

B1. The narrative provides the MTW agency with an opportunity to explain to the public, including the families that it serves, its MTW plans for the fiscal year and its short and long-term goals.

The MTW agency should provide a description of how it seeks to further the three MTW statutory objectives during the coming Fiscal Year. Those three MTW statutory objectives are: (1) to reduce cost and achieve greater cost effectiveness in federal expenditures; (2) to give incentives to families with children whose heads of household are either working, seeking work, or are participating in job training, educational or other programs that assist in obtaining employment and becoming economically self-sufficient; and (3) to increase housing choices for low-income families.

The Washington County CDA 2025 MTW plan is to simplify how utility allowances are calculated and eliminate utility reimbursement payments. These two initiatives will further the objectives of greater effectiveness in federal expenditures and increase housing choice for low-income families. The plan is to simplify the utility allowance schedule with one amount depending on bedroom size only. An analysis of current allowances will determine the amounts used for each bedroom-sized unit and will be reviewed yearly.

Over the past few years, the CDA has been experiencing changes in how landlords charge tenants for utilities. Some are combining multiple utilities together and charging one additional fee. These fees are in addition to the rent and are included in the lease but do not fit under standard utility amounts. Moving to a set utility amount based only on bedroom size streamlines the gross rent calculation for participants moving and port-in's giving families. Participants will be able to search for a unit knowing exactly what the gross rent can be within the payment standard for unit size.

Eliminating utility reimbursement payments will create efficiency and cost savings. Currently, 95% of participants are eligible for additional Energy Assistance resources through state funded services. The 5% not eligible for other resources are over income for the assistance. The participant impact is minimal with an average of 7% receiving a utility reimbursement monthly and of those, 26% of the reimbursements are between one to seventeen dollars.

As a small agency in a large Metro area where over half of the participants are port-in's, the CDA continues to look for changes that are straight forward to communicate with the surrounding agencies and port-in participants. Through the Resident Advisory Board and additional MTW tenant meetings, the CDA learned that any changes to the program make participants uneasy and need to be done thoughtfully and communicated openly. The 2024 plan was to continue with the changes outlined in the 2022 plan.

The changes that have been implemented include the goals of efficiency, cost effectiveness, and increasing housing options for low-income families.

1.o

- Increasing maximum rent to 50% at move-in. The goal of this initiative is to give participants increased housing options. Increasing the initial rent burden gives families additional choice in units to rent that would otherwise be unaffordable. Washington County is an area of opportunity with excellent schools, employment opportunities and safe neighborhoods for families. This gives voucher holders the same opportunities as non-assisted tenants.

Since January 2022 nineteen families have used the increased maximum rent to move into the county. The average percentage used by these nineteen families was 42% of income. This flexibility gave these families the opportunity to move into safe, decent housing with opportunities for jobs and for children to attend quality schools. Rents have continued to increase over the past year making it harder and harder for voucher holders to find housing. No changes to the initiative have been made since implementation.

1.v and w and

- The Agency allows self-certification of assets less than \$50,000. In addition, the Agency does not include any income from those assets in the calculation of tenant rent. This initiative meets the goal of program efficiency by decreasing staff time collating documentation for annual recertifications.

A self-certification form was developed for participants to sign confirming they have assets less than \$50,000. Staff save time trying to collect information from tenants. No changes have been made to policy since implementation.

3.c

The Agency allows self-certification of assets less than \$50,000.

No changes have been made during the past year to this initiative. Participants self-certifying assets eliminates the need to collect bank statements and other asset documentation creating efficiency and time saving for both participants and staff.

2.d

- The Agency performs a rent reasonable test using GoSection8.com on all units, including those owned by the agency. Prior to this initiative, the Agency used two different rent reasonable systems. This activity has contributed to the initiative of efficiency by saving the agency time and money by moving to one system.

Quality assurance testing is done monthly on 5% of units to assure the third-party system is accurate. To date, the quality assurance test has shown no issues with the third-party system.

- Self-certification for initial move-in inspection. The landlord self-certification of non-life-threatening deficiencies at move-in has been working well, eliminating delays for starting rent payment due to inspections. We continue to monitor this initiative for effectiveness. A few landlords have expressed concerns with the system, all but one has been satisfied with the explanation and have agreed with the system.

5.c

- The Housing Assistance department has been conducting HQS inspections on Agency owned buildings since September 2022. The same standards are used for all units inspected with no differential treatment for Agency owned buildings. The Agency moved to a third-party inspector in 2023, creating an additional separation from the inspection on agency owned units. No concerns have been raised by tenants to date.

The Agency conducts HQS on units owned by the housing authority. The Agency has a third-party management company that provides property management including maintenance services offering a degree of separation between the Agency and the property manager. The activity is cost effective, allowing the same inspector to conduct all needed inspections for the program.

eliminating the need to contract with an outside person or agency to conduct inspections on Agency owned properties. This activity also gives the Agency access to units and better

- monitor conditions of the properties.

Please describe the alternative method of calculating the utility allowances. Please explain how the method of calculating utility allowances is different from the standard method and what objective the MTW agency aims to achieve by using this alternative method.

The Agency will use an alternative method of calculating utility allowances by using one standard allowance based on bedroom size regardless of tenant utility responsibility and/or unit type. The Agency will continue to use the lesser of unit size or voucher unit size. The utility allowances were established by determining the standard utilities charged per bedroom size and building type. It was determined that 0–2-bedroom units' standard utilities were gas heat and all electric in multi-family units. The three- and four-bedroom units' standard utilities were gas heat, all electric and gas water heating for townhomes. Five and above bedroom units included gas heat, all electric, gas water heating, water, sewer, and trash for single-family homes. The amounts used to determine the allowance will be reviewed annually. The alternative method of calculating utility allowances

meets the objectives of reducing cost and achieve greater cost effectiveness in federal expenditures and providing low-income families greater housing choice. Staff time will be saved in the calculation of utilities and families moving will know up front what gross rent is affordable.

Utility Allowance Chart

Zero bedrooms	One bedroom	Two bedrooms	Three bedrooms	Four bedrooms	Five bedrooms	Six bedrooms
\$81	\$98	\$120	\$206	\$245	\$420	\$457

Safe Harbor Waivers seeking HUD Approval:

The MTW Operations Notice describes a simplified process for MTW agencies to implement MTW activities outside of the safe harbors described in Appendix I. For each Safe Harbor Waiver request, a document that includes the following information must be provided: (a) the name and number of the MTW Waiver and associated activity for which the MTW agency is seeking to expand the safe harbor, (b) the specific safe harbor and its implementing regulation, (c) the proposed MTW activity the MTW agency wishes to implement via this Safe Harbor Waiver, (d) a description of the local issue and why such an expansion is needed to implement the MTW activity, (e) an impact analysis, (f) a description of the hardship policy for the MTW activity, if applicable, and (g) a copy of all comments received at the public hearing along with the MTW agency’s description of how the comments were considered, as a required attachment to the MTW Supplement.

1.n. - Utility Reimbursements (HCV)

Describe the MTW activity, the MTW agency’s goal(s) for the MTW activity, and, if applicable, how the MTW activity contributes to a larger initiative.

The Agency will eliminate utility reimbursements payments for Housing Choice Voucher participants. Under this initiative, the Agency goal is to save time calculating, tracking and issuing payment for utilities.