PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN A HOUSING FIRST CONTEXT

A Guide for Community Entities

ALINA TURNER, PhD

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN A HOUSING FIRST CONTEXT: A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ENTITIES

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INTRODUCTION

In its renewal of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), the Government of Canada has prioritized Housing First as a key strategy to reduce homelessness. A Housing First approach focuses on moving people who are experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness as rapidly as possible from the street or emergency shelters into permanent housing with supports to maintain housing stability.

This Guide to performance management was developed specifically for Community Entity (CE) organizations to help manage HPS funding, as performance management is essential to understand the effectiveness of interventions funded under HPS, as well as a community's overall progress towards reducing homelessness. It is important that communities develop effective performance management processes to link their efforts to national-level goals and benchmarks.

Performance measurement is a process that systematically evaluates whether your efforts are making an impact on the clients you are serving or the problem you are targeting (Albanese, 2010).

Performance management:

- Articulates what the homeless-serving system, as a whole, is trying to achieve;
- Illustrates whether progress is being made towards preventing and reducing homelessness in a particular community;
- Keeps programs accountable to funders;
- Quantifies achievements towards the goals of the Community Plan and HPS targets;
- Uses information gathered for continuous improvement;
- Aligns program-level results to client outcomes at the individual and system-levels; and
- Informs the next round of strategy review and investment planning.

This Guide complements HPS Directives and the Housing First Toolkit developed by the Mental Health Commission. The Toolkit is designed to provide guidance for the design and implementation of Housing First programs.

Guide Development Process

The Guide was developed through research and key stakeholder consultation to collect and review existing promising practices from 14 CEs. Practices across a range of communities varying in size were reviewed to shape the content of the Guide and identify promising approaches. Communities were selected based on their experience as CEs working in a Housing First context or moving towards this approach.

The review process also included consultation with national organizations and drew on US, UK and Australian performance management practices to complement Canadian findings (Greenberg, 2010; Hambrick, 2000; Mares, 2008; Moseley, 2008; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008; Queensland Government, 2011; Turner, 2013; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2002).

Overview

This Guide consists of four modules, each building on previous discussions on the following interrelated topics:
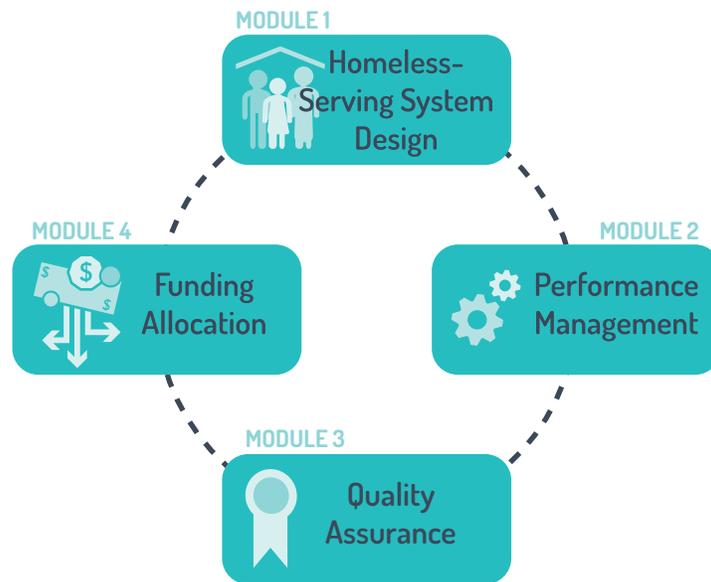
The modules begin with an overview of the main aims of each section, present detail discussions on themes, and end with a summary, reflection questions, and key considerations for smaller CEs to highlight essential steps in a particular practice area. Each module provides sample forms, such as client grievance and serious incident forms, contract boilerplates and RFPs, etc. that communities can adapt locally.

MODULE 1 – Designing the Homeless-Serving System discusses the tenets of Housing First as program and philosophy and links these to system planning. The Module provides an introduction to implementing a systems approach focusing on the role of the CE in leading the development of a local homeless-serving system. This is an important first step to introducing performance management.

MODULE 2 – Performance Management introduces the concepts of performance indicators and targets to enable program and system-level analysis. These concepts are brought together in real-life examples to illustrate the systems approach to performance management in CE practice.

MODULE 3 – Quality Assurance outlines key processes and procedures that aim to improve service impact through continuous improvement with a focus on service standards, program monitoring and risk management.

MODULE 4 – Funding Allocation brings the concepts discussed full circle by linking performance management, system planning, and quality assurance to CE investment practices. Financial monitoring is presented as a powerful tool that can be leveraged in performance management, with particular focus on developing eligible costs guidelines and benchmarking costs. The module discusses annual funding cycles that incorporate funding allocation into strategic review and business planning processes.

Module 1 –

Designing the Homeless-Serving System

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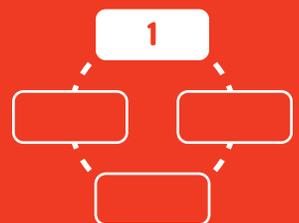
DESIGNING THE HOMELESS–SERVING SYSTEM

Housing First as Program and Philosophy

This Guide is designed to help communities develop plans and processes to reduce homelessness following the Housing First approach. Considerable research has established the efficacy of Housing First programs for those with co-occurring mental illness and addiction problems across jurisdictions.

Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach focused on quickly moving people from homelessness into housing and then providing supports necessary to maintain it (Gaetz, 2013). Rather than requiring homeless people to first resolve the challenges that contributed to their housing instability, including additions or mental health issues, Housing First approaches emphasise that recovery should begin from a stable housing (Stefancic & Tsemberis, 2007; Tsemberis, 2010a, 2010b).

HPS has developed a slate of materials on Housing First for CEs.

Here, we need to make an important distinction between Housing First as a philosophy that emphasizes the right to a place of one's own to live, and as a specific program model of housing and wrap-around supports based on consumer choice.

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  ┌──────────────────┐     ┌──────────────────┐     ┌──────────────────┐
  │  as Program Type  │ <---│  HOUSING FIRST    │---> │  as Philosophy    │
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HPS has defined the six mandatory Housing First principles which are relevant at the program and system-levels:

1. **Rapid housing placement with supports:** This involves helping clients locate and secure accommodation as rapidly as possible and assisting them with moving-in.

2. **Offering clients a reasonable choice:** Clients must be given a reasonable choice in terms of housing options as well as the services they wish to access.

3. **Separating housing provision from treatment services:** Acceptance of treatment, following treatment, or compliance with services is not a requirement for housing tenure, but clients are willing to monthly visits (weekly visits in the case of clients with high needs).

4. **Providing tenancy rights and responsibilities:** Clients are required to contribute a portion of their income towards rent.

5. **Integrating housing** into the community to encourage client recovery.

6. **Recovery-based and promoting self-sufficiency:** The focus is on capabilities of the person, based on self-determined goals, which may include employment, education and participation in the community.

CEs and the Transition to Housing First

More than simply introducing new program types, the transition to Housing First as a philosophy requires a reorientation and redesign of the local service network and its response to homelessness (Gaetz, 2010).

In order to shift to Housing First from a systems perspective, communities need to reflect on some critical questions, including:

- What are our homelessness objectives?
- Based on our objectives, what will our milestones be?
- In order to achieve our objectives and milestones, who do we need to prioritize?
- How will we prioritize, identify/target, intake, assess and match priority populations with the right housing and support?
- What programs do we already have in our community?
    - o Who do they each serve?
    - o What is their eligibility criteria?
    - o What are their expected outcomes?
    - o How do we know if they are working?
- What are the standards service for each program type and our system as a whole?
- What will our community's approach to shared measurement and information sharing be?
- How can we gain visibility of the movement of people through the homeless-serving system?
- How will we coordinate the different programs in our system?
- How will we know where to best invest our limited dollars to achieve our community objectives?
- What will our process be to ensure our programs are working?
- How are we going to ensure safety for clients, workers and the community?

It is important to note that the Guide is particularly focused on managing performance of sub-projects within a Housing First context. In other words, there are likely areas that have a bearing on the general operation of the CE, however, the Guide aims to highlight how such processes can be adapted to a Housing First approach.

