



PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

Through partnerships, public housing agencies (PHAs) and other organizations collaborate for the betterment of their own organizations, their constituents and partners, and their communities. These partners may share or augment services, bring attention to mutual goals or underserved populations, access funding, and coordinate to create policy change. Partnerships between PHAs can additionally support administrative and policy efficiencies that improve services and landlord satisfaction. Keys to any partnership are shared values or mission and a commitment to making the partnership productive for all parties.

The following strategies are included in this section:

- Relationships and Resources
- PHA Collaboration

Related strategies:

- Monetary Incentives and Reimbursement Funds

The strategies in this partnerships chapter address the following areas:

Partnerships Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Relationships and Resources	PHA Collaboration
Increase Recruitment	X	X
Increase Retention	X	X
Improve Responsiveness		
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X	X
Improve Inspections Process		
Minimize Bureaucracy	X	X

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PHAs may already be familiar with partnerships where social service organizations or departments refer clients into PHA programs like the Family Unification Program (FUP), but referrals and access to services can link PHAs and outside organizations in other ways. While many PHAs already offer supportive services and resources for landlords and tenants that can be a draw to increase landlord participation in the HCV program, gaps may still exist. While there may be advantages to offering services in-house, PHAs may not always have resources or flexibility to expand their service offerings. Partnerships with outside organizations may be used to expand offerings, resulting in benefits for landlords and tenants, the PHA, and, ideally, the partner.

As noted in the adjacent graphic, partnerships can range from formal partnerships to informal referrals for services. Additionally, the types of partner organizations can also vary. Private and nonprofit organizations may offer resources to the community that PHAs are not able to provide due to restrictions on the use or availability of funds.

This chapter will examine different types of partnerships. The Introduction will offer suggestions on how PHAs can identify the types of partnerships that would be most beneficial in addition to ways PHAs can identify and reach out to organizations that might be good candidates for partnership.



NOTICE: PARTNERSHIPS

For the purposes of this Guidebook, the term **PARTNERSHIP** refers to a relationship with another organization, regardless of the level of formality and whether services or funds are or are not exchanged.

Partnerships can vary and can be:

FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS: Established by a signed agreement by both parties. These can also range from a legally binding agreement such as a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to non-binding documents such as a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

INFORMAL PARTNERSHIPS: Although not established by an agreement, informal partnerships can include relationships and a shared understanding between the PHA and other organization(s). Referrals to another organization may be included in this category.



TIP: Some grant opportunities may give preference to PHAs and outside organizations if they have partnerships in place. This can be a great starting place when talking to other organizations.

EXAMPLES OF PARTNERS

- Other PHAs
- Continuum of Care (CoC)
- Local governments (state, city, or county)
- Local nonprofit organizations
- Community-based organizations
- For-profit developers
- Apartment associations
- Community Development Corporations
- Federally qualified health center

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS

- Work toward common goals
- Share and maximize resources of partnering organizations
- Gain access to outside expertise
- Minimize discrepancies between operations of neighboring PHAs
- Raise awareness of PHA and partner organizations

PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

- **CoC:** Partner to fund a landlord liaison position with a common goal of prioritizing the homeless and most vulnerable populations
- **City government:** Provide security deposits or a damage fund for HCV families, reducing the financial risk for landlords
- **Health and Human Services:** Provide referrals of foster youth for FUP/Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers
- **Nonprofit:** Coordinate a marketing campaign to encourage landlord participation or offer services such as housing counseling to voucher families
- **Local officials:** Raise awareness of a specific issue, such as a Veterans Day campaign to promote the HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program
- **Local board:** Join a board to increase interaction with other organizations with a similar mission and learn about opportunities and resources

GETTING STARTED

One of the first questions a PHA might ask is whether the PHA could benefit from establishing a relationship with another organization. Most likely, the answer is yes! Partnering with other organizations provides opportunities for PHAs to offer additional services to landlords and tenants, expand upon existing services, and increase awareness of the PHA and its programs, as well as share resources and save money. Even if a PHA does not have a need to offer additional services, there are many other useful ways that partnering can be beneficial. It's important for PHAs to remember that all partners should experience benefits in order for the partnership to be sustainable. In addition to thinking about how a specific partnership will enhance its own services, PHAs should consider reasons why the other organization may be interested in a partnership.



But how can a PHA decide what types of partnerships or organizations might be most beneficial? When looking to forge partnerships and identify new resources to support the HCV program, PHAs should:

- Identify gaps within the PHA's own landlord program
- Get to know the agencies serving the PHA's service area

- Be alert to opportunities to raise the visibility of the PHA's mission and the HCV program within the community or region
- Coordinate efforts with other organizations that share the PHA's mission and values



TIP: Being familiar with the HCV program and the needs and wants of landlords can help during the process of identifying partner

organizations. While an organization might not be focused on the PHA's number one area of concern, a partnership might address an additional or tangential concern.

