

HOUSING VOUCHERS - AND - LANDLORD USAGE



INTRODUCTION

NAR is supportive of government assisted housing programs. Affordable housing opportunities should be available to all citizens. There are many prospects for the government and property owners and managers to work together to provide adequate, safe, and affordable housing to American families.

Existing housing voucher programs include a number of barriers and disincentives for housing providers to participate. Currently, the program requires landlords to comply with burdensome government regulations and procedures which can seriously compromise the performance and financial viability of a property, which may include: uncertainty of appropriated funds, amendments of landlord's leases, longer vacancies before leasing up, and compliance with additional required regulations not normally attendant to conventional housing.

Numerous studies have shown that providing landlord incentives and removing barriers to participation, increases availability of housing units for residents. PHA's have significant flexibility in policies and procedures that can make the program more accessible to landlords. For example, the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016 (HOTMA), which NAR strongly supported, provides PHAs with administrative flexibility to ease inspection protocols to make them more landlord-friendly. PHAs have also used innovative programs to create other incentives or remove administrative burdens on housing providers.



BEST PRACTICES TO INCREASE LANDLORD PARTICIPATION



OUTREACH TO LANDLORDS

Cultivating trusted relationships between landlords, program administrators and social service staff has increased landlord willingness to work with vouchers and improved tenant success. By reaching out to housing providers, PHAs can provide information, guidance, and relieve concerns of landlords who may be reticent to participate in the voucher program. Holding open meetings to address concerns, or providing a landlord hotline can also help.

*EXAMPLE - **Miami-Dade County** (Fla.) provides a landlord portal that centralizes all forms and requests and also a free property listing platform.*



SECURITY DEPOSIT POOL

Many property owners site concerns with damage to the property which may not be covered by the security deposit levels allowed by the PHA. By providing an additional pool of money to cover any additional damage, housing authorities can provide a sense of security for property owners.

*EXAMPLE - **Marin Housing Authority** (Calif.) offers up to \$2,500 per family as a security deposit, and up to \$3,500 per family to be paid to the owner once family vacates if it is determined the family caused damages beyond normal wear and tear.*



VACANCY LOSS ASSISTANCE

When a voucher tenant is served with an eviction notice from the property, the housing subsidy stops. This means the housing provider is not receiving rent from the tenant, nor a subsidy from the housing authority. Providing landlords with an eviction protection fund, creates certainty for a landlord that they won't lose rent while they re-lease the unit.

*EXAMPLE - **The Cambridge Housing Authority** (Mass.) works to mitigate the uncertainty of the voucher process with vacancy loss reimbursements.*



STREAMLINE INSPECTIONS

One of the more significant concerns of housing providers is the amount of time a unit must remain vacant until a voucher resident can move in. Often there are several weeks or even months before the PHA can schedule the inspection prior to move-in. The **Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act** of 2016 authorized HUD to allow PHAs the discretion to approve units for lease up before passing an inspection. This allows a tenant to move in, and a housing provider to begin receiving rent, even before the inspection is completed.

BEST PRACTICES TO INCREASE LANDLORD PARTICIPATION

LANDLORD INCENTIVES

Financial incentives can also compel a landlord to participate in the program. A HUD study also found that “PHAs could offer one-time signing bonuses or financial incentives for new entrants or for landlords in low-poverty neighborhoods.”

*EXAMPLE - **The Oakland Housing Authority** (Calif.) offers both a \$500 signing bonus for landlords who are new to the program, as well as re-rent incentives and vacancy loss payments.*

RENT FLEXIBILITY

Many voucher holders want to live in areas of opportunity (those near transit, jobs, etc.). However, often the rent levels do not support the market rent for units in those communities. PHAs some flexibility to increase rent levels, which would support vouchers at those higher rents.

*EXAMPLE - **The Atlanta Housing Authority** changes their rent levels based on neighborhood, allowing units in areas of higher opportunity to be eligible for higher rents. They also offer bonuses for single family housing providers, and for properties with upgraded building systems.*



DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIP WITH HOUSING AUTHORITIES



REALTORS® are active members of their communities, and are often housing providers themselves. REALTORS® can help bridge the gap between housing authorities and housing providers in order to improve housing opportunities for all.



Establish a relationship with your local housing authority and/or local voucher administrator. A list of housing authorities can be found here: www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts

1. Call and request a meeting. Say you are a REALTOR® (or represent a REALTOR® Association) and are interested in finding ways you can work together.
2. Do your homework! Make sure you know what the program is about. Here is a great resource for background - [HUD Housing Voucher Guidebook](#).
3. Consider inviting a local government official. This can enhance your credibility, and show REALTOR® commitment to affordable housing issues.
4. After the initial meeting, develop ideas for ways you can work together.
 - a. Host an event between the housing authority and housing providers;
 - b. Host a homeownership fair;
 - c. Host a tenant workshop, to educate new voucher holders on how to be a successful resident;
 - d. Work together on a myths/facts document for housing providers;
 - e. Work together on local issues of shared interest;
 - f. Invite them to present at a meeting of your Association; and/or
 - g. Keep up the communication – suggest a quarterly check-in
5. Keep in mind that holding an event with a PHA could qualify for funding consideration under the [housing opportunity grants](#) program from NAR.