Cost Study Questionnaire

Research team introductory script

My name is _____, and I am with MDRC, the organization that has worked with HUD and your agency on the Tiered and Stepped Rent Demonstration. Thank you for your time. My goal during this meeting is to understand whether the time and cost it takes to administer the [stepped/tiered] rent policy relative to the standard rent policy.

Your experiences can help us learn more about the [stepped/tiered] rent policy. We know that you are busy and will try to be as brief as possible. We anticipate that the interview will take no more than 90 minutes. If you have any comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions to reduce this burden, please send them to the Reports Management Officer, Paperwork Reduction Project, to the Office of Information Technology, US. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, DC 20410-3600. Only data collection instruments that are approved by Office of Management and Budget (OMB) may be fielded in this study. This data collection instrument is approved by the OMB, and assigned OMB Approval No. 2528-0339.

This interview is not part of an audit or a compliance review. We are interested in learning about your experiences. Your name and identity will not be included in any reports. However, because of the nature of the questions in this interview and your job function, it may not be possible to completely anonymize your responses. You do not need to answer any question you do not wish to answer.

Do you agree to participate? Would it be okay for me to record so I don't have to take notes while we're talking? (My colleague_____ will take notes as backup to the recording). We will keep any recording and notes in a secure network that only members of the research team may access.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview, do you have any questions before we begin?

[If the participant agreed to the recording, start recording.]

[Interviewer: at start of audio, state date, time, & interview #]

[A note to interviewers on facilitating a group interview with housing authority staff: The cost team is conducting interviews with groups of PHA staff so that it can obtain shared reflections on the questions that are posed, rather than to obtain standalone responses. In a group interview, interviewers are encouraged to rotate the respondent to whom questions are first asked and then ask if other respondents have additional detail to add or differing perspectives. The goal is a somewhat free-flowing discussion, with responses informed by (but not required from) all respondents.]

[Questions in Section A will be asked during each round of cost interviews.]

I. Introduction

1. What is your title?

2. How long have you been in your current role? How long have you been working at [PHA]?

3. What is your role at [PHA]?

4. *[For housing specialists only]*

   a. *[If PHA has Low-Income Public Housing households in the study]* Do you work with families in the Housing Choice Voucher Program or with families that live in Low-Income Public Housing?

   b. Do you work primarily with families under the [stepped/tiered] rent rules, the standard rent rules, or a mixture of both?

   c. *[If participant responded "both" to question 5]* What percentage of your caseload is made up of families under the [stepped/tiered] rent policy and what percentage is made up of families under the standard rent policy?

II. PHA Activities Directly Affected by the [Stepped/Tiered] Rent Policy

The first set of questions address the time it takes staff to complete tasks that are performed by Specialists. We would like to hear your experiences concerning how long each task takes, on average, for households under the [stepped/tiered] rent rules as compared to those under the standard rent rules.

We understand that some cases take more time and can be more difficult to complete than others but please think about the average time across all of your cases. When reflecting on each task try to be comprehensive and include any time spent on a case from when it starts until when the certification is submitted.

[For each certification below ask how long tasks take to perform under both rent policies]

Certification Type	[Stepped/Tiered] Rent Rules	Standard Rent Rules
Triennial/Annual		
New Admission		
Hardship Interim ([Stepped/Tiered] Rent Rules)		

End-of-Hardship Interim ([Stepped/Tiered] Rent Rules)		
Interim - Contract Rent Change		
Interim – Household Composition Change		
Interim – Step Increase (Stepped Rent Rules)		
Interim - Change of income (Standard Rent Rules)		
Move/Change of Unit		
Other Interims		

III. Hardships

We would like to learn more about your experiences and staff time spent processing hardship requests under the [stepped/tiered] rent policy. This includes time spent receiving a request, discussing it with the client, reviewing the necessary paperwork, and, if the request is accepted, determining the hardship remedy and processing the interim certification.

1. How long does it take [staff/you] to review and process an accepted hardship? This includes time spent determining the hardship remedy and completing the interim certification.

2. How long does it take [staff/you] to review and process a hardship that was denied?

IV. Additional Actions

[Do staff spend time/Are you spending time] on tasks under the [stepped/tiered] rent policy that aren't captured in a certification? How does this compare to the amount of time spent under the standard rent policy? This could include things like answering questions, checking to see if families qualify to have their rent reduced, or other time spent with clients that doesn't result in a certification.

