

HCV Best Practices: Leasing and Administrative Plans Supplemental Q&A

1. It seemed you were saying that it's good to pay higher rents so you are utilizing those funds, but shouldn't we also be concerned with per unit cost?
 - a. **Panelist response:** As a smaller agency, yes. This will determine how many vouchers you can have and better funding. Atlanta is a very large agency and may not be the same as a smaller agency.
 - b. **Additional response:** PHAs should take into account both unit cost and the implementation of exception payment standards as a potential unit cost to expand housing opportunities.

2. How large does a PHA need to be to make it worthwhile to implement an online owner or applicant system?
 - a. **Panelist response:** Although size can play a role, it really isn't about the size of your agency so much as how much your agency is willing to invest in implementing a streamlined application process.
 - b. **Additional response:** Agencies should take a look at how much staff time is allocated to responding to customer services inquires and requests. Assessing the amount of time spent as well as transparency for the client is important when determining how much a PHA would like to spend on an online system or enhanced website to allow for online processing.

3. Where do you find the incentive money?
 - a. **Panelist response:** As an MTW agency, you know our funding is different, and we use a good amount to ensure landlords are retained.

4. What Market Rental Tool would you recommend?
 - a. **Panelist response:** We use GAMLIS (Georgia Multiple Listing Service) as our source for rental-leased units and send rent estimates based on that.
 - b. **Additional response:** There are several tools on the market that can be found by researching rent reasonableness database providers; for example, Social Service and AffordableHousing.com. Reputable firms should be able to provide references.

5. In my area, there is a PHA located in a "tourist" type area. Owners can rent their properties on weekends for 2–3 times the FMR. Any suggestions on how the PHA can recruit HCV rental units?



- a. **Panelist response:** This is difficult. We have some owners now that have converted their AirBnBs to HCVP just to have less turn/cleaning cost for the unit. We offer market rents for the Atlanta market though and offer various incentives that include the Leasing Incentive Fee (in lieu of deposit that is non-refundable and one month's rent) and a Market Adjustment Incentive that pays owners \$250 for passing the inspection the first time for single-family units.
 - b. **Additional response:** Owner outreach and HCV Program education are critical to increasing landlord participation. Creating marketing materials listing the benefits of the program is helpful when recruiting owners. One of the biggest selling points of HCV participation is consistent rental income.
6. How do you know who has watched the whole briefing and how do you make sure only those who are eligible watch?
- a. **Panelist response:** Once they complete the presentation, they send all the paperwork back to the office, and we will provide them with vouchers and start the leasing process.
 - b. **Additional response:** Eligibility can be determined upfront. Only provide access to those who have been determined eligible. Or, once the briefing and any knowledge checks (if applicable) have been completed, eligibility can be determined before the issuance of the voucher and request for tenancy approval.
7. Many are hesitant to adopt SAFMRs due to real or perceived administrative burdens. Several have told us (the HUD office) that their software programs do not allow for SAFMR entries, which means PHA staff must manually override the default payment standards. Are there any workarounds or solutions you can recommend to lessen the administrative burden for PHAs to implement SAFMRs?
- a. **Panelist response:** Our software allows us to set the payment standards/FMRs in our system. We have it set via census tract for all City of Atlanta Census Tracts. We use Yardi Voyager PHA, and it does everything that we want it to do. I am unclear what workaround could be used without seeing the software itself and how the staff is using it to ensure maximum potential.
 - b. **Additional response:** The large software providers used by PHAs allow for the use of SAFMRs. In the absence of adequate software, agencies can consider creating a calculation tool or SAFMR look-up tool that has the SAFMRs programmed in so the payment standard automatically populates based on the zip code.
8. What is a best practice for ensuring clients actually participate in an online briefing? We are concerned that not all family members may participate.
- a. **Panelist response:** We put together a presentation with voiceover, but we still have an appointed time. We still schedule time for the briefings to take place.



We choose to do a Microsoft Teams call where we display it, and we have a staff person guiding the presentation through. At the certain points and at the end of the presentation, there are certain documents that need to be signed. We have electronic signature software. We have checkpoints throughout the presentation to give feedback, ask questions, and that kind of thing. That helps to keep the listener engaged and makes sure they stayed through the entire presentation.

