System-level approaches to landlord engagement ensure there is a coordinated strategy to utilize the unprecedented amount of resources in communities and overcome challenges of difficult housing markets. Engaging in system-level approaches encourages provider agencies to reduce competition and instead pool power, capacity, and resources to build a more robust unit acquisition strategy. Ultimately, communities should seek to create an approach that takes advantage of every housing opportunity – every unit that a property owner is willing to contribute must be filled with a program participant.

**Landlord Engagement Models**

There are three models often seen in communities in their approach to landlord engagement. Historically, communities have taken a decentralized approach where housing search staff conduct unit identification for their caseload of participants in a specific program or agency. In the past several years, and specifically in response to the pandemic, communities have shifted towards centralized approaches to landlord engagement.

**Centralized**

In a centralized model, communities task a specific team, program, or agency to carry out the function of landlord engagement and unit acquisition for the system. This may be centered around landlord engagement for a Continuum of Care, geography, or population. Centralized models typically ensure landlords are receiving the same level of customer service, despite which agency is providing rental assistance to the tenant.

**Decentralized**

In a decentralized model, several entities carry out the function of landlord engagement and unit acquisition, typically conducting individualized housing search for a caseload of participants in a program or agency. Decentralized models do not coordinate outreach, messaging, or retention standards but may have their own internal approaches.

**Hybrid**

Hybrid models of landlord engagement have characteristics of both centralized and decentralized models. There may be an agency or program tasked with unit acquisition for the system as well as staff across provider agencies engaging landlords in their housing search with participants. Hybrid models may still coordinate their efforts, share unit and landlord information, and ensure a consistent message is utilized for outreach.

**Key Components of System-Level Approaches**

**Large-Scale Recruitment**

Conducting large-scale landlord recruitment and unit acquisition efforts is essential to utilizing the various rental assistance resources. Large-scale recruitment shifts efforts from engaging individual landlords to approaching management companies, municipality-controlled units, and networks of property owners. In large-scale recruitment strategies, entities conducting landlord engagement seek opportunities to acquire multiple units...
at a time through relationship building and negotiations. Activities in large-scale recruitment include marketing campaigns that leverage local champion support, building relationships with property owners and companies who may be willing to dedicate incoming vacancies, and networking with groups, like the local Chamber of Commerce, landlord associations, and neighborhood associations.

**Dedicated Staff**

Systems must have staff dedicated to the role of landlord engagement and unit acquisition to carry out an effective approach. Staff with an expertise in real estate, sales, and marketing can leverage their knowledge to navigate the housing market and negotiate with property owners.

**Landlord Service Standards**

Developing shared standards across housing programs can alleviate concerns from providers about engaging in a coordinated strategy and ensure landlords are receiving the same level of customer service across provider agencies. Standards may include expectations regarding response times, tenancy support, and points of contact. Landlord service standards can be leveraged as an incentive when recruiting new landlords.

**Mechanisms for Unit Sharing**

As communities engage in large-scale, system-level approaches, there should be mechanisms in place for unit information to be shared with agencies and participants. There are several platforms communities can use that range in simplicity and accessibility, like Padmission and Google Sheets.

**Landlord Incentives**

Financial incentives can be tailored to the specific needs of the community and leveraged for recruitment and retention. Find more information on landlord incentives in the EHV Webinar Summary on Landlord Incentives.

**Coordinated Marketing and Outreach Efforts**

Coordinating marketing and outreach efforts often leverage local champions and networks to promote a powerful, consistent message to property owners. Find more information on marketing approaches in the EHV Webinar Summary on Marketing, Outreach, and Retention.

**Hosting Events**

Hosting events are an opportunity to network with property owners, build morale, and coordinate housing efforts. Communities should include events, like housing surges, unit fairs, and landlord appreciation dinners, in their system-level approach.
Building a System-Level Approach

Assess the Unit Acquisition Need and Local Housing Market

A first step in building a system-level approach can be conducting an assessment of the unit acquisition need across the system and gaining an understanding of the local housing market. The assessment should include both quantitative and qualitative data, including the number of households searching for units, desired neighborhoods, bedroom types needed, as well as housing market data like vacancy rates, common screening criteria, and types of property owners.

Tailor the Approach

Based on a community’s understanding of the assessment, they can then build a system-level approach tailored to their understanding. EHV service fees can be leveraged to carry out the approach. The table below demonstrates how communities can develop tailored approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment: If you find…</th>
<th>Response: Then you could…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quick lease-up process</td>
<td>Establish quick standard response times and pre-screen households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of studios and 1 BR units</td>
<td>Increase lease-signing bonuses for studios and 1 BR units; Offer shared housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realtors are common practice</td>
<td>Ensure there are funds to pay realtor/broker fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners are concerned about the turnaround time for unit inspections</td>
<td>Outline unit inspection expectations and establish holding fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large management companies make up the majority of units</td>
<td>Offer a point of contact for any vacancies/tenant concerns; Build relationships with staff at all levels (executive, property-level, and leasing agents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available units don’t pass inspections</td>
<td>Develop a centralized fund to cover the costs of repairs and increase available housing stock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Resources

- [HCV Landlord Resources](#)
- [Rapid Rehousing Roundtable Discussion Series: Landlord Engagement and Unit Acquisition](#)