



System Improvement: From Best Practices to Implementation

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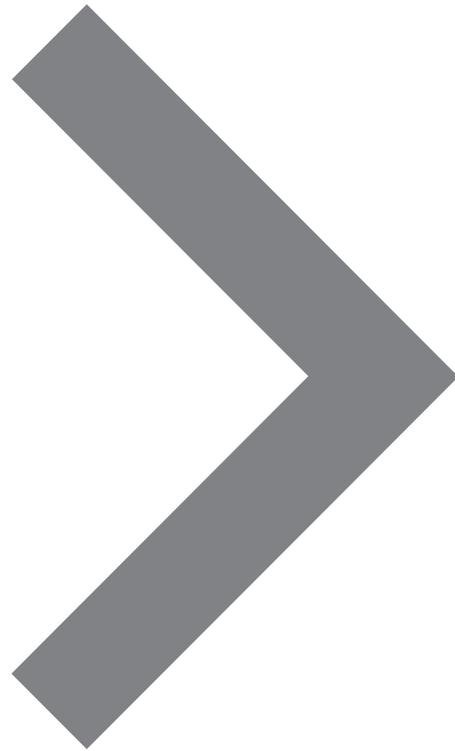


Agenda

- Data-Driven Decisions
- Centering Equity in Decision-Making
- Housing Focused Practices
- Considerations for Rural Areas
- Considerations for Tribal Areas
- Q&A



Data-Driven Decisions



To prevent and end homelessness, communities must be able to **analyze data at both the system and project levels** and evaluate their efforts by subpopulation, across project types, and in other ways

Data Driven Decisions: Homeless Management Information System

Required Reports

HMIS produces several reports that HUD requires for homeless services programs at both the project and the system levels; these reports contain a wealth of valuable information such as housing destinations, household income, and mainstream benefits access

Client-Level Data

HMIS data starts at the participant level; aggregate data collected for each client and household flow up into project and system level performance reports; high quality and reliable client-level data facilitates furthering equity

System-Level Analysis

Aggregate client level data from HMIS flows up into system level performance analysis; it helps systems understand pathways that households take from homelessness to housing so they can identify what is working and what needs improvement

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) will be the primary source of homeless services data in most CoCs. It is the main driver of multiple HUD-required reports which can be used as important parts of an overall performance improvement plan. This data can also be used at the project level to evaluate participant outcomes and assess overall impact on system performance. Victim Service Providers will use HMIS-comparable databases that can also provide valuable performance information, especially at the project level.

Data Driven Decisions: Project Level vs. System Level

- **System level data will inform broader decisions about resource allocation and access**
- **Project level data will inform decisions to improve performance**

System level data reports on and informs the overall performance of the system. Reports like the Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA) and System Performance Measures (SPM) **assess the system's outcomes** with respect to moving people from homelessness to permanent housing. Analysis of system level data should include system-wide activities like Coordinated Entry and a variety of non-homelessness system data.

Project level data reports on and informs the performance and outcomes of individual projects. This data is important for understanding how **projects contribute to overall system performance**. Analysis of project level data will allow CoCs to identify lower-performing projects and take appropriate action at the project level to create a more efficient, effective system.

Data Driven Decisions: SNAPS TA Strategy



In 2018, the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) published the [SNAPS Data TA Strategy to Improve Data and Performance](#) (the Strategy); it is one of several federal efforts to obtain an even more accurate picture of the scale and scope of homelessness in our nation

SNAPS encourages communities to get familiar with the Strategy, as it will guide their data-oriented efforts with Continuums of Care (CoCs); it [indicates the key markers and characteristics of a data-driven system](#), which CoCs can use to set their own improvement goals

The Strategy contains [ambitious, aspirational goals](#); CoCs should integrate these goals into local needs-driven performance metrics, work toward collecting stronger, more useful data, and make continuous progress toward their goals

Data Driven Decisions: SNAPs Overarching Goals

Communities use their data to optimize systems of care through making ongoing system performance improvements and determining optimal resource allocation

Communities operate data systems that allow for accurate, comprehensive, and timely data collection, usage and reporting

Federal government coordinates to receive and use data to make informed decisions in coordination with other data sets, across and within agencies

Data Driven Decisions: Goals for Communities

- **Strategy 3 of the SNAPS Data TA Strategy to Improve Data and Performance defines the specific characteristics of CoCs that effectively use data to improve their efforts**

CoC uses data for system planning

Use project level performance data to make rating and ranking decisions and set local performance goals; align homeless system resources to meet needs of people experiencing homelessness; use all data sources (including non-homeless system data) to prevent and end homelessness

CoC uses data for coordination of care

Multiple homeless providers coordinate to provide housing and services; all homeless providers remove systemic barriers to housing and services; homeless providers and non-homeless systems of care coordinate to remove systemic barriers to housing and services

CoC uses data to prioritize existing resources for most vulnerable people

Communities use all available resources for most vulnerable persons; homeless system uses RRH for progressive engagement and 100% of PSH is highly targeted; data from non-homeless systems is used to prioritize highly vulnerable persons; local evidence drives highly targeted prevention

Data Driven Decisions: Relevant Reports

Annual Performance Report (APR)

System Performance Measures (SPM)

Point-In-Time Count (PIT)

Housing Inventory Count (HIC)

Longitudinal System Analysis (LSA)

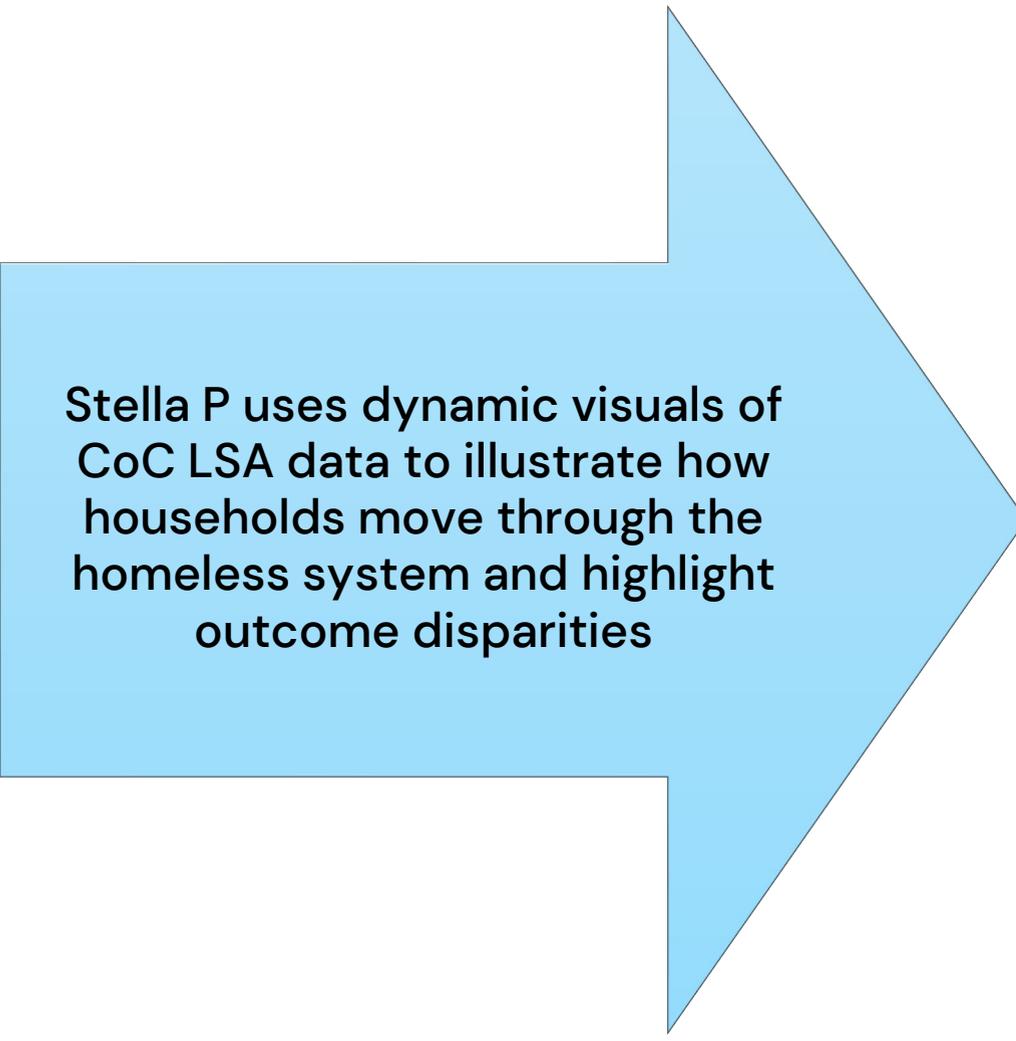
Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)

