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Practical Strategies for Building a Successful Housing Mobility Program

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Practical Strategies for Building a Successful Housing Mobility Program

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CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES

WITH A FOREWORD BY MARGERY AUSTIN TURNER, URBAN INSTITUTE

February 2013

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FOREWORD

Margery Austin Turner

Why run a housing mobility program? The fundamental reason is that neighborhoods make a difference in the lives of families and children. Poor families benefit when they can move away from distressed and dangerous environments to live in safe, opportunity-rich neighborhoods.

The Moving to Opportunity demonstration (MTO) is by far the most ambitious effort test this proposition. The families from public housing projects in five cities that volunteered to participate in MTO were randomly divided into three groups: the *experimental* group received housing vouchers that (for the first year) could only be used in low-poverty neighborhoods, along with one-time help finding a house or apartment that qualified; the *comparison* group received regular housing vouchers that could be used to move to any neighborhood; and the *control* group continued to receive housing subsidies in their original development.[1]

Recently released results from the full, formal evaluation conclude that, as a group, the MTO experimental households enjoy significantly better health and mental health outcomes than the control group but not higher employment, incomes, or educational attainment.[2] The health gains (which weren't anticipated when MTO was launched) are hugely important. Obesity, anxiety, and depression severely degrade a person's quality of life, employability, and parenting abilities. Nobody should understate the value of a policy intervention that helps tackle these chronic health risks. But what explains the absence of measurable differences in employment and education?

One possible reason is that few experimental households spent much time living in high-opportunity neighborhoods. In fact, less than half the households in the MTO treatment group actually moved to low-poverty neighborhoods initially, and many moved back to higher poverty neighborhoods after a year or two. Consequently, by the end of the demonstration period, differences among the three treatment groups in exposure to high-opportunity neighborhoods were quite modest.

It turns out that most MTO households who moved to high-opportunity neighborhoods had difficulty staying there. Only one in four sustained their residence in these locations throughout the study period. MTO households left these neighborhoods for three main reasons: problems with their lease or conflicts with the landlord, dissatisfaction with how their housing was maintained, or desire for a bigger or better-quality apartment. During the housing boom (leading up to 2008), households faced additional stressors, such as units being sold and rehabbed, rented above the voucher program rent ceiling, or removed from the voucher program altogether.[4]

1   For more on the origins and design of MTO, see Xavier de Souza Briggs, Susan J. Popkin, and John Goering, *Moving to Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment to Fight Ghetto Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

2   Lisa Sanbonmatsu, Jens Ludwig, Lawrence F. Katz, Lisa A. Gennetian, Greg J. Duncan, Ronald C. Kessler, Emma Adam, Thomas W. McDade, and Stacy Tessler Lindau, *Impacts of the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program after 10 to 15 Years* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, 2011).

3   Margery Austin Turner, Jennifer Comey, Daniel Kuehn, and Austin Nichols, *Helping Poor Families Gain and Sustain Access to High-Opportunity Neighborhoods* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2011) http://www.urban.org/publications/412455.html.

4   Xavier de Souza Briggs, Jennifer Comey, and Gretchen Weissman, "Struggling to Stay Out of High-Poverty Neighborhoods: Housing Choice and Locations in Moving to Opportunity's First Decade," *Housing Policy Debate* 20, no. 3 (2010): 383–427.

Nevertheless, MTO households that did manage to live for longer periods in neighborhoods with lower poverty did achieve better outcomes in work and school. Adults were more likely to have jobs and earn more, and youth had higher English and math test scores, other things being equal. These benefits were not only statistically significant but also meaningful in size. For example, an adult who lived in neighborhoods with poverty rates averaging 16 percent over a decade has a predicted monthly income $233 higher at the end of the period than an adult who lived in neighborhoods with poverty rates averaging 41 percent. The corresponding differences in boys' predicted English and math test scores equate to nearly a year of instruction.[5]

It's important to note, though, that moving to a low-poverty neighborhood does not guarantee that children will attend high-performing schools or that adults will have better access to jobs. Roughly 7 of 10 MTO households sent their children to their assigned schools; and for those that were school "choosers," informed choices proved difficult. Some parents were unaware of the options available in their new neighborhoods, in part because most relied on limited information resources, such as word-of-mouth referrals from relatives and friends.[6] Geographic analysis also revealed that MTO households relocating to low-poverty neighborhoods in Los Angeles and Chicago were no closer to low-skilled job opportunities than those they left behind.[7] And ethnographic observation of MTO households highlighted the tremendous struggles they faced trying to line up a secure, three-way spatial match: access to affordable child care (often provided by relatives or friends), an apartment that stayed affordable, and a reasonably secure job. This struggle often led to instability, difficult commutes, and frequent moves and job changes.

The evidence from MTO argues for ongoing investments in housing mobility programs that help low-income households find and afford housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods. But it also challenges policymakers and practitioners to strengthen the design and implementation of these programs. Low poverty rates alone may not target the neighborhoods that are truly rich in opportunities for households with children. So, housing mobility programs need to get smarter about identifying and monitoring other indicators of opportunity, including low crime, good neighborhood schools, and access to decent jobs. Households also need help *staying* in high-opportunity neighborhoods as well as getting there, especially when rental market conditions are tight. And some households need supplemental help to understand and access the educational and employment opportunities that their new neighborhoods have to offer.

The next generation of housing mobility programs must learn from these lessons to ensure that poor households reap the benefits that opportunity moves can bring.

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5   Margery Austin Turner, Jennifer Comey, Daniel Kuehn, and Austin Nichols, Residential Mobility, High-Opportunity Neighborhoods, and Outcomes for Low-Income Families: Insights from the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, 2012).

6   Kadija Ferryman, Xavier de Souza Briggs, Susan J. Popkin, and María Rendón, Do Better Neighborhoods for MTO Families Mean Better Schools? (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2008).

7   Elizabeth Cove, Margery Austin Turner, and Xavier de Souza Briggs, Can Escaping from Poor Neighborhoods Increase Employment and Earnings? (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2008).

*Chapter*1

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, administered by public housing agencies (PHAs) across the country, provides low income households the ability to affordably rent decent housing practically anywhere in the United States. And yet, they don't. Studies have shown that voucher holders are concentrated in a relatively small partion of the neighborhoods with available affordable rental housing. These neighborhoods are often poorer, more racially segregated, and of lower quality than other neighborhoods;[8] and the schools in these places are often lower performing, with high poverty rates.[9]

Many efforts are already underway to make these neighborhoods better, more livable places. But, in order to fully exercise their right to housing choice, households also need quality information about all the neighborhood and housing options available to them as well as the tools to overcome real and perceived barriers in the private rental market. This is the important role of a housing mobility program.

If you are reading this, you have already decided to explore putting together a housing mobility program for HCV program participants in your community. Many different kinds of organizations can operate housing mobility programs, including PHAs, community-based not-for-profit groups, fair housing advocacy and enforcement organizations, government agencies, private for-profit companies, and various combinations of these.

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8   See the following sources: Deborah J. Devine, Robert W. Gray, Lester Rubin, and Lydia B. Tahiti, "Housing Choice Voucher Location Patterns: Implications for Participant and Neighborhood Welfare" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, 2003); Rolf Pendall, "Why Voucher and Certificate Users Live in Distressed Neighborhoods," Housing Policy Debate 11, no. 4 (2000): 881–909; and Mary K. Cunningham and Audrey Droesch, "Neighborhood Quality and Racial Segregation" (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2005).

9   See Ingrid Gould Ellen and Keren Mertens Horn, *Do Federally Assisted Households Have Access to High Performing Public Schools?* (PRRAC, November 2012), available at www.prrac.org/housing-schools.php.

Drawing on the best available research and model programs from across the country, this toolkit is designed to provide practical advice for all these different types of organizations. However, we expect that some chapters or sections will be more relevant to certain types of organizations and that different organizations may use the information differently, depending on their role in their community's prospective housing mobility program. Please keep this in mind when reading through the toolkit.

Here's what's inside:

✳ **Chapter 2 Aligning Your Community's Policies to Support Housing Mobility** discusses how to adjust underlying HCV policies and better align other housing policies to support full housing choice.

✳ **Chapter 3 Setting Program Goals and Making Other Key Decisions** walks you through establishing goals, target populations, and definitions for opportunity neighborhoods as well as assessing both the housing market and the needs of prospective program participants to inform program design.

✳ **Chapter 4 Building Your Housing Mobility Program** offers basic, standard, and enhanced options for key housing mobility program components: landlord development, outreach, pre-search counseling, housing search assistance, and post-move support.

✳ **Chapter 5 Measuring Success** presents a framework for tracking program activities and outcomes.

✳ **Chapter 6 Funding and Implementing Your Mobility Program** shows you how to put all the components together, firm up funding for the core voucher program, identify new funding sources, and plan the implementation of your housing mobility program.

✳ **Chapter 7 Advocating for Policy Changes** closes the toolkit with an overview of pending issues that communities can bring to HUD and their representatives to build policies that better support housing mobility.

Because the toolkit is meant as a practical resource for communities planning housing mobility programs, we have also tried to include the tools and materials that actual housing mobility program practitioners use in the field as much as possible. You will find these materials referenced throughout the text and included in the appendices of the toolkit.

Building a housing mobility program is an important and challenging undertaking, especially in the context of increasinglly scarce resources. Congratulations on taking your first step in this process!

UNLEASHING THE POWER OF YOUR HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM

Among many other positive outcomes, the HCV program can accomplish the following:

For Households

✓ *Help households move away from high-crime areas.*

✓ *Help households move to neighborhoods with high-quality schools or better access to jobs and transportation.*

✓ *Help households stay in gentrifying neighborhoods.*

✓ *Help households move near relatives and friends.*

For Landlords

✓ *Help landlords find good tenants.*

✓ *Respond to landlord needs and overcome red tape.*

For Neighborhoods

✓ *Ensure landlords are maintaining their properties.*

✓ *Help stabilize neighborhoods.*

For PHAs and State and Local Governments

✓ *Help create stronger households and better tenants.*

✓ *Increased earned income and "graduation" rates for households in the program.*

✓ *Help fulfill civil rights obligations under the "Affirmatively Further Fair Housing" rule.*

✓ *Help PHAs earn SEMAP points for deconcentration.*

✓ *Help overcome historic discrimination and segregation.*

*Chapter*2

Aligning Your Community's Policies To Support Housing Mobility

In this chapter, you will learn about

✽ Making sure Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) policies provide households with the necessary flexibility to move to high-opportunity neighborhoods

✽ Thinking regionally about HCV program administration

Behind any successful housing mobility program is an efficient and well-managed core Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. This means fair rents, timely inspections, consistently high standards, and good customer service—for the landlord and the tenant. Program administration must have a favorable reputation to gain community support and the participation of property owners with units in high-opportunity areas. This chapter covers several policies that can make your voucher program "housing choice friendly."

MAKE SURE VOUCHER POLICIES GIVE HOUSEHOLDS THE FLEXIBILITY THEY NEED TO MAKE MOBILITY MOVES

Give program participants enough time to lease-up

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations (24 CFR §982.303) require that the initial term of a voucher must be at least 60 calendar days. There is no maximum search period under HUD rules: the Public Housing Agency (PHA) may establish policies allowing extensions of the initial voucher term, and of course must extend the term of the voucher as a reasonable accommodation to make the program accessible to a person with a disability. The PHA may, at its discretion, establish a policy granting a household a suspension of some or all of the voucher term if the household has submitted a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) up to the time the proposed unit is approved or denied.

The length of the allowable search term to lease-up after voucher issuance may affect the household's ability to find housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods. There is no magic formula for establishing the right policy. Determining a housing choice–friendly policy depends upon the following factors:

■ rental market (rent levels and vacancy rates) in the metropolitan area;

■ willingness of landlords to lease to voucher holders and success of landlord outreach efforts;

■ whether there is source of income protection;

■ level of search assistance provided; and

■ degree of racial segregation in the local housing market.

The standard 60-day search process may put pressure on households to locate a unit more quickly than possible, leading to unit selection in higher poverty neighborhoods with lower performing schools.[10] Finding rental housing in higher income neighborhoods within tight markets, where some property owners are apprehensive about the voucher program, can present more of a challenge. In this environment, a longer voucher term may be required. At the same time, some

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10   See Stefanie DeLuca, Philip M.E. Garboden, and Peter Rosenblatt, "Why Don't Vouchers Do a Better Job of Deconcentrating Poverty? Insights from Fieldwork with Poor Families," *Poverty and Race 21*, no. 5 (2012): 1–2.

households may be *more* likely to lease when provided with a shorter initial voucher term. The different capabilities and approaches that households bring to the process, and the difference in rental markets, suggest the need for significant flexibility in a PHA's search time policy. It is also important to revisit the PHA policy at least annually as these factors, especially the local rental market, are subject to frequent change.

Low-income households, particularly those living in higher poverty, segregated neighborhoods often have very little knowledge of or familiarity with higher opportunity communities. Their choices are driven by frequent unit failure, time pressure from the voucher office (limited search times, and the message that a household must "use your voucher or lose it"), word of mouth from family and friends, and landlord lists distributed by the PHA that primarily include listings in low-opportunity, segregated neighborhoods.[11]

Communities may want to discuss changes to the HCV Administrative Plan with local PHAs to formally extend search time for households seeking housing in higher opportunity communities and ensure that the landlord list distributed to households looking for housing includes a substantial number of available units in low-poverty communities. Under current HUD rules, PHAs are directed to include in each voucher holder's information packet a "list of landlords or other parties known to the PHA who may be willing to lease a unit to the household, or help the household find a unit";[12] however, an actual list of units is not required. You can advocate that the list include referrals to a housing mobility program, regional rental search listings, and so on. If PHAs do maintain a list of apartments, your community should regularly review them to ensure ample listings of available units in low-poverty neighborhoods.

Establish payment standards that support opportunity moves

PHAs establish payment standards for each unit size at levels between 90 and 110 percent of the published fair-market rent (FMR). One important strategy that a PHA can employ to make its program mobility friendly is to establish separate payment standard amounts within the basic range for a designated part of an FMR area. In other words, use higher payment standards of 110 percent of the FMR in areas of lower poverty and higher rents, and lower payment standards of 90 percent of the FMR in low-opportunity, high-poverty neighborhoods. This strategy could realize some savings for the PHA that could help fund the higher payment standards in opportunity neighborhoods.[13]

Current use of metropolitan area-wide FMRs allows voucher holders access to various parts of a metropolitan area; however, because FMRs generally are set at the 40th percentile of the metropolitan rent distribution, some of the most desirable neighborhoods do not have many units available in the FMR range. Therefore, HUD has an exception payment standard policy that allows payments standards to be set much higher than 110 percent of the FMR. The PHA must demonstrate

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11   Id. See also the proposed regulation and request for comments, National Archives and Records Administration, *Federal Register*, "Public Housing and Section 8 Programs: Housing Choice Voucher Program: Streamlining the Portability Process," https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/03/28/2012-7341/public-housing-and-section-8-programs-housing-choice-voucher-program-streamlining-the-portability.

12   See 24 CFR 982.301(b)(11).

13   24 CFR §982.503 (b)

program need—that is, suitable housing not being available in portions of the FMR area at the published FMR.[14]

If your community wants to increase the number of units available to households in opportunity areas with higher rents, your PHA should request HUD approval to establish a payment standard amount higher than the basic range. The HUD Field Office may approve exception payment standards from 110 to 120 percent of the FMR. Requests for an exception payment standard amount above 120 percent of FMR must be approved by the Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing [See Appendix A HUD guidance on this process].

Make Occupance Guidelines ("Subsidy Standards") Attractive To Landlords And Consistent Within Regions

HUD guidelines (CFR 24 §982.402) require that housing agencies establish subsidy standards for the determination of household size, and that such standards provide for a minimum commitment of subsidy while avoiding overcrowding. Subsidy standards, sometimes called occupancy standards, must be consistent with Fair Housing requirements[15] and relate to the number of bedrooms on the voucher, or the subsidy level, not the household's actual living arrangements. Typical standards outlined in PHA Administrative Plans use two people per bedroom as the baseline, and outline exceptions to that baseline, such as housing children of different genders above a certain age, pregnant women, live-in aides, and so on. Particularly restrictive policies (lowering the number of people housed in a unit) may be more attractive to property owners in high-opportunity areas but could also reduce the number of housing units available in these communities. Different policies in different jurisdictions (for example, occupancy guidelines in a city PHA that give households "more room") may inadvertently create incentives for households to remain in poor neighborhoods. For these reasons, we recommend somewhat less restrictive policies that are consistent across adjacent housing authority jurisdictions within a region.

Enforce Housing Quality And Neighborhood Standards

The Housing Quality Standards (HQS) checklist includes the question, "Are the site and immediate neighborhood free from conditions which would seriously and continuously endanger the health or safety of the residents?" Some combination of conditions—such as a unit surrounded by boarded-up buildings, occupied by squatters, with overgrown lots, criminal activity, and so on—may constitute serious adverse conditions (e.g., fire hazard/accumulations of trash/vermin/rodents, etc.) requiring the unit to fail HQS. Strict application of this standard can eliminate units in concentrated areas, encouraging households to look elsewhere.

Many PHAs are also taking advantage of a change in HUD guidelines effective July 2008, allowing landlords to self-certify repairs of non-emergency HQS fail items, without requiring a reinspection.

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14   24 CFR §982.503 (c)

15   National Archives and Records Administration, *Federal Register*, "Part V: Department of Housing and Urban Development, Fair Housing Enforcement—Occupancy Standards; Statement of Policy; Notice; Republication," http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/library/occupancystds.pdf.

Self-certification is only acceptable for non-emergency failures that are the owner's responsibility to fix. This change does not apply to project-based vouchers. Self-certification in lieu of reinspection reduces PHA costs and as a policy is very attractive to property owners and managers. Using such a policy in high-opportunity areas is less of a risk to PHAs than in low-opportunity areas where housing stock is likely older and often only marginally passes HQS inspection.

THINK REGIONALLY: EXPAND HOUSING CHOICE BEYOND YOUR JURISDICTION'S BORDERS

Align Voucher Policies and Remove Barriers to Portability

Portability enables a household to use a voucher issued in one jurisdiction when moving to another jurisdiction where the program is administered by a different local PHA. Although portability has presented administrative challenges for PHAs and program participants, at its core it enables the program to better serve households and expand housing opportunities.

A series of barriers may await city households who apply directly to suburban PHA voucher programs, including lack of notice of waiting list openings, residency preferences for admission, first-come-first-served waiting list rules, and in-person application requirements at some PHAs. To make "porting" from one jurisdiction to another mobility friendly, PHAs should consider the following strategies:

- Work with area PHAs to determine if locally determined 110 percent exception payment standards are already in place in areas where they are needed, and whether higher exception payment standards should also be requested to expand affordable housing opportunities for households in high-opportunity areas.

