

Choice Neighborhoods Protocol: Grantee/City Officials

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I am <NAME>, a researcher at <ORGANIZATION>, and this is <NAME> from <ORGANIZATION>. Before we begin, I want to tell you a few things about this study and your participation in it. Please feel free to ask me any questions you might have as I move through the introduction.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contracted the Urban Institute and researchers at Case Western Reserve University to evaluate the Choice Neighborhoods program (Choice). Choice provides resources for local communities to help distressed neighborhoods develop affordable housing, provide access to a range of services for residents, and increase opportunities and safety. The study aims to understand the strategies and outcomes associated with Choice implementation for housing, residents, and neighborhoods in nine communities. We are collecting information and data from several sources, including a resident survey, neighborhood observations, program documents, and interviews.

We are conducting interviews with people such as yourself to understand the process and experience of those who were involved in or affected by Choice in this community. The interviews will provide valuable perspectives on what has been achieved through Choice and what the challenges have been with implementation. Your insights are important for this study. We are not evaluating your [agency/organization] but are focused on implementation and outcomes of Choice activities.

Your participation in this interview is **voluntary** and you are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. The questions in the interview have been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated at up to 90 minutes, including preparation and follow-up. The OMB control number is XXXX-XXXX, expiring XX-XX-XXXX. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

The interview will last approximately one hour. You may choose to skip any questions you don't want to answer, and you may stop participating at any time. We will not release your name or any other identifying information beyond the research team and will not include your name or identifying information in our report and documentation. If you are in a position that makes it so you are the only person or one of few people who would know certain information, it is possible someone reading the report might infer the source - you should be aware of the possibility. Note that researchers are required to take steps, including reporting to authorities, to address a situation where they believe someone they speak to may harm themselves or others. *[If conducting the interview via a videoconference*

platform: We also recognize that video meetings can be hacked, and though we have taken steps to prevent this from happening, it is a possibility.]

With your permission, we will audio record the interview, which we will have transcribed to ensure we have an accurate account of what is said. [NAME] also will be taking notes. Only members of the research team will be allowed to review the recording, transcript, and notes, and all members of our team have signed a confidentiality agreement. We will destroy the recording, transcript, and notes at the conclusion of the project.

Do you have any questions about the study or today's interview?

Do you consent to participate in the interview?

Do you consent to be recorded?

Introduction

I'll start with a few questions about your position and engagement with the Choice Neighborhood efforts in [NEIGHBORHOOD].

- 1) What is your current title and role?**
- 2) What was your title and role during the Choice implementation?**
- 3) When was your last involvement with Choice at [NAME OF SITE]? [or] What is your current involvement?**
- 4) Please describe the original vision for the Choice neighborhood in terms of the housing, people, and neighborhood components.**

I'd like to begin by asking about the housing component of Choice implementation.

Housing

As a refresher, the Choice Neighborhoods program provides direct investments through competitive grants targeted to neighborhoods marked by high rates of poverty with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing. With Choice, HUD has sought to address the problem of persistent, concentrated poverty through a strategy focused on three components: housing, people and neighborhood. The Choice transformation plans developed by each grantee team reflect the challenges and opportunities in each locality.

- 5) Please give an overview of what was implemented related to housing.**
- 6) Did the scope of the housing plan change during implementation from the original plan?**
 - a. *If yes: what changed?*
Prompts: number of buildings or units; proportion of subsidized, affordable, and market-rate units; siting of housing; plans for non-replacement housing
 - b. What led to these changes?
- 7) What factors were most important to implementing the plan successfully?**

Probe: availability of financing, including tax credits, city resources, and/or PHA resources; environmental or historic preservation issues; accessibility issues; increased construction costs; real estate market factors, such as land costs, rental pricing; leadership and prioritization of Choice Neighborhood, change in leadership; partners' capacity and experience; community support

- a. In what ways did the factors you identified affect implementation of the housing plan?

8) What were the biggest challenges for implementation?

Probe: availability of financing, including tax credits, city resources, and/or PHA resources; environmental or historic preservation issues; accessibility issues; increased construction costs; real estate market factors, such as land costs, rental pricing; change in leadership; partners' capacity and experience; timeframe needed to complete redevelopment; lack of community support

- a. How did these challenges affect implementation of the housing plan?
- b. Were they resolved? *If so, how?*

9) Did the Choice housing redevelopment activities affect the housing stock in the neighborhood?

