

Cambridge Housing Authority: Mapping the Voucher Issuance Process



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) is responsible for developing and managing affordable housing for residents of Cambridge, and administers several state and federal housing programs. This report maps the process of issuing mobile rental vouchers (specifically, the CHA's Moving to Work Housing Choice Voucher program (Section 8), HCV) and identifies costs at each stage of the process.

Through conducting qualitative interviews with CHA Leasing Office staff and analyzing data from monthly reports and salary schedules, our team determined that there were 6 key steps in the process of HCV issuance: (i) Submit Application, (ii) Process Application, (iii) Screen Applicants, (iv) Briefing, (v) Inspection, and (vi) Lease Up. Reporting is an additional key internal step that occurs throughout the process. Subsections in each step are also analyzed and mapped in detail. Our team also built an Excel Cost Calculator model to help CHA measure the costs of each step and sub-step per month as well as per voucher issued, and to understand the time spent by various Leasing Department staff in completing different tasks. The Excel model is intended to be a "living document" and can be modified and revised over time; additionally, the cost data in the model can be used to benchmark and measure future improvement to the voucher issuance process.

The final section of this report contains recommendations and next steps. Four immediate steps are identified and described: (i) Accurately measure staff time at each step by standardizing metrics and developing a user-friendly tracking tool, (ii) Modify the Excel Cost Calculator to accurately reflect staff time inputs and reflect monthly variation, (iii) Use the updated Excel Cost Calculator to determine baseline costs of the voucher issuance process and benchmark future improvements, and (iv) Optimize staff utilization based on analysis of the administrative costs of various steps of the voucher issuance process.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) is a government entity established under state law in 1935 by the City of Cambridge. Its mission is to develop and manage affordable housing for the residents of Cambridge: CHA owns and manages over 2,700 housing units and administers over 2,300 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV). CHA is also one of twenty-nine Moving to Work (MTW) agencies nationwide. The MTW program (administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development) allows CHA greater flexibility in designing programs to meet the needs of Cambridge residents.

Our research specifically examines the MTW Housing Choice Voucher program, also known as “Section 8.” This program is open to individuals earning up to 50% of the Area Median Income for Cambridge; the limit is set yearly by HUD, and in 2010 is \$32,150 for an individual and \$45,900 for a family of four. Individuals are able to rent their own apartments in the private market and pay around 30% of their income towards rent, with CHA covering the remainder through monthly checks sent directly to the landlord. The Payment Standard determines the maximum rent that CHA will pay for an apartment. The Standard is updated yearly by CHA and varies by the size of the apartment (in 2010, the Payment Standard for a 1 bedroom was \$1,685).

The goal of this project was to gain insight into the HCV issuance process and answer two key questions for CHA:

- (i) What is the Housing Choice Voucher issuance process?
- (ii) What are the costs at each stage of the process?

As CHA noted in the initial project meeting, HUD is interested in the potential cost savings CHA can achieve by developing innovations and improvements in its voucher programs. However, to date, neither CHA nor any other housing authority has established the baseline administrative cost of issuing a voucher – thus, it has been impossible to accurately identify potential cost savings of an innovative program.

The costs of each step have not previously been measured, making it extremely challenging to understand where inefficiencies might exist and how they could be eliminated. Financial costs are generated by different means along the process, so reducing costs and inefficiencies may require a multi-pronged approach. For instance, costs arise from the time spent by different Leasing Office staff at each step, as well as from the repetition of certain steps (for example, rescheduling no-show clients, or contacting clients who are missing required documents).

Through analyzing CHA’s voucher issuance process and understanding the cost per voucher at each sub-step, it is possible to not only reduce inefficiencies in issuing vouchers, but to use current costs as a baseline for future improvements and innovations. Mapping the process – and identifying and fixing inefficiencies – can also yield internal and external benefits. Internal benefits may include increased efficiency, lower costs, more productive staff, and improved morale. External customers may also experience greater satisfaction and perhaps shorter wait times. Simply put, process improvements will help CHA better support its mission of developing and managing affordable housing for the residents of Cambridge.

II. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Data: Our methodology for collecting qualitative data consisted primarily of group and individual interviews. We first conducted a group interview with key staff members involved in the voucher and leasing process: Catherine Scrive, (Leasing Officer I), Matina Williams, Kunthea Ly (Leasing Officers II), Yuen Ting Tang (Deputy Director of Leasing), and Angelica Benzan (Director of Leasing). We prepared a thorough list of interview questions including broad conceptual questions about the process, as well as specific questions about each staff members' roles and responsibilities. After the group interview, we conducted individual interviews with Benzan, Scrive, Williams, Tang, Ly, and Michaelle SaintFort (Leasing Officer I) in order to hone in on specific details of the process (i.e. the time taken for and the number of clients involved in each sub-step of the process, as well as the number of staff involved in each sub-step). Answers to time questions were often estimates at best.

Quantitative Data: We also requested and obtained quantitative data from CHA in the form of monthly reports, salary schedules for leasing department employees, and the budget of the leasing department. This data was instrumental to calculating administrative (staff) costs of the voucher issuance process.

Process Mapping: The group and individual interview information helped us understand and map the complete voucher issuance process from the initial CHA application to the Lease Up step, and also illuminated specific details of each part of the process step. This information is captured in an overview process map (see Exhibit 3 in the Appendix) and the detailed process flow diagrams (see Exhibit 4 in the Appendix).

Excel Cost Calculator: Using the data gathered through interviews, process mapping, and CHA's quantitative data (monthly reports and salary schedules), we created an Excel Cost Calculator model to measure staff costs incurred at each step of the voucher issuance process. The Cost Calculator combines the time devoted to each process step, with direct salary and benefit costs to attach a dollar value to each task in the voucher issuance process. This model will assist CHA in understanding the administrative cost of issuing a voucher.

III. TOOLS

In order to clarify the voucher process and identify recommendations, we created two sets of tools: process maps and an Excel Cost Calculator model. Given the aforementioned challenges in accurately costing out the voucher process, the cost estimates presented in this report are estimates. The process maps and cost calculator will be valuable tools for CHA moving forward, as they are living documents that can and should be adapted by CHA as the agency improves cost measurement practices.

➤ Process Maps

The overall process map provides a simplified, bird's-eye view of the voucher process. It communicates the complexities of larger process steps and their relation to the entire process. The detailed process maps break down each process step into its activities, and show the relationship between CHA Leasing Department staff, the client, the landlord, and external stakeholders as they relate to process flow. These maps can help CHA identify potential bottlenecks, redundancies and/or inefficiencies. These maps also provide leasing department staff with a visual that more clearly communicates how their role(s) fit into the overall process.

➤ Excel Cost Calculator

The process maps enabled us to create an Excel Cost Calculator model that assigns costs to processes and activities. The Cost Calculator lists each process step by activity on the Y axis, and employees involved in the process on the X axis. For each activity, we identified which staff members are involved, and entered input measurements of hours per client and/or hours per activity, as well as number of clients and/or number of times the activity occurs per month. The model then calculates the total number of hours spent and the total number of clients processed through each step per month. Employees were categorized by level and pay scale, including the CHA benefit rate, to assign a numerical cost to staff time for each step of the process. The model allows for per client cost, per activity cost, per employee cost, total costs for each step, and total aggregate costs. We intend the tool to be used on a monthly basis to account for monthly fluctuations in gathering longitudinal data for benchmarking.

The Cost Calculator model easily calculates two key data points:

- The first sheet calculates the administrative costs (direct staff costs) *per month*, based on staff salary schedules and benefit rate, time spent, and client volume.
- The second sheet calculates the administrative costs (direct staff costs) *per voucher issued*, based on staff salary schedules and benefit rate and the time spent at each step of the process to issue one voucher.

It is important to note that this model does not account for indirect administrative costs (overhead). This includes categories such as rent, materials, printing, and travel. A very rough way to estimate these indirect administrative costs is to estimate the monthly overhead costs at one twelfth of the Leasing Department's annual administrative budget (\$367,599 annually, or approximately \$30,600 per month). However, the process of issuing vouchers accounts for only a portion of the Leasing Department's total workload; so ideally the *voucher issuance* overhead budget should be allocated proportionally. In order to account for overhead costs in measuring the overall administrative cost of issuing vouchers, CHA will need to determine the appropriate proportion of the Leasing Department's overhead budget to include. For example, if CHA determines that the voucher issuance process accounts for 40 percent of the Leasing Department's work, the proportional monthly overhead costs of the voucher issuance process would be \$12,240.