- Property owners and managers appreciate consistency in policies and procedures across jurisdictions within a region or metropolitan area. The more that PHAs can work together to minimize differences in their policies and procedures, the more positive the program's image will be.

- Enforce procedures and timelines for rent reasonableness, inspections, and transfers of paperwork so households are not delayed when they have identified a unit in another jurisdiction. Preventing delays in the process is also important to property owners.

DID YOU KNOW?

HUD is currently providing grants to fund community and regional planning efforts through its Choice Neighborhoods and Sustainable Communities initiatives. Both these initiatives encourage mobility, so if your community has received a planning grant through either program, your organization should get involved in local planning efforts and advocate for the inclusion of a housing mobility program. To learn more about these initiatives and see if your community has received a planning grant, go to the HUD web site.

Leverage Your Community's Affordable Housing Development Strategies To Expand Opportunity

PHAs can engage in broader affordable housing production strategies that expand opportunities for households to live in high-opportunity areas by project-basing Housing Choice Voucher units in affordable properties in these areas. This strategy requires PHAs to foster relationships with developers so units coming online in desirable areas are available to program participants (and, ideally, added to a housing choice inventory list of some kind). In particular, units receiving federal funding are explicitly prohibited from discriminating against voucher holders (see Appendix B).[16] Here are some affordable housing strategies that may provide desirable units:

1. **Project-based vouchers** are a component of a PHA's Housing Choice Voucher program. A PHA can attach up to 20 percent of its voucher assistance to specific housing units if the owner agrees to either rehabilitate or construct the units, or the owner agrees to set aside a portion of the units in an existing development. All units must meet HUD housing quality standards.[17] Communities should focus project-based voucher site selection in opportunity areas, thereby increasing the supply of affordable housing in nontraditional areas and encouraging mobility moves.

2. **The Low Income Housing Tax Credit program** (LIHTC) is an indirect federal subsidy used to finance the development of affordable rental housing for low-income households. Many local housing and community development agencies are effectively using these tax credits to increase the supply of affordable housing in their communities. The LIHTC program was enacted by Congress in 1986 to provide the private market with an incentive to invest in affordable rental housing. Federal housing tax credits are awarded to developers of qualified projects. Developers then sell these credits to investors to raise capital (or equity) for their projects, which reduces the debt that the developer would otherwise have to borrow. Because the debt is lower, a tax-credit property can in turn offer lower, more affordable rents.[18] The Low Income Housing Tax Credit program is an opportunity to locate affordable units in high-opportunity communities.

3. **Inclusionary zoning** is an effective tool that municipalities can use to ensure adequate affordable housing is included in the normal course of real estate development. Inclusionary zoning is a mandatory approach that requires developers to make a portion of the housing units in their project affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Incentive zoning is a voluntary approach that either waives certain regulatory requirements or provides additional density (the incentives) for developers in exchange for providing affordable housing. Most inclusionary zoning is enacted at the municipal or county level but can also be imposed by the state, as in Massachusetts.[19]

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16 In Illinois, public-private partnerships can provide incentives to participating companies creating a cost-effective way to improve workforce retention, recruitment, and morale, and encourage economically diverse housing opportunities See http://www.metroplanning.org/work/project/8.

17 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) web site, http://www.hud.gov.

18 http://www.hud.gov.

19 http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-iz.html.

4. **Employer-assisted housing** (EAH) describes any number of ways employers are investing in homes for the local workforce. By assisting employees to buy or rent homes close to work or transit, employers help reduce long commutes that contribute to employee stress and encourage employees to live in areas that are often not accessible to low-income households.

Form Regional Partnerships

Jurisdictional fragmentation among multiple PHAs serving single metropolitan areas often complicates and delays program participant moves across city and town lines. Regional partnerships between PHAs can help address these challenges, and they come in many different shapes. It is up to you to decide what works best for your region.

Start by identifying the PHAs in the area that serve areas high in opportunity. Next, meet with the PHAs to discuss ways to increase regional housing choices. Specific topics of conversation should include the possibility of administering joint waiting lists, developing portability procedures, signing a portability agreement, and establishing a portability fund.

CHAPTER CHECKLIST

In this chapter, we reviewed ways to make your housing voucher program more "housing choice friendly" by offering ideas that can be implemented across your entire Housing Choice Voucher program. Here is an "action items list" to check off. If you are administering vouchers, many of the changes will need to be updated in your administrative plan.

- ☐ Extend initial search time for households searching in opportunity neighborhoods from 60 to 120 days.

- ☐ Establish payment standards, including exception payment standards, that attract landlords.

- ☐ Train HQS inspectors to systematically apply the neighborhood conditions questions on HQS.

- ☐ Remove barriers to portability by aligning voucher policies with PHAs in neighboring jurisdictions.

- ☐ Look to your state's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) and to affordable housing strategies throughout your metropolitan area for potential units. Make connections.

- ☐ Make a list of potential affordable housing production pipelines in your community and develop a strategy to ensure those units are in housing choice areas and that voucher holders can easily access them.

- ☐ Develop partnerships with PHAs in your region.

*Chapter*3

Setting Program Goals and Making Other Key Decisions

In this chapter, you will learn about

� Formulating the goals that your housing mobility program will aim to accomplish

✻ Determining who will be served by your program

✻ Defining and identifying your program's opportunity neighborhoods

Before embarking upon particular mobility strategies, all decisionmakers have to agree on the goals of their program. To accomplish this, you must answer four key questions:

1. What will your program seek to achieve?

2. Who will your program serve?

3. How will your program define neighborhoods of opportunity?

In some cases, the answers to these questions may have already been decided for you through the negotiation of a consent decree or other kinds of mediation. In other cases, you and your community may have the discretion to formulate your own answers to these core, mission-driving questions, in whole or in part.

During the decisionmaking process, it's important to set up mechanisms to solicit direct input from multiple community stakeholders including voucher holders, landlords, community leaders, and others. Also, make sure that you come to the table with the kind of information you'll need to make these key decisions. These documents may include your community's Analysis of Fair Housing Impediments, supporting documentation for any active consent decrees or pending legal cases, and maps of where Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) holders currently live in your jurisdiction, including voucher distributions by race. You will also need to assemble other data to identify opportunity neighborhoods and assess the housing market in these areas.

This chapter walks you through each of these questions in depth and outlines the key decision points that will shape the activities of your housing mobility program going forward. At the end of this process, you will be able to formulate a clear mission statement for your program, similar to this one:

Our housing mobility program
seeks to ensure access to quality education and safety
by helping voucher-holders with children access neighborhoods
with violent crime rates 30 percent below the regional average
and schools where 20 percent or less of students qualify for free- or
reduced-price meals.

You will also understand the complexities of the local housing market in your opportunity neighborhoods as well as the level of assistance the households participating in your housing mobility program are likely to need. This information will help shape your housing mobility program's design, which we discuss further in chapter 4.

1. ARTICULATE WHAT GOALS YOUR PROGRAM SEEKS TO ACHIEVE

Housing mobility programs define success in very different ways depending on the unique characteristics of their communities and the impetus for putting these programs in place. At their core, all mobility programs focus on locational outcomes—that is, assisting voucher holders in moving from one place to another. However, individual mobility programs may have very different reasons for facilitating these moves. Here are some examples of program goals you might consider:

GOAL: HELP VOUCHER HOLDERS MOVE OUT OF CONCENTRATED POVERTY

Researchers often view high neighborhood poverty rates as a flag for chronic disinvestment and social disorder. In fact, high-poverty neighborhoods often have inferior infrastructure, access to fewer or lower-quality resources, and higher than average crime rates.[20] Because poverty is considered a proxy for so many of these issues, many communities use neighborhood poverty as the starting point for their definitions of opportunity neighborhoods. For example, those living in high-poverty neighborhoods have worse health outcomes than those living in lower poverty neighborhoods in overall mortality and incidence of disease (e.g., heart disease, respiratory disease, and cancer).[21] Further, results from the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration show that voucher holders moving to lower poverty areas were able to move to safer neighborhoods.[22]

GOAL: HELP HOUSEHOLDS OVERCOME RACIAL SEGREGATION

If your community's Analysis of Fair Housing Impediments highlights problems with racial or ethnic discrimination in your housing market or if you see your mobility program as part of a community strategy for desegregation, you'll want to make sure that your program goals reflect this.[23] Another reason for including a racial integration focus is that, in many cases, simply targeting low-poverty areas may not be enough to ensure access to opportunity for voucher holders; researchers have found that even *affluent* African American neighborhoods often suffer from significant public and private investment deficits compared to similar white neighborhoods.[24] Moreover, relocation to a

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20   Jennifer Comey, Xavier de Souza Briggs, and Gretchen Weismann, "Struggling to Stay Out of High-Poverty Neighborhoods: Lessons from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment," Three City Study of Moving to Opportunity Brief 6 (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2008).

21   Ingrid Gould Ellen, Tod Mijanovich, and Keri-Nicole Dillman, "Neighborhood Effects on Health: Exploring the Links and Assessing the Evidence," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 23, no. 3–4 (2001): 391–408.

22   Jeffrey R. Kling, Jeffrey B. Leibman, and Lawrence F. Katz, "Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood," *Econometrica* 75, no. 1 (2007): 83–119.

23   Under current law, race-conscious programs to promote housing integration are constitutionally acceptable, as long as they do not involve selection of tenants based on their individual race or ethnicity. See generally, Philip Tegeler, "The Future of Race-Conscious Goals in National Housing Policy," in *Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation,* edited by Margery Austin Turner, Susan J. Popkin, and Lynette Rawlings (Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 2009, 145–69).

24   Margery A. Turner, "HOPE VI, Neighborhood Recovery, and the Health of Cities," In *From Despair to Hope: HOPE VI and the New Promise of Public Housing in America's Cities,* edited by Henry Cisneros and Lora Engdahl (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009).

racially integrated low poverty tract rather than simply a very low poverty tract is highly predictive of living in both racially diverse and very low poverty tracts over the long term.[25]

GOAL: PROVIDE ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

Recent evidence from MTO shows that relocation to low-poverty neighborhoods can improve educational outcomes for youth: boys and girls living in low-poverty neighborhoods tested better in math and reading.[26] Further, of youth living in more highly educated neighborhoods (areas where at least 20 percent of residents had college degrees), boys tested better in math, and girls scored better in reading. Attending low-poverty schools can also lead to substantial gains in educational attainment among youth.[27] For example, children residing in public housing but attending schools in which 20 percent or less of the student body qualified for free and reduced-price meals (FARM) had better standardized test outcomes for math and reading than youth living in public housing and attending schools where more than 20 percent of students qualified for FARM. Unfortunately, households who move to low-poverty areas often do not end up accessing these types of schools because of lack of good information about educational options.[28]

GOAL: KEEP HOUSEHOLDS HEALTHY AND SAFE

There is substantial evidence that moves to less-poor or less-segregated neighborhoods can improve movers' safety and health.[29] For example, moves to lower poverty neighborhoods are associated with improved mental health in adults and adolescent girls.[30] Households in lower poverty neighborhoods also travel shorter distances to get to supermarkets than households in high-poverty neighborhoods, and easier supermarket access can help foster good health by providing access to nutritious foods.[31] Further, minority and low-income neighborhoods in Southern California were found to have higher exposure to airborne pollutants due to higher levels of traffic

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25   See the following sources: Briggs et al., "Struggling to Stay Out of High-Poverty Neighborhoods"; and Susan Clampet-Lundquist and Douglas S. Massey, *Neighborhood Effects on Work and Schooling: A Reconsideration of the Moving to Opportunity Experiment* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 2006).

26   Margery Austin Turner, Austin Nichols, and Jennifer Comey, "Benefits of Living in High-Opportunity Neighborhoods: Insights from the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration" (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2012).

27   Heather Schwartz, "Integrating Schools is a Matter of Housing Policy," *Shelterforce*, spring 2011.

28   Ferryman et al., *Do Better Neighborhoods for MTO Families Mean Better Schools?*, supra note 6.

29   See the following sources: David P. Varady and Carole C. Walker, "Housing Vouchers and Residential Mobility," *Journal of Planning Literature* 18, no. 1 (2003): 17–29; Jill Khadduri, "Deconcentration: What Do We Mean? What Do We Want?" Cityscape 5, no. 2 (2001): 69–84; James E. Rosenbaum, Lisa Reynolds, and Stefanie DeLuca, "How Do Places Matter? The Geography of Opportunity, Self-Efficacy and a Look Inside the Black Box of Residential Opportunity," Housing Studies 17, no. 1 (2002): 71–82.

30   Kling et al., "Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood." See also Turneret al., "Benefits of Living in High-Opportunity Neighborhoods." King et al., supra note 22. See also Turner et al., supra note 21.

31   Shannon N. Zenk, Amy J. Schulz, Barbara A. Israel, Sherman A. James, Shuming Bao, and Mark L. Wilson, "Neighborhood Racial Composition, Neighborhood Poverty, and the Spatial Accessibility of Supermarkets in Metropolitan Detroit," *American Journal of Public Health* 95, no. 4 (2005): 660–67.

density than other neighborhoods.[32] The Poverty and Race Research Action Council has released a series of policy briefs on how to incorporate health goals into the voucher program.[33]

GOAL: SUPPORT PARENTS' EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Relocation to less-poor or less-segregated neighborhoods may not, on its own, improve economic well-being in the short term.[34] Movers to suburban areas are more likely than others to obtain jobs, but they do not necessarily obtain jobs with higher wages than voucher holders who relocate to other areas.[35] Further, experimental findings from the MTO demonstration show that those who a received a voucher to be used in a low-poverty area did not have better employment outcomes.[36] However, recent nonexperimental analysis of MTO data suggests that adults (former public housing residents) in low-poverty neighborhoods are more likely to have earnings above the federal poverty level and are more likely to have a job, and adults living in more highly educated areas have higher earnings and are more likely to have incomes above the federal poverty level.[37] In order to have any chance of affecting employment outcomes, you'll need to make sure that your opportunity neighborhoods have high levels of transit and regional employment access to employment centers that match the skills of participating households.[38]

SUMMARY

This is in no way a definitive list of goals your program could aim to achieve. You may want your mobility program to achieve some other goal that is important to your community. Beyond assisting individual voucher holders, policymakers may also see mobility programs as instrumental to achieving community-wide or neighborhood-specific outcomes, including racial desegregation, deconcentration of poverty, or neighborhood revitalization. Keep in mind, however, that your mobility program will not be able to achieve these goals in isolation; it must be part of a comprehensive approach that balances place-based investment with enhanced housing choice for voucher holders.

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32   Douglas Houston, Jun Wu, Paul Ong, and Arthur Winer, "Structural Disparities of Urban Traffic in Southern California: Implications for Vehicle-Related Air Pollution Exposure in Minority and High-Poverty Neighborhoods," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 26, no. 5 (2004): 565–92.

33   See the following sources: Kami Kruckenberg, "Two Simple Changes to Improve Health Outcomes in the Section 8 Voucher Program," policy brief (Washington, DC: Poverty & Race Research Action Council, 2011); and Kami Kruckenberg and Phil Tegeler, "Prescription for a New Neighborhood? Housing Vouchers as a Public Health Intervention," policy brief (Washington, DC: Poverty & Race Research Action Council, 2010).

34   Miriam Wasserman, "The Geography of Life's Chances," *Regional Review* 11, no. 4 (2011): 25–31.

35   James E. Rosenbaum, Lisa Reynolds, and Stefanie DeLuca, "How Do Places Matter? The Geography of Opportunity, Self-Efficacy and a Look Inside the Black Box of Residential Opportunity," *Housing Studies* 17, no. 1 (2002): 71–82.

36   Kling et al., "Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood," supra note 22.

37   Turner et al., "Benefits of Living in High-Opportunity Neighborhoods," supra note 26.

38   Thomas W. Sanchez, Qing Shen, and Zhong-Ren Peng, "Transit Mobility, Jobs Access and Low-Income Labour Participation in US Metropolitan Areas," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 7 (2004): 1313–31.

2. IDENTIFY WHOM YOUR PROGRAM WILL SERVE

There are many low-cost ways that you can make your community's existing HCV program policies more "housing choice friendly" (see chapter 2). However, running a housing mobility program represents a significant investment for any organization and may require you to allocate limited resources strategically. This may mean that you decide to serve particular types of households. This section will help you identify who you will serve and determine what challenges those households may have—critical information to consider when deciding what services to offer (see chapter 4).

STEP 1: ESTABLISH BASIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Public housing agencies typically require that any household participating in a special initiative such as a housing mobility program must be in good standing and in compliance with all HCV program requirements. In addition, many housing mobility programs establish basic eligibility criteria for their mobility programs or they target particular subgroups of voucher holders. Sometimes external factors shape decisions about these subgroups:

- **Relocation**: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) often requires that public housing agencies awarded monies to revitalize public housing or other subsidized units develop plans for relocation with HCVs that include housing mobility.

- **Settlement classes**: Programs that originate through a consent decree often identify a specific group of people to be served that has suffered systematic discrimination (i.e., public housing residents of color or households on the housing authority waiting list).

Other times mobility programs target voucher holders who are most likely to successfully lease-up and stay in opportunity neighborhoods:

- **Second movers**: Some mobility programs target households who have used a housing voucher for at least one year, who are familiar with housing search and renting in the private market.[39]

- **Households on the cusp of self-sufficiency**: MTW PHAs sometimes choose to target their mobility programs to subsidized households who are meeting or exceeding the PHA's work requirements. Others target current participants in family self-sufficiency (FSS) programs.[40]

You might also choose to restrict eligibility to prioritize enhanced mobility program supports for voucher holders who are likely to benefit most from an opportunity move:

- **Households with young children**

- **Households with chronic health problems**

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39   Jill Khadduri, "Deconcentration: What Do We Mean? What Do We Want?" *Cityscape* 5, no. 2 (2001): 69–84.

40   Mary Cunningham, Molly Scott, Chris Narducci, Sam Hall, Alexandra Stanczyk, Jennifer O'Neil, and Martha Galvez, *Improving Neighborhood Location Outcomes in the Housing Choice Voucher Program: A Scan of Mobility Assistance Programs* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2010).

