

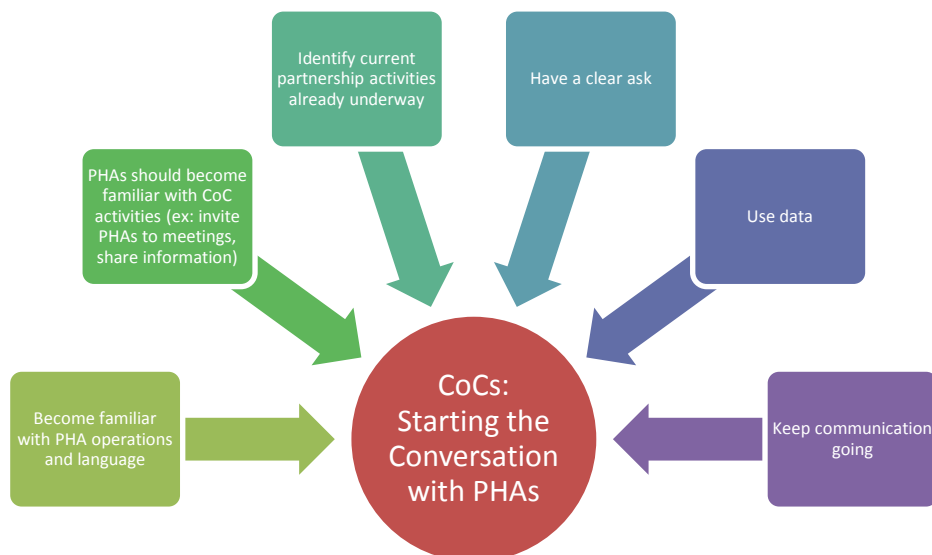


CoC and PHA Collaboration: Strategies for CoCs to Start the Partnership Conversation

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) strongly encourages Continuums of Care (CoCs) to proactively seek to engage in partnerships with Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) within their geographic area. PHAs are a critical partner in a community's efforts to end homelessness, and their participation in local decisions about how to address homelessness is essential to success. As noted by HUD in an August 2013 webinar entitled, ["Ending Homelessness Through the Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing Programs"](#), communities that have been most successful in working toward ending homelessness are those where PHAs are working directly with homeless service providers, the local CoC, and local VA officials.

While some CoCs are already successfully engaging with their local PHAs by incorporating PHA Presidents/Executive Directors onto CoC Boards of Directors, implementing move-up strategies and/or homeless preferences, or collaborating on local planning processes, many CoCs are just starting the process of carving out effective partnerships, and may be struggling with how to start the partnership conversation.

This guidance document provides CoCs with preliminary strategies and tips for starting or improving the partnership conversation and engaging their local PHA(s) in collaborative planning activities. This document discusses big picture approaches to forming an effective partnership; CoCs and PHAs are also encouraged to review [The Business Case for Partnering](#) guidance document created by HUD in partnership with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) for a more in-depth discussion of the benefits of partnership. This [CoC and PHA Collaboration: Strategies for CoCs to Start the Partnership Conversation](#) document provides a snapshot and overview of the ideas that are further detailed in [The Business Case for Partnering](#). For example, while this document touches upon the concept of CoCs having a clear "ask" when approaching their PHAs, [The Business Case for Partnering](#) includes more specific suggestions and guidance, such as ways that CoCs can reduce administrative burden for PHAs when they partner.



Start here: Become familiar with local PHA(s) operations and language.

Understanding more about PHAs and their services means CoCs can better identify partnership opportunities, taking into account not only benefits to the CoC but also the PHA. This knowledge will help CoCs make informed “asks” of their PHA. Below are some suggested resources for CoCs seeking to increase their basic knowledge of PHAs.

- 1) Become familiar with PHA language. HUD’s Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) and Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) created the webinar [“PHA 101: A Guide for CoCs”](#), featuring PIH staff providing an overview of the basics about PHAs and the programs administered by HUD's Office of PIH.

Identify how many PHAs there are within the CoC’s jurisdiction. CoCs often have multiple PHAs within their jurisdiction. [Tools](#) on the HUD.gov website can help CoCs locate their PHA(s), as well as retrieve contact information.

Consider where the PHA is physically located. In the [“Study of PHAs’ Efforts to Serve People Experiencing Homelessness”](#) released by HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), PHAs reported geographic distance as a top barrier to collaborating with CoCs.

- 2) Be informed about the housing resources PHAs offer. What *type* of PHA are they? Once a CoC identifies the type of PHA (s) they have a better understanding of what resources that PHA can bring to the table.