IV. ANALYSIS: VOUCHER ISSUANCE PROCESS STEPS

The process mapping component of this project helped answer one of two critical questions for CHA: What is the Housing Choice Vouchers issuance process? Gaining a clear understanding of the process is critical to answering CHA's second question: What are the costs at each stage of the process? Obtaining quantitative data about the administrative costs of the process will give CHA a baseline against which to make and measure cost effective adjustments to the process in the future.

Several challenges arose in mapping the seven major steps of the process as well as the detailed sub-steps within each step. First, CHA had already mapped out the inspection step, but had never before mapped the entire process from the application to the issuance of the first rent check. The absence of foundational work on this project both at CHA and other housing authorities made it difficult to navigate how to appropriately map the seven steps and their sub-steps. Second, the lack of a standardized macro-level framework for the process made it difficult for staff members to speak consistently about the steps and sub-steps of the process.

The following section describes the purpose of each of the seven steps and the general operations of each step in the voucher issuance system. More detail is included in the process flow diagrams (see Exhibit 2 in the appendix).

➤ **Step 1: Submit Application**

Purpose: Clients submit a voucher application to CHA to signal their interest in the program. This step helps CHA begin to collect information on the applicant which will later be used in the screening process.

Analysis: At this point, demand for vouchers dramatically exceeds the supply. CHA maintains a waitlist which currently has 13,502 households on it, with wait time ranging from two to ten years. CHA now faces such a high demand that it can no longer place applicants on the waitlist. When it was open, clients were automatically placed on the waitlist.

➤ **Step 2: Process Application**

Purpose: After clients on the waitlist move forward in the voucher program, the voucher system requires a substantial amount of paperwork; a whole step is dedicated to processing applications. CHA staff begins to gather information about clients, which will eventually be utilized to evaluate whether clients qualify for the voucher program.

Analysis: Vouchers are sporadically issued by CHA in bulk, depending on CHA's federal voucher allotment and clients who exit the program. When this transfer takes place, there is a peak in activity for CHA. The Director of the Leasing Department selects clients from the waitlist based on a preference system. CHA first notifies the clients who are withdrawn from the waitlist by sending "update" or "invitation" letters. The letters request confirmation from the clients that they want to continue with the voucher application process. CHA receives response letters from about 25% of clients either accepting or declining the opportunity to move forward in the process. Clients who do not respond are removed from the process. For those who accept, CHA will create a client file and prepare invitation letters for a screening appointment.

➤ **Step 3: Screen Applicants**

Purpose: Clients must meet several requirements before they can officially qualify for a voucher. CHA must screen the applicants to determine eligibility. CHA determines if clients qualify for the voucher program by reviewing required documents, performing a Criminal Offender Record information (CORI) check, and interviewing the applicants.

Analysis: CHA sends the letters prepared in Step 2 to the clients to schedule in-person interviews. The Screening Appointment letters are important to this step because they outline the required documents needed for CHA to correctly execute the screening. The screening appointment is then conducted either individually or in a group. Afterwards, the client must submit all of the required documentation, which can become an iterative process as it often takes time for clients to fill out and submit all documents. Once submitted, Leasing Officer II places all documentation into the client's file and passes the file on to the Director or Deputy Director to be formally approved for the voucher.

➤ **Step 4: Briefing**

Purpose: After the client has been screened and approved for a voucher, the client essentially enters a training phase. CHA uses a briefing session to teach clients about the voucher program and the steps needed to secure a voucher-eligible unit.

Analysis: After scheduling appointments with the clients, CHA conducts several group briefing sessions with about 10 clients each. One or two Leasing Officer IIs will brief the clients on the next steps of the process, which includes finding a unit, filling out the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) and supporting documents, and calculating the costs of renting a unit with the voucher. CHA staff also field any questions from the clients at this time. After the briefing session, staff members will formally prepare and issue the voucher as well as take any follow-up questions from clients either in person or over the phone.

