

6.0 HCV Project-Based Program

Project-based vouchers (PBV) are an optional component of the HCV program that PHAs may choose to implement. Under this component, PHAs have been able to attach up to 20 percent of their allocated voucher program budget authority 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 for voucher holders.

Effective with 2016's Housing Opportunity through Modernization Act (HOTMA), PHAs are permitted to project-base an additional 10 percent of their vouchers above the previous 20 percent program limitation. The additional 10 percent allocation must be used for units for homeless families, families with veterans, supportive housing for persons with disabilities or elderly persons, or in areas where vouchers are difficult to use. In addition, certain units do not count toward the 20 percent limitation, including units that convert to PBV under the Rental Assistance Demonstration program (RAD), and HUD-VASH PBV set-aside units.

Project-based vouchers can generally be attached to no more than 25% of the units in a property, although there are several exceptions to this requirement. The limitation does not apply to properties with four units or less, units housing seniors or families with a member with a disability, and units whose residents are receiving supportive services.

Pensacola Housing may opt to implement project-based voucher programs if at any time it determines that such a program would:

1. Expand the affordable housing stock available to its clients;
2. Increase the affordability of housing currently not affordable for extremely low income and very low income households;
3. Preserve the affordability of existing affordable housing for extremely low income and very low income households; or
4. Expand affordable housing opportunities for hard-to-house households within our jurisdiction.

Pensacola Housing may enter into agreements and contracts for project-based assistance based on the rules in this chapter.

6.1 Project Selection Criteria

Pensacola Housing will consider the following project selection criteria in evaluating proposals for project-based Housing Choice Vouchers:

1. Housing that serves families with children;
2. Housing that serves homeless households;
3. Housing that serves households with special needs, including, but not limited to:
 - a) Young adults aging out of foster care;

- b) People with mental and/or developmental disabilities;
 - c) People with physical and/or sensory disabilities;
 - d) Domestic violence survivors; and
 - e) Recent immigrants for whom language is a barrier to utilizing the tenant-based program.
4. Housing that reduces concentrations of poverty and/or need by:
 - a) Being located in low poverty census tracts;
 - b) Being located in census tracts with a lower-than-average percentage of tenant-based vouchers;
 - c) Serving very low-income populations within mixed-income developments; or
 - d) Reducing concentrations of poverty in existing buildings and developments.
 5. Housing that provides opportunities to increase the diversity of Pensacola's neighborhoods;
 6. Housing that offers an appropriate level of supportive services to residents;
 7. Housing that commits to best efforts to serve extremely low-income households for the life of the project;
 8. Housing that increases access to high-performing public schools;
 9. Housing that provides opportunities for economic self-sufficiency; and
 10. Housing that maximizes the use of other funding sources and leverages the use of HCV program funds.

6.2 Eligible Owners of Project-Based Housing

Pensacola Housing will accept applications for project-based HCV program assistance in projects owned by:

1. Non-profit housing providers;
2. For-profit housing providers; and
3. Other housing authorities in Escambia County.

6.3 Project Selection Processes

Under 24 CFR 983.51, PHAs that intend to project-base vouchers have the option of using a competitive selection process, a non-competitive selection process, or both.

Using the non-competitive selection process, PHAs may select a proposal for housing assisted under a federal, state, or local government housing assistance, community development, or supportive services program that required competitive selection of proposals (for example, the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, or units for which competitively awarded low-income housing tax credits (LIHTCs) have been provided), where the proposal has been selected in accordance with such program's competitive selection requirements within 3 years of the PBV proposal selection date, and the earlier competitively selected housing assistance proposal did not involve any consideration that the project would receive PBV assistance.

In order to streamline the selection process and reduce administrative burden, Pensacola Housing will use the non-competitive selection process when proposals are available that meet both:

- The criteria defined in 24 CFR 983.51 (b, 2) for non-competitive selection; and
- The project selection criteria defined in Section 6.1 of this Administrative Plan.

If non-competitive selection is not applicable, or if there are no proposals available using the non-competitive selection process, then Pensacola Housing may implement a competitive selection process following the procedures below.

