HOW TO PARTNER ON A **DATA PROJECT**

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Many Continuums of Care (CoCs) have built their capacity to analyze data over the past several years. Many CoCs have also focused on building partnerships with persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness (PLEE). CoCs are increasingly focused on data-driven decision making. This document discusses how CoCs can partner with PLEE to interpret and make decisions using data.

There are many reasons that partnership on data projects is essential. For CoCs, these types of partnership can:

- **Identify Effective Solutions -** By partnering with PLEE, CoCs can gain a better understanding of the root causes of homelessness and develop more targeted approaches to addressing this complex issue.
- **Respect Autonomy by Sharing Power -** PLEE should have the opportunity to have ownership and agency within the systems that are designed and funded to support them. Be transparent about how decisions are made in your community and state explicitly what impact contributors are expected to have on future decisions.

The insights and experiences of PLEE are crucial to the development of effective, responsive, and compassionate solutions to this complex issue. By sharing PLEE experiences, ideas, and data interpretations, PLEE can help shape the response systems that will ultimately impact the future of individuals in similar situations. PLEE input can help to create a more equitable and just society, where everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of how CoCs and PLEE can partner on a data project. A data project can include any evaluation or planning project that includes quantitative or qualitative data. This document is intended for individuals in the CoC leading data projects (e.g., HMIS Leads, CoC Data Evaluation Leads, technical assistance providers).

Before launching a new data project with PLEE, the initiative must recruit people with lived experiences. Click here for more information on *PLEE Recruitment and Compensation*.

The document is organized into the seven steps of a collaborative data project:

1. Identify Questions
2. Build Partnership with People with Lived Experience
3. Discuss the Question(s), Data Source(s), and Assumptions
4. Organize, Aggregate/Disaggregate, and Analyze
5. Build & Interpret Existing Data Visualizations Together
6. Work Together to Identify the Findings
7. Notify All Partners of the Final Results

***Note:** Steps 1 and 2 can happen at the same time. We want to encourage communities to generate questions about their system with PLEE but recognize that sometimes CoCs already have questions generated by evaluations and community convenings.*

STEP 1: IDENTIFY QUESTIONS

The first step in a data project is identifying a question or a set of questions. What do the CoC or people accessing the system want to know about the homeless system?

The question should be:

- **Actionable:** Focused on identifying specific problems or challenges within the homeless system of care, and seeking solutions or improvements that can be implemented to address them.
- **Clear:** Use clear and simple language. This may require defining terms or using existing definitions as a guide.
- **Concise:** Ask only one question at a time and keep your questions as short as possible. Rather than using one broad question or one sentence with two questions, ask two concise and distinct questions.
- **Measurable:** Use terms that can be measured and observed. The CoC will need to find data sources to measure the question.

(Tip) If you are not sure where to start, look and work through the Stella P Dashboard and highlight some questions that rise to the top!

INSTEAD OF:	TRY:
Why do people not like going to shelters?	• What are clients' experiences in shelters? • How do the shelter's policies and procedures impact the client's experience? • What can be done to improve the client's experiences in a shelter? • How do the shelter staff's level of training, expertise, and demographics (cultural, racial, and gender identity) impact clients' experiences?

What is the racial breakdown of people accessing services?	• Are there services being disproportionately accessed by specific racial groups?
	• What is the experience of accessing the system by race?
	   ○ Do clients feel physically safe?
	   ○ Do clients feel like they are being profiled or treated differently by staff compared to other racial groups?
	• What can these experiences and access data reveal about the need for more intentional marketing of system opportunities?

Why do families have more resources and exit homelessness more quickly?	• What resources do we need to build to address homelessness for everyone in our community? • By household type and eligibility criteria, what is the length of time it takes people to access housing once

INSTEAD OF:	TRY:
	they have started the process? ● By household type and eligibility criteria, how are people prioritized for housing support?
Why are clients missing their appointments? Why are the resources so spread out? It takes all day to go to one appointment and back?	● What are the barriers people with lived experience face when trying to access appointments? ○ Are there unique factors pertaining to intersectional identities that impact their ability to access appointments? ● What resources can the CoC provide to support clients accessing appointments?
What is the average length of stay in transitional housing programs?	● How can we improve the effectiveness of transitional housing programs to help individuals experiencing homelessness achieve long-term stability and independence?
What do we know about mortality and homelessness?	● How many people die each year while engaged in services? ● Is the number of people dying each year growing, declining, or staying the same?

To create a measurable question, the CoC must identify the right data source(s).

Consider using the following options:

QUANTITATIVE ONLY:

- **HUD** Point-In-Time (PIT)
- **HUD** Housing Inventory Count (HIC)
- **HUD** CoC Analysis tool
- **HUD** System Performance Measures
- **HUD** Stella Performance Data
- **Local** Homeless Data Dashboards
- **Local** HMIS Reports (e.g., APR)
- **Local** HMIS data
- **Cross-system data:** Examples include data sets from non-HMIS participating agencies, the Veterans Administration (HOMES), education system, jail/arrest/release records, Department of Education, and Electronic Health Records (EHRs)
- Other data sources on homelessness, housing, and poverty include the American Community Survey, HUD Consolidated Planning data, etc.

