Flexible Resources, Data-Driven Solutions: Using HMIS and HEARTH to End Homelessness

HMIS Governance Across Jurisdictional Boundaries
Presenters

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Learning Objectives

• Learn about the basic building blocks of proper HMIS governance
• Understand how governance fails or succeeds in different HMIS implementation configurations (Single HMIS, Data Warehouse, Hybrid Approaches)
• Understand how governance fails or succeeds among Statewide CoC, Multi-CoC and Regional CoC approaches
• Understand how other communities have created successful HMIS governance
Governance Context

HMIS governance model:

- Define the relationship between the HMIS implementation and the CoC;
- Establish organizational requirements for the HMIS implementation;
- Formalize leadership and oversight expectations; and
- Provide structure for decision-making.
Governance Context

- **Each HMIS implementation is different** – CoCs are comprised of various collaborations among CoC leadership, HMIS project management, Homeless assistance programs, and other organizations (statewide, multi-CoC, regional collaborative, public-private, etc.).

- **Governance application will be different** – HMIS governance models will vary and require that each CoC define governance in a manner that addresses the unique roles and relationships within the HMIS implementing jurisdiction.
Governance Context

• Each CoC is responsible for its own internal HMIS governance
• There are many ways to collaborate on HMIS across jurisdictional boundaries
• Combining HMIS data can take many different forms
  – Full Data Integration or a single HMIS covering many CoCs
  – XML Data Sharing
  – Data Warehousing
Governance Context

- HMIS governance within a single CoC is complex
- HMIS Governance becomes much more complex when more than 1 CoC is involved
- Cross jurisdictional issues involve major planning challenges
- Collaboration and consensus building are keys to success
- Crucial to define core understandings and agreements between partners on a common vision and common goals.
Terms

• **Continuum of Care (CoC) Lead** – The primary decision-making entity of the CoC.

• **Contributory HMIS Organization (CHO)** – Organization that operates a contributory homeless assistance program and/or a contributory non-homeless assistance program.

• **Contributory CoC Program** – A program, operated by a CHO, that contributes Protected Personal Information (PPI) or other client-level data to an HMIS.

• **Non-Contributory CoC Program** – A program that does not contribute PPI or other client-level to an HMIS.
Terms

- **Participating CoC Program**— A Contributory CoC Program that makes reasonable efforts to record all the universal data elements and all other required data elements as determined by HUD funding requirements on all clients served and discloses these data elements through agreed upon means to the HMIS Lead Agency at least once annually.

- **Data Recipient**— A person who obtains PPI from an HMIS Lead Agency or from a CHO for research or other purposes not directly related to the operation of the HMIS, CoC, HMIS Lead Agency, or CHO.
Terms

• **HMIS Lead Agency (HMIS Lead)** – Organization designated by a CoC to operate the CoC’s HMIS.

• **Homeless Assistance Program** – Program, identified by CoC as part of its homeless assistance system, whose primary purpose is to meet specific needs of people who are homeless.

• **Unduplicated Accounting of Homelessness** – Measure of extent and nature of homelessness, utilization of homeless programs over time, and effectiveness of homelessness programs.
Terms

• **HMIS Software Solution Provider** – An organization that sells, licenses, donates, builds or otherwise supplies the HMIS user interface, application functionality and database.

• **HMIS Vendor** – A contractor who provides HMIS software and/or support services for the operation of a CoC’s HMIS.
Terms

- **HMIS Participation:**
  - Programs must attempt to record all the universal data elements on all clients served and disclose to HMIS Lead at least once annually.
  - All homeless assistance programs should participate.
  - Victim Service Providers (as defined by VAWA) are prohibited from participating in HMIS.
  - Remember that the PDDE (Program Descriptor Data Elements) are required for all programs in the CoC regardless of HMIS Participation (including DV).
Terms

• **HMIS Participating Bed** – For any residential homeless program, a bed is considered a “participating HMIS bed” if the program makes a reasonable effort to record all universal data elements on all clients served in that bed and discloses that information through agreed upon means to the HMIS Lead Agency at least once annually.

• **End User** – An employee, volunteer, or other person affiliated with a CHO who uses or enters data in the HMIS or other administrative database from which data are periodically uploaded to the HMIS.
Major Planning Challenges Posed When Crossing Jurisdictional Boundaries

• Planning an HMIS Implementation that involves a number of CoCs may take longer than expected.
• The “people” issues are more challenging than the problems with technology.
• With careful organization, the HMIS Implementation can be a great success!
Importance of Coordinated Planning and Leadership

• Importance of coordinated planning
  – A well-coordinated planning process is critical to the success of any HMIS that involves more than one CoC
  – HMIS across jurisdictional boundaries will only succeed if attention is placed on:
    • Engaging key stakeholders in all of the jurisdictions
    • Defining the project vision and goals
    • Developing and carrying out a work plan for achieving the vision and goals
    • Reaching consensus on all key decisions along the way
    • Overcoming barriers and challenges
Importance of Coordinated Planning and Leadership

- Importance of coordinated planning (cont.)
- Start with **first things first:**
  - Policy and program decisions take precedence over technology choices, not the other way around.
  - Higher level policy choices should be made before lower level operational decisions.
  - Think first about what you want to know **before** making HMIS policy decisions.
Importance of Coordinated Planning and Leadership

• Importance of leadership
  – A strong **project champion** is essential to:
    • Initiate the project vision
    • Engender stakeholder support and buy-in
    • Attract funding and resources
  – RHINo leaders - Community Technology Alliance and the Schwab Foundation
  – NJ-HMIS Collaborative- 3 State Agency partners and 20 CoC and all HMIS Participating Agencies.
NJ-HMIS Collaborative Composition

• Steering Committee – Representatives from the State Partner Agencies make decisions regarding financial and policy decisions
• HMIS Lead Agency - Implement, facilitate, Train and support
• Advisory Council – Approve system change, communication between Lead HMIS Agency and CoC
NJ-HMIS Collaborative Composition

- CoC - Provide communication to Provider Agencies regarding HMIS and HUD requirements & Monitor HMIS CoC Data
- Provider Agencies – Capture HMIS required data and services to homeless and at risk of homelessness clients
Governance Philosophy and Structure

- **Collaboration and consensus building** are keys to success.
- The business world’s model: central authority
  - Management *commands* the HMIS and corporate departments must provide the data.
- Our CoC/human services world’s model: decentralized authority
  - Participation is *voluntary* and participants bring their own interests to the table.
  - This is compounded when more than one CoC is involved.
Governance Philosophy and Structure

• Governance philosophy:
  – Governance approaches are evolving because HMIS is evolving
  – RHINo utilizes a single steering group composed of key stakeholder organizations.
  – NJ-HMIS Collaborative holds bi-monthly advisory council meeting involving all partners
  – Both projects emphasize consensus building among equal partner agencies.
  – Both projects, stakeholders are represented at a policy level for key decisions and involve IT staff.
Governance Philosophy and Structure

- Governance group composition:
  - A single lead steering group helps to centralize planning, enhances project coordination, and avoid confusion.
  - Key stakeholders should be represented, meaning those who will provide data, use data, pay for the project, or carry out the project.
  - Representatives should be able to commit, or facilitate commitment of, their organizations at a policy level.
  - Other composition factors to consider:
    - Geographic balance
    - Nonprofit provider representation
    - Homeless or formerly homeless representation
    - Academic/research partners
# Governance Philosophy and Structure

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<tr>
<th>BACHIC</th>
<th>NJ-HMIS Collaborative</th>
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<td>CoC coordinators from 11 CoCs:</td>
<td>3 State Agencies</td>
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<td>Napa</td>
<td>Representatives from 20 CoCs</td>
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<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>*only one CoC in NJ is not part of the</td>
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Governance Philosophy and Structure

- Committees and other structural issues:
  - Meeting coordination (who sets the agenda?):
    • Co-chairs or executive committee?
    • Staff-led?
  - Working committees (who accomplishes tasks?):
    • Fundraising?
    • Design/Technology (for IT level involvement)?
    • Policies and Procedures?
    • Report design and approval?
  - Fiscal agent (who manages the funds?):
    • Partner agency?
    • Another government agency or nonprofit?
    • Foundation?
Governance Philosophy and Structure

- Relationship to other local, regional, or statewide groups:
  - Coordinate and link with other regional or statewide groups, e.g., homeless coalitions or state interagency councils on homelessness
  - Communicate with local CoC and/or 10-Year planning groups
  - Remember that the Project should be designed to serve broader regional or statewide data needs
Approach to Meetings and Decision Process

Approach to meetings:

• Meetings must be regular and well-planned.
• Regularly scheduled meeting: every month or two months (3-4 hour meetings may be needed).
• Neutral outside facilitation is key.
• Agendas should emphasize decisions/action needed now.
• Agenda example:
  – Introductions
  – Agenda review
  – Participant/subcommittee updates
  – 3 to 6 decision/action items
  – Wrap up, next steps, setting next meeting
Approach to Meetings and Decision Process

Approach to meetings (cont.):

- Support decisions with written presentations and background materials
- Steps may be needed to overcome distance barriers to meeting
- BACHIC reduces travel time by meeting in the approximate geographic center of Bay Area (Oakland)
- NJ-HMIS Collaborative meets bi-monthly and offers Webinar connections for those partners that can’t attend to the meetings.
Approach to Meetings and Decision Process

• Decision process:
  – Critical choices need to be made on many issues
  – **Consensus building is absolutely critical!**
  – Democratic voting should be viewed as supporting and documenting the consensus previously reached
Importance of Staffing and Funding for Planning

- **Seed funding** is needed to pay for process planning and technical expertise.
- Planning and technical services that may be needed:
  - Neutral facilitation (especially for thorny issues)
  - Meeting space, agenda, other written materials
  - Project documents (agreements, design documents, work plans, and policies and procedures)
  - Technology and capacity needs assessment
  - Fundraising activities
- Funds for planning can come from the state, local governments, or an interested foundation.
Basic Participation Understandings and Agreements

• It is critical to take the time needed to define core understandings and agreements.
• These core understandings and agreements are the “glue” that holds the collaboration together.
• Reaching core understanding and agreement can be very challenging, but once done helps to catapult the project toward success.
Basic Participation Understandings and Agreements

• BACHIC core understandings and agreement are recorded in:
  – Project Overview and Guiding Principles for RHINo
  – Policies and Procedures for Implementation and Operation of RHINo

• NJ-HMIS understandings and agreement are recorded in:
  - MOU between NJMHFA and CoC
  - Policies and Procedures for Implementation
  - Participation Agreements with Provider Agencies
Defining Participants’ Roles and Responsibilities

- Participants’ roles and responsibilities must be defined, agreed, and make sense.
- Central roles and responsibilities are best recorded in the core participation agreements or MOUs.
- Operational roles and responsibilities should be detailed in policies and procedures or standard operating procedures document.
- No matter where they are recorded, it is very important to take the time to make sure everyone understands and agrees with their roles and responsibilities.
Defining Participants’ Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities may need to be articulated for any combination of:
- Steering group
- Committees of the steering group
- Representatives of CoCs, state agencies, or other groups
- Lead agency
- Project staff or contractors
- Local HMIS staff
- Planning, fundraising, and technical consultants
- Data analyst and academic researchers
- Client Perspective
Defining Participants’ Roles and Responsibilities

- Policies and procedures or standard operating procedures are very useful for defining roles and responsibilities.
- General topics:
  - Data preparation, transfer, and receipt
  - Data access rights
  - Project management and administration
  - Data confidentiality and security
  - Data release, reporting, and publication
  - Researcher and 3rd party participation
Approaches to Overcoming Barriers to Success

- Two keys to success:
  - Make a compelling case for the value of the regional or statewide data.
  - Actively address participants’ specific concerns and problems.
- The “people” issues are more challenging than the problems with technology.
- A significant challenge is to sustain participant buy-in and support.
Approaches to Overcoming Barriers to Success

• Common participation barriers:
  – Not understanding the value of regional or statewide data
  – Lack of funding for participation and contribution of data
  – Lack of staff time or capacity for contributing data
  – Concerns about control and ownership of data contributed
  – Concerns that comparative data might reflect negatively on the agency or CoC
Approaches to Overcoming Barriers to Success

• Common participation barriers (cont.):
  – Concerns about protecting confidential information
  – Perceiving the project as lower priority than, or competitor for resources to, other activities (e.g., HMIS or PIT count)
  – Staff turnover among participants
  – Lack of authority or willingness to commit the participating CoC or agency
Approaches to Overcoming Barriers to Success

• Strategies to overcome barriers:
  – Explain the specific uses and value of regional or statewide data.
  – When possible build on existing technology, MOUs, Data Use Agreement, and policies.
  – Identify and include existing supporters of regional or statewide approaches on homelessness.
  – Reach out to and regularly inform all stakeholders.
  – Carefully and respectfully listen to all participants issues and concerns.
  – Seek to provide answers and solutions to each issue or concern.
Approaches to Overcoming Barriers to Success

• Strategies to overcome barriers (cont.):
  – Show all the benefits of the project, such as shared HMIS strategies and practices.
  – Help with local CoC or agency costs if possible.
  – Exceed local CoCs’ confidentiality and security requirements, including removing client identifiers.
  – **Be persistent!** Changing minds will take time.
  – **Remain positive!** Your enthusiasm will help convince others.
Importance of Developing a Common Vision

- The single most important planning activity of a regional or statewide data project is to **create understanding and consensus around what the project will accomplish**.
- An early planning goal should be to surface everyone’s ideas and forge the commonalities into a unified vision.
- The resulting vision may be for a data warehouse, or it may be for another form of collaboration.
- The important thing is give sufficient time to reach group consensus on what the project must accomplish and how it will do so.
Importance of Developing a Common Vision

• A step-by-step strategy - **CUPID**
  – Craft a vision or mission statement.
  – Uncover the benefits expected.
    • For policymakers?
    • For service providers?
    • For homeless people?
    • For the public? Others?
  – Prepare the programmatic goals for meeting vision/mission.
  – Identify the reports needed to meet the goals.
  – Determine the data needed to generate the needed reports.
Key Lessons Learned and Suggestions

• Cultivate strong leadership.
• Build upon a prior history of regional or statewide collaboration.
• Budget and identify funding for planning.
• Policy should guide technology, not the reverse.
• Make sure key stakeholders are represented at the policy level and that IT staff are also engaged.
Key Lessons Learned and Suggestions

• Consensus building is a critical activity.
• Developing and gaining buy-in for regional or statewide vision is also a critical activity.
• **Be patient!** - It will take more time than expected.
• Take steps to ensure that the project complements and supports other state, regional, and local groups.
• Listen to the issues and concerns of participants.
• Provide answers and solutions to participants’ concerns
Key Lessons Learned and Suggestions

- Nurture the process with neutral facilitation, staffing, and technical expertise.
- Use technology to overcome distance barriers.
- Assess (periodically) participants’ technology needs and capacity to participate in a data warehouse.
- Use a work plan/checklist to identify and logically order all needed tasks and make sure they are completed.
- Clearly document all important agreements and decisions.
Next Steps

- Review your own internal CoC and HMIS governance structure and consider whether it meets existing and future requirements under HEARTH and new HMIS Data Standards (March 2010).
- Consider the benefits of regional or statewide data and why you think you need it - and make a case.
- Assess potential partners and what it will take to get them “on-board”.


Next Steps

• Assess what type of system will be needed to achieve your goals for Regional or Statewide data.
  – Data Warehouse/XML/Single or Regional HMIS
• Identify a lead entity or champion to promote the idea.
• Consider existing Best Practices and access current materials available on the HUD website.
• Be aware that this will take longer than you think, so start planning now.
Questions/Comments?
Resources

- www.hudhre.info
- www.hmis.info
- http://www.state.nj.us/dca/hmfa/home/hmis/
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