PHAs should keep a list of potential partners since the needs and wants of landlords and PHAs change over time. An organization that might not be a good fit today could be a great fit down the road. A list can do double duty: staff can use it to refer tenants to needed services or to publicize PHA news to interested organizations.

Identify Areas for Improvement and Expansion

First, PHAs should identify areas where they need or would like to add or supplement service areas. Identifying these areas up front will help the PHA be more effective at recognizing partnership opportunities when they arise or can inform a strategy to seek out new relationships. Possible service areas could include underserved geographies in the jurisdiction, populations such as homeless veterans, or non-elderly persons with disabilities eligible for special purpose vouchers. Conducting a periodic examination is also good standard practice and can help PHAs improve efficiency and effectiveness as a whole. In addition to reviewing operations from a service focus, PHAs should consider the goals of this Guidebook: increase recruitment, increase retention, improve responsiveness, improve tenant-landlord relationships, improve the inspections process, and minimize bureaucracy. Where is the PHA seeing challenges? Could partnering with another

PHA introduce efficiencies that help improve the inspections process, for example, or reduce bureaucracy?

To begin identifying areas in which a PHA can improve landlord satisfaction, the PHA can talk with landlords and PHA staff through informal discussion, open discussion at a PHA or partner event, or even conduct an online poll to identify top concerns or issues. The Education and Outreach chapter offers several different options for landlord-PHA interaction. PHAs might also ask landlords if they are aware of services provided to market-rate tenants that would improve both the landlord and tenant experience with the HCV program. PHAs should also ask staff who are involved with the HCV program to identify areas for improvement. This information should be compiled and reviewed on a periodic basis. While it may not be possible to improve all areas of concern through a strategic partnership, there may be ways the PHA can partner to reduce that concern, even if they cannot remove it completely.

For example, if landlords list damage to units as a primary concern, PHAs may be able to address this issue multiple ways. A PHA might:

- Consider starting a tenant education class. See Tenant Education in the Education and Outreach chapter.
- Partner with a local organization that is already providing a form of tenant education. PHAs could partner with or refer tenants to this organization, saving time and money.
- Partner with an organization that assists with security deposits.



TIP: Some areas of concerns will be most effectively addressed by the PHA instead of through a partnership. For example, a PHA that has identified delays in inspections as an area of concern for landlords may find that implementing an element of flexibility – such as allowing landlords to self-certify for certain inspections repairs by providing documentation of the repair – may be beneficial.

Get to Know Agencies Serving the Area

Once a PHA has identified an area of concern that cannot be addressed by the PHA or is better suited to another entity, PHAs should begin to examine if there are partnerships or existing outside resources that could meet the need.

There are multiple ways to identify potential partner organizations:

- Ask PHA staff: PHA staff, not limited to HCV staff, may know of resources that, while not specifically targeted to HCV landlords, could be beneficial.
- Ask partner organizations: If the PHA has current partners, they might also be aware of additional organizations that could be potential partners or resources.
- Ask other PHAs, or city or county departments: Local PHAs, municipal or county housing or human services departments might share the names of their partnering organizations.
- Join the mailing list of community and partner organizations to hear about community needs or new initiatives and potential partners.
- Get involved in the community: Join a board or a committee of an interest group that includes some organizations the PHA would like to know better or that focuses on a topic close to your mission.
- Increase civic participation: Attend a meeting hosted by the city, county, or school district on a topic that would be of interest to landlords and make a point of introducing the PHA to other participants or speakers.
- Hold an informal meeting of organizations: Current partners or well-known resources, such as social service organizations, that share similar goals should meet to discuss how resources might be shared or to share information about existing resources. Ask these organizations to invite others that might be useful.
- Search the internet or dial 211 for untapped resources or potential partners.

The Inventory of Local Organizations

The network of public, private, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations in each jurisdiction varies. PHAs will need to familiarize themselves with organizations that operate in their service area. The first organizations to consider may include nonprofit service providers and governmental entities, academic institutions, financial institutions, philanthropies, healthcare systems, and other employers that have a stake in improving the quality of their neighborhoods. Many of these organizations have social responsibility requirements or missions that may overlap with the PHA's mission.

Reminder - this list is not exhaustive!

For example, if a PHA has landlords who would benefit from more detail on the inspections process, perhaps a local college has film students who would be willing to create an inspections video!



Get plugged in!