- a. If so, in what ways?

Prompts: increase/decrease in housing or local land costs; increase/decrease in the availability of housing at a range of price points

People

The next questions focus on the people component.

10) Please give an overview of the People-focused activities that were implemented.

11) What factors were most important for implementing the people plan successfully?

12) What were the major challenges with implementation?

- a. How did these challenges affect implementation?
- b. Were they resolved? If so, how?

The policymakers who designed the Choice Neighborhoods program hoped that original residents who lived in [NAME OF THE ORIGINAL TARGET DEVELOPMENT] would experience improvements in their lives after they moved into the new development. In particular, we are interested in changes related to housing stability, employment, income, education, and health.

13) Given your sense of the community, do you think the original residents experienced a change in their life circumstances from the time prior to redevelopment to early 2020 (pre-COVID)?

- a. If so, in what areas of their lives were the greatest changes experienced?
Prompts: housing, health, employment or access to jobs, safety, access to parks or other neighborhood amenities

- b. Did children experience changes? If so, in what areas?
Prompts: housing, health, education, safety, access to parks or other neighborhood amenities
- c. What about older youth?
- d. If not, why don't you think residents' lives have changed much?

Choice also envisioned that new residents who moved into assisted and affordable units and had not lived in the original development would experience improvements in their employment, income, education, and health.

14) Do you think the new residents experienced a change in their life circumstances after they moved in?

- a. If so, in what areas of their lives were the greatest changes experienced?
Prompts: housing, health, employment or access to jobs, safety, access to parks or other neighborhood amenities
- b. Did children experience changes. If so, in what areas?
- c. What about older youth?
- d. If not, why don't you think the new residents' lives changed much?

Case Management and Supportive Services Coordination

15) From your vantage point, were case management services / service coordination efforts effective? [Note: Seattle used a service coordination rather than a case management model]

- a. If so, what made them effective?
- b. About what proportion of residents did the services reach?
- c. Were they able to address the needs of all residents, including those with high needs?
- d. Were there resident needs they were unable to meet? If so, what were they?

16) Did supportive services providers coordinate with each other during Choice implementation?

- a. **How effective was the coordination of supportive services?**
Prompt: providers communicated with each other, coordinated service delivery, shared information, etc.

17) Do you think the case management and supportive services helped advance quality-of-life outcomes for residents related to employment, education (for 0-5 year olds and school-aged children), youth development, and health, especially the original residents from [NAME OF THE ORIGINAL TARGET DEVELOPMENT]?

- a. Which services do you think were most effective?
- b. Why do you think they were effective?

Neighborhood

Let's shift to the neighborhood component of Choice.

18) Please give an overview of the neighborhood-focused activities that were implemented.

Choice Neighborhoods included the provision for sites to spend up to 15 percent of their grant to leverage funding for Critical Community Improvements, which could be public amenities, improved security measures, or other community-wide supports during the transformation.

19) How have the Critical Community Improvements affected the neighborhood? *[Note: CCI activities might still be underway in some of the 2013 sites. Rephrase, if appropriate, to ask about outcomes to date.]*

- a. Have the CCI's helped change perceptions about the neighborhood? Describe the change.
- b. Have they led to changes in commercial activity? Describe the changes.
- c. Have they led to changes in safety and residents' sense of safety? Describe the changes.
- d. What factors do you think most helped achieve these outcomes?
- e. Were there any intended outcomes that were not realized or not yet realized? Please describe.
 - i. Why do you think these outcomes were not realized?

20) What were the major successes with neighborhood improvements?

- a. What were the key factors that led to these successes?

21) What were the major challenges with the neighborhoods component?

- a. How did these challenges affect implementation?
- b. Were they resolved? If so, how?

[PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW, DEVELOP LIST OF LOCAL AND STATE-FUNDED INVESTMENTS IN THE CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD AND ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS APPROPRIATE]

22) We understand that the [LOCAL/STATE] government targeted resources to the neighborhood during Choice implementation. What were the major investments?

- a. Were certain locations prioritized for these investments?
Probe: near the target housing redevelopment?