System Planning and Housing First

To understand performance management in a Housing First context, we need to contextualise it within the system planning perspective. System planning is a method of organizing and delivering services, housing, and programs that coordinate diverse resources to ensure efforts align with homelessness reduction goals.

System planning requires a way of thinking that recognizes the basic components of a particular system and understands how these relate to one another, as well as their basic function as part of the whole. Processes that ensure alignment across the system are integral to ensure components work together for maximum impact. A homeless-serving system contains a variety of local or regional service delivery components serving those who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness (Albanese, 2010; Austen, 2012; Burt, 2005; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2002).

Although Housing First is basically about rapidly rehousing individuals and supporting them to maintain housing stability, learnings from many Canadian communities as well as internationally suggest that the shift to Housing First is much more fundamental than introducing specific programs. It required a full restructuring of the local system's approach to homelessness, tying together the activities of diverse stakeholders towards the shared goal of reducing and preventing homelessness.

> System planning requires a way of thinking that recognizes the basic components of a particular system and understands how these relate to one another, as well as their basic function as part of the whole.

The CE in System Planning

To successfully implement Housing First using a system planning approach, successful CEs share a number of functions developed over time. However, small CEs may not necessarily achieve all of these functions initially.

Planning Lead:

- Leads the implementation of the Community Plan to reduce homelessness, including annual strategic reviews, updates, and business planning;
- Monitors and reports on progress of the Plan;
- Designs, implements, and coordinates the local homeless-serving system;
- Implements and operates the community's integrated information system.

Funder & Performance Manager:

- Manages diverse funding streams to meet community priorities and targets, compliance, monitoring, and reporting requirements to funders;
- Ensures comprehensive outcomes measurement, program monitoring and quality assurance processes are in place;
- Implements and supports the uptake of service standards for programs within the system.

Knowledge Leader & Innovator

- Implements Housing First and other innovative program adaptations to meet local needs leveraging existing and new resources;
- Ensures research supports the implementation of the Community Plan;
- Shares best practices at regional and national levels;
- Champions homelessness issues in the local community, provincially, and nationally;
- Consults and engages with diverse stakeholders to support plan implementation;
- Implements capacity building initiatives, including training and technical assistance across the homeless-serving sector.

A Step-by-Step Guide to System Planning

The context in which CEs operate to drive homelessness reductions across the homeless-serving system requires that performance management processes are aligned with, and fundamentally driven by system-level goals. To develop performance management processes, a community has to develop very clear structures and processes for the homeless-serving system. Without this, implementing a performance management framework will likely lead to confusion and ultimately complicate the system further.

STEP 1: DISCERNING THE HOMELESS-SERVING SYSTEM'S STRUCTURE

Creating order out of a range of programs and services in an existing community can seem like a daunting task, particularly in larger centres. However, without a clear and agreed-upon understanding of your local service delivery landscape, efforts to reduce homelessness risk being one-offs that may fail to fundamentally shift the community to Housing First.

The process of discerning your system's structure entails:

- identifying the various programs and services currently delivered for homeless and at risk groups;
- classifying these according to program types (transitional housing, emergency shelter, drop-in, health outreach, etc.);
- assessing current capacity (number of beds, number of clients served per year, etc.);
- identifying program funders and their expectations;
- analysing programs' funded (formal) role versus actual operational functioning (i.e. funded to provide transitional housing, but functions as long-term supportive housing in practice);
- identifying points of articulation between programs and public systems (i.e. hospital, jails, etc.);
- evaluating current data management processes and requirements.

The CE can play a key role in this process by leading the information gathering and analysis, and creating opportunities for dialogue between stakeholders on developing the system's structure. The Community Advisory Board (CAB) can significantly assist the CE in this process.

Going through this process also allows your community to gain clarity on program types using common definitions and clearly articulated relationships among components. By articulating the role of programs and how they work together (or where they fail to), your community can gain valuable insights into the dynamics of the local response to homelessness and where shifts can occur to meet common goals.

The CE can play a key role in this process by leading the information gathering and analysis, and creating opportunities for dialogue between stakeholders on developing the system's structure.

STEP 2: IDENTIFYING KEY PROGRAM COMPONENTS

While no perfect homeless-serving system exists, there are key components that we know to be essential in any system that can reduce homelessness. After assessing the current state of the local system, a community should consider the current system's capacity to reduce homelessness. You may note that your system has no Permanent Supportive Housing units for example, or lacks Affordable Housing. This analysis provides you with a sense of priorities moving forward. You can also consider analysing where most resources are currently allocated:

- Is most of the community's funding being invested in Emergency Shelters and Outreach programs?
- Could allocations shift towards Housing First programs to balance the investments towards permanent housing?

While Housing First programs are important to reducing homelessness, it is the reorientation of the entire service system towards Housing First as an approach that is essential. In this manner, Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing can have a critical part to play in a homeless-serving system based on the Housing First approach.

The following diagram presents some of the common program components of successful homeless-serving systems. ▶

RAPID REHOUSING

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

ASSERTIVE COMMUNITY TREATMENT

Program Components

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

EMERGENCY SHELTERS

OUTREACH

PREVENTION
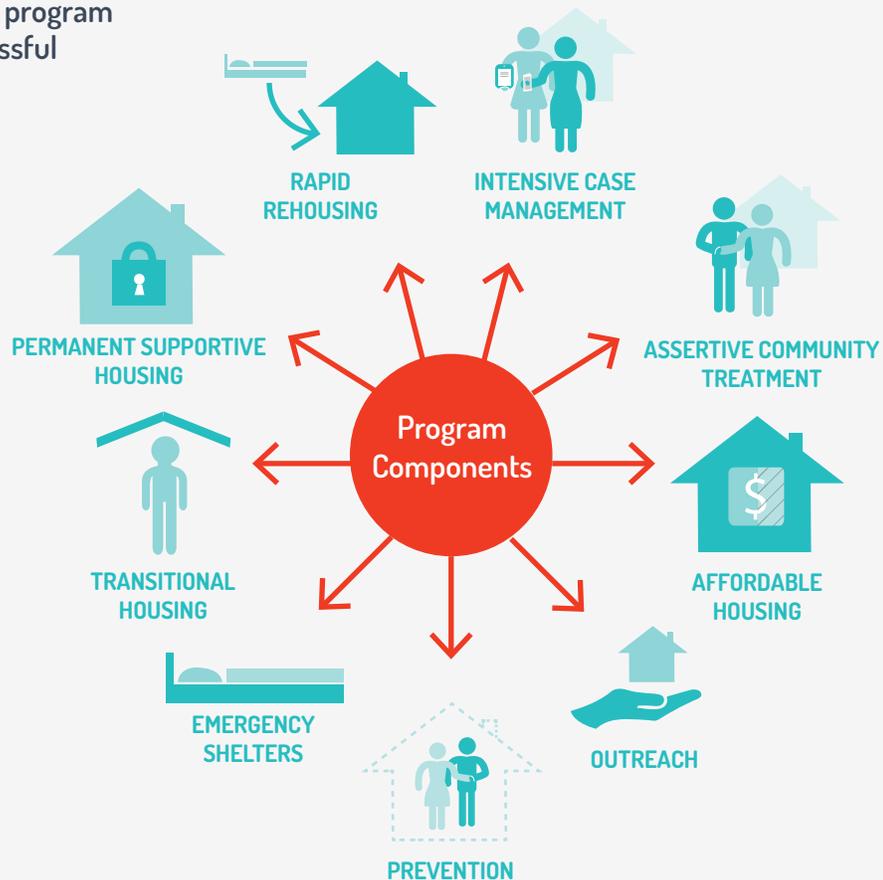
It is important to note that each of these program components plays a particular role in the homeless-serving system. It is the relationship between these interventions, articulated at the system-level that ultimately drives common community goals. Note that part of the work of the community to generate a common system structure is also to define the type of activities appropriately delivered by each program type, their target population, as well as eligibility and prioritization criteria for entry into the programs accounting for clients' level of acuity and homelessness history. Where possible, the length of stay and intensity of supports should also be defined, along with expected outputs and outcomes.

The list below provides general definitions of program components in existing homeless-serving systems. Part of the work of implementing a systems approach is for your community to categorize current programs along such agreed-upon definitions. Where gaps emerge, you can consider tackling them in investment allocation processes or even redesigning programs and facilities.