Regardless of whether the initial target population includes all voucher holders or one of the sub-groups described above, not all voucher holders eligible for your mobility program will be interested in making opportunity moves. Also, practitioners estimate that 25 to 35 percent of interested households actually lease-up in opportunity neighborhoods. Don't consider this a negative; research shows that keeping participation in mobility programs voluntary is the key to achieving positive outcomes in the long term.[41]

STEP 2: ANTICIPATE COMMON BARRIERS TO MOBILITY FOR PARTICIPATING HOUSEHOLDS

Once you've decided on which voucher holders your program wants to focus its efforts, take the time to consider common barriers to mobility that these households might have. In most mobility programs, staff sits down with program participants to assess their individual needs and make small adjustments to tailor support services and make appropriate referrals as needed (see Pre-Search Counseling in the next chapter). However, at the program design stage, you should think through the factors that shape the components that will make up your mobility program, both in type and intensity.

Here are some important questions to consider with your program staff, voucher holders, local landlords, and community leaders:

- Are potential participants moving voluntarily or will they be forced moves? How long have participating households lived at their current location?

- How much experience do your potential program participants have with searching for housing in the private market?

- How much do they depend on public transportation?

- How much do they depend on extended family or neighbors to provide child care?

- Are critical institutions in their lives (such as specific churches) accessible from the opportunity areas?

- What about English language proficiency? Do a large number of your potential participants struggle to communicate in person? Over the phone?

ABOUT POLICYMAP

PolicyMap is a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) that allows users to display data-customizable maps and create tables and reports. PolicyMap brings together data from a wide variety of sources, included the Decennial Census, ACS, HUD, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), FBI Uniform Crime Reports, and many others. Users can access much of this data for free; however, some data sources are available only to subscribers. Subscriptions cost from $2,000 to $5,000 a year. For more information on PolicyMap, please visit www.policymap.com.

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41   See the following sources: Judith Feins, Debra McInnis, and Susan J. Popkin, "Counseling in the Moving to Opportunity Program" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1997); Leonard S. Rubinowitz and James E. Rosenbaum, *Crossing the Class and Color Lines: From Public Housing to White Suburbia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Susan J. Popkin, George C. Galster, Kenneth Temkin, Carla Herbig, Diane K. Levy, and Elise K. Richer, "Obstacles to Desegregating Public Housing: Lessons Learned from Implementing Eight Consent Decrees," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 22, no. 2 (2003): 179–99; and Xavier de Souza Briggs, "Housing Opportunity, Desegregation Strategy, and Policy Research," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 22, no. 2 (2003): 201–06.

■   How much will issues of bad credit or criminal history affect successful lease-up?

The answers to these questions will help you map out the specifics of your mobility program in the next chapter of the toolkit, Building Your Housing Mobility Program.

3. DEFINE AND LOCATE YOUR OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Now that you've decided on your program goals and target population, you'll need to decide how your program will define opportunity neighborhoods. First, you will identify the data sources and measures that allow you to operationalize each of your goals. Second, you will set meaningful thresholds for each of these measures. Third, you will combine all these measures into one comprehensive definition and apply it to locate your opportunity neighborhoods.[42] This section lays out each of these steps.

STEP 1: ASSEMBLE DATA THAT ALIGN YOUR DEFINITION OF "OPPORTUNITY" TO YOUR PROGRAM'S GOALS

Appendix C lists potential data sources, sample measures, the latest year of data available, the frequency of updates, and the smallest level(s) of geography at which data are available for your reference. When you start actually downloading and assembling the information you need, you will ideally pull data for the whole metropolitan area or region, even if multiple public housing agencies administer the HCV program. Widening the scope of your search will allow you to choose from among a larger number of prospective areas and provide a roadmap for thinking regionally about HCV program administration (see chapter 2).

In general, you'll want to obtain the most recent information for the smallest geography possible. But you may have to make some trade-offs. For example, the most recent poverty statistics come from the 2010 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. However, they are only available for large geographies like counties, cities, and states that will not be useful for the neighborhood-level analyses you need to do. The 2006–10 American Community Survey 5-year estimates are available for census tracts, but represent an average over that five-year time span rather than a discrete point in time.

While the American Community Survey (ACS) or the Decennial Census (Census), with their detailed information about poverty and racial and ethnic composition,[43] are a good starting point, other unique national databases can also serve as important resources. For example, FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) provide crime rate and other indicators to evaluate neighborhood safety. The National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) database includes the number of students receiving

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42   Mary Cunningham et al., *Improving Neighborhood Location Outcomes in the Housing Choice Voucher Program*, supra note 40.

43   Khadduri, "Deconcentration: What Do We Mean?," supra note 39.

free and reduced-price lunches at each school nationwide. In addition, you may access GreatSchools' free web-based tool, which allows users to search by zip code or city and view detailed profiles of over 200,000 schools—public, private, and charter—including a ranking based on students' standardized test scores for all schools where data is available.[44] HUD is currently promoting the use of GreatSchools to help voucher holders incorporate school quality concerns into their moving decisions. While not a database, PolicyMap brings together data from various sources and represents them in a mapping allocation, so you can view data geographically. This is particularly useful for locating schools, grocery stores, nonprofits, and parks. You may also want to obtain local administrative data for some of your measures like local transportation and school quality or student performance measures from local schools or state departments of education.

If you use school data, also keep in mind that associating individual schools to individual neighborhoods can be tricky. Traditional neighborhood schools will have defined attendance areas that may or may not correspond to the nearest census tracts or zip codes. You may need to contact local school districts to obtain maps or geographic information systems (GIS) shape files of these attendance areas. On the other hand, if your local school districts have liberal school choice policies, neighborhood definitions matter very little. You might just consider targeting census tracts or zip codes that are within a comfortable distance from desirable schools. The GreatSchools web site, for example, identifies "nearest school" to an address without regard to school district or school zone.

STEP 2: SET MEANINGFUL THRESHOLDS

One of the biggest challenges of defining opportunity neighborhoods is deciding where to draw the line. How much poverty is too much poverty in a neighborhood? How much crime is too much crime? There is no easy answer to these questions, but we can offer some useful suggestions.

POVERTY

In the Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) regulations, which HUD uses to measure the performance of public housing agencies, low-poverty areas are defined as census tracts with a poverty rates at or below the overall poverty rate for the principal operating area of a public housing authority, or at or below 10 percent, whichever is greater. In practice, however, overall poverty rates in high-density, high-poverty jurisdictions may be much too high to set as a goal. In these cases, consider using the overall poverty rate for your metropolitan area or region.

Setting poverty thresholds low has certain advantages. Voucher holders who move to very low poverty areas (10 percent or less) are less likely to move because of dissatisfaction with their neighborhood than voucher holders who move to areas with higher levels of poverty.[45] Even so, setting more moderate poverty thresholds can yield some benefits, especially for households moving out of particularly distressed neighborhoods. For example, moving to a private rental unit in a neighborhood with a poverty rate between 30 and 40 percent may be a real improvement for households

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44   GreatSchools, "Our Mission," http://www.greatschools.org/about/aboutUs.page.

45   Briggs et al., "Struggling to Stay Out of High-Poverty Neighborhoods," supra note 20.

accustomed to living in public housing developments that are more than 70 percent poor.[46] Finally, setting the poverty threshold too low might limit target neighborhoods to only the wealthiest areas with few available rental units. In sum, you should consider your target population, the local and regional socioeconomic context, and housing market dynamics when using poverty rate thresholds as screens for "opportunity."

RACIAL SEGREGATION

Most mobility programs that explicitly include racial composition as a factor in identifying opportunities have grown out of a consent decree or pending lawsuits and tend to be those that actively consider race as part of the equation.[47] The thresholds they set vary widely from no more than 10 percent minority all the way up to 41.5 percent minority. If your program seeks to include an explicit racial integration goal in defining target neighborhoods, you might want to consider the kind of standard HUD uses in defining an "area of minority concentration" for siting of assisted housing units. That is, figure out what the average percent minority is in tracts in your region, and set your threshold at or below that number. This will help to ensure that the mobility program does not intensify racial concentration and segregation in the region.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

As mentioned earlier, research shows that students living in public housing who attended schools where 20 percent or less of the student body qualified for free and reduced-price meals outperformed students from public housing who attended schools where over 20 percent of students qualified for FARM. This suggests that having 20 percent or less of the student body qualifying for FARM is an important threshold in determining the academic success of low-income students.[48] Further, achievement gaps between poor and nonpoor students at schools meeting this criterion decreased substantially. Information on the share of FARM students can be gathered for public and nonprofit private schools from the National Center for Education Statistics.

However, to consider local variation on this measure, you may want to also compare the share of students qualifying for FARM against the average share for your metro area or region. To do this, you can use the National Center for Education Statistics to pull data by county rather than individual school. If your program spans multiple counties, you would collect data for each county in your area and calculate the average. You could then compare individual schools against this average to see if it is better or worse than the average school on this measure. If very few schools meet the 20 percent threshold, you could choose instead to only select schools with less than average shares qualifying for FARM.

46   Khadduri, "Deconcentration: What Do We Mean?," supra note 39.

47   Cunningham et al., *Improving Neighborhood Location Outcomes in the Housing Choice Voucher Program*, supra note 40.

48   Heather Schwartz, "Integrating Schools Is a Matter of Housing Policy," in *Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy to Promote Integration* (Washington, DC: Poverty & Race Research Action Council, 2011).

We should also note that many states are expanding the measures they use to measure school performance. States publishing school ratings that go beyond what is required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are most often using student performance (test scores) in additional subjects aside from math and reading, measures of growth in performance, American College Testing (ACT) scores, number of students enrolled in advanced placement (AP) courses, and AP test scores. Some states have even created indexes that weight test scores on the full range of low to high performance, rather than just determining whether or not scores were at proficiency or above.[49] You should check with state's department of education web site to determine what measures they collect and what benchmarks they use. If your program is based in a state using expanded measures, you could incorporate some of them into your definition of opportunity.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

You may also want to include a measure of crime in your definition of opportunity. Frequently, the number of violent crimes per 100,000 people or per 1,000 people is used to measure crime, and is one of the primary crime measures included in the FBI's Uniform Crime Report. There are no universally agreed-upon thresholds, however, for what number of violent crimes per 100,000 or 1,000 people is considered a "safe" neighborhood. Rather, neighborhood safety is more often described in relative terms. You can use the UCR database to determine the number of violent crimes per 100,000 or 1,000 people for all the policy districts in your metro area or region and calculate an average. Then, you can compare the average to the number of violent crimes for the police districts in your opportunity neighborhoods. For police departments that cover large areas, for example police departments of major cities like New York or Chicago, you may be able to get violent crime rates for subdivisions of their police district.[50] Contact your local police department to see what data are available and at what levels to determine how closely they can match your opportunity areas.

As mentioned above, some research has shown that air pollution is higher in high-poverty neighborhoods. This can have many negative effects on health, including higher incidents of asthma episodes in children.[51] If you would like to include clean air thresholds as part of your definition of opportunity areas, consider using air quality thresholds set by the Clean Air Act.[52] Local organizations monitor air quality nationwide. To see if a local clean air agency operates in your area, you can check the web site for the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, which maintains a database of member organizations.[53] However, both the type and level at which data are available will likely vary by organization. You should contact your local clean air agency to see if it can provide you with the data you need.

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49   Heather L. Schwartz, Laura S. Hamilton, Brian M. Stecher, and Jennifer L. Steele, "Expanded Measures of School Performance" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011).

50   Micere Keels, Greg J. Duncan, Stefanie Deluca, Ruby Mendenhall, and James Rosenbaum, "Fifteen Years Later: Can Residential Mobility Programs Provide a Long-Term Escape from Neighborhood Segregation, Crime, and Poverty?" *Demography* 42, no. 1 (2005): 51–73.

51   Onchee Yu, Lianne Sheppard, Thomas Lumley, Jane Q. Koenig, and Gail G. Shapiro, "Effects of Ambient Air Pollution on Symptoms of Asthma in Seattle-Area Children Enrolled in the CAMP Study." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 108, no. 12 (2000): 1209–14.

52   For information on the Clean Air Act, go to http://epa.gov/oar/caa/title1.html#ia.

53   For the National Association of Clean Air Agencies web site, go to http://www.4cleanair.org/.

EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

To improve employment outcomes for the households your program will serve, households may need access to jobs that match their skill level, and education and training opportunities in order to increase earning capacity A recent study using MTO data uses labor force participation and the number of low-wage jobs within a five-mile radius of the center of the tract as measures of "high work" and "high job density" communities. High-work tracts are those with at least a 60 percent labor force participation rate, and high–job density tracts are those with 200,000 low-wage jobs within a five-mile radius.[54] Finding opportunity areas close to where your program participants work can also help them feel more connected to their new neighborhood and make them more likely to stay there, so you should also consider where the households you serve will likely work and if opportunity neighborhoods will be accessible to those places.[55]

STEP 3: USE YOUR COMPREHENSIVE DEFINITION TO LOCATE YOUR OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS

After identifying your sources, measures, and thresholds, you'll combine them altogether to come up with your community's comprehensive definition of opportunity. For example, the community illustrated in the introduction of this chapter would put together a definition that looks something like this:

FIGURE 1. USING INDICATORS TO DEFINE OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS

DIMENSION	MEASURE	THRESHOLD
Crime	Violent crimes per 100,000 population	< 30% of regional average
School characteristics	Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals (%)	< 20%

Once you have your opportunity neighborhood definition, you must apply it to your community to identify where your opportunity neighborhoods are located. Overlaying all these different layers (i.e., poverty, racial composition, school characteristics) with differing geographies to identify opportunity neighborhoods can be complicated. Online services like PolicyMap can help you spatially combine data at low cost. But, ideally, you would want to have someone on your staff who has expertise in GIS and data analysis. If you don't, consider hiring a consultant or partnering with a local university or research organization to help you (see chapter 6, Funding and Implementing Your Mobility Program).

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54 Margery Austin Turner et al., "Benefits of Living in High-Opportunity Neighborhoods," supra note 26.

55 Melody L. Boyd, "The Role of Social Networks in Making Housing Choices: The Experiences of the Gautreaux Two Residential Mobility Program," *Cityscape* 10, no. 1 (2008): 41–63.

STEP 4: ASSESS THE HOUSING MARKET IN YOUR OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Once you've identified your opportunity neighborhoods, it's time to assess the rental housing market in these areas. Appendix C provides a complete list of potential data sources, sample measures, the latest year of data, the frequency of updates, as well as the geographic level at which data are available for the kinds of information you'll need to conduct this market assessment.

COMPARE THE SUPPLY OF RENTAL UNITS TO YOUR PROGRAM'S ESTIMATED DEMAND

In order for your opportunity neighborhoods to be viable, they have to have the potential to provide enough rental units to satisfy your program's demand. As a starting point, estimate the number of households your program will serve by calculating 25 to 35 percent of the total number of households you plan to target. Then, pull statistics on rental vacancies from the ACS or the Decennial Census for each of your opportunity areas and sum them across your opportunity neighborhoods. How do these numbers compare? Do you have enough total units in which to place your households?

Even if the answer to this question is yes, you should also look at the data to see how vacancy rates in your individual opportunity neighborhoods compare to one another. Some areas may have very few units available, which will make it difficult for your program participants to successfully lease-up. The higher the ratio of vacant rental properties to households, the easier it will be for your program to help program participants with housing search. In general, 5 percent is considered the normal market vacancy rate. However, it may also be helpful to compare the rental vacancy rate in your opportunity area to your metropolitan area or region. If the rental vacancy rate in an opportunity neighborhood is lower than the rate for your community as a whole, expect demand for rental units in this area to be higher.

Remember to also look at the size of the rental units present in opportunity neighborhoods and evaluate it in light of what you know about your target population. If you expect to serve a lot of large households, for example, make sure there is a sizable number of three- and four-bedroom rental units in your opportunity areas. If not, you may be unable to serve them. This information is also available from the ACS.

COMPARE RENTAL COSTS TO FAIR-MARKET RENTS

Before launching your mobility program, you'll want to understand how rental costs in your opportunity neighborhoods compare to the payment standards set locally for different sized units by the public housing authority in that jurisdiction to advocate for changes in local policy (chapter 2) or accurately estimate the amount of difficulty your program participants will have with housing search.

A traditional rental market survey would include

1) scanning rental listings on web sites such as Craigslist and Zillow;

2)   contacting brokers that operate in opportunity areas;

3)   contacting community development corporations (CDCs) that operate in opportunity areas, since they might have completed market analyses for their housing developments; and

4)   accessing more exclusive listings services, such as MLS through a licensed realtor

Unfortunately, the U.S. Census Bureau does not provide any information on cost by size of unit through the decennial census or the ACS. PolicyMap provides the only such information on a national scale. It displays the percentage of units of a specific size that fall into different rent categories (e.g., under $300 a month, under $500 a month, over $1,000 a month). You might also explore real estate listing sites to search for estimated costs for rental units in your opportunity neighborhoods, though they are likely to exclude smaller "mom-and-pop" rental properties. Another source is the small-area FMR data, which HUD posts online for every zip code.

Next, find the local fair-market rents and payment standards currently in use and calculate 110 percent and 120 percent of the FMR for each size unit. Comparing these payment benchmarks with rental costs in opportunity neighborhoods will help you understand what adjustments may need to be made to the payment standards and how easy or difficult it is likely to be for program participants to lease-up within those parameters. PHAs establish payment standards for each unit size at levels between 90 and 110 percent of the published FMR, and they can vary the standards by neighborhood or unit size. Nevertheless, the HUD Field Office may approve exception payment standards from 110 to 120 percent of FMR, and the Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing can approve exception payment standards above 120 percent.

TROUBLESHOOT OTHER FACTORS THAT MIGHT HINDER SUCCESSFUL MOVES

Make sure that you understand fair housing issues in your opportunity areas. Your community's Analysis of Fair Housing Impediments may help identify instances of discrimination. You also might check with your local fair housing organization to anticipate the types of resistance that your program participants might experience.

Sometimes the sheer distance between program participants' current residences and opportunity neighborhoods discourages making these types of moves, especially for people with close and sustained ties to their neighborhood.[56] In addition, the cost of living, beyond rent and transportation, can be higher in opportunity neighborhoods. For these reasons, you must examine this issue more closely to anticipate challenges that might arise. If your program targets residents of one or more specific public housing developments, you already know where your program participants are and only need to determine how far the opportunity area(s) are from those locations. This can be done most simply by using online mapping sites like Google Maps and Bing Maps, which allow you to search the current address of your target population and get directions to the opportunity neighborhood—either driving, walking, or using public transportation. Further, you should provide infor-

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56   See the following sources: Margery Austin Turner, Susan Popkin, and Mary Cunningham, "Section 8 Mobility and Neighborhood Health" (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 1999); and Boyd, "The Role of Social Networks in Making Housing Choices."

mation to your participants about the potential impact on their household budget living in an opportunity neighborhood might have.