23) Aside from the Choice target housing redevelopment, did public financing (city, state, federal) support housing development or rehabilitation during the Choice intervention in the neighborhood surrounding the Choice redevelopment?

- a. In what ways?
- b. Has there been any additional public financing for housing since roughly [2016] [2018], or after the implementation grant ended?
 - i. What has the additional financing supported?

24) Aside from the Choice target housing redevelopment, was there any private investment in housing development or rehabilitation during the

**intervention in the neighborhood surrounding the Choice redevelopment?
Please describe these investments.**

- a. Has there been any additional public financing for housing since roughly [2016] [2018], or after the implementation grant ended?
 - i. What has the additional financing supported?

- 25) Has there been any non-housing investments in the neighborhood (new construction of or improvements to commercial or community amenities) made by the public or private sector, or private actors such as anchor institutions or philanthropies, in the last year? In the last 5? 10?**
- a. What have investments supported? Who made the investments?
 - b. Would you attribute the investments in commercial or community amenities to the Choice Neighborhoods intervention? Why?

The next questions focus on partnerships, collaborations among government agencies, and leveraging resources for implementation efforts.

Partnerships

- 26) We understand that a number of partnerships were involved in the Choice effort in [NEIGHBORHOOD]. Were any of the partnerships established during [FOR 2013 GRANTEES: the Choice planning period]? During preparation of the implementation grant application? During implementation (i.e., did the grant lead to new partnerships)?**
Prompts: private developers; affordable housing nonprofits; city hall / city agencies; etc. not involved from the beginning

- 27) Did any of the partnerships last beyond the period of the grant? Which ones?**
- a. Why do you think these partnerships lasted?
Prompts: partner had preexisting relationships with respondent or neighborhood; partner was integral to an ongoing program; partner had funding; etc.

- 28) Overall, would you say the partnerships affected grant outcomes related to housing, people, or neighborhood?**
- a. Which partnerships were noteworthy? How did these partnerships affect outcomes?

- 29) What made some partnerships more effective than others?**
Prompts: level of engagement, individual staff members, history of work in the neighborhood, connections with a variety of resources, etc.

Systems Change Questions/Collaboration Among Government Agencies

- 30) Choice requires government agencies to collaborate. Did collaborations among the departments, offices, agencies, and districts**

responsible for Choice implementation strengthen or weaken during the grant term?

- a. Which collaborative relationships grew stronger? Became weaker?
 - i. Why did that collaboration grow stronger / weaken?
- b. Did the collaborations during the grant period lead to ongoing collaborations for other purposes? Please describe.
 - i. Has working collaboratively across departments become a norm?
 - ii. What difference does collaboration make for your department? Please give an example.
 - iii. What difference does interagency collaboration make for the city? Please give an example.

Leverage and Catalytic Impacts

31) Data from HUD indicate that [GRANTEE] leveraged the following resources during the grant period: [AMOUNT, SOURCE, PURPOSE].

- a. What difference did the leveraged resources for [HOUSING/PEOPLE/NEIGHBORHOOD] make?
 - i. Which outcomes might have been different but for the leveraged resources?

32) What factors helped or hurt efforts to leverage resources in support of Choice implementation?

- a. Were any major activities affected because previously committed resources did not materialize?
 - i. What was affected?

33) Are you aware of whether certain private sources or neighborhood activities supported by private funds were newly targeted to the neighborhood? By this we mean, that the funds were not already planned to be invested in the neighborhood prior to the Choice efforts.

- a. Would you attribute any of this targeting to the Choice intervention?

34) Do you think the housing developments and neighborhood improvements likely would have happened in the current form or as quickly absent the Choice funding?

Wrap Up

35) Thinking about Choice Neighborhoods and the [INSERT NAME] neighborhood, would you say Choice has been a success?

Probe: in terms of housing, residents, neighborhood

- a. Why do you say it has / has not been a success?

36) Overall, what lessons would you say [SITE] offers for how Choice can be implemented to further the program's housing, people, and neighborhood goals?

- a. What recommendations would you offer other Choice grantees or HUD about the program and efforts to improve housing, resident outcomes, and neighborhoods?
- 37) Is there anything we haven't discussed about the Choice Neighborhoods program that is important for us to understand?**