

STRATEGY: EXPANDING YOUR NETWORK

Reaching beyond HCV-centered events to find opportunities to provide outreach to current HCV landlords and recruit new landlords.

Who: All PHAs regardless of size and/or location.

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ○ MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Expanding Your Network PHA Process Improvements

| PHA Process Improvement | Expanding Your Network |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Increase Recruitment | X |
| Increase Retention | X |
| Improve Responsiveness | X |
| Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship | |
| Improve Inspections Process | |
| Minimize Bureaucracy | |

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHAs can participate in a range of activities to recruit or retain HCV landlords that do not require the PHA to plan and host the events themselves. Typically, these events and activities are less costly and easier to implement. For example, the HCV staff can partner with and attend other organizations' events, or even schedule and meet with an individual landlord. The complexity of the outreach does not dictate effectiveness—a phone call has the potential to have an impact on a landlord's willingness to participate in the HCV program, and it is very cost effective.

This strategy also includes ways that PHAs can utilize their own data and coordinate internally to identify and reach prospective landlords.

Related Strategies:

- Landlord Outreach Events
- Landlord Focused Customer Service

EVENTS HOSTED BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

On the following pages are two examples of opportunities where PHAs might partner with other organizations to deliver information about the HCV program to a variety of audiences. While the events listed in this section are hosted by other organizations and, therefore, do not require the same level of logistic considerations as events hosted by the PHA, a level of planning and development is still required.

Depending on the nature of the event and the audience, the PHA will need to prepare materials to present, hand out, or have available.

Another area where the PHA might decide to devote some planning and development is marketing. Although the events described are hosted by other entities, the information provided at the event by the PHA, as well as by other organizations is likely to have appeal for the PHA audiences including landlords and tenants.





See strategies: New Landlord Orientation, Landlord Outreach Events, and Tenant Education in this chapter for additional information on types of materials a PHA might consider and marketing tips.

Housing Industry Group Meetings

Local apartment associations, industry and investor groups, and real estate associations can be valuable partners with PHAs. They can help to disseminate information about the HCV program to their members and serve as a resource for gathering feedback from the landlord community at large. Many apartment associations hold regular meetings with their members, who may include owners and landlords, property or fee management companies, and housing developers or builders.

PHAs should consider strengthening relationships with apartment associations and similar organizations and requesting, if not already invited, to participate in apartment association meetings. Attending these meetings or events provides the PHAs with an opportunity to recruit from and strengthen ties with a large pool of landlords, both current and prospective landlords in the HCV program. It also offers a key opportunity for the PHA to combat myths and stereotypes about the HCV program and HCV tenants.

The PHA might participate by presenting information about the PHA and its programs, the HCV program, and new policies and regulations as well as listening to concerns from participants.



TIP: Be prepared with facts to counter common myths and negative stereotypes if landlords push back with stories of bad experiences!

Changing perceptions of the program can be easier than it might seem. For example, several PHAs stated that one of the common myths they hear is that HCV tenants damage units. When asked, landlords acknowledge that they have had HCV and non-HCV tenants who have caused damage to units. PHAs do not always need to be on the defensive; many times people will debunk their own myths when provided with additional information.

While PHA staff may be apprehensive about the potential of hearing complaints about PHA performance or the HCV program, landlords have indicated that being heard and making contact with PHA staff is greatly valued. Additionally, PHAs have said that changes made as a result of landlord feedback have had some of the greatest impact in changing landlord perception of the HCV program. By being open to hearing criticism and feedback – relationships with apartment associations, and landlords, can change adversarial relationships to partnerships.

Housing Fairs

Housing Fairs or other convention type events are another great opportunity for PHAs to interact with current or potential HCV landlords

without requiring the PHA to carry out all of the planning, logistics, and hosting duties. There may be a cost for the PHA to rent an exhibit or table space. While these types of events lack formal presentations, they provide the opportunity for substantial one-on-one interaction with those who are curious about the PHA and its programs.



TIPS:

- Make the PHA booth appealing! Have a jar to collect business cards.
- Bring informational sheets about PHA programs, including HCV.
- Bring sample paperwork and business cards.
- Bring “mythbusters” fact sheets.

APPOINTMENTS, MEETINGS, PHONE CALLS

Outreach does not necessitate hosting or even participating in an organized event. Outreach to prospective or current landlords can be done effectively through one-on-one interaction.

The desire to be heard by PHAs is commonly voiced by landlords. Meeting directly with landlords in a one-on-one or small group appointment can open lines of communication that supplement the PHA’s outreach through organized workshops, forums, or other events.



Wheel Of Fortune!

It can be easy to get lost in the mix at conventions. To make their booth appealing, one PHA took an innovative approach to draw people to learn about the HCV program—Wheel of Fortune Mythbusters. Using a dry-erase table-top Wheel of Fortune-style game, the PHA landlord liaison wrote common myths about the HCV program on the wheel. Convention participants spun the wheel and had the opportunity to “bust the myth” to win a piece of candy. Examples of myths are: There is only one PHA, which is HUD; Once you agree to accept a tenant with a voucher, that tenant cannot be evicted; You do not get to choose your tenants.