From time to time, Pensacola Housing may issue a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) inviting proposals for projects that meet Pensacola Housing's project-based program goals. Specific project selection criteria will be determined by Pensacola Housing based on its assessment of current needs and opportunities, and will be described in the RFP, along with numerical weights indicating the priority of each selection criteria used. The RFP process will include a panel of evaluators representing both Pensacola Housing staff and members of the community with an interest in low-income housing.

Pensacola Housing may establish minimum threshold criteria for sponsors participating in the project-based program (for example, minimum standards for the most recent audit of the sponsoring organization), and a minimum score based on numerically weighted criteria. Each RFP response shall be scored according to the weighted selection criteria identified in the initial RFP, and the projects ranked from highest to lowest score until the budget authority allocated for the RFP round is committed.

All projects awarded project-based HCV subsidy must be developed and operated in a manner consistent with HUD regulations. Awards of project-based subsidy are subject to approval of Pensacola City Council.

6.4 Payment Standards / Rent Reasonableness

The payment standards used for project-based vouchers will be the same as those used throughout Pensacola Housing's HCV program. Pensacola Housing staff will evaluate the rent reasonableness of proposed project rents against the market rent for comparable unassisted units, as per HUD guidelines and this Administrative Plan.

6.5 Utility Estimate Schedule

In general, Pensacola Housing will use the same utility estimate schedule in the project-based program as it uses for tenant-based assistance. For each PBV unit under contract, Pensacola Housing will implement the new schedule at the next regularly scheduled review.

An owner with energy-efficient units may submit a written request to the Housing Administrator that a project-specific utility estimate schedule be substituted for the tenant-based program utility estimate schedule, based on a written estimate from Gulf Power or (if applicable) Pensacola Energy of the likely consumption of utilities for that building based on its specific energy-efficient features. Such a request will be reviewed and responded to within 30 business days.

6.6 Uses of Subsidy

An owner may use the revenue provided by the project-based housing choice vouchers for any purpose consistent with its organizational mission.

6.7 Contract Term

The contract term for each project will be negotiated individually, based on the project's needs, within the general framework of 5 to 15 years. All contracts are subject to availability of adequate funds.

6.8 Requests for Rent Increases

Owners of units assisted by Pensacola Housing project-based voucher assistance may request rent adjustments annually. Such requests must be in writing, for a specific proposed rent amount. Pensacola Housing will base rent increases on rent reasonableness determinations made by reviewing rents for comparable unassisted units, as per HUD guidelines and this Administrative Plan.

Rent increases will take effect

For each PBV unit under contract, rent increases will take effect at the next regularly scheduled review starting 60 days after the increase was approved by Pensacola Housing.

6.9 Vacancy Loss Payments

When a family moves out mid-month, the housing provider may retain the full HAP payment for that month.

6.10 Reconciliations

Reconciliation requests from owners must be made in writing within 12 months of the payment and must contain all of the following:

1. The specific time period of the discrepancy;
2. The participant name or unit number; and
3. A detailed explanation for why the owner believes there is a discrepancy

Pensacola Housing will respond to complete reconciliation requests within 30 days of receipt.

6.11 Damage Claims

Pensacola Housing will not make payments to the owner for any damages to the unit, or for any other amounts owed by a family under the family's lease.

6.12 Family Right to Move [24 CFR 983.261]

A family residing in a PBV unit may terminate the assisted lease at any time after the first year of occupancy. The family must provide both Pensacola Housing and the owner advance written notice of intent to vacate in accordance with the lease.

If the family intends to request a tenant-based voucher, they must contact Pensacola Housing before giving notice to terminate the lease. Pensacola Housing will notify the family whether a tenant-based voucher is immediately available, or whether they will be placed on a priority waiting list. If a tenant-based voucher is not immediately available, the family may choose to extend its tenancy in the PBV unit.

If a tenant-based voucher is immediately available, the family will have 14 days from the end date of their PBV lease to contact Pensacola Housing to schedule a move meeting and receive the tenant-based voucher.

If the family terminates the assisted lease before the end of one year, the family relinquishes the opportunity for continued tenant-based assistance. However, if a member of the family is or has been the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and a move is needed to protect the health or safety of a family member, then Pensacola Housing will not terminate assistance and will offer the family a tenant-based voucher, even if vacancy occurred during the initial lease period.

