

**The Neighborhood Stabilization Program  
Tracking Panel:  
OMB Clearance Package Appendix B**

**Draft**

**October 9, 2012**

## Follow-up Site Visit Protocol: Program Design Staff

Name of Organization:

County:

Interviewee Name and Position:

Date of Interview:

Interviewers:

Information to complete prior to interview

Check all that apply:

- Grantee is a member of a consortium
- Grantee was an NSP1 grantee
- Grantee's target area includes more than one county
- Other NSP2 grantees are targeting the county

List other grantees:

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### Introduction

*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 xxx-xxxx, expiring on xx/xx/xxxx). 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. To be clear, the study is not a HUD monitoring visit or audit of your organization, but rather an exploration of how a large national initiative to stabilize communities functions under different circumstances.

*Purpose of the visit:* In the summer of 2012, we visited 29 grantees and their partner organizations to gain a baseline understanding of NSP2 grantees’ early implementation processes and overall NSP2 strategies. In these follow-up site visits, we are interviewing the same grantees and partner organizations to gain an understanding of NSP2 grantees’ strategies and outcomes and how they relate to baseline expectations. Today we would like to cover several topics regarding program design including: overall NSP2 strategies, neighborhood outcomes and impact, obstacles the [grantee] encountered, and lessons learned from the NSP2 experience.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Overall NSP2 Strategy**

This interview is designed to build on the information your organization provided during our last visit, in summer 2012. As we go through each topic, we will primarily be talking about changes that have occurred since our last interview.

1. Based on the most recent QPR, [lead grantee’s] intervention strategy involved the following NSP2 activities and volume of activity (e.g., expected number of units/properties).

1.1 Is the information about NSP2 activities and units/properties accurate for your organization? [Make corrections if necessary]

1.2 If this has changed, please describe how and why.

[Site visitor: populate expected number of units/properties for each NSP2 activity and partner from most recent QPR]

	Lead Grantee: (# of Units)	Partner 1: (# of Units)	Partner 2: (# of Units)	Partner 3: (# of Units)	Total
Financing (A)					
Acquisition & Rehabilitation (B)					
Land banking (C)					
Demolition (D)					
Redevelopment (E)					

*Possible probes: Were there external factors? Changing market conditions, competition from other buyers for foreclosed properties, buyer interest, and changes in grantee capacity constraints? Did this activity no longer fit the needs of the targeted area?*

2. In general, are your overall objectives for NSP2 the same now as they were back when we last spoke (summer 2012)? Please explain.

2.1 If it has changed, please describe how and why your objectives have changed.

**Partnership Arrangements [For grantees with partner organizations]**

3. In addition to pursuing NSP2 eligible activities, organizations were also responsible for the following tasks: [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview]

Role	Lead Grantee: (Y/N)	Partner 1: (Y/N)	Partner 2: (Y/N)	Partner 3: (Y/N)
Communicating with and managing other organizations				
Monitoring progress				
Securing and managing non-federal funds				
Managing NSP grant and/or other federal funds				
DRGR reporting				

Has your organization’s role or responsibilities changed since our last interview?

3.1 If so, how and why?

*Possible probes: Partner organization changes, increased or decreased organizational capacity*

4. In thinking about your partnership arrangements, what have been the greatest challenges to implementing your NSP2 strategy within this arrangement? In other words, are there specific aspects of your partnership arrangements that you believe have made it harder to implement NSP2?

5. Have you been able to overcome these challenges?

5.1 If so, how and what were the consequences until it was resolved?

5.2 If not, why not and what has been the consequence?

6. Conversely, are there specific aspects of your partnership arrangements that you believe have supported or facilitated the overall implementation of NSP2?

6.1 If so, please explain these factors/aspects and how they facilitated implementation.

6.2 If no, has that led you to conclude anything about the value of your partnership arrangement?

7. On the whole, thinking about your partnership arrangements, give me a sense for how well this arrangement facilitates your ability to do the following? Please explain each, e.g., How has it made it better? How has it made it worse?

7.1 Understand what your partners are doing

7.2 Coordinate activities across partners

7.3 Share experiences across partners, e.g., lessons learned, best practices, and strategies

7.4 Share data across partners

7.5 Select your NSP2 tracts

7.6 Select properties for intervention

7.7 Build your organization's internal capacity

7.8 Complete your NSP2 activities

7.9 Accomplish your overall objectives

8. To what extent are partnership structures and types important factors in programs' success?

8.1 What partnership structures and types would you most recommend?

**Target Area**

9. When we last spoke, you were targeting \_\_\_\_ [insert number] tracts with NSP2 funds. Has the number of targeted NSP2 tracts or the areas being targeted changed since then?