Emergency Shelters provide temporary accommodations and essential services for individuals experiencing homelessness. The length of stay should be short, ideally 7-10 days. Shelters provide essential services to the homeless and can play a key role in reducing homelessness as these services often focus efforts on engaging clients in the rehousing process.

Transitional Housing provides place-based time-limited support designed to move individuals to independent living or permanent housing. The length of stay is limited and typically less than two years, though it can be as short as a few weeks. Such facilities often support those with dealing with addictions, mental health and domestic violence that can benefit from more intensive supports for a length of time before moving to permanent housing.

It is important to note that considerable investment in transition housing has been made across Canada - though we know that without permanent housing, clients often cycle through such time-limited facilities. If your community has a considerable stock of such units, consider whether you can transition these to Permanent Supportive Housing.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) provides long-term housing and support to individuals who are homeless and experiencing complex mental health, addiction, and physical health barriers. The important feature of the program is its appropriate level of service for chronically homeless clients who may need support for an indeterminate length of time while striving to move the client to increasing independence. While support services are offered and made readily available, the programs do not require participation in these services to remain in the housing.

Rapid Rehousing provides targeted, time-limited financial assistance and support services for those experiencing homelessness in order to help them quickly exit emergency shelters and then retain housing. The program targets clients with lower acuity levels using case management and financial supports to assist with the cost of

housing. The length of support services is usually less than one year as it targets those who can live independently after receiving subsidies and support services.

Intensive Case Management (ICM) programs provide longer-term case management and housing support to moderate acuity homeless clients facing addictions and mental health. Programs are able to assist clients in scattered-site housing (market and non-market) through referrals to wrap-around services. ICM programs ultimately aim to move clients toward increasing self-sufficiency. Program participation and housing are not linked so that loss of one does not lead to loss of the other.

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) programs provide longer-term case management and housing support to very high acuity homeless clients facing addictions and mental health. Programs are able to assist clients in scattered-site housing (market and non-market) through direct services. ACT programs ultimately aim to move clients toward increasing self-sufficiency. Program participation and housing are not linked so that loss of one does not lead to loss of the other.

Affordable Housing is an appropriate intervention for low income households who cannot afford rents based on market prices. Tenants in affordable housing programs should spend no more than 30 percent of their gross income on shelter. As supports are limited, more complex clients will likely need additional services to maintain housing.

Outreach provides basic services and referrals to people who are sleeping rough and require more concentrated engagement into housing. Outreach aims to move those who are living outside into permanent housing by facilitating referrals into appropriate programs.

Prevention services provide assistance to individuals and families at imminent risk of becoming homeless. These services are for those who can live independently after receiving one-time services.

STEP 3: ESTABLISHING COMMON PROCESSES

While diverse services may exist in the homeless-serving system, it is essential to develop processes to effectively match client needs to the right service, at the right time so having a coordinated entry and assessment process in place that uses common acuity measures and prioritization processes to determine program match and eligibility is a key ingredient to a well-functioning system.

Program Matching

It is important to have a consistent process in place to match clients with appropriate programs. Acuity assessment tools, such as the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT), Calgary Acuity Scale, or Denver Acuity Scale can be used to understand the level of need in the homeless population.

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness is working on developing a set of tools specific for the Canadian context and is currently assessing available tools against best practices, in collaboration with research and clinical experts.

Assessment tools measure a variety of aspects (health, mental health, addictions, system interactions, etc.) and should be strategically assessed and selected to meet community needs as some modifications of these tools may be necessary. Whichever tool is chosen, it is important that it is used consistently across services to ensure a common understanding of need is in place and enable system-level assessments of program success and accurate matching of client needs. Using this information, a standardized assessment process can be applied to best match clients to interventions.

Lower Acuity

RAPID REHOUSING   AFFORDABLE HOUSING   PREVENTION

Moderate Acuity

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING   INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

Higher Acuity

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING   ASSERTIVE COMMUNITY TREATMENT
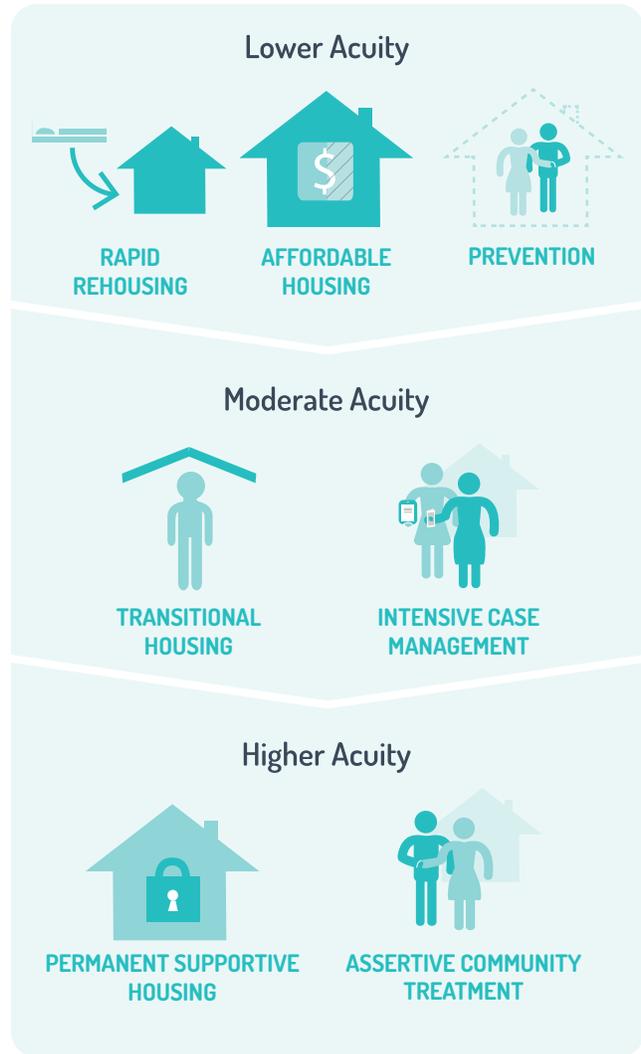
Placing someone with a lower acuity who needs a low level of support in a PSH program for example, will not only fail to serve the client's needs, but also take up valuable and limited program spaces away from someone who would benefit from them. Similarly, placing clients with complex needs that require long-term and intensive supports in a Rapid Rehousing program who exits them within 6-12 months, may create recidivism for the client back into homelessness. The figure below outlines the common program types that tend to match the needs of these sub-populations.

Despite this relationship between acuity and homelessness history, it is important to distinguish the two because this relationship cannot be taken for granted; for example, someone with a long history

of homelessness living in an emergency shelter may not score very high on an acuity assessment. This may be because they are accessing diverse support services while in shelter that are reducing their acuity in key areas (health, mental health, etc.). If we only target high acuity clients, we may miss the longest term shelter users. Thus, homelessness history and acuity must be accounted for in program matching and prioritization, rather solely focusing on one or the other.

Coordinated Access

Some communities, including Medicine Hat and Edmonton have taken these defined system alignment processes to another level by creating centralized access points into their Housing First programs. In Medicine Hat for example, clients seeking housing and supports are assessed using a common acuity assessment tool and then placed into appropriate programs from a central intake point. The aim of this initiative is to create a single entry point into Housing First programs that made entry and right-matching easier from a client and agency perspective. This also assists the CE to better understand demand for services as applications are centrally managed and analysed to deduce service demand trends and outcomes.

> The aim of this initiative is to create a single entry point into Housing First programs that made entry and right-matching easier from a client and agency perspective.

It is essential to note that in Canadian communities, such central access points remain partially developed and implemented. Multiple entry points into the homeless-serving system continue to exist even in Medicine Hat or Edmonton, as the current process is specifically tailored to managing access into Housing First programs only. A true central access point would incorporate all the components of the homeless-serving system (Emergency Shelter, Transitional and Affordable Housing, Outreach, etc).

As this is a very complex process to administer and implement, developing common acuity assessment and prioritization processes, as well as articulating eligibility and referral processes clearly across the homeless-serving system can go a long way towards reducing confusion for frontline staff and clients.

Even in small centers with limited programs, well-articulated system-level policies and processes can facilitate more appropriate client referrals and reduce frustration and duplication of services. Ultimately, ensuring clients have ready access to the right program at the right time leads to better outcomes for them and the system as a whole.

