

## Tenant Selection Plan Best Practices City of Madison

The City of Madison requires a tenant or resident selection plan for projects receiving federal funds and adherence to all state, local, and federal fair housing requirements.

Below is a set of best practices that may assist housing developers and property managers in drafting a Tenant Selection Plan (TSP). These best practices serve to align the City's goals with those of the project and to ensure Madison residents have reduced barriers to fair housing choice. They are not intended to be a complete or exhaustive list. In creating your project's Tenant Selection Plan, housing developers and property managers should consult with your attorney to ensure that your plan complies with all applicable laws and regulations, program requirements, and the Fair Housing Act.

The TSP should clearly identify the project's criteria regarding the following categories:

- **Income criteria**, including providing clear information on minimum and maximum income requirements of applicants and the processes and criteria used to evaluate applications. Identify the **unit mix**, i.e., the quantity of housing units that are available for rent at each level of income-restriction (e.g. 30% of the Area Median Income, 50% of the Area Median Income, 60% of the Area Median Income). The TSP should also indicate the rent structure that identifies the rental rates of units by bedroom size and income distribution.
- **Occupancy criteria**, including defining the minimum number of persons allowed to occupy each unit in the project, subject to local, state, and federal laws. Each unit should be occupied by a minimum of one person per bedroom at the time of occupancy.
- **Credit score and/or report**. The TSP, marketing, and application materials should include a section noting whether or not a credit report will be ordered. The housing provider must provide a notice to applicants if adverse action is taken based on information obtained from the credit report.
- Landlord or **housing history**, including eviction judgment.
- **Waitlist process** and waitlist preference criteria, if applicable.
- **Notice of denial**, which includes a written explanation of the TSP criteria the applicant failed to meet. The notice of denial should inform applicants how to seek an appeal of the housing provider's decision.
- **Compliance with the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)**, which provides that an applicant may not be denied admission on the basis that the applicant is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, if the applicant or tenant otherwise qualifies for admission.
- Tenant selection and application **criteria for supportive housing units**.
- **Criminal and felony convictions**, including defining the number of years that will be considered in a criminal background search. A housing provider's TSP should clearly define what information will be collected for the use of screening an applicant's criminal history:
  - It is unlawful for a housing provider to reject applicants solely based on arrest records (without conviction)

- Housing providers should distinguish between convictions for **criminal conduct that indicates a demonstrable risk to resident safety and/or property** and criminal conduct that does not.
  - Screening policies should take into account the nature and severity of a conviction and the amount of time that has passed since the criminal conduct occurred
  - Housing providers should take into account evidence that the individual has maintained a good tenant history before and/or after the criminal conduct occurred.
- **Preferences:**

The TSP should identify the **age-restriction**, or lack thereof, of tenancy for the project. Acceptable age-restrictions may include “family” housing for units without an age-restriction; “active-adult” or “senior” housing for units restricted to households with at least one member aged 55 and above; and “elderly” housing for units restricted to households aged 62 and above.

The TSP should establish resident preferences that do not diminish or obstruct the Project’s fair housing obligations. Both existing tenant preferences and new tenant preferences should be outlined in the TSP. The TSP should identify the populations targeted to lease supportive services units in the Project, if applicable. The Project’s waitlist must indicate if certain tenant populations will be given a higher priority for units than others.

The City of Madison and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) stress the importance of applying TSP standards consistently to all applicants.