



# Year 5 Interviews: Comparison 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 5, 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 Specialists. 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.

## Note to Interviewer

**Note to Interviewer:** Before the interview, you should carefully review the Site Summary, which collates information from web survey responses and admin data. Use this information to tailor the questions below accordingly. You should pay close attention to the challenges that they identify, any (non-MTW) incentives they implement, and how those incentives are tailored to their market.

Interviews will be held with PHA staff potentially including the executive director, director of the HCV program or rental assistance programs, 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 like 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.

## 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 are not 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.

## 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.

These questions have been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget [OMB#]. Your participation in this interview is voluntary and you are free to skip any questions that you do not wish to discuss. There might also 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, or you would prefer not to answer a question, just let me know. 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

### Background & current state of the HCV program

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 role? How do you support the HCV program?
  - o *If interviewee is in a manager role:* Are there other programs that sit within your department? (e.g. project-based subsidies, 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, student properties, short-term rentals/Airbnb, 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 a 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 I’m going to ask more about any changes you’ve made in the last few years.

9. Do you see landlord engagement as a priority for the PHA? Tell me a little more about why (or why not).
10. 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)
11. 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?
12. 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?
13. 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?
14. 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?

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 local programs serving landlords)
16. Are you familiar with HUD's Moving to Work program?
  - o *If yes:* In 2021, HUD invited PHAs to apply for MTW to test new landlord incentives. Were you aware of this cohort?
  - o *If yes:* Did you consider applying for it? Tell me more about the reasons you decided to not apply for it?

## Comparable incentives offered

Now I want to ask more about any activities your PHA may have undertaken in the past few years that relate to landlord participation and engagement. Specifically, I want to learn more about any activities, incentives, or program changes you've made in order to increase landlord participation.

17. To start, can you give me an overview of any efforts that you have made to increase landlord engagement and participation over the past three years? Then I'll ask for more details of each of them.
  - o Have you made any programmatic changes to attract landlords? (e.g. new technology, faster/direct payments, higher payment standards, etc.)
  - o Have you offered any financial incentives for landlords to participate? (e.g. signing bonus, damage reimbursement, vacancy loss, funding for repairs, etc.)
  - o Have you made any changes to the way you communicate with landlords? (e.g. outreach events, surveys, website, partnerships with industry groups, landlord liaison, landlord advisory board, etc.)
  - o Have you offered any administrative flexibilities to make things easier for landlords? For example, these might include pre-qualifying inspections, waiver of the initial mandatory inspection, or a less frequent inspection schedule.

*[Repeat for each of the incentives described. Follow up on any activities mentioned in the survey as well. Tailor these probes based on the type of activity mentioned – e.g. if an administrative flexibility, be sure to clarify whether HUD waiver was sought. Focus in particular on activities that are similar to MTW landlord incentives, such as inspection flexibilities and financial incentives.]*

18. How long has this activity been in place?
19. What made you decide to implement [activity]? What did you hope to achieve? What impacts were you hoping to see?
20. Which units or landlords were you targeting with this activity? (e.g. neighborhoods, length of tenure, types of units, etc.)
21. Tell me more about how you implemented [activity].
  - o What were the steps in the process of designing/planning [activity]? Who was involved?
  - o What went well?
  - o What challenges did you encounter?
22. Did you have to seek a HUD waiver? How is this activity funded (e.g. admin fee, non-admin reserves, state or local funding, etc.)?
23. How have landlords responded to [activity]?
  - o Was the reception different among different landlord segments or neighborhoods?
  - o Did landlords have questions or concerns about [activity]? If so, what were they? How did you address them?



24. What about tenants – how have they reacted to [activity]?
  - o Has it influenced tenants’ experiences of the program?
  - o Were there any differences in the reaction between different types of tenants?
  - o Did tenants have questions or concerns about [activity]? If so, what were they? How did you address them?
25. Overall, would you say [activity] had the impact you hoped it would? Why or why not? (e.g. landlord willingness, participation, success rates, mobility, tenant experience)
  - o Have you monitored the impacts of [activity] on the program? If so, how?
  - o Did [incentive] have any other impacts in terms of program performance or other aspects of the program?

## Changes in program and landlord behaviors

We’ve talked about the different things your agency has done over the past few years to engage landlords. Now I want to ask some big-picture questions about how those changes have influenced the HCV program.

26. First, I’m interested to hear whether the program changes you’ve made have influenced landlords who are already in the program. Overall, do you think these program changes have changed landlords’ experiences with the program? Can you give me a couple of specific examples of any changes you’ve observed?
  - o Have you seen any changes in your relationships with landlords who were already participating in HCV before these changes occurred?
  - o Have you seen any change in your ability to retain these landlords in the program?
27. Now I’m interested in learning more about whether the changes in the HCV program have led to changes in the recruitment of new landlords. This could be a positive or negative change. I’m interested in hearing a couple of specific examples of changes you’ve seen.
  - o Have there been any changes in the number, type, or location of landlords participating in the program?
  - o Have you seen any changes in landlords’ perceptions of or attitudes towards the program?
  - o Have you seen any changes in landlords’ perceptions of or attitudes towards the PHA?
  - o Have you seen any changes in landlords’ willingness to accept vouchers?
28. Have you observed any changes (positive or negative) in the overall performance of the HCV program? *[For each of the following areas, probe on what the staff person thinks might have caused those changes.]*
  - o Have you observed changes in success rate?
  - o Have you observed changes in lease-up times?
  - o Have you observed any changes in program costs?
  - o Have you seen any other changes in program outcomes or performance?
29. What about tenants – how have these changes to the program affected them?
  - o Have you observed any changes in the lease-up process for tenants?
  - o Have you observed any changes in the type or quality of homes available to tenants?
  - o Have you observed any changes in the feedback that you hear from tenants about the units?
30. Were there any unanticipated consequences of these changes? Can you tell me more about these consequences?

- How have they affected the program or the experience of tenants or landlords?
  - How have you responded to these issues?
31. Of all the activities/changes that the PHA implemented, which one(s) do you think changed landlord behavior the most? Tell me more about that.
  32. Of all the activities/changes that the PHA implemented, which one(s) do you think changed landlord behaviors the least? Tell me more about that.

## Other programmatic context

Now that I've asked you about your efforts to engage landlords, I want to ask about any other major changes that have taken place at the PHA in the last couple years.

33. Aside from the activities we've already discussed, have there been any internal changes at the PHA that have affected the HCV program? What were they? How did they affect the program? (e.g. leadership changes, changes in funding or capacity)
34. Aside from the activities we've already discussed, did the PHA launch any other initiatives in the past few years that have affected the HCV program? (e.g. mobility initiatives, RAD conversions)
35. Over the past few years, have there been any changes in the community that could affect the HCV program? What were they? How did they affect the program? (e.g. market changes, new housing programs, legislation)
36. Thinking about your efforts to engage landlords over the past few years, what lessons have you and your staff learned about how to increase landlord engagement and participation in the HCV program?
37. What structures or policies need to change within the PHA to make it easier to engage landlords?
38. What structures or policies or laws need to change within the city or state?
39. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your HCV program or your PHA's efforts to engage landlords?

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

40. Before we wrap up, I'd just like to confirm some of the information we gathered from the web surveys you completed before this site visit 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 vouchers 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 vouchers, or EHV's. 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?

Thanks very much for your time today. Do you have any questions for me?