



Landlord Engagement Initiative Guidebook

Introduction:

The North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH) is committed to ending homelessness and believes landlords and property owners are critical partners to meeting this goal. In order to engage landlords to be a part of the team, NCCEH, in partnership with Healthy Blue of North Carolina, is launching the Landlord Engagement Initiative.

The intent of the Landlord Engagement Initiative is to increase access to housing by addressing barriers to housing. It will provide funding and support to develop partnerships with landlords and property owners. Through this initiative, we will learn which landlord engagement strategies increase access to housing.

In Phase I of the Landlord Engagement Initiative funds are available to Back@Home Rehousing Agencies. The intent is to increase access to units that are not otherwise accessible.

Landlord Engagement Initiative funds will be used to support strategies identified by Rehousing Agencies and NCCEH. Landlord engagement resources are intended to fill in a gap, meaning that other state, local, and private funds should be accessed before leveraging Landlord Engagement Initiative funding.

Landlord Engagement

Back@Home Rehousing Agencies are reaching out to Landlords to increase access to affordable housing. For the purposes of this document, the term “Landlord” refers to landlords, property owners, and property management companies – basically anyone with the legal right to rent an apartment to people. Commitments vary – some landlords immediately make a unit open to Back@Home tenants, while other landlords participate in a referral process when new units become available.

The Landlord Engagement Initiative offers funds and technical support to Rehousing Agencies and landlords to determine what works best when sustaining relationships and commitments critical to scaling up housing for Back@Home households.

Table of Contents

This guide is for Back@Home Rehousing Agencies who have received funds through the Landlord Engagement Initiative. Below is a description of each section of this guide.

Links to each section are provided in the bold underlined title for each section.

I. Eligible activities: General description of what activities are eligible for reimbursement

II. Using Move-In, Barrier Buster, Unit Upfit, and Unit Repair Fees: Deeper description of the eligible expenses, and how to use them.

- [Move-In Fees](#)
- [Barrier Buster Fees](#)
- [Unit Upfit Fees](#)
- [Unit Repair Fees](#)

III. Approvals: Describes which funds need approval, and what the approval process is

IV. Reporting: Overview of what type of information needs to be reported

V. Invoicing and Reimbursement: Overview of the invoicing and reimbursement process

VI: Documentation: Describes the process for using the online forms to document expenses and submit requests for approval

VII: Technical Assistance - Coaching: Describes coaching available to Back@Home Agencies as they develop a Landlord Engagement plan

Appendix:

- [Attachment 1:](#) Documentation and Approvals Workflow
- [Attachment 2:](#) Back@Home North Carolina Landlord Engagement Eligible Expenses
- [Attachment 3:](#) Landlord Coupon

Additional Resources:

Contact LandlordEngagement@ncceh.org to gain access to agency forms, Smartsheet, and materials that can be used to promote and educate about this initiative.

I. Eligible Activities:

Currently, there are four activities that Rehousing Agencies can be reimbursed for through the Landlord Engagement Initiative.

Eligible activities for reimbursement:

- **Move-In Fees:** a flat rate incentive for eligible landlords and property owners. This incentive is intended to reduce screening barriers and mitigate the cost of potential extra time, effort, and possible unit vacancy required to identify a tenant, complete paperwork, and obtain an inspection.
- **Barrier Buster Fees:** flexible funding to overcome financial barriers for clients that would otherwise inhibit their ability to sign a lease. Barrier buster fees could include, for example, help with arrears or covering a pet fee.
- **Unit Upfit Fees:** flexible funding to pay for smaller repairs that will help a unit meet inspection requirements and utilize rental assistance programs, growing the available healthy, safe, and affordable housing stock.
- **Unit Repair Fees:** flexible funding to augment rent deposits, covering repairs arising after the tenant has leased the property. These fees will strengthen landlord relationships and sustain available healthy, safe, and affordable housing stock.

