

## TRIBAL HOUSING OFFICE/TDHE ONSITE-INTERVIEW GUIDE

*Note: This is the guide for the interview with officials in the tribal housing office (or TDHE) that administers the IHBG program in each of the 24 tribal areas selected for site visits. The official being interviewed will have already completed a phone survey on similar topics. This in-person interview will allow the interviewer to probe responses in the telephone survey and ask questions about related topics not covered in that survey.*

### **Introduction/Purpose of the Study**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a researcher from the Urban Institute, a non-profit research organization located in Washington, DC. With me today is [name and affiliation]. I'm here today because the Urban Institute, on behalf of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is studying the housing conditions and needs of Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians across the United States. The study will describe housing needs and socioeconomic conditions in Indian Country. It will provide HUD with information on how current programs are operating, the extent to which housing needs are being addressed, and demographic and economic trends. It will also answer questions about home ownership in Indian Country and the impacts of the recent financial crisis. This is a three and a half year study that includes analysis of census and administrative data, surveys and in-person interviews, and selected case studies.

Your tribe/village is one of 24 sites we are visiting in to conduct these in-person interviews with tribal leaders, Tribal Housing Offices and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHE), and program staff. Interviews will cover the way the tribal staff is organized and its relationship to the TDHE; tribal staff views on the performance of the TDHE; perceptions of social/economic conditions; housing preferences; housing conditions; and key challenges. These interviews will provide important qualitative information on local institutional arrangements, particularly as they relate to housing, housing problems and the implementation of housing programs.

We will use what we learn today and from other interviews to contribute to a report on housing conditions and needs among Native Americans. This report will be submitted to HUD to inform the federal government of housing challenges.

### **Confidentiality Statement** *[Interviewer must read this]:*

Before beginning the interview, I (we) want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and remind you that your participation is voluntary. I (we) know that you are busy and will try to be as brief as possible. We have many questions and are going to talk to many different people, so please do not feel as though we expect you to be able to answer every question. The interview today should last about an hour. This interview is not part of an audit or a compliance review. We are interested in learning about your ideas, experiences, and opinions about

housing in your tribal area/village. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think.

In addition, before we start, I want to let you know that although we will take notes during these interviews, information is never repeated with the name of the respondent in any reports or in any discussions with supervisors, colleagues, or HUD. When we write our reports and discuss our findings, information from all the people we speak with is compiled and presented so that no one person can be identified.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

### **A. Organizational characteristics and history**

1. Describe your position with this organization. (Probe: How long have you held this role? How did you acquire this position?)
2. Describe the organizational structure (leadership; staffing; relationships with tribal leaders, other entities, etc.). How has this structure changed over time? Describe the structure of tribal government and how your organization relates to it.
3. Describe the history of this organization's leadership. How is the Executive Director selected and how many have been in charge since your organization first began administering IHBG funds?
4. What is the experience and expertise of the organization's (a) leadership, (b) staff, (c) advisors, and (d) partners?
5. What is the history of your organization and its involvement in administering IHBG funds?
6. Do you manage funds for more than one tribal area? [If YES] Please describe the process for administering funds for two or more areas. (Probe: What are the challenges and benefits?)
7. What other groups and leaders do you work with regularly in carrying out your mission? Which ones are most important to you and why?

### **B. Contracting out**

1. Why has your organization decided to either contract out, or not contract out, various functions?
2. (If not covered above): What are the advantages and disadvantages of contracting out a particular function?
3. What has been the result of contracting out various functions (by type)?

### **C. Organizational improvements**

1. (Of needed changes identified in the telephone survey): What is the organization's highest priority for improvement?
2. What are the challenges to making this improvement?
3. What is the consequence if this improvement is not made?

### **D. Training**

1. What types of training have you and your staff taken advantage of over the past 3 years? Tell me about each of the providers and how you rate their value.
2. (If multiple training needs were identified in the telephone survey): What is the highest priority need, and why?
3. Why is this training not now available?
4. What is the consequence of such training not being offered/available?

### **E. Perceptions of social/economic conditions, trends and issues in the area**

1. This is a map of your reservation. Will you please describe the geography of the reservation and how it varies in terms of physical terrain, climate, settlement patterns, access to transportation, shopping, employment, education, etc.?