➤ **Step 5: Inspection**

Purpose: CHA must verify that the unit the client found meets national inspection standards, most often by inspecting the unit directly. This step also begins to incorporate the landlord, a major stakeholder in the process, as well as the City of Cambridge for units in Cambridge.

Analysis: During the briefing, clients are informed about completing the RFTA, which is the document that notifies CHA of an owner's intent to rent to the voucher holder. Often the client will return the RFTA with pieces missing from the landlord, requiring CHA staff members to spend time assisting the client in completing the application. Once the RFTA is complete, a Leasing Officer II will inspect the client's unit and, if necessary, coordinate an inspection with the City of Cambridge. The Leasing Officer II also schedules a meeting with the landlord and, if needed, ensures that the landlord completes paperwork so that he or she is approved to be a landlord of a voucher-eligible unit. Then, to determine if the unit's rent is reasonable, the same Leasing Officer II will compare the rent with other units in the area, or use CHA's rent reasonableness software called AREA. If the rent is too high, staff members may negotiate with landlords on the price of rent. Simultaneously with the inspection process, the client is formally be put into the system and assigned a caseworker. Once CHA approves the unit, the client is qualified to receive the voucher.

➤ **Step 6: Lease Up**

Purpose: The final step in the process with the client and landlord is to formally sign the lease and have CHA cut the first rent check to the landlord.

Analysis: A CHA staff member prepares the leasing information and schedules an appointment with the client. The client must complete more paperwork, sign the lease, and learn more about the voucher program after the lease has been signed. Often the Lease Up meeting will need to be rescheduled as some clients may not show for the meeting. The staff member then logs in the client's information, and CHA's Accounting department signs the first rent check.

➤ **Reporting**

Purpose: An important internal step is reporting the number of clients served in CHA's monthly reports.

Analysis: On a monthly basis, each staff member in the Leasing Department must track and input certain data specific to his or her responsibilities in the voucher issuance process. This information is compiled by the Deputy Director in a monthly report. This step is ongoing throughout steps one through six, but is captured here as a last step.

V. ANALYSIS: COST OF THE VOUCHER ISSUANCE PROCESS

The Excel Cost Calculator uses three inputs to calculate the *monthly administrative cost* (Sheet 1) associated with the voucher issuance process: (1) Staff salary and benefit information of each staff member involved in the process, (2) Staff time spent on each sub-step of the process, and (3) Number of clients for which the sub-step is completed each month. Sheet 2 of the Excel Cost Calculator uses two inputs to calculate the *administrative cost per voucher*: (1) Staff salary and benefit information of each staff member involved in the process, and (2) Staff time spent on each sub-step of the process. Here, administrative cost refers only to direct staff cost (salary and benefits), and not departmental overhead costs.

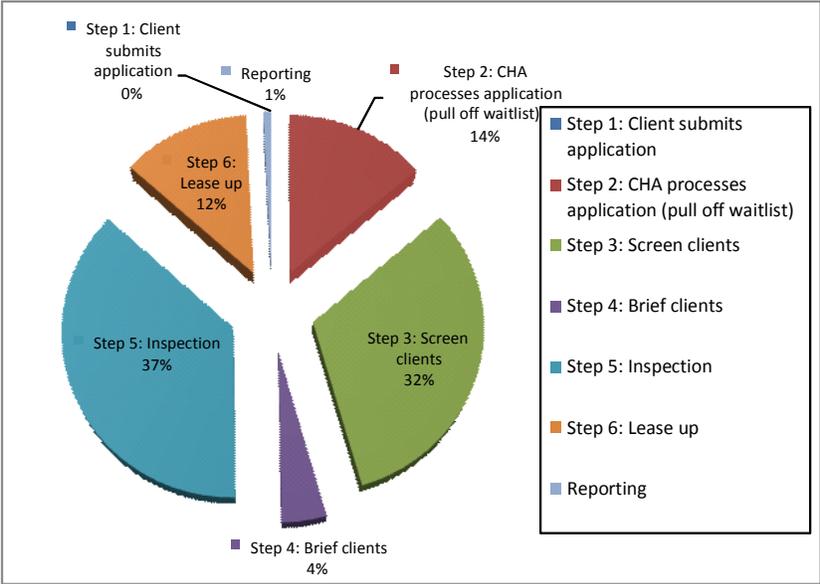
Figure 1: Time and Costs per Month by Process Steps