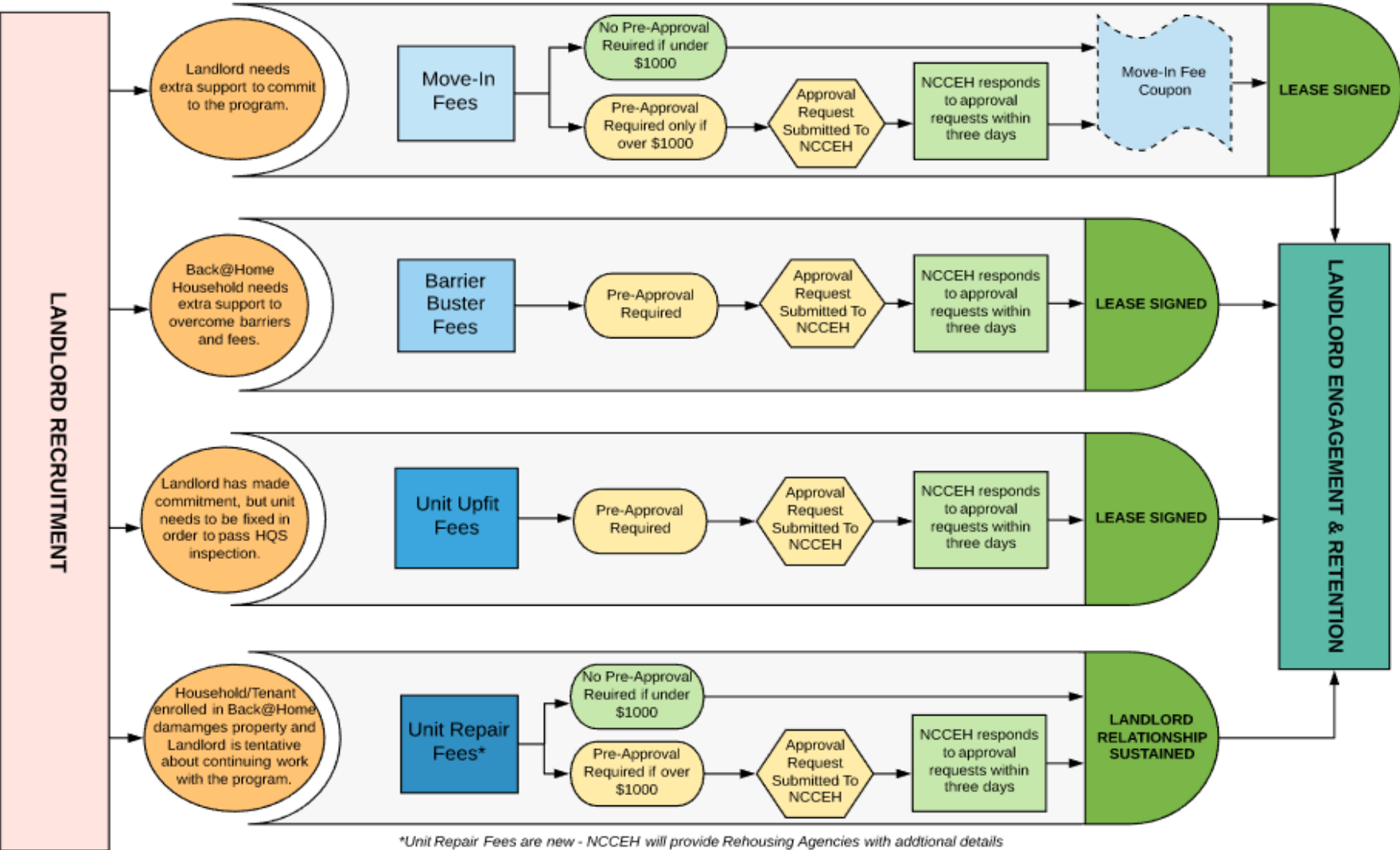
Please see [Attachment 2](#) for a summary of these eligible expenses and documentation.

Pre-Approvals:

NCCEH will reimburse Rehousing Agencies for properly documented eligible activities described above. In some cases, pre-approval from NCCEH is required to receive reimbursement.

Move-In Fees over \$1,000, Barrier Buster Fees, Unit Upfit Fee, and Unit Repair Fees over \$1,000 require approval by NCCEH on a case-by-case basis before they can be spent. The process for approval is further explained in [Section III: Approvals](#).