(After the above, do the following only for those that have a Indian Service Area outside of reservation boundaries) This is map your service area outside of reservation boundaries in which you also provide IHBG funding. Will you please similarly describe the geography of this outside service area: how it varies in terms of physical terrain, climate, settlement patterns, access to transportation, shopping, employment, education, etc.?

2. What is your overall assessment of the economic conditions in the area? (Probe: Have you witnessed an impact of the recession on employment, economic activity, and need for housing? Please describe the changes over the past 3-4 years.)
3. What are the major sources of employment in your area? Have there been any significant changes in the tribal economy or tribal economic development, over the past 5 years, for example new industries, gaming, new businesses or employers?

[If YES] How have these affected the region?

4. Describe your perception of poverty and unemployment in this area? Is this a general problem? Has this changed over time?

#### **F. Living on or off the reservation**

1. Over the past year, have more of your tribal members been moving off the reservation or back onto the reservation? If they move off, what are the different places they move to?
2. At this point, what do you think are the comparative advantages for them of living on or off the reservation? Has this changed since the recession and foreclosure crisis and, if so, how?
3. How do these trends influence the way you administer the IHBG program? Do you see the need to shift assistance to different locations in the coming years? If so, how would you accomplish that?

#### **G. Condition of assisted and private housing**

1. How would you characterize the physical condition of your assisted housing properties compared to private housing? (Ask separately for rental and homeownership.) (If difference between assisted and private): Why are there differences? (If assisted housing deteriorates faster): Why?
2. (See telephone survey for housing quality standards used to inspect/assess units) Are you satisfied with the procedures and quality standards you use for inspecting/assessing the condition of your properties? (If not): Why?
3. What tradeoffs does your organization face with respect to (1) the need to maintain your existing stock and (2) the need to develop new housing? Which is the higher priority, and why?

4. Please describe the process you use to assess the physical condition of your assisted housing (e.g., formal inspections, complaints, etc.). Are there any problems with this process?
5. Are there subgroups of residents in this service area that are specifically in need of housing assistance, such as homeless, youth, substance abusers, single parent households, or the elderly?

[If YES] Describe the conditions of these groups.

6. Please discuss the need for housing assistance in your service area. (Probe: Are there many people waiting for assistance through your organization. Has this grown over time?)
7. What types of housing are in need? What types of housing do you support through IHBG funds?

#### **H. Resident satisfaction with assisted housing**

1. How do you generally communicate with and get feedback from residents?
2. How satisfied are most assisted households are with their housing?
3. What are the most common complaints made by assisted housing residents?
4. What is the basis for these complaints?
5. How valid or reasonable do you believe the complaints are?
6. What is being done to respond to the complaints?

#### **I. IHBG program planning**

1. Please describe the process you go through to determine how to allocate your IHBG funds. (Probe, if necessary: How do you decide what your top priorities are when preparing your annual plan? What information is factored into these decisions?)
2. What is the organization's rationale for, and strategy behind, the overall spending plan? (See telephone survey for spending strategy.)
3. Is your plan currently on track to accomplishing its objectives/targets? (If not): Why is this the case?

4. What are the allocation priorities of each of the groups you consult with when preparing your Indian Housing Plan? (See telephone survey for groups consulted.)
5. How do the funding priorities of the groups you consult with compare with your overall spending strategy? (See telephone survey for spending strategy.)
6. Besides housing development and operations, what other activities do you support with your IHBG funds? (Probe, if necessary: counseling; infrastructure; community programs; special needs populations, etc.)
7. How, if at all, have the organization's allocation priorities shifted since 2003 with respect to:
  - Administrative vs. direct service expenditures?
  - Operations/maintenance vs. production/development?
  - Rental vs. homeownership?

**J. Partnering with other groups**

1. (See types of other public agencies the TDHE partners with from the telephone survey.)
2. In addition to partnering with other public agencies to provide housing services in conjunction with IHBG funds, do you partner with any other types of groups? (If so): Which ones, and for what purposes/activities?
3. Considering each partner group separately, do you generally benefit or not from having such partnerships?
4. Would you like to do more such partnering or to be in a position to do less?
5. (If not answered above): What are the primary results of having such partnerships?