By using this game, the landlord liaison created positive images and made the information appealing and fun when presenting it to groups.

In a one-on-one meeting with a landlord, the PHA has an opportunity to address the individualized concerns and needs of the landlord. Perhaps most importantly, the small scale allows landlords to ask questions that they might not feel comfortable asking in a public setting. Additionally, speaking face-to-face with landlords can help de-escalate situations.

“ Meeting with a landlord is not just about what we want but also what they want. ”

- PHA Landlord Relations Supervisor



TIPS

- Consider scheduling appointments with similar landlords in groups. For example: meet with landlords who operate large apartment complexes one month, and with landlords with small portfolios the next. Groups of landlords may share common issues and concerns. If an activity, for example, the passage of new legislation, affects a certain type of landlord, the PHA might want to schedule a meeting with the landlords most impacted by this type of issue versus scheduling based on the portfolio size of the landlord.
- Before setting your schedule or attending an appointment, take time to talk to other departments within the PHA to gauge if there are specific issues that have been more common over a period of time. Example: The Inspection Department may note they have seen a change in the number of abatements over the last 6 months. The HCV landlord contact may be able to address the issue directly with landlords or, at least, enter the appointment with an understanding that the issue may come up in discussion.

IDENTIFYING AND REACHING PROSPECTIVE LANDLORDS USING PHA DATA AND PROGRAMS

The following are additional ideas targeted at recruiting new landlords using data and programs already collected or in place. These efforts do not necessarily qualify as strategies, but PHAs could use these as a starting point when developing an overall outreach strategy.

PHA Data Analysis

PHAs may want to consider a variety of tools and resources to identify prospective landlords.

Many landlords post rental listings online at a number of websites, and the most-used website may vary by city and state. PHAs may want to consider reviewing rental listing postings on a weekly or monthly basis and identify any landlords they may not currently be working with. Calling landlords proactively with rental listings on behalf of the PHA to develop a relationship could help identify new landlords. Consider inviting these landlords to a new landlord orientation.

Another idea is to conduct outreach to all Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties that are required to take HCVs. It can be helpful to remind these properties of their obligation to take HCVs. It also can be helpful to establish a relationship with landlords of these properties to see if they own other communities that voucher holders may also be interested in renting.

Similarly, PHAs may want to run a listing from their line-of-business software of all current landlords and properties that rent to voucher holders. In some areas, PHAs have found that landlords only allow voucher holders to live in some of their properties, and not all. Analyzing whether the PHA has an existing relationship with a landlord that currently owns more properties may result in additional properties being open to voucher holders.

Another way to use data on current landlords and properties is to see if there are major landlords that are not currently participating in the program. PHAs may want to develop an outreach plan, coordinated with key leadership, to make a pitch to those landlords to learn more about the program.

And finally, PHAs that are particularly data savvy could access local tax records to see what landlords own the most units in their area and target those landlords. When conducting analysis, PHAs should note that over the past decade, many single-family properties are now owned by a company.



New Markets!

In one city, the landlord liaison attended young professional networking events, where she heard many of the participants mention that they or their friends had inherited a housing unit and were not sure of how to deal with it. At approximately the same time, she noticed that the HCV program showed a change in ownership trends. Many of the PHA's owners had primary sources of income unrelated to their ownership of rental housing. Participating in these networking events helped this PHA employee tap into a new group of potential owners.

Another PHA has begun talking to developers about the HCV program. They are reaching out to developers and attending city hall meetings with developers and investors to “start the conversation” with the goal of reaching new and untapped markets.

program. The show ran for approximately one month. The PHA is now considering hosting a show dedicated to the HCV program. The show was taped and broadcast at no cost to the PHA; it was seen as a community benefit.

- During the PHA's outreach for HUD-VASH, the PHA prepared a letter to be sent from the mayor to current landlords stating that the mayor supported HUD-VASH and working to end veteran homelessness. The mayor challenged landlords to set aside one unit each for a veteran.
- One PHA that has a HUD-VASH designated inspector has had great success in marketing both the HUD-VASH as well as the HCV program. The inspector is a veteran and is very effective at recruiting landlords to participate in the HUD-VASH program. Many of these landlords have gone on to also rent to HCV holders. In addition to being a veteran, the inspector has been successful because he has been able to establish a personal connection with landlords. They see him face-to-face more than any other PHA staff.

Combine Efforts with Other PHA Programs

When PHAs can piggyback the HCV program off efforts of other PHA programs, they can promote awareness of the HCV program to a new audience, which is already familiar with the PHA and its programs. These shared efforts also optimize funding or staff resource use. For example, the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program challenged mayors nationwide to end homelessness among veterans. The PHAs below each took a different approach to using the buzz surrounding HUD-VASH to increase awareness of the PHA and HCV.

- During the outreach for HUD-VASH, a PHA, with the mayor's assistance, hosted a show on the local public broadcasting TV channel. Both the mayor and the VASH manager spoke about the HUD-VASH



