the review of the PHA census instrument and this information request.