MIXED METHODS AND QUALITATIVE DATA:

- Surveys (e.g., annual satisfaction surveys)
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Listening sessions
- Meetings (including notes)
- Client and staff exit interviews
- Public statements
  - Governance and policies and procedures documents
  - Mission statements

If you can't find a data source that answers your question, consider reframing the question or collecting new data!

EXAMPLE DATA PROJECT

The CoC has recently established a Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB). One member offers the following observation during a meeting: "It seems like more people are dying on the street every year. What's happening? What can we do about this?"

Question(s):

- Original Question:
  - What do we know about mortality and homelessness in our community?
- A more actionable, clear, concise and measurable set of questions:
  - How many people die each year while engaged in services?
  - Is the number of people who die each year growing, declining, or staying the same?

Data Source: Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Data

Finding: Over the past 5 years, the number of people that die each year in the CoC while engaged in services has not changed much. However, there are some gaps in the HMIS service data including, (1) there are an unknown number of people not engaged in HMIS services, and (2) county morgues, police, and hospitals do not communicate with the homeless system when an individual passes away.

Result: The CoC and LEAB set the following plan to investigate these questions further.

- Gather lists of names from each homeless memorial over the past 5 years to compare with the number of folks documented in HMIS.
- Connect with county police and county morgues to count all people without a known residence who passed away, the cause of death, and the location found.
- Expand the question to include finding ways to prevent deaths rather than just count them.

New Questions

- What are the causes of death for people experiencing homelessness? Where do people experiencing homelessness die?
- *What can the CoC do in the short-term to prevent more deaths?*

STEP 2: BUILD A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

Step two focuses on building partnerships between the CoC and PLEE. In this context, partnership includes:

- Working together to achieve a shared set of goals; and
- Collaborative decision-making on the project like drafting the question(s), identifying data sources, collecting additional data, and analyzing the data.

There are many ways to approach a partnership with PLEE during the first two steps of the data project. For example:

- Option 1: The CoC can partner with an existing PLEE leadership group. The CoC will start by building a collaborative partnership with this group, then focus on identifying question(s) for the data project.
- Option 2: The CoC will convene a new group on PLEE to partner with on this project. The CoC will draft question(s) to help assist with the recruitment process. Once the group is convened, the CoC will use this sample on-boarding slide-deck to build the partnership and refine the data question(s).
- Option 3: The CoC will partner with different groups of PLEE to (1) identify the question(s), and (2) lead the remaining components of the data project. This approach will require the CoC to engage in step 2 (building collaborative partner) multiple times throughout the course of the project.

When partnering with PLEE, it's essential for CoC staff or members to confront their biases about who can be a "data person." Do not assume that PLEE do not understand or have experience with data. The CoC should ask each interested participant about their experience working with data. If participants do not have experience with data, the CoC should create an on-boarding and support process tailored to each participant's needs. Sample on-boarding slides focused on key data terms can be found here. **Anyone can be a data person, when offered the appropriate support.**

When working with participants that are new to data:

- **Acknowledge the Emotional Labor**: For PLEE, working with data can be emotionally difficult. It can be painful to see their traumatic experiences expressed numerically or to confront the scale of the homelessness crisis. For CoCs, it's important to acknowledge this emotional labor and provide space for people with lived experience to experience these emotions during the data project.
- **Go Slow to Go Fast**: It can be helpful to have several slow and exploratory data conversations at the beginning. During these conversations, consider sharing a graph, explaining how to read the graph, and then asking participants "What do you notice?" Let the participants lead the discussion and offer support only when asked.
- **Offer On-Boarding Support***:* When starting a new project with anyone, it is important to review the purpose, goals, jobs, timelines, and expectations for participants.
    - This slide deck template focuses on introducing PLEE to the project timeline, refining the data question(s), and sharing information about logistics (e.g., compensation).
    - This slide deck template includes explanations of key terms for a data project.

In addition to on-boarding, compensation and recruitment are pillars of effective PLEE engagement. The following subsection summarizes key aspects of recruitment and compensation.

COMPENSATION AND RECRUITMENT

Compensation: It's important to ensure that partners with lived experience receive fair and equitable compensation for their work. This might involve:

- Aligning their pay with market rates for jobs similar to theirs. For example, if PLEE will be involved in analyzing the data in the project, consider compensating them at a comparable rate to a Data Analyst. Discuss with PLEE how they would prefer to receive their compensation, whether it's through checks, cash, prepaid cards, or other options.
- Empowering PLEE members to explore their preferences and choices when collaborating with the CoC.

The following tools have been developed to assist PLEEs and CoCs to think about compensation separately in an effort to establish a sustainable and equitable new relationship.