9.1 If so, please describe how (by how many) and why your target areas changed.

9.2 Has your approach for targeting tracts for NSP2 activity changed since we last spoke? If so, how and why?

10. [If applicable] When we last spoke, you had different strategies for different types of tracts. [Insert summary for site from baseline interview, e.g., tracts with no market demand or extremely high rates of abandonment were targeted for demolition, while "tipping point" neighborhoods were targeted for purchase/rehab.] Has your approach to targeting tracts for specific NSP2 activities changed in any way?

10.1 If so, please describe how and why it changed.

11. [If applicable] Also, in our last discussion, we talked about the level of NSP2 concentration and you indicated that \_\_\_\_ [fill in, e.g., you were unable to concentrate some of your activities because you had to find properties that were the "low-hanging fruit" to purchase/demolish in order to meet your spending deadlines]. Did this change at all since we last spoke?

11.1 If yes, how did it change and why (e.g., what happened to allow you to do this, or what happened to prevent you from achieving the desired level of concentration)?

11.2 If you were not able to concentrate activities to the degree desired, how do you think this affected your NSP2 implementation, and in particular, the potential impact on the surrounding community?

**Obstacles, Challenges, and Supports**

12. Among your organization's NSP2 activities, which activity was the most difficult to implement?

12.1 Why?

12.2 Were you able to overcome these barriers, and if so, how?

13. Conversely, among your organization's NSP2 activities, which activity was the least difficult to implement?

- 13.1 What made it easier to implement than the other activities?
- 14. Were there any specific features about the program itself—i.e., its rules and regulations—that either facilitated or inhibited your ability to implement the program well or in a timely way?
  - 14.1 If yes, what were they and how did they affect your implementation?
- 15. On the whole, looking across all aspects of the program—e.g., program rules, your partnerships, the selection of tracts and properties, working with other stakeholders in the community, your relationships with private developers and lenders, politics, executing the NSP activities, and so on—what have been the greatest challenges your organization has encountered in implementing your NSP2 strategy?
- 16. Have you been able to overcome these challenges?
  - 16.1 If so, how?
  - 16.2 If not, why not and what have been the consequences?
- 17. Conversely, what factors do you believe have supported or facilitated your organization’s NSP2 implementation? For example, have there been specific developments, people, or events that seemed to have pushed the program’s implementation forward?

**Concurrent Neighborhood Development Activities/Funding/TA**

- 18. Based on our previous discussion, you indicated that the following non-NSP2 organizations or initiatives were working on community development efforts in the targeted areas [*Site visitor: populate from baseline interview, and note that some tracts may have more activity than others*].
  - 18.1 Are these efforts still occurring in the target area?
  - 18.2 Are there any additional non-NSP community development efforts occurring in the targeted area?
- 19. According to our last interview, your organization leveraged the following non-federal resources [*Site visitor: populate from baseline interview*]. Has that changed since our last interview [*insert changes in table*]?

Leveraging Source	\$ Amount (baseline)	\$ Amount (follow-up)

- 19.1 If it has changed:
  - How and why?
  - How is this changing your NSP2 strategies, plans, and activities?

20. Your most recent QPR shows program income of \_\_\_\_\_ [Site visitor: populate from recent QPR]. Is this correct?

20.1 How much program income in total do you ultimately expect?

20.2 Do you have plans for how those funds will be used?

If so, what are they?

21. Your organization received the following forms of technical assistance related to NSP2 \_\_\_\_\_ [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview]. Do you continue to take advantage of this technical assistance?

21.1 If so, please describe how it has affected your ability to accomplish NSP2 activities.

21.2 If not, please describe why your organization stopped utilizing it.

22. Have you used other forms of technical assistance since our last visit?

22.1 If so, please describe this technical assistance

22.2 If so, describe how it has affected your ability to accomplish NSP2 activities.

23. What types of technical assistance do you think are most helpful?

**NSP2 Outcomes and Impact**

24. [Site visitor: populate columns 1-2 with table from baseline site visit summary. I have information from a previous Action Plan, as well as expectations we discussed during our last visit. Let's discuss your organization's progress for each activity.

Activity	Total # of Units Proposed/Expected		Grantee's current expectations
	Earliest AP (before baseline visit)	From Interviewee during baseline visit (if available)	
Financing (A)			
Acquisition and Rehab (B)			
Land Banking (C)			
Demolition (D)			
Redevelopment (E)			

25. Do you ultimately expect to finance as many units as you originally expected [as reported on the earliest AP]?

25.1 If not, what are the reasons for this?

25.2 [If grantee will exceed expectations]: What factors have/will allow you to exceed expectations?

