

# STRATEGY: INFORMATION SHARING

Providing updates, news and information on HCV and other PHA programs through the portal, websites, social media, mailers, columns or articles, and newsletters.

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

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

**Implementation Considerations:** ● LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

## Information Sharing PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Information Sharing
Increase Recruitment	
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	
Improve Inspections Process	X
Minimize Bureaucracy	X

**WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS:** PHAs use information-sharing strategies to connect landlords with new and important information, provide timely reminders that can fine tune processes and increase satisfaction, and build the relationship between landlords and the PHA. In the past, newsletters may have been the most common way of disseminating information. Requiring some investment of time, design, and other resources, newsletters can create a focal point that landlords know to expect. Creating an electronic newsletter can be a way of keeping the product while decreasing some of the required investment. Today, though, PHAs also have access to a wide range of tools to get out periodic or time-sensitive information that require fewer resources and can be implemented more quickly. Website or portal information, social media posts, and emails or texts can be a



quick way of spreading important and time-sensitive information. Certain ways of sharing information – through the mail, email, and text – are certain to reach the landlord audience as long as the PHA is diligent about keeping contact information current. Social media posts such as on Facebook or Twitter can get the word out instantaneously as long as your audience uses those forms of media. Certain ways of sharing can also be tracked effectively, offering the PHA a way to quantify what works.

### Related Strategies:

- Technology

## CONTENT

A PHA may use a range of information-sharing tools and may very well use more than one strategy for the same piece of information. To



determine which tools are the most appropriate and useful, the PHA will want to start by defining **WHAT**, as in, what type of information needs to be shared. The type of information will usually make clear **WHO** the audience is.

**What** type of information needs to be shared?

- Urgent, time-sensitive information will require the quickest ways of connecting with an audience, and may also be a good choice to promote through more than one communication means. This might mean social media, but if the information has the ability to have an immediate financial impact on the landlord, it will be important to ensure that the information has the best opportunity to reach all landlords.
- If the information is something that the audience might want to print off and keep, it might be best as a website post, newsletter item, or flyer.
- If the PHA has a number of items that have a longer time frame, a newsletter might be a good fit.

Specific types of content that a PHA might want to communicate about include:

- New policy, guidance, regulation, or law that would impact current landlords
- Hot topics or areas that the PHA has seen landlords struggling with. Example: reasonable accommodation, Fair Housing
- New PHA tools or resources
- How and where to list available housing units\*
- PHA events\*
- Benefits of voucher programs for prospective landlords and how to participate
- Partner resources
- Seasonal reminders, for example, smoke detector or battery changes
- Spotlights on partners
- New updates to PHA technology or resources. Example: Portal
- Where to find landlord resources\*

- Client or landlord spotlight
- Requests that PHAs have of landlords such as brief surveys, satisfaction questionnaires, or contact information updates
- Information that landlords have asked for the PHA to address. Especially landlord inquiries that the PHA has needed time to look into.

\* Indicates items that might be helpful to be recurring.

**Who:** PHAs should make decisions about distribution based on the content that will be shared. For example, seasonal reminders will be most useful for current landlords. Client and landlord spotlights, on the other hand, might be of interest to a wider range of recipients, including current and prospective landlords.

## INFORMATION-SHARING METHODS

Some methods that PHAs might consider using to share their content include:

- 1 Newsletters
- 2 Re-occurring columns in other publications
- 3 Information posted on the PHA portal
- 4 Information posted on the PHA website
- 5 Social media posts
- 6 Emails or mass email, also called email blasts or bulk email
- 7 Texts or bulk multimedia messaging service (MMS) or short messaging service (SMS)



### REMINDER: Social Media Manners

– When posting on social media, be sure to monitor the comments received for opportunities to engage with responders by answering questions, referring to resources, or countering negative stereotypes.



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**TIP:** Evaluate success with tracking data. If using a delivery method that works through emails or text and SMS messaging, the company may allow the PHA to see the number of recipients who open the message or in some way interact with it, such as, by clicking a link or sharing the content. This analysis can help the PHA determine if the method is reaching the audience and, perhaps, whether the audience is interested. Based on this data, the PHA may consider altering the frequency, content, subject line, etc. A PHA can also find out when an address was not deliverable, which can help guide contact update outreach. Keeping contact information current is the most important way of ensuring that the PHA can reach its landlords when needed.

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## IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS/STEPS

To determine the appropriate information-sharing methods, look at the **WHY** and the **WHEN** as well as an important **HOW**.

**Why** does the PHA need to share this information? Some examples of reasons include:

- To inform of a change in HCV-related programs or policies.
- To let an audience know of time sensitive information like an event, other opportunity, or other deadline.

- To offer a positive story to remind landlords of benefits of working with the HCV program.
- To create a regular line of communication with current landlords.
- To ensure that current program forms, information, and policies are easily available.

**When** does the audience need to receive the information?

- Yesterday! Aim for the speediest ways of communicating.
- By a specific deadline. Select the strategies that fit the timeline.
- On a regular basis. Select strategies that the PHA can easily and regularly repeat.
- Anytime.

**How** does the PHA reach the audience of choice?

As mentioned before, the most significant limiting factor is contact information. If the audience is current landlords, does the PHA have their up-to-date contact information? What will it mean if the information disseminated does not get to the landlord? How does the PHA update landlord information?

If the audience is landlords who are not yet associated with the HCV program, how will the PHA increase the likelihood that they will come across and interact with the information? Consider reaching out to industry groups these landlords might belong to. The PHA might consider placing information at a location frequented by prospective landlords, such as where landlords place advertisements for available listings.



## NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters, both electronic and print versions, can require a higher level of resource investment than other information-sharing strategies. Before deciding to develop a newsletter, ask the questions that follow. These questions will inform the newsletter audience, purpose, content and more.

- What is the purpose of the newsletter? Is a newsletter the best way to reach that goal?
- Who is the target audience? General public, tenants, HCV landlords, partnering agencies?
- How often will the newsletter be published? Monthly, quarterly, yearly?
- How will the newsletter be distributed? Hard copy, online?
- Who will decide what is included in each newsletter? Or how will each newsletters content be decided?
- Who at the PHA will gather the content and draft it for publication?
- How much design does the PHA want to incorporate into a newsletter? Remember that all images should have the appropriate alt-text. Color contrasts, charts, and graphs must also be compliant with section 504/508.
- Will the newsletter articles or items need to be approved within the PHA? What is that process?

As an exercise to determine how often to publish, list the 12 months (or the 4 quarters, etc.) and brainstorm what items the PHA might report on each month and who will develop these items. If the list developed does not have two items in every month or the staff person(s) who would be assigned has concerns about the time demands, consider publishing fewer issues.



### TIPS:

- PHAs should consider maintaining a landlord email list.
- Readers of web-based or email-based news may read it on their phone's small screen – make sure titles are clear and compelling, and keep content short.
- Regularly updating contact information increases PHA options in selecting methods that will reach all current landlords.
- While providing information is helpful, over messaging can cause reader fatigue. PHAs should be mindful of the amount of information they send and target information to the audience who benefits from it. Information that is not useful for a particular audience may also cause readership to decline.