- The *PLEE-Facing Compensation and Recruitment Document discusses:*
    - Why PLEE perspectives are important
    - How engagement can be difficult
    - Why PLEE should be paid for their work
    - Possible roles and responsibilities
    - Potential payment ranges by role and responsibilities
    - Examples of fair and unfair engagements that include questions PLEE can ask the data project leads
- *The CoC facing Compensation Document* is a summarized version of the PLEE-Facing Compensation and Recruitment document. This resource discusses:
    - Why PLEE should be paid for their work
    - Possible roles and responsibilities
    - Potential payment ranges by role and responsibilities
    - List of considerations for developing fair engagements

Recruitment: When recruiting committee members, it's important to share information about the scope of the project, potential for impact, time commitment, compensation, and availability of on-boarding support.

Additionally, **establishing open dialogue** is critical to building strong partnerships. It is important for the CoC to provide multiple avenues for PLEE to provide feedback, based on PLEE's preferences. Taking the time to explore how PLEE feel most comfortable providing the feedback is essential to getting robust and candid feedback.

Setting expectations regarding project timelines and outcomes is often helpful. Moreover, it is important to discuss what actions can be taken by the CoC as a result of findings, as well as the length of time potential “proposed” changes might take to implement. Research and analysis can be a slow process but is a necessary process to make data informed decisions.

EXAMPLE INFORMATION TO SHARE DURING RECRUITMENT **Example Question: What can be done to improve the client's experiences in a shelter?**	
Explanation of Data Project and Potential for Impact	*We want your feedback on shelters! We will use this feedback to guide decisions about funding and the creation of more shelters in our community.*
Feedback Mechanisms	*You can provide feedback on this project at any time, during workgroup meetings, via email to the project lead, or through the anonymous Google Form.*
Time Commitment	*We are creating a committee to guide this work. The committee will meet once a month for two hours. The committee will meet at least six times.*
Compensation	*Committee members will receive $50 for each meeting they attend. This can be distributed as a check, electronic funds transfer, or gift card.*
On-Boarding Support	*If you've never done this before, don't worry! All are welcome. We will host an orientation for all committee members. There will be plenty of time for questions. Please reach out to example@email.org if you have any questions.*

For more information on what information to share during recruitment, please refer to the Recruitment Worksheet. This worksheet will help CoCs think through the information they need for recruitment, and it provides examples of policies and resources to guide PLEE on questions they can ask the CoC before and during the engagement. The topics covered are:

- Setting Expectations for the Engagement
- Acknowledging Emotional Labor
- Onboarding Support and Ongoing Resources for Participation
- Compensation for PLEE Partners
- Notifying PLEE Partners of the Final Results

During the project, it may be important to revisit this step. For example, the CoC may need to recruit additional committee members with specific areas of expertise (e.g., sub-population, experience in a unique project). The partners with lived experience and CoC may decide to recruit other people with lived experience to participate in a limited-term engagement effort like responding to a survey or participating in a listening session. The same principles on compensation and recruitment will apply to these short-term partners!

STEP 3: DISCUSS THE QUESTION(S), DATA SOURCE(S) AND ASSUMPTIONS

Before beginning analysis, the CoC and PLEE should discuss the question(s), data source(s), and assumptions.

The group should collaboratively review the question(s) to ensure they are actionable, measurable, clear, and concise. If partners with lived experience were not involved in drafting the question(s), this is a time for them to propose new questions or revise the current question(s). The CoC should be open to any potential shifts in topic or area of focus.

Once the question is finalized, the CoC and PLEE should review the potential data sources for limitations and document the assumptions. Doing this step together will help create a uniform understanding of the questions, and what the data can and can't tell us.

Step 3 may take several meetings to complete. Here are suggestions for how to structure those initial meeting:

- First, give PLEE a chance to meet each other, share goals for the data project, and establish group norms.
- Next, review to ensure the question or set of questions are actionable, concise, clear, and measurable. See step 1 for more information. If you haven't already, gather feedback from people with lived experience on the questions.
- Once the question is finalized, review the potential data sources, data source limitations, and methodology assumptions.
  - *Data Source(s) Limitations*: Which data sources can we use to answer these questions? What can this data tell us? What can't this data tell us?
  - *Methodology Assumptions*: How can we use the data to answer the questions? Typically, the raw data will not answer a data project question. To analyze the data in a way that answers the question, assumptions will have to be made. See the "Defining Key Terms and Measures" callout box for examples.
- Then, have a reality check. Given the limitation of the data and the group's goals, is this data project worth the time investment and resources? Does the question need to be updated to reflect the assumptions?
- Once the team has reviewed the data sources and understands their limitations, the group may decide that the data sources available are not enough to answer the question. At this point, the group may need to change the question, collect additional data, or proceed knowing that the limitations are unavoidable.
  - Example: After reviewing Stella P data on length of time homelessness, does the group feel qualitative data is needed?
  - Do we need to collect additional data now or later?
    - If your group would like to collect additional qualitative data now, consider co-building qualitative interviews, listening sessions, and survey questions. For more information:
      - Qualitative Data 101
      - Transactional to Transformational: Person-centered Data Collection

DEFINING KEY TERMS AND MEASURES

Defining the **terms** and **units of measure** in the questions will help document the assumptions. Example:

Term: What do you mean by youth?