*Possible probes: Market conditions? Competition from other investors? Program-related obstacles? Partnership or organizational issues? Unrealistic baseline outcome goals?*

26. Do you ultimately expect to do as many units of acquisition and rehab as you originally expected [as reported on the earliest AP]?

26.1 If not, what are the reasons for this?

26.2 [If grantee will exceed expectations]: What factors have/will allow you to exceed expectations?

27. Do you ultimately expect to land bank as many units as you originally expected [as reported on the earliest AP]?

27.1 If not, what are the reasons for this?

27.2 [If grantee will exceed expectations]: What factors have/will allow you to exceed expectations?

28. Do you ultimately expect to demolish as many units as you originally expected [as reported on the earliest AP]?

28.1 If not, what are the reasons for this?

28.2 [If grantee will exceed expectations]: What factors have/will allow you to exceed expectations?

29. Do you ultimately expect to do as many units of redevelopment as you originally expected [as reported on the earliest AP]?

29.1 If not, what are the reasons for this?

29.2 [If grantee will exceed expectations]: What factors have/will allow you to exceed expectations?

30. Please describe the outcomes your agency has achieved *outside of* the five specific NSP2 activities. For example, in our last interview your organization hoped to accomplish: [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview]

Additional Outcomes (BI)

Has your organization been able to accomplish these additional outcomes?

30.1 If not, why not? Do you expect to eventually accomplish these?

30.2 If so, what factors contributed to your success?

*Possible probes: Market conditions? Unrealistic baseline outcome goals? Partnership or organizational issues? Funding problems?*

31. Thinking more generally, please describe how you think all of the NSP2 activities have impacted the neighborhood(s)? Will additional impacts materialize in the future? If so, when?



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

32. Among your organization's intervention strategies, which NSP2-eligible activity do you think contributed the most to these neighborhood impacts and why? The least?
33. Within your target area, were there some neighborhoods where the intervention was more successful than others?
  - 33.1 If so, how do these neighborhoods' characteristics differ from other neighborhoods in your target area?

### **Lessons Learned**

We would like to understand what lessons grantees have learned from their experience with NSP2 in order to improve the structure of future efforts to stabilize and revitalize distressed neighborhoods

34. After you were awarded the NSP2 grant, how long was it before you were able to start doing NSP2 activities (e.g., acquiring properties)?
  - 34.1 Was this interval too long?
  - 34.2 If so, how could the NSP2 program have been designed differently to shorten this interval?
  - 34.3 In retrospect, was there anything you could have done differently to shorten this interval?
35. What staff skills are most needed to effectively and efficiently accomplish neighborhood revitalization efforts?
36. What other interventions are needed to support organizations' efforts or achieve the desired neighborhood impacts (e.g., investments in infrastructure, schools, the ability to use powers of eminent domain, etc.)?
37. What level of financial investment is needed to successfully impact a distressed neighborhood? Did the level of NSP2 funding you received reach this threshold? Or combine with other neighborhood revitalization efforts to reach this level?
  - 37.1 If not, what level of financial investment is likely needed to successfully impact a distressed neighborhood?
38. Are there any other "lessons learned" of how to best structure efforts to stabilize or revitalize distressed neighborhoods that you would like to share?
39. Are there things you would have liked to do but couldn't? If so, what were these, and what prevented you from doing these?
40. Is there anything you wish you had done differently? If so, what?

### **Wrap-up/Conclusion**

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

Thank you for your time.

## Follow-Up Site Visit Protocol: Program Operations Staff

Name of Organization:

County:

Interviewee Name and Position:

Date of Interview:

Interviewers:

### **Introduction**

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Do you have any questions before we begin?

**I would like to discuss your organization's experience implementing its NSP2 intervention strategy. Let's discuss each one by one.**

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

1. According to our last interview, your organization preferred to pursue properties with the following characteristics: [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview].

1.1 Has your organization continued to prefer these types of properties?

1.2 If not, how and why did your preference change?

2. What have been the greatest challenges in acquiring these properties?
3. Have you been able to overcome these challenges?