Federal Partner Reports (RHY, SSVF, etc.)

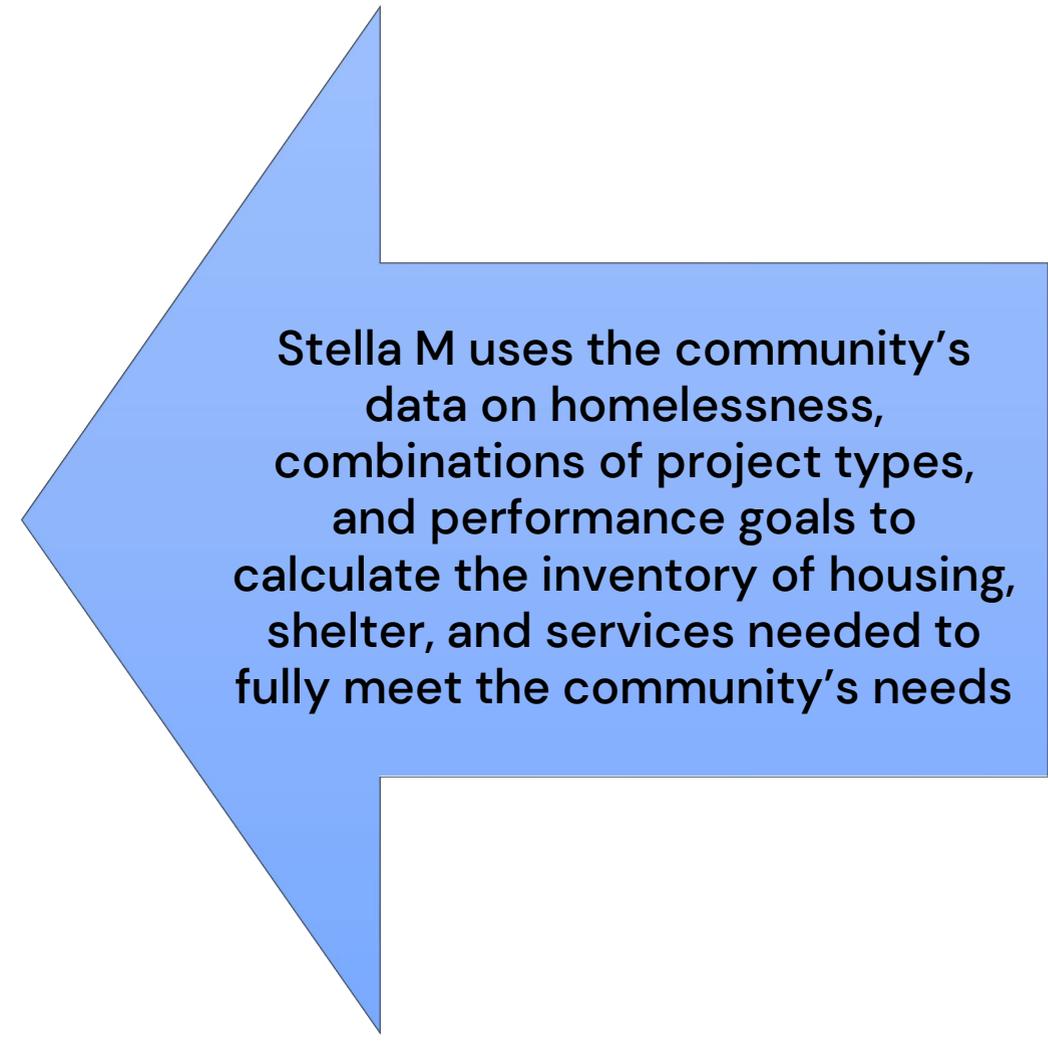
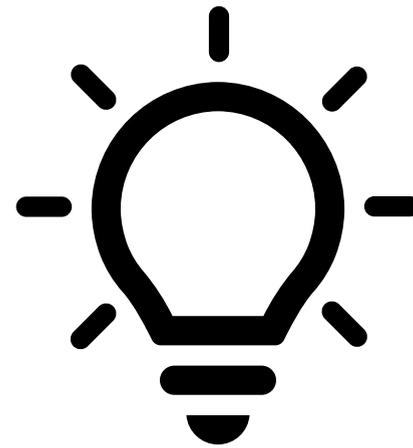
Victim Service Provider Reports

Spotlight: Stella P and Stella M

Stella P is a ready-made tool that can help CoCs analyze the flow of households through various homeless services system pathways. Stella M can be used to test variables related to housing inventory, shelter, and services.



Stella P uses dynamic visuals of CoC LSA data to illustrate how households move through the homeless system and highlight outcome disparities



Stella M uses the community's data on homelessness, combinations of project types, and performance goals to calculate the inventory of housing, shelter, and services needed to fully meet the community's needs

Data Driven Decisions: Quantitative and Qualitative Data

In your pursuit of data driven decisions, both qualitative and quantitative data must be considered. **Quantitative data will inform what is happening**, and **qualitative data will inform why it is happening**.



