

NSPIRE Answers

What is NSPIRE?

NSPIRE – the National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate – is the new physical inspection model designed to promote HUD’s goal of reducing health and safety hazards in the home. To achieve this goal, NSPIRE prioritizes the condition of dwelling units—where people live. NSPIRE aligns multiple HUD programs to a single set of inspection standards so that the same expectations of housing quality can be achieved across HUD programs.

NSPIRE introduces a new, innovative approach for developing, updating, and adapting standards and scoring based on continuous learning and improvement. To develop NSPIRE, HUD is collaborating with a diverse group of stakeholders, including property owners and managers, public housing agencies, public health and public safety professionals, and resident groups, who are providing critical input to the standards, processes, and protocols. These aspects of NSPIRE are being tested at volunteer properties throughout the two-year NSPIRE Demonstration, currently in progress, with feedback from inspectors and properties used to update and refine the inspection model.

NSPIRE is also being updated using data gathered from a concurrent demonstration that HUD is conducting for the Housing Choice Voucher program. Both demonstrations reflect HUD’s congressional mandate to implement a single inspection protocol for public housing and voucher units. Under NSPIRE, HUD plans to leverage inspection data, lessons learned, and stakeholder feedback to update standards and scoring at least every three years.

NSPIRE makes key improvements to inspections to increase their objectivity, accuracy, and consistency. Under NSPIRE, inspections are based on deficiency indicators to ensure deficiencies cited



by inspectors accurately reflect substandard conditions within a property. Each inspection standard is supported by a rationale, which is a clear and concise explanation of the potential risk a defect presents.

Why is it happening?

HUD’s analysis found that its inspection models could be improved to enable HUD to more effectively and consistently evaluate housing across programs. HUD determined that while its legacy inspection models are well-intentioned in design, neither model currently aligns with HUD’s priorities or the state of the housing industry. Further, while a majority of properties are in compliance with HUD’s standards, NSPIRE will provide improved capabilities to detect and identify those properties that are not. Under NSPIRE, HUD aims to safeguard affordable housing for American families and promote the health and safety of residents living in HUD-assisted housing.

What will it accomplish?

With NSPIRE, inspectors for HUD-assisted and HUD-insured housing will be able to conduct objective, defensible, and consistent assessments to evaluate housing conditions. This will result in inspection results that more accurately indicate property conditions and promote better living conditions for residents. NSPIRE inspections will more accurately reflect the true physical conditions of properties and ensure that property owners adopt sound maintenance practices to eliminate health and safety hazards that may pose a threat to residents. By placing more emphasis on the condition of residents' dwellings, the new inspection model aligns more closely with stakeholder expectations regarding housing quality. As a result, NSPIRE will encourage property owners to perform year-round maintenance and address health and safety deficiencies in a timely fashion. Properties will not be expected to expend more resources, but rather shift their maintenance plans to prioritize residents' health and safety. It will also eliminate unnecessary complexity by aligning inspection standards across diverse HUD programs, while accommodating flexible protocols.

How will it do that?

NSPIRE focuses on the condition of dwelling units and modernizes and streamlines HUD's physical inspections processes using objective, defensible, and repeatable quality indicators focused on those things most important. Inspections will prioritize critical health and safety conditions, and properties will not be able to pass inspection if dwelling units fail the inspection. HUD also understands the importance of collaborating with its stakeholders in the design and implementation of NSPIRE. The NSPIRE Model will be tested during a demonstration, with feedback collected from stakeholders and sources to develop and refine the standards. Having volunteer properties collaborate with HUD in the NSPIRE Demonstration is an essential part of this process. With their input, HUD will establish inspection standards that accurately evaluate the most important aspects of HUD housing.



What is the NSPIRE Demonstration?

The NSPIRE Demonstration is a two-year process to test and evaluate NSPIRE standards, processes, and protocols in collaboration with approximately 4,500 volunteer properties. By performing inspections under the NSPIRE Model at volunteer properties, HUD will be able to test and evaluate the revised standards, the new scoring model, new technology, and new information exchange and support services.

During the Demonstration, HUD will evaluate inspection accuracy, objectivity, and efficacy. Throughout the course of the Demonstration, the results of these tests and evaluations will allow HUD to refine the NSPIRE standards, scoring, and protocols for increased effectiveness and efficiency. The NSPIRE Demonstration will also allow HUD to test and evaluate implementation strategies to determine the most effective way to roll out NSPIRE nationwide.



Why does NSPIRE have a Demonstration?

HUD wishes to work collaboratively with public housing agencies and property owners and agents to evaluate NSPIRE's effectiveness and refine the standards, scoring, and protocols. The Demonstration allows HUD to test aspects of NSPIRE independently of existing regulations. By performing NSPIRE inspections at volunteer properties, HUD will be able to test and evaluate the revised standards, the new scoring model, and updated technologies and processes across the new model. NSPIRE is also being updated using data gathered from a concurrent demonstration that HUD is conducting for the Housing Choice Voucher program.

Feedback provided by participants and testing conducted throughout the course of the Demonstration will allow HUD to refine NSPIRE standards, scoring and protocols. Additionally, testing and input received during the Demonstration will help HUD achieve its goals for NSPIRE of increasing objectivity in physical inspections and focusing on resident health and safety. Once the Demonstration has concluded, NSPIRE will be implemented through the issuance of regulatory and sub-regulatory updates and changes through the rulemaking process.