3.1 If so, how?

3.2 If not, why not?

4. Within your target area, were there neighborhoods where it was easier to acquire properties?

4.1 If yes, was this related to neighborhood characteristics, or available property types, or both?

4.2 If neighborhood characteristics, how did these neighborhoods' characteristics differ from other neighborhoods?

4.3 If property types, what types of property (tax lien, short sale, foreclosure, etc.) were easier to acquire?

***Rehabilitation Process [Grantees doing rehabilitation]***

5. What were the primary obstacles that your organization faced in trying to rehabilitate properties?
6. How did your organization respond to these challenges?
7. What factors contributed to your organization's success in rehabilitating properties?
8. According to our last interview, your organization expected the following individuals to benefit from your rehabilitation activities: [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview]
9. To what extent has this expectation been realized?

9.1 If the beneficiaries differ from the baseline expectations, what factors contributed to this outcome?

9.2 If the beneficiaries differ from the baseline expectations, what are the differences?

***Redevelopment Process [Grantees doing redevelopment]***

10. What were the primary obstacles that your organization faced in trying to redevelop properties?
11. How did your organization respond to these challenges?
12. What factors contributed to your organization's success in redeveloping properties?
13. According to our last interview, your organization expected the following individuals to benefit from your redevelopment activities: [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview]

To what extent has this expectation been realized?

13.1 If the beneficiaries differ from the baseline expectations, what factors contributed to this outcome?

13.2 If the beneficiaries differ from the baseline expectations, what are the differences?

***Demolition Process [Grantees doing demolition]***

14. What were the primary obstacles that your organization faced in trying to demolish properties?

15. How did your organization respond to these challenges?
16. What factors contributed to your organization's success in demolishing properties?
17. In our last interview your organization described the decision process of what should happen to a property after it is demolished. [Briefly describe the process as you understand it. Get any corrections necessary.] Have you updated or changed the process and criteria to determine what happens with demolished properties?
  - 17.1 If so, please describe how and why the decision process changed?
18. According to our last interview, your organization expected the following individuals to benefit from your demolition activities: [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview]
  - 18.1 To what extent has this expectation been realized?
  - 18.2 If the beneficiaries differ from the baseline expectations, what factors contributed to this outcome?
  - 18.3 If the beneficiaries differ from the baseline expectations, what are the differences?

***Land Banking Process [Grantees doing land banking]***

19. What were the primary obstacles that your organization faced in trying to bank properties?
20. How did your organization respond to these challenges?
21. What factors contributed to your organization's success in banking properties?
22. According to our last interview, your organization expected the following outcomes for your land banked property after the NSP2 program: [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview]

Are these expectations still accurate?

  - 22.1 If not, how and why have your expectations changed?

***Financing Process [Grantees doing financing]***

23. According to our last interview, your organization pursued the following financing activities: [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview]
  - 23.1 Do you continue to pursue these activities or has your strategy changed?
  - 23.2 If it has changed, please describe how and why your strategy changed.
24. What were the primary obstacles that your organization faced in trying to provide these financing activities?
25. How did your organization respond to these challenges?
26. What factors contributed to your organization's success in providing these financing activities?
27. According to our last interview, your organization expected the following individuals to benefit from your financing activities: [Site visitor: populate from baseline interview]

To what extent has this expectation been realized?

- 27.1 If the beneficiaries differ from the baseline expectations, what factors contributed to this outcome?
- 27.2 If the beneficiaries differ from the baseline expectations, how do they differ?

***Obstacles, Challenges, and Supports***

I would like to discuss your organizations' overall experience implementing the NSP2 program.

- 28. Among your organization's intervention strategies [insert list of activities], which NSP2-eligible activity was the most difficult to implement and why? The least difficult? Why?
- 29. In general, what challenges has your organization encountered in implementing your NSP2 strategy?
- 30. Have you been able to overcome these challenges?
  - 30.1 If so, how?
  - 30.2 If not, why not?
- 31. What factors do you believe have supported or facilitated your organization's NSP2 implementation?

***Lessons Learned***

We would like to understand what lessons grantees have learned from their experience with NSP2 in order to improve the design of future efforts to stabilize and revitalize distressed neighborhoods.

- 32. After you were awarded the NSP2 grant, how long was it before you were able to start doing NSP2 activities (e.g., acquiring properties)?
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  - 32.2 If so, how could the NSP2 program have been designed differently to shorten this interval?
  - 32.3 In retrospect, was there anything you could have done differently to shorten this interval?
- 33. Are there any other "lessons learned" of how to best structure efforts to stabilize or revitalize distressed neighborhoods that you would like to share?
- 34. Are there things you would have liked to do but couldn't? If so, what were these, and what prevented you from doing these?
- 35. Is there anything you wish you had done differently? If so, what?

***Wrap-up/Conclusion***

This concludes my questions for you. Do you have any questions for me or other input you'd like to provide? Thank you for your time.