



# Year 2 Baseline Interviews: Treatment PHAs

MTW Evaluation: Landlord Incentives

Last Modified: October 5, 2022

## Introduction to Protocol for Reviewers

The PHA interview protocol is a guide for the interviewer to follow a particular approach to interviewing. The interviewer guides the conversation using questions listed in the protocol, following up with probes (shown in bullets) as needed to gather more detail. Interviews will be conversational; the interviewer and interviewee may speak about these topics out-of-order, or the interviewee may address multiple questions in a single response. Interviewers will also have access to information about each PHA prior to the interview, so they can tailor the questions as needed to make the questions more relevant and targeted (for example, asking about a specific incentive or characteristic of the local rental market).

In Year 2, we anticipate interviewing up to 5 key staff at each PHA, such as the Executive Director, Manager of the HCV Program, MTW Coordinator, Landlord Liaison, and Housing Specialist. These interviews will take place in-person during site visits.

On average, we expect interviews to be approximately 60 minutes. Interviews will vary in length according to the information the interviewee has to share; some may be longer than 60 minutes if the interviewee has a lot of information to share, while others may be less than 60 if the interviewee has less experience with the program. The estimated time for each section currently adds up to more than 60 minutes. Interviewers will be trained to make trade-offs and prioritize some questions over others during the interview in order to manage the interview timing.

The following interview protocol will be piloted and adjusted accordingly to eliminate any questions which do not yield useful information. Interviewers will be trained to keep a core focus on the goals of the interview and manage the interview time accordingly.

## Paperwork Reduction Act – Burden Statement

Public Reporting Burden for this information collection is estimated to average 60 minutes per respondent, including time to review the information in the Study Overview and Introduction. The MTW Evaluation: Landlord Incentives is a study of the implementation and impacts of providing selected incentives to landlords to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. This information is being collected to document implementation of PHA activities that could affect landlord participation in the HCV program. PHAs in the MTW Landlord Incentives cohort are required to respond. The information requested is protected and held confidential in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552a (Privacy Act of 1974) and OMB Circular No. A-130.

## Note to Interviewer

**Note to Interviewer:** Before the interview, you should carefully review the Site Summary, which collates information from the MTW Supplement, web surveys, and admin data. Use this information to tailor the questions below accordingly. You should pay close attention to the challenges that they identify, the incentives that they plan to implement, and the way their incentives are targeted or tailored to their market. You should also make note of any Agency-Specific Waivers listed in the MTW Supplement that may lead to variations in implementation of incentives (for example, agencies may seek a waiver to include special programs like HUD-VASH or Mainstream Vouchers in their MTW program).

Interviews will be held with PHA staff potentially including the executive director, director of the HCV program or rental assistance programs, MTW Coordinator, housing specialists, or landlord liaisons. One-on-one interviews are strongly preferred, but group interviews (ideally with staff with similar roles) can be conducted if there are scheduling challenges that require it.

Depending on their role and their length of time with the organization, interviewees may not be able to comment on all the questions or sections included here. For example, front-line staff such as housing specialists may not have been involved in management-level decisions. If the interviewee indicates that they are not the right person to speak about a specific topic, move on to the next question.

## Study Overview & Introduction

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. HUD is collaborating with Abt Associates to understand the impact of landlord incentives. The purpose of the study is to understand how PHAs are implementing landlord incentives, and how these incentives affect program outcomes. We're interviewing all the PHAs that are part of the Landlord Incentives cohort of MTW.

These questions have been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget [OMB#]. When your agency received MTW designation, they also agreed to participate in the evaluation – so, your participation in this interview today is required. There may be some questions that you are unable to answer or that are more appropriate for other staff. If you are unable to answer a question, just let me know and we'll move on to the next one. We expect this interview to take about one hour.

We will be taking notes and recording this interview. The notes, recording, and transcript of this interview will not be shared outside of the study team. The information you share with us will be used for research purposes only, not for any audit or compliance purposes. The study reports will summarize the findings from these interviews and from other data collection activities. We won't name specific individuals in our reports and publications, but we might name the PHAs who participated in the study, so it's possible that someone who is familiar with the PHA would be able to tell who was interviewed.

Do you have any questions before we begin? *[pause for questions]*

Do you consent to participate in this interview? *[get verbal consent before proceeding]*

Is it OK if I turn on the recorder now? *[get verbal consent before proceeding]*

The tape recorder is now on. This is *[interviewer name]* speaking with *[interviewee name]* from *[PHA name]* on *[date]*.