Unit of measure: Are you measuring in households or people?

Potential answers: Heads of household between the ages of 18 and 24, people between the ages of 18 and 24, people under 18

For more information, see the Stella M Toolkit: Assumptions Guide

EXAMPLE: QUESTIONS, DATA SOURCES, AND REALITY CHECK

- **Question**: How can the CoC expand its homelessness prevention program to serve all people that would benefit from this intervention?
- **Data Source**: HMIS
  - **Limitations**: Only 50 percent of local shelters are in HMIS. Additionally, HMIS does not capture data about people living in unstable housing that are not yet experiencing homelessness.
  - **Assumptions**: The group decided to focus on the number of households that meet three criteria: (1) accessed emergency shelters once a year, (2) stayed for less than 61 days, and (3) exited to permanent housing destinations. Emergency shelters will include safe havens and emergency hotel vouchers. The analysis will focus on households, not individuals. Once the number of households that meet the three criteria is determined, the number will be doubled to account for the missing HMIS data.
- **Reality Check**: Do we need to collect more data (now or later)?: Given the data source, limitations, and assumptions, should the group move forward with this project?

The group decides to move forward, but adjusts the question to acknowledge the data limitations and assumptions: “What is the fewest number of households a new homelessness prevention project should expect to serve in a year?”

STEP 4: ORGANIZE, AGGREGATE/DISAGGREGATE, AND ANALYZE

Now, it's time to begin the data analysis process! To conduct an effective data analysis, it is important to first organize the data in a way that is accurate, complete, and in a suitable format. Once the data is organized, data can be aggregated or disaggregated to identify trends and patterns in the data. Finally, the data can be analyzed to gain insights.

This work will typically be led by the CoC, with oversight from PLEE. PLEE might be involved in these steps if they have a particular interest in building their data analysis skills.

ORGANIZE

To ensure accuracy, it is important to **organize data** before analysis. To organize the data:

1. **Compile Data**: Gather all relevant data from various sources, such as HMIS, surveys, administrative records, and other data collection methods.
2. **Check for Accuracy and Completeness**: Verify that all data fields are filled in correctly and check for outliers or missing values.
3. **Standardize the Data**: Convert all data to a common format, such as a spreadsheet. Ensure that all data is in the same units of measurement.
4. **Clean the Data**: Remove duplicates, correct spelling or formatting errors, and resolve inconsistencies.
5. **Transform the Data**: If needed for analysis, create new variables by combining existing ones or calculate new measures such as percentages or rates.
6. **Document the Data**: Document any decisions made about how to handle outliers, missing values, or other data issues. Additionally, compile a general list of what was done with the data so that the process can be reproduced or replicated by other CoCs.

AGGREGATE AND DISAGGREGATE DATA

In this context, aggregating data refers to combining individual data points or observations into summary statistics or categories.

- For example, if we have data on each individual experiencing homelessness in a community, we might aggregate that data to determine the total number of people experiencing homelessness, the number of homeless families with children, or the number of homeless veterans.

Disaggregating data, on the other hand, involves breaking down aggregated data into individual components.

- For example, if we have aggregated data on the length of time homeless for people in a community, we might choose to disaggregate that data by race to see if there are any differences in the length of time homeless for people by race.

Both aggregating and disaggregating data are important for understanding the scope and characteristics of homelessness in a given community. Aggregated data can provide a broad overview of the issue, while disaggregated data can help identify subpopulations within the larger population that may have unique needs or require targeted interventions.

ANALYZE

Analyzing data for a homeless system of care involves systematically examining and interpreting data related to people experiencing homelessness. For more guidance on analyzing homelessness data, check out the following resources:

- Stella P Race and Ethnicity Analysis Guide
- HMIS Data Analytics Courses
- Using HMIS Data

CoC leads should only complete a basic analysis of the data before launching step 5. This basic analysis should be guided by the collaboratively identified assumptions from step 4.

STEP 5: BUILD & INTERPRET EXISTING DATA VISUALIZATIONS TOGETHER

To engage people with lived experience in a collaborative analysis process, the CoC lead should create data visualizations that are **clear** and **easy to interpret.**

Visualizing data is one of the most powerful tools to tell a story and inform decision making. Images and **visual representations are more memorable** than words alone. Unfortunately, data visualization is commonly where the data and "non-data" divide is most prominent because the data visualizations are unclear or overwhelming.

By following best practices for clear data storytelling[1,2], the CoC can better ensure that they are not creating barriers for people with lived experience interested in engaging with the data.