At least one mobility program has found that households that moved farther from their originating neighborhoods were more likely to stay in their new communities. While there has been no formal study, the Baltimore Special Mobility Program tracked this aspect of participant moves and retention and found that households are more likely to break the ties with the old neighborhood and successfully become part of their new community more easily when they move a longer distance.

If your program targets current voucher holders, you'll need to gather information about where the households live. If your organization is a PHA, then you already have access to this information. If you work for another government agency or nonprofit organization, you can use census tract–level data from HUD's Picture of Subsidized Households data, either directly from HUD or using PolicyMap.[57] While the public-use data will not allow you to pinpoint particular subgroups of voucher holders (i.e., households with children, FSS participants, etc.), it will allow you to see the percentage of rental households that are voucher holders by census tract and identify the places where they are most concentrated. You can then calculate the distances to opportunity areas from these neighborhoods using the online mapping sites described above.

It comes as no surprise that low-income households are less likely to own a vehicle than households with higher incomes.[58] And the truth is that opportunity neighborhoods are often located in suburban areas with less extensive public transportation systems than city centers.[59] Therefore, it is very important that you examine what transportation options are available for your participating households in destination neighborhoods. Check out your metropolitan area's transit authority web site, which will provide a list of the transportation options offered (e.g., bus and rail service), route maps, and lists of the fares charged. The ACS provides several variables related to transportation and access to it. Several of these are included in PolicyMap (as well as free web sites such as Google Maps and Bing Maps), and can, therefore, be easily mapped. Average travel time, primary mode of transportation, and average number of vehicles per household are all available for free on PolicyMap. If you choose to subscribe to PolicyMap, you can also map the distance to the nearest transit stop and transit stop density measures (i.e., number of transit stops within a given area). This will help you determine how feasible it will be for your program participants to use public transportation during both their housing search and after they've settled into a unit in an opportunity neighborhood. If public transportation options are limited, your program may need to build concrete alternatives. Partnering with car voucher programs, which are growing in number, is another option to help meet your households' transportation needs.[60]

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57   HUD's Picture of Subsidized Households data are available at www.HUDUser.org or at www.PolicyMap.com.

58   Heidi Goldberg, "State and County Supported Car Ownership Programs Can Help Low-income Families Secure and Keep Jobs" (Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2001).

59   Edward L. Glaeser, Matthew E. Kahn, and Jordan Rappaport, "Why Do the Poor Live in Cities? The Role of Public Transportation," *Journal of Urban Economies* 63, no. 1 (2008): 1–24.

60   For more on this topic and to find a program near you, check the Working Cars for Working Families web site: http://www.workingcarsforworkingfamilies.org/.

The second-most troublesome issue for households in opportunity areas is typically child care. Knowledge of the resources and subsidized slots available is important information to have at this stage of planning.

Also, take the time to do a quick scan of basic resources like supermarkets, parks, schools, and social services in and near your opportunity neighborhoods if you did not include these amenities as part of your definition of opportunity neighborhoods.

STEP 5: REVISIT YOUR DEFINITION OF OPPORTUNITY

Once you have completed this process, all the information you've gathered about your neighborhoods will help you evaluate the viability of your definition of opportunity neighborhoods. If your analysis suggests that it will be challenging to meet your participants' demand, you have several different options. You may decide to widen the geographic search area to include other neighboring cities or counties. Or you may choose to revisit your opportunity neighborhood definitions and tinker with the thresholds you set. In either case, you'll want to redo steps 1–3 until you land on a definition you feel comfortable with. Alternatively, you may decide to start serving a smaller group of people with your existing definition and invest in intensive service components in your mobility program. The next chapter, Building Your Housing Mobility Program, will discuss how to match your housing market characteristics to individual program components more at length.

CHAPTER CHECKLIST

This chapter reviewed how you determine program goals and whom your program will serve, defining and identifying opportunity neighborhoods, and planning a communications strategy. Here's a recap of the key steps in this process.

- [ ] Determine your program's goals: will you try to move families out of poverty? To racially integrated areas? To areas with access to good schools? To areas that are healthy and safe? To areas that support the household's employment and self-sufficiency?

- [ ] Decide what target group(s) your program will serve and what barriers they may face in making mobility moves

- [ ] Create an initial definition for opportunity neighborhoods and identify defining characteristics

- [ ] Set thresholds for those characteristics or measures

- [ ] Find neighborhoods that meet those criteria

- [ ] Analyze the housing market in your opportunity neighborhoods

- [ ] Revisit your definition of opportunity neighborhoods and tweak it if needed

*Chapter*4

Building Your Housing Mobility Program

In this chapter, you will learn how to develop the core components of a mobility program, including

✳ Landlord development

✳ Target population outreach

✳ Pre-search counseling

✳ Housing search assistance

✳ Post-move support

After deciding on program goals, your organization must think strategically about how to brand its housing mobility program. This means crafting messages that will attract voucher holders and landlords to the program while addressing any fears and objections that the community at large may have. Before making decisions about your messaging, make sure you involve stakeholders so you gain an understanding of differing perceptions of housing mobility and the voucher program in general. Ask landlords who already rent to voucher holders what can be improved. Ask landlords who don't about their impressions of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. Ask current voucher holders why they don't move to opportunity areas to begin with. Ask community leaders about local culture, politics, and attitudes toward affordable housing.

With this information, answer the key marketing question, "What's in it for me?" for each stakeholder. Perhaps for participants, it's finding a good place to live in a neighborhood that is safe and secure. For owners, it's a good business decision. For the public, it's decreased poverty concentration and a more vibrant, diverse community.

As part of the branding process, consider the terminology that you will use in marketing efforts and program informational materials. Some terms may carry negative connotations you'll want to avoid in a specific market area. For example, perhaps tenants react negatively to the term "mobility" or property owners or community leaders are resistant to "affordable housing." Job titles for your staff are important, too. Ask yourself if they will be coaches or counselors, specialists or family advocates. Thoughtful early planning can help you avoid problems later. This exercise will help you develop consistent messages and relevant marketing and informational materials to support your program.

Once you've decided on your messaging, you're ready to design the nuts and bolts of your housing mobility program. Ideally, every program should contain five components: landlord outreach, reaching out to your target population, pre-search counseling, housing search assistance, and post-move support. However, the particular strategies you employ should align with the program goals that you have defined, the conditions of your local housing market, your participants' needs, and available resources.

For each program component, you'll find a menu of "basic", "standard", and "enhanced" strategies to choose from. "Basic" strategies include ways to build housing mobility into the processes and operations of a typical HCV program and should require virtually no additional staffing or budget. "Standard" strategies fall solidly within the capacity and expertise of HCV program staff and the best practices of existing housing mobility programs but may add new on-site group services (i.e. workshops, classes, or events) or require some additional staff time. "Enhanced" strategies include activities that significantly increase cost, either because of sizeable incentive payments to landlords or program participants, additional cost associated with organizing events off site, or the need to hire additional staff to keep caseloads low or provide specialized expertise.

In reality, practitioners find there is a continuum of strategies and that what's high-cost for one housing mobility program may be low-cost for another. This chapter's simple framework will help you think through these issues.

✳ LANDLORD DEVELOPMENT

Perhaps the most important component of a housing mobility program consists of helping identify and recruit landlords and properties in opportunity neighborhoods before any of your program participants attempt housing search. Think back to the assessment of the housing market that you conducted in chapter 3. The basic approach to landlord outreach works best when housing market conditions are generally favorable to your participants. However, if the market is tight or you've identified potential fair housing issues, you should consider investing significant resources up front to develop a sustainable pool of housing opportunities for your participants. In fact, these types of investments may actually lessen the amount of housing search assistance your program needs to offer later on. Successful landlord outreach efforts may also significantly reduce search time for households.

BASIC

CONTACT LANDLORDS FROM LOCAL PUBLICATIONS, DATABASES, AND TRADE GROUPS

All HCV programs must help identify potential units for program participants. The most basic approach to landlord development for housing mobility programs is just to more effectively targeting existing efforts. To begin, identify rental properties that receive HUD assistance already located in your opportunity areas—these may include project-based voucher units, tax credit units, or landlords already working with the voucher program. If you are the PHA with jurisdiction in your opportunity areas you probably already have this information; if not, this information is important to obtain.

Also, make sure you find out if landlords or property managers renting to HUD-assisted households have buildings in opportunity areas. You can often find this information on the landlord's web site, particularly if the landlord is a large property management company. To find other landlords that operate properties in your opportunity neighborhood, online apartment search web sites or local daily and weekly newspapers will be helpful. You might also look into how your organization can access local MLS listings or collaborate with local landlord associations and realtor investor groups to reach out to their members.

> **PRACTIONER'S TIP:**
>
> *Try searching for landlords and properties online here:*
>
> - *Apartments.com*
> - *ApartmentFinder.com*
> - *ForRent.com*
> - *ApartmentGuide.com*
> - *Rent.com*
> - *Section8.org*

OFFER RESPONSIVE, CONVENIENT LANDLORD SERVICES

Once you've identified a viable pool of potential landlords, pick up the phone to promote your program to these parties. Be sure to use the messaging you developed. The image of the HCV program matters a great deal when marketing to property owners in high-opportunity areas.

Landlords already interact with the program in many different ways. Making all these points of contact as positive as possible can encourage greater participation on the part of other property owners and increase repeat business. Start by fast-tracking inspections and contract execution for landlords in opportunity areas and offering direct deposit for housing assistance payments.

You could also provide a program orientation, particularly for landlords who have never rented to a HUD-subsidized household before. Owners will have questions about inspections and rental payment procedures, the households to be served, and other ins and outs of the voucher system. Most PHAs already provide some type of program introduction and information for new owner participants; making this orientation more "mobility friendly" requires just a little extra effort. Put together a short brochure highlighting the benefits of being a participating landlord. You might also enlist some of your star landlords to help lead some of the program orientations. These landlords will be the best recruiters of other landlords for your program.

STANDARD

MAINTAIN UP-TO-DATE LISTINGS IN OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Sometimes the biggest challenge for housing mobility programs is keeping the listings up to date for the pool of viable landlords you developed in the basic approach. Studies often identify this as a major barrier for households who want to move to better neighborhoods.[61] But keep in mind, more listings are not necessarily better. Landlords can get frustrated when the number of available units far exceeds the number of potential tenants, and keeping lists current can be labor intensive.

High-volume housing mobility programs will want to adjust the number of listings to fit the participant demand for units in opportunity neighborhoods by adding new listings and taking off ones that are no longer valid. This will requires checking in with your landlords and property managers regularly. This also provides a mechanism for keeping commitments you make to landlords and following up to ensure all is going well with current program participants. Remember to organize listings in searchable format, whether it is in an existing database, hard-copy lists, or a web site.

Low-volume programs may find it more efficient to identify units for specific households rather than independently creating and maintaining lists that would be only marginally useful (see the standard approach to housing search assistance).

CULTIVATE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO INTERACT WITH LANDLORDS

With minimal additional resources, you can provide more opportunities for landlords to interact with your program. For example, you could also establish a landlord advisory group to invite policy and procedure input and feedback. This builds buy-in and creates opportunities to better understand the needs of this core constituency. You could also offer educational opportunities and

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61   Briggs et al., "Struggling to Stay Out of High-Poverty Neighborhoods," supra note 4.

resources such as property management tips, lead-based training and resources, financial resources, fair housing training, and so on.

ENHANCED

MAKE PERSONAL APPEALS

If landlords won't come to you, you should plan on going to them. You might try direct mail to prospective landlords. You could also try tabling at events such as community resource, business, or educational fairs, or giving presentations at property owner/manager organizations. Make sure you invest time and resources in designing and producing a polished brochure and informational materials that will sell your program to potential landlords. Appendix D has some examples of the materials other housing mobility programs have used to recruit landlords.

Your staff may also need to drive up and down streets to identify potential properties and rental vacancies in some areas. Smaller "mom and pop" operations often don't show up in online databases or participate in trade groups, but practitioners note that working with landlords who operate properties with four units or less makes it easier to successfully scatter voucher holders than when working primarily with a few large apartment complexes.

It also may help to visit individual landlords and pitch your program while you're in the neighborhood. Many landlords who are unresponsive to mass mailings or phone calls might be more receptive when they can put a face to your program and get their questions answered in a more personal way. Many smaller operations have less familiarity with the HCV program and may require more information about the fundamentals of the program in order to recruit them.

PLAN A MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Practitioners sometimes put together media campaigns to promote participation in housing mobility programs to potential landlords. These campaigns use the messaging carefully tailored to landlords in your opportunity neighborhoods and can be implemented on any platform including local cable television, radio, newspapers, or magazines. Some programs supplement these efforts with newsletters of their own that highlight outstanding landlords and offer updates on services and policies.

INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY TO STREAMLINE PROCESSES

Many HCV programs already use online technology solutions to help support their landlords and can just tailor them for opportunity neighborhoods as part of their basic approach to landlord outreach. For those that don't currently have them, developing these sorts of tools can require substantial up-front investment and expertise. However, they can help relieve administrative burden on your staff and project a positive image for your program. Here are some ideas:

- **A free online property listing service**: Landlords often struggle to fill vacancies, so this could be a big selling point for your program. This kind of web site can also help keep your

property listings up to date by automatically removing listings after 30 or 60 days without an override by the landlord.

■ **A web site for landlords**: This would provide online resources like program information, downloadable forms or process tracking.

OFFER FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Some housing mobility programs find that offering financial incentives can help facilitate program participation, especially among landlords who are unfamiliar with the HCV program or have had less than optimal experiences in the past. For example, you might consider cash payments to cover administrative activities or rent loss during inspection and leasing. Offering to pay for the new household's security deposit up front can also be helpful.

You might also explore other innovative ways to incentivize landlord participation through local tax policy. For example, Illinois law grants property tax abatement (tax savings) to owners of rental properties in certain low-poverty areas who are renting to Housing Choice Voucher participants. Eligible units must be in substantial compliance with the local building code and must have passed the Authority's most recent inspection. The Housing Opportunity Tax Savings Program can result in tax savings of up to 19 percent of equalized assessed valuation for the greater of two units, or 20 percent of the total units in a building.

TARGET POPULATION OUTREACH

You will want to make sure you communicate your program's message about opportunity neighborhoods and housing choice to all voucher holders and, in particular, your program's target population. Your program may need to tailor its approach to its potential participants and opportunity neighborhoods. Think back to the questions you worked through in the last chapter. If your opportunity neighborhoods are located particularly far away, or if your potential participants have to move because of a relocation program or have lived at their current location for a long time, low-intensity information and outreach may not be enough to spark their interest. Start with low-intensity strategies in the basic approach and consider using the standard or enhanced approach in circumstances when housing mobility might be a harder sell.

BASIC

PROMOTE HOUSING MOBILITY AT ALL POINTS OF CONTACT

One of the best ways to get the message about moves to opportunity areas to applicants and participants of the voucher program is for everyone who has contact with them to be familiar with the program and spread the word. In many housing agencies, special programs like mobility counseling, homeownership, and self-sufficiency have been treated as "boutique" programs, separate from the day-to-day operations of the voucher program and only under the watchful eyes of the man-

agers and staff of those initiatives. By providing all staff with written materials and scripts and holding staff accountable for ensuring that applicants and participants know about the program, promoting housing choice will become part of the culture of the local HCV program (see Appendix E for examples of household recruitment material).

For example, when an inspector is in a household's unit located in a low-opportunity area, he could leave a postcard with some basic information that would plant the seed; when a housing specialist interviews an applicant to the HCV program, she could mention how important it is to consider nontraditional neighborhoods; when a voucher holder calls in and is put on hold, she could hear a message about making a good move; and when she waits in the reception area she could see a poster of a family that recently moved to an opportunity area.

Perhaps the most opportune moment for talking about housing choice occurs is at voucher issuance briefings. Make sure your program staff discuss the benefits of moving to neighborhoods that offer households greater opportunities and suggest what kinds of neighborhood characteristics program participants might want to consider. Exhibit maps that identify preferred destination communities and provide listings of available units in opportunity neighborhoods. You might also consider Inviting households who've already made successful moves to opportunity neighborhoods to come and share their experiences. No one can reach other voucher holders like they can. Include their stories in the voucher briefings you develop.

STANDARD

You may need to develop more excitement among voucher holders than you can generate through their regular interactions with the voucher system. If this is the case your community, here are some other ways to reach out.

DIVERSIFY YOUR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Whatever your strategies for marketing, it's important to keep them fresh. Trying new approaches from time to time avoids stale and traditional methods that the audience tends to tune out after years of repetition. Try to involve successful households in this process as much as possible. For example, you might consider putting together a promotional video or a calendar with photos and descriptions of neighborhoods and households. One innovative housing mobility program actually features 15-minute performances by a local theatre group in waiting areas and in briefings. These theatrical sketches, some comedic and some dramatic, focus on the challenges of moving to a new community very different from the one a household is moving from, and dealing with landlords during the viewing and application stages of the housing search. A local college theatre department might be able to provide something like this in your community.

HOLD EVENTS TO ATTRACT INTEREST AND ATTENTION

Plan a one-day personal development "conference" or fair including education, health, financial literacy, employment and training, and housing exhibits. You can partner with nonprofit organiza-

tions as well as with institutions like schools, employers, churches, clinics, and local businesses in your opportunity neighborhoods to highlight the resources available in these areas to help program participants advance their goals.

DID YOU KNOW?

Baltimore's housing mobility program requires potential program participants to

- *attend "readiness workshops,"*
- *raise their credit score, and*
- *save money to contribute toward their security deposit*

before *they can become eligible for a voucher. This process takes eight months on average. Not all applicants are willing to make this commitment up front, but those who do are highly successful.*

ENHANCED

ORGANIZE TOURS OF OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Alternatively, you might want to find ways to bring potential participants to visit opportunity neighborhoods. Bus or van tours are often a popular and effective way to introduce households to unfamiliar communities and provide a wonderful opportunity to answer questions and for discussion about concerns. You might also hold an open house in an opportunity neighborhood with a sports or other well-known figure as a draw.

OFFER FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Just like landlords and property management staff, voucher holders may respond to financial incentives. Offering security deposit assistance and help with moving expenses to households who choose to make an opportunity move can make the transition easier. Some housing mobility programs in the past have even offered cash incentive payments to be used for miscellaneous move-in expenses.

PRE-SEARCH COUNSELING

Some housing mobility programs provide housing search assistance from the time a voucher is issued. Other programs, however, do not begin the search, or even issue a Housing Choice Voucher, unless they have determined the household is "ready." Readiness may be defined in many different ways: acceptable credit rating, savings adequate to pay a security deposit and cover moving costs, or resolving household issues that may represent barriers to successfully leasing a unit.