## Interview Questions

### Program context and background

1. To get us started, can you tell me a bit about your role here at the PHA? How long have you been in this position? What is your role within the HCV program?
  - o *If interviewee is in a manager role:* Are there other rental programs that sit within your department? (e.g. multifamily properties, emergency rental assistance, special program vouchers, etc.)
2. Tell me a little more about the rental market here. What does the market look like right now? (tight vs. loose, costs, size and types of units, quality of units)
  - o Are there other distinct aspects of the rental market that might make it easier or harder for voucher holders to find rental units? (e.g. seasonal properties, short-term rentals/Airbnb, student rentals or other special populations, large development projects, strong economic growth, new major employers, etc.)
  - o Tell me more about the types of landlords in this jurisdiction. (e.g. corporate vs. mom-and-pop, city-wide vs. neighborhood focused, etc.)
  - o Are there other PHAs that have a lot of vouchers within this jurisdiction? Which ones? How does that affect your agency's HCV program?
3. Tell me more about the kind of units that someone with a voucher normally finds in this market. Is it easy or tough for them to find a unit? What types of units do they tend to rent? (e.g. single-family/multifamily/mobile homes, size of building, number of bedrooms, quality, neighborhood, tax credit or other subsidized properties)
4. Do some types of households have tougher time successfully leasing with a voucher? If so, which types and why?
5. Are there any laws here that prohibit discrimination against tenants using vouchers? Can you tell me about them?
  - o *If jurisdiction has SOI protections:* How do you think that affects voucher holders? Does it make it easier for them to find a unit?
6. I'd like to learn a bit more about the tenant selection process at your PHA. Can you tell me more about how tenants join the waiting list and how they are selected from the list?
  - o How is the wait list prioritized? Which groups are prioritized (e.g. homeless, elderly/disabled, families, local residents)?
7. Can you walk me through what a typical lease-up process looks like, from the time a tenant is selected to the time move they into the unit?
  - o What kind of supports are available to help tenants successfully lease up? (e.g. housing navigator, rental listings website, neighborhood guide, etc.)
  - o Who are the tenants' main point-of-contact at the PHA?
  - o What about outside of the PHA? Do tenants often work through a real estate agent, broker, housing navigator organization, or another third party?
  - o Do you help voucher holders with security deposits or rental arrear payments? If so, is the money from this from regular PHA funding? If not, where is it from?
  - o What is the maximum length of time you permit for a tenant to find a unit and submit a Request for Tenancy Approval? What happens if they don't find a unit in that timeframe?

- o What are the common ‘sticking points’ for tenants in the process? What are the most common reasons that they are unsuccessful in leasing up? (e.g. can’t find a unit, landlord not willing, landlord misses deadline)
8. From your perspective, how is the HCV program going right now in general? What is going well with the program? What are the biggest barriers or challenges for the program right now?

## Current state of landlord participation

I’d like to learn more about the role that landlords play in the program, and how you work with them. I’m going to start by asking about how things are going with landlords right now, and then later we can talk more about the upcoming changes with MTW.

9. I’d like to ask more about the current process for bringing landlords into the program. Can you walk me through what happens, from the landlord’s perspective, from the time they express willingness to join the program to the time that a tenant moves into their unit?
- o Who do they communicate with at the PHA? Are there any external partners (realtors, brokers, etc.) involved?
  - o What kind of information do you provide prospective landlords about the program?
  - o What forms, documentation, or other logistical requirements do they need to complete?
  - o What communication channels do you use to complete the process? (e.g. phone, email, mail, texting)
  - o What kind of supports are available to them to ensure a successful lease-up? (e.g. customer service, links with other PHA or local programs)
  - o Do landlords undergo any type of screening to determine whether they are a good fit for the program or tenant? Tell me more about this.
  - o Thinking about the process of bringing in new landlords, are there any major ‘sticking points’ where you tend to lose prospective landlords? (e.g. inspection takes too long, too much paperwork, losing contact with landlords during the process)
10. I want to ask about landlords who are already participating in HCV. Overall, how do you think they view the HCV program right now? What are their biggest concerns or challenges with the program?
11. How do you communicate with these landlords who are already involved in the program? How do you keep them engaged and maintain relationships with them?
- o Is there a landlord liaison? Tell me about their role.
  - o Is there a landlord advisory committee? Tell me about their role.
  - o Are there any other communications channels that you use to maintain relationships with landlords already in the program?
12. What about those who are not participating – how do you think they view the program? What do you think are their biggest barriers to participating?
13. How do you engage with these landlords who are not yet participating in the program? How do you reach them and build relationships with them?
- o *If there is a liaison:* Tell me about the landlord liaison’s role.
  - o *If there is an advisory board:* Tell me about the advisory board’s role.
  - o Are there any other communications channels that you use to build relationships with landlords who are not participating in the program?
14. Outside of the landlord incentives you plan to implement for MTW, has the PHA implemented any other changes to help increase landlord participation over the past few years? (e.g. new technology, outreach campaign or events, partnerships with industry groups, other financial

incentives, new website or materials, direct deposit, improved customer service, etc.) Tell me a bit more about that.

- o Why did you decide to implement [activity]?
  - o How long has [activity] been in place?
  - o Which landlords did you target with [activity]?
  - o Do you think [activity] has changed landlord behaviors with regards to Section 8 voucher holders?
  - o *If activity was a financial incentive or program flexibility:* Did you seek any HUD waivers to implement [activity]?
15. Outside of the PHA's activities, are there other local factors that you think play a role in landlord participation? What are these factors? (e.g. market conditions, economic or policy factors, other state or local rental subsidy programs)

## Motivations and Goals for MTW

Now I'd like to learn a little bit more about your plans for MTW, what you hope to achieve, and the specific incentives you're planning to implement.