When creating data visualizations, consider the following: [3]

- Focus on the **practical significance** (i.e., "Why is this important/interesting?")
- Use **familiar types of graphs** (i.e., pie charts, bar charts, tables, line graphs)
    - If there is too much information, consider making a table or breaking it up into multiple charts.
- Minimize grid and axis lines wherever possible.
    - Ask yourself, "If this element is removed, will it still make sense?"
- **Group data by** frequency, sequentially, alphabetically.
- **Strategically label** the visualizations
    - Label placement should be **horizontal.**
    - Place the legends at the **top** of graphs or directly label elements of the graphs and remove the legend.
    - **Minimize decimal usage** when appropriate.
    - Important interpretative details can be added as **subtitles.**
    - Context can be added as a **note** at the bottom.
- Be Mindful with **Color** Usage
    - Consider **accessibility** when determining color palettes. Avoid using red-green and yellow-blue color combinations.
    - Keep in mind **color connotations** (i.e., green being seen as positive and red being seen as negative).
    - Confirm that data findings are still legible when **printed in black and white.**
    - **Light/dark contrast** with color can draw attention to key points. This might be an iterative process as the group collectively decides what should be emphasized.
- Choose **easy to read font style** and **larger text** for accessibility purposes.

---

[1] Klass, G. M. (2012). Just plain data analysis: Finding, presenting, and interpreting social science data. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

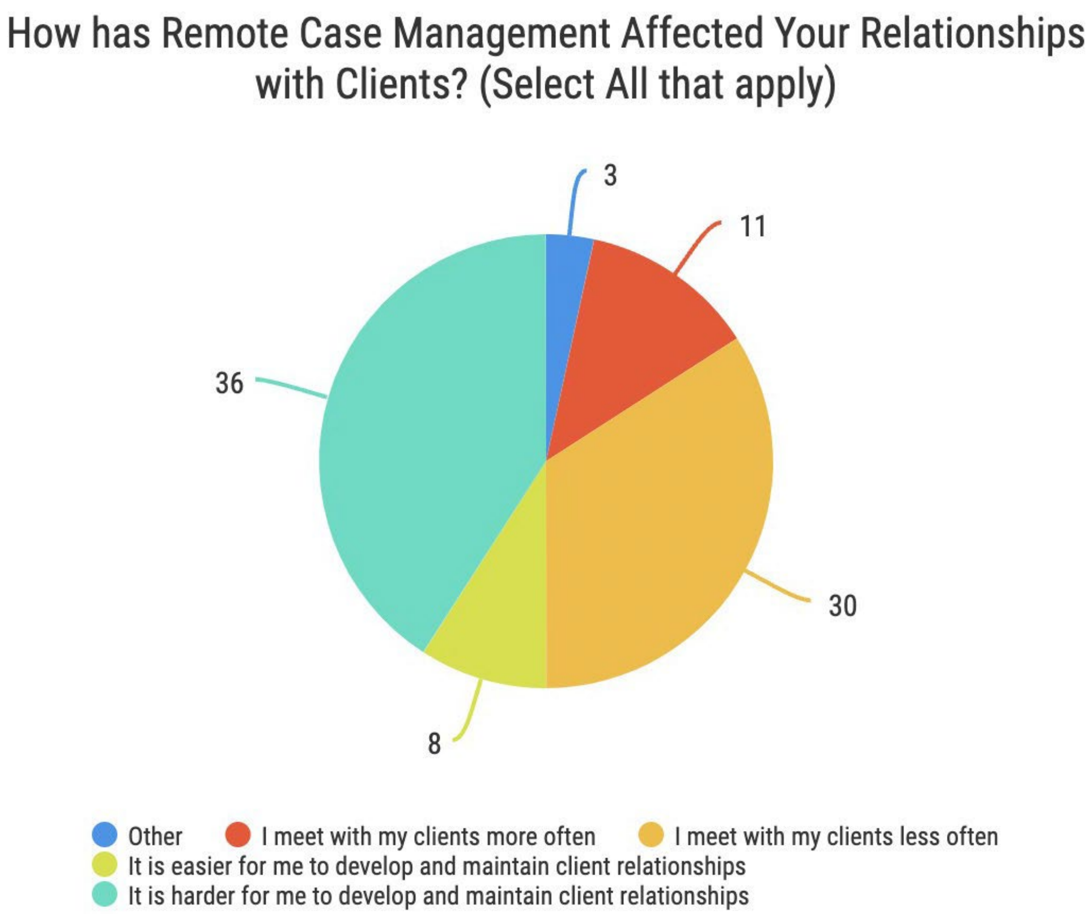
[2] Knaflic, C. N. (2015). Storytelling with data: A data visualization guide for business professionals. John Wiley & Sons.

[3] Morris, Tori and Pierce, Leonard. "Engaging Your Community with Data Take-home tactics and interventions to foster data literacy", October 26, 2022.

EXAMPLE: PUTTING CLEAR DATA STORYTELLING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

This example offers several visualization examples for the same data. The data focuses on the impact of remote case management on staff's frequency of meetings with clients.