If a family breaks up as a result of an occurrence of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, then as provided in 24 CFR part 5, subpart L, Pensacola Housing will offer the victim the opportunity for continued tenant-based rental assistance.

6.13 Tenant-Based Vouchers and Maximum Occupancy Standards

Families occupying project-based units who exceed the maximum occupancy standard for the assisted unit as outlined in Section 7.2 of this Administrative Plan may qualify for a tenant-based voucher if:

1. The owner submits a request to the HCV program manager for a tenant-based voucher for the family;
2. The owner certifies that the owner has no units of an appropriate size for the family, and is not likely to have an appropriate sized unit available within six months of the date of the request;

3. The family meets all the requirements for a tenant-based voucher outlined in Chapter 2 of this Administrative Plan; and
4. Pensacola Housing has a voucher available to offer the family.

6.14 Tenant Selection: Waiting Lists

Pensacola Housing will open the waiting list for its PBV program at the time of acceptance of its first PBV project. Separate waiting lists will be maintained for tenant-based assistance and PBV assistance. In compliance with HUD notice PIH-2011-54, all families on Pensacola Housing's tenant-based waiting list will be offered the option to have their names placed on the PBV waiting list when it is opened. The PBV waiting list will be opened, and current applicants notified of their opportunity to request a place on it, in compliance with the procedures detailed in Section 5.3, "Closing and Opening the Waiting List," of this Administrative Plan. Applications for the PBV program waiting list will be taken in compliance with the procedures detailed in Section 5.4, "Taking Applications," of this Administrative Plan.

Owners who receive project-based subsidy from Pensacola Housing may establish their own waiting lists for project-based units, subject to requirements specified in the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract.

6.15 Lease Terms for Residents of Project-Based Properties

The initial lease term for residents of project-based units will be 12 months.

6.16 Eligible Lease-Up Date / No Duplicate Subsidy

For an existing participant moving between buildings or programs, Pensacola Housing will start a new lease no sooner than the first of the month following the last month covered by the previous HAP contract. Pensacola Housing will not make subsidy payments on behalf of the same family to both the former and the new property owner when a family moves mid-month. Nor will Pensacola Housing pay a project-based owner overlapping subsidy for a contracted unit when one family moves out mid-month and another family moves in during the same month.

6.17 Occupancy Standards for Project-Based Properties

The occupancy standards used for project-based vouchers will be the same as those used throughout Pensacola Housing's HCV program. See Section 7.3 of this Administrative Plan.

6.18 Tenant Selection: Admissions Criteria

Applicants for project-based assistance must meet the same eligibility requirements as applicants for HCV tenant-based assistance outlined in Chapter 2 of this Administrative Plan, unless otherwise stated below.

6.18.1 Criminal History

Pensacola Housing will review applicant criminal history to ensure applicants are eligible for subsidy under federal regulations, by applying the HUD-mandated denials for criminal history outlined in Section 2.15 of this Administrative Plan. In addition, owners should screen and select tenants using their own standards for criminal history.

Consistent with provisions in the HUD regulations for “evidence of rehabilitation,” and in order to accommodate individuals with disabilities, Pensacola Housing may give the property owner flexibility to accept applicants with disabilities for subsidized units who have a criminal history that would otherwise disqualify them for assistance. Screening flexibility will be given particularly to project sponsors with demonstrated expertise in serving people with mental illness and/or chemical addictions, and the capacity to provide the needed services for such tenants. Tenant screening flexibility does not extend to applicants who are sex offenders subject to a registration requirement.

Owners must submit their tenant screening and supportive services plan to Pensacola Housing to qualify for additional screening flexibility, and may be required to document the reasons why the owner feels an applicant is likely to live successfully in the project-based unit without serious re-offense, despite serious criminal history.

Owners may allow admission to convicted sex offenders who are Class B and Class C felons subject to time-limited registration requirements, who do not, in the opinion of the owner of the subsidized units, constitute a threat to other residents, the surrounding community, or the public at large.

6.18.2 Other Criteria for Admission

For an applicant who has been previously been assisted under the program and was terminated for violating a family obligation in the last 3 years, Pensacola Housing will allow admission to the project-based program when the applicant has supportive services that will increase the likelihood of successful program participation. This does not apply to program violations where fraud or deception relating to income or household circumstances was a factor in the termination of assistance.