16. What motivated your agency to apply for MTW designation in the landlord incentive cohort?
17. How do you see your MTW designation aligning with your current efforts to engage landlords? What does MTW add to these efforts?
18. Tell me about what you hope to achieve with these new incentives. What would a 'successful' MTW program look like? (e.g. improved success rate, better landlord relationships, improve landlord perceptions of vouchers, improve tenant mobility)
- o How do you anticipate the landlord incentives will influence voucher holders' ability to secure housing?
  - o Do you anticipate any changes in the quality, location, or other characteristics of the housing options available to voucher holders?
19. Do you anticipate any issues in implementing these incentives as planned? Tell me more about those potential challenges. If they come up, how will you address them?
20. Thinking back to your original application, which spells out the agency's vision and plans for MTW – can you tell me about the process for developing that application package?
- o Which staff from the PHA were involved? In what ways?
  - o Were tenants or landlords involved? In what ways? What feedback did you receive from them?
  - o What information or data did you take into account?
  - o Did you have a good sense of what incentives you wanted to implement at the outset, or did it require some consideration?

## Planned Incentives

I have a list of the incentives you're planning to implement here from your [baseline survey/latest MTW Supplement]. I'd like to ask you a little more about each of these.

21. First, I see here that you plan to implement [incentives – list all]. Can you tell me if any of these incentives have changed since you submitted the MTW Supplement? Is there anything missing from this list, or anything that I mentioned that you're no longer planning?

*[Complete for each planned incentive individually.]*



22. What made you decide to include this incentive in the plan?
23. What do you hope to achieve with this incentive? What impacts do you hope to see? (e.g. landlord willingness, landlord participation, success rate)
  - o Do you think there's any risk that this incentive will have negative consequences? If so, how will you manage or mitigate that risk?
24. Which landlords or units will be eligible for this incentive? How did you decide how to target this incentive? (e.g. neighborhoods, length of tenure, types of units, new units only, etc.)
25. What is the timeframe for implementation?
26. Which staff will be involved? Will any partners be involved?
27. Do you expect that this activity will affect the PHA's day-to-day operations or budget? How? (e.g. staffing, program costs/revenues, policies or procedures)
28. Looking ahead, do you foresee any issues with implementing this incentive as planned?
29. *For initial inspection waiver only:* Will you be tracking the number of initial inspections that are waived? If so, how will you track this information?
30. *For pre-qualifying inspection only:* How long is the pre-inspection valid for? Will you be tracking how many units are pre-qualified? Will you be tracking how many pre-qualified units end up being leased? If so, how will you track this information?
31. *For direct payment incentives only:* What is the maximum payment that can be made to a landlord under this policy? How frequently can payments be made to a single landlord? How did you decide on that value?

*[After reviewing each incentive individually]*

32. Which of the incentives do you think will have the greatest impact on landlord participation? Why?
33. Tell me about how you plan to let landlords know about these incentives. How will you get the word out?
34. As you implement these incentives, will you be monitoring their implementation in any way? Do you plan to communicate with landlords or tenants about their experience of the incentives? Tell me more about your plans for monitoring.

## Other Program Changes

Now that we've spoken about your MTW landlord incentives, I want to ask about any other major changes that the PHA has coming up.

35. First, are you planning on obtaining any MTW waivers for this year other than the landlord incentive waivers we discussed? If so, what are they?
36. Aside from the MTW activities we've already discussed, does the PHA plan to implement any other major program changes or launch any new initiatives at the same time as MTW? (e.g. RAD conversions, mobility initiatives, etc.)
  - o *If yes:* Can you tell me more? What motivated this change?
  - o What is the timeline for implementation?
  - o How do you expect this change to affect the HCV program?
37. Outside of PHA activities, are there any changes within the jurisdiction more broadly that you think will have an impact on the HCV program over the next few years? (e.g. policy changes, market changes)

- *If yes:* How do you think that will impact the HCV program?
38. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your agency's HCV program or your MTW incentives? Anything I didn't ask about that you think we should know?

### Additional data questions – for staff who manage program data (HCV Program Manager, data specialist, or similar) only

39. Before we wrap up, I'd just like to confirm some of the information we gathered from our pre-site visit survey and HUD administrative data. *[Note that they may be unable to provide this information during the interview. If so, ask them to share information by email and follow up as needed.]*
- *If success rate data is available from survey or admin data:* I see that you reported [#] regular tenant-based voucher issuances between [DATE] and [DATE]. Of those, you reported that [#] successfully leased up within 180 days. Do those numbers seem correct to you? If not, do you think they are too high or low? What are the correct numbers?
  - *If agency has missing or incomplete success rate data:* We are looking for two key metrics: the number of regular tenant-based voucher issuances between [DATE] and [DATE], and the number of those issuances that resulted in a lease-up within 180 days. This excludes special program vouchers like HUD-VASH, Mainstream, or EHV. Are you able to provide that information for our study?
  - *If any other key data points from survey/admin data is missing or unclear:* I noticed that we are also missing [information] from our information on your PHA. Could you provide that information for our study?

That wraps up all of my questions. Thank you very much for your time today. Do you have any questions for me?