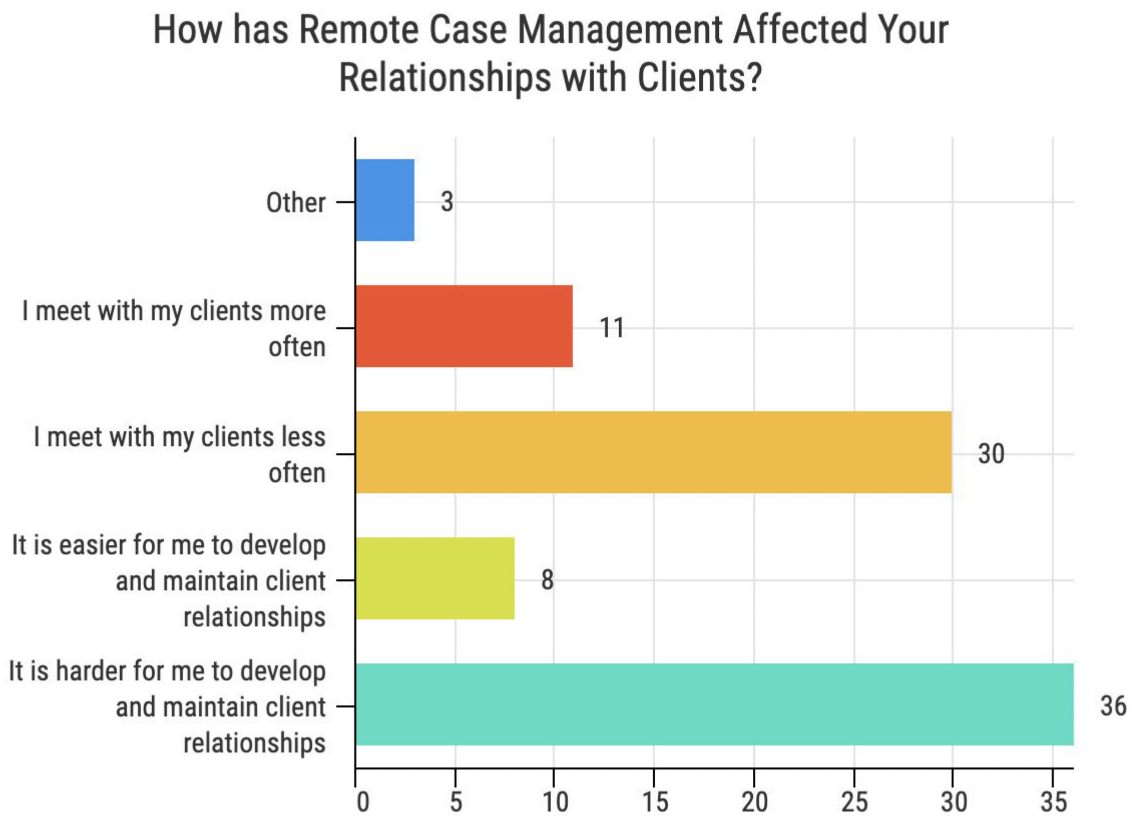
The first example is a pie chart:



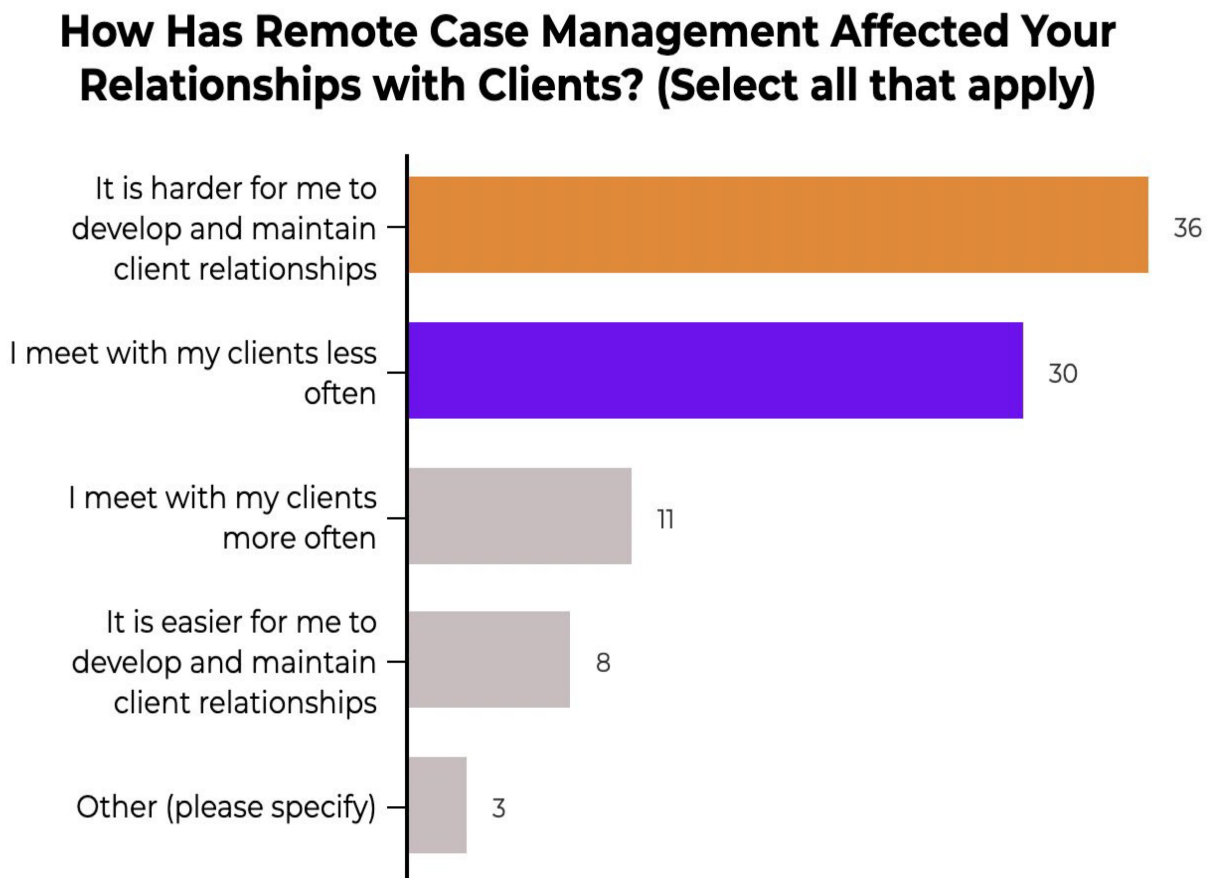
There are several key challenges with this pie chart:

- Difficult to differentiate smaller percentages
- Can be more challenging to compare the relative width and angles of slices
- Use of color is distracting
- The legend at the bottom requires considerable back and forth tracking to make sense of what the pie chart is conveying

By switching the format to a bar chart and using color intentionally, this visualization can be improved:



Furthermore, by ordering data and reducing the clutter, the bar chart visualization can be improved upon:



Once you have implemented promising practices for data storytelling, convene to the work group to engage in an exploratory view of the data. Exploratory data analysis allows a group to **discover patterns, spot outliers, and check assumptions**. During this phase, intentionally make space for **others' interpretations, doubts, curiosity, and general reactions** to what is being presented.

When initially presenting the data, **describe what the graph is broadly covering** and clarify **how to read the type of graph**, rather than diving into what it means.

Once the group has a shared understanding of how to interpret findings, system leads can provide initial insights and interpretations of the findings, and then pause and **invite the group to share their own interpretations of the data.**

When presenting data and discussing preliminary interpretations, consider asking the group the following questions:

- What story are the numbers telling?

- What is your first reaction to seeing the data like this?
- What trends (if any) are you seeing?
- Is this what you expected to see?
- Is there anything surprising in what you are seeing?
- Do the findings align with your experience and what has been shared with you?
- Does this data prompt any follow up questions for you?
- Is there anything you think we should take a second look at?
- Are there different ways we could be looking at this?

Personal connections that resonate with an audience make for more impactful data storytelling. Wherever possible, create opportunities to **connect the aggregate data to qualitative data** that underscores the **humanity and implication behind the numbers.**

CONTEXTUALIZING NUMBERS: WHAT'S BEHIND A PERCENTAGE?

In data projects, CoCs and people with lived experience should work to identify the story behind the data. For example, bed utilization rates are a common performance metric in housing programs. In the basic sense, bed utilization is the measure of how many clients are served compared to the total number of beds.

In many programs, bed utilization is often above 100 percent. Individuals often interpret 100 percent rates as a measure of good performance. It is important to work with people with lived experience to unpack the nuances of any metric. For example, when bed utilization is above 100 percent:

- *households could be rapidly entering and leaving the program, or;*
- *the average length of household stay may be shorter than other programs.*

By discussing the story behind the data, CoCs and people with lived experience can ground data findings in the client experience. This step may lead to more human-centered and compassionate action steps from data projects.

Finally, be prepared for the data interpretation and visualization phase to be **iterative**. As PLEE provide feedback, the CoC should be **open to pivoting** if it realizes there are additional compelling findings that should be highlighted and presented differently, or that additional data needs to be collected. It is critical to **factor in sufficient time** for this phase when work planning and setting deadlines.

For more information on data visualizations and exploratory data analysis please refer to the following slide deck.

STEP 6: WORK TOGETHER TO IDENTIFY THE FINDINGS

Now that the CoC and PLEE have co-developed and interpreted the data visualizations, it is time to draft findings and recommendations.

