Choice Neighborhoods Protocol: HUD Choice Neighborhoods Grant Managers

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 at HUD and engagement with Choice Neighborhood grantees.

1) **What is your current title and role?**

2) **What was your title and role during Choice implementation in the [2010-2011 / 2013] sites?**

3) **When was your last involvement with Choice at [NAME OF SITES]? [or] What is your current involvement?**

Implementation

4) **Based on your observations or awareness of changes over time, what differences stand out between the first cohort of Choice Neighborhoods grantees and the 2013 cohort?**
   Prompt: grantee characteristics, pre-implementation planning, implementation, leveraged resources, local engagement and support, impact of cities as co-applicants, etc.

   [2010/11 grantees: Quincy Corridor (Boston), Woodlawn (Chicago), Iberville-Tremé (New Orleans), Eastern Bayview (San Francisco); 2013 grantees: Near East Side (Columbus), South Norwalk (Norwalk), North Central (Philadelphia), Larimer/East Liberty (Pittsburgh)]

5) **For the grantees that received planning grants, what difference did the grants make for their work conducted under the implementation grants?**
   Prompt: overall readiness to begin implementation, partner relationships, leveraged resources, local engagement and support, etc.

The next questions focus on grantees' implementation successes and challenges by components of Choice – housing, people, and neighborhood.

6) What successes did you see related to implementation of Choice activities associated with <u>housing</u>?
   a. Were any activities implemented more easily than expected?
      i. Which ones?
      ii. What contributed to their relative ease of implementation?
   c. Were there differences between the 2010/2011 and 2013 grantee cohorts in the success of housing activity implementation? If so, what were they?
      i. What do you think led to these differences?

7) What challenges did you see related to implementation of <u>housing</u> activities?
   a. What contributed to the challenges?
   Prompt: partner collaboration, other relationships, financing, etc.
      i. Were these challenges resolved? If so, how?
   b. Were there differences in the challenges faced by the 2010/2011 and 2013 grantee cohorts? If so, what were they?
      i. What do you think led to these differences?

8) What successes did you see related to implementation of Choice activities associated with <u>people</u>, such as relocation, case management, supportive services, and education-related activities?
   b. Were any activities implemented more easily than expected?
      i. Which ones?
      ii. What contributed to their relative ease of implementation?
   c. Were there differences between the 2010/2011 and 2013 grantee cohorts in the success of people-related activity implementation? If so, what were they?
      i. What do you think led to these differences?

9) What challenges did you see related to implementation of <u>people</u>-related activities?
   a. What contributed to the challenges?
   Prompt: partner collaboration, other relationships, financing, etc.
      i. Were these challenges resolved? If so, how?
   b. Were there differences in the challenges faced by the 2010/2011 and 2013 grantee cohorts? If so, what were they?
      i. What do you think led to these differences?

10) What successes did you see related to implementation of Choice activities associated with <u>neighborhood</u>, such as CCI implementation, safety measures, and other activities?
   c. Were any activities implemented more easily than expected?
      i. Which ones?
      ii. What contributed to their relative ease of implementation?
   d. Were there differences between the 2010/2011 and 2013 grantee cohorts in the success of neighborhood-related activity implementation? If so, what were they?
      i. What do you think led to these differences?

11) What challenges did you see related to implementation of <u>neighborhood</u>-related activities?
   a. What contributed to the challenges?
   Prompt: partner collaboration, other relationships, financing, etc.
      i. Were these challenges resolved? If so, how?
   b. Were there differences in the challenges faced by the 2010/2011 and 2013 grantee cohorts? If so, what were they?

ii. What do you think led to these differences?

12) We know that plans can change once implementation is underway. What were some of the more significant changes in grantees' plans overtime?
   a. What factors tended to lead to changes in plans?
      Prompt: emerging opportunities, challenges with financing, collaboration, community resistance, etc.?

13) From your perspective, were there significant differences between:
   a. Public housing and HUD-assisted housing sites' implementation of housing activities?
   b. People-related activities?
   c. Neighborhood activities?
      i. *If yes*: What were the differences?
      ii. Why do you think the differences happened?

14) Were there significant differences between:
   d. Sites with one-for-one replacement and those with waivers implementation of housing activities?
   e. People-related activities?
   f. Neighborhood activities?
      i. *If yes*: What were the differences?
      ii. Why do you think the differences happened?

15) Critical Community Improvements were an important piece of Choice implementation and efforts to leverage external resources. Did HUD's role in determining CCI activities change between 2010/2011 and 2013?
   a. Did HUD change guidance on activities that were allowed/disallowed? Please describe the change.
   b. Did HUD change technical or other assistance to help determine CCI activities? Please describe the change.

16) Choice allows flexibility for grantees to use up to 15 percent of their grant towards developing People interventions aimed at residents' quality of life outcomes. Did HUD's role in determining People interventions change between 2010/2011 and 2013?
   a. Did HUD change guidance on activities that were allowed/disallowed? Please describe the change.
   b. Did HUD change technical or other assistance to help determine People activities? Please describe the change.

The next questions focus on partnerships and collaborations.

Collaboration

17) Were there practices or dynamics that helped foster collaboration among organizations and actors that were part of Choice implementation, regardless of whether the collaboration was effective?
   a. If so, what were they?
      Probe: Formal practices such as meetings, MOUs, Informal dynamics such as longstanding relationships
   b. Can you give an example of effective collaboration during or after Choice implementation?

18) **Were there practices or dynamics that made it more challenging for core implementation partners to collaborate effectively?**
    a. If so, what were they?
       Probe: formal practices such as meetings, MOUs, informal dynamics such as longstanding tensions
    b. Can you give an example of ineffective collaboration during or after Choice implementation?

Systems Change

19) **Choice requires government agencies to collaborate and we know from the baseline study that [INFO ON COLLABORATION]. How did collaborations among departments and agencies responsible for Choice implementation progress during the grant term?**
    a. Which collaborative relationships grew stronger? Became weaker?
    b. Why did that collaboration change in this way?

20) **Did requiring the city to be a co-applicant in 2013 make a difference in local collaborations? If so, how?**

Policy reforms/Lessons Learned

It's likely that some rules and policies make collaboration easier, while others may make it more difficult.

21) **What local or federal policies or practices appear to help collaboration among agencies?**
    Prompt: Choice requirements for collaboration, local institutional requirements for planning/governance of programs.

22) **What barriers to coordinating people, housing, and neighborhood efforts have you seen that stem from local or federal requirements or policies?**
    Prompt: Meeting requirements, neighborhood-based schools, environmental or land use processes, jurisdictional issues (where a place crosses political boundaries), housing/relocation rules.

23) **Have you seen any evidence of these policies, rules, or practices moving or changing as a result of Choice?**
    a. Have other policies, rules, or practices come about because of Choice that might help reduce barriers to collaboration?
       Probe: Greater participatory requirements or collaboration requirements among agencies, ideas from Choice spilling over to other agencies, decisions by city hall on procurement or other policies.

24) **What changes has HUD made to program requirements or NOFAs in later grant cycles based on what they learned from the 2010/2011 and 2013 cohorts?**
    Probe: changes related to the housing component? People component? Neighborhood component? Changes in grantee engagement?

Wrap-Up

25)   What adjustments would you make to the program, if any, to better serve future grantees and communities?

26)   Is there anything we haven't discussed about the Choice Neighborhoods program that is important for us to understand?