Step	Number of Clients	Hours per Month	Cost per Month	Percent of Total Cost
1: Client Submits Application	0	0	\$0	0 %
2: Process Application	250	53	\$1,740	14 %
3: Screen Clients	83	113	\$3,916	31 %
4: Brief Clients	32	16	\$519	4 %
5: Inspection	32	138	\$4,615	37 %
6: Lease up	30	48	\$1,576	13 %
Reporting	--	2.5	\$89	1 %
TOTAL	--	373	\$12,501	100 %

➤ **Cost Per Month**

Figure 1 above shows summary statistics for the monthly staff costs of the voucher issuance process. Based on the current time estimates as reported by staff in interviews, the total monthly administrative staff cost of the voucher issuance process is approximately \$12,500 (See Figure 2 below for the visual division of costs per month per process steps).

Figure 2: Cost per Month by Step Chart



The total number of monthly hours (as reported by staff in interviews) totals approximately 373 hours between the seven Leasing Department staff members involved in the voucher issuance process. Steps 3 (Screening) and 5 (Inspection) are the most time intensive steps, and thus drive a significant proportion of the administrative cost of the voucher issuance process. Together these two steps account for 251 hours and \$8,531, or 68 percent of the total cost.

Time Spent and Costs Incurred by Staff Position

Figure 3 below breaks down the total number of monthly hours as well as total monthly costs incurred in the voucher issuance process by staff position. Note that these numbers are per position, and not per person. While there is only one Associate Leasing Officer, one Deputy Director, and one Director, there are two Leasing Officer Is and two Leasing Officer IIs. Any staff members not included in these tables are not accounted for in our Process Maps or Cost Calculator, as no additional staff involvement was mentioned in the interviews. CHA should revisit and update the Process Maps and Cost Calculator accordingly if any staff members are excluded.

Figure 3 also illustrates the disproportionate time spent on the voucher process by different staff positions. Similarly, there are significant differences in the costs incurred by various staff members. Again, this data relies on the time estimates gathered during interviews. If time estimates are changed in the Excel Cost Calculator model, the model will automatically update the costs in question to reflect the revised time estimates.

Figure 3: Hours Spent by Staff Position

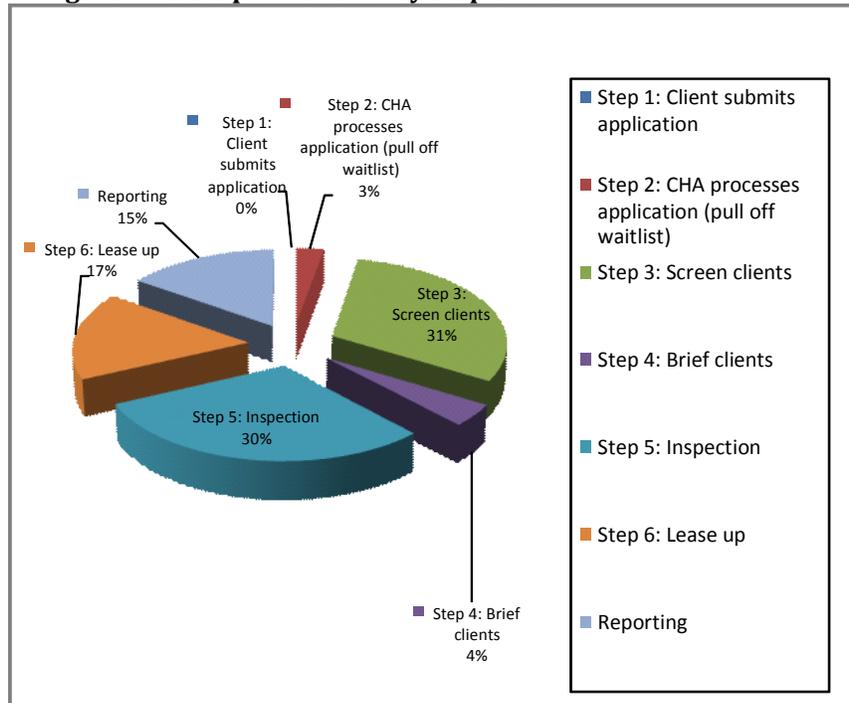
Staff	Associate Leasing Officer (1)	Leasing Officer I (2)	Leasing Officer II (2)	Deputy Dir. of Leased Housing (1)	Director of Leased Housing (1)	TOTAL
Hours	8	57	288	9	11	373
% of Total Time Spent	2 %	15 %	77 %	2 %	3 %	100 %
Cost	\$203	\$1,649	\$9,709	\$430	\$510	\$12,501
% of Total Costs	2%	13 %	78 %	3 %	4 %	100 %