The decision to include pre-search counseling as part of a housing mobility program is viewed very differently by existing programs. Some programs provide counseling events partially as a measure of commitment or "buy-in" among their participants and feel that the additional support will make them more likely to retain housing in opportunity neighborhoods long term. Other programs include counseling as a way of assisting households to eliminate obstacles to leasing and address issues such as credit, rental history, criminal background records, or other household issues. Some programs do not believe counseling is necessary or even advisable. You must determine your approach based on your goals, the needs of the population you will serve, and, to a certain extent,

your organization's philosophy. In addition, you will want to consider various approaches to providing pre-move assistance, including individual counseling, coaching, case management, advocacy, or group training or counseling.

At a minimum, some form of pre-search counseling creates a space where program participants can anticipate the challenges they will face during housing search. As with the other program components in this chapter, we present basic, standard, and enhanced approaches to prepare households for success.

BASIC

HELP ANTICIPATE MOBILITY BARRIERS AT VOUCHER BRIEFINGS

During the standard voucher briefing or recertification, make sure that program staff communicate clearly about landlord expectations in your opportunity neighborhoods. Are there credit score thresholds? What about rental policies pertaining to criminal history? What kind of a security deposit will they ask for? But don't just leave it at that. Have referrals to local nonprofits or other organizations ready for potential program participants who may need assistance to resolve some o f these issues. Alternatively, invite some of these organizations to the briefing to talk about their services or arrange for workshops to talk about these topics.

If your community believes strongly in pre-search counseling, make sure to gauge interest in additional pre-search counseling at the end of these sessions and sign potential program participants up for one-on-one interviews.

STANDARD

INTERVIEW AND ENROLL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

A low-intensity approach may mean counseling staff act more as coaches or advocates and carry larger caseloads because they will be offering less in the way of counseling services. At a minimum, your staff will interview interested households, obtain a copy of their credit reports, and go over these documents in detail with them. Some housing mobility programs also require households to sign an enrollment agreement at this stage.

OFFER WORKSHOPS

An important aspect of pre-search counseling is providing information to households through workshops (often mandatory) or other group training sessions. Topics most often needed by program participants include financial literacy, rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords, good neighbor training (housekeeping, conflict resolution, etc.), and more in-depth fair housing training. Training often provides information that will assist the household to make an informed decision about its housing location, prepare it for a more successful experience after a move, and result in the household being realistic about their options.

ENHANCED

PERFORM AN IN-DEPTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

An up-front, in-depth needs assessment ensures that your program staff can serve their program participants appropriately. You might start the process by asking about your participants' goals and concerns about making an opportunity move. What are the participants looking for in a new neighborhood? What obstacles are they most worried about in moving to a new area? Next, identify barriers the household may face in their effort to find a unit in an opportunity neighborhood, successfully lease up, and retain their housing. This includes things like credit problems, language barriers, criminal history, transportation challenges, child care needs, and health issues. You should also assess the participant's history as a renter. Program participants who have never rented an apartment in the private market before or are coming directly from public housing may need more intensive help with housing search as well as training on how to be a responsible tenant in the private market. Your program staff might also try to identify other issues that may prevent successful leasing and tenancy, ranging from problems with satisfactory housekeeping and maintenance to more serious issues with drug or alcohol abuse, behavioral problems, or other family conflicts.

Many housing mobility programs use an assessment tool to better understand their participants. This type of tool can also help track participant progress to aid in your performance measurement efforts (see chapter 5). Some information you ask may be able to be auto-populated from the PHA system of record in advance. Be sure your staff has adequate training and the skills to conduct the assessment and effectively engage the participant in the process. Think critically about what information you most need to serve participants appropriately and what outcome measures you'll want to assess going forward. An example assessment form is provided in Appendix F. This particular form is used in stages to obtain information as it is needed and to update the information over time.

Housing mobility programs have different approaches about where this initial assessment should take place. Some programs advocate that home visits are the best way to start off on the right foot. Program staff's first interactions take place in the environment where the participant is most comfortable and involve the entire household in the search and move process from the very beginning. Others practitioners view home visits before a move as expensive and not providing any valuable information about the household that cannot be obtained in the program office or by phone or mail. You'll have to decide what works best for your program.

During the needs assessment process, you and the participant might determine that an opportunity move is not a good fit. Some participants may not want to participate in all the required elements of your program. Others may not be able to make a

> **PRACTIONER'S TIP:**
>
> *A Ready-to-Rent folder contains a completed standard form rental application, a letter of introduction from the mobility counselor describing the program and household's participation, certificates of completion of workshops preparing the household for tenancy, a copy of the head of household's credit report, and a voucher program brochure for owners. While landlords may require their own form of application and will run their own credit checks, having the information is helpful to the household in the application process and usually leaves a very good impression with the landlord.*

major move because of commitments to caretaking responsibilities or simply not want to leave behind family members, friends, churches, or other support systems.[62] Your program staff may also find that particularly high-need households (i.e., domestic violence, prior homelessness, mental illness, etc.) would be better served through transitional or supportive housing.[63]

EXTEND INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT TO REMEDIATE BARRIERS TO MOBILITY

Once you've completed a needs assessment, a work plan can be created with household input, setting goals such as saving a certain amount of money for security deposit and moving expenses, developing a household budget, improving credit, or other activities to prepare for a successful search and move. At this point, some programs have their program participants sign an enrollment agreement that requires the household to make a commitment to searching in opportunity areas, ensures that everyone understands his responsibilities, and provides the housing mobility program with a way to hold the household accountable. See Appendix G for a sample.

During the pre-search counseling process, program staff often work with program participants to put their finances in order and prepare documents and materials they'll need during their housing search. They help program participants put together household budgets, provide credit counseling or referrals to credit repair counseling agencies, and facilitate financial literacy training. In addition, program staff commonly help to resolve issues with criminal history that may jeopardize households' ability to lease up in opportunity neighborhoods. Program staff may obtain criminal background reports, work with households to prepare explanations for potential landlords, or provide information about how to have records expunged. Some housing mobility programs even help program participants access affordable, reliable transportation through local nonprofits that refurbish donated cars and make them available to low-income households at minimal cost.

HOUSING SEARCH ASSISTANCE

All HCV holders need some sort of support with housing search to find units in opportunity neighborhoods. However, the level of support your program provides should mirror both your participants' needs and local housing market conditions. When making decisions, look back at the housing market assessment and the questions you answered about your participants' mobility barriers in chapter 3. If you decide to provide enhanced pre-search counseling, the individual needs assessments your staff will do with participants will also be an important resource.

If affordable housing is in short supply or you know of acute fair-housing issues, you may want to invest in an enhanced approach to help participants' make an opportunity move. The only excep-

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62   David P. Varady and Carole C. Walker, "Housing Vouchers and Residential Mobility," *Journal of Planning Literature* 18, no. 1 (2003): 17–30.

63   See the following sources: Varady and Walker, "Housing Vouchers and Residential Mobility"; and Susan J. Popkin, Victoria E. Gwiasda, Lynn M. Olson, Dennis P. Rosenbaum, and Larry Buron, *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago* (Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

tion might be if you're consistently making significant investments in landlord development. This may mitigate the need for intensive one-on-one assistance with housing search unless your potential participants have particular barriers that would make it difficult for them to find housing and negotiate a lease on their own (i.e., language barriers, large household size, disability).

Remember, the housing assistance you provide is not "steering." Rather than limiting choice, an effective housing mobility program expands the range of neighborhoods available to program participants and renews your HCV program's commitment to affirmatively furthering fair housing.[64]

BASIC

USE VOUCHER BRIEFINGS TO ARM PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WITH THE TOOLS THEY NEED

DID YOU KNOW?

Some states and localities have ordinances prohibiting landlords from discriminating against applicants based on their source of income. To find out whether your state or city has source-of income-protections, see PRRAC's compilation of source-of-income protection laws (see appendix B) or check with your local government.

Housing search advice can be offered through interactive presentations at briefings, provided in writing, or both. Start with the basics. Make sure participants understand how the HCV works, what processes are involved, and what the tenants', landlords', and PHA's responsibilities are. Next, walk program participants through the process they will use to find properties. If you have a database or web site in place, take the time to show them how to conduct searches and how to use key words to narrow their results. Also make sure to provide complete information on how to use public transportation to get to listings in your opportunity neighborhoods. This should include maps and schedules of the routes, as well as estimated cost and travel time.

Further, offer advice on how to interact with landlords. Coach program participants on how to contact the landlord and make an appointment, what information to ask, and what information to provide on the phone. You can also provide guidance about what to wear and whether to take children along to see units. Program participants also benefit from tips on keeping a journal of units viewed, spotting discrimination, and putting together documents that landlords will want to see.

Lastly, provide moving tips and a checklist to help households manage the activities everyone faces when making a move: utilities, telephone, cable, change of address, school registration, and so on.

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64   See U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Promoting Fair Housing," http://portal.hud.gov/ hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/promotingfh.

STANDARD

PROVIDE SUPPORT AT KEY MOMENTS

Housing mobility programs often make referrals to a minimum number of available units in neighborhoods that program participants are interested in. These referrals may consistent of simply an address and contact information, or may be accompanied by neighborhood information, area maps and descriptive information, demographics, and other data about the neighborhood(s). Additional low-intensity housing search services may include assisting searchers to file fair housing complaints or making referrals to partnering fair housing advocacy organizations as needed. Helping coordinate PHA approval and leasing activities once program participants have identified a potential landlord can also be one of the most effective ways to demonstrate outstanding communication and customer service.

OFFER HELP WITH TRANSPORTATION

The need to provide transportation will depend somewhat on the percentage of households who have cars and the quality and frequency of public transportation systems. Further, transportation assistance will look different in different communities. It may mean having a counselor drive a program participant to view units, issuing bus or train passes, or providing vans to transport groups to open houses or to view multiple available units. If you've chosen to do bus tours to reach out to potential participants, you might be able to piggy-back on these efforts to hold open house–style events for landlords to show particular units to potential renters.

In order to keep transportation assistance a low-intensity activity, housing mobility programs tailor their transportation strategies. A low-volume program might offer transportation assistance to all its participants without shouldering much more administrative burden or cost, but high-volume programs may need to target transportation assistance more strategically.

ENHANCED

CONNECT LANDLORDS WITH HOUSEHOLDS AT EVENTS IN OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS

In addition to working individually with households and providing transportation to units and an introduction to landlords, you can organize open houses for landlords or rental agents, thus providing a service to the property management as well as households searching. Invitations or coordinating transportation for a group of households and providing refreshments and perhaps written materials about the available unit(s) and neighborhood is all that is required.

PROVIDE INTENSIVE ONE-ON-ONE ASSISTANCE

With this approach, program participants receive one-on-one supportive services from housing search to lease-up. Program staff often start by identifying units and providing individualized transportation for housing search. They also contact landlords directly if they are unfamiliar with the

voucher program. Brochures, a phone call, or even a personal visit can go a long way to persuading a property manager to accept a household.

Next, program staff routinely help negotiate rent and lease terms with landlords while assisting with the coordination of public housing authority approval and leasing activities. Practitioners find that this one-on-one assistance not only supports the voucher holder and her household, it also serves to strengthen relationships between landlords and your mobility program. Walking the landlord through the RFTA, inspection, rent determination, and leasing and contract execution in a timely way also provides your staff with a unique opportunity to educate landlords about your program, promote transparency, and demonstrate a dedication to customer service. You'll also often find that a persuasive counselor, working with PHA rent determination staff, may be able to persuade a landlord to reduce the rent to an acceptable and reasonable amount within the payment standard for the area, especially once trust has been established. If financial assistance is available, the mobility counselor will also coordinate the process by qualifying the tenant for the funds and seeing that proper payment is made in a timely manner.

POST-MOVE SUPPORT

Once program participants have successfully leased-up in opportunity neighborhoods, they face many challenges adjusting to their new home and neighborhood. There are things that all housing mobility programs can do to make this transition easier, but you may want to consider offering more support for participants who have limited experience with the private rental market or might experience more difficulty adjusting because of language barriers, disability, or race or cultural differences. If there are specific employment, educational, or health-related desired outcomes, then post-move support must address them as well. This section will suggest a range of services that can be provided, depending on the available resources and program objectives.

BASIC

CHECK IN BEFORE VOUCHER RECERTIFICATION

Be sure to contact program participants two to three months before the end of the first lease year before voucher recertification. This will allow you to connect these "second-movers" (see target population in chapter 3) back to your pre-search counseling component to assess how well their current rental meets their needs. This point of contact is critical since so many households who move to opportunity neighborhoods have difficulty staying there. Program participants may need support negotiating with their current landlord or formulating a new plan. Checking in before voucher recertification also helps program staff link program participants to your program's housing search assistance component more effectively in order to support subsequent moves to other opportunity neighborhoods.

STANDARD

PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT RESOURCES TO SUPPORT HOUSEHOLD TRANSITIONS

Typically the most dramatic changes for households are in the areas of schools, child care, and transportation. Some communities put together welcome packages for new residents. If your opportunity neighborhoods don't already do this, remember you've already gathered a lot of information while deciding on your definition of opportunity neighborhood. Take the time to package that information much like a local Welcome Wagon would. Provide maps, basic information like how to hook up utilities and phone service, and some marketing samples or coupons. Also include a list of local web sites where participants can find good information about government agencies, public transportation routes and schedules, school registration information, health care facilities, child care resources, recreation and community centers, employment services, and calendars of events.

You might also plan on sending out mailings or emails about educational offerings related to your participants' long-term goals to stay connected throughout your participants' first year in their new home. Participants may find workshops on topics such as financial management and investment, computer skills, home decoration and maintenance, domestic violence, parenting, resume writing, interview skills, employment benefits, getting along with your boss and coworkers, or choosing the right day care helpful, whether your organization offers these opportunities directly or through county extension services, community colleges, or community-based organizations.

CHECK IN SHORTLY AFTER MOVE

Making contact with households soon after the move, no later than the first 30 days, is important to find out whether they are adjusting. A move can put a great deal of stress on households, especially financially, so it's important to ensure that they are able to meet basic furniture needs and have adequate funds for food and other basic needs within those first few weeks. It's also important to troubleshoot child care and transportation issues and provide needed referrals. Low-volume housing mobility programs may want to do this in person; a home welcoming visit is a good way to connect with program participants. High-volume programs may do this over the phone. Ask if program participants have met their neighbors, had any contact with the landlord, and if their children have made any new friends. Responses will inform program staff whether the household has gotten off on the right foot and has a positive attitude about the new community. It is also a good idea to contact the property owner or manager. A quick conversation with tell you anticipate potential problems and will let the landlord know that you are available to support the household.

ENHANCED

CONNECT THROUGHOUT THE VOUCHER TERM

How much contact the program staff has with program participants after that first visit may range from "as needed" to multiple visits at specific intervals. If no visits are required and contact is left up

to the household or the judgment of the staff person assigned, program staff won't know if the household is fitting in or being welcomed into the new community. On the other hand, participants may view too much attention as intrusive. Striking a balance will depend on your program goals, individual households' needs, their ability to adapt, and the probability that they will reach out and ask for assistance if needed.

Whatever you decide, make sure your program staff takes advantage of their interactions with participants to encourage them to become involved in the new community. Program staff can accompany participants to events and activities and make introductions to members of a neighborhood association, school and church volunteer groups, and community recreation center programs. For some households, peer networks or support groups are very helpful. Introducing one household to another in the same community—one that can provide information and advice—may help ease the new household into its new situation. If you've already decided on enhanced strategies for landlord development, participant recruitment, or housing search that already bring program staff to opportunity neighborhoods, capitalize on these efforts to provide occasional opportunities for voucher holders to meet and discuss how they are dealing with challenges they encounter in their new communities.

Remember, home visits should not be inspections. While program staff should notice any damage or housekeeping issues that need to be addressed, a visit that is perceived by the household as an inspection may damage the relationship and limit future contact. Program participants should see your program staff as a supportive resource rather than a compliance monitor.

Periodic check-ins can also help program staff respond to other program participant needs by providing referrals and follow-up with social service agencies. Structured and frequent visits with the household can also bolster a holistic approach to working with households that includes time and services for teenagers and other household members. Program staff may also actively help with conflict resolution between tenants and landlords.

CHAPTER CHECKLIST

In this chapter we walked you through the five primary activities of a housing mobility program and a range of strategies your program could employ within each component. To review the program activities and strategies, see figure 2 below.

FIGURE 2. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES CHECKLIST

ACTIVITY	BASIC	STANDARD	ENHANCED
Landlord development	• Contact landlords from local publications, databases, and trade groups • Offer responsive, convenient landlord services	• Maintain up-to-date listings in opportunity neighborhoods • Cultivate other opportunities to interact with landlords	• Make personal appeals • Plan a media campaign • Invest in technology to streamline processes • Offer financial incentives
Target population outreach	• Promote housing mobility at all points of contact	• Diversify your promotional materials • Hold events to attract interest and attention	• Organize tours to opportunity neighborhoods • Offer financial incentives
Pre-search counseling	• Help anticipate mobility barriers at voucher briefings	• Interview and enroll program participants • Offer workshops	• Perform in-depth assessment • Extend individualized support to remediate barriers to mobility
Housing search assistance	• Use voucher briefings to arm households with the tools they need	• Provide support at key moments • Offer help with transportation	• Connect landlords with households at events in opportunity neighborhoods • Provide intensive one-on-one assistance
Post-move support	• Check in before voucher recertification	• Provide information about resources to support household transition • Check in shortly after move	• Connect throughout the voucher term

Chapter 5

Measuring Success
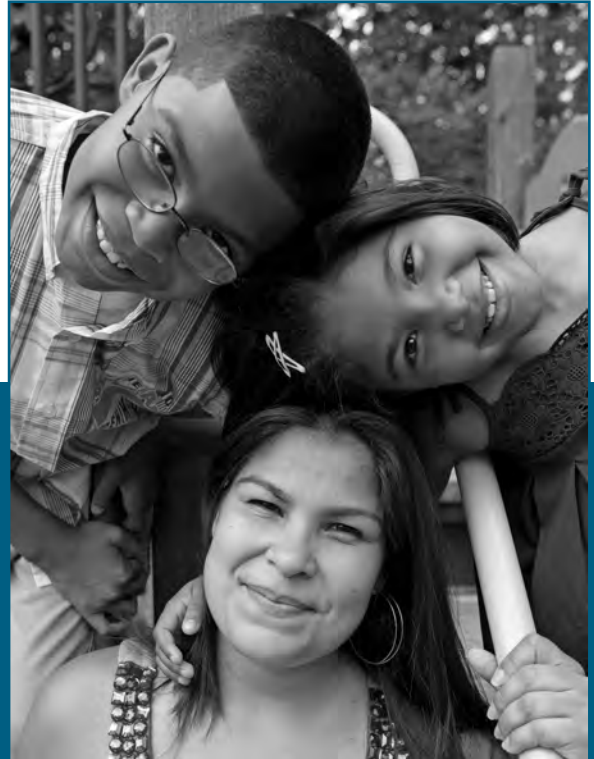
In this chapter, you will learn about

✳ Developing a performance management system

✳ Launching an evaluation of your program to assess its impact

A critical—though often overlooked—part of program design is building a performance measurement system that collects information on program inputs, key activities, outputs, and outcomes. Building such a system should not be viewed as the job of researchers, but as a tool for program managers to use while overseeing the program. After all, you will be the one to use performance measurement day to day. Why? A well-designed performance measurement system can help you understand important information that you can use to make ongoing program improvements, and designing a performance measurement system in the program's early stages can help streamline data collection and ameliorate the onerous task of reporting to funders, particularly if more than one is investing in the program.

