

The Agency has attempted to compile a list of best practices observed by management agents that work with PHFA. Please note that the list is not all inclusive or in order of importance. The ideas presented are merely another tool to assist management agents in the challenging role of trying to keep units fully occupied by tenants so the property can pay the bills. Feel free to contact PHFA with any comments or suggestions for improving this list.

1. Establish a preventative maintenance program. Good tenants want to live in a building that is properly maintained. Contact your Agency's technical services representative if you require assistance in establishing a program for your property.
2. Establish a plan to manage the property's capital repairs and replacement needs. The Agency maintains a reserve for replacement spreadsheet by property that identifies what items are eligible for RFR replacement and when they should be replaced. Ask for a copy of this schedule from your property's technical services representative and utilize it to budget capital improvements. The plan should also include upgrades that encourage investing in technology that will lead to future energy savings.
3. Train staff. All staff should be properly trained and receive periodic continuing education. Numerous organizations provide training including PHFA, Quadel, NAMA, etc. Insist that staff take advantage of training opportunities. The training of on-site staff is an allowable project operating expense. PHFA conferences and both PennDel AHMA in the east and PAHMA in the west offer excellent training opportunities throughout the year. Attendance and membership should be mandatory. Support staff such as the property's accounting staff and regional managers/ regional maintenance personnel should also receive training. These costs are not permitted operating expenses and should be paid from the management fee collected.
4. Pay your staff an appropriate wage. It is extremely difficult to obtain good staff. Once you do it pays to try to keep them. Staff turnover can be very costly and time consuming for a management company. Treat your employees with respect by paying them an appropriate wage with benefits. This is often an area where management agents look first when a property starts having cash flow difficulties. If you are unable to provide pay increases to your staff, work with them to provide compensation in other ways, such as paying more of their benefits or offering incentives for reaching certain goals. A disgruntled employee can damage a property's reputation quickly.
5. Have a written policy in place to manage the turnover of vacant units. Vacant units can be turned over in 3-5 days with a plan of action in place. Schedule a unit inspection once the notice of lease termination has been received so the work

required upon move-out can be determined. Once the scope of work is determined, coordinate with the maintenance personnel, painters, carpet installers, and any other necessary repair persons, installers, and janitorial staff to get the work done timely and quickly upon move-out. Follow-up and inspect each phase of the work.

6. Have a policy in place to keep the property fully occupied. Do you need to advertise in the local newspapers? Would an “open house” be of benefit? If excessive turnover is a problem, why are people moving out? Revisit the screening criteria if turnover appears excessive. General occupancy properties may wish to consider a preference for working families. Develop a program for tenant retention that addresses the cause of the turnover. Do exit interviews with residents who are leaving. Contact your property’s PHFA and/or HUD housing management representative if you need assistance in setting up your retention plan. Establish and maintain a waiting list. Review the list and purge those that are no longer interested every six months. Finally, any vacancy should be listed on the Pennsylvania Affordable Apartment Locator (PAL) maintained by PHFA as soon as it occurs.
7. Establish written eviction procedures. Legal expenses can seriously hurt the property’s bottom line if tenants are evicted without following proper procedure. Have an attorney review the policy before putting it in place and make sure that all property managers are aware of the policy and follow it.
8. Create a physical environment that supports a sense of community within the development.
  - Establish after school programs if you have a general occupancy property with numerous children.
  - Establish a computer center that the residents can use. Contact HUD for assistance in establishing a Neighborhood Network Computer Center.
  - Create common areas within buildings that tenants can utilize for meetings.
  - Provide landscaping and recreational areas that tenants enjoy and utilize.
  - Plan activities that meet the needs of the resident population such as picnics or bingo.
9. Provide resident services that foster a sense of community
  - Establish services that will improve day-to-day life such as offering a meals program and/or van service in an elderly building. A general occupancy building could provide after school programs, job training, and/or life skills training. Identify the types of services needed and work to fill those needs. Contact the Agency’s housing services coordinator assigned to your property for assistance.
  - Provide recreational activities

10. Integrate the property with the surrounding community through partnerships with other organizations and agencies. An elderly building can have a direct relationship with the local senior center or a local hospital to provide blood pressure screenings and other medical services. Both elderly and general occupancy properties can often form partnerships with local colleges.
11. Secure the property. Develop effective relationships with the local police department. Work for increased police visibility if security is a concern. Make improvements to the physical appearance of the site to improve security. Keeping bushes trimmed, adding lighting and motion sensors, and installing security cameras can do wonders to deter crime. Contact your PHFA technical services representative or your HUD representative for assistance with paying for security, especially capital upgrades.
12. Work to obtain yearly rent increases. Tax credit properties should expect to increase rents yearly. Tenants should get used to the concept of increasing rents each year. Section 8 properties may be limited in their ability to increase rents. Currently, only those properties with total housing expense less than fair market rents can request and obtain a yearly rent increase if they obtain an AAF rent increase. All other Section 8 AAF rent increase properties are required to obtain a rent comparability study to determine if a rent increase is warranted. A property manager should check yearly with neighboring market rate properties to try to determine if the property's rents are comparable. If rents are close to the neighboring market rate properties, then a rent comparability study may be warranted. Please contact your property's PHFA financial analyst if you have any questions regarding a rent increase on a Section 8 property that receives an AAF rent increase.
13. Review real estate taxes on a yearly basis for appropriate assessment. State legislation was passed to assist tax credit properties. The value of the tax credits may not be considered in the assessment on these properties. Please contact your PHFA financial analyst if you have any questions regarding your current taxes.
14. Review your insurance bills yearly. Put your insurance out for bid each year to ensure you obtain the best price for your property. Contact the PHFA insurance specialist if you have any concerns that you are getting the best price or if you need the names of insurance carriers to obtain quotes.