PROCESS FOR USING FEES AS PART OF LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT AND LEASE-UP

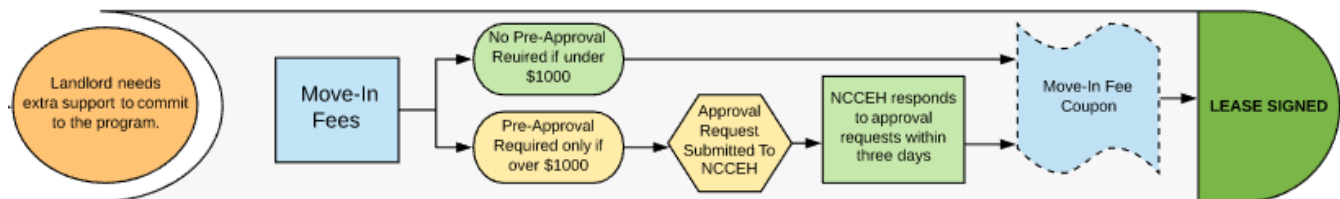


II. Using Move-In, Barrier Buster, Unit Upfit, and Unit Repair Fees

During landlord recruitment, Rehousing Agencies assess what strategies are needed to recruit landlords and sustain relationships with them. In instances where Landlord Engagement Initiative funds are useful, they are deployed – sometimes immediately, and sometimes after approval. Each eligible activity has unique features, so this guide walks through each category.

The following sections will provide information about how to use each of the eligible activities.

Move-In Fees



During Landlord Engagement, Rehousing Agencies can offer Move-In Fees as an incentive for landlords who need extra support to commit to the program. There are two strategies to apply Move-In Fees to engage Landlords:

- **Move-In Fee Strategy Number One:** During the outreach to landlords, Rehousing Agencies can present Move-In fees to raise landlord interest and get housing commitments. Once a landlord agrees to participate and has a unit in mind, Rehousing Agencies will sign a Landlord Engagement Coupon with the landlord, to be redeemed at the time of lease-up.
- **Move-In Fee Strategy Number Two:** In some instances, a Rehousing Agency may identify a high barrier household who would have trouble passing routine screening for a landlord's units. At this point Rehousing Agencies can offer the landlord a Move-In fee to reduce the screening barriers for the household's application and provide the landlord with the Landlord Engagement Coupon, to be redeemed at lease-up.

To receive the Move-In Fee, landlords must agree to the requirements of the Back@Home Program (that rent does not exceed 110% of FMR and passes a rent reasonableness check, debarment check, and an HQS inspection). **The landlord must also agree that:**

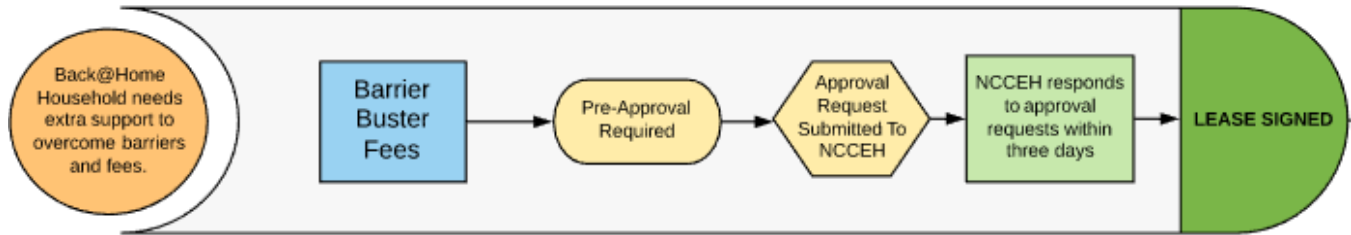
- Application fees will be waived,
- ID will be required only for application purpose,
- Background checks will be reviewed on case-by-case basis, with consideration for overall history and length of time from last incident, and
- Income, credit, and rental history requirements will be waived in exchange for the move-in fee, rent, and case management services to support housing stability.

If a landlord agrees to these requirements, a Move-In Fee Coupon can be presented to the landlord. This cements the commitment of the landlord and Rehousing Agency for a specified unit. At lease-up, the landlord can redeem the coupon for the agreed upon amount of money.

If the amount of the Move-In Fee is UNDER \$1,000, Rehousing Agencies can pay the landlord at lease-up and document it through the provided online form. More information about the documentation process is in the [Section VI: Documentation](#).

If the amount of the Move-In Fee is OVER \$1,000, Rehousing Agencies must get approval before spending the fee. More information is in [Section VI: Approvals](#).