On average, both the time spent and costs incurred in the voucher issuance process are heavily weighted towards Leasing Officer IIs, who together represent 77% of the total time spent and 78% of the total cost of the process. The Leasing Officer IIs spend, on average, 144 hours a month each, incurring a staff cost of \$4,855 a month each (compared to eight hours and \$203 for the Associate Leasing Officer, 28.5 hours and \$825 a month for each Leasing Officer I, nine hours and \$430 a month for the Deputy Director, and 11 hours a month and \$510 for the Director).

➤ **Cost Per Voucher**

The administrative staff cost of processing a single voucher is \$625, based on the time estimates as reported by staff in interviews (See Figure 4 below for the visual division of costs per step per voucher).

Figure 4: Costs per Voucher by Step Chart



When considering the cost *per voucher* rather than *per month*, the allocation of time and costs spent per step changes somewhat, but are still largely concentrated within the Screening (31%) and Inspection (30%) steps. One notable difference between the allocation of monthly costs and per voucher costs occurs in Step 2 (Process Application) – which represents only 3% of the total *cost per voucher*, but 14% of *cost per month*. Note, however, that attrition and screening means there are more clients in the process in earlier steps (See Figure 5 for exact data). Thus, there is a greater proportion of time and costs allocated to Step 2 in the *monthly* calculation than in the *per voucher* calculation. Specifically, 250 applications are processed per month on average (Step 2), while only 83 clients per month proceed to the screening process (Step 3), and 32 clients per month continue on to briefing.

Figure 5: Time and Costs per Voucher by Process Steps

Step	Hours per Month	Cost per Month	Percent of Total Cost
1: Client Submits Application	0	\$0	0 %
2: Process Application	.53	\$18	3 %
3: Screen Clients	5.59	\$193	31 %
4: Brief Clients	.81	\$26	4 %
5: Inspection	5.66	\$188	30 %
6: Lease up	3.33	\$105	17 %
Reporting	2.83	\$95	15 %
TOTAL	18.9	\$625	100 %