**K. Other housing assistance programs operating in the area**

1. Please describe the other agencies operating housing programs in your region and the programs they offer.

[If there are other programs] Can you describe the level of activity of these other programs and how they compare to IHBG? (Probe: How many households are served? Do they serve the same, less than, more than the IHBG program? (Than your organization overall, if you operate other programs?))

- 2 Do you work with any other agencies such as another tribe, BIA, USDA, state agency, or Housing Authority in providing services?

[If YES] Describe these agencies and discuss your partnerships with each of them.

[If no] What barriers prevent you from partnering with other organizations? What changes can be made within this organization, ONAP/ HUD that would allow more freedom in collaborating?

- 3 Besides IHBG funds, do you operate other housing programs. [If YES] Describe each program and approximately how many households are served.

#### **L. Challenges in housing development**

1. What is your strategy for developing new housing effectively in this reservation? What aspects are most important? What approaches and techniques have proved most successful? Can you tell me more about innovative practices you have employed?
2. (See telephone survey for changes in development costs.) How and to what degree have changes in development costs over the past three years affected your organization's ability to build new housing units on tribal lands?
3. (See telephone survey for factors affecting development of new housing.) Aside from development costs, what are the most significant factors that affect your ability to develop new housing? (Probe, if necessary, regarding: size and/or type of terrain in the service area; issues with tribal land, infrastructure, climate, local political environment, or local construction or finance industries; other factors.)
4. (If land assembly identified as a problem in telephone survey) Can you tell me more specifically why land assembly is a problem for you in the IHBG program in this reservation? (probe as needed)
5. (If infrastructure provision identified as a problem in telephone survey) Can you tell me more specifically why infrastructure provision is a problem for you in the IHBG program in this reservation? (probe as needed)
6. If regulations and processes identified as a problem in telephone survey) Can you tell me more specifically why regulations and approval processes are is a problem for you in the IHBG program in this reservation? (probe as needed)

#### **M. Challenges in housing management and maintenance**

1. What is your strategy for performing housing management and maintenance functions effectively? What aspects are most important? What approaches and techniques have proved most successful? Can you tell me more about innovative practices you have employed?

(See telephone survey for responses on factors affecting management and maintenance and reaffirm answers with respondent).

2. (If lack of staff resources or training identified as a problem in telephone survey) Can you tell me more specifically how lack of staff resources or training affect your ability to perform housing management and maintenance effectively? (probe as needed)
3. (If criminal activity identified as a problem in telephone survey) Can you tell me more specifically how criminal activity affects your ability to perform housing management and maintenance effectively? (probe as needed)
4. (If failure of tenants to live up to responsibilities re: unit maintenance and rent payments identified as a problem in telephone survey) Can you tell me more specifically how tenants failing to live up to their responsibilities affects your ability to perform housing management and maintenance effectively? (probe as needed)

#### **N. Leveraging and private market development**

1. What efforts have you made to secure funds from other government programs to support development projects you initiate? How have these efforts worked so far? What are the major barriers in leveraging public funding in this way?
2. In what types of projects have you been able to leverage public funding in this way? Which of these projects have been most successful and why? (For projects that appear innovative, probe to get ample description of approach).
3. What efforts have you made to secure funds from private sources to support development projects you initiate? How have these efforts worked so far? What are the major barriers in leveraging private funding in this way?
4. In what types of projects have you been able to leverage private funding in this way? Which of these projects have been most successful and why? (For projects that appear innovative, probe to get ample description of approach).

5. Has private market activity (businesses as well as housing development) been expanding in this reservation? If so, what are the main reasons? What has the tribal government done to support it? What more should the tribe do?
6. If private market activity has not been expanding in this reservation, what are the reasons? What do you think the tribe could or should do about it?

**O. NAHASDA issues**

1. Please discuss your impressions of NAHASDA. From your perspective, what are its good and bad points?
2. Are you in a position to be able to compare NAHASDA with what had been the case prior to NAHASDA--that is, when there were several separate HUD housing assistance programs? (If so):
  - Are total funding levels any different (holding constant for inflation)?
  - Is there more or less burden on the TDHE?
  - Is there more or less flexibility for the TDHE?

(For each of the above): Has this been for the better or for the worse?

3. What would you change about NAHASDA if you were in a position to do so?
4. (If not answered): What specific rules and/or procedures would you change, and how?