Data Driven Decisions: Qualitative Data Sources

Data Collection Venues

- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Roundtables
- Public hearings
- Listening sessions
- CoC membership meetings

Stakeholders to Consider

- People with lived experience/expertise
- People experiencing poverty
- People from historically marginalized populations
- Case managers
- Street outreach workers
- Culturally specific organizations
- General service providers

Data Driven Decisions: Additional Data to Consider

Census Data

Poverty Data

Evictions

Child Welfare

Hospitals
and Public
Health

Medicaid

Law
Enforcement

Education
System

Behavioral
Health

Mainstream
Benefits

Public
Housing

Data Driven Decisions: The Performance Improvement Process

- The **performance improvement process** is outlined in HUD's **Performance Analysis and Improvement Toolkit**
- Performance improvement is **ongoing and iterative**

Step 1: Analyze System Performance

Analyze system performance at the system, household, pathway, and subpopulation levels; prioritize areas for improvement while considering impact, equity, CoC performance targets, and CoC priorities

Step 2: Identify Contributing Factors

Identify contributing factors such as individual project performance, data quality, and resource capacity; gather more evidence to support results

Step 3: Design Improvement Strategies

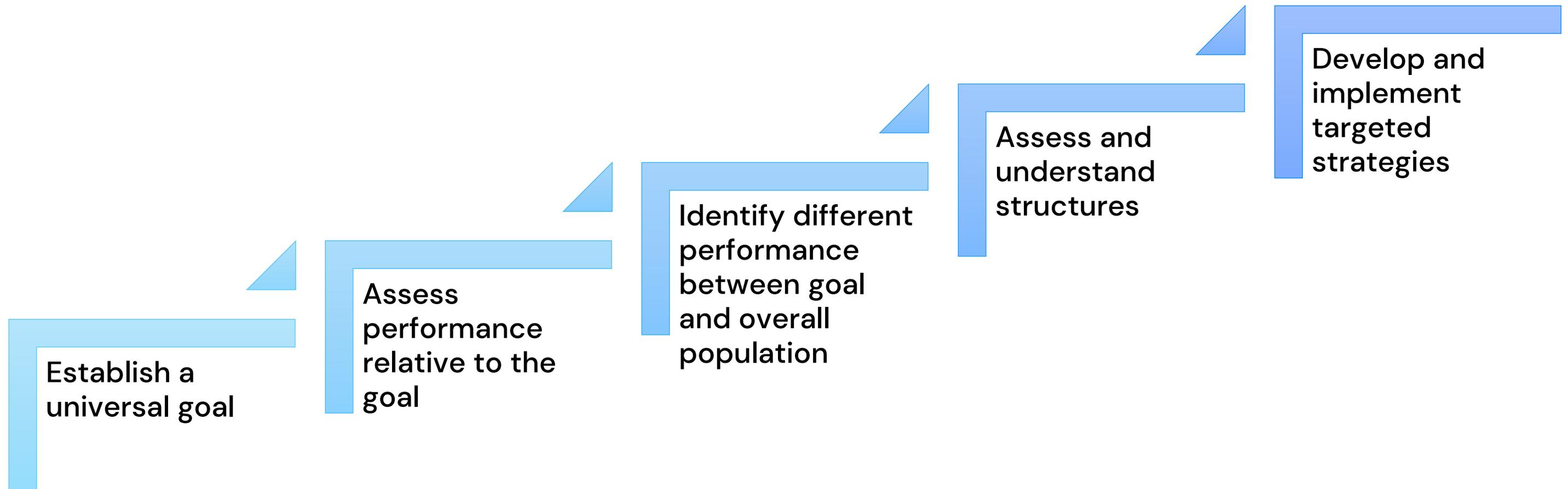
Design improvement strategies, prioritize for impact, and consider a logic model design for implementation

Step 4: Monitoring and Evaluating Strategies

Create a performance improvement plan, conduct quarterly progress monitoring, and implement an evaluation plan

Spotlight: Targeted Universalism

When working to address equity in your system, Targeted Universalism is an excellent framework to drive your efforts. Targeted Universalism facilitates data analysis that **ensures racial equity is prioritized**.



Data Driven Decisions: Final Thoughts

Don't let perfection get in the way of progress

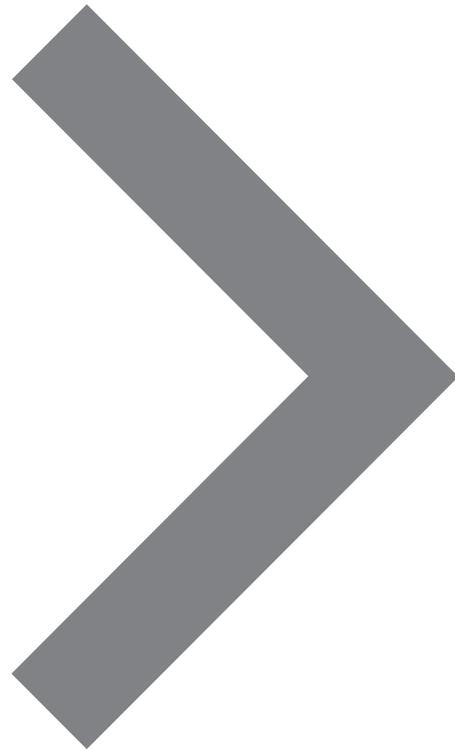
Remember the qualitative data

Project-level data and system-level are both important

Center equity and related data in decision-making

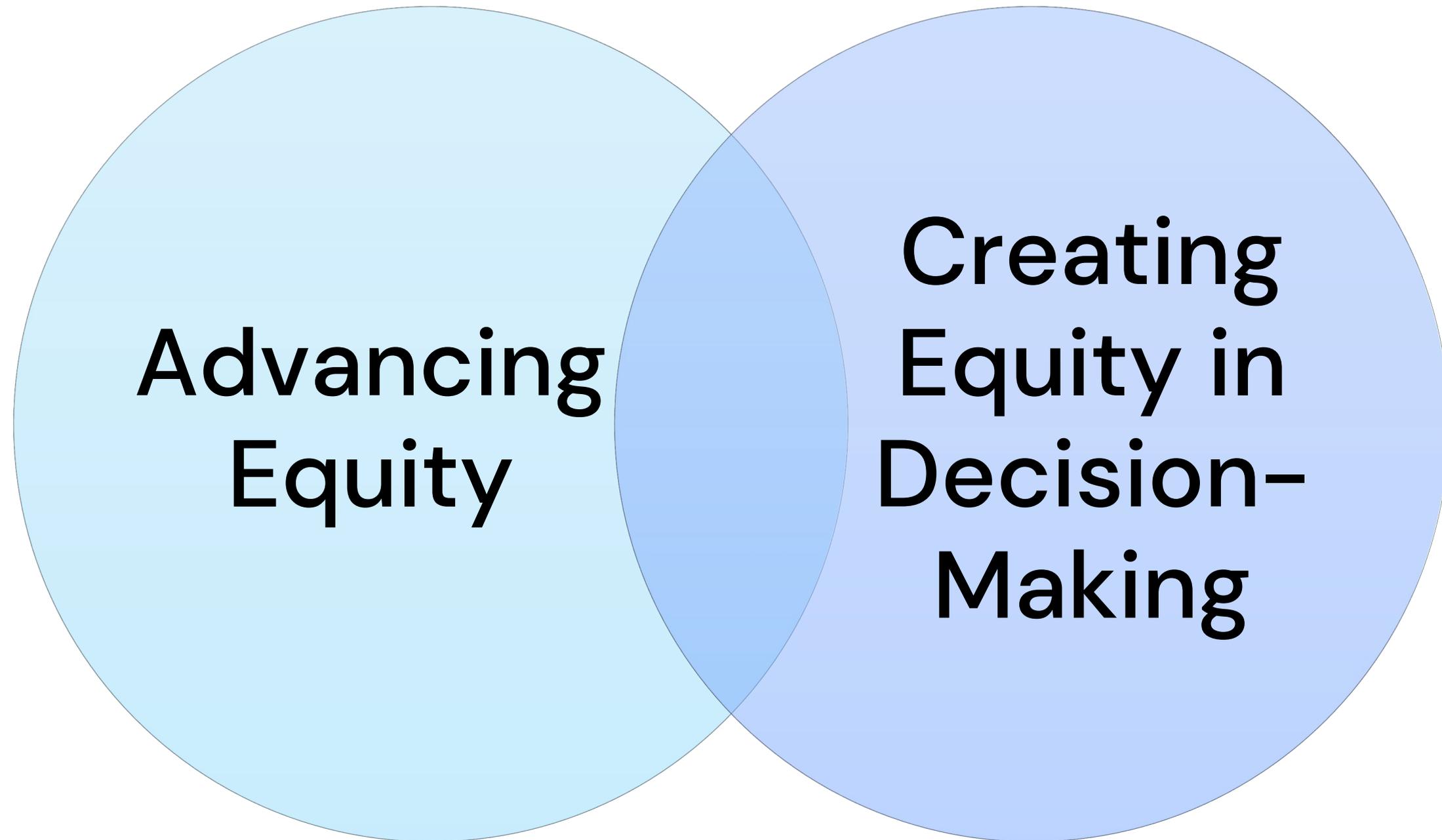


Centering Equity in Decision-Making



The **structure for advancing equity** is the same for all populations but the **process of advancing equity** is different for every population

Comparison: Advancing Equity and Creating Equity in Decision-Making



Essential Principles: Creating Equity in Decision-Making

Meaningful Participation

To create opportunities for meaningful participation, current stakeholders must relinquish some level of control, marginalized people must be empowered to identify where and how they want to participate, and systems must provide new decision-makers with training, support, and space to grow

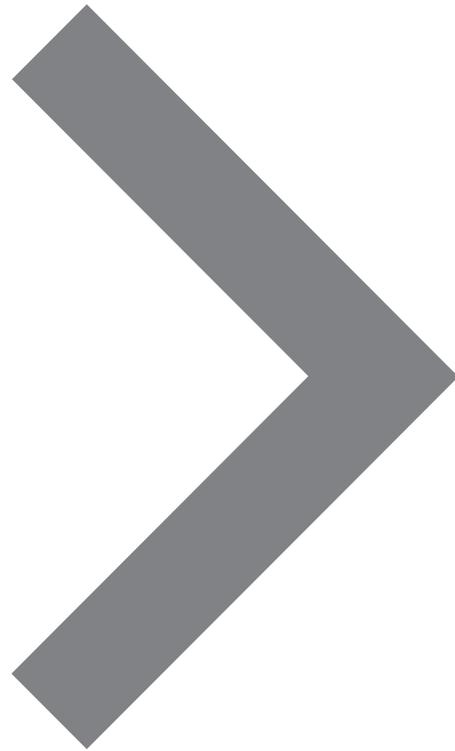
Equity and Expertise

The system and its current stakeholders must recognize marginalized people, including people with lived experience of homelessness, as experts; that means prioritizing the knowledge, skills, and experience of marginalized people within their areas of expertise

Adapt and Accommodate

Systems must adapt to the needs of its new stakeholders; creating flexibility in meeting dates/times/formats and letting go of 'professional' norms including communication styles and dress expectations are two critically important steps for almost any population

Creating equity in decision-making is a key part of advancing equity in homeless services systems; it requires putting into practice the principles discussed in the first webinar of this series, "Advancing Equity." It requires sustained effort to identify and overcome the associated challenges—everything from resistance to change from current stakeholders to reimagining the decision-making process to create opportunities for meaningful participation. It also requires dedication and commitment to identifying who isn't at the table and incorporating them into the decision-making process in a way that is respectful and mutually beneficial.



An equitable decision-making process must be as **accessible, inviting, and interested in marginalized people** as it is in 'traditional' stakeholders

Structure: Creating Equity in Decision-Making

Consult with members of the marginalized populations

Create change in partnership with the people it will impact

Implement changes gradually and with intentionality

Assess outcomes: celebrate success and identify what isn't working yet

Continue to consult and iterate as old barriers persist and new barriers emerge

Spotlight: Compensating People With Lived Experience

Marginalized people, including people with lived experience, should be **paid as experts** for participating in the decision-making process

Ask your experts how they want to be compensated and be flexible with your payment methods; cash, gift cards, checks, and payment apps are all reasonable requests

Reimburse associated costs: transportation, meals, and childcare are all frequent and reasonable

Local gov't general funds

CoC Planning Grants

ESG funds, depending on how it is earmarked

HHS grants, including from SAMHSA

Corporate grants

Nonprofit, foundation, and faith-based partners

Philanthropies and personal giving accounts

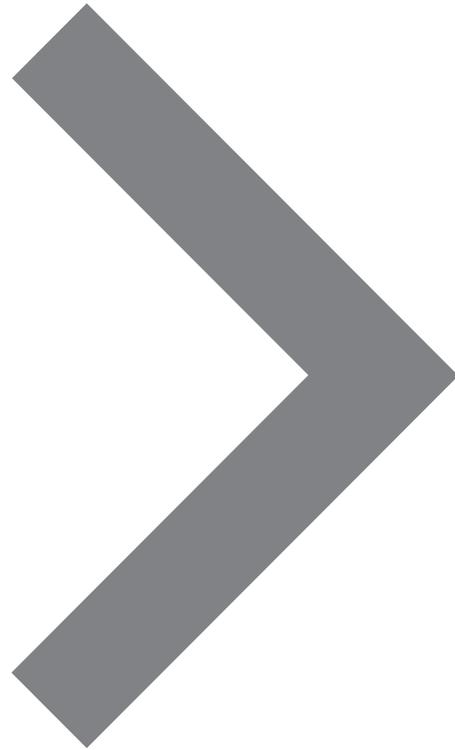
Partnerships with colleges/universities

Fundraising and/or social media fundraisers

Data sources: "Paying People with Lived Experience and Expertise," HUD

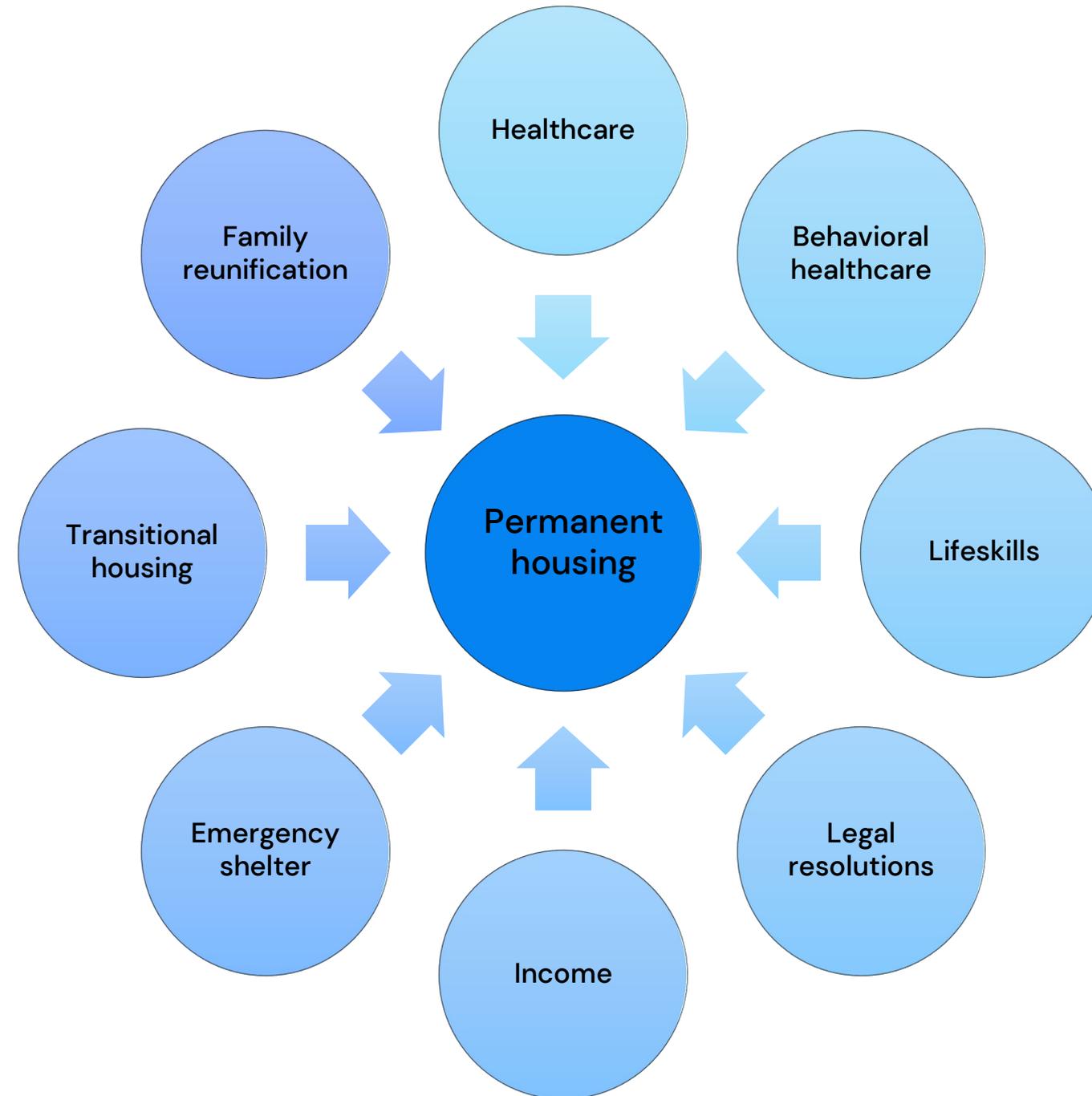


Housing Focused Practices



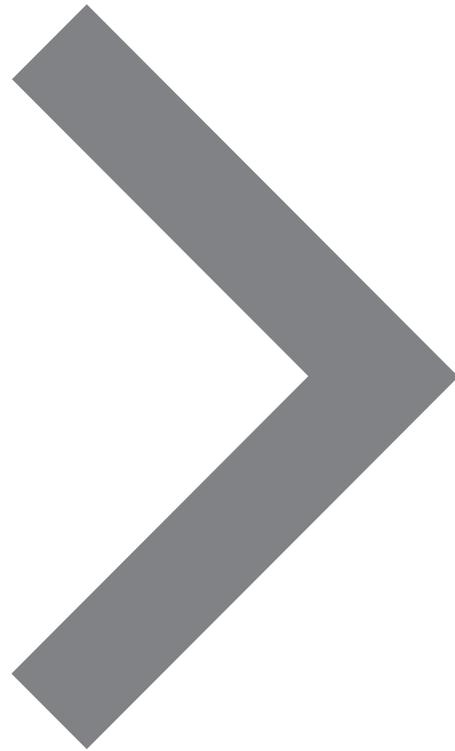
The goal of homeless services is **safe, stable permanent housing** for people experiencing homelessness

Centering Permanent Housing in Homelessness Response



Spotlight: The Mind of (Many) Homeless Services Providers





Housing focused practices are **Housing First practices**: a service approach that treats housing needs as **foundational and urgent**

Spotlight: What is Housing First?

“An approach to quickly and successfully connect [people] experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements.”



Principles: Housing First

Homelessness is first
and foremost a
housing crisis

All people
experiencing
homelessness can
**achieve safe, stable
permanent housing**

Everyone is “housing
ready”

Achieving housing
often results in
quality-of-life
improvements

People experiencing
homelessness have
the right to dignity,
respect, and self-
determination

Participant needs
dictate the exact
configuration of
housing and services

Data sources: “Housing First in
Permanent Supportive Housing,” HUD

Implementation Layers: Housing First

CoC/ Community

Organization

Project

Direct service staff

CoC and Community-Level Implementations: Housing First

Implement project-level low-barrier-to-entry requirements in CoC and ESG written standards

Streamline access to housing subsidies through Coordinated Entry

Create system-level partnerships with non-CE housing subsidy providers

Develop system-level partnerships with landlords that include eviction prevention education

Invest time and money in creating a range of return-to-housing models

Build system-level bridges to mainstream benefits providers

Work with other funders to align resources other than CoC/ESG with Housing First

Monitor fidelity of Housing First implementation at the provider/staff levels

Organization and Project-Level Implementations: Housing First

Eliminate prerequisites to project intake

When appropriate, try rapid exit case management before housing search and subsidy

Create a communications template to sell landlords on saying 'yes' to participants

Protect the legal tenancy rights and responsibilities of participants

Solicit feedback from past and existing participants about housing barriers

Review and re-review project policies, procedures, and practices for unintentional barriers

Provide staff training on person-centered practices such as trauma-informed care

Ensure staff are correctly and consistently implementing Housing First

Data sources: "Housing First in Permanent Supportive Housing," HUD; "Housing First Checklist: Assessing Projects and Systems for a Housing First Orientation," USICH



→ Housing First: Further Reading



The Housing First model was pioneered in the early 1990s; since then, it has been incorporated and studied by many different funders serving a range of participants populations and geographies.

To learn more about Housing First, including best practices for implementation at every level, please review the following foundational resources:

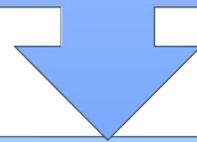
- [Housing First in Permanent Supportive Housing \(HUD\)](#)
- [Housing First Checklist: Assessing Projects and Systems for a Housing First Orientation \(USICH\)](#)



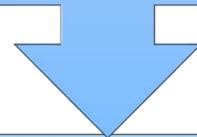
Housing focused practices are also about **identifying and providing access** to every possible route back to housing

Streets to Housing: The Most Familiar Path

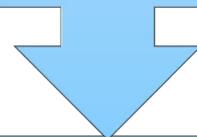
Initial Street Outreach Contact



Subsequent Coordinated Entry Activities



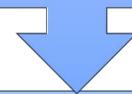
Coordinated Entry PSH/RRH Referral



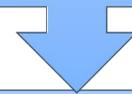
Housing via PSH/RRH

Streets to Housing: An Even More Complex Route to Housing

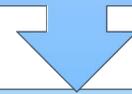
Initial Street Outreach Contact



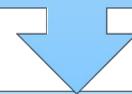
Immediate Housing Problem-Solving Conversation



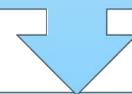
Ongoing Housing Problem-Solving Conversations



(time passes)



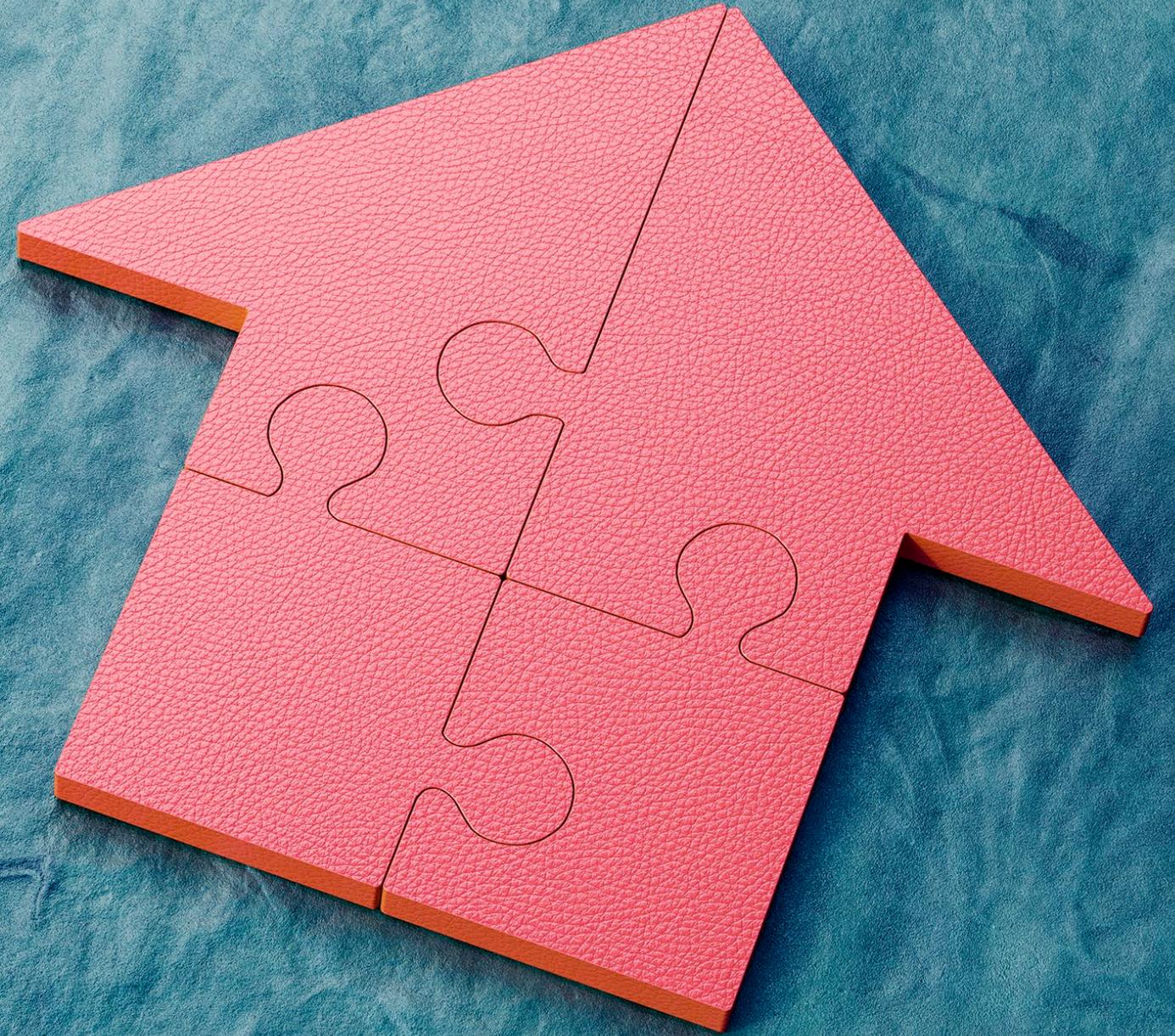
...and Housing Problem-Solving Works!



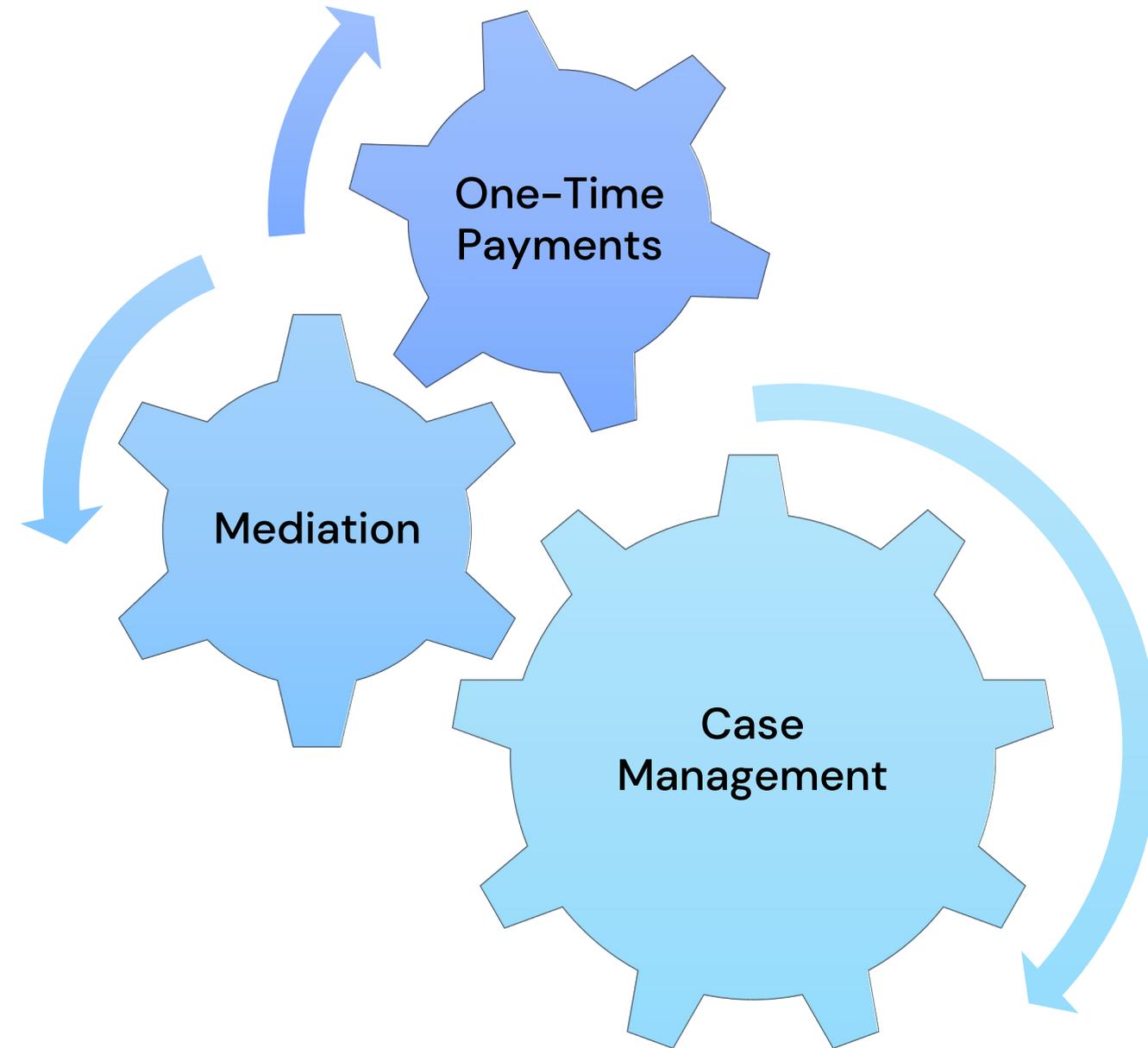
Housed Via Support Networks

Spotlight: What is Housing Problem-Solving?

“A person-centered, housing-focused approach to explore creative, safe, and cost-effective solutions to quickly resolve a housing crisis.”



Core Tools: Housing Problem-Solving





→ Housing Problem-Solving: Further Reading

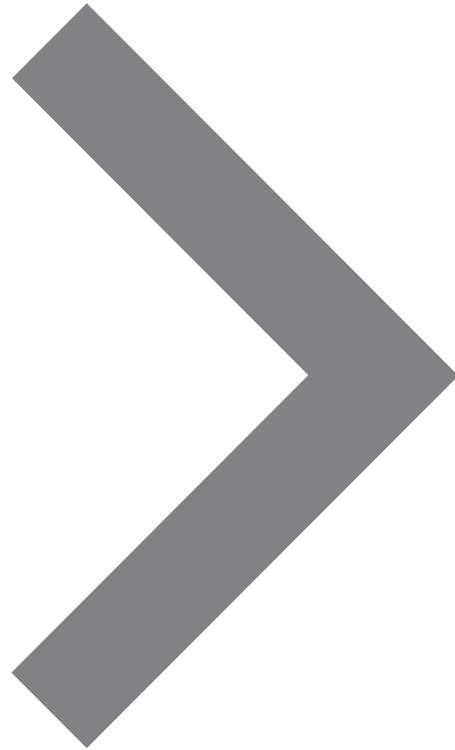


Housing Problem-Solving (HPS) is an emerging practice, which means resources about best practices and project design are still b
To learn more about HPS, including how to fund common HPS activities with CoC Program and ESG funds, please review the following resources:

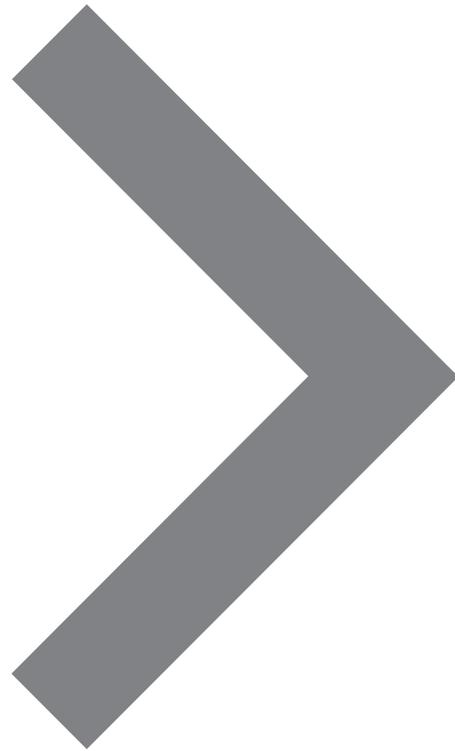
- [COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Housing Problem-Solving \(HUD\)](#)
- [Adopting Housing Problem-Solving Approaches with Prevention, Diversion, and Rapid Exit Strategies \(USICH\)](#)



Considerations for Rural Areas



Rural communities often face **unique challenges** when establishing a coordinated community response to homelessness...



...and they possess
**unique strengths and
resiliencies** that make
them well positioned
to prevent and end
homelessness

Rural Areas: System-Wide Considerations

Creatively engage non-targeted systems and programs, faith communities, and informal partners to address resource gaps

Design leadership and governance structures to increase capacity

Develop outreach and engagement practices that reach people experiencing homelessness

Implement coordinated entry processes that promote access for people across large geographies

Think outside the box to expand the availability of crisis beds and permanent housing opportunities

Rural Areas: Balance of State CoCs

- It is common for rural areas to be included in Balance of State (BOS) and statewide CoCs, which can include hundreds of counties and a mix of rural and suburban communities
- While the total number of people experiencing homelessness in these areas may be relatively small, the percentage of people experiencing homelessness, particularly unsheltered homelessness, is often disproportionately high
- Data collection challenges and statistical modeling associated with the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count mean that the magnitude of rural homelessness can be unclear



Spotlight: Regional Governance

Divide into Sub-Regions

Regions may be defined by a leadership body or CoC members and may be based on equitable distribution of coverage areas; each region should be a manageable size and conducive to local collaboration

Establish Local Structures

Local governance structures should reflect the community; they may take the form of local boards or coalitions. Representation of local structures should be included in overall CoC governance structures

Define Roles

Local governance structures should include roles for various staff, including but not limited to Chair, Point-in-Time Count Coordinator, Coordinated Entry Coordinator, Performance Coordinator, etc.

Many Balance of State CoCs have divided their territory into sub-regions, a concept that may be useful for any CoC that covers a large geography. In this model, each region usually has its own local governance structures that feed up into overall CoC governance. Benefits of a regionalized approach include enhancing buy-in due to the local focus, creating opportunities to better tailor local responses, reducing the burden on CoC staff, and better ensuring coverage and coordination across the CoC. Local structures, when purposefully focused on efforts related to data, can also lead to higher quality PIT results and System Performance Measures reporting, thus creating an environment for more informed decisions locally and across the CoC.