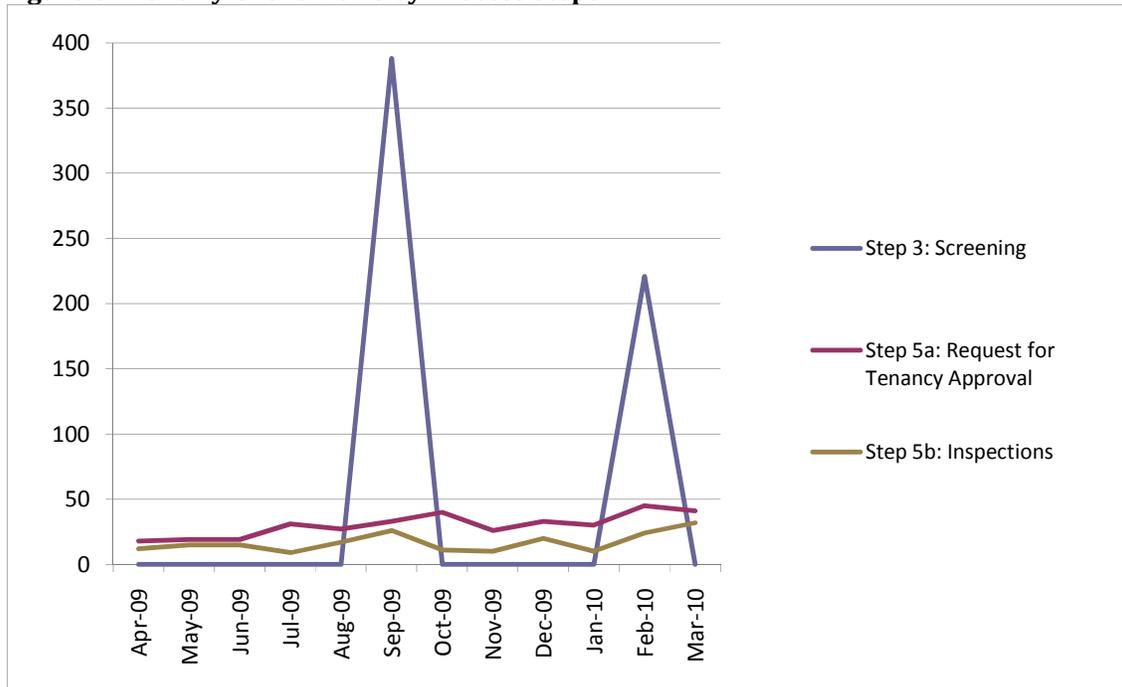
VI. LESSONS LEARNED

In working to answer the two primary questions we were tasked with, we discovered several key findings that guided us in thinking about the current status of CHA's Housing Choice Voucher process and possible next steps. The "lessons learned" about each of the two primary questions (process and costs) are elaborated below.

➤ HCV Issuance Process Findings

CHA has limited control over certain steps in the process. In issuing the HCV, CHA employees have two primary partners: the client and the landlord. In the Screening, Inspection, and Lease Up steps, the client must provide significant amounts of personal information and documentation. When information is insufficient, the client is sent away with instructions for completing the missing pieces of information. Occasionally, it takes a client three or more visits to complete the step. This not only utilizes staff time, but also significantly slows the client's throughput time. Additionally, the landlord must provide documentation of inspections and safety standards. Obtaining their compliance can also take staff time and slow the process.

Figure 6: Monthly Client Flows by Process Steps



The process flow is stop-and-go depending on voucher availability. Clients are pulled *en masse* from the waitlist to proceed through the voucher issuance process when vouchers become available. This creates a process flow of peaks and valleys in the screening process, which is visually depicted in Figure 6 above. The fact that CHA is aware of, and has some control over, the number of clients coming through the pipeline is an effective pull mechanism which allows CHA to prepare staff for peaks. In all subsequent steps in the process, client and landlord control over the pace of the process makes client flow more unpredictable for CHA, contributing to the stop-and-go flow. The question becomes whether or not CHA is utilizing staff efficiently during peak times and off times, and how effectively they transition staff between these periods.

➤ **Cost Findings**

There is a culture of teamwork and job-sharing around the HCV process. The set-up and management of the leasing department encourages a high level of inter-staff communication and support. Flexible job descriptions, employee mobilization, and the open floor plan of the department all support this culture. In some cases a step is completed by a single staff member, and in other cases by staff members in different positions sharing tasks.

Task-sharing and teamwork is an effective way to cope with the peak times and “balance the line” in a system of irregular process flow. This type of structure also has positive implications for employee satisfaction and team effectiveness as it relates to total quality management. However, we discovered that staff are often unable to provide consistent information on which employee does what task and how long it takes them. This presents a challenge to costing out the process, as the cost of different employees’ time varies within the department.

There is not a practice of measuring time around the HCV process. It became clear through our interviews that most Leasing Department staff are unaccustomed to tracking their time spent on various activities. Staff time estimates for process steps often contradicted one another, and occasionally were self-contradictory. This is understandable given the heavy workload, limited resources, and the culture of teamwork and task-sharing. However, in order to accurately cost out the voucher process, the ability to accurately measure and report staff time is essential.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

➤ **Accurately measure staff time at each step by standardizing metrics and developing a user-friendly tracking tool.**

In order to accurately reflect the administrative costs of the voucher issuance process (that is, the cost of staff time), it is critical to accurately measure staff time. We recommend that CHA:

Standardize metrics so that staff members have a shared understanding of the defined beginning and end of each step of the voucher process with which they are involved. This can be accomplished by reviewing process maps and defining each sub-step of the process either through the Wednesday staff meetings or through written, shared documents defining each sub-step.