As the saying goes, performance measurement systems are not built in a day. They take staff time and program resources to develop. This does not mean you should skip it altogether. A performance measurement system will not only help you implement and manage a successful program, and report to current funders, it may help you successfully attract additional resources. Results matter. Funders want to know about return on investment, or ROI—and not just corporations are data driven. Government and philanthropic funders are increasingly requiring results-oriented approaches that require collecting performance measures. This means part of your job is to collect data on outcomes that you can use to "pitch" the idea of investing in housing mobility programs by showing it is wise to do so. Consider the following pitches to a potential funder.

A. Our housing mobility program helps low-income households move to opportunity neighborhoods. It is great.

B. Our housing mobility program helped 500 low-income households move to opportunity neighborhoods, an increase of over 20 percent from last year. What is more, we had a 97 percent retention rate in those neighborhoods. Today, 65 percent of our voucher holders are living in opportunity neighborhoods while only 54 percent were living in opportunity neighborhoods last year.

Which pitch would you invest in? Option B, right? What makes Option B the more enticing pitch? It is not just longer. It provides hard numbers, descriptions of improvements over time, and the big picture. To make this kind of pitch, you need data—the kind of data that go into a performance measurement system. Should we get started on customizing a performance measurement system for your program?

✳ 10 STEPS TO BUILDING A PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM

Can you just buy a performance measurement system off the shelf? No. Here is why: for a performance measurement system to work, it requires customization. You do not have to start from scratch, though. Complex tasks, like building a performance measurement system, are easily accomplished by breaking it down into key steps. (Some of which you've already done in previous chapters!) Here are the 10 steps we recommend. You do not have to follow these steps exactly, but it is a helpful framework to get you started.

1.   Clearly define program goals.

2.   Add objectives and benchmarks toward achieving those goals.

3.   Define key activities.

4.   Working from the key activities, describe the program inputs, outputs, and outcomes.

5.   Fill in your logic model.

6.   Identify data collection method "opportunity points."

7.   Build or purchase a management information system (MIS) to record key data.

8.   Design reports.

9.   Fine-tune by checking key data collection points and the quality of data input.

10. Use data.

STEP 1. DEFINE PROGRAM GOALS

In chapter 3, we discussed developing program goals. Clearly stating goals is critical to understanding how successful the program is at achieving its purpose. For example:

Our housing mobility program
seeks to ensure access to quality education and safety
by helping voucher-holders with children access neighborhoods
with violent crime rates 30 percent below the regional average
and schools where 20 percent or less of students qualify for free- or
reduced-price meals.

STEP 2. ADD OBJECTIVES AND BENCHMARKS

An important part of performance measurement is adding benchmarks to your goal statement. This requires understanding where the program began and where you would like it to head. Take, for example, the goal statement above:

■ Ensure access to quality education by helping voucher holders with children move to neighborhoods with schools where 20 percent or less of students qualify for free- or reduced-price meals

　o Increase the number of households living in opportunity neighborhoods by 20 percent within one year.

　o Help 70 percent of households remain in opportunity neighborhoods at the time of voucher recertification.

STEP 3: DEFINE KEY ACTIVITIES

Chapter 4 outlined the program components you can choose from to construct your housing mobility program. You'll need to think through each program component and decide which strategies will work best for your community.

For example, a low-volume program might look like this:

■ **Landlord Development**

　o Basic: Contact landlords from local publications, databases, and trade groups; offer responsive, convenient landlord services

■ **Target Population Outreach**

　o Basic: Promote housing mobility at all points of contact

■ **Pre-Search Counseling**

　o Standard: Interview and enroll participants; offer workshops

■ **Housing Search Assistance**

　o Standard: Provide support at key moments; offer help with transportation

■ **Post-Move Support**

　o Enhanced: Connect throughout the voucher term

STEP 4: WORKING FROM KEY ACTIVITIES, DESCRIBE INPUTS, OUTPUTS, AND OUTCOMES

After you have identified your program's key program strategies, you can use these as a starting point to describe your input, activity, output, and outcome measures. Figure 3 applies some of these key concepts to the sample housing mobility program described in step 3, above.

INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Experts on performance measurement and management distinguish between different types of measures, all of which can play useful roles. Although terminology varies, here we outline the rationales for four basic categories of performance measures and the context for their use in implementation.

- **Input measures** *track the resources that an agency uses to accomplish its goals. Examples include number of staff, funding levels, facilities, and types of services.*

- **Activity measures**, *which include indicators such as intake volumes, caseloads, and turnaround times, track the agency's activities. These are metrics of "the wheels turning" and can help spot bottlenecks, service interruptions, or backlogs.*

- **Output measures** *track what the agency produces directly and what staff can realistically be held accountable for…examples of output measures could include the number (and percentage) of clients who move to opportunity neighborhoods, the number of new housing units produced in opportunity neighborhoods, the cost per successful placement, and rates of retention in opportunity neighborhoods.*

- **Outcome measures** *reflect the interim and long-term benefits that a program is intended to achieve for its clients or for the larger community…interim outcomes include exposure of families to healthier neighborhoods and access to services from those locations; long-run outcomes including improved mental and physical health, educational achievement, and employment success for participating families, as well as lower levels of segregation in the community as a whole.*

Reprinted with permission from *Keeping the Promise: Preserving and Enhancing Housing Mobility in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program* (Poverty & Race Research Action Council 2005)

	FIGURE 3. INPUT, ACTIVITY, OUTPUT, AND OUTCOME MEASURES FOR A SAMPLE HOUSING MOBILITY PROGRAM			
PROGRAM COMPONENT	**INPUT MEASURES**	**ACTIVITY MEASURES**	**OUTPUT MEASURES**	**OUTCOME MEASURES**
Landlord outreach (basic)	Existing staff trained on: • landlord search techniques • landlord orientations • expediting processes	Landlords contacted in opportunity neighborhoods Landlord orientations Expedited inspections	Landlords successfully recruited	Ample unit listings available in opportunity neighborhoods
Outreach to target populations (basic)	Existing staff trained on opportunity messaging Materials prepared	Enhanced voucher briefings	Participants recruited each month	Program utilization high, reaching target population
Pre-search counseling (standard)	Staff trained on: • interviewing and credit • running workshops	Interviews conducted Credit reports run Workshops offered	Participants enrolled Participants attending workshops	Participants pass landlord screenings
Housing search assistance (standard)	Staff trained on housing search and referrals Dollars budgeted for transportation assistance	Referrals to available units in opportunity neighborhoods Bus passes issued	Units in opportunity neighborhoods visited	Participants successfully lease-up units in opportunity neighborhoods
Post-move support	Staff trained on post-move support Welcome wagon packets prepared	Packets distributed 30-day follow-ups 90-day follow-ups 6-month follow-ups 9-month follow-ups	Participants stay in unit "Second-movers" referred back to housing search assistance	Participants stay in opportunity neighborhoods

STEP 5. FILL IN A LOGIC MODEL

Logic model? Isn't that the super-complicated Excel sheet otherwise known as HUD Form 1984? Yes, HUD requires many subsidized housing programs to submit a logic model as part of the grant application process. Unless your program requires it, you don't have to use HUD's form; it's up to you. If that works for you, then use it. If not, you can create your own. Regardless, you'll need to customize your logic model for your program. There are basically six key components of a logic

model: (1) problem, need, or situation; (2) activities; (3) outputs; (4) outcomes; (5) measurement reporting tools; and (6) evaluation process. The good news is that you have already mapped your activities, outputs, and outcomes in step 4, so half the work is done already! The only extra step is to set benchmarks for these measures to keep your program on track, much like you did for your overall program goals in step 2. For example, don't just say you're going to track the number of landlords your program will contact and successfully recruit, be specific:

Activity: Contact 20 new landlords a month

Output: Successfully recruit 10

Outcome: Achieve a 1-to-1 ratio of program enrollees to landlords

STEP 6. IDENTIFY DATA COLLECTION METHOD "OPPORTUNITY POINTS"

If you are administering a social program, your staff are already collecting a certain amount of data. Your job as a performance measure architect is to identify data collection "opportunity points" that will help feed information into the performance measurement system. The best way to identify these opportunity points is to map out the flow of participants through your program. For each step in the process, ask what types of data staff are already collecting and what do you need to collect for your performance measurement system. At a minimum, you might collect data on program enrollment, participation in program activities, and program exit.

STEP 7. BUILD A MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (MIS) TO RECORD KEY DATA

The previous step helped you develop a list of variables to collect in your performance measurement system. Figuring out the type of MIS to use is a big deal. Databases can be costly. Whether you are starting from scratch or are adding a module to an existing system, you will need the help of an MIS professional—someone who understands the design and technical aspects of MIS.

STEP 8. DESIGN REPORTS

Once you have an MIS in place, you will need to pull information, in the form of reports, from your database. These reports are important because you can use them to manage outcomes, troubleshoot, and make program improvements. It will take several reports to meet the needs of all your stakeholders. Make sure to share these reports with staff at regular meetings. Discuss the data included in the report and how to improve outcomes. Other key stakeholders that will be interested in data are program funders. Set up reports that include required reporting to each funder.

STEP 9. FINE-TUNE BY CHECKING KEY DATA COLLECTION POINTS AND DATA QUALITY

"Garbage in, garbage out" is an old expression you've probably heard by now. It is true. If program staff are not entering data correctly or are not entering data at all, as a program manager you will not be able to learn much from your performance measurement system. Make sure to conduct quality control checks weekly and review issues in staff meetings. One common data collection problem is missing program exits. Participants complete the program, but staff, overwhelmed by the households they are currently serving, overlook entering their program exit data. To solve this problem think about prompts that you can work into staff's day-to-day tasks or, even better, if technical whistles can remind staff automatically when to enter program exit dates.

STEP 10. USE THE DATA

Build it and they will use the data. Or will they? It is easy to invest a ton of time, money, and sweat into developing a performance measurement system and then to forget about using it once it is up and running. Using the data is, of course, important for managing the program.

Case managers, housing search counselors, and landlord recruiters will all be entering data into your performance measurement system. To ensure they care about the quality of what goes into the system, they have to feel invested in the benefits of what comes out. Here are some ways to use the data with staff:

- Schedule weekly management meetings with caseworkers to discuss program participant outcomes. Use key performance measures to discuss progress.

- Do a "bottleneck" checkup once a month that brings program staff together to discuss how households are moving through the program. Are there ways to improve service delivery by improving quality or expediting assistance? For example, are households signing up for community tours? If not, why not? How can they be improved? Another example: landlords are complaining that inspections take too long. How long do inspections take from request to completion? How can that time be minimized?

- Make sure to include program participant outcomes in annual employee progress reports and salary discussions.

- Consider linking staff pay or bonuses to specific performance measures.

LAUNCHING AN EVALUATION

A performance measurement system cannot tell you everything. It cannot, for example, tell you whether your housing mobility program is causing the results that you see. There are too many other factors that may be driving outcomes—for example, household motivation or factors related to the housing market. Further, a performance measurement system cannot tell you if your program is cost-effective—important information if you are making a case for more funding. Understanding the costs of the program (in addition to its outcomes) can also pique the interest of policymakers who operate in a "do more with less" environment and are concerned about dedicating taxpayer dollars to failed social programs. Setting up a good system can also help prepare your organization for formal evaluation.

To understand the true impacts of the program, though, you'll need to go beyond just performance measurement. You'll need to design and conduct a rigorous evaluation. Every research study should be designed to fit the needs of the research questions, but if you are interested in rigorous study, you should include some of the following methods:

- experimental or quasi-experimental design
- cost-effectiveness ratios
- process study on program design and implementation
- interviews with program participants

Launching an evaluation will require the help of researchers trained in social science methods. To find such experts, check with local universities. Sometimes researchers are looking for willing partners and are willing to collaboratively seek funding for research studies. When engaging a research partner, you should start by describing the scope of work. Here are the some of the major elements that should go into the scope of work:

- description of the mobility program
- key research questions
- research methods
- study implementation and management
- experience and technical qualifications

CHAPTER CHECKLIST

Remember these key steps when developing a performance measurement system:

1. Clearly define program goals.

2. Add objectives and benchmarks toward achieving those goals.

3. Define the program's key activities.

4. Working from the key activities, describe the program inputs, outputs, and outcomes.

5. Fill in your logic model.

6. Identify data collection method "opportunity points."

7. Build or purchase a management information system (MIS) to record key data.

8. Design reports.

9. Fine-tune by checking key data collection points and the quality of data input

10. Use data.

You should also consider launching an evaluation of your program to learn more about its impact.

Chapter 6

Funding and Implementing Your Mobility Program

In this chapter, you will learn about

✽ Financing your housing mobility program

✽ Key steps to implementing the housing mobility program you've designed

Now that you have thought through the components of a housing mobility program and identified strategies that you think fit best for your program, it's time to think about the steps to getting your program up and running. An essential first step in this process is finding ways to fund your housing mobility program. The first part of this chapter identifies a variety funding streams that you could use to help support your mobility program. The second section explains essential steps to setting up your program and making a plan for implementation.

FINDING WAYS TO FUND YOUR HOUSING MOBILITY PROGRAM

Communities considering putting together a housing mobility program often struggle with cost. Research shows that the cost of running a housing mobility program ranges anywhere from $70 to $6,000 per voucher, though the methods used to measure cost vary widely and make comparisons among programs impractical.[65] This section presents ways that communities can make adjustments to safeguard funding for their core voucher program when they expand their mission to include housing mobility and identify additional funding to support the types of program enhancements described in chapter 4.

MAKE PROGRAM ADJUSTMENTS TO ENSURE YOUR VOUCHER PROGRAM'S CURRENT FUNDING

Some voucher administrators have very real concerns about how efforts to expand housing choices will affect the funding for their program overall. Before looking for any new funding for program components, it is vital for communities to acknowledge these concerns and make strategic moves to protect funding for the core voucher program.

BOLSTER YOUR HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM'S HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT (HAP) FUNDING

Because rents are likely to be higher for units in opportunity areas, the average cost of vouchers may go up without any offsetting reduction in payment standards in other neighborhoods. Assuming your community decides to increase the applicable payment standards to accommodate these higher rents, it will not be able to serve as many households with its annual allocation of subsidy (Housing Assistance Payments, or HAP) funds. Some PHAs many worry that this will put their voucher program at risk for a reduction of HAP renewal funding. However, this does not have to be the case.

Since 2007, Congress has provided renewal funding *based on voucher funds spent in the prior year*. Under this policy, a PHA can maintain its current funding level either by serving the same number

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65   Cunningham et al., *Improving Neighborhood Location Outcomes in the Housing Choice Voucher Program*.

of households at the same average voucher cost or by spending somewhat more per voucher on fewer households. Unless fundamental changes are enacted in the voucher program going forward, this policy is likely to continue.

PHAs may even be able to *increase* their HAP allocation when they promote housing mobility. In the context of dismal budget realities, many PHAs do not have any reserves at their disposition. However, agencies that do can draw on these monies to pay the higher subsidy costs *and* maintain the number of vouchers in use. This will result in higher renewal funding, based on the higher costs initially supported by reserves.

PHAs also worry that allowing program participants to move to opportunity areas serviced by another PHA (see chapter 2) will lead to the loss of the voucher and a subsequent decrease in HAP funding. However, no matter what decision the receiving PHA makes, the sending PHA should experience no net loss.[66] If the receiving agency absorbs the voucher—that is, issues one of its vouchers to the moving household—the sending PHA gets its voucher back and can reissue it to a new household on its waiting list. Reductions in HAP fees should only occur if there are delays in voucher reissuance. If the receiving PHA decides to bill the sending agency, the voucher remains part of the sending agency's portfolio.

PROTECT YOUR VOUCHER PROGRAM'S ADMINISTRATIVE FEES

HUD determines a PHA's administrative fees on the basis of units leased as of the first day of each month. PHAs depend on administrative fees to run their voucher programs and need to ensure that implementing mobility-friendly policies and programs does not adversely affect this essential funding.

First, communities must anticipate that housing search may take longer for households looking to find available units in opportunity areas. To compensate, PHAs should adjust the pace at which it issues new vouchers to households on the waiting list to optimize the count of units leased every month while carefully tracking and monitoring success rates to make further adjustments and avoid over-leasing issues. Before issuing a new voucher, PHAs can also encourage a household to search for a new unit while continuing to use its voucher in its current home. In addition, communities can purposefully design their housing mobility programs to make the search period as efficient as possible. This includes focusing on "second movers" (see chapter 3) who already know how the voucher program and private market work as well as dedicating resources to enhanced landlord outreach and pre-move counseling for program participants (see chapter 4).

Second, if your community decides voucher portability will be a core component of its housing mobility program (see chapter 2), the sending and receiving PHAs must closely coordinate their activities. If the sending PHA can predict with reasonable reliability the number of port-outs that other PHAs will absorb and communicates effectively with its partner PHA, it can adjust its issuance of vouchers to waiting list households in advance without waiting for each decision. Sending PHAs will, however, earn lower administrative fees; current HUD rules require the sending agency to shift

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66   HUD recently issued a proposed amendment of its portability regulations, 77 *Fed. Reg* 18731 (March 28, 2012), which would alter several impacts described here. At the time this report went to press, a final rule had not been released.

80 percent of the administrative fee earned for a "port-out" voucher to the receiving agency, unless the two PHAs agree to a different fee split. Over a multiyear period this policy may fairly reflect the division of labor for the voucher, but in the short run it underpays a sending PHA that has invested on its own in a housing mobility program.

