



PRODUCT NO. 2 OF 9

HMIS Staffing and Resourcing Toolkit

A Guide to Increase Capacity and Ensure Sustainability Across Your HMIS Implementation

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This resource is prepared by technical assistance providers and intended only to provide guidance. The contents of this document, except when based on statutory or regulatory authority or law, do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

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About This Toolkit

This Staffing and Resourcing Toolkit for Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) is an update to the “Homeless Management Information Systems Budgeting and Staffing Toolkit: Resource and Cost Planning for a Sustainable HMIS Implementation” that was published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2011. That document provided an overview of HMIS eligible activities that could be supported by HUD funding, presented funding diversification strategies, and reviewed HMIS Lead management and staffing models. It also provided budget planning and HMIS Lead staffing tools, which assisted communities in identifying the funds and staffing needed to support successful HMIS implementation.

Since then, much has changed as a result of the implementation of HUD’s current Continuum of Care (CoC) program, including an increased use of system performance measures and an emphasis on planning and funding decisions driven by objective and high-quality HMIS data. Additionally, innovative strategies and best practices have been identified as HMIS implementations have matured and the field has become increasingly professionalized. This toolkit addresses funding, management, and staffing strategies, and provides a set of policy and operational considerations for CoC and HMIS leadership to address from a capacity-building and -improvement perspective. This toolkit recognizes that many CoCs across the nation have taken steps to increase the resources available to support HMIS implementations for their geographic area, including funding from HUD, federal partners, state and local governments, and private and philanthropic organizations. Further, it recognizes that clarifying the shared responsibilities across HMIS stakeholders in an HMIS implementation remains a challenge for CoC data leadership, HMIS Lead personnel, and HMIS participating agency management, and that continued efforts to improve the administration and operation of data systems are essential to preventing and ending homelessness.

Introduction

Administration and management of an HMIS on behalf of a CoC is a shared responsibility. While the CoC maintains ultimate responsibility for designating, operating, and monitoring an HMIS, implementing an effective HMIS is a collective effort across stakeholders. There are typically four main stakeholder groups: the CoC, the HMIS Lead, Contributing HMIS Organizations (CHOs), and the HMIS Software Vendor that provides the HMIS to the community.

The HMIS Lead is responsible for managing the HMIS for the CoC's geographic area on behalf of the CoC, in accordance with the requirements of the CoC Program Interim Rule and any HMIS requirements prescribed by HUD. Additional responsibilities assigned to the HMIS Lead should be documented in the CoC's governance charter, but may also be clarified in a separate, more detailed written agreement that is incorporated by reference into the CoC's governance charter.¹

HUD requires that CoCs designate both a single HMIS for the CoC's geographic area and an eligible applicant to manage the continuum's HMIS, which is defined as the HMIS Lead. Whether the HMIS Lead is a recipient (that is, the Lead receives HUD funding directly through a signed grant agreement) or a subrecipient (the Lead receives HUD funding through a subgrant from a recipient to operate the HMIS project), the HMIS Lead must be a private nonprofit organization, state, local government, or instrumentality of a state or local

¹ <https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/1566/what-are-the-responsibilities-of-the-hmis-lead/>

government.

While there are few statutory or regulatory requirements placed upon HMIS Leads, there are many locally defined standards and expectations that an HMIS Lead may be required to meet. Some communities may need additional resources—in terms of funding, staffing, and increased capacity—to meet the demands of operating an effective HMIS implementation that produces actionable and high-quality data. But additional resources are rarely the only solution to the challenges CoC leadership face. Since many apparent issues with the administration and operation of an HMIS are actually the result of how an HMIS is used by end users, prioritized by CoC leadership, and integrated into operations for a homelessness crisis response system, strategies and solutions beyond funding are often needed to make meaningful improvements in a community’s HMIS. For instance, funding and resources could help a CoC improve its data quality by increasing the number of staff that provide training or monitor data quality. However, a CoC could also improve its data quality through different training approaches or modalities that are more accessible and relevant to end users. Such a strategy is less about obtaining *more* resources than it is about using existing resources *differently*.

While some challenges are quantitative and can be improved with resources alone (more training, more performance dashboards, more HMIS Lead staff to administer the system), many challenges are qualitative in nature (better end user training, more individualized help desk support, closer collaboration between HMIS Lead staff and CoC). Understanding the interconnectedness of a community’s HMIS implementation can help CoC and HMIS leadership target structural, performance, and resource strategies effectively and systematically. Many of the apparent challenges in a community’s HMIS implementation are symptoms of another underlying problem, related to HMIS governance and leadership, staffing structures across the HMIS Lead and CHO, or misplaced priorities. As a result, CoC and HMIS leadership should engage in a meaningful and transparent planning process that is responsive to stakeholder needs and supports a sustainable HMIS implementation.

This toolkit is intended to support such a planning process by outlining four sequential steps that CoC and HMIS leadership can follow to improve the administration, management, and performance of their HMIS:

- Chapter One outlines the importance of setting a vision and corresponding strategic goals for HMIS. Chapter One also discusses how a community can collectively create a vision to guide their HMIS implementation, move closer toward optimizing their systems of care through data-driven strategies, allocate resources optimally, and embrace a continuous quality improvement culture.
- Chapter Two highlights specific improvement strategies that CoC and HMIS leadership can consider across various levels of HMIS stakeholder involvement (the CoC, the HMIS Lead organization, and the individual HMIS stakeholder). The improvement strategies outlined in Chapter Two are examples of how targeted solutions and action plans can create a framework to begin the alignment of current and future resources, identify community partnerships, and diversify funding opportunities across the CoC and within organizational and individual stakeholders.
- Chapter Three offers practical advice for securing increased and diversified resources to support improvement strategies and solutions.
- Chapter Four provides guidance on the implementation of solutions as they have been identified that support the vision and strategic goals for a community’s data-driven response to homelessness, and as they have been selected and funded in a way that improves the CoC’s overall HMIS performance and the capacity to set up and benefit from data systems.

Chapter 1: A Vision for HMIS and Data

The Importance of Vision

The CoC is responsible for coordinating homeless services and homelessness prevention activities across the CoC's geographic area. Establishing a vision and supporting strategic goals for how to carry out these activities are effective organizing principles that help the CoC to set priorities, allocate resources, and align short-term operations and program management with long-term goals and objectives. Most public and nonprofit organizational stakeholders that make up the CoC have vision and mission statements, as well as values or principles that apply to their primary purpose. Whether it is a nonprofit or a government entity, the concept behind these key terms is essential in creating a purposeful and mission-driven goal, a reason why employees belong to the organization and continue to work toward a collective goal.

Within a CoC, there are likely to be several different organizational stakeholders, each with different needs, expectations, and uses for data. Case managers with direct service providers will need assessment and demographic data to record who is being served and what housing and supportive services are being provided. Program and organizational leadership may be interested in outputs and outcomes for the program participants served by the agency, or other household-level trends and analyses. CoC leadership will have an interest in system performance and data related to cost-effectiveness. Further, public sector leadership and philanthropic stakeholders may have an interest in data related to gap analyses or program design to support targeted investments within a collective impact framework. Across the varied and disparate stakeholders, data is needed to inform decisions.

A shared vision for data can create alignment across organizational partners, clarify expectations for data access and use, and reinforce a culture of data-informed decision-making. A shared vision for data can also support an actionable strategic plan and reinforce the shared responsibilities for a community's HMIS. Vision statements provide a foundation for an organization's programs, services, communications, organization, and culture. A vision statement lays out the ideal goals or end state by defining what long-term success looks like after all stakeholders and system partners have completed shorter-term tasks and objectives. For most communities, a vision statement will likely include an ideal end state in which homelessness has been prevented and ended, and everyone in the community has a safe and stable place to call home. A vision statement for HMIS and its data will likely support the community-wide vision and goals by ensuring data is of high quality and is accessible, used to guide decision-making and resource allocation, and targeted to address inequalities and serve the most vulnerable people. Each community should set ambitious goals to end homelessness by using data to tailor strategies to local conditions and priorities.

Crafting A Vision for the CoC and HMIS

HUD has defined the CoC as the coordinating body for homeless services and homeless prevention activities for a geographic area. The CoC is responsible for the following:

- Operating the CoC,
- Designating an HMIS for the CoC, and
- Planning for the CoC.

Additionally, HUD's purpose of the CoC program is to:

Promote community-wide goals to end homelessness; provide funding to quickly rehouse homeless individuals (including unaccompanied youth) and families while minimizing trauma and dislocation to those persons; promote access to, and effective utilization of, mainstream programs; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Similarly, a CoC's vision statement for its HMIS and the way data is used to support the goals of ending homelessness should also be forward-looking, aspiring yet attainable, and should include both the quantitative end goal and the qualitative characteristics by which that goal is achieved.

In some ways, the CoC's responsibilities can be considered the CoC's mission—working to prevent and end homelessness through the CoC planning structure. A vision can then be thought of as what a community's ideal end state would look like when those three responsibilities have been fully and effectively carried out. Recognizing that HMIS is a critical tool in the efforts to prevent and end homelessness, a community could further develop the HMIS's vision. A clearly defined vision for HMIS may include some or all of the following components:

- Provide high-quality data for implementing policies and programs to eliminate homelessness.
- Assist in the coordination of care and service delivery.
- Measure the nature and extent of homelessness and deploy resources to help those in need.
- Enable partners to report on outputs and outcomes.

With a clearly defined vision set forth from the CoC, the HMIS Lead staff will better understand how their contribution fits into the bigger picture of the CoC's strategic plan and vision and reinforce day-to-day operations in the context of long-term system change efforts.

Governance and Goals

The vision for a community's HMIS management and use of resources should be determined collectively by the CoC, rather than by any one HMIS stakeholder, including the HMIS Lead. HUD requires that the CoC designate both the HMIS Lead and the HMIS software, but the actual administration and oversight of the HMIS will likely include at least the following stakeholders:

- CoC Board;
- CoC committee or work group related to HMIS, data, or performance measurement;
- HMIS Lead;
- HMIS participating agency leadership and end users; and
- HMIS Software Vendor.

While the CoC maintains ultimate responsibility for designating, operating, and monitoring an HMIS, a CoC's HMIS is very much a shared responsibility. There are typically four main stakeholder groups: the CoC, the HMIS Lead, contributing homeless organizations, and the HMIS Software Vendor that provides the HMIS to the community. The HMIS Lead is responsible for managing the HMIS for the CoC's geographic area, in accordance with the requirements of the CoC Program Interim Rule and any HMIS requirements prescribed by HUD. Any additional responsibilities assigned to the HMIS Lead should be documented in the CoC's governance charter, but may also be clarified in a separate, more detailed written agreement that is incorporated into the CoC's governance charter as a reference.

In some cases, an HMIS subcommittee is established which sits between the CoC Board and the HMIS Lead. This subcommittee takes on a portion of the roles and responsibilities assigned to the HMIS Lead by the CoC Board, such as drafting and reviewing HMIS policies and procedures, ensuring forms and agreements are relevant and in alignment with CoC-wide policies, and providing operational support to HMIS stakeholders, such as collecting and synthesizing end user feedback or identifying gaps in training. Establishing a strong HMIS governance structure can transparently and equitably allocate roles and responsibilities across HMIS stakeholders who have both the authority and expertise to operationalize policies and procedures. This approach to governance can alleviate the workload from the HMIS Lead, allowing for resources to be directed toward strengthening the HMIS implementation through enhanced trainings, consistent monitoring, and stronger data analyses that help drive community decisions.

Setting Strategic Direction

It is important for CoC and HMIS leadership to jointly and clearly articulate the HMIS vision, how responsibilities are shared across stakeholders, and what resources and actions are necessary to achieve the strategic goals outlined in the vision. When a community lacks an agreed-upon vision for how HMIS is being used, this can lead to competing priorities among HMIS stakeholders, agencies, and CoC leadership, resulting in an unclear decision-making process.

Additionally, lack of vision may lead to miscommunication and eventually a breakdown of roles and responsibilities across the continuum, resulting in major system setbacks in developing a data-informed culture. Operating an HMIS without a supporting vision can lead to breakdowns in communication standards and performance expectations. Finally, lack of vision may ultimately lead to a loss of investment, compromising your continuum's ability to provide high-quality services to those experiencing homelessness.

Realizing Concrete Benefits

A vision is only as good as the tactical and strategic steps taken by the appropriate stakeholders to advance the vision. Since a vision statement is meant to describe the ideal end state, concrete benefits should be realized across short-, medium-, and long-term time frames. The following are examples of how a well-defined vision can help serve a CoC:

- **Continuous Data Quality Improvement:** Accurate and timely data entered into HMIS has the capability to paint a vibrant picture of how quickly clients are being served, which projects are reaching their capacity, and how many clients are successfully

HMIS Governance: Shared Responsibilities

The CoC Program interim rule makes clear that the CoC is ultimately responsible for HMIS, and not the agency that gets the grant, because the grant is awarded on behalf of the CoC. Thus, the management of HMIS is often delegated to the HMIS Lead, but the CoC maintains an oversight role.

A CoC's vision for HMIS and data may include several different components. A CoC may first prioritize HMIS participation, then data quality, then enhanced HMIS functionality for coordinated entry support, followed by data dashboards and performance management reports. Data literacy and system use (or utilization) may also be identified as long-term strategic goals that support the CoC's vision. It is likely that different stakeholder groups will need to support different components at different points in time. For instance, system functionality will be a technical process that relies on the HMIS Lead and HMIS Software Vendor, but HMIS participation will require the support and leadership of the CoC Board, HMIS Lead, and CHOs. A strong governance structure is necessary to 1) ensure buy-in, 2) define common goals and strategies, 3) prioritize tasks and activities, 4) allocate resources to support progress, 5) codify new policies and procedures in written documentation, and 6) agree to and implement enforcement mechanisms.

exiting to permanent housing. In other words, HMIS provides “real-time” data on how quickly and efficiently the CoC’s projects are operating and provides insight into areas of potential improvement. HMIS allows communities to understand its strengths, create opportunities to build on those strengths through data-driven funding decisions, and at the same time highlight a community’s areas for improvement, which allow the community to work together to actively seek solutions.

- **Coordination of Care:** HMIS can also be used as a conduit for higher levels of coordination of care across the CoC. For example, HMIS may be used by multiple service providers throughout the continuum that play different roles in influencing the lives of clients experiencing homelessness, and ensure that a client’s collected data follows that client throughout their duration of involvement in social services. This data could assist in building out a client’s full data profile, which would include any history or involvement in these all-too-often siloed social service sectors, including past and current medical needs, housing history, involvement in the justice system, legal services, or child welfare involvement.
- **Effective Communication and Buy-In:** Additionally, when a clear vision is articulated, HMIS then becomes a tool that can communicate broadly to a wide range of community stakeholders, increasing community buy-in and support while also increasing the participation of additional agencies into HMIS. This allows for a richer, more accurate portrayal of a community’s homeless population and its unique needs and strengths.

As communities come together to address the importance of defining a vision for HMIS, consider the following questions as examples that may help guide the conversation:

- How does HMIS data advance the goals and efforts of the CoC’s strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness?
- Is there currently a vision statement for the CoC’s HMIS implementation? If not, what could one look like?
- Are there competing priorities for HMIS and its data that the HMIS Lead should be supported in clarifying? If so, how does a vision statement provide that clarification?
- Do HMIS stakeholders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, particularly in terms of data quality, access, and use?
- What resources, time, and actions would need to be taken for your CoC to become stronger, data-driven decision-makers?

Chapter 2: Strategies for Improvement

A vision needs plans, resources, people, and support to be implemented effectively. Bridging the gap from vision (which is a long-term guiding principle that leads to an ideal end state) to strategy and operation (which are carried out on a daily basis) can often be challenging without the right mix of stakeholder involvement, oversight, and transparent assignment of roles and responsibilities.

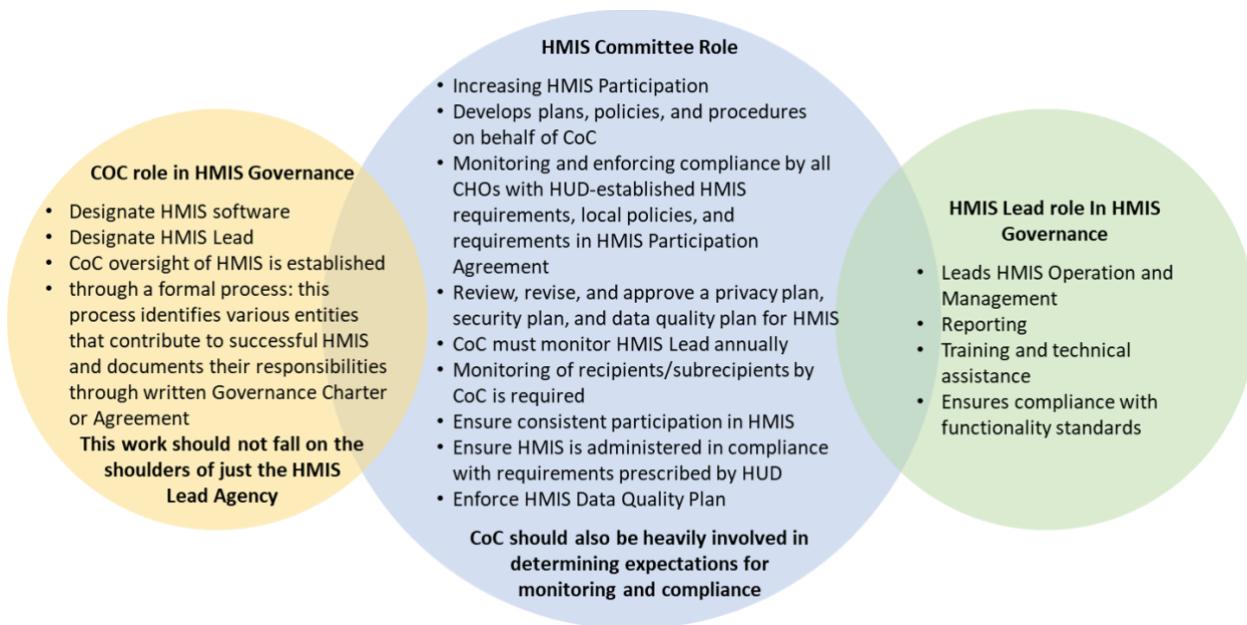
Recognizing that administration and management of a community’s HMIS is a shared responsibility, CoCs and HMIS Leads should operationalize the HMIS vision through clearly defined roles and responsibilities, a delineation of activities and tasks, and appropriate resourcing in terms of funding, training opportunities, and personnel. HMIS governance charters, contracts and work plans, and policies and procedures should codify these roles and responsibilities. Additionally, the governance structure across the HMIS implementation should be set up in a way that allows for open and consistent communication channels, feedback loops, and meaningful opportunities to assess how the daily components of the HMIS strategy are reinforcing the overarching vision for HMIS and the use of data to prevent and end homelessness. Appendix A provides examples of common roles and responsibilities across

HMIS stakeholders.

Opportunities Across the Continuum

Recognizing that HMIS is a shared responsibility across a number of stakeholders, many communities can improve the transparency and quality of their HMIS operations by reassigning or clarifying roles and responsibilities across CoC data leadership, the HMIS Lead, CHOs, and the HMIS Software Vendor or other data consultants that may support HMIS implementation.

The strategies that the CoC puts in place to advance the HMIS vision should be widely applicable and attainable by all CHOs as well as those provider agencies that are not yet participating in HMIS. The strategies should also emphasize the shared nature of HMIS and clearly define roles and responsibilities across stakeholders so each stakeholder can accordingly plan for and resource their share of HMIS administration, management, and operation. Visualizing both discrete and shared roles and responsibilities can be a helpful exercise to ensure that the HMIS governance structure is supported by adequate resources and effective teams.



Depending on a CoC's HMIS governance structure, other stakeholders will also share responsibilities or provide services to the overall HMIS implementation. In general, CoC and HMIS leadership may structure their HMIS administration and management structures in either a centralized or decentralized model. Both models can provide benefits to the community, and some characteristics of each model are listed in the table below:

	Centralized	Decentralized
Administration	HMIS Lead only	Shared between HMIS Lead and CHO
Data Quality Monitoring	Shared between CoC and HMIS Lead	Shared between HMIS Lead and CHO
Help Desk	HMIS Lead only	Shared between HMIS Lead and HMIS Software Vendor
Training	HMIS Lead only	Developed by HMIS Lead but delivered by CHO
Reporting and Analysis	HMIS Lead only	Any of HMIS Lead, CHO, and HMIS Software Vendor or consultant

Before deciding on an administrative or management model, communities should assess the following factors related to the current HMIS baseline and what it will take to achieve the HMIS vision. This should be an iterative process and account for all support and services provided by all HMIS stakeholders. For instance, if a CoC receives system administration services from the HMIS Software Vendor, current staff roles and responsibilities within the HMIS Lead may shift from system administration to reporting, data analysis, or end user training and technical assistance. Similarly, if the HMIS Lead contracts with a consultant to develop and deliver trainings to HMIS end users, the HMIS Lead could have additional capacity to implement policies and procedures with the CoC or focus on system administration and report development.

A helpful exercise for CoC and HMIS leadership is assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Commonly called a SWOT analysis, this assessment helps identify an organization's performance relative to internal resources and mandates, as well as external systems-level expectations. This process can be especially helpful in cases where a community secures new resources but is unsure of how to effectively allocate them. A SWOT analysis is also helpful for identifying areas for improvement, which can in turn lead to the selection of appropriate strategies by CoC leadership. Appendix B has a sample Strengths—Weaknesses—Opportunities—Threats (SWOT) assessment template.

Identifying opportunities across the CoC requires an open and honest assessment about the performance of each HMIS stakeholder, particularly regarding shared roles and responsibilities. Some specific HMIS topics and questions for consideration may include:

- HMIS Participation and Bed Coverage
 - How is the CoC inclusive of homeless assistance providers that do not receive federal funding?
 - How does the HMIS Lead support these privately funded organizations meet their data and reporting goals, or generally support HMIS participation?
 - How does the HMIS software meet the reporting and care coordination needs of these partners?
- Reporting and Data Analysis
 - How has the CoC defined reporting priorities across programs and projects, as well as by regular standard reports and custom ad hoc report requests?
 - What resources and expertise does the HMIS Lead have to meet current and future reporting needs for the CoC?
 - How are CHOs empowered to access data relevant to their program and project performance, and support funding opportunities?
- Training and End User Support

- How does the CoC provide incentives and resources to require or encourage ongoing training and skills development by HMIS stakeholders?
- How does the HMIS Lead ensure that training curricula is comprehensive and relevant to changing data needs across the CoC?
- What guidance and support does the HMIS software vendor provide to ensure proficient use of its software, and are end users directly supported or just the HMIS Lead (or contract holder)?
- Do CHOs prioritize training opportunities and provide daily operational oversight and adherence to all policies and procedures as conveyed through trainings?

Responding to these questions (and others) can help CoC and HMIS leadership develop improvement strategies, including possible refinements to the management and administrative structures across the HMIS implementation.

CoC and HMIS leadership should carefully document the shared responsibilities of administering, managing, and operating an HMIS implementation, as this is a primary consideration of developing and resourcing an appropriate HMIS management structure. Efficiencies of scale could be gained from HMIS mergers/consolidations as well. While many solutions require new resources, these resources are not always available to be implemented or deployed in a timely manner. Accordingly, CoCs should explore other options in terms of staffing models, organizational structures, and defined deliverables within contracts, memorandums of understanding (MOUs), statements of work (SOWs), or other written agreements to maximize the use of existing resources until new resources can be secured. Appendix C provides an example of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Tool. This helps communities effectively manage contractual requirements with their HMIS Software Vendor by determining the stakeholder or group of stakeholders responsible for various operations or management roles across the HMIS implementation. The tool can also support planning for staffing and resourcing considerations across the HMIS Lead and other HMIS stakeholders.

HUD encourages mergers of CoC geographies and HMIS implementations when a merger is:

1. Beneficial to both continuums
2. Providing cost effectiveness through economies of scale
3. Agreed to through an open and transparent process by CoC Boards.

Keep in mind that HMIS mergers can happen separately from CoC mergers, but CoC mergers must also include an HMIS merger!

Opportunities Within the HMIS Lead

HUD has identified increased capacity for HMIS Lead personnel as a key strategy for improving the quality and uses of homelessness data in CoCs across the country. Investing in the people setting up, operating, and benefitting from data systems is inclusive of all HMIS stakeholders, but is especially important for HMIS Leads, given their specific responsibility to operate the HMIS on behalf of the CoC. Improvement strategies and investments in HMIS Leads provide benefits to CoC leadership in the form of strengthened partnerships; data of higher quality and reliability; and increased use of data for systems planning, care coordination, and reporting. These same strategies and investments also provide benefits to HMIS software providers, CHOs, and end users as enhanced support and direction through better and more frequent training and monitoring processes and better communication structures. Because HMIS Leads sit at the nexus of data use and performance, system administration, and data management and oversight, any improvement strategy or investment in the HMIS Lead should have positive spillover benefits to other HMIS stakeholders as well. Two key strategies for HMIS Leads to consider are improvements to their management structures and enhanced hiring practices.

HMIS Management Structures

Management models may vary greatly depending on the goals of the HMIS and CoC, the number of agencies in the system, the size of those agencies, the type of software being implemented, level of integration of data from different data systems required, the type of network utilized, the HMIS budget, the project's political support, individual and agency skillsets, the nature of the lead HMIS organization, and in-kind support available. Many HMIS implementations are under-resourced and, as a result, may be operating without needed staffing.

The HMIS management structure will affect the staffing for the HMIS Lead agency. A decentralized administrative model will likely require fewer resources within the HMIS Lead agency, but more resources within the CHOs. Conversely, a centralized administrative model will require more resources and a larger HMIS Lead agency team to provide all administrative, management, operational, reporting, and training activities necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the HMIS for the CoC.

CoC and HMIS Leadership are encouraged to review the [HMIS System Administrator Checklist](#) to complete an assessment framework ensuring that HMIS Leads, system administrators, and other relevant HMIS stakeholders are fulfilling the roles and responsibilities that may be required by the CoC for effective HMIS operation and implementation. The checklist provides an overview of the activities, duties, and tasks that a CoC may require of its HMIS Lead, as well as the plans, policies, and procedures a CoC should have in place to govern its HMIS implementation. CoCs should use this checklist in the context of assuring that the HMIS Lead has the appropriate administrative, analytic, customer service, management, and technical staff on the HMIS Lead team to fulfill the requirements and expectations as defined by the CoC in written agreements such as work plans, contracts, or SOWs.

When developing an HMIS staffing or management structure, it is important to consider which services will be provided and how those services are quantified. For example, service desk and end user technical support can be an labor-intensive activity that may be fulfilled by the HMIS Lead, the HMIS Software Vendor, or a combination of the two, depending on priority or complexity of the service desk ticket (e.g., the HMIS Lead is responsible for Tier 1 and Tier 2 requests that deal with password resets and project set up adjustments, while the HMIS Software Vendor is responsible for restructuring privacy settings according to agency and project data sharing needs). This service lends itself to purchasing technical support at a rate (such as hours per month), but is difficult to define a specific deliverable, output, or outcome since the use of service desks and end user technical support is highly variable and the level of effort is dependent on each unique ticket.

The commitment of adequate staffing resources for HMIS is essential for the successful implementation of any HMIS solution seeking to fulfill both HUD requirements and community needs. Increased use of data to measure system performance, allocate funding, and implement project- and systems-level homeless crisis response interventions necessarily leads to increased roles and responsibilities of data leadership in a CoC. The HMIS Lead and other HMIS stakeholders are either fully or partially responsible for the following activities:

- Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA) report generation and submission;
- Annual Performance Report (APR) generation and submission;
- System Performance Measures (SPM) generation and submission;
- Data Quality planning, report generation, and monitoring;
- HMIS grant management and contractual oversight;
- Housing Inventory Count (HIC) reporting and maintenance;
- Integrating/standardizing data from federal programs such as Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH), HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing

(HUD-VASH), Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA), and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG);

- Monitoring HMIS security and privacy compliance;
- Monitoring program compliance with HMIS Data Standards;
- Training and end user support;
- Performance and HMIS sections of the CoC Program application; and
- Point-in-time (PIT) Counts of the sheltered homeless.

The HMIS Lead—in conjunction with CoC data leadership and other HMIS stakeholders—should regularly assess how these tasks and activities are managed and the overall efficacy with which the HMIS implementation is managed. Implementing management and structural changes across HMIS stakeholders can be a valuable way to assign roles and responsibilities to the entity best equipped to complete them, provide cost-effective solutions, and reinforce the community’s vision for HMIS and data across all stakeholders.

Enhanced Hiring Practices

Consider the following excerpts from two job descriptions for similar “HMIS Specialist” positions from different communities:

HMIS Specialist I

- Completion of a bachelor's degree program at an accredited college or university, with major course work in computer science, decision science, information science, or a closely related field
- Three years of experience performing computer programming and analysis
- Knowledge of at least one database management system and associated query language
- Experience in JavaScript, HTML, Python, and .NET frameworks

HMIS Specialist II

- Knowledge of federal strategic initiatives to prevent and end homelessness (such as *Home, Together*) criteria and benchmarks for ending veteran, youth, and chronic homelessness, and other cross-system collaborations
- Working knowledge of HUD's categories and definitions of homelessness and chronic homelessness, and associated recordkeeping requirements
- Familiarity with federal, state, and local privacy statutes and regulations
- Experience developing and delivering training material such as presentations, user guides, sample templates/documents/checklists, and pre-recorded webinars

Subject matter expertise at the individual level is crucial for a professional and high-performing HMIS Lead. However, if all positions, titles, or job descriptions within an HMIS Lead's staffing plan emphasize either the policy or technical skillsets too heavily, gaps in local HMIS leadership, capacity, and expertise may develop. HMIS Leads need to balance the technical and programming needs of HMIS administration with policy and planning tasks needed by HMIS and leadership, as HMIS data is increasingly used to set policy, inform resource allocation strategies, and operationalize plans to prevent and end homelessness. HMIS Leads may have varying degrees of latitude to develop job descriptions that align with the actual roles and responsibilities, and should coordinate with CoC data leadership and other HMIS stakeholders when developing a staffing plan and engaging in the hiring process.

It is particularly challenging to attain this balance in HMIS Lead Agencies with 1–2 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs). Not every staff person needs to be a generalist, but high-functioning HMIS Leads teams are often comprised of team members who have both policy and technical expertise. Interpreting project- and systems-level outcomes reports in the context of coordinated entry inflow and outflow can be just as essential to community as having a deep

understanding of HUD’s Data Standards terminology and report programming specifications.

Communities should carefully consider how they will meet their data-related needs, especially in smaller CoCs that have limited full-time staff capacity in their HMIS Lead. Some CoCs have identified contractors or consultants to be effective approaches to developing and delivering specific, time-limited trainings to HMIS end users, reviewing and revising policy documents or end-user guides, or other concrete deliverables. Some communities have purchased enhanced system administration services from their HMIS Software Vendor, which can be an efficient way to quickly add capacity to the system with minimal training or onboarding processes. Other CoCs may alter their HMIS governance structure to increase the responsibilities of HMIS participating agencies. Communities may also form partnerships with colleges and universities or research institutions to improve certain aspects of the HMIS related to reporting, data analysis, data quality, or even process improvement.

Appendix D provides a sample HMIS Implementation Staffing Plan that can support a strategic and prospective assessment of staffing needs to support the HMIS Lead’s hiring practices.

Opportunities for Individual Leaders

To build a strong and sustainable HMIS implementation, appropriate resourcing and staffing of a community’s HMIS Lead is only one part of the equation; maximizing human capital and implementing good human resource management practices is the other. Ensuring a positive, collaborative, and purpose-driven environment can help retain staff, maximize their value and potential, and develop a proactive management approach can strengthen the overall performance of the HMIS Lead.

CoC and HMIS leadership should be aware of intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors existing across the HMIS implementation’s individual stakeholders, and work to provide opportunities, incentives, direction or guidance in a responsive, flexible way to increase individual capacity. Unlike some systemwide or organizational structures that are rigid and hierarchical, investing directly in people as individual leaders can provide immediate and flexible benefits to the overall performance of the HMIS Lead and other HMIS stakeholders. A strong HMIS Lead team that receives clear guidance from their CoC is able to quickly and efficiently adapt to the ever-changing needs of the community.

Build Staff Capacity through Professional Development

As the needs of CoC data leadership and other HMIS stakeholders continue to grow, HMIS Leads should work to set out intentional professional development opportunities for their staff. Building capacity, acquiring new skills, learning from other peer communities across the country, and increasing the professionalization of the HMIS Lead team are necessary to attract and retain talented individuals.

Creating a vision for HMIS and data and selecting system-wide and organizational strategies are important; but ultimately it is the motivation and knowledge, skills, and abilities of individual contributors across the HMIS implementation that is most capable of advancing the vision and strategies through day-to-day work.

Continuous improvement can be promoted and supported through a culture of learning and skill development by providing access to ongoing training and personal development opportunities. Encouraging ongoing learning and goal achievement will help prevent team members from becoming complacent or bored in their positions. Advancing the vision and executing strategies requires investment in people over time. Creating opportunities for professional development signals the importance of implementing and supporting a culture of data, recognizes the need for additional skills in a constantly changing environment, and emphasizes the many ways in which data needs to be used as a tool to prevent and end homelessness across the continuum.

Staff can continue to grow in their positions by offering them different learning opportunities, such as:

- **Formal Organizational Curricula.** HMIS Leads can support new hires by developing and instituting formal organizational curriculum to ensure a meaningful onboarding process. Ensuring familiarity with federal HMIS data standards and regulations is important, as is ensuring a clear understanding of organizational structure, roles and responsibilities required of a specific job description, and situating the HMIS Lead's goals and objectives within the appropriate context as a partner to advance the CoC's vision for using data to support ending homelessness. Formal organizational curricula will vary across public and nonprofit sector HMIS Leads, and should also include any standard operating procedures and human resource policies.
- **Training and Conference Attendance.** Regular attendance at training seminars and state, regional, and national conferences can ensure that HMIS Lead team members and other HMIS stakeholders are exposed to a wide range of ideas and practices from subject matter experts and other HMIS stakeholders from peer communities. National conferences may be sponsored or hosted by federal partners, nonprofit advocacy organizations, or others, and can focus on data-related policies, emerging best practices, statutes and regulations, or practical workshopping opportunities. Paying costs of staff to travel to and attend HUD-sponsored and HUD-approved training on HMIS are eligible costs under the CoC Program for all recipients and subrecipients with an HMIS budget line item (including the HMIS Lead and CHOs). Other trainings and conferences may be offered by HMIS software vendors, data visualization firms, and statistical analysis software companies that can provide valuable and relevant learning opportunities.
- **Active Participation in CoC Meetings.** A simple but sometimes overlooked strategy for building HMIS Lead staff capacity is frequent and active participation in CoC leadership forums. The [HUD SNAPS Data TA Strategy to Improve Data and Performance](#) specifically identifies HMIS Leads as supporting data literacy across CoC planning efforts as a way to improve the capacity of people setting up, operating, and benefitting from data systems. This strategy provides HMIS Lead staff with an opportunity to be closely connected to CoC leadership and policymakers who are acting upon the available HMIS data, and further provides an opportunity for HMIS Lead staff to support the interpretation of data analyses and reports through data literacy concepts.
- **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).** Virtual distance learning courses, programs, and certifications can be a flexible and easily accessible way for HMIS Lead personnel to learn new skills or gain a deeper understanding of data and related content. MOOCs may be offered by colleges and universities or other online learning platforms that include course content from both universities and corporations. MOOCs can be a helpful way for HMIS Lead staff to upskill or deliberately teach employees new skills. Upskilling takes place frequently and across a wide variety of organizations, but is not always a deliberate process with adequate support provided to the individual. Using distance learning platforms can provide a strong foundation for the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a team member may be expected to take on before they actually step into a new position or are tasked with new roles and responsibilities. A longer-term and intentional upskilling process within the HMIS Lead can ensure seamless transitions during times of organizational growth or change, and can provide enhanced support to other HMIS stakeholders within minimal additional resources.
- **Continuing Education.** Traditional continuing educational opportunities are others way to invest in people and ensure the HMIS Lead has the internal skills, expertise, and attributes necessary to advance the CoC's vision for HMIS and data. Stipends or other financial assistance may be available from the HMIS Lead or other CoC partners. Absent financial assistance, the HMIS Lead can provide a flexible working schedule to

staff who are gaining new skills or certifications. Building in a set amount of time on a monthly or annual basis for individuals to participate in training or educational opportunities can also be a practical strategy for ensuring a motivated and well-trained HMIS Lead team.

Chapter 3: Securing Funding and Resources

Once a vision and strategic direction for a community's HMIS has been developed and specific strategies have been identified, the next step is to secure the necessary funding and resources to operationalize these plans of action. Costs for HMIS implementation will vary according to CoC size and geography; project scope, goals and objectives; implementation status; and a variety of other local community factors. There is no single, optimal model for staffing and budgeting, and this chapter will not provide CoCs with an answer to the question "what does it cost?" Rather, it will guide a community through an examination of the array of costs and resource considerations that may be applicable to their implementation, both currently and into the future, to turn the vision for HMIS and data into a reality.

Creating Partnerships

As HMIS implementations have matured, data collection and reporting requirements have changed and become more robust. As other federal, state, and local funders have realized the benefits of HMIS participation, communities have strategically begun to diversify their funding streams to ensure the continued availability and functionality of the HMIS for its stakeholders. Diversification of HMIS funding is critical to ensuring that HMIS implementations are able to:

- Support the operational demands of new programs and projects;
- Create an equitable, sustainable, and transparent base of resources to ensure buy-in;
- Meet the administrative, reporting, and training needs of new HMIS participating organizations;
- Fulfill the reporting and data management demands of CoC and HMIS leadership; and
- Mitigate risks due to possible loss of grant funding.

Reliance on a single resource increases risk for HMIS viability if financial resources are reduced or lost and can put the CoC at-risk of non-compliance with HUD's HMIS requirements. Securing funding from diverse sources helps to strengthen the viability of an HMIS project and reduce risk. Planning for the long-term viability of operations for HMIS has become a priority for many communities that have begun to identify innovative HMIS financial sustainability strategies.

Federal Partners

HMIS has grown in importance for and utilization by federal partner funding sources in recent years. Both the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) require HMIS participation for some or all of their homeless assistance programs.

Although the following federal partner programs and project types do not have dedicated HMIS project funding or support HMIS project component types, if a CoC has instituted a fee structure for HMIS administrative and reporting services, or has implemented a licensing or user fee model, then these programs can support HMIS costs and expenses:

- Health and Human Services
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
 - Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)
 - Administration for Children and Families
 - Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY)

- Social Service Block Grant (SSBG)
- Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)
- Veteran Affairs
 - Homeless Programs Office
 - Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)
 - HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH)
 - Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)
 - Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD)
 - Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV)

Integrating these programs into the HMIS not only provides more complete data for local planning and analysis, but can also lead to streamlining data collection and reporting requirements for local providers who use HUD funds in conjunction with their other activities. Regardless of whether these programs are required or encouraged to participate in a CoC's HMIS implementation, participation can improve the availability of funding for the HMIS and lead to a stronger, more robust HMIS with more comprehensive data.

State and Local Governments: Tried and True Partners

Many state and local governments have supported HMIS implementations and operations through varied and creative use of funding sources, including general revenue, human service block grants, mental health program, and bond funds. Several state governments have invested significant resources by spearheading statewide or regional HMIS implementations. In these cases, a state agency often provides financial and/or in-kind support to help plan, implement, and administer HMIS. Frequently, state or local governments also provide in-kind support, including staffing, technical system administration, equipment, and space for personnel and systems. Some have collaborated on cost-sharing formulas among governments within a geographic area covered by a single HMIS implementation.

Private Foundations: Tapping the Philanthropic Spirit

Private foundations interested in funding initiatives that address homelessness, systems integration, access to care, capacity building, and technology can also be viable funding sources. Private grants can be used for all phases of HMIS development and operation. One-time grants may be useful for targeted technical assistance and training for agencies; consumer initiatives to promote involvement; and capacity building, equipment, software, and database development costs. One-time or short-term grants are often easier to obtain from private funding sources than ongoing operational grants. Foundations that focus on using technology for social causes or services may be good sources for HMIS projects, especially those projects that need only one-time donations or funding—for hardware, software, or research.

Matching Resources to Priorities

This toolkit began by outlining the importance that a vision plays in helping define a community's strategic direction and identifying data-related priorities across the CoC. These priorities may require differing levels of resources, including financial needs and human capital. A community must first know what its priorities are and where they lie, then determine to what extent the resources already exist that can fulfill the requirements of each priority area. Communities should also be aware that increased funding is not always the solution to identified issues of capacity or HMIS performance. Revised HMIS user manuals or training documents can increase the efficacy of new user training curricula and ensure knowledge retention. A standardized HMIS report library with common parameters and a data dictionary can reduce the amount of effort the HMIS Lead puts into custom report requests. An improved help desk platform can increase the accessibility of HMIS guidance and ensure streamlined communication between HMIS end users and the HMIS Lead staff.

Rather than increasing funding, these activities can be completed by existing resources being allocated to different priorities. These non-financial resources still require investment in people, capacity, or new technology, but can be easier to secure and faster to implement. CoC and HMIS leadership should always consider how the vision and strategies can be advanced with existing resources before putting in the time and effort required to secure new funding and resources.

The use of a fee (either fee-for-service or licensing fee structures) can be an effective way for CoC and HMIS leadership to raise revenues to support the overall expenditures of the HMIS software and HMIS Lead staff and infrastructure. HMIS fees also provides accountability and oversight, as well as a transparent way to quantify need across the system. Some possible benefits of fee structures may include:

- Efficient allocation of HMIS end user licenses,
- Prioritized data quality by CHOs,
- Effective advocacy by multiple HMIS stakeholders for increased HMIS participation and funding, and
- Shared responsibility for data quality and adherence to privacy and security plans.

Resource Diversification

Sustaining a robust and responsive HMIS over time can be exceedingly difficult without tapping into supplementary funds across an array of sources. The following sections highlight several ideas successfully being used by communities to augment their primary funding streams for HMIS operations.

Cost Sharing: Distributing the Load

Agency participation and/or user fees can be an effective strategy to cover all or a portion of ongoing operational costs. An HMIS fee structure will provide for direct payment to the HMIS administering agency from participating providers. An advantage in using an HMIS fee structure is that it does not require cash match if HMIS fees are coming from non-CoC-related funds. Charging fees allows HMIS implementations to fairly and equitably base a fee structure on the number of users or the level of effort required for HMIS staff to serve the needs of individual programs.

While cost-sharing can be administratively burdensome, communities using this model have found that establishing a standardized fee structure and billing method can both ensure timely receipt of payment and create other real advantages, including:

- Increased equity in participation (participants feel they pay a fair share, not covering the entire cost of the implementation).
- Enhanced stability of funding (losing one user or provider will not adversely affect continued operations).
- Reduced financial burden on providers (sharing fees among participants minimizes the burden).

Whatever fee structure is employed, the CoC and HMIS Lead agency must be sure that the structure is both fair and reasonable. The basis for fees must also be well-documented and transparent.

Cost-Sharing Examples:

- Single fixed fee per agency (agency pays an annual fixed fee, e.g., \$1,000/year)
- Single fixed fee per program (agency pays an annual fixed fee, e.g., \$500/year, for **each** HMIS-participating program such as PATH, VA, etc.)
- Single fixed fee per user (agency pays an annual fixed fee, e.g., \$200/year, for each licensed HMIS user)
- Single fixed fee with additional sliding scale fee based on the level of effort for specific added tasks needed by a program
- Agency-paid fee for specific ongoing project costs (e.g., annual HMIS user license fees, equipment maintenance costs, data entry costs)

Fee-for-Service: Matching Effort and Cost

Another way to fill gaps in HMIS project revenue is to use a fee-for-service model—charging fixed fees for specific services. Service fees may be linked to one-time activities (e.g., implementation of a new program in the system, or one-time analysis of a specific data set) or to ongoing services or benefits that the paying agency requests. This funding strategy provides support to unique and unmet costs. A fee-for-service structure requires careful attention to billing and follow-up. However, most services are likely to be ongoing and standardized, which will simplify the billing demands. Examples of fees-for-service being used by existing HMIS projects include:

- One-time fee for HMIS setup when a new agency joins HMIS.
- Fees for adding customized fields or screens for agency-specific purposes.
- Fees for developing and/or generating custom reports for agency-specific use.
- One-time per agency or per user fees for training.
- Contract service fees for specific community reports (e.g., fee for PIT count or comprehensive community homelessness report).
- Hourly fees charged to agencies for data entry or data cleanup.
- Fees for data conversion from a legacy system, or integration with another system.

Appendix E provides a budget template that CoC and HMIS leadership can jointly complete to ensure revenues are diversified and sufficient to cover the costs of operating the HMIS for the CoC.

Consolidating HMIS Implementations: Economies of Scale

“Economies of scale” refers to the concept that if the scale of production of a particular product is increased, the per-unit cost of production will go down. This results from efficiencies that are realized by spreading costs through the consolidation of operational

requirements. For HMIS implementations, these efficiencies are found when two or more CoCs consolidate their individual HMIS implementations or staffing models into one. For instance, a combined HMIS implementation supported by multiple CoCs would allow for the reduction of staff, software purchase costs, hosting, etc. Additionally, consolidating HMIS implementation may:

- Streamline and diversify cost requirements.
- Enable scarce resources to be better utilized.
- Combine funding to support ongoing operational costs.
- Release resources to hire a specialized staff.

For some CoCs, the limited availability of funds makes an independent HMIS implementation too expensive to operate. For example, a small or rural CoC operating a stand-alone HMIS implementation is often unrealistic due to the costs associated with software, hardware, and staffing. In these cases, it is often more cost effective to join a neighboring, regional, or statewide HMIS implementation.

Helpful Tip! [Resource mapping](#), or asset mapping, is a helpful starting place for communities to fully understand the scope of resources currently available in their CoC. Community resource mapping is not a new strategy or process. It has been in use for many years in varying forms. Community resource mapping is sometimes referred to as asset mapping or environmental scanning. Community resource mapping is best noted as a system-building process used by many different groups at many different stages in order to align resources and policies in relation to specific system goals, strategies, and expected outcomes.

Chapter 4: Implementing HMIS Improvements

Now that the vision for HMIS has led to identification of strategies for HMIS improvements and the securing of funding and resources, the community will need to implement strategies, execute plans and agreements, and operationalize the HMIS vision. HMIS staffing structures will vary across communities, depending on the size of the CoC and HMIS implementation, the HMIS governance structure, and how roles and responsibilities are defined across the HMIS Lead and other HMIS stakeholders. The ways in which HMIS is used for reporting and analyses, coordinated entry management, data integration or warehousing, and other purposes will also influence the staffing structure and model of the HMIS Lead and other HMIS stakeholders. Regardless of these factors, HMIS improvements can be developed and implemented across communities or systems, organizations, and individuals.

Importantly, HMIS Lead and CoC data leadership will need to set priorities to fully and effectively carry out their strategies. In the dynamic environment of HMIS management and reporting, HMIS Lead are often pulled in many different directions. Sometimes they need to respond to data requests to support funding opportunities; other times they need to address crucial training needs as new agencies join the HMIS implementation. Incorporating software updates also takes high levels of effort in conjunction with the HMIS Software Vendor. As a result, it is imperative that the selected strategies are appropriately prioritized. Appendix F provides a priority template to help HMIS and CoC data leadership prioritize activities, investments, or strategies based on available resources and level of impact.

Implementing change effectively across communities and organizations is a complex process, and is highly dependent on systems, organizations, and individuals incorporating change into policies and practices.² Implementation cycles can also take a year or more to fully complete, as the process of defining a vision, prioritizing activities, developing plans and strategies, securing funding and resources, and training staff or otherwise operationalizing new policies,

² <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/sites/nirn.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/NIRN-Briefs-1-ActiveImplementationPracticeAndScience-10-05-2016.pdf>

procedures, and structures can be both time and resource intensive.

At a high level, an implementation cycle is made up of the following steps:

- Planning for action by ensuring stakeholder buy-in, effective channels of communication, and identifying change leaders to organize the implementation process;
- Prioritizing activities that are most important and deliver the most value by advancing the vision of the CoC;
- Selecting strategies for different levels, including systems, organizational, and individual, and defining the desired outcomes for each strategy to monitor progress and measure success;
- Ensuring resources are deployed to support each strategy. Resources may be financial but, as previously mentioned, could also be qualitative resources, in the form of new skill sets for HMIS Lead staff, enhanced training materials for HMIS end users, or knowledge sharing through conferences and peer learning opportunities for CoC data leadership;
- Monitoring the implementation process by ensuring that the strategies are well-defined and that changes in policy and practice are followed through with stakeholder support, training, feedback loops, and other continuous quality improvement strategies. Monitoring should occur at the short-term or operational level in order to measure outputs, objectives, and activities, as well as the long-term and strategic levels to ensure that outcomes and goals are being attained; and
- Assessing overall progress toward the goals and objectives of the strategy and improve or adjust as needed, and determining whether more or different resources are needed to ensure success and sustainability.

There are many examples of implementation frameworks and change management processes across a wide array of sectors and industries. While these frameworks and processes vary, they generally share common themes of training and skill development, sharing of knowledge and best practices in a deliberate and coordinated fashion, and building leadership capacity at all levels of an organization, not just at the management and supervisory levels. Process monitoring and outcomes assessments are also crucial components of these approaches. CoC and HMIS leadership should determine whether adopting a formal guide or seeking technical assistance will support these change management efforts.

Community-Wide Implementation Example: Staffing Plan

The need for more and better data to advance the goal of preventing and ending homelessness requires further investments in and improvements to the capacity of people setting up, operating, and benefitting from HMIS software and HMIS data. Communities should plan to use data to make ongoing system performance improvements and determine optimal resource allocation strategies, in alignment with [HUD's Data Strategy to Improve Data and Performance](#). Local community conditions may also necessitate enhancements to HMIS implementations to strengthen cross-system partnerships, leverage funding opportunities, and demonstrate objective data-driven outcomes.

Implementing a staffing plan within the HMIS Lead is an example of a strategy that addresses all three levels of stakeholder involvement: across the CoC, within the organization, and within individual stakeholders. An HMIS Lead should be closely connected to long-term CoC strategic planning efforts and be able to respond to the needs of CoC leadership and HMIS implementation stakeholders through its hiring and staffing process. An HMIS Lead will also make investments and improvements in its organizational structure and prioritize its HMIS Lead role and responsibilities in instances when the organization provides diverse services or operates multiple programs. An HMIS Lead should also develop a staffing plan to meet the needs of its workforce through adequate support and staffing and through opportunities in

skill acquisition and professional growth.

An HMIS Lead staffing plan is also a helpful example of an implementation process because it accounts for both quantitative and qualitative factors. Quantitative factors include dedicated funding amounts and sources, full time equivalent staffing basis, and indicators of workload, such as volume of help desk tickets, number of projects or end users within the HMIS implementation, and other tasks and activities related to system administration, customer service, and other domains to be fulfilled by the HMIS Lead. Qualitative factors that may need to be considered within the context of developing a staffing plan and include the complexity of help desk tickets.

HMIS Leads should try to account for both discrete and time-limited tasks, as well as the ongoing operational activities of the HMIS implementation. Special projects or initiatives—such as developing an interactive data dashboard, or a new performance report for use in the CoC Program rating and ranking process—can be expected to be relatively intensive efforts for shorter periods of time. Other roles and responsibilities of the HMIS Lead will be less intensive but need to be completed on an ongoing basis, such as reviewing bed and unit inventories or project descriptor data elements, generating and reviewing Annual Performance Reports, and assessing data quality monitoring reports.

The staffing plan needs to account for the HMIS Lead's organizational structure and human resources, but must also consider staff development opportunities and pathways for advancement, as well as projected growth and changes across the HMIS implementation's priorities and structures.

Developing a staffing plan for the HMIS Lead can be a useful process to ensure that the right human resources are in place—and supported with adequate resources—to achieve the CoC's vision for how HMIS implementation should be operated and how HMIS data is used to support policy and practice.

Change Management: Expecting the Unexpected

It is important to note that implementation is an ongoing process and is generally additive over phases of implementation and periods of time. Even a well-resourced and carefully implemented strategy will not have the desired impact if that strategy was not the most appropriate one to close a performance gap or increase organizational capacity. Similarly, the best strategies won't be successful if they are not adequately resourced, or if initial staff training and ongoing capacity building opportunities aren't provided to the front-line workers responsible for operationalizing the strategies selected by CoC and HMIS leadership.

As a community's HMIS improvement strategies and resources begin to align more closely with the vision set forth by the CoC, it is likely that the implementation of these identified improvement strategies will necessitate change at the organization level. Chapter Two of this toolkit discussed the value of conducting a SWOT assessment to help CoC and HMIS leadership select the most appropriate strategies to meet the needs of a growing HMIS implementation or address gaps across the CoC's data management approach. Similarly, a SWOT can help the HMIS Lead develop and implement a staffing model or other innovations regarding policy and practice.

Conducting a SWOT analysis of the current HMIS implementation will help communities identify areas that may require such change. Apart from the identification of weakness and threats placed on the HMIS Lead, a SWOT analysis also highlights areas of opportunity and strengths. By taking a strengths-based approach, communities may harness existing resources and invest in capacity building instead of looking to additional outside resources to fill needs. A SWOT analysis can also help CoC and HMIS data leadership make connections between the change management process and implementation drivers, such as increasing the availability of and access to training resources to increase core competencies and improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of HMIS Lead staff.

Regardless of what may be identified through a SWOT analysis, communities may decide that organizational change is necessary and elect to use this disruption as opportunity for growth and reinvention. This change may take place through the evaluation of current job descriptions, internal staff restructuring, cross-training, or onboarding new staff that are equipped with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the CoC.

When organizations experience staff turnover, rather than seeing such change as a deficit or deficiency, organizations can take a strengths-based approach and view this transitional period as one of growth and opportunity. As staff leave the organization, it can present an opportunity to reevaluate the current position, question whether its current responsibilities continue to align with the agency's vision and priorities, and, if not, put forth a revised and updated job description that will attract the talent needed to support the organizational vision. Additionally, revisiting and updating existing job descriptions and positions will create space for decision makers to reimagine what current staff positions entail, and how these positions may be used more effectively to fulfill the needs of the CoC while also contributing to the overall professional development of the employee.

Conclusion

Evolving HUD requirements for data collection—e.g., Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), PULSE, Housing Inventory Count (HIC), Annual Progress Report (APR), e-snaps, etc.—and related CoC needs for data-informed planning and practice dictate that communities move beyond the basics of HMIS implementation to more aggressive focus on data reporting and analysis. To that end, CoCs must evaluate if their investment in HMIS is adequate to meet growing demands for quality data, increased emphasis on community performance, and increasing challenges of coordinated entry data management and data sharing. These demands amplify the significance of assuring that HMIS implementations are adequately staffed and funded. HMIS Leads sit at the crucial nexus of HMIS operations and data strategy, and are charged with providing a solid data foundation upon which the policy and practice efforts of preventing and ending homelessness can be built by CoC partners.

Appendix A: HMIS Stakeholders Roles and Responsibilities Template

Roles	Responsibilities
CoC Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a vision for how HMIS is used as a tool to prevent and end homelessness. • Develop goals for HMIS participation and data quality to ensure that data used for setting policy and allocating resources is as accurate, complete, consistent, and timely as possible. • Review and approve privacy, security, and data quality plans, as well as all HMIS policies and procedures. • Monitor the HMIS Lead and ensure that Covered Homeless Organizations are monitored for compliance. • Incentivize HMIS participation and data quality through the rating and ranking process for making funding decisions. • Align HMIS policies and operations with CoC-wide strategic plans and cross-sector partnerships to maximize the use of data in developing and implementing solutions to homelessness. • Ensure that HMIS committees or data work groups are actively addressing the CoC's HMIS and data priorities, and providing operational support to HMIS stakeholders as necessary.
HMIS Lead Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer the CoC's HMIS in a way that furthers the CoC's vision for HMIS and data. • Ensure reporting requirements are met and that all reports meet data quality standards. • Set standards regarding system access and training. • Provide the training, communication, and support to HMIS end users necessary to ensure that all plans, policies, and procedures are implemented effectively. • Bridge the gap between vision and strategy as set by CoC leadership and CHOs to ensure that the value of HMIS and the importance of high-quality data is understood by all HMIS stakeholders. • Carry out other roles and responsibilities regarding HMIS administration and data use as defined by the CoC.
CHOs and HMIS End Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to all HMIS plans, policies, and procedures. • Provide organizational resources to ensure high quality data is collected and entered into HMIS. • Monitor HMIS access and use within the organization and ensure that day-to-day HMIS operations are managed effectively. • Hold the HMIS Lead and CoC leadership accountable for providing appropriate training resources and system functionality in a way that furthers the CoC's vision for HMIS. • Provide meaningful and specific feedback to CoC and HMIS leadership as part of a structured continuous quality improvement process.

HMIS Software Vendor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide transparent communication regarding software contract management processes.• Align development processes and system upgrades in a way that addresses community-level data and functionality needs.• Support increased data access and use through improved reporting modules and data integration solutions, as defined by CoC and HMIS leadership in contracts and SOWs.
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Appendix B: SWOT Analysis for a CoC's HMIS Implementation

SWOT Analysis: Strengths—Weaknesses—Opportunities—Threats

- What are the biggest strengths of your HMIS Lead (internal to the HMIS Lead)?
 - *Professional and high capacity staff*
 - *Frequent learning opportunities through conference attendance*
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- What are the biggest weaknesses of your HMIS Lead (internal to the HMIS Lead)?
 - *Slow response times for service desk ticket responses*
 - *Small staff who needs to wear many hats*
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- What are the biggest opportunities for the HMIS Lead and other HMIS stakeholders throughout your CoC (external to the HMIS Lead and applicable to the CoC)?
 - *Well-defined privacy policies to maximize use of HMIS as a tool for care coordination*
 - *Increasing emphases on the use of data to end homelessness*
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- What are the biggest threats for the HMIS Lead and other HMIS stakeholders throughout your CoC (external to the HMIS Lead and applicable to the CoC)?
 - *Low bed coverage*
 - *Competing priorities for custom reports and data collection workflows*
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

Additional Questions for Local Consideration

- How has funding and staffing for the HMIS Lead changed over the last five years?
- How have the needs of HMIS and use of data changed for the CoC over the last five years?
- How will you plan to continue investing in your HMIS Lead staff to further build knowledge and skills?
- How will you assess the level of effort needed for HMIS Lead staff to accomplish the activities and tasks that are expected of them?
- What are the standards, requirements and expectations, and deliverables that the HMIS Lead must provide to the community, where are they documented, and when were they last updated?
- What is the highest priority request the HMIS Lead should identify in conjunction with the CoC?

Appendix C: Customer Relationship Management Tool (CRM)

Customer Relationship Management Tool	Responsible Stakeholder			
Role or Responsibility	CoC Leadership	HMIS Lead	CHOs	HMIS Software Vendor
<i>Sample Role or Responsibility</i>	25%	50%	15%	10%
Data Quality Monitoring				
Help Desk and Technical Support				
End User Training Development				
End User Training Delivery				
Reporting to HUD and the CoC				
Data Analysis				
System Administration				
Contract Monitoring				
Financial and Grant Management				
Data Integration and Warehousing				
Policy and Procedure Development				
Software Customization				
Project Management				
Coordinated Entry Data Management				
Security Monitoring				
Privacy and Confidentiality Monitoring				
Data Hosting and Server Maintenance				
Project Set Up				

Appendix D: HMIS Implementation Staffing Plan

To effectively plan and budget for staffing, a best practice is to develop a staffing plan that helps advance the CoC's and HMIS's annual goals. Such a strategic approach will help ensure that adequate funding is available for staffing needed during each phase of the CoC's growth and fulfill project goals and objectives.

To begin, an HMIS staffing plan should begin with the identification of all the various roles and responsibilities necessary to operate a high functioning HMIS. Next, the plan should outline the specific tasks necessary to fulfill the identified roles. Once these key points are identified, aligning current staff responsible to fulfill these duties can be delineated, along with the full-time equivalent (FTE) or level of time and effort needed to accomplish these tasks. This staffing plan is seen as your baseline, or current state. Once the baseline is set, communities can begin think about what their HMIS implementing and staffing needs might look like within the next 1–3 years. By filling out the column on the right of the staffing plan, CoCs can proactively approach their staffing structure by anticipating and accounting for future growth, both within the HMIS Lead but among HMIS participation as well. What might HMIS look like in the future? Where will you need to increase your resources to account for end user growth (training needs, curriculum development, report generation, etc.). In anticipating what your staffing structure might look like going forward, communities can begin to plan and implement forward-thinking strategies aligned with the overall CoC strategic goals to increase their HMIS capacity. The outline below walks readers through questions to consider as they work through their current HMIS staffing structure while also considering the needs of their HMIS staffing structure over the course of 1–3 years.

The following design criteria should be considered in developing an effective staffing plan:

- Plan staffing based on the CoC's strategic or business plan.
- Hire proactively, based on anticipated needs and expected attrition.
- Apply proactively for funding resources to support planned staffing level increases.
- Maximize existing resources (focused on efficiency before hiring).
- Determine the gaps in current resources and develop strategies to fill them.

Key questions in developing a staffing plan include:

- How many new employees will be needed during the coming year(s)?
- Why will those employees be needed?
- When will they be needed?
- How long will they be needed?
- How much will it cost to hire new staff?
- What value will new staffing bring to the CoC and HMIS?

In considering optimal staffing levels and commitments, the HMIS plan should also be attentive to:

- Cross-training (which provides continuity during staff turnover);
- Internal staff development (which increases skills and decreases turnover);
- Outsourcing (provides continuity during turnover and increases access to expertise); and
- Documentation (which formalizes operational policies and procedures, data collection, and reporting while ensuring continuity in the event of staff turnover).

CURRENT HMIS IMPLEMENTATION STAFFING PLAN				ANTICIPATED HMIS GROWTH OVER 1-3 YEARS			
Current HMIS Priorities and Goals: (Example: HMIS participation, data quality, enhanced HMIS functionality for coordinated entry support)				1-3 Year HMIS Priorities and Goals: (Example: data dashboards, performance management reports, data literacy and system utilization) *aligned with CoC Strategic Plan			
Number of End Users:				Anticipated number of End Users:			
Total Annual Budget:				Total Budget Needed:			
Roles and Responsibilities	Tasks associated with Roles	Who is Responsible?	Current FTE	Future Roles and Responsibilities	Tasks associated with Roles	What skill sets will you need?	Anticipated FTE
System Administration				1)			
Project Management				2)			
and Governance				3)			
Vendor Relations and Evaluation				4)			
				5)			

Training and Technical Support							
Data Analysis and Reporting				6)			

Appendix E: Sample Budget Worksheet

Revenue Source	Annualized Revenue	Expense Category	Annualized Expenditures
<i>Agency User Fees</i>	\$13,500	<i>HMIS Software Licenses</i>	\$112,350
<i>CoC HMIS Project Grant</i>	\$88,125	<i>HMIS Lead Staff Salaries</i>	\$101,000
<i>ESG HMIS Project Grant</i>	\$27,500	<i>HMIS Lead Staff Benefits</i>	\$21,900
Total Revenue		Total Expenditures	

Appendix F: Priority Matrix

This Priority Matrix is intended to help CoC and HMIS leadership identify the priority activities that are attainable and provide sustainable improvement or impacts within the CoC's HMIS implementation. CoCs should set the axes that are most effective and relevant—cost may not always be a consideration, but some form of value, impact, or measure of effectiveness is needed to ensure that the CoC is leveraging investment or strategies that address the most pressing underlying areas for improvement.

Cost	Low Impact, High Cost • • •	Moderate Impact, High Cost	High Impact, High Cost
	Low Impact, Moderate Cost • • •	Moderate Impact, Moderate Cost	High Impact, Moderate Cost
	Low Impact, Low Cost • • •	Moderate Impact, Low Cost	High Impact, Low Cost
	Impact		