PHAs should make sure they are connected to their local community and local government. Attending local meetings is a simple, low-cost way of connecting with other groups and organizations that may have similar goals and be interested in sharing resources. It also allows the PHA to stay up to date with community needs and target services and resources accordingly.

Join Forces with Other Organizations

Establishing and Maintaining a Relationship

Creating partnerships is rarely a quick-fix strategy because it involves forming and building relationships. For the initial discussion, consider meeting in person or using an online meeting platform with video to be able to see each other. If the PHA is requesting the meeting, and it is in person, the PHA may want to offer to travel to the other organization's office space. This minimizes time and resource burden for the other organization.

Partnerships that benefit both the partner organization as well as the PHA may be easier to establish and maintain. Be prepared to discuss ways that partnering with the PHA can benefit the partner and further their mission. For example, an organization that provides emergency funds to help tenants avoid evictions might not consider helping landlords to be part of their mission to avoid homelessness; however, providing



Join a Board!

Serving as part of a board or committee is a good way to build name recognition, make connections with organizations of mutual interest, learn about funding opportunities, and develop relationships that can support PHA and HCV goals over time. Yes, it is a big commitment. The good news is that the PHA itself may already have staff members who are part of a board or a committee within a city or county department such as an affordable housing, public safety, or job creation board or committee. See if such a board or committee includes organizations and objectives that are relevant to HCV and its landlords.

landlords with funds to make unit repairs might help keep voucher families housed if those funds help keep landlords satisfied with the HCV program and renting to voucher families.

Build PHA and HCV Program Name Recognition

In order to establish partnerships, it is important for the PHA to have a good reputation and a strong presence in the community. Other organizations are more likely to be interested in partnering with a PHA when they know about the PHA, what it does, and the dedication exhibited by staff members. Like most activities in this chapter, making a name for the PHA is an ongoing process. The PHA is probably already carrying out some of the activities that will help it make connections in the community such as hosting promotional events for landlords or voucher families, networking, serving on committees and boards, attending meetings, promoting HCV programming through radio or television PSAs or advertisements, and scheduling meetings with organizations where there may be a common connection.

Once a potential partner has been identified, PHAs may reach out and request a meeting. PHAs should come to the meeting:

- Prepared to provide general information about the PHA and HCV program
- With a basic understanding of the potential partner's organization
- With specific topics or ideas for collaboration and thoughts on how the partnership could benefit all organizations involved

If this particular partnership does not meet the PHA's needs or vice versa, ask the organization if they are aware of any other organizations that might be able to assist. Additionally, whether a partnership is established or not, PHAs should ask whether the organization could promote PHA programs in instances where the target audience overlaps. Should a partnership be formed, PHAs can request that their programs be highlighted on the organization's website and return the favor.



Formalizing Relationships

The level of relationship building and subsequent interaction may also depend on the type of relationship the PHA has, or will have, with the organization. For example, identifying and setting up a few introductory meetings might be all that is necessary. Referrals to programs and services provide one example of how relationships can be more or less formal. PHAs may be familiar with relationships where the PHA receives referrals themselves into the FUP or other PHA programs from outside organizations. When the referral is from the PHA to the outside organization, the process might be similar: the PHA develops a relationship with the contact person at the service organization. The PHA and the contact may have periodic meetings or speak directly about referral applications. The process requires a hands-on level of interaction, but may not require any formal agreement. In other cases, the PHA has talked directly with the organization about services and how these might benefit PHA tenants or landlords. The PHA might list the organization on its website or in written materials, but the PHA does not work regularly with the referral contact. The

organizations may prefer that the interested landlord or tenant self-refer to indicate a level of interest. The relationship is indirect and less formal for the PHA, but the PHA should still continue to reach out to the organization periodically to check:

- Whether the services in question are still available to ensure the PHA is informing its tenants and clients correctly.
- If there are new ways the two partners can benefit from each other.

Some partnerships include financial responsibilities for both parties; sometimes partners are expected to meet specific responsibilities or deadlines. When the work of one partner depends in some way on another partner, the relationship might be strengthened through a MOU, MOA, or an intergovernmental agreement, in the case of governmental entities, to formalize responsibilities. Additionally, the involved partners might need to develop policies to regulate how services are provided. A PHA's legal team may want to review any agreements requiring signature.



STRATEGY: RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES

Identifying resources outside the PHA and building relationships that create avenues for connecting landlords to opportunities the PHA does not offer.

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

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal to moderate.

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

Relationships and Resources PHA Process Improvements

PHA Process Improvement	Relationships and Resources
Increase Recruitment	X
Increase Retention	X
Improve Responsiveness	
Improve Tenant-Landlord Relationship	X
Improve Inspections Process	
Minimize Bureaucracy	X



specific neighborhoods or landlords meeting certain income or asset restrictions.