Barrier Buster Fees

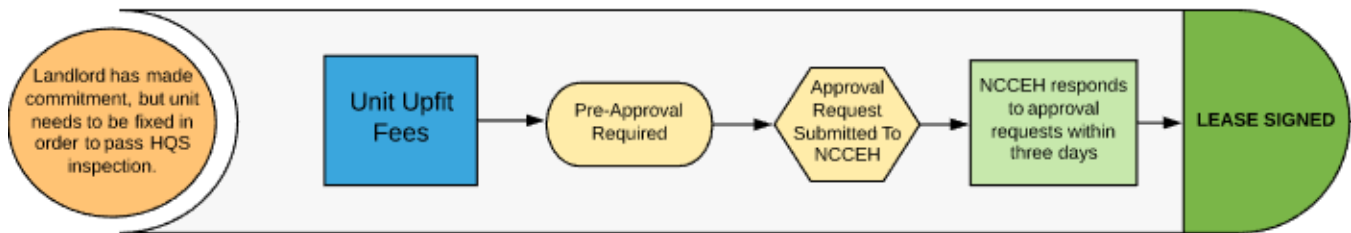


Barrier Buster Fees can remove barriers to rental for Back@Home participants. As Rehousing Agencies work with households to identify their housing needs and apply for open units, they may become aware of barriers such as utility arrears, pet fees, or a car that needs a new part.

Rehousing Agencies can work with potential tenants to remove these barriers. If other resources, such as Back@Home funds, are not available or can only cover a portion of the costs, Barrier Buster fees could be leveraged.

Currently, all Barrier Buster Fees require approval by NCCEH. More information is in [Section III: Approvals](#).

Unit Upfit Fees

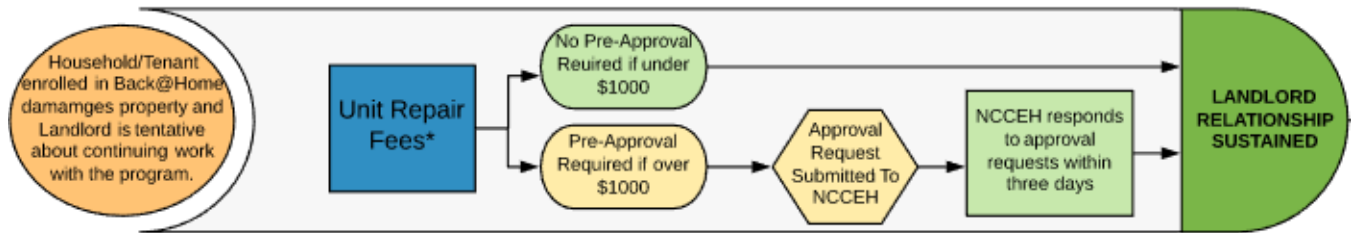


Even if the landlord has agreed to rent and the tenant is approved and ready to lease, there still may be an issue – there could be a problem with the unit inspection.

If unit does not pass inspection, there is an opportunity to work with the landlord to determine if they are willing and able to fix or upfit the apartment. In some cases, landlords or property owners may be willing but unable to afford fixes or upfits. Rehousing Agencies can consider using Unit Upfit Fees to make small repairs or updates so that the unit can pass inspection.

Currently, all Unit Upfit Fees require approval by NCCEH. More information is in [Section III: Approvals](#).

Unit Repair Fees



In some instances, a household enrolled in Back@Home may damage a unit, creating issues for the landlord. Rehousing Agencies can work with the tenant and landlord to address the issue and can support the landlord in using the rent deposit to fix damages.

It may be that damages go beyond what the rent deposit can pay for, or that there are other extenuating circumstances that leave the landlord having to cover costs. This could put strain on the relationship between the landlord and the Rehousing Agency, potentially reducing the possibility that the landlord will work with the Rehousing Agency or other rehousing programs in the future.

If this is the case, Rehousing Agencies can provide Unit Repair fees to cover costs above and beyond what the rent deposit pays for.

If the amount of the Unit Repair Fee is UNDER \$1,000, Rehousing Agencies can cover the cost of the repair and document it using the provided online form. More information about the documentation process is in the [Section VI: Documentation](#).

If the amount of the Unit Repair Fee is OVER \$1,000, Rehousing Agencies must get approval before spending the fee. More information is in [Section III: Approvals](#).