In this phase, PLEE can include the standing committee, as well as PLEE who would like to give one-time feedback. When engaging with PLEE, it is important to offer multiple opportunities to engage that meet varying comfort levels and capacity. Common ways of gathering one-time feedback include:

- Anonymous surveys
- Interviews
- Listening sessions

When refining the findings, the CoC should create space for PLEE to share whether the findings are aligned with the data they reviewed. PLEE can identify the trends that should be emphasized. The CoC should partner with PLEE to explain the limitations of the data and what is missing from the findings.

It is important to consider all data when developing findings. Resist the temptation to inflate or deny data that seems negative. Data should include feedback collected directly from PLEE involved in the project. When discussing and interpreting feedback that might appear less than positive, approach it from a neutral stance, free of judgment, and focus any inquiries on clarification rather than defensiveness. Remember that critical feedback can speak to the faith and trust of PLEE placed in the data collection process to feel comfortable enough sharing candid feedback. If the data project will not lead to action on a piece of negative data, clearly explain why. This is essential for demonstrating that all data was equally considered. This can build trust in the process across all partners.

Findings should be communicated clearly. Keeping essential information at a fifth-grade reading level can better ensure that the findings are accessible to all partners and community members. While it is important to be considerate of readability in communication to all partners, be mindful of implicit biases and do not assume or imply that PLEE are not intelligent enough to understand the data or other content shared.

If the reading level of your findings are too high, consider the following strategies to make the content more readable:

- Use frequent and meaningful **subheadings** to help readers navigate the document.
- Present **one idea at a time**. If you have multiple ideas, use multiple sentences to improve clarity.
- Aim to keep sentences short (**15 words or fewer**).
- Substitute **shorter**, more **familiar words** whenever you can.
    - If you have to use a word that is unfamiliar to your audience, explain it as simply as possible.
    - Spell out all acronyms.
- Use the **active voice** rather than passive voice.

When it comes time to present the findings to the public, PLEE who helped interpret and co-develop the final product should also be engaged in this phase. It is recommended that the CoC offer to schedule prep meeting(s) and utilize the time to provide any **relevant context** regarding the **meeting purpose** and **intended audience**, go over the **agenda**, **answer clarifying questions**, and **divide up speaking portions** based on **speaker preferences**.

As the CoC offers opportunities to present findings in partnership with people with lived experience, keep in mind this is a ***shared* product**, and create space for presenters to emphasize what is important to them. **Resist the desire to control the narrative** by writing out prescriptive speaking points for presenters to read from.

While this can be a time intensive commitment for a CoC, such collaborative and iterative efforts foster **stronger and more robustly informed decision making** that can then **facilitate greater buy-in** from the community at large.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE SEE:

Clear Language and Design, Measuring Readability, 2015, https://clad.tccld.org/category/tips-tools/

Grael Norton, Wheat Mark, 5 Easy Tips to Lower Your Flesch-Kincaid Readability Score, November 17, 2013, https://www.wheatmark.com/5-easy-tips-to-lower-your-flesch-kincaid-readability-score/

Sarah Stasik, Crowd Content Blog, Why You Should Worry About Your Content's Reading Level, Updated on Mar 09, 2021, https://www.crowdcontent.com/blog/2018/02/27/content-reading-level/

STEP 7: NOTIFY ALL PARTNERS OF THE FINAL RESULTS

All participants, no matter their level of involvement, should receive information about how their feedback influenced the direction of the data project. By clearly communicating this information, the CoC can demonstrate their commitment to partnership with PLEE and the influence of that partnership on the data project.

If you have an on-going committee, it's important to share frequent updates with that group about the status of the data project. Do not be afraid to communicate where you are in the process! Your findings do not always need to be final to provide an update. If you will not be taking action on part of the feedback, be prepared to acknowledge this and explain why.

If PLEE were engaged in a one-time feedback opportunity, be intentional about how you follow up with them.

- Whenever possible, this follow up should happen face-to-face during a meeting or conversation.
- If face-to-face sharing isn't possible, consider which formats of follow-up might be the best for participants. For example, a colorful flier or short video might be more effective than a long report.

Whenever possible, meet with the PLEE to **debrief their experience participating in the data project**. Give everyone a chance to share what went well in the project and what could have gone better. Consider offering anonymous opportunities to provide this feedback, like through Google Form or a virtual board with sticky notes. Ensure this feedback is summarized and easily accessible to CoC staff that will lead future data projects.

Finally, CoCs should take time to intentionally **express gratitude** for the PLEE involved in the project. This work can be time-intensive and emotionally challenging. Data project partnerships between CoCs and PLEE are essential steps towards ending homelessness.

This material is based upon work supported, in whole or in part, by Federal award number H-19-TA-MD-0006 awarded to Cloudburst Consulting Group, Inc by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. Neither the United States Government, nor any of its employees, makes any warranty, express or implied, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed, or represents that its use would not infringe privately-owned rights. Reference herein to any individuals, agencies, companies, products, process, services, service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise does not constitute or imply an endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the author(s), contributor(s), the U.S. Government or any agency thereof. Opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position of, or a position that is endorsed by, HUD or any Federal agency."