This strategy provides ways that PHAs can create informal relationships with organizations that provide services that might benefit HCV landlords or tenants, resulting in a list of available resources. It also discusses how to best present and utilize these resources to improve landlord satisfaction.

This strategy outlines:

- Ways in which PHAs can identify landlord or tenant-related resources provided by outside organizations
- Examples of different types of resources that address areas of concern commonly identified by landlords
- Suggestions for ways PHAs can identify and promote mutually beneficial outcomes

WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHAs operate under limited budgets and may not have the resources or capacity to provide some of the services or programs that would promote improved landlord recruitment and retention. The Relationships and Resources strategy focuses on identifying organizations outside the PHA that currently provide services relevant to voucher landlords. Such services, programs, or incentives could include education on anti-discrimination efforts including Source of Income (SOI) laws, legal advice, tax advice, security deposit resources, damage mitigation funds, and repair or rehabilitation services. See the Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements chapter for additional information. Some services may be limited to landlords within

IMPLEMENTATION

As discussed in the chapter introduction, the first step is to identify needs or desires of landlords that the PHA is not currently able to address as well as it would like. Outside organizations, particularly local and nonprofit organizations, may have flexibility that allows them to offer services the PHA might not be able to provide due to a lack of funding or regulatory restrictions. So, when thinking about useful and helpful services, PHAs should think creatively about ways to improve the landlord experience and not limit their search to services they could provide, should they have additional funding. For example, organizations may offer tenant-landlord remediation services, something that many PHAs are not able to provide, which is a service that might help resolve conflicts and avoid a breach of the client's family obligations and a landlord that chooses to no longer work with HCV tenants. Once an issue has been identified as one that other organizations may be able to address through existing services, PHAs should begin to research organizations in their area that might provide these services. Whenever there is a possibility for the PHA to link its landlords or residents to useful services that are already offered by government agencies and nonprofit organizations, the PHA should explore the possibility. Suggestions on how to identify potential resources are noted in the Getting Started section in the Introduction to this chapter.

Once identified, the PHA should initiate contact to ensure the organization offers the services the PHA is seeking and will provide the services to the audience the PHA would refer. The PHA should also determine the cost of services and confirm that the organization has the willingness and capacity to accept referrals. PHAs should establish a relationship to ensure that referrals from the PHA are welcome and the organization has the resources to handle a potential increase in requests for services. While this type of relationship might not necessitate a formal partnership, PHAs may want to explore the possibility of entering into



NOTICE: REFERRALS

For the purposes of this chapter, the term **REFERRALS** is primarily used to reference PHAs sending landlords or clients to outside organizations who provide additional services.

PHAs may traditionally think of referrals as client or landlord referrals *from* outside organizations to the PHA. These are critical partnerships and should continue to be fostered and strengthened. PHAs may want to promote their relationships with other agencies as some landlords have a particular interest in assisting individuals in a certain demographic. For example, PHAs that receive client referrals from their local Veteran's Affairs office may have landlords that are especially interested in and motivated to rent to veterans.

There is additional benefit for landlords who rent to tenants who receive case management support from other agencies. Case managers can help address issues that directly or indirectly help participants to be better tenants. Examples include HUD-VASH voucher holders and foster youth voucher holders with connections to child welfare services.

a formal relationship to establish priority for the tenants or landlords that the PHA refers. This may benefit both the organization and the PHA, should the organization have a need for a limited preference for vouchers for families it serves. See PIH Notice 2013-15 for additional information related to partnerships and agreements related to serving persons experiencing homelessness. If, through this outreach or relationship, the PHA



TIP: Prior to reaching out to an organization, consider doing a quick search on the internet to see if the organization is well regarded in the community. Other organizations may also be able to provide feedback and serve as an informal reference.

can offer potential participants the name of a point of contact at the organization or has the ability to explain any part of the referral process to potential participants, the referral is more likely to succeed. The PHA should also confirm the preferred method for making referrals. This interaction may also serve as the foundation for additional partnership opportunities in the future.

PHAs will also need to determine a method for maintaining a list of resources and how often they will update the list. Additionally, PHAs must carefully consider how they will let landlords and tenants know about these resources. While resources should be made available to all tenants and landlords, the PHA must be mindful of not overwhelming their partner with referrals.

RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES

The examples in this section highlight different ways PHAs might be able to address identified issues such as tenant damages or enhanced landlord training through relationship building and referrals to outside organizations. As shown, these referrals do not come at a financial cost to the PHA and can greatly expand the range of services available to landlords, promoting both recruitment and retention. It should be noted that these are just examples – organizations and the resources they provide vary from area to area and PHAs should not limit their search based on the following list.