III. Approvals:

The following fees require approval:

- Move-In Fees over \$1,000
- All Barrier Buster Fees
- All Unit Repair Fees
- Unit Repair Fees over \$1,000

Approval Process:

To get approval, there are two steps.

1) A Rehousing Agency representative submits the request for approval via the online form called *Landlord Engagement: Request for Approval!*. Each Rehousing Agency has access to their own form. To get access to the form, contact LandlordEngagement@nceh.org

To minimize data entry, the form will automatically send the information submitted to the *LLE Documentation of Activity* Smartsheet. It will also send an automatic approval request to NCEH.

2) NCCEH will receive the request and respond within three days via the agency Smartsheet. Decisions will also be documented by NCCEH in the [LLE Documentation of Activity](#) Smartsheet and designated agency staff will receive an alert that the request was approved. To designate staff for receiving approval notifications, contact LandlordEngagement@ncceh.org.

Real-Time Responsiveness to Approvals:

Rehousing Agency representatives may find themselves out of the office in the community, working quickly to enable a household to apply for a particular unit. In cases like this, it may be important to understand immediately if a fee is eligible for approval. In these cases, Rehousing Agency staff can reach out to Emily Carmody at NCCEH to discuss the activity at 919.755.4393, ext. 5020.

Please note: While NCCEH can identify if an activity is eligible through a quick phone call or email, in order to get reimbursed, all approvals must go through the formal approval process prior to invoicing.

IV. Reporting:

Each Rehousing Agency has access to online forms for submitting information about eligible activities, households that receive landlord engagement assistance, and requests for approval. Information from the form will be documented in Smartsheet with pages accessible to Rehousing Agencies and NCCEH.

Information that will be documented through the online form and saved to Smartsheet:

- HMIS ID or Assigned ID (if using an HMIS-equivalent database)
- Household Size (Number of Adults and Number of Children)
- Type of Eligible Activity (Move-In Fees, Unit Upfits, Barrier Buster, or Unit Repair Fees)
- Date funds were spent
- Amount spent
- Who funds were paid to
- County that the unit is in
- For activities requiring approval:
 - Total cost of project
 - Description of what funds were used for
 - Additional Resources sought out / received

V. Invoicing and Reimbursement:

Rehousing Agencies will receive Landlord Engagement Funds through reimbursement. NCCEH requests that agencies submit invoices on a monthly basis, eight business days after the end of the month.

As described in [Section IV](#), Smartsheet will track all households served and all eligible activities. Every month, Rehousing Agencies can download information from Smartsheet as an Excel file. Downloading the information as an Excel file makes it possible for Rehousing Agencies to complete the NCCEH Landlord Engagement Initiative Invoice provided along with this guidebook.

As needed, Rehousing Agencies can request that NCCEH provide a short training on the process of downloading information from Smartsheet as an Excel file and entering it into the invoice.

Invoices must be signed by the Rehousing Agency and include:

I. The Landlord Engagement Invoice Cover Sheet:

- Expense summary (the total amount requested for reimbursement for that month with subtotals for eligible activities)
- Confirmation that necessary information is included with the invoice
- A signature from an authorized official

II. A detailed list of expenditures for each client listed by eligible activity:

- Recipient of Fee/Expense
- Head of Household Client ID (HMIS or HMIS-Equivalent)
- Date Paid
- Amount

III. Supporting documentation: In addition to the Landlord Engagement Invoice, supporting documentation for each payment should be included, as outlined below. All applicable receipts and vendor invoices should have the corresponding client ID on them and be printed or scanned to NCCEH, along with the invoice report.

All eligible expenses require a copy of payment (i.e. canceled checks, credit card statements). Additional supporting documentation for each activity includes:

- Move-in Fees: Signed and Dated Landlord Coupon
- Barrier Busters: Documentation of barrier and amount due (such as utility bill to cover arrears or copy of lease outlining pet fees)
- Unit Upfit: Failed inspection report (HQS report or habitability inspection report), Invoice for repairs with work descriptions
- Unit Repair: HQS Inspection showing no initial damage, Invoice for repairs and work descriptions indicating portion paid by the rent deposit

VII. Documentation:

Client Demographics

Rehousing Agencies should use HMIS to document client demographics, unless the agency has approval to use an HMIS-comparable database.