Target Populations, Eligibility and Prioritization Criteria

An important step in aligning the homeless-serving system is clarifying target populations, prioritization and eligibility criteria. The target population is the group of individuals for whom the program was intended and designed. A program's target population is distinct from its eligibility criteria.

Eligibility essentially restricts access to the resource according to specific criteria. Prioritization criteria outlines the factors taken into account to determine who gets access a resource *first*. These may be overlapping in practice, however should be clearly considered at the outset to ensure clarity for providers, the CE and clients. Note that acuity scores and homelessness history (as an example) can be used across eligibility and prioritization criteria.

Eligibility is often influenced by funding sources; for examples, HPS has defined chronic homelessness in a particular manner, so a program using HPS funds must ensure clients are screened to meet this requirement. The more specific and transparent eligibility is, the clearer stakeholders are about making appropriate referral, including self-referrals. Eligibility criteria can include or exclude particular groups from access to the service.

Acuity scores or time homeless can also be used as eligibility criteria at the program-level. It is important for eligibility and prioritization criteria to be aligned to system-level goals and target populations. Where misalignment occurs, it can result in programs working at cross purposes, leading to poor outcomes at the client and community levels.

The chart below provides an example to clarify target populations, eligibility, prioritization and acuity. ▼

Level	Target Population	Eligibility Criteria	Prioritization Criteria
Housing First System	Chronically or Episodically Homeless Individuals	Homeless for more the 180 cumulative nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation in the past year; or Currently homeless and have experience three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year	Longest total amount of time spent homeless
Specific Program	Chronically Homeless Families	• Must have been homeless (emergency shelter/rough sleeping) for a minimum of 12 months continuously. • Presence of dependent minors (under 18 years). • Meet income requirements (below LICO, etc.). • Score in high range of standardized acuity assessment.	Combination of: • Longest time homeless • Domestic violence involvement. • Highest acuity prioritized

System priorities should be aligned with funder and Community Plan goals. They can include addressing the needs of priority target populations, such as chronically homeless, rough sleepers, youth, etc. These are populations that the system as a whole is aiming to make an impact on. By contrast, a particular program may have a target population it intends to serve. The program's target population should be aligned to system priorities. For example, in Medicine Hat the system's priority target population is chronic and episodically homeless with the longest homelessness history. In light of this, the client with the longest time homeless has access to a program space first provided she or he also meets the program-level eligibility criteria, which could, for example, include acuity scores. Acuity is accounted for to match the client to a particular program type and ensure appropriate levels of supports are in place.

It is therefore important for CEs to establish and communicate clear system-level prioritization and eligibility criteria. Programs should then be encouraged to consider how their target population,

eligibility and prioritization criteria align with the larger system, particularly the community's Housing First approach.

Defining a consistent process for prioritizing access to HF programs is a critical step in implementing system planning.

STEP 4: MANAGING PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE QUALITY

A critical part of the work of the CE in system planning is measuring success and managing performance. To this end, agreed-upon indicators and targets at the system level and specific to program types, such as the fidelity self-assessment tool in the HPS community plans or a fidelity assessment tool from an assessment team, are needed. These indicators should reaffirm the targets set out in the Community Plan and at the national level.

The ongoing and systematic assessment of outcomes and outputs by CEs play an essential role in system planning and transitioning to Housing First; to this end, CEs must work closely and diligently with stakeholders to develop performance management processes that drive the ultimate objective of reducing homelessness.

Similarly, Quality Assurance standards for services are helpful to ensure best results. The CE should develop transparent service standards across the homeless-serving system and monitor these consistently. Quality Assurance not only covers areas like case management practice, but also issues of staff, client and community safety and the management of grievances and serious incidents.

Module 2 provides a detailed look at Performance Management, while Module 3 is focused on Quality Assurance.

> Quality Assurance not only covers areas like case management practice, but also issues of staff, client and community safety and the management of grievances and serious incidents.

STEP 5: ALIGNING DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT

An efficient information system is essential to implementing performance management processes and system planning. An integrated information system is a locally administered, electronic data collection system that stores longitudinal person-level information about those accessing the homeless-serving system. The shared information system aligns data collection, reporting, coordinated intake, assessment, referrals and service coordination in the homeless-serving system. Regardless of which software system is used (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System [HIFIS], another Homeless Management Information System [HMIS], etc.), implementing a common tool will create a more coordinated and effective housing and service delivery system and will act as the backbone of the homeless-serving system.

An integrated information system can assist communities to:

- Develop unduplicated counts of clients served at the local level;
- Analyze patterns of use of people entering and exiting the homeless-serving system; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of these systems.

These information systems are essential to the effective implementation of Community Plans to reduce homelessness. They are also important for government and other funders to track their investments and progress against objectives.

Rather than simply providing a means of tracking clients in a particular funded program, these information systems act like the nerve-center of a homeless-serving system. This can capture all the points of contact between a homeless person and the homeless-serving system. ▶

RAPID REHOUSING

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

COORDINATED ACCESS

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

EMERGENCY SHELTERS

PREVENTION

OUTREACH
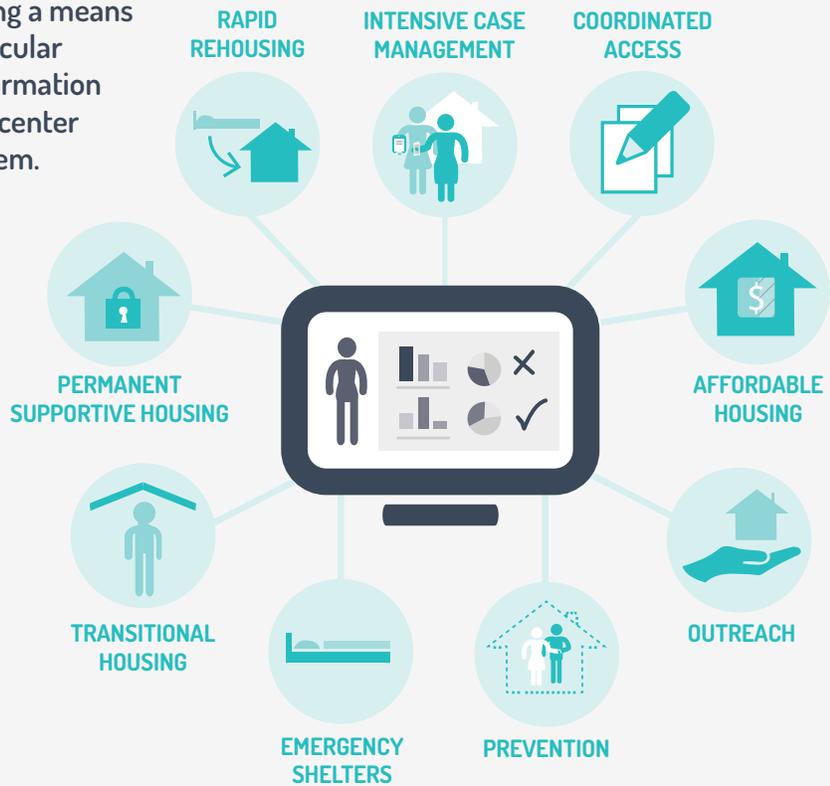
The learning from 20 years of US experience in over 300 US communities that implemented information systems is that they work when tailored to local needs. A comprehensive community engagement process is essential for local stakeholders to come together to determine collective needs and processes, and choose a software solution. Although implementing a single software solution is the ideal option, it may not be possible in all communities. However, there are steps all CE can take to improve data collection and management:

- Develop consistent definitions and data sets to ensure that all programs are collecting the same data using the same definitions (a good place to start would be the data required in the Community Plan)
- Develop and sign agreements to share data
- Develop tools and technology to allow the CE to gather data from the programs and combine it

One of the barriers noted to introducing such systems in the Canadian context is that of privacy legislation, particularly when multiple legislation is involved. Privacy may be a challenge, but it is not insurmountable. Learning from the experience of communities with operating systems, we can develop the necessary information sharing, storage and security measures that satisfy all applicable legislation.

Implementing an information system is integral to developing a homeless-serving system. The implementation process requires local stakeholders to collaborate. Implementation of an integrated information system should be a priority across all services, including emergency shelters.