This section is divided into two categories: resources for landlords and resources for tenants. While resources for tenants ultimately may end up benefitting landlords, the distinction is who is the immediate recipient of the service – landlords or tenants. This is also a useful point to remember when approaching potential partners – benefits to tenants also benefit landlords and vice versa!

Resources for Landlords

In recent conversations with HUD representatives, landlords identified several

areas where they would like to see additional services. While many PHAs are working to meet these needs, not all PHAs have the necessary funds or resources. Outside organizations, particularly those in the housing industry, may already be providing services that can help to fill the gap. Examples include affordable housing and tenant organizations that provide rental listings, local governmental or nonprofit organizations that offer landlord-tenant mediation, or local governmental organizations that administer incentives for landlords.

In states with new laws or regulations that may change how some landlords have recruited tenants in the past, PHAs may reach out to outside organizations to inform landlords about the new legislation. Laws may include nondiscrimination and fair housing laws, changes to construction or rehabilitation laws to mandate inclusionary zoning (for those landlords who are developers or who rehabilitate their units), changes to the tax code, or rent control laws that offer exceptions for renting to voucher tenants. For example, as of 2017, 12 States, the District of Columbia, and many localities had established SOI laws. These laws prevent landlords from discriminating against prospective tenants based on how they are paying their rent. PHAs may want to partner with legal aid societies or tenants' rights organizations or other organizations to assist landlords in fully understanding how any new laws will affect them, share best practices in recruiting and screening tenants, dispel myths, and assist them in compliance.

Another concern of landlords is the financial cost of repairing damages to housing units. As part of a broader effort to attract reluctant landlords and, thus, improve housing choices for voucher-assisted tenants, a state or local government may create and administer tenant damage mitigation funds. On the following page are examples of existing resources that PHAs utilized to address both damage mitigation efforts and SOI training. See the Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements chapter for more information on tenant damage mitigation funds.



THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Offer landlords education on newly implemented law	Apartment associations, housing rights organizations, community development corporations, local government civil rights offices	PHAs might consider sending staff to trainings geared toward landlords, so staff can answer questions. This would need to be coordinated with the organization providing the training to ensure appropriateness.
EXAMPLE: A local housing rights organization provides monitoring to ensure landlords are in compliance with the newly passed SOl law. They also provide training to landlords.		

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Address landlords' concern about paying for tenant damages	State programs	Requirements differ. Some programs may require claims to be verified or processed through the PHA which would require staff time. The PHA should consider marketing this program to landlords.
EXAMPLE: A state commerce department runs a statewide mitigation program for clients receiving a housing subsidy of any type, not just HCV participants. The program allows landlords to recover damages as a strategy to encourage them to rent to subsidized tenants. The program, which is funded through recording fees on real estate transactions, has distributed nearly \$1 million across the state. The PHA's limited involvement in the program entails offering family subsidy verification to the landlord upon request.		
NOTE: Additional information about damage claim funds will be provided in the Monetary Incentives and Reimbursements chapter.		

Resources for Tenants

Resources for tenants may provide direct or indirect benefits to landlords by improving the landlord's perception of voucher tenants or the tenant's ability to successfully maintain housing. In order to be effective at proactively easing landlord concerns, PHAs should inform landlords that these resources are provided to tenants. PHAs might also consider providing a list of tenant resources to landlords as they may be a referral source.

One type of assistance for tenants is financial. Programs might include financial assistance with:

- Back rent
- Security deposits
- Application fees
- Utility deposits
- Utility debt



TIP: Assistance with furnishings can be invaluable. PHAs should seek out community and faith-based organizations that can fill this need. For example, a community organization in Portland, OR, provides furnishings to HUD-VASH participants upon lease-up.

There are also partner organizations that provide resources for tenants which are not financially based. Examples of resources might include:

- Mediation or dispute resolution programs
- Trainings or workshops that help families become good tenants (See the Tenant Education strategy in the Education and Outreach chapter)
- Donations such as furnishings or clothing
- Job seeking or job training support
- Ongoing behavioral health case management
- Assistance in applying for services such as nutrition programs and Social Security disability payments

Connecting tenants with organizations and agencies that offer necessary support can lead to improved relationships between tenants and landlords. PHAs may also want to consider creating a resource sheet with information on agencies that provide assistance such as:

- Unemployment office
- Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
- Job training opportunities such as those available through the Department of Labor
- Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Veterans Affairs (VA)



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

When looking for additional space or ways to use space more effectively, PHAs may want to consider co-locating with partner organizations and/or resources. If PHAs have a free space in a community center or other location, they may want to offer that space to a partner organization. The PHA might also invite an organization staff member to work out of a shared space on a limited basis (for example, 1 day a week or 3 days a month) to make it easier for the organization and its audience to connect.

One PHA identified a potential partnership when they noticed they shared an office building with a YWCA and a community organization that assists renters with deposits for application fees and utilities. According to the PHA, being in close proximity to these organizations is a big advantage. When tenants need assistance, the PHA is able to “send people down the hall” to receive assistance.

THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Offer emergency funding to support housing stability for tenants with limited budgets	State and local organizations	PHAs may need to research organizations that provide these services or funds. Each organization may have different requirements to access assistance. PHAs should maintain a current list and ensure the programs and funds are still available.
EXAMPLE: One PHA is located in a community with several organizations that offer financial resources for back rent, eviction prevention, and security deposits. When the PHA receives notifications per the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract from the landlord of threatened evictions and non-payments, for example, the PHA will work to connect tenants with organizations with financial resources to stabilize the family’s housing. The tenants and landlords work to avoid the eviction process.		

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Resolve landlord-tenant disputes	Local or national organizations	<p>PHAs must be mindful of organizational familiarity with landlord-tenant laws and regulations when recommending them for HCV family and landlord dispute resolution and mediation services. PHAs should make clear that these organizations are not affiliated with the PHA and they provide independent services. There may be fees involved for tenants or landlords.</p> <p>As it is not typical for PHAs to provide dispute resolution services, PHAs should consider providing referrals to organizations that provide these services instead of developing a more formal partnership.</p>

EXAMPLE: When landlord-tenant issues arise, one PHA makes use of a dispute resolution program run by Volunteers of America Western Washington Dispute Resolution Center (DRC). The longstanding program office, which provides services in a range of mediation situations, is located within walking distance of the PHA. The PHA is able to refer tenants to the center for assistance with state and local landlord-tenant law. PHA tenants are not required to use the program. The program includes an application, service fee, and fee per mediation session. The landlord-tenant fee is \$200, but there is a fee waiver process. DRC is not a legal process and does not involve lawyers.

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Tenant education	Local or national organizations	Tenant education can be a valuable tool to help tenants learn skills that will help them maintain housing. Additionally, tenants completing this type of training may decrease landlord concerns about negative tenant behavior. PHAs should consider informing landlords that tenant education courses are available and tenants who complete the course will receive a certificate. This also serves as an incentive for tenant participation as a certificate may help them locate a unit.

EXAMPLE: In one community, the Volunteers of America holds monthly tenant education workshops. The program is funded by a county, run by a nonprofit, and benefits public and private sectors (PHAs and private market landlords), making it an excellent example of collaboration across government agencies and nonprofits. Renter Certification and Fair Housing Workshops are voluntary and open to all tenants, with topics including landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities, fair housing laws, protected classes, soft skills to help maintain housing, and tools for assisting tenants in obtaining housing. Tenants receive a completion certificate they can present to landlords and a credit toward Dispute Resolution Center services. Initially, Volunteers of America presented the program to the PHA and now the PHA makes referrals to the program.



TIP: PHAs that maintain a multitude of partnerships have the potential to become recognized as an integral part of their community and not, as is sometimes the case, an isolated housing authority. Landlords who encounter the PHA within its role in community partnerships may come to recognize the PHA and its work as a familiar and reputable presence in the community. These landlords may be more willing to join the HCV program. To encourage landlords to view the PHA in this positive light, highlight the effort the PHA puts into partnerships in the PHA's marketing and on its website. Ask partner organizations to highlight the PHA's good work, too.

STRATEGY: PHA COLLABORATION

Relationships that PHAs form with outside organizations (including other PHAs) to share resources, promote the HCV program, and collaborate on strategies that aim to increase opportunities for landlords and/or streamline PHA policies.

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

Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ Minimal to moderate.

Implementation Considerations: ● LOW ● MEDIUM ○ DIFFICULT

PHA Collaboration Process Improvements

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



WHAT THIS IS AND WHY IT WORKS: PHA-formed partnerships do not have to result in landlords or tenants receiving direct services to be of value to the HCV program and HCV landlords. This strategy focuses on relationships PHAs can form that improve the PHA's HCV program, and thereby can result in improved landlord participation.

The following two goals, which can be addressed by strategic relationships, will be examined in this chapter:

- Improvements to program administration
- Improvements to PHA and program perception and promotion

These relationships typically do not involve the exchange of funds, but may be more formal

than the examples presented in the Referrals strategy of this chapter.