Third, if a PHA maintains its total voucher spending by paying higher average subsidies for fewer households, it could, at least in theory, approach HUD for supplemental fees to help offset a loss of administrative fees. Current regulations (24 CFR §982.152) grant HUD the authority to provide "extraordinary" and "hard-to-house" fees; mobility moves could easily fit into either category. However, communities should note that this may take some advocacy since HUD does not currently exercise this authority and is facing a tough budget climate.

IDENTIFY NEW FUNDING SOURCES FOR YOUR PROGRAM

A number of housing mobility programs are funded as part of litigation settlements against HUD and housing authorities. Other programs find funding through private donors, foundations, or HUD programs like the Community Development Block Grant program.

In this section we highlight different HUD funding streams for housing mobility programs and HUD initiatives that you may be able to tap into to fund your program. We provide some basic background on these programs, explain how they encourage mobility, and describe how you can access these funds.

Additionally, we provide information on foundation funding and where you can to find out more about major funders in your area. Private foundations may be able to fund extraordinary expenses incurred by households moving to high-opportunity areas or special initiatives to expand opportunities, support households after a mobility move, or research to better inform program design decisions.

LEVERAGING DOLLARS FROM ONGOING FEDERAL PROGRAMS

HUD consistently funds the programs detailed in this section annually. As such, these programs could provide reliable, long-term funding streams for your mobility program.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program was created through the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, the goal of which was the development of viable urban communities through decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities.[67] To promote this goal, the CDBG program provides state and local governments with funds for a range of community development activities, giving CDBG grantees flexibility to

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67   24 C.F.R. 570 (1982); see also U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, " 'Basically CDBG' Course Training Manual," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/community development/training/ basicallycdbg (last visited July 30, 2012).

determine which activities to fund locally. HUD requires that every CDBG recipient submits a Consolidated Plan[68] certifying the following: (1) that the awarded grant will be carried out and administered according to the Fair Housing Act, and (2) the recipient will affirmatively further fair housing.[69]

How This Program Encourages Mobility

Because of the required commitment to "affirmatively further fair housing," CDBG funds can be used to fund housing mobility programs. Every PHA running a significant Housing Choice Voucher Program can access these funds for mobility. CDBG grant funds can also be allocated to local fair housing organizations or other nonprofit housing agencies engaged in housing mobility activities.[70]

Under CDBG, housing mobility programs can be funded as "public service" or "program adminis-tration" activities.[71] Fair housing counseling is considered an eligible public service. To access CDBG funds for a public service activity, the service must be either a new service or a quantifiable increase in the level of service. Once a program is funded, ongoing assistance is allowed without quantifi-able increases. CDBG dollars can also fund fair housing activities as a "program administration" activity.[72]

How to Access This Funding

CDBG funds are distributed annually by HUD to either large cities or urban counties (entitlement communities) and states (Small Cities CDBG Program). You will likely have to coordinate to some extent with your local jurisdiction's department of community development, though the exact process will vary.

Cities and states usually have an annual competitive grant application process which invites local agencies to apply for a portion of the CDBG funds. You can visit the HUD web site to determine

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68   24 CFR Part 91.225, 325,425 (The regulation states certification means an analysis of impediments to fair housing choice will be done, appropriate actions will be taken to overcome impediments, and records will be kept by the juris-diction of analysis of impediments and actions taken); see U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Promoting Fair Housing," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/ promotingfh (last visited July 30, 2012) (the HUD web site states a recipient must certify "the grantee will work diligently to affirmatively further fair housing").

69   U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Promoting Fair Housing," ("under the Consolidated Plan, HUD funded recipients are required to: (1) examine and attempt to alleviate housing discrimination within their jurisdiction; (2) promote fair housing choice for all persons; (3) provide opportunities for all persons to reside in any given housing development, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin; (4) promote housing that is accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities; (5) and comply with the non-discrimination requirements of the Fair Housing Act."); see also U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, " 'Basically CDBG' Course Train-ing Manual" ("The Consolidated Plan is prepared by the recipient in accordance with 24 CFR Part 91, and describes needs, resources, priorities and proposed activities to be undertaken with respect to HUD'S CPD formula programs, in-cluding CDBG").

70   24 C.F.R. 570 (1982); see also U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "'Basically CDBG' Course Training Manual." http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/ training/basicallycdbg (last visited July 30, 2012).

71   24 CFR 570.201(e).

72   24 CFR 570.206. See Notice CPD-07-08 (acknowledging that communities may undertake fair housing activities with CDBG funds, including actions to affirmatively further fair housing. Activities communities undertake to affirmatively further fair housing can be directed at increasing housing choice and informing the community about fair housing rights. Thus, CDBG funds may be used to fund housing mobility programs either as a fair housing service or as an activity to affirmatively further fair housing.).

whether you are in an entitlement community and who to contact to find contact information for the local agency or staff person in charge of CDBG allocations.[73] Also, visit your local city government's web site to learn more about its processes for allocating CDBG funds, or contact your local government's department of community development or other organization responsible for allocating these funds to get more information.

CDBG grantees can obligate a maximum of 15 percent of their allocation plus 15 percent of program income received in the prior year to public service activities,[74] while program administration costs are capped at 20 percent of the grant.[75] Since a larger share of the grant can be spent on program administration costs, classifying your activities as a public administration activity may increase the likelihood of getting funding or getting a larger amount.

Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP)

The Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) is a funding stream that can be used by state and local agencies to fund a mobility program. FHAP funding is available to those state and local agencies that enforce fair housing laws. These agencies must be engaged in activities that help "protect families and individuals who believe they have been victims of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or familial status."[76] A list of current FHAP recipients is available on the HUD web site.[77]

How This Program Encourages Mobility

The types of activities allowed under FHAP clearly include key functions of a housing mobility program, and FHAP-funded organizations can partner with housing mobility programs to expand voucher holder opportunities.[78] However, there are no current examples of FHAP-funded organizations using funds for housing mobility programs.

How to Access This Funding

State and local agencies that demonstrate to HUD that they enforce "a fair housing law that is substantially equivalent to the Fair Housing Act" are eligible for FHAP funding.[79] If your organization is not eligible to directly receive FHAP funding, you can partner with a FHAP grantee. To find current FHAP grantees operating in your area, go to the HUD web site: HUD maintains a full list of all FHAP

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73   Visit http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs/contacts

74   Id.

75   HUD, "Use of Community Development Block Grant Program Funds in Support of Housing." http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/hudclips/notices/cpd/07cpdnotices.cfm (last visited July 30, 2012).

76   HUD, "Fair Housing Initiatives Program," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/partners/FHIP/fhip (last visited July 30, 2012).

77   HUD, "Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) Agencies," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/partners/FHAP/agencies (last visited September 18, 2012).

78   24 CFR Part 115 et al.

79   HUD, "Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP)," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/partners/FHAP (last visited September 18, 2012).

grantees.[80] Contact your local FHAP grantee to see if they would be interested in partnering on your mobility program.

Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP)

The Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) allows for partnerships between HUD, local government and other agencies that assist people experiencing housing discrimination. HUD operates three initiatives under FHIP, but the most relevant for funding a housing mobility program is the Education and Outreach Initiative.[81]

How This Program Encourages Mobility

Housing mobility programs can qualify for the Education and Outreach Initiative (EOI) because housing mobility programs fall within the parameters for eligible EOI funding – providing housing counseling.[82]

How to Access This Funding

You can apply for FHIP-EOI funding annually if you are a state or local government, fair housing organization, or other public or private nonprofit organization representing people protected by the Fair Housing Act.[83] Since HUD does not release the Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) at the same time each year, it is important to check the HUD web site regularly for new funding opportunities.

HUD Housing Counseling Program

HUD's Housing Counseling Program provides funds for public or private nonprofit organizations that provide various housing counseling from pre-purchase housing counseling to rental housing counseling.[84]

How This Program Encourages Mobility

While HUD's Housing Counseling program is primarily known for homeownership and foreclosure counseling, eligible agencies may also receive funds for renter counseling, including mobility counseling for voucher holders.[85] Counselors trained in rental housing are able to educate

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80   HUD, "Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) Agencies."

81   The three FHIP initiatives are (1) the Fair Housing Organizations Initiative (FHOI), which aims to build the capacity of fair housing organizations (FHOs); (2) the Private Enforcement Initiative (PEI), which provides funding for organizations to test for housing discrimination; and (3) the Education and Outreach Initiative (EOI), which funds state and local efforts to conduct outreach and education on fair housing rights and laws including what equal opportunity in housing means and what housing providers need to do to comply with the Fair Housing Act. See also HUD, "Fair Housing Initiatives Program."

82   Id.

83   24 CFR Part 125.

84   HUD, "Housing Counseling Program Description," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/housing/sfh/hcc/counslng (last visited September 18, 2012).

85   24 CFR Part 214 (2007) (implements the Housing Counseling Program authorized by section 106 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 (12 U.S.C. 1701x)).

potential tenants on tenant/landlord law and promote the benefits of moving to high-opportunity neighborhoods.[86]

How to Access This Funding

To receive grants through this program, your organization must be a HUD-approved housing counseling agency or a state housing finance agency. To learn more about how to become a HUD-approved housing counseling agency, visit the HUD web site.[87] Alternatively, your organization could partner with existing HUD-approved housing counseling agencies in your area. HUD maintains a searchable database of these agencies on its web site.[88] Once you identify agencies working in your area, contact them to see if they would open to partnering with you to provide housing mobility counseling.

Moving to Work (MTW)

MTW HOUSING MOBILITY DEMONSTRATION
The four new MTW PHAs will have the option of participating in a Housing Mobility Demonstration, which targets the increasing housing choice objective of the MTW demonstration program. PHAs will design and test a strategy that takes advantage of MTW flexibility to increase housing choice for residents through a housing mobility program. The demonstration will include a rigorous evaluation to test the program outcomes.

Moving to Work (MTW) is a HUD PHA demonstration program that gives PHAs flexibility in how they use their funds.[89] This flexibility gives PHAs the ability to design and test strategies for the households they serve. PHAs may also allow for certain exemptions from existing public housing and Housing Choice Voucher program rules, as approved by HUD.

According to HUD, "the statutory purpose of the MTW demonstration is to give PHAs and HUD the flexibility to design and test various approaches for providing and administering housing assistance that:

1. Reduce cost and achieve greater cost effectiveness in federal expenditures;

2. Give incentives to families with children where the head of the household is working; is seeking work; or is preparing for work by participating in job training, educational programs, or programs that assist people to obtain employment and become economically self-sufficient; and

3. Increase housing choices for eligible low-income families."[90]

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86   HUD, "Housing Counseling Training Grant FY2012 NOFA, at 6." http://archives.hud.gov/funding/2012/hctpnofa.pdf (last visited November 8, 2012).

87   See HUD, "HUD Office of Housing Counseling Housing Counseling Program Description," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/housing/sfh/hcc/counslng.

88   A full list of HUD-approved housing counseling agencies can be found at http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm (last visited July 30, 2012).

89   HUD, "Moving to Work," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/mtw (last visited July 30, 2012). MTW was authorized by section 204 of the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996, P.L. 104-134, 110 Stat. 1321.

90   Id. at 2.

There are currently 35 PHAs participating in MTW.[91] In February 2012, HUD announced that it was accepting applications for four PHAs to join the MTW demonstration;[92] applications were due June 27, 2012.

How This Program Encourages Mobility

As mentioned above, increasing housing choice is an explicit aim of MTW. Participating PHAs are able to take advantage of the flexibility afforded to them through MTW to advance housing mobility. Examples of how some MTW PHAs have implemented mobility initiatives are presented in figure 4 below.

FIGURE 4. EXAMPLE MOBILITY INITIATIVES FROM MTW PHAS		
ADMINISTERING PHA	**PROGRAM NAME**	**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**
San Diego Housing Commission	Choice Communities	A four-prong approach consisting of (1) an information booklet describing Choice Communities low-poverty areas, (2) increased payment standards in Choice Communities, (3) a security deposit loan program to be used in Choice Communities, and (4) affordability caps expanded to 50% in Choice Communities. Participation is open to any new or existing HCV program resident.
Minneapolis Public Housing Authority	Mobility Voucher Program	A mobility voucher issued to single-parent households on the waitlist who are currently employed or who will agree to find employment within 3 months of moving. Vouchers must be used in specified low-poverty neighborhoods. Participants receive mobility counseling and case management services to assist with move-in and to support stability in these new neighborhoods.

How to Access This Funding

The deadline for the recent round of MTW applications has passed. If your organization is an MTW PHA, you may be considering how you can use your flexibility to advance your housing mobility program or create a housing mobility program. If you're not an MTW PHA, check the HUD web site to see if a PHA in your community has MTW status. A list of MTW agencies with contact informa-

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91   HUD, "Moving to Work Participating Sites," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_in-dian_housing/programs/ph/mtw/mtwsites (last visited July 30, 2012).

92   U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Public and Indian Housing. Notice PIH-2012-16 (Feb. 27, 2012).

tion is available on the HUD web site.[93] If there is an MTW PHA operating in your area, contact them to see how your organizations can work together to use MTW's flexibility to promote mobility.

OBTAINING FUNDING FROM SPECIAL FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

HUD is also currently funding several special initiatives and demonstration that could provide funding for a housing mobility program. While these programs provide new opportunities for shorter-term funding streams, the futures of these programs are less certain than the ongoing programs we discussed above and may not be consistently available in the long-term.

Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants

In 2010, HUD launched the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI)—a comprehensive approach to redeveloping public and HUD-assisted housing as well as the surrounding neighborhoods through improvements in nearby housing, public schools, transportation, and access to jobs. HUD has funded implementation grants to support community efforts to undertake these neighborhood redevelopment projects.[94] So far, HUD has funded five implementation grants[95] ($122.7 million total funding).[96] The 2012 Choice Neighborhoods NOFA announced approximately $110 million available for four to five new Implementation Grant awards;[97] each individual award will not exceed $30 million. HUD announced the Implementation Grant finalists in August 2012;[98] the awards will be announced by December 2012.

How This Program Encourages Mobility

Because CNI implementation projects require the demolition and redevelopment of current public and HUD-assisted housing units, HUD expressly requires CNI grantees to provide housing mobility counseling and housing search assistance for residents displaced as a result of the public housing and neighborhood redevelopment process.[99] HUD also considers providing mobility counseling

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93   HUD, "MTW Site and HUD Contact List," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC_10136.pdf (last visited September 18, 2012).

94   HUD, "Choice Neighborhoods FY2010 NOFA Pre-Notice, at 1," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC_9827.pdf (last visited July 30, 2012).

95   HUD, "Round 2 NOFA for the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, Docket No. FR-5473-N-01, at 6," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=cnround2nofa.pdf. See also HUD, "FY2010 Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant Award Information." http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=PlanningGrantsummaries.pdf (listing the seventeen Project Grant winners along with a project summary).

96   Id. (Stating 2011 funding was combined with 2010 funding to make a total of $122.7 million in awards).

97   HUD, "FY 2012 NOFA for the Choice Neighborhood Initiative – Implementation Grants, Docket No. FR-5600-N-19," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/cn/fy12funding.

98   For a list of 2012 Implementation Grant Finalists, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2012/HUDNo.12-134.

99   HUD, "FY2012 NOFA Choice Neighborhoods Initiative – Implementation Grants, Docket No. FR-5600-N-19." http://archives.hud.gov/funding/2012/choiceni.pdf (last visited July 30, 2012) (Grantees' Transformation Plans are required to include "mobility counseling and housing search assistance for residents displaced as a result of revitalization of severely distressed projects").

over multiple years—rather than helping households make their initial relocation only—as an eligible use of grant funds.[100] In both the 2011 and 2012 NOFA ,finalists are required to describe their strategy for a regional mobility program for any tenant-based voucher assistance provided in connection with the Choice Neighborhoods grant."[101]

How to Access This Funding

Lists of current implementation grantees and 2012 finalists can be found on the HUD web site.[102] If your community either already has a grant or is a finalist for one and your organization is not already involved in the project, contact the lead applicant organization to see express your interest in providing housing mobility services.

ACCESSING FOUNDATION FUNDING

You may also be able to partially fund your mobility program through grants from foundations, particularly from foundations that make substantial grants in your local area. The Council on Foundations provides useful profiles of philanthropic funding for each of the 50 states that tell you who the largest foundations based in your state by total assets and by total giving, along with the foundations nationally that are giving the most to projects in your state.[103] This provides you with a good starting list of organizations to approach to for funding. Go to the foundations' web sites to learn about their funding priorities and see if a housing mobility program fits with their current objectives. Each foundation's web site should also include information on how to apply for funds.

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100 Id. at 20.

101 See HUD, "HUD's Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 NOFA for the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative – Round 2 NOFA (for Implemen-tation Grant Finalists Only), Docket No. FR-5473-N-01," http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=cn-round2nofa.pdf (stating the regional mobility counseling program must have a regional focus [i.e., it must provide counseling to voucher holders seeking to live outside neighborhoods of minority concentration and/or poverty concen-tration anywhere within the MSA of the revitalizing neighborhood; it must identify housing opportunities in neighbor-hoods that are not minority-concentrated or poverty-concentrated and that have high-quality schools and early learning programs; and provide transportation assistance for voucher holders to visit identified housing opportunities]).

102 A list of grantees can be found here: http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_hous-ing/ programs/ph/cn.

103 State philanthropic funding profiles are available here: http://www.cof.org/programsandservices/publicpolicy/bystate.cfm?nav ItemNumber=16117.

FIGURE 5. SOURCES OF FEDERAL FUNDING FOR YOUR MOBILITY PROGRAM

PROGRAM NAME	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL ALLOCATION FY 2012	GRANTEES (TYPE AND NUMBER) FY 2012	FUNDING CYCLE	PROGRAM WEB SITE
ONGOING PROGRAMS					
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Provides communities with funds to design and implement programs that target low-income individuals.	$3.3 billion	Entitlement Communities, small cities, 1209 general units of local government, and states	Annual	http://portal.hud.gov/ hudportal/HUD?src=/ program_offices/comm _planning/community development/programs
Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP)	Provides funding to fair housing organizations and nonprofits for projects and activities that enhance compliance with the Fair Housing Act.	$42.5 million	Fair housing organizations and other nonprofits	Annual	http://portal.hud.gov hudportal/HUD?src=/ program_offices/fair_ housing_equal_opp/ partners/FHIP/fhip
Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP)	Provides funding annually on a noncompetitive basis to state and local agencies that enforce fair housing laws.	$24.1 million	State or local organization that enforces a fair housing law	Annual	http://portal.hud.gov/ hudportal/HUD?src= /program_offices/ fair_housing_equal_ opp/partners/FHAP
HUD Housing Counseling Program	Provides counseling to individuals on seeking, financing, maintaining, renting, or owning a home.	$40.05 million	Local housing counseling agencies, national and regional intermediaries, state housing finance agencies, and multistate organizations	Annual	http://portal.hud.gov/ hudportal/HUD?src=/ program_offices/ housing/sfh/hcc/ counslng
Moving to Work (MTW)	Gives PHAs and HUD the ability to test innovative approaches to administering housing assistance.	N/A; MTW participants combine HUD public housing and Housing Choice Voucher funds into a single block grant	35 PHAs	Annual	http://portal.hud.gov/ hudportal/HUD?src=/ program_offices/public_ indian_housing/ programs/ph/mtw
SPECIAL PROGRAMS					
Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants	Large grants awarded to communities that have developed a comprehensive transformation plan to redevelop their neighborhood.	$110 million	4–5 Implementation Grants awarded to eligible applicants (PHAs, local governments, tribal entities, nonprofits and for-profit developers). Individual grants will not exceed $30 million.	Annual	http://portal.hud.gov/ hudportal/HUD?src=/ program_offices/public _indian_housing /programs/ph/cn

IMPLEMENTING YOUR HOUSING MOBILITY PROGRAM

Now that you've decided which program components and strategies your program will use, it's time to make practical decisions about all the pieces that will make your program work: partnerships, staffing, budgeting, and timelines.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE ORGANIZATION(S) TO RUN YOUR PROGRAM

A variety of organizations successfully operate housing mobility programs including public housing agencies, community-based not-for-profit groups, fair housing advocacy and enforcement organizations, government agencies, private for-profit companies, and various combinations of these. No matter what type of organization makes sense for your community, it should meet certain criteria to have the best chance for success.

Begin by looking at your organization's mission and the direction provided by your board of directors or commissioners to determine if a housing mobility program fits into your activities. Assuming the existing mission embraces such an initiative, consider these questions:

- Does your organization already administer your community's HCV program? If so, does it run a high-performing program? Does it already have good working relationships with the property management and development community?

- What is your organization's ability to incorporate new work? Have other experiences demonstrated a willingness and adaptability on the part of leadership and staff to accept and manage change?

- Does your organization administer other "special" programs such as a Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program, homeownership, homelessness programs, or permanent supportive housing that could be used as platforms for a housing mobility program? This would provide a work group or department where staff with appropriate skills, information technology tools, and community partnerships already exists to support the new mobility initiative.

- Has your organization formed strong relationships with the organizations you will need to support your initiative? This will include real estate industry groups, social service providers, fair housing enforcement agencies, training programs, educational institutions, public agencies, employers, and others within the community.

- Do you have the space to house additional staff or the resources to add the space required?

Finally, the lead organization for your housing mobility program will need a critical mass of the expertise needed to operate the key components of your program. This expertise may include the following:

- **Marketing and outreach**: Event planning and execution; briefings, workshops, seminars; partner identification; relationship building; public relations

- **Communications**: Message crafting; creation of multi-platform marketing materials (videos, brochures, radio spots)

- **Counseling/case management**: Engagement with diverse low-income households; rapport building; creative problem-solving, skilled assessment

- **HCV Program navigation**: Intake, voucher regulations and policies

- **Data infrastructure and content**: Web site and database development; data entry and/or staff training

- **Decisionmaking support**: Statistical analysis to support the evolution of program goals and ongoing program evaluation; qualitative work (i.e., focus groups, interviews with individual households)

- **Goal-related expertise**: Health, self-sufficiency, or workforce development (optional, depending on your program's goals)

FIGURE 6. PROS AND CONS OF KEEPING HOUSING MOBILITY PROGRAM FUNCTIONS IN HOUSE	
PROS	**CONS**
• Control of work flow, productivity, efficiency, and quality of work	• Core housing mobility functions may be outside the expertise of your organization
• Easier integration of mobility activities into regular program functions and other initiatives (FSS, homeownership, etc.)	• Property owners and managers may be more responsive to another organization
• Existing information technology solutions already in place for tracking and reporting	• The work may not fit into your mission, or your staff may simply not have the will or capacity to incorporate new work

The particular mix of expertise you will need will depend on the strategies your community has chosen to include in its housing mobility program model. For example, the housing mobility program described in step 3 in chapter 5 would largely require the skill set that a high-functioning medium-sized PHA might have—namely, low-intensity marketing and outreach capability and counseling/case management capacity, strong skills in HCV program navigation, and existing basic data infrastructure. However, this PHA might consider contracting out particularly specialized tasks, like statistical analyses for decisionmaking or the design of materials use to support program participant recruitment.

If you think you might want to contract with another organization to lead implementation of your community's housing mobility program or some portion of the work, consider the following:

- What would your partner's responsibilities include?

- Are there appropriate organizations in your area to do this work? You'll need to evaluate their organizational capacity in the same way you would your own.

- Is the cost of contracting the work more or less than doing the work in house?

- Do you have the capacity to monitor the contractor? Your organization must be prepared to work closely with the contractor, especially if you are administering the HCV program.

- What are your organization's procurement policies? What process would your organization have to go through to contract with a partner?

Your community will need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of contracting to decide what works best for your program. However, if you do decide to contract, it is essential to establish effective communication strategies with the contractor and coordinate activities in a way that best supports households and landlords. This requires a strong commitment from all parties as well as clear delineations of expectations and processes (see description of management plan in next section).

In addition to relationships forged through formal contracts, your community should think about strategic partnerships with other community agencies and organizations that may not be contractual relationships but provide linkages to other resources for your program participants. Establishing relationships with these resources from the very beginning helps program staff respond to households' needs. Your program should explore linkages with the following:

- City and state agencies that provide services such as TANF, food stamps, weatherization funds and other financial assistance

- Employment and training, literacy, and ESL programs

- Community-based service providers

- Medical providers and health-related nonprofits

- Local K–12 schools

Whether you've decided to develop and implement a program within your own organization or contract the work, you must still be in control of the program design and define what services will be provided.

> **PRACTITIONER'S TIP**
>
> *Contact your local university about enlisted students in decisionmaking support, graphics, communications, or marketing strategy for your program. You can save money and provide great internship opportunities for students.*

STEP 2: MAKE STAFFING DECISIONS

The people who work directly with participating households and landlords are the key to a successful effort. All the resources and the best program design cannot make up for program staff who are not committed to the mission or who do not have the qualities and skills for the work. Figure 7 outlines the specific skills and knowledge the program staff of successful programs often have.

You must decide the organizational structure and the roles and responsibilities of counselors and other staff. Someone must provide supervision and manage the program. Your program may be a one- or two-person effort or you may have a staff of 10 or 15, depending on the number of house-

FIGURE 7. PROGRAM STAFF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE AREAS	
GENERAL SKILL SETS	**SPECIFIC SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE**
HCV PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE	Intake, tent determination, HQS inspections, ongoing occupancy requirements, FSS, SEMAP
COMMITMENT TO MISSION AND PROGRAM GOALS	Deconcentration, desegregation, choice, self-sufficiency, quality of life, SEMAP high performer, customer service
KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY	Familiarity with rental market, employment, transportation, services, and community resources
ABILITY TO RELATE TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS AND LANDLORDS	Understanding issues of poverty, experience with socioeconomic and racially diverse population, ability to communicate clearly, problem-solving skills
PRESENTATION AND TEACHING SKILLS	Ability to conduct briefings, workshops, seminars; to make community presentations; to prepare written materials; and to understand adult learning styles
RECRUITING, MARKETING AND OUTREACH	Creative, personable, professional, persuasive; ability to encourage landlord participation, market mobility program, conduct orientations and forums
ASSESSMENT AND INTERVIEWING SKILLS	Ability to engage program participants, determine barriers to success and level of services needed, assess readiness to make successful move and settle into new community
ORGANIZATIONAL AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS	Good time management and organizational skills, flexible schedule, record-keeping and reporting, ability to review and understand program data

Source: Quadel Consulting Corporation.

holds you want to serve, your counseling philosophy, and the resources available. You will need to consider whether to hire a separate landlord outreach worker or incorporate that role into that of program staff working with households. You'll also have to decide whether the same staff will provide both pre- and post-move support to program participants or those functions will be separate. Different programs will find different strategies more efficient and effective for their particular model.

The example program in chapter 5 would typically have each program staff work with a group of households that are in different stages: overcoming barriers and preparing to search in opportunity neighborhoods, actively searching, moving, and settling into a new community. But remember, some households will require more staff time, and some stages in the process will be more demanding than others. Take this into account when determining caseloads. You may have to make some assumptions at first and then adjust operations after gaining some experience. Program staff might have a caseload of 30, 40, or even more households, but some will just be starting out and others will have moved; some of the households may be highly motivated and have fewer challenges and require less attention.

In models where program staff are wearing many hats, perhaps building on their existing responsibilities administering the standard HCV program, you'll need to carefully allocate staff time between administrative tasks and direct participant contact. A program staff at the example housing mobility program from chapter 5 might spend more time with participants, as shown in figure 8 below.

FIGURE 8. USE OF TIME EXPECTATIONS FOR COUNSELORS BY ACTIVITY		
ACTIVITY	**ADMINISTRATIVE**	**DIRECT PARTICIPANT CONTACT**
	(% OF TOTAL TIME)	(% OF TOTAL TIME)
Interview, assessment and enrollment		12%
Data entry	5%	
File management	4%	
Home visit (including travel)		22%
Referrals to units		2%
Interim contact with participating households		6%
Transportation to view units		17%
Field report completion	3%	
Coordination with landlord outreach staff	3%	
Financial assistance applications for participating households	1%	
Referrals to social services & follow-up		6%
Schedule workshop attendance & follow-up	1%	
Conduct workshops and voucher briefings		12%
Post-move check-in with tenant & landlord		2%
Post-move visits, linking household to community		4%
	17%	83%

Source: Adapted for the example model from Housing Authority of Cook County Community Choice Program.

STEP 3: PUT TOGETHER AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Once you've thought through organizational decisions, you'll need to put together a plan that can serve as a blueprint for your program going forward. This plan should contain several key components:

■ **Budget**: You will either develop a budget for the program you want and find the money to operate that program, or you will have a certain amount of funds available and back into your program and budget. Typically this process is a little bit of both; additional funds can often be identified once the planning process is well under way. Use your thought process about staffing and partnering decisions in step 2 of this section to estimate staffing and subcontract costs. Also, be sure to include any financial incentives you've chosen to include in your program (i.e.,

security deposit or moving expense support) as well as projected expenses for transportation or events. Appendix H has a sample budget you might use as a starting point.

■ **Organizational chart**: Sketch out an organizational chart that lays out a management structure for the lead organization and any contractors you expect to engage.

■ **Scope of work**: Next, take the time to define and write up a scope of work for each organization involved. This should include a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, including specific estimates of the number of households to be served or landlords to be recruited in a given period.

■ **Contracts and agreements**: If you've decided to contract out in any way, review your lead organization's procurement policies. You may need to write a request for proposals and manage a competitive selection process. Even if your organization does not require this process, you may decide that it's the best approach if you have not already identified natural partners in your community. You should also talk to your contracts staff to better understand the type of contract that works best for your program. You will also want to develop memoranda of agreement or understanding with non-contractual partners to formalize your relationships.

■ **Management plan**: Best practices suggest that establishing performance standards, written policies and procedures, and a process to hold staff accountable are important to achieving success. You'll want to engage in process mapping among members of your team to agree on handoffs and information sharing, particularly during the unit approval and leasing process. A mechanism for regular meetings, reporting, and quality control should be a component of the management plan. It should also specify how staff and contractors will receive regular feedback, review data together, and develop protocols for data sharing.

■ **Hiring and training**: Every organization that will be involved in implementing your housing mobility program will need to put together job descriptions and find the right people to fill these positions. Some key staff might already be working within these organizations, but you may need to hire additional workers. Think strategically about how you'll recruit for these positions and the process you'll use to select the right candidate. A training plan should include the mission and goals, written policies and procedures, timetable, training materials, and refresher training from time to time.

■ **Timeline for Implementation**: How long it takes to implement a program is usually a function of how complicated the program will be—program size, services to be offered, jurisdiction(s) involved, availability of data to define opportunity areas—and whether you will implement the program in house or outsource the work. In addition to these early decisions, keep the following in mind when laying out a schedule: What approvals are needed, are revisions required to the PHA administrative plan, how long it will take to procure a contractor, develop written policy and procedures, hire and train staff, develop a marketing program, and establish partnerships in the community?

CHAPTER CHECKLIST

In this chapter, we discussed ways to fund your housing mobility program. To fund your program, you should:

- [ ] adjust the administration of your HCV program to maintain the program's current level of funding;

- [ ] identify new sources of funding from ongoing federal programs like CDBG, FHAP, FHIP, the HUD Housing Counseling program, and MTW, which could turn into long-term funding streams for your housing mobility program;

- [ ] seek out funding from special HUD programs, like the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative; and

- [ ] investigate private foundations to determine whether your program is eligible for a grant, and apply if it is.

We also reviewed three primary steps to take when implementing your program.

1. determine which organizations will be involved in running your housing counseling program;

2. make decisions about staff: what expertise will staff need and how will they spend their time; and

3. draft an implementation plan that will act as a blueprint in starting up your program.

Chapter 7

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this chapter, we will highlight

* Key points for developing a housing mobility program

* Policy changes that HUD could make to support housing mobility

A fundamental policy goal of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program is not just to provide shelter, but to provide greater access to opportunity. This toolkit offers communities concrete strategies to empower households and enable them to move beyond traditional HCV neighborhoods to areas that offer better education choices for children, and better health and safety outcomes. Housing mobility may not be an option for everyone, but practitioners around the country find that many households are eager to take advantage of the opportunities these neighborhoods offer. Expanding access to opportunity through housing mobility can also help your community renew its commitment to affirmatively further fair housing.

The HCV program affords a great deal of flexibility for incorporating housing mobility goals into day-to-day operations, even without launching a more ambitious housing mobility program. The policy changes detailed in chapter 2 and the basic program approaches in chapter 4 include increasing payment standards where necessary to access high-opportunity neighborhoods; expanding landlord recruitment efforts and apartment listings to include substantial numbers of units in high-opportunity areas; training staff to include housing mobility as part of initial briefings and recertification; and compiling information on local school performance and other neighborhood features of potential apartments so households better understand their choices.

While these types of changes can be implemented within an existing HCV budget, they are not cost-free. Assisting households with mobility moves may take more time on the part of staff and may have some impact on HCV program funding. But, as detailed in chapter 6, most of the cost impacts can also be mitigated by creative management practices. And implementing a housing mobility program will also require strong leadership and a commitment on the part of staff to help households make fully informed choices.

Implementing an enhanced housing mobility program with more intensive workshops for households, community orientation and tours, transportation assistance, one-on-one pre-move counseling, and post-move follow-up will likely require more substantial staff commitment and additional resources. Communities can identify many different potential sources of funding for these efforts in chapter 6.

Beyond designing and implementing your housing mobility program, your community should also consider advocating for policy changes to support your efforts. Many of the HCV program's rent structures, administrative rules, and financial incentives make it more difficult for households to make moves to opportunity areas. The good news is that many of these policies can be changed by HUD without the need for congressional action.

HUD has already begun to make important reforms, but you can encourage it to do more by taking steps within its statutory authority to

■ fully implement the Small Area fair market rent (FMR) initiative in the tenant-based voucher program, with additional study on its application in the project-based setting;[104]

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104 See http://prrac.org/pdf/fair_housing_comments_on_Small_Area_FMRs_7-12-10.pdf.

■   amend the Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) rule to provide much stronger incentives for public housing agencies (PHAs) to promote deconcentration (including across jurisdictional lines), and to reduce the emphasis on utilization rates, where delays in renting up are the result of efforts to assist households with mobility moves;[105]

■   provide supplemental administrative fees for households making "difficult" moves;

■   streamline portability rules and require mandatory absorption of vouchers by receiving PHAs except in limited circumstances;[106]

■   revise PHA "consortia rule" to make forming a consortium among PHAs within the same housing market a more attractive option;

■   require that apartment listings distributed to program participants include a substantial number of apartments in high-opportunity, low-poverty areas;[107]

■   issue a rule permitting PHAs to use Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) funds for security deposits and/or last month's rent in certain hard-to-access areas;

■   provide stronger guidance to eliminate PHA practices that limit access to higher opportunity areas, such as inconsistent screening rules, waitlists based on chronological order of application, in-person application procedures, and residency preferences;

■   require strong performance-based affirmative marketing for HCV programs administered in higher opportunity communities;

■   develop a robust monitoring and enforcement mechanism to ensure that HCV holders have unrestricted access to housing funded by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and the federal Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME); and

■   use its fair housing enforcement authority to investigate discrimination against voucher holders in jurisdictions where it is banned, and in areas where such discrimination has an obvious discriminatory racial impact.[108]

Your efforts to advocate for these policy changes and design an effective and sustainable housing mobility program in your community will make a real difference for voucher holders. Thank you for taking the time to think through all of these important decisions and advance greater housing choice.

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105 For a more detailed analysis and recommendations on reforms to the SEMAP rule, see PRRAC's comments at http://prrac.org/pdf/SEMAP-4-8-11.pdf.

106 See Regulations Division, Office of General Counsel, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2012. "RE: Public Housing and Section 8 Programs: Housing Choice Voucher Program: Streamlining the Portability Process, 77 F.R. 18731," http://prrac.org/pdf/portability_fairhousing_comments_5-29-12.pdf.

107 The possibility of this approach was suggested in HUD recent proposed rule and solicitation of comments on the Section 8 portability rule. See National Archives and Records Administration, *Federal Register*, "Public Housing and Section 8 Programs: Housing Choice Voucher Program: Streamlining the Portability Process," https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/03/28/2012-7341/public-housing-and-section-8-programs-housing-choice-voucher-program-streamlining-the-portability.

108 See appendix B for a full list of jurisdiction that currently ban "source of income discrimination" by landlords and property owners.

LIST OF APPENDICES

(Available at www.prrac.org/projects/expandingchoice.php)

- Appendix A: Guidance on requesting a regulatory waiver

- Appendix B: State, Local and Federal Laws Barring Source-of-Income Discrimination

- Appendix C: Data sources and measures

- Appendix D: Sample landlord outreach materials

- Appendix E: Sample family recruitment materials

- Appendix F: Sample assessment form

- Appendix G: Sample enrollment agreement

- Appendix H: Sample Budget

- Appendix I: Annotated Bibliography of Housing Mobility Research 2010-2012

2012 Conference Advisory Committee