Section B

I. Additional Core Activities and the [Stepped/Tiered] Rent Policy *[for program administrators only]*

The next questions concern various activities that PHA staff are involved. These activities, and the specific tasks they include, were spelled out in the HCV and Public Housing Activities Checklist that we emailed to you recently.

1. Intake and Eligibility

    a. How many staff work on this function?

    b. Which 2 of the following tasks do they work on the most?

Applicant intake	
Process port-ins	
Eligibility determinations	
Informal reviews	
Denial of eligibility	
Reasonable accommodation	
Data entry, file management, and reports	

    c. What percentage of their time do they devote to these tasks?

    d. How, if at all, has the Demonstration affected the staff time devoted to the activity?

2. Lease-Up

    a. How many staff work on this function?

    b. Which 2 of the following tasks do they work on the most?

Briefings (individual or group)	
Voucher Issuance	
Search assistance	
Extensions, expirations, and withdrawals	

RFTA processing	
Rent reasonableness	
HAP contracts	
Informal reviews	
Reasonable accommodation	
Data entry, file management, and reports	

    c.   What percentage of their time do they devote to these tasks?

    d.   How, if at all, has the Demonstration affected the staff time devoted to the activity?

3.   Ongoing Occupancy

    a.   How many staff work on this function?

    b.   Which 2 of the following tasks do they work on the most?

Annual recertifications	
Interim recertifications	
Moves	
Rent reasonableness	
Process port-outs	
End of participation	
Termination and related informal hearings	
Other informal hearings	
Reasonable accommodation	
Data entry, file management, and reports	

    c.   What percentage of their time do they devote to these tasks?

d. How, if at all, has RRD affected the staff time devoted to the activity?

4. Inspections

    a. How many staff work on this function?

    b. Which 2 of the following tasks do they work on the most?

Scheduling and notifications	
Preparing for inspection	
Driving to/from inspection	
Conducting inspection	
Post-inspection paperwork	
HQS enforcement	
Reasonable accommodation	

    c. What percentage of their time do they devote to these tasks?

    d. How, if at all, has the Demonstration affected the staff time devoted to the activity?

5. Monitoring and Supervision

    a. How many staff work on this function?

    b. Which 2 of the following tasks do they work on the most?

Plans/policies	
Prepare, approve, and distribute HAP	
PIC and EIV	
SEMAP and file QC	
VMS reporting and corrections	
Other monitoring	
HCV staff supervision	
Board support	

Community relations	
Billing and budget support	
Audit support	
Research studies	

      c.   What percentage of their time do they devote to these tasks?

      d.   How, if at all, has the Demonstration affected the staff time devoted to the activity?

6.   Support Services

      a.   How many staff work on this function?

      b.   Which 2 of the following tasks do they work on the most?

Working with partners	
Marketing, outreach, and enrollment	
Case management, services, and referrals	
Home-ownership related services and referrals	
Expanding housing opportunities	

      c.   What percentage of their time do they devote to these tasks?

      d.   How, if at all, has the Demonstration affected the staff time devoted to the activity?

II. Replacement Families for Households That Exit Under the [Stepped/Tiered] Rent Policy

The next questions concern the families who have replaced households that received housing assistance under the [stepped/tiered] rent policy and later left housing.

1.   How long did it typically take, from the time a household left either HCV or public housing, for a new family to be identified and given a voucher or move into public housing?

2.   For HCV households, how much additional time did it typically take for a household to lease up?

3.   What fraction of HCV families who were given a voucher were unable to lease an apartment?

4.   Were there noteworthy issues in the lease up of these families during the Tiered and Stepped Rent Demonstration compared with before the alternative rules were implemented?

V. HCV Checklist *[for housing specialists only]*

Finally, we would like your input on the HCV and Public Housing Activities Checklist we emailed to you recently. You and your colleagues will be asked to fill out this form so that we can refine our time estimates for administrative tasks.

1. Are the instructions and the form clear? Do you have questions about it?

2. How easy or difficult do you think it will be to complete?

   [Probe: Is there an easier way for us to collect this information from you and your colleagues? Does anything need to be clarified?]