IMPROVEMENTS TO PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

In addition to increasing awareness of the PHA and the HCV program, PHAs can form relationships with other organizations, including other PHAs, to increase housing opportunities and to minimize bureaucratic obstacles that might prevent a landlord from participating in the HCV program. Below, two different types of relationships are examined:

- Partnering with another PHA
- Partnering with another agency or locality

Partnering with another PHA

In recent conversations with HUD representatives, landlords stated that working with multiple PHAs caused confusion. Landlords may own properties in multiple PHA jurisdictions and, therefore, may need to work with multiple PHAs when participating in the HCV program. When those PHAs each have different forms or procedures, landlords may experience confusion and frustration that can lead to dissatisfaction with the HCV program. PHAs that partner with other PHAs in nearby jurisdictions may find advantages in coordinating some of their policies and administrative procedures related to HCV landlords.

In addition to minimizing bureaucracy resulting from working with multiple PHAs, combined PHA efforts can also result in sharing resources and costs, as well as increasing housing opportunities for tenants. This strategy is best suited for PHAs that share jurisdictions or are in close proximity.

When considering partnering with other PHAs, a PHA should ask:

- Is there one or more PHAs in close proximity?
- Are there a number of landlords that own or manage properties in multiple jurisdictions?

If the answers to the above are no, issues with administration may be better addressed through other strategies. However, if the answer to either or both of the above is yes, there may be an opportunity to partner with one or more PHAs to minimize the administrative burden on landlords and expand the number of housing opportunities for tenants.

PHAs should engage in conversation with other PHAs and begin to examine the potential for forming a partnership. Partnerships with PHAs range from informal – for example, agreeing to provide contact information for another PHA should a landlord contact the incorrect jurisdiction – to a more formal partnership that involves an MOU. PHAs should always ensure that a formal partnership such as consortia adheres to any applicable rules or regulations.

The following strategies in action provide suggestions that can be incorporated to enable PHAs to align certain policies or procedures to reduce confusion for landlords working with multiple PHAs.

THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Increase flexibility and staff efficiency by sharing administrative functions	PHAs in the same geographic area	PHAs sharing functions will have to ensure hours are charged to the correct line item within the correct PHA. PHAs will want to have MOUs for job-sharing functions. Communication between the PHAs will be critical for facilitating timely sharing of information and smooth flow of activities.
EXAMPLE: One agency may have a strong group of inspectors while another agency has a strong landlord relations staff. These agencies could divide tasks – one PHA does inspections for both agencies, and one PHA handles landlord relations for both agencies. This increases consistency in scheduling, inspections and other procedures, as well as helps PHA staff do more with less.		

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Creating a consistent PHA experience for landlords	PHAs in the same geographic area	Where PHAs may share the same pool of landlords in a similar geographic area, landlords may find it difficult to determine why boundaries, payment standards, policies, and paperwork may differ between PHAs. PHAs will actively increase their knowledge of each other's programs and identify operations and messaging they can align to improve landlord understanding and retention.

EXAMPLES:

- When a community enacted an SOI law that landlords cannot refuse to rent to HCV program participants solely because of their participation in the HCV program, landlords had many questions and there was concern they might leave the HCV program. Two PHAs in one region that work with the same landlords began to meet to discuss ways to increase landlord engagement and address landlord questions with one voice.
- When two nearby PHAs found that landlords mistook one PHA for the other PHA, they began working together to provide similar customer experiences. They meet every other week. They adopted similar paperwork and each accepts requests for tenancy approval forms from the other. They are developing an interjurisdictional agreement to allow tenants to lease up in both jurisdictions. Because they know each other's programs, they can answer questions, provide information, and correct misinformation to landlords for either PHA. They are considering sharing costs for a landlord locator position.

Partnering with another agency or locality

In addition to working with other PHAs, a PHA might find that there are ways to partner with other agencies to expand housing opportunities. PHAs that have small service areas, limited housing stock, or are in close proximity to other PHAs might benefit from exploring opportunities to partner and expand. Similar to the considerations listed above, PHAs should examine whether there are agencies that perhaps own underutilized housing stock, or a jurisdiction that does not have a housing program in place, for example. When entering into a partnership to expand housing opportunities, PHAs should ensure that the agreements are legal and in adherence with any state or local laws or HUD regulations.



PHA HIGHLIGHT:

A PHA facing challenges with low housing stock in their city identified a nearby property owned by the US Department of Agriculture that was eligible as PHA-assisted housing under 24 CFR § 982.352 and was having trouble filling all of its rental units. Unfortunately, the property was outside the PHA service area. The PHA obtained authority to expand its jurisdiction so voucher families could lease-up at this high-quality property. This policy solution helped the PHA, USDA, landlord, and HCV families.