Eligible Activities - Move-In, Barrier Buster, Unit Upfit, and Unit Repair Fees:

Information related to Landlord Engagement Activities will be submitted through online forms and stored in an LLC Documentation of Activity Smartsheet. Each participating Rehousing Agency has their own Smartsheet for tracking, reporting, and invoicing purposes.

Documenting Fees that **do not** Require Approval:

Move-In Fees UNDER \$1,000 and Unit Repair Fees UNDER \$1,000 do not require approval.

- Once a Rehousing Agency spends these fees, staff should document their activities in the online form Landlord Engagement: Documentation of Move-In and Unit Repair Fees Under \$1000.
- An online form must be completed every time fees are spent. The form will automatically send information to the LLC Documentation of Activity Smartsheet.

- For every eligible expense, the following information is required:
 - Name and email for person submitting the form
 - HMIS ID or Assigned ID (if using an HMIS-equivalent database)
 - Household Size (Number of Adults and Children)
 - Payment information including name of business/landlord receiving payment and county where unit is located
 - Type of Eligible Activity (Move-In Fees, Unit Upfits, or Barrier Buster Fees)
 - Date funds were spent and amount
 - For Unit Repairs only: information about the use of rental deposits to cover costs
 - Additional attachments as needed

Documenting Fees that **do** Require Approval:

Move-In Fees OVER \$1,000, all Barrier Buster, all Unit Upfit, and Unit Repair Fees OVER \$1,000 require approval.

- Before spending the fees, the Rehousing Agency staff must submit information through the online form [Landlord Engagement: Request for Approval](#).
- NCCEH will be notified that a request has been submitted. Requests will be reviewed within three business days and documented in the [LLE Documentation of Activity](#) Smartsheet.
- Designated Rehousing Agency staff will get an email notifying them that a decision has been made.
- For every request for approval, the following information is required:
 - Name and email for person submitting the form
 - HMIS ID or Assigned ID (if using an HMIS-equivalent database)
 - Households Size (Number of Adults and Children)
 - Payment information including name of business/landlord receiving payment and county where unit is located
 - Amount Requested
 - Type of Eligible Activity (Move-In Fees, Unit Upfits, or Barrier Buster Fees)
 - Description of Activity
 - Additional Resources sought out or received:
 - If for arrears: Were Back@Home Funds used for arrears? If so, how much?
 - Will the landlord be contributing anything to the cost? If so, how much?
 - Are other community resources contributing? If so, how much?
 - Unit Repair Fees: Is the rent deposit being used? If so, how much?
 - Additional attachments as needed
- Once a Rehousing Agency receives an approval from NCCEH, they are able to spend the funds and invoice for the costs.
- Once the funds are spent, a Rehousing Agency representative will need to access the [LLE Documentation of Activity](#) Smartsheet and update it with the amount spent and the date spent.

For more detail, see Attachment 1: Documentation and Approval Workflow.

Dashboard

Each Agency's *LLE Documentation of Activity* Smartsheet will have a dashboard for at-a-glance assessment of the program activities and funds. The dashboard will track which households are served, if they are using Move-In Fees, Barrier Buster Fees, and/or Upfit Fees, and how much is being used in each category. This will help Rehousing Agencies and NCCEH evaluate the progress of the Landlord Engagement Initiative.

Keeping the *LLE Documentation of Activity* Smartsheet up to date is important, not only because it is the single way Rehousing Agencies can get reimbursed, but also because it will allow for real-time tracking of the types of fees being used the most, and how much funding is still available.

NCCEH and Rehousing Agencies will include the Landlord Engagement program in their Back@Home coordinating meetings to discuss the program successes and challenges and make course corrections as needed.