Rural Areas: Coordinated Entry

Involve Key Stakeholders

- Stakeholders from across the area should be involved in planning and design
- Identify leads for each region or community
- Solicit feedback and be inclusive from the beginning stages

Tailor Processes to the Community or Region

- Consider finding the Coordinated Entry (CE) method that works best for each Region, including combinations of methods
- Multisite centralized access
- No wrong door
- Assessment hotline
- Strong outreach network for off-site CE

Establish a Network of Referral Sources

- Referral sources may include police, firefighters, EMTs, park rangers, mainstream benefits offices, and school liaisons, among others
- Establish partnerships with large organizational partners such as the United Way if possible

Rural Areas: Crisis Beds and Housing Opportunities

Engage developers
and consider
USDA's Rural
Housing Services

Develop
relationships with
landlords

Educate the
community on
landlord/tenant
issues

Conduct housing
focused outreach

Consider shared
housing
opportunities



→ Additional Information



For more ideas that may be useful for rural communities, please see these other webinars from the Closing the Gap: Homelessness to Housing Series:

- [“Stakeholder Engagement and Advancing Equity”](#)
- [“Street Outreach”](#)



Considerations for Tribal Nations

CoC and Tribal Nation Partnership



HUD encourages CoCs to reach out to neighboring Tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) to reach out to CoCs, to **identify opportunities for meaningful partnership**

In 2021, there were **691 Tribal organizations whose land may overlap with 132 CoCs**

Subject to all applicable HUD requirements, CoCs with explicit Tribal approval are expected to serve Tribal land as part of the CoC's geography, including creating ways for Tribal entities to achieve **equitable access to CoC Program funds**

Data sources: "Including Indian Tribes and TDHEs in Your CoC," HUD

Intersections: Rural Areas and Tribal Nations

- According to the First Nations Development Institute:
 - Outdated definitions and poor data quality in the U.S. Census have led to misunderstanding about the size and significance of the rural Native American population
 - Due to challenges with data collection, data-driven decision making often leads to rural Native communities being left behind regarding provision of public assistance and private philanthropic funding
 - Citing a 2012 report from the Housing Assistance Council, 54% of the national American Indian and Alaskan Native populations lives in rural and small-town areas, with large fluctuations in this percentage at the state level
- Members of Tribal Nations and Indigenous populations experiencing homelessness in rural areas will likely experience similar issues as other populations, and these issues will likely be more acute and severe
- It is critical for response systems in rural areas to intentionally and meaningfully include Tribal Nations and Indigenous populations

What Can CoCs Do?

Engage with Tribal entities while recognizing Tribal sovereignty

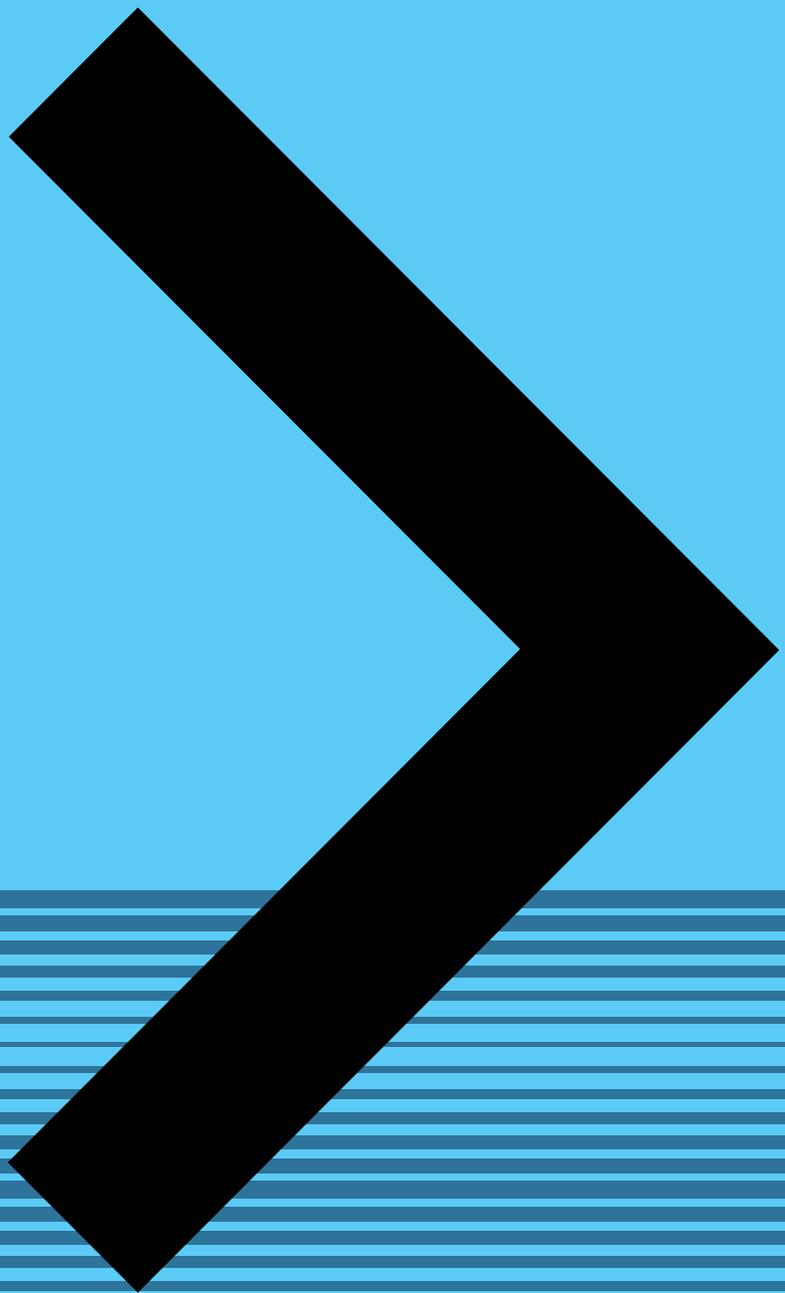
Rely on and grow existing relationships between Tribal entities and existing CoC stakeholders

Create a NOFO process that facilitates equitable access by Tribal entities

Offer Tribal-focused training on essential CoC functions (HMIS, Coordinated Entry, etc.)

Create opportunities for meaningful representation of Tribal entities

Recognize Tribal entities as experts on their own experiences; accept and adjust to feedback



Q&A

Resources and Works Cited (1/2)

- [SNAPS Data Strategy and Useability](#), HUD
- [“SNAPS Data TA Strategy to Improve Data and Performance,”](#) HUD
- [Stella and System Modeling](#), HUD
- [“CoC Performance Analysis and Improvement Toolkit,”](#) HUD
- [“Targeted Universalism Policy and Practice,”](#) Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley
- [“Paying People with Lived Experience and Expertise,”](#) HUD
- [“Housing First in Permanent Supportive Housing,”](#) HUD
- [“Housing First Checklist: Assessing Projects and Systems for a Housing First Orientation,”](#) USICH
- [“COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Housing Problem-Solving,”](#) HUD
- [“Adopting Housing Problem-Solving Approaches with Prevention, Diversion, and Rapid Exit Strategies,”](#) USICH
- [“Including Indian Tribes and TDHEs in Your CoC,”](#) HUD

Resources and Works Cited (2/2)

- ["Strengthening Systems for Ending Rural Homelessness: Promising Practices and Considerations,"](#) USICH
- [Rural Capacity Building Program \(RCB\),](#) HUD
- [Rural Gateway,](#) HUD
- [Rural Homelessness Resources,](#) HUD