Develop a user-friendly tracking tool for staff to record the amount of time spent on each sub-step of the process. Such a tool will help zero in on time spent in two ways: First, tracking their time will help staff become more aware of the actual time required to complete each sub-step of the process. Second, in addition to measuring time spent at each sub-step, the tracking tool could incorporate a mechanism for measuring the number of times each sub-step is performed on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Some preliminary ideas for a user-friendly tracking tool are included in the appendix (see Exhibit 1 and 2).

➤ **Modify Excel Cost Calculator model to accurately reflect staff time inputs and to meet CHA’s evolving needs.**

Once CHA *begins tracking staff time* spent on each step and sub-step of the voucher issuance process, this data can be inputted into the Excel Cost Calculator model. The model includes

formulas that will automatically update total costs of the voucher issuance process when staff time inputs (measured in hours or fractions of an hour) are changed. We recommend that CHA:

Appoint a staff member to be in charge of inputting updated staff time spent on each sub-step. We will happily train a staff member on how to use the Excel model. Once CHA has implemented the time tracking tool (*Recommendation #1*) and has a more accurate sense of time spent, it will be relatively straightforward to update the Excel Cost Calculator.

Modify the Cost Calculator to reflect monthly fluctuations in workflows. This can be accomplished by copying the Excel model into a new tab for each month, and then tracking and recording the number of clients served in the given month at each sub-step of the process. Again, the formulas are set up to automatically re-calculate monthly costs of the voucher issuance process if the number of clients served in a given month increases or decreases.

- **Use the updated Excel Cost Calculator model to determine baseline costs of the voucher issuance process and benchmark future improvements.**

To accurately identify potential costs in advance of HUD's new improvements to its voucher programs, CHA can use the Excel model to calculate the baseline administrative cost of issuing a voucher. After establishing a culture and practice of time tracking (*Recommendation #1*) and updating the Excel Cost Calculator model based on accurate time measurement and monthly client flows (*Recommendation #2*), ***the Excel Cost Calculator model will give CHA an accurate baseline administrative cost of the voucher issuance process against which it can measure future improvements.***

- **Optimize staff utilization based on analysis of the administrative (staff) costs of various steps of the voucher issuance process.**

While CHA's culture of task sharing can be an effective tool to manage peak periods, there are of course cost implications associated with staff in more senior positions completing certain tasks. In order to effectively manage task sharing, we recommend that CHA:

Analyze Leasing Department staff job responsibilities to understand which staff members are completing which tasks, and consider the cost implications of task assignments and task sharing. There may be cases in which transferring specific tasks to a different staff member may be more cost effective. In addition to current job descriptions and department knowledge, the detailed process maps can be used as a tool for understanding task assignment and task sharing, as the staff member responsible for each sub-step is indicated on the detailed process maps.

Analyze "peak periods" and "lull periods" to ensure efficient staff capacity utilization during lulls. We did not specifically analyze staff tasks outside of the voucher process and thus lack a complete picture of staff capacity utilization. However, the variation in monthly client flows suggests that staff may experience peaks and lulls in voucher processing work. Thus, CHA should consider how to best leverage staff time, both during peak periods as well as during lull periods when staff may have excess capacity.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This report maps Cambridge Housing Authority's process of issuing mobile rental vouchers, and identifies costs at each stage of the process. The goal of this project was to gain insight into the HCV issuance process and answer two key questions for CHA: (i) What is the Housing Choice Voucher issuance process?, and (ii) What are the costs at each stage of the process?

The report maps the six steps in the voucher issuance process, from the time the client first submits an application through the point when CHA cuts the first HAP check to the landlord. By mapping the process, this report is a first step in reducing some of the inefficiencies associated with issuing vouchers. In the Excel Cost Calculator model, current costs act as a baseline for future improvements and innovations. Our goal is for CHA to use this report to integrate process improvements which help CHA better support its mission of developing and managing affordable housing for the residents of Cambridge.