Public Housing Only	Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Only	Combined
These PHAs only administer the Public Housing program, and may administer other Public Housing-related programs such as ROSS or HOPE VI . They do not administer the HCV program.	These PHAs only administer the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program , and may administer other HCV-related programs such as Family Self Sufficiency or Project-Based Voucher PBV (a component of the HCV program). They do not administer the PH program.	These PHAs administer both Public Housing and Section 8 HCV.

- 3) Is the local PHA currently designated as a [Moving to Work](#) (MTW) PHA? If so there may be opportunities for unique uses of Federal dollars to meet the local needs of the CoC.
 - Moving to Work is a demonstration program for PHAs that provides them the opportunity to design and test innovative, locally-designed strategies that use Federal dollars more efficiently, help residents find employment and become self-sufficient, and increase housing choices for low-income families.
 - PHAs designated as MTW are allowed certain regulatory and fiscal flexibilities in how they administer their programs.
 - 39 PHAs are currently designated as MTWs; more information can be found at [HUD.gov](#).

Knowing if a local PHA has MTW status will better inform a CoC's engagement of their local PHA and present CoCs with the opportunity to propose strategies to PHAs that can be tailored to the needs of their specific community, including increasing the percentage of project-based vouchers, linking rental assistance to supportive services, increasing case management services, and streamline HUD processes to reflect local needs.

- 4) Review the local PHA Plan, a comprehensive guide to public housing agency policies, programs, operations, and strategies for meeting local housing needs and goals. There are two parts to the PHA Plan: the 5-Year Plan, which each PHA submits to HUD once every 5th PHA fiscal year, and the [Annual Plan](#), which is submitted to HUD every year. CoCs can seek out opportunities to provide PHAs with information on which policies are hindering and helping homeless households during the Annual Plan process. CoCs should provide data to support their comments whenever possible.

CoCs should also review the PHA's Administrative Plan and the PHA's Admission and Continued Occupancy Policy, especially when approaching PHAs about creating a homeless preference or discussing waitlist management.

- The Administrative Plan, a supporting document of the PHA Plan, for the administration of the HCV program, includes PHA policies on selection and admission of applicants from the PHA waiting list, including any PHA admission preferences, procedures for removing applicant names from the waiting list, and procedures for closing and reopening the PHA waiting list.
 - The PHA's Admission and Continued Occupancy Policy, for the administration of the Public Housing program, is similar to the Administrative Plan and covers PHA policies on various subjects, including the selection and admission of applicants from PHA waiting list, screening of applicants for tenancy, occupancy standards and occupancy policies.
- 5) Read [PIH Notice 2013-15 \(HA\)](#), in which HUD provides guidance to PHAs on housing individuals and families experiencing homelessness through the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. A joint [webinar](#) between CPD and PIH was recorded to provide an overview of the PIH Notice, the types of strategies PHA's can implement to participate in local efforts to end homelessness, and how PHA's can coordinate with CoCs and providers.

Assess the current status of PHA involvement with the CoC.

CoC activities (such as regular membership meetings, committees, or point in time counts) are an excellent opportunity to begin or strengthen partnerships with PHAs. PHAs across the country are currently fulfilling several important roles in CoCs, from administering CoC funded programs to leading CoC Boards of Directors. Some examples of these successful and effective partnerships can be found in the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' ["PHA Guide to Participation in the Continuum of Care and Other Collaborative Planning"](#) guidebook. Below is a sample of some questions CoCs can use to assess the current level of engagement by the PHA with the CoC. The more questions are answered "yes", the more opportunities there are to leverage existing engagements into future partnerships.

- Is the housing authority a recipient of CoC Program funding?
- Do representatives from the housing authority attend CoC meetings?

- Do representatives from the housing authority participate on the CoC Board?
- Do representatives from the housing authority participate on any CoC committees?

Have a clear ask. Bring something to the table.

Articulating a clear ask of a PHA can help move the process forward more efficiently, and is an effective alternative to open-ended meetings. Identify concrete ways the PHA can help house homeless individuals and families, and pair that ask with ways community providers can help the PHA make it happen. Knowing what motivates the PHA (i.e. good utilization rates) can help inform this conversation.

What might the CoC be asking for?	What does the PHA need?	What can the CoC offer the PHA?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferences (ex: for chronically homeless households) • Reduced screening criteria • Wait-list management • Flexible in-take procedures • Review of termination policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good utilization rates • Strong landlord relationships • Reduced administrative burden • Eviction prevention • Stable communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals • Help with paperwork/briefings • Housing Search Assistance • Case management or supportive services for tenant • Liaisons between PHA, tenants, and landlords • Help with paperwork/briefings • Services for tenants and landlords • Advocacy • Grant-writers

Example: CoC “asks” for a PHA homeless preference. What does the PHA need and what can the CoC offer?