- b. **Additional response:** The agency could incorporate a knowledge check (quiz) into the briefing process to determine if key concepts are understood by the family. A statement of responsibility could be added to the request holding the head of household responsible for ensuring all required family members participate. Or, the agency may want all family members to take the knowledge check.

9. One of our largest PHAs that struggles with voucher utilization has an intake process that is 12-steps long and on average takes 52 days to issue a voucher. Additionally, they reported only a 30% response rate to waiting list pulls when their waiting list was last refreshed in July of last year. What are some ways you can suggest PHAs streamline their intake processes to reduce time to issuance and increase response rates for waiting list pulls?

 - a. **Panelist response:** At Atlanta Housing, we have used a residency preference for people who live or work in the city of Atlanta to ensure that they have the first pulls from the waitlist. This ensures that the waitlist applicants are here to make the intake meetings and have the necessary work requirement that they need to come onto the program. We also offer document signing and voucher issuing online (signed electronically), including the briefing online so that the applicants can still work and make it to the briefing without transportation assistance. Atlanta is an MTW agency, so you will have to check what you are able to do in your agency.
 - b. **Panelist response:** CMHA has just begun pulling from its new Housing Choice Voucher waitlist; however, because our process is almost exclusively electronic, it has cut down the overall back and forth inherent in the application process with a higher return in successful voucher issuances (we went from roughly 30% to almost 60%).
 - c. **Additional response:** A large amount of time spent during the intake process is completing verification of eligibility. To reduce the length of time it takes to complete this process, agencies should ensure all documents are easily understood by applicants who are not familiar with the program. Implementing verification methods that do not require tenant-supplied documents may also reduce processing time. To increase the response rate, agencies should reach out to families on the waitlist to verify continued interest in the program and update contact information.



10. Can you elaborate on how changes to policy would overcome some of the obstacles you discovered from VMS data?
 - a. **Response:** The type of policy changes would depend upon the obstacles encountered. For example, if the voucher success rate is low, it could indicate that payment standards are too low, or that occupancy standards are too rigid, thus restricting housing options. Also, some PHAs have screening requirements for owners that are more stringent than what is required by statute, which may be limiting owner participation. Similarly, screening for participants could be too strict. It is possible that waiting list preferences are not targeting populations with the greatest need or are so complex that the waiting list is difficult to manage. PHAs should examine every step of the lease up process from application to HAP Contract execution to determine where bottlenecks exist and identify opportunities for policy changes to address these barriers.

11. Regarding maintaining VASH utilization, have any of the panelists used HUD's new VAMC referral tracking feature on the TYT? What other practices have been implemented to encourage the VA to increase veteran referrals?
 - a. **Response:** For additional information on this topic, you may want to watch [Strategies to Maximize Use of Special Purpose Vouchers](#). You should communicate ongoing issues with the HUD field office regarding not receiving referrals. Establishing regular meetings and shared goals with the VA will help identify ways to work together to eliminate concerns that could be preventing referrals and what resources may be available or needed to increase referrals.

12. If you are using high-rent, enhanced payment standards, how are you still meeting the 40% limit of family income towards rent and utilities?
 - a. **Panelist response:** We do ask the participant to be mindful of the utilities they are responsible for when searching for units. If, for example, an enhanced payment standard is \$2,500, we ask the participant to leave room to ensure the unit will be affordable with UA.
 - b. **Additional response:** The enhanced payment standard will increase the maximum subsidy to be paid; however, affordability must be taken into account regardless of the payment standard type. PHA's should use the rent burden tools in their system of record (Yardi, Elite, etc.) or create a tool that can determine affordability for the family.

13. Does anyone know if any organization has put together a guidebook for owners?
 - a. **Response:** Agencies such as the Chicago Housing Authority and the Philadelphia Housing Authority have created owner guidebooks.

14. Please provide links to view any videos for waiting list info, briefings, and landlord briefings. Also, information on what vendor you used to develop the videos/tools.



- a. **Response:** To see the CMHA HCVP Waiting List explainer video, please visit: <https://www.cmha.net/apply/>
- b. **Additional Response:** To see the briefing Prezi used at WNCP, please visit: <https://prezi.com/view/tooQkwUaWWGWuzZnz6rr/>