IMPROVEMENTS TO PHA AND PROGRAM PROMOTION

PHA partnerships can offer PHAs, and their programs, intangible benefits such as increasing awareness of the HCV program within the affordable housing community and among the general public, changing the stereotypes of the HCV program, as well as allowing the PHA to gather information that can be used to further combat these myths. These changes to program visibility, attitudes, and beliefs can be great tools for PHAs to increase retention and recruitment of HCV landlords.

The following two strategies in action look at ways PHAs can spread information to landlords about the HCV program through partner events, as well as learn and share information with other organizations through networking. These strategies can typically be implemented with minimal cost to the PHA.

While this section is tied closely with the Expanding Your Network strategy in the Education and Outreach chapter, the content below focuses on, and provides additional examples of, the types of varied organizations that PHAs can partner with. For suggestions on information that PHAs can present at partner organization events, see the Expanding Your Network strategy.

As with the other strategies in this chapter, this variation begins with identifying areas that could be improved by a strategic partnership. See “Getting Started” in this chapter’s introduction. However, as this variation is focused on increasing landlords’ and the general public’s awareness of the PHA and the HCV program, it could be argued that the majority of PHAs could benefit from these types of partnerships. Additional implementation considerations are included with each example below.

THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Increasing awareness of the HCV program to current or prospective landlords. Participation in events held by other organizations provides a way to interact with current or potential landlords and spread the word about the HCV program with minimal investment and planning by the PHA.	Local government agencies, apartment associations, nonprofits, housing organizations	PHAs will need to identify organizations and meetings which provide an opportunity to address potential landlords. Additionally, PHAs will need to reach out to these organizations to request to make presentations. PHAs should be prepared to discuss the reasons PHA participation might benefit the event. A good place to start is by identifying shared goals between the PHA and HCV program and the organization. For example, presenting at an apartment association might provide landlords in attendance with an opportunity to share concerns directly with the PHA, learn about new PHA or program policy, and ask questions. See Expanding Your Network in the Education and Outreach chapter for additional information on what types of information may be helpful to include.
EXAMPLES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">The PHA’s service area encompasses multiple municipalities. A representative from the PHA makes presentations at each of the municipalities’ meetings about the HCV program. For example, one of the municipalities asked the PHA to attend a crime-free housing meeting to discuss the HCV program.		

- Another PHA partnered with its local Continuum of Care (CoC) to participate in the CoC's housing fair for HUD-VASH and homeless families. This provided an opportunity for PHA staff to interact with landlords.
- Another PHA partners collaboratively with the local YWCA on monthly meetings that cover a variety of types of assistance. The YWCA also holds two conferences that are attended by landlords. The PHA assists with conference organization and facilitates a landlord forum at the conferences. The PHA reports that most of the questions in the landlord forum are about the HCV program. The questions asked and comments heard at these meetings and conferences have a direct impact on the resources the PHA posts on its website, which is a key tool for communicating with prospective and current landlords. The information presented at the meetings and conferences helps manage landlord expectations related to the HCV program. These forums are especially important because there is not a strong industry group in the area to provide information; for example, a new law drew increased meeting attendance because participants were eager to learn what the new law would mean for them and this was the only public forum to get information.
- A PHA on the West Coast and the local chapter of the National Association of Residential Property Managers have large gatherings of landlords, property owners, and investors, which serves as a great opportunity to network. The PHA staff member assigned to landlord engagement also participates in any community function they can attend to meet landlords, people looking for housing, as well as potential service providers. The goal of networking is for these individuals to learn about the program and spread information to others. The partners believe "any platform is a good platform" and that hearing about the positive aspects of the PHA and the HCV program is contagious.

THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION:

OPPORTUNITY	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS
Learning about new resources that can benefit landlords and tenants and information sharing with other organizations	Local government agencies, apartment associations, nonprofits, housing organizations	PHAs should consider forging an ongoing partnership with other organizations to exchange information, promote current resources, or advocate for new support from outside entities. This partnership could take the form of a task force, board, or informal meetings. While the PHA may not be able to attend all partner meetings, they should commit to some form of continuous engagement.

EXAMPLES:

- One PHA partners with other agencies within the city and attends joint meetings where topics include available funding for needs like security deposits.
- A PHA with staff assigned to landlord engagement hosts quarterly meetings with other organizations that are client-focused and assist veterans and families in crisis situations. During these meetings, the PHA shares information about their programs and the availability of units. This exposure helps quickly connect at-risk families to landlords with vacant units.