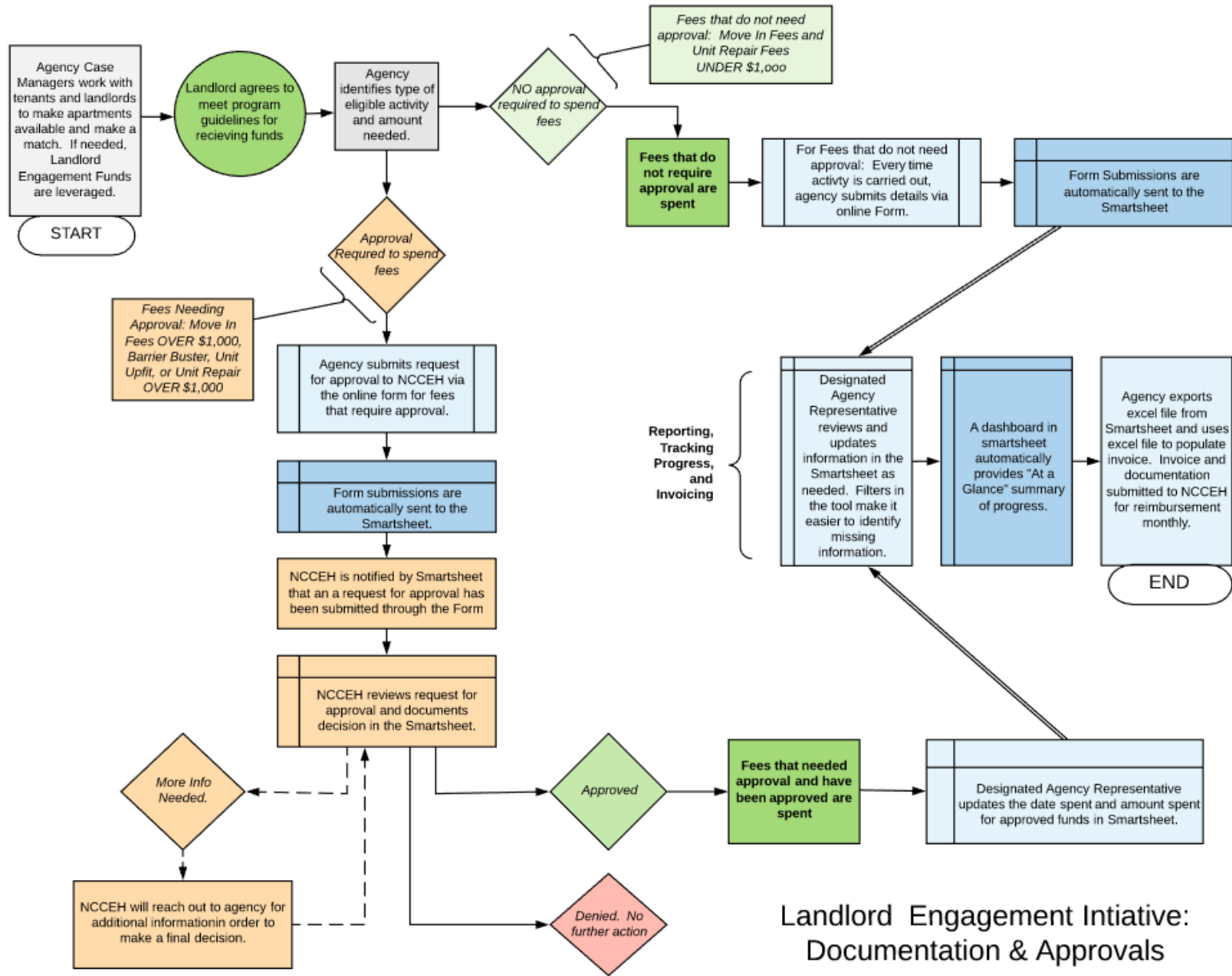
V. Technical Assistance: Coaching

In order to support agencies to develop plans to leverage Landlord Engagement Initiative funds and to build a shared understanding of what strategies are most effective, NCCEH will provide technical assistance to Back@Home agencies in the form of coaching.

A TA provider will provide one-on-one support with Back@Home agency staff and support NCCEH to provide trainings and share information that will strengthen the initiative. Landlord engagement coaching will assist Rehousing Agencies in developing a strategic plan to increase access to units and support Rehousing Agencies in meeting their established goals.

For more information or questions about provided coaching, contact NCCEH staff by emailing LandlordEngagement@ncceh.org.

Appendix 1: Documentation and Approvals Workflow



Appendix 2: Back@Home North Carolina Landlord Engagement Eligible Expenses (updated 4/29/2019)

North Carolina Landlord Engagement Initiative funds are being made available to Back@Home Rehousing Agencies to increase access to housing for Back@Home households. This funding is meant to be flexible and innovative to address barriers to housing. Guidance on Eligible Expenses may change as we learn through implementation and evaluation which incentives best increase access to housing and build a landlord network.

Reimbursement: When submitting monthly billing, Rehousing Agencies must complete and submit a signed invoice along with required documentation for each expense per household. (All submissions require household ID, type of eligible expense, date, and amount spent)

Approvals: Rehousing Agencies should submit requests for approval through the online Landlord Engagement Activity Form. NCCEH will review for authorization and will notify Rehousing Agencies of the determination. Questions about eligible activities should be directed to LandlordEngagement@ncceh.org

Eligible Expense	Description	Pre-Approved Payment Cap	Supporting Documentation Requirements
Move-In Fees	Funds to incentivize landlords to rent to Back@Home households and to receive reduced screening and leniency in criminal background checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to \$1,000 Rehousing Agencies must request authorization exceeding the pre-approved cap. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signed Back@Home Landlord Coupon with amount and landlord commitment to comply with program guidelines. Receipt for fee payment
Unit Upfit & Repairs	Funds to pay for smaller repairs that help meet HQS standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires NCCEH pre-approval* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial failed HQS/Habitability Inspection Report Receipt of upfit/repair expense Passed HQS Inspection Report
Barrier Buster Fees	Quick placement of households by eliminating housing barriers such as pet deposits and utility/rental arrears or other needs to make the unit accessible to the household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires NCCEH pre-approval* Rehousing Agencies must first utilize available State Back@Home funding for arrears, administrative fees, and deposits before requesting funds Rehousing Agencies are encouraged to utilize available community resources before requesting funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copy of payment of arrears, deposits, etc.
Unit Repair Fees	These fees can be used in circumstances where a quick response to minor damage by a tenant enrolled in Back@Home will keep the landlord relationship intact. Should supplement the use of rent deposit to cover damages, not replace it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to \$1,000 If fees exceed \$1,000, landlord must demonstrate that rent deposit and insurance have been leveraged, and requires NCCEH pre-approval.* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copy of HQS Inspection showing no damages Detailed invoice for expenses that includes amount covered by the rent deposit. Copy of payment for portion of damages covered by Landlord Engagement Funds.

*Approval will be documented in Agency Reporting & Invoicing Smartsheets. Approvals required for reimbursement.



Back@Home Landlord Move-In Coupon & Agreement

This agreement made by _____ (Name of Back@Home Rehousing Agency)

on the _____ day of _____, 2019

with _____ (Name of Landlord/Owner/Property Manager)

This agreement is for the following unit(s) receiving this Move-In Fee:

Address/Street Number:

Unit Number(s):

City: _____

County: _____

Zip Code: _____

AGREEMENT:

I. MOVE-IN FEE

The Back@Home Rehousing Agency will provide a one-time \$ _____ Move-In Fee to acknowledge the cost of extra time and effort to house Back@Home households and possible unit vacancy as the Rehousing Agency identifies the tenant, completes paperwork, and obtains inspection. Accepting a Move-In Fee is not a violation of Fair Housing Law and often a common practice.

II. TERMS OF AGREEMENT

The Unit must pass a HUD HQS Inspection, Debarment Check, and Fair Market Rent/Rent Reasonableness to be leased through the Back@Home program and receive the Move-In Fee payment.

The landlord agrees that the application fees will be waived; ID will be required only for application purpose; background checks will be reviewed on case-by-case basis with consideration for overall history and length of time from last incident; and income, credit, and rental history requirements will be waived in exchange for the Move-In Fee, rent, and case management services to support housing stability.

The Back@Home Rehousing Agency has up to 14 days of the unit being deemed eligible to place a tenant in housing. Once the unit is leased by a Back@Home household, the Landlord can redeem this coupon and the Back@Home Rehousing Agency will make the Move-In Fee Payment to the Landlord/Owner/Property Manager within 10 days.

III. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY HOUSING

If a tenant has reason to believe that they have been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, national origin, or familial status, the tenant may file a complaint with HUD. HUD has set up a hotline to answer questions and take complaints about Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. The toll-free number is (800) 424-8590.

IV. APPROVAL OF MOVE-IN FEE AGREEMENT

Printed Name and Title of Back@Home Rehousing Agency Representative

Signature of Back@Home Rehousing Agency Representative

Date

Printed Name of Landlord/Owner/Property Manager

Signature of Landlord/Owner/Property Manager

Date