6.18.3 Debt Owed to Pensacola Housing or Another PHA

Applicants for project-based units who owe Pensacola Housing or another PHA money must repay the amounts owed before their application will be approved. However, Pensacola Housing will consider on a case-by-case basis entering into a repayment agreement for amounts owed to Pensacola Housing. Pensacola Housing will only enter into a repayment agreement when the applicant has sufficient income to make regular payments under the agreement.

6.19 HQS and Inspections

Pensacola Housing will examine the proposed site before the proposal selection date. If the units to be assisted already exist, Pensacola Housing will inspect all of the units before the

proposal selection date to determine whether the units substantially comply with HQS. To qualify as existing housing, units must substantially comply with HQS as of the proposal selection date.

Pensacola Housing will inspect each contract unit before execution of a HAP contract. Pensacola Housing will not enter into a HAP contract covering a unit until the unit fully complies with HQS.

Before providing assistance to a new family in a contract unit, Pensacola Housing will inspect the unit. Pensacola Housing will not provide assistance on behalf of the new family until the unit fully complies with HQS.

At least annually during the term of the HAP contract, Pensacola Housing will inspect a random sample, consisting of at least 20 percent of the contract units in each building, to determine if the contract units and the premises are maintained in accordance with HQS. Turnover inspections, as described above, are not counted toward meeting this annual inspection requirement.

If more than 20 percent of the annual sample of inspected contract units in a building fail the initial inspection, Pensacola Housing will reinspect 100 percent of the contract units in the building.

Pensacola Housing will inspect contract units whenever needed to determine that the contract units comply with HQS and that the owner is providing maintenance, utilities, and other services in accordance with the HAP contract. Pensacola Housing will take into account complaints and any other information coming to its attention in scheduling inspections.

Pensacola Housing will conduct re-inspections needed to determine if the owner (or, if applicable, the family) has corrected an HQS violation, and will conduct inspections to determine the basis for exercise of contractual and other remedies for owner or family HQS violations.

In conducting quality control HQS inspections, Pensacola Housing will include a representative sample of both tenant-based and project-based units.

All other procedures and requirements relating to HQS described in Chapter 13 of this Administrative Plan apply to the project-based program.

6.20 Rent Calculations for Tenants

The Minimum Rent policy described in Section 8.3 of this Administrative Plan shall apply to residents of units assisted by project-based vouchers, with the following exceptions:

1. Residents of assisted living facilities subsidized by Medicaid are exempt from the minimum rent policy, and
2. Residents of buildings that provide highly supportive housing and services to the chronically homeless and/or to disabled individuals are exempt from the minimum rent policy unless the building owner elects to impose the minimum rent policy on its own residents, in which case the building owner may impose a minimum rent of up to \$50 toward rent and utilities.

6.20.1 Treatment of Medicaid

Pensacola Housing will calculate the family TTP as described in Chapter 8, with the exception of project-based units providing assisted housing for seniors on Medicaid. For these properties, Medicaid payments made on behalf of residents of such units will be viewed by Pensacola Housing as medical payment deductions, and residents will be considered to have zero income.

6.21 Unit Transfers

Owners may allow a resident of a project-based unit to transfer from one unit to another on the same contract. Under HCV regulations, a transfer from one unit to another is subject to all the requirements and processes of an initial lease-up. The tenant must have a new lease for the new unit. If the transfer is to a unit on a different project-based contract, recertification of eligibility will be required.

6.22 Release of Health-Related Information

Pensacola Housing will not release any health-related information for an assisted resident to a property owner without a specific release from the resident.

6.23 Protection of Revenue in the Event of Reduction in Federal Funds

Pensacola Housing will follow HUD guidelines in responding to federal cuts in Pensacola Housing's HCV budget authority.

In the event that Pensacola Housing anticipates or is informed of federal appropriations reductions in Housing Choice Vouchers that would affect Pensacola Housing's allocation, Pensacola Housing will seek to convene a meeting with affordable housing stakeholders to inform them of potential consequences and to receive input on any additional strategies to adapt to a reduced appropriation level.

6.24 HAP Contract Language Takes Precedence

In the event of a discrepancy between the language of this Administrative Plan and the language of a HAP contract in effect for an assisted property, the HAP contract language will take precedence.