PIH Notice 2013-15 identifies establishing a preference in their admissions policies as the PHA’s “greatest tool” for increasing program access for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

- CoCs can help PHAs demonstrate the local need to create a preference.
 - PHAs must make decision based on their community needs. CoCs can help PHAs connect the dots between Point-In-Time (PIT) count, Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) data, the community’s strategic Plan to End Homelessness, the Consolidated Plan, and the PHA Plan process.
- When it comes to identifying eligible households for a preference, CoC organizations can offer outreach to homeless households and to current and potential landlords. In addition, CoC homeless service organizations can help PHAs to verify homelessness and assemble the required documentation.
- CoC partners can also provide PHAs assistance with paperwork and briefings to expedite the process and alleviate administrative burden.
- The continued presence of the homeless service provider is also a key factor to the tenant’s sustained occupancy in the unit. Service providers may act as liaisons between the family and property manager should issues arise, as well as act as a single point of contact for PHAs when a household’s subsidy or housing is at risk.

Additional information on identifying issues and how CoC/PHA partnerships can be solutions, please reference [The Business Case for Partnering](#).

Use Data.

Use data to support the “ask”. Demonstrate the community’s need using local data from HMIS, the Plan to End Homelessness, and other local data sources and reports. For many CoCs this may mean starting with a review of their data collection and data quality performance standards.

Communication.

At the outset of collaborative planning, and throughout all current and future partnership opportunities, CoCs and PHAs must keep open and regular communication. It’s important that both PHAs and CoCs clearly communicate their goals and the resources they can offer.

- CoCs should consider identifying one or two key people to act as main points of contact for all communication with and outreach to the PHAs. This will help focus the CoC’s communication by reducing inconsistent messaging and lack of internal coordination by the CoC, as well as make a PHA’s communication to the CoC that much easier and centralized. The goal is to reduce the chances of miscommunication or oversight.

Coordination.

The CoC Program interim rule requires Continuums of Care to establish and operate a coordinated entry system. The primary purpose of coordinated entry is to make rapid, effective, and consistent client-to-housing and service matches—regardless of a client’s location within a CoC’s geographic area—by standardizing the access and assessment process and by coordinating referrals across the CoC. As CoCs are developing and implementing their coordinated entry systems they should consider how to involve their PHAs. As one of the larger providers of affordable housing in the community, PHAs can be a critical contributor of this process. PHA involvement in coordinated entry alone does not provide additional housing opportunities, however creating homeless preferences and then participating in a coordinated entry system ensures that those PHA resources are used more effectively and in coordination with CoC resources.

The Houston and Harris County housing authorities only receive referrals through their local CoC’s coordinated entry system, thereby streamlining the referral process as well as reinforcing the importance of coordination system-wide. For other examples of Houston’s collaboration efforts visit this [USICH Blog post](#).

- PHAs can support this process on the front-end by identifying applicants for rental assistance who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and encouraging them to also seek assistance through the community’s coordinated entry system.
- PHAs can also provide housing opportunities for individuals and families based on referrals from the community’s coordinated entry system. For example, a PHA can collaborate to identify homeless households that might qualify for a wait-list preference, or the PHA can rely on the coordinated entry system to refer persons who qualify for special purpose vouchers or permanent supportive housing programs that are administered by the PHA and its partners.

Set a goal.

Whether it is a single finite goal with a rapid timeline (ex: house 20 chronically homeless veterans in the next 90 days), or a longer –term more complex goal (ex: design a plan for the development of 300units

over the next three years)—start with the goal that both the CoC and PHA feel is attainable and impactful. This collaborative planning, the implementation, and the success of achieving these goals will likely solidify the partnerships and build the trust and confidence needed to continue moving forward as partners working toward the goal of ending homelessness.

For further information to help you learn about PHAs and their unique programs and regulations as they serve communities, please utilize:

- HUD has recently created a new [web page](#) that consolidates all recent guidance and resources to help Public Housing Agencies contribute to ending homelessness.
- USICH’s [“PHA Guidebook to Ending Homelessness”](#) The USICH PHA Guidebook provides guidance and best practices PHAs can use to strengthen their collaborative efforts.
- CSH’s [PHA Toolkit](#). This toolkit provides PHA staff and other stakeholders with the knowledge and know-how to put together a key piece of the puzzle to ending homelessness—supportive housing.