STEP 6: INTEGRATING SYSTEMS

Once the structure and alignment of the homeless-serving system are defined, the points of intersection with other systems become clearer. One of the key roles of the CE is to work with stakeholders to integrate the homeless-serving system with key public systems and services, including justice, child intervention, health, and poverty reduction. ▶

JUSTICE

HEALTH

POVERTY REDUCTION

HOMELESS-SERVING SYSTEM

EDUCATION

INCOME ASSISTANCE

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Discharge Planning Committees, for example, work to ensure clients do not cycle in and out of public systems like jails and hospitals and homeless shelters by developing referral networks and programs specifically targeting those at imminent risk for discharge into homelessness.

CEs can also develop processes that integrate Housing First programs with public systems. For example, an ICM program focused on reducing discharging into homelessness of high acuity clients with long term homelessness and justice interaction histories can be introduced. The eligibility, prioritization and referral processes of the program would be fully aligned with the system planning approach.

Module 1 –

Review

This module provided an introduction to the basic tenets of system planning from the CE's perspective. It also discussed Housing First as program and philosophy, making the case for a shift in the role of the CE to manage this transition.

This module provided an introduction to the key steps to designing a homeless-serving system:

STEP 1: Discerning the homeless-serving system's structure

STEP 2: Identifying key program components

STEP 3: Establishing common system alignment processes, including consistent acuity assessment, program matching, coordinated intake processes, eligibility and prioritization criteria

STEP 4: Managing performance and service quality

STEP 5: Aligning data collection and management

STEP 6: Integrating the homeless-serving system and other public systems (justice, health, child intervention, etc.).

Considerations for Smaller CEs

For smaller CEs or those new to the role, full system planning implementation may be overwhelming. By breaking down the process into manageable pieces, you can begin to introduce system planning in the community.

Learnings from CEs in New Brunswick, Kelowna, Kamloops, Halifax and St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador who are beginning the work of transitioning to Housing First and system planning suggest the importance of:

- developing a **service map** of existing resources and documenting the populations served, their eligibility criteria and referral process; this can be published as a referral guide for clients and service providers to facilitate access to resources;
- reviewing available **acuity assessment** tools with service providers in your community and agreeing to pilot a common tool; review impacts and learnings over time;
- gathering key homeless service providers to examine current intake practices and pilot one organization **coordinating intake** for a number of programs; this can start small with two or three programs, and be scaled up;
- bringing funders and service providers together to review current data collection and management practices, including software systems and data sets in use; propose piloting a **common data** set using a common **information management system** in several organizations; expand the use of the system over time;
- discussing **service standards** across providers and documenting these; ask organizations to endorse the standards and develop training for new staff on these;
- bringing homeless-serving agencies together with key representatives of **public systems** (corrections, child welfare, health, education, etc.) to share information and practices on homelessness; propose developing coordination measures to prevent discharge into homelessness from these systems.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is the current understanding and buy-in for Housing First as a philosophy and program?
2. What implications would Housing First and system planning have on the existing network of services?
3. How do Housing First programs fit into your local homeless-serving system?
4. What would transitioning to Housing First and system planning mean for the CE? Consider your current role in community and shifts in internal capacity needed in particular.
5. How is funding currently managed in your community to serve homeless and at risk clients? What impacts would the coordination of funding have?
6. What organizational context (non-profit, municipal government, etc.) does the CE currently operate in and what impacts will this have on transitioning to Housing First?
7. How would you begin introducing coordinated intake and common assessment in your community?
8. How will Housing First programs ensure appropriate targeting of clients to meet community and HPS goals?
9. What are the challenges and opportunities of integrating the homeless-serving system with other public systems in your community?
10. How would you measure acuity across the homeless-serving system in your community?
11. What would it take to implement an integrated information system? How would you handle privacy, consent, and data sharing and storage issues?
12. What capacity would the CE require to lead system planning work?
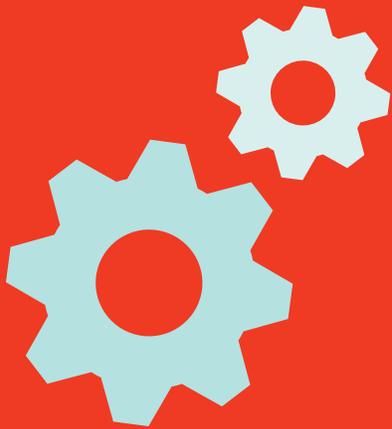
Module 2 -

Performance Management
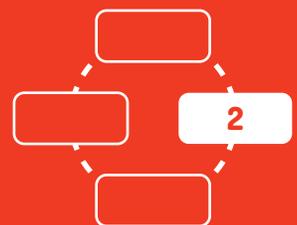
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

A systems-focused performance management process will help the CE:

- Evaluate system's impact on priority populations;
- Articulate what the system aims to achieve;
- Illustrate the level of performance expected of all services;
- Facilitate client participation in quality assurance activities at program and system-levels; and
- Promote service integration across sector and with mainstream systems.

Developing performance measurement processes requires that the CE identify performance indicators and targets, develop processes to measure and report on these and make efforts for continuous improvement in the system as result of the information gathered.

A particular focus in this module is also given to the CE's role in managing performance across funding streams, engaging diverse stakeholders, and leveraging integrated information management systems and Point-in-Time Homeless Counts.

Performance Indicators

To start, several key performance management terms should be highlighted, starting with outputs and outcomes.

Output	Outcome
What a program or system does or produces (Albanese, 2010) Examples: • Number of clients served • Stability/length of stay in program • Occupancy rate • Cost per client served	**What is gained or changed as a result of output related to client knowledge, skills, behaviors or conditions (Albanese, 2010)** Examples: • Housing situation at program exit • Return to homelessness • Income changes at program exit • Interaction with public systems • Self-sufficiency measures

Another distinction should also be made between program and system-level performance indicators.

- Program Performance Indicators vary depending on the target population, program purpose, services design, etc. They are useful for measuring program performance of individual programs and to compare performance across similar programs.

- System Performance Indicators reflect aggregate system performance and impact. They are used to measure achievement across the homeless-serving system towards high-level goals and can be used to compare various communities.

Program Performance Indicators	System Performance Indicators
• Focus on client measures of success. • Often differ depending on program type. • Tie directly to clients' progress in programs.	• Examine how the entire system addresses a particular measure of effectiveness. • Improve system planning and structure.

No one program can reduce homelessness on its own; an intentional systems approach is critical to ensure interventions are aligned and working towards broader community goals without unnecessary duplication or gaps.

This approach recognizes the interdependency of individual initiatives and aims to ensure communities are developing programmatic responses as part of broader system planning efforts, rather than one-offs.

Key Program and System–Level Performance Indicators

There are a number of indicators that CEs can use to monitor performance at the program and system-levels. The following list provides you with a starting point to this work. Note that it is the analysis of the relationships of these indicators *within* and *between* programs that renders the most insightful findings. No one indicator tells you the whole story, but they can provide a useful starting point to your analysis.

Occupancy is a measure that provides a numeric figure for the fill rate of program or facility. In the context of an emergency shelter, it would refer to the percent of beds occupied out of the total capacity of the shelter.

In Housing First programs, occupancy is calculated based in reference to the total case load capacity of a program. For example, if a Housing First program has 2 case managers that can work with a maximum of 20 clients, the capacity of the program is 40 clients. If the current case load is 20, the program would have an occupancy rate of 50%.

From a performance management perspective, low occupancy rates indicate the program is not being utilized to its maximum efficiency. A low occupancy rate may be desirable in an emergency shelter; over time, you could consider shifting resources if the shelter was consistently underutilized. In a Housing First program or affordable housing, low occupancy may indicate other issues at play hampering the capacity of the program to reach occupancy targets.
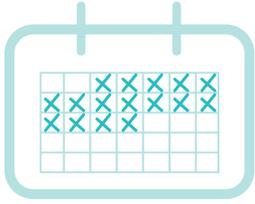
The length of stay measure refers to the time between program entry and exit of a client. Depending on program type, lengths of stay differ significantly. Rapid Rehousing programs have lower expected timeframes than Permanent Supportive Housing for example - thus, the measure cannot be applied uniformly across the system. Over time, you want length of stay in emergency shelters to decrease, while stabilizing in Housing First programs.

Where clients tend to exit a program with a longer expected length of stay fairly quickly, it may indicate program or system challenges. Case managers could be exiting clients before they are ready or the program may be taking on lower acuity clients that do not need as long an intervention. In either case, it merits a closer look. Lengthening time in shelters or other programs can similarly signal the need for further investigation.
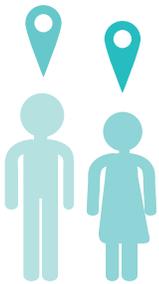
Destinations at Exit A system designed to move clients into permanent housing quickly must pay close attention to the destinations of clients at various points. Capturing information about the housing situation of clients when they exit any part of the system is critical to this end. Positive destinations, such as affordable housing or market housing, signal success at the program and system-levels. Alternatively, negative housing destinations (shelter/rough sleeping, jail, disappeared from program, etc.) can provide important information about program effectiveness as well as the broader macro-economic context it operates in. For example, decreasing destinations into market housing may be caused by shifting rental rates or landlord willingness to rent to Housing First clients.

It is particularly important to analyse this measure across program types in a tailored manner. For example, positive destinations at exit for a shelter can include a Housing First program though constant cycling of clients could signal the need for a closer look.

Return to Homelessness (Recidivism) While a certain number of clients will likely experience homelessness episodically, it is important to monitor the capacity of your system to reduce this over time. By measuring the rates of return to rough sleeping or emergency shelter (also known as recidivism) across program types, you can gain critical information about the ability of programs to stabilize clients in the long-term.

Ideally, no clients who access Housing First programs become homeless and continuous improvement activities in your system should strive towards this. High rates of return to homelessness can signal notable flaws in the program; if these are present across the system, they may indicate macro-economic issues impacting rehoused clients as well (rental shortages in market housing, for example), or poor system alignment processes resulting in inappropriate program matching or prioritization.

Rehousing Rate You may also consider introducing a measure to track the rate of rehousing within Housing First programs: in other words, how many times does a client relocate while enrolled in the program? This may tell you important information about the success of particular clients or programs, and may help you identify key service gaps, especially where high acuity clients consistently require high levels of rehousing in scattered-site programs.

In some communities, high rehousing rates in scattered-site ICM programs for key client sub-groups has led to the identification of the need for Permanent Supportive Housing targeting those with a high level and complexity of needs.

Income Measuring income at program entry and exit, as well as sources of income provides useful information about the program and system capacity to improve client's stability and quality of life. In some cases, income growth may not be possible if the client is on disability assistance - and income stability should be measured instead.

Over time, you should expect to see increases in income across programs, although expectations should be tailored on a program-by-program basis in light of the target populations served. For example, income gains in programs serving youth who attend school will not be as high as those in ICM programs where clients gain employment and access to social assistance.

Self–Sufficiency Over time, programs should demonstrate efforts towards increasing client self-sufficiency. This can include the number with part-time or full-time employment, education, or in job training program at intake/follow up. Programs should support clients to maintain housing stability independent of the service; thus, a sufficient support system should be in-place. Engagement in community, recreation and volunteering are also important indicators of self-sufficiency.

Measures that assess client connections to informal support networks or their access to necessary mainstream services (having a family doctor, participating in recreational activities, etc.) should be assessed on an ongoing basis and services adjusted according to client need. As clients recover, supports gradually decline but are re-initiated if a client becomes at risk of homelessness.

Acuity As discussed already, acuity scores can be measured at program entry and regular intervals to assess the impact of case management on various dimensions. Decreases in scores should be expected and shifts at the program-level should be monitored on a regular basis.

Interaction with Public Systems At program entry and exit, capturing information about the client's interaction with emergency services (EMS, hospitals, jail, etc.) can have tremendous value to understand the level of engagement public systems have with homeless populations. Similarly, they can help you gauge the relative cost of these system interactions. Over time, you can estimate the reduction in overall costs of homelessness as your community progresses with implementation of Housing First. This information can help you to document that supporting Housing First initiatives is significantly less expensive than emergency responses.

Data on the use of hospitals, Emergency Medical Service, Emergency Room, police interactions, jail and prison stays, etc. can provide a better picture of system interactions at various levels and can also point you in the right direction when it comes to prevention and discharge planning. You may find that many homeless in your community have high levels of interaction with the health system; in this case, collaborative planning to develop targeted housing initiatives with the health system may be a key strategy to reduce homelessness.

Key measures at regular intervals, at intake and exit can include:

- # times hospitalized
- # days spent hospitalized
- # times Emergency Medical Service was utilized
- # hospital Emergency Room visits

- # interactions with police
- # times in jail
- # days in jail
- # times in prison
- # days in prison

Program-Specific Particular programs may have a focus or specialization. For example, Transitional Housing programs may be tailored to reduce substance use, while some PSH programs may focus on community reintegration and building informal supports for formerly chronically homeless residents. Developing indicators to capture these program-specific foci can provide a more fulsome picture of your system. CEs are encouraged to work with programs to develop additional program-specific indicators and targets to capture their area of specialization and excellence.

Gathering and Analyzing Program and System Data

When speaking with programs about collecting data, it is important to clarify exactly what data they are expected to collect. Although the key indicators are identified above, analysis of the system will be incomplete without an understanding of systemic treatment of specific subgroups. Analysis can reveal populations that may not be served well in the current system and can lead to program and system-level improvements.
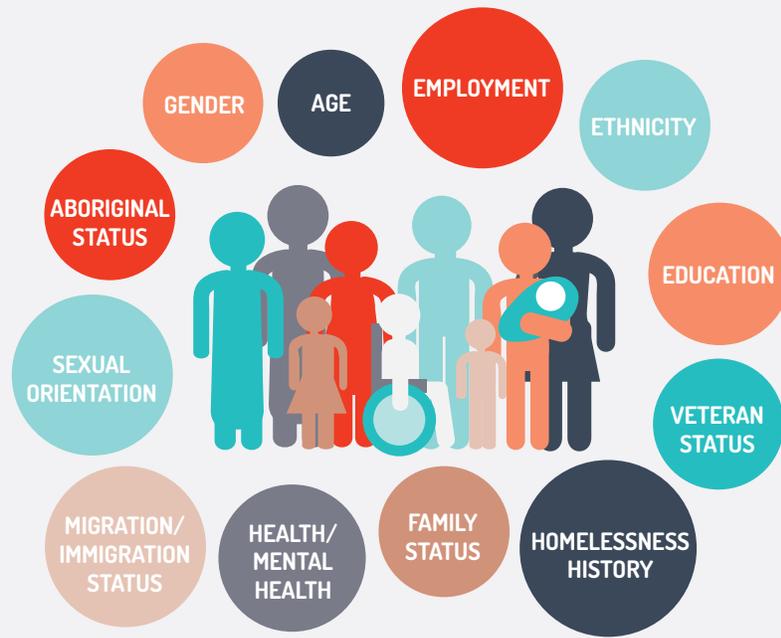
The data elements above are common elements that can be collected at the client level and used to analyse performance for particular groups, such as Aboriginal women in Emergency Shelter programs, or new migrants in ICM or PSH programs. Many programs already collect data on these elements, so it may simply be a matter of agreeing on common definitions (for example on age ranges) and on agreeing to share the information. ▲

Performance Targets

Performance targets at the program and system-levels are numeric goals or percentages set for a particular indicator. Program-level performance targets act as a point of reference from which programs can be evaluated against similar program types within the homeless-serving system and with best performers regionally or internationally.

Similarly, system-level performance targets can help you track progress against Community Plan goals, such as ending chronic homelessness or rough sleeping, decreasing emergency shelter beds, etc.

Setting program- and system-level targets:

- Allows for analysis of data collected at system and program-levels;
- Presents standards that can be applied or adapted as best practices;
- Can be used to pin-point trouble areas and resolve these systematically; and
- Generates system-level trends, while being tailored to program type.

System-Level Performance Targets

The following section outline targets that can help provide a basic outline of a community's progress towards reducing homelessness. Note that these are only part of a broader performance management process, which includes qualitative methods to augment data with client, staff and partner organization narratives, program monitoring, financial analysis, etc.

Progress towards the sample goals is indicated by the various measures outlined in the system indicators section of the table. Note that goals should be specific and measured with associated timelines.

Sample Target	Corresponding Performance Indicators
Overall homelessness is reduced by 60% by 2017-18.	Number of homeless. Indicate number in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and sleeping rough against emergency shelter and transitional housing capacity. Number of households housed. Break data down by chronic/episodic, singles, families, youth, Aboriginal people, Veterans, immigrants, women, etc. Number of permanent housing units and occupancy rates in community.
Chronically and episodically homeless numbers are reduced by 20% by 2017-18.	Number of chronically and episodically homeless housed. Percent of shelter/transitional housing users with multiple stays. Percent of housed chronically and episodically homeless who maintain housing at 6 and 12 months post-intake.
80% of Housing First clients are stabilized in permanent housing by 2016-17.	Percent of re-housed clients who remain in housing 1 year post intervention. Percent of those served by "Housing First" programs return to homelessness.
Usage of emergency shelters is reduced by 15% by 2017-18.	Average length of stay in emergency and family shelters. Number of days for clients to move from shelters into permanent housing. Number of emergency shelter and transitional beds in community.
90% of Housing First clients have improved self-sufficiency at program exit.	Change in clients employed and reduction is social assistance use, where appropriate. Average income increase from intake to 12 month follow up. Average acuity levels at program intake and exit.
Use of public systems is decreased by 25% among Housing First clients at program exit.	Interactions with police, days in jail, days hospitalised, EMS and ER usage at client intake and 12 month follow up. Estimate of dollars saved through intervention.
50% of homeless programs participate in integrated information system by 2017.	Percent of homeless agencies in community contributing data to HPS using an integrated information management system. Number of shelter beds on integrated information management system.

Program-Level Performance Targets

While the indicators outlined above can be gleaned through analysis of output information at the highest aggregate level, system effectiveness is also assessed through program performance monitoring.

Program Performance Indicators	Program Performance Targets Examples					
	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Affordable Housing	Housing First Programs	Prevention	Outreach
Occupancy	90%	95%	95%	95%	90%	95%
Length of Stay	21 days	90% clients complete program within timeframe (6mns, 24 mns, etc.	At any given reporting period, 85% of the people housed will still be permanently housed.	95% maintain housing for at least 6 months; at least 85% maintain housing for at least 12 months	85% of clients maintain housing for 1 year after intervention	N/A
Destinations at Exit	50% of those engaged with shelter service providers leave program to go to positive housing destinations	85% go to positive housing destinations	N/A	N/A *Homeless individuals are considered to have successfully exited the program when they demonstrate the ability to maintain stable housing and require less intensive supports and services, and as a result, leave an organization's Housing First client caseload.	85% of clients leaving program go to positive housing destinations	70% of clients engaged in program leave program to go to positive housing destinations
Return to Homeless-ness	Less than 20% of clients return to shelter/rough sleeping	Less than 10% of clients return to shelter/rough sleeping	Less than 10% of clients return to shelter/rough sleeping	Less than 5% of clients return to shelter/rough sleeping	N/A	N/A
Income	30% of those engaged with shelter service providers report an increase in income from employment and/ benefits	85% of clients leaving program report an increase in income from employment and/ benefits Where clients are unable to increase income, 95% maintain stable source of income	Program defined, if applicable	85% of clients leaving program report an increase in income from employment and/ benefits Where clients are unable to increase income, 95% maintain stable source of income	85% of clients have an increase in income at program exit	20% of those engaged with shelter service providers report an increase in income from employment and/ benefits
Interaction with Public Institutions	Program defined, if applicable	Program defined, if applicable	Program defined, if applicable	Intake and Exit comparison of: EMS interactions, Hospital days, days in jail/ prison etc.	Intake and Exit comparison of: EMS interactions, Hospital days, days in jail/ prison etc.	Program defined, if applicable

Because programs at different levels of the homeless-serving system target diverse subpopulations and consequently have special eligibility requirements, some measures of success should to be tailored depending on program type.

The following chart presents common performance indicators on a program type basis, and includes performance targets that can be used to benchmark performance across the homeless-serving system. Unlike the system measures identified above, program performance targets specifically focus on client level measures of success. Positive outcomes in the following areas when reported in the aggregate, contribute to the broad impact measures. Analysis should be broken down by program type, and benchmarks should be developed specific to these to facilitate comparisons across programs.

Examples of Self-Sufficiency Targets:

- 80% of clients have increased marketable skills or income within 1 year;
- 80% of participants will increase skills and educational qualifications within 1 year;
- 60% of client who increase their skills in education and/or training will secure part-time, full-time or volunteer work.

Analyzing Performance

Understanding the relationship between outputs and outcomes at the program and system-levels is key to analysing performance. It may seem trivial for CEs to measure occupancy rates in programs, for example, but this type of analysis tells us whether our system is being used effectively. The outputs of programs ultimately lead to positive outcomes for clients served at the individual program-levels, but also in aggregate at the system-level.

This is also why a defined structure for the homeless-serving system and its program components is important for performance management. It is difficult to measure program-level performance if you treat all your programs the same way: in reality they function in a distinct, yet interconnected manner.

For example, Rapid Rehousing programs target lower acuity homeless persons to move them into housing as quickly as possible, while Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs target long-term chronically homeless, with very complex conditions. PSH programs are much more intensive and clients can stay as long as they need the service, thus more costly. If we applied the idea that the per client cost should be the same for both programs, that would not only be unrealistic given their divergent service models and target population, it could result in considerable damage. If we drive costs down in PSH programs to Rapid Rehousing levels, the likely result that is that the program will be unable to handle the complex clients it is intended to serve, leading to poor outcomes, and ultimately program failure. However, having programs that fit under the same program type compared to one another (known as 'benchmarking') can be a very good exercise in determining what appropriate per client costs are, but also to gauge whether outcomes are being met across program types.

We need to think of the performance outcome and output indicators as just that: indicators. In and of themselves, these numeric markers tell you part of the story only. They are signs of what may be occurring on the ground, but by no means definitive.

For example, a low occupancy rate in an Emergency Shelter program compared to a similar rate in an Affordable Housing program can mean very different things. Firstly, from a systems perspective, you want Emergency Shelters to have lower occupancy as this is a signal you are making strides to reduce homelessness. At the same time, if you have low occupancy in Affordable Housing, you may need to consider why clients are not accessing the resource - assuming there is system-level demand for it. You may have an issue of poor targeting at hand, where the program is unclear or too stringent in its eligibility criteria, or there is a lack of information about the resource, etc. In other words, the low occupancy is an invitation for you to explore the drivers behind the numbers rather than take them as the full story.

Performance management is a way of analysing the program components of your system to make sense of what may be happening at the client level (micro) and relating it to the system's overall trajectory (macro), and vice–versa.

We also have to keep on top of environmental trends: economic performance of the region, migration, rental rates and vacancy, housing costs, etc. as these will constantly challenge a system's ability to meet its aims. Shifting performance at the program-level may in fact signal a macro-change in the context the initiative operates.

As an example, an Intensive Case Management program targeting families becomes over-whelmed with referrals and is now running over-capacity; client-level outcomes show that less families than previously are exiting the program to stable, permanent housing and more are showing up in the emergency shelter within a year of exiting the program.

The causes of this situation can be complex and mutually reinforcing: it is the CE's job to work with the program to understand what is at play. In this case, the region in which the program operated could be experiencing high housing costs due to economic growth, which spurred migration. The program could be attracting more families at risk who became vulnerable as result of the macro-economic changes impacting the housing market.

At the program-level, staff turnover, or poor training etc. could explain lower client-level outcomes; however, it is also important to examine whether the target population coming into the program has a higher acuity than previously, which could impact the capacity of the program to affect the same level of change. The additional client demand leading to the program running over-capacity could impact service quality.

It is the interaction of these various forces that help explain what is occurring at the program–level; this analysis is crucial to determine the course of action needed to get the program back on track. What the indicators did is point out that shifts are occurring that require further investigation, rather than being a fait accompli.

From a system perspective, we can look at the length of stay indicator as another example. Across three different emergency shelters, we see that clients' length of stay has been increasing consistently from 10 days to 15 days over the past 6 months.

This trend is telling us to take a closer look to understand what may be at play. Working with shelter data, staff, and users, the CE can analyse what may be driving this shift. It can involve a change in the operations of rehousing programs, which are now full and unable to assist new clients coming into the shelter system. This can drive the average length of stay up, as the 'backdoor' out of the shelter is unavailable. Other reasons can be a result of a shrinking rental market, which again impact the ability of clients to access market housing resulting in longer stays in shelter.

This example also highlights the interrelatedness of programs within the system; as one program fails to meet its intended outcomes, it impacts the rest. A Rapid Rehousing program that has inappropriate targeting in place for example, may be taking on clients that are too complex for their level of service and length of stay; this leads to high acuity clients being exited from the program too quickly, resulting in returns to homelessness. High rates of recidivism are red flags that point to the need to examine program design and make necessary adjustments to improve client outcomes.

> A Rapid Rehousing program that has inappropriate targeting in place for example, may be taking on clients that are too complex for their level of service and length of stay; this leads to high acuity clients being exited from the program too quickly, resulting in returns to homelessness.

A program may also provide too much support given client needs; program staff may be reluctant to 'let clients go' believing they are incapable of being independent and shape service delivery accordingly. This not only leads to system blockage as programs reach maximum caseloads, but they ultimately impact clients on two fronts: clients who remain homeless have no access to much needed resources, while clients on the caseload are unprepared for eventual graduation from the program which risks their long-term stability.

Working with Diverse Funders

As noted in Module 1, the CE necessarily works across diverse funding streams to coordinate resources for maximum impact to meet Community Plan objectives. This means that the CE may have to collect and report on measures that are beyond what is requested by a particular funder. The primary aim is to develop mechanisms that tell the coordinating body whether the community is reducing homelessness. As each community has unique resources and needs, it is critical that CEs work with partners to develop targets and indicators that match the local context and Community Plan priorities.

Through its renewed funding, HPS aims to ensure outcomes at the client, organization, and community level align towards national-level goals. HPS sets system targets that are monitored for and reported on at the national level; these are simple and measurable. For example:

- Reduce the number of shelter users who are chronically and episodically homeless by 20%
- Reduce the number of people sleeping rough by 20%

At the program-level, additional indicators are monitored, such as:

- 80% of Housing First clients who remain in housing at 6 and 12 months
- Less than 30% of Housing First clients who require rehousing
- Less than 15% of Housing First clients who return to homelessness

The CE's role is to ensure data is collected to measure progress towards these national-level goals by aligning outcomes at the client, organization, and community level.

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CE COORDINATED FUNDING
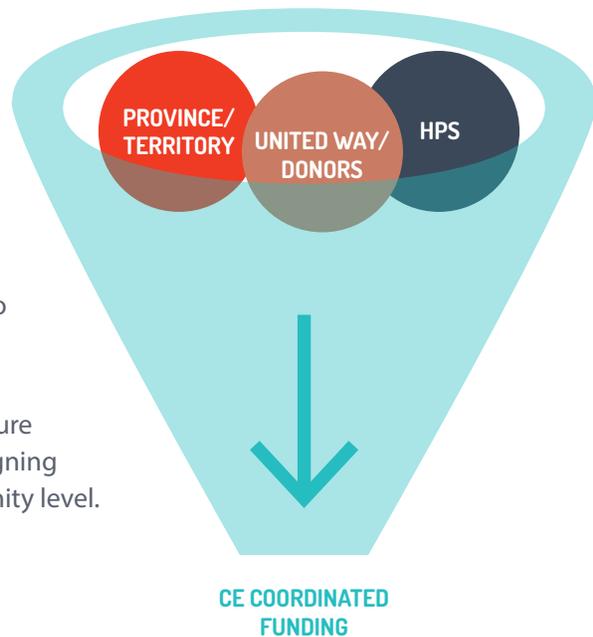
Engaging Key Stakeholders

It is critical that CEs use diverse sources of information to determine what is occurring in the system and not solely rely on program-level data. While essential to this process, such data is by no means infallible: programs may have poor data quality or they may be behind on data entry and reporting, thus the reliability of the information may be compromised. Further, it is important to examine numerical information against the day-to-day experiences of system stakeholders across all levels. A strong network of stakeholders engaged at the system-level can assist the CE in making sense of these trends. A System Planning Committee for example, can bring key program and public system stakeholders together to discuss these issues and determine corrective actions where possible. Your CAB may have or want this function already directly or through a sub-committee.

The other key source of information comes from your day-to-day CE functions: monitoring program activities through site visits and ongoing dialogue, financial reviews and budget analyses, as well as informal interactions with programs and other system stakeholders. All these sources of information, along with staying on top of new research and environmental scanning, combine to give you a comprehensive lens through which to understand the operations of the system and guide your decision-making in real time.

It is important that these conversations and analyses occur on an ongoing basis in your system: as shifts are constantly occurring, to manage responses, you need to be on top of changes and ready to respond. It also means your system has to be nimble and adapt quickly to changes. A sudden shift in demand for Housing First programs may require that you move funding to ramp up these programs by decreasing allocations from parts of the system that are underutilized.

This of course changes your relationship with funded programs: just because a program has "always done things this way," does not mean it should continue to. Your role is to move the system for the maximum benefit of clients and to drive community goals. Ideally, key stakeholders share this vision and work with you to achieve this, even if it means changes in funding for them towards the greater good. Agency leadership who is fully engaged in system planning with the CE understand that hard decisions need to be made, and support these to maximize positive impact for clients.

As the CE, being transparent about your role as system planner and funder, your process for making decisions, and working closely with stakeholders to ensure their views are included in the process will assist buy-in. Unfortunately, not all decisions will have a positive reception in community and part of the challenging role of the CE is to manage relationships in these contexts. Ultimately, being consistent, transparent, fair and motivated by the drive to serve clients and reduce homelessness will help you manage these tensions.

Leveraging Data

The CE can leverage data gathered to monitor outcomes and gauge whether funded programs meet the results attached to contracts. These outcomes would be aligned with the Community Plan, HPS and other funder priorities.

The CE can draw program-level data to develop dashboards or reports for each funded program on a monthly or quarterly basis to analyze performance indicators. These reports can be used to monitor CE progress and to inform system planning discussions with community partners.

Programs can be analyzed according to their program type (ICM, Permanent Supportive Housing, etc.) to identify trends. These can also be examined as a whole to assess system-level performance and emerging issues. Such analyses can identify indicators of program-level issues, leading to further analysis and investigation.

CE's can use these reports to monitor compliance with contracts, particularly if these include performance targets. Where a program is not on track, CEs can investigate what may be occurring on the ground and take remediation action as appropriate.

This program-level data can also be analyzed as part of CE's strategy development and business planning process. CEs can use the data during contract negotiation processes and make amendments as appropriate. This analysis can also lead to system adjustments to better meet community needs and support funding decisions and priority setting for the coming investment planning cycle.

Data quality cannot be underestimated regardless of the data collection system in use. Without measures to assess and address data quality issues, the reliability of the information gathered is compromised, as is the CE's capacity to monitor contracts and manage the homeless-serving system.

> Data quality cannot be underestimated regardless of the data collection system in use.

To address data quality, the CE can:

- pull client-level records to ensure accuracy and completeness;
- review client files during site reviews (a 10% sample is recommended);
- review of data submitted by programs and require necessary corrections;
- provide training on data accuracy and validity and reporting expectations;
- make CE staff available to provide constant data quality support to funded programs.

Homeless Counts in Performance Management

Point-in-time homeless counts provide a snapshot of sheltered and unsheltered homeless people in a community on a single day/night. They do not capture the hidden homeless or those at risk. Because of these limitations, such counting efforts can underestimate the number of homeless individuals in a community.

As a snapshot, such counts do not provide information on system use throughout the year, which is why integrated information management systems are important. Nevertheless, there is a strong relationship between point-in-time counts and CE's performance management role at the system-level.

The count can be a valuable tool for system planning particularly in the absence of an information management system. The count may be the only systematic source of data the CE has to help in strategic planning, review trends and progress. This information can shape system design or help identify key policy changes.

> The count may be the only systematic source of data the CE has to help in strategic planning, review trends and progress. This information can shape system design or help identify key policy changes.

Consider using the data generated through a homeless count to shed light on some pointed questions, including:

- What is the relationship between the number of homeless enumerated and the Core Housing Need rate in your community?
- What does the occupancy rate of emergency shelters on the night of the count tell you about the homeless population's needs?
- What explains some of the differences in characteristics between the homeless enumerated in emergency shelters and those sleeping rough?
- Why are certain sub-groups overrepresented in the count?
- