



Guide 5: Resident Advisory Boards and the Housing Authority Plan Process



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This document is part of the **Public Housing Resident Organizing and Participation Toolkit**. The full toolkit includes topical guides, customizable resident council documents and forms, tools related to tenant participation funds, and case studies of resident organizations around the country. To see the full toolkit go to: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/public-housing/resident-toolkit/>

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RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARDS AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY PLAN PROCESS

Housing authorities are required to develop a guide (the Plan) detailing their mission and goals and how they plan to meet them through activities, programs, and any updates to their policies.

The Plan has two parts: the Annual Plan and Five-year Plan. The documents are used to inform HUD, families served by the housing authority, and the public. Resident involvement in developing the Plan is critical since it outlines the housing authority rules, policies, and programs.

The Plan includes changes or updates to housing authority policies such as:

- How residents are admitted
- How rents are determined and collected
- Grievance procedures and eviction
- Resident programs and services such as homeownership, community service, and self-sufficiency
- Safety and crime prevention
- Budgets for maintenance, repairs, security, and other programs

The documents describe any new activities that the housing authority will undertake, such as:

- Development and redevelopment projects
- Changes to housing subsidies and programs (including converting public housing to RAD)
- Modernizations
- Designation of housing for specific populations such as the elderly

What is a Resident Advisory Board?

A Resident Advisory Board (RAB) is a group of residents that participates in the Plan process. HUD requires that the housing authority establish one or more Resident Advisory Board(s) as part of the Plan process. The housing authority must consider the recommendations of the RAB(s) and make revisions that it deems appropriate to drafts or to the Plan. The RAB must be able to participate through the entire Plan process, including if the Plan is amended or modified after it is final.

The RAB is made up of public housing residents, including resident leaders, from different properties. If more than 20% of the households that the housing authority serves receive Section 8 tenant-based vouchers, the housing authority must make efforts to get voucher-holders to participate on the RAB.



Federal rules for public housing:

You can find public housing regulations in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

Most rules related to tenant participation are in Title 24, Housing and Urban Development, Part 964, Tenant Participation and Tenant Opportunities in Public Housing.

*When you see a reference to 24 CFR 964 that is a reference to the CFR. The legal requirements for RABs are generally found in **24 CFR 903.13**.*

What is a Resident Advisory Board and what is its role in development of the Annual Plan? Click the link to read the regulations in detail.

The Plan Process & the RAB

The housing authority and the RAB should develop a reasonable timetable, including the meeting schedule, to promote participation. Many housing authorities are required to publish an Annual Plan once a year. However, housing authorities with 550 or fewer public housing units and/or housing choice vouchers combined may be exempt. More information on these designations and the templates for specific plans can be found on [HUD's webpage](#).

The housing authority must follow a step-by-step process to create the Plan. Resident participation, primarily through the Resident Advisory Board, is a key piece of that process. The Resident Advisory Board ensures that tenants are able to participate and have a meaningful voice in the creation of the Plans.

HUD guidelines suggest a 6-month process for the development of the Plan. The Resident Advisory Boards (below, we will say "RAB" though there may be more than one) should be recruited and appointed early in the process in order to ensure effective resident participation.

In an example where the housing authority fiscal year begins on January 1st, the housing authority would begin compiling background materials in May, the public hearing would take place at the beginning of October, and the plan would be submitted in mid-October and receive approval before the start of the new fiscal year. Note that the PHA is required to make the proposed plan/documents available to the public at least 45 days prior to the hearing and to publish the notice of the hearing.

A housing authority must consider the recommendations of the RAB but are not required to agree with them. When the housing authority sends the Plan to HUD, they must include information about which, if any, suggestions the RAB made. The housing authority must also include how they analyzed and made decisions around the recommendations. If the housing authority disagreed with the RAB recommendation, it must explain why.

Time before the Plan is due	Phase	PHA Tasks related to the RAB
6 months	Preparation to develop the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather information to develop the Plan• Establish the Resident Advisory Board and begin meeting
4.5 months	Plan development and drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult with the RAB and local government agencies related to community needs, resources, and PHA policies
3.5 months	Public Hearing Notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan for a public meeting, with at least 45 days notice, to receive public comments• Plan to make proposed documents available to the public at least 45 days before the public hearing
2 months	Update draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue drafting and consultations, as needed
30 days	Public Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtain written recommendations from the RAB• Revise Plan, as needed
Plan Due (75 days prior to the beginning of the PHA's fiscal year) to HUD		

After submission		
75 days after submission	Approval or Disapproval by HUD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantive Disapproval: the RAB and public, through the same process, must be consulted again to revise the Plan. • Approval: The Plan and all attachments must be available for public review at the PHA main office and provided to the RAB.

Housing Authority Support to the Resident Advisory Board

The housing authority must allow the RAB sufficient time, information and resources to fully carry-out their role, including:

- Sufficient time to review and make recommendations on the Plan.
- Advance notice of meetings (at least 48 hours)
- Adequate information about the housing authority’s programs and policies included in the Plan. This may include gathering and compiling data and materials or providing initial recommendations to the RAB.
- Any existing documents that will assist them in making recommendations
- Resources to carry-out their duties, including communicating with other residents and holding meetings with residents. These resources may include:
 - » Meeting space
 - » Printing
 - » Office supplies—such as paper, pens, etc.
 - » Phone
 - » Computer
 - » Internet

Following the process, the housing authority should continue to keep the RAB engaged. The housing authority must make the final Plan and any attachments available to the public. The housing authority may also share the HUD notice of the Plan’s approval.

Resident Advisory Board Membership and Formation

Officially recognized resident councils and jurisdiction-wide resident councils have the right to select members for the RAB. How members are selected depends on if there is a resident council, or councils, that follow HUD resident tenant participation rules. Resident councils that meet those requirements are called “duly-elected” resident councils. If there is:

- **A duly-elected jurisdiction-wide resident council**, the housing authority must appoint the group or its representatives as the Resident Advisory Board.
- **No duly-elected jurisdiction-wide council**, but one or more duly-elected resident councils, the councils or their representatives should be appointed. The housing authority may have the resident councils choose a certain number of representatives to serve as RAB members, and may select residents from properties with no qualified councils to fill out the remainder of the positions.
- **No duly-elected resident councils**, then the housing authority must appoint members that reflect and represent the diversity of all residents.

In cases where the housing authority must recruit and select RAB members, the housing authority should provide enough notice of their plans so that residents can volunteer to participate with the RAB or else form resident councils that could provide members to the RAB.

The RAB should be as diverse as the residents of the assisted housing are—in age, race, properties, geography, etc.

If there is a jurisdiction-wide resident council that forms the RAB, the housing authority may need to create another RAB to represent any residents with tenant-based vouchers (Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers). The housing authority may also create RABs for other groups of interested residents (for example, by geography). Unless there is a jurisdiction-wide council, the housing authority may choose to include all residents in only one RAB.

Participation in a RAB is limited to residents in public housing and the Section 8 tenant-based program. The housing authority is not required to include residents in project-based Section 8 properties, though these residents are welcome to participate in the public meeting.

Whether or not residents choose to participate in a RAB, the Plan process still requires that the housing authority conduct outreach, and all residents may participate at the public meeting.



For more information on resident councils, see [Guide 1: Organizing and Running Resident Councils](#).

RAB Membership Term

Each housing authority may decide on a policy for terms on the RAB. They should consider the number of RABs, resident interest in volunteering, aligning terms with the Plan process, and how to maximize resident participation. When the jurisdiction-wide resident council serves as the RAB, it is common that the residents will participate for multiple years and that the RAB will meet nearly year-round. It is also common for the RAB to be a more ad-hoc group that comes together to discuss the housing authority in a meeting or two and does not meet again.

Why Participate in a RAB?

As a resident, you are an expert on the strengths and needs of your community. Participating on the RAB is an excellent way to share your experience and provide input on decisions that affect your housing and communities. The information you share will help the housing authority set priorities for improvements and resident services.

Public Hearings and Comment on the Plans

The housing authority is required to hold public meetings to receive comments from the public on their proposed activities. Anyone from the public can attend—not just members of the RAB! The housing authority must work with the RAB, and consider all the comments they receive at the public hearing. The housing authority must give at least 45 days notice for the hearing, and tell residents where related documents are available to pick up. The housing authority must conduct outreach to promote public participation.

Any significant amendment or modification to the Plan must also include input from the RAB and requires a public hearing.

Questions to ask the housing authority

If you are considering participating in a RAB, you may want to ask the housing authority:

- What is the time commitment for serving on the RAB?
- What is the term of service?
- When and where are meetings usually held?
- What decisions have been changed in the past because of RAB participation?
- What will my role be?
- How will decisions be made?

Examples of RABs in practice



Los Angeles County, California: The Los Angeles County Community Development Authority (LACDA) serves as the county's housing authority. LACDA does not have a jurisdiction-wide resident council, but does have some active property-based resident councils.

During the Plan process, LACDA coordinates with the active resident councils to make sure they have time to choose representatives to the RAB. LACDA then identifies other active residents in buildings not represented by resident councils. ROSS service coordinators contribute to the selection, as they know many of the residents.

RAB meetings are held at the largest LACDA property. Transportation is provided for RAB members. When the public hearing is held, it is publicized ahead of time at all LACDA properties and again transportation is provided to residents who live at other properties.

LACDA is aware that most of the participants are seniors, and that younger families are underrepresented. LACDA makes an effort to recruit younger RAB members, and also takes into account how representative the RAB is when weighing the RAB's suggestions.



Fall River, Massachusetts: The Fall River Housing Authority has a jurisdiction-wide resident council, the Joint Tenant Council (JTC). JTC trains its representatives on the Plan process, so they can fully contribute. Because the JTC is a jurisdiction-wide resident council, the JTC representatives automatically serve as the RAB.

The Fall River RAB has a history of resident engagement and has influenced the Plan. One change that the RAB influenced in the Plan is a new grievance policy, which was implemented several years ago.



Resources

United States Code of Federal Regulations related to Public Housing Agency Annual and Five Year Plans and Resident Advisory Boards: Title 24 Housing and Urban Development, Part 903 Public Housing Agency Plans: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2011-title24-vol4/pdf/CFR-2011-title24-vol4-part903.pdf>

HUD website. Resident Advisory Board—Public Housing Agency (PHA) Plans. This website includes templates and definitions for the different types of PHAs (Standard, Troubled, Small, High Performing, and Section 8 only): https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/about/rab

National Housing Law Project. Public Housing fact sheet #2: The Resident Advisory Board: <https://nhlp.org/files/08A%20FS-02%20v5%20030804%20rab.PDF>