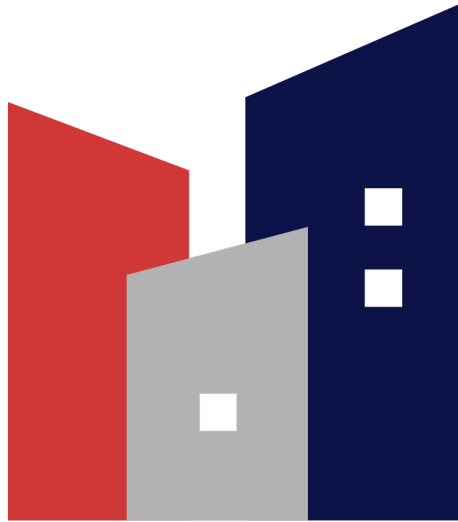




Housing Consultants of America

How to Choose an Affordable Housing Compliance Consultant

What owners, developers, nonprofits, and management companies should evaluate before selecting a compliance partner



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Choosing an affordable housing compliance consultant is not simply a matter of comparing hourly rates. The firm you select may review eligibility decisions, support recertifications and move-ins, help prepare for audits, interpret complex program requirements, and work directly with sensitive tenant documentation. The right partner should strengthen your internal operation, reduce compliance risk, and provide dependable capacity when your team needs it.

Start With the Programs in Your Portfolio

Affordable housing compliance is not one-size-fits-all. A consultant who understands one program may not have the depth needed for a layered property or a portfolio operating under multiple funding sources. Before comparing firms, identify the programs, agencies, and property types for which you need support.

Ask prospective consultants about direct experience with the programs in your portfolio, including HUD-assisted housing, Section 8, LIHTC, HOME, RAD, PBV, public housing, and other applicable funding or regulatory structures. For layered properties, ask how the firm approaches situations in which multiple program requirements apply to the same household or unit.

1. Evaluate Program Expertise

A strong compliance consultant should be able to move beyond general explanations and apply program requirements to real tenant files and operational situations. Ask who will actually perform the work and what experience those professionals have with eligibility, income, assets, deductions, student status, rents, utility allowances, EIV, certifications, notices, and required documentation.

How HCA aligns: Housing Consultants of America supports affordable housing organizations across multiple compliance functions and program types, allowing clients to use one resource for file review, occupancy support, recertifications, audit preparation, training, and ongoing compliance questions.

2. Look at Practical Experience - Not Just Credentials

Certifications and training matter, but practical experience matters just as much. A consultant should understand what compliance looks like at the property level: incomplete verifications, late recertifications, applicant questions, staffing shortages, system limitations, conflicting documentation, audit requests, and deadlines that cannot simply be moved.

Ask whether the firm has experience working directly with owners, management companies, nonprofits, site teams, and compliance departments. The strongest partners understand both the regulatory requirement and the operational reality of implementing it.

3. Compare Turnaround Times

Turnaround time can directly affect occupancy, recertification timeliness, resident communication, and subsidy processing. Ask prospective firms how quickly they typically review move-in files, recertifications, interim certifications, and urgent compliance questions. Also ask what happens when volume suddenly increases.

Do not evaluate speed in isolation. A fast review is only valuable when it is also accurate, documented, and supported by a consistent quality-control process.

4. Consider Geographic Coverage

Organizations with properties in multiple states should consider whether the consultant can support a geographically dispersed portfolio. Federal program knowledge is important, but state allocating agencies, monitoring practices, forms, and local requirements can also affect compliance operations.

Ask whether the firm routinely works across state lines, how it researches jurisdiction-specific requirements, and whether support can be delivered remotely, onsite, or through a combination of both.

5. Ask About Property Management Software Knowledge

A compliance consultant who understands your software environment can integrate more efficiently into existing workflows. Ask about experience with affordable housing and property management platforms used by your organization, as well as the firm's process for learning client-specific systems.

HCA professionals have worked with commonly used housing and property-management systems, including platforms such as Yardi, RealPage/OneSite, MRI, Boston Post, AppFolio, Emphasys, Tenmast, PHA Web, HAB, Rent Manager, and ResMan. Specific system experience should always be confirmed for the team assigned to a project.

6. Understand the Firm's Quality-Control Procedures

Ask what happens after a consultant reviews a file. Is there a standardized checklist? How are errors documented? Who handles difficult or disputed issues? Is there a second-level review for complex situations? Does the firm identify recurring patterns across multiple files?

A good compliance partner should do more than return a list of corrections. Quality control should help management understand why errors are occurring and whether a policy, training, staffing, or workflow problem is contributing to them.

7. Evaluate Audit and Monitoring Experience

Audit experience is especially important because it gives consultants insight into how documentation is viewed by outside reviewers. Ask whether the firm has supported HUD Management and Occupancy Reviews, LIHTC monitoring, investor or lender reviews, file audits, corrective-action responses, and other regulatory or oversight reviews relevant to your portfolio.

A consultant who understands the audit process can help a property prepare before the reviewer arrives, organize requested records, identify weaknesses, prepare staff, and develop a plan for correcting deficiencies.

8. Confirm Staffing Capacity

A one-person consulting practice may be excellent for a small project but unable to absorb a sudden portfolio-wide backlog. Conversely, a large firm may not always provide the responsiveness or continuity a client expects. Ask how the provider handles volume, vacations, urgent requests, acquisitions, staffing vacancies, and simultaneous deadlines.

The key question is whether the provider can scale with your organization when workload changes - not simply whether it can handle today's assignment.

9. Look for Ongoing Support, Not Just Project Completion

Affordable housing compliance questions continue after a file audit or backlog project ends. A strong partner should be able to support the organization as new questions, staffing changes, audits, regulatory updates, and unusual tenant situations arise.

Ask whether the firm offers ongoing file review, temporary staffing, compliance question support, policy review, training, recertification processing, move-in assistance, EIV support, voucher processing, and audit preparation. A provider with multiple service options can often adapt as the client's needs change.

10. Evaluate Communication and Accountability

Compliance consulting involves deadlines and risk, so communication should be clear. Before engaging a firm, understand who your primary contact will be, how questions are escalated, how completed work is tracked, how corrections are communicated, and what reporting management will receive.

A consultant should make the compliance process easier to manage - not create another layer of uncertainty.

Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Compliance Consultant

- Which affordable housing programs does your team work with most frequently?
- Who will actually perform our file reviews and compliance work?
- What experience do you have with layered properties?
- What are your typical turnaround times for move-ins, recertifications, and file reviews?
- In which states or regions do you currently support clients?
- Which property management software systems does your team know?
- What quality-control process do you use?
- What audit and monitoring reviews have you helped clients prepare for?
- How much additional workload can your team absorb if our needs increase?
- Can you provide temporary support during staffing vacancies?
- Can you support ongoing compliance questions after the initial project?
- How will we track progress, corrections, deadlines, and outstanding items?

Why Organizations Choose Housing Consultants of America

Housing Consultants of America (HCA) is structured to serve as an extension of an owner's, developer's, nonprofit's, or management company's compliance operation. Rather than limiting support to a single type of assignment, HCA can assist clients across the compliance lifecycle.

Services can include third-party file reviews, annual and interim recertifications, move-in and applicant files, EIV support, voucher and subsidy processing, backlog recovery, temporary occupancy and compliance staffing, MOR and audit preparation, policy support, training, and day-to-day compliance questions.

For organizations comparing affordable housing compliance firms, the objective should be to find a partner with the expertise to understand the programs, the staffing capacity to respond when workload changes, and the operational experience to help turn compliance requirements into workable processes.

Choose a Partner That Can Grow With Your Portfolio

The best compliance relationship is not based only on the problem you have today. It should also support the organization you are building. As portfolios grow, regulations change, employees turn over, and audits approach, owners and management companies need access to experienced professionals who can step in without requiring the organization to rebuild its compliance infrastructure every time workload changes.

Comparing affordable housing compliance consultants?

Housing Consultants of America can discuss your portfolio, programs, current workload, staffing challenges, and compliance priorities to determine what level of support makes sense for your organization.

About the Author

Jenna Ghisolfo is President & Founder of Housing Consultants of America. Her work focuses on affordable housing compliance, operational support, training, file review, and helping housing organizations strengthen day-to-day compliance practices.

Disclaimer: This article is intended for general educational purposes and is not a substitute for current HUD, state allocating agency, investor, lender, or other governing program guidance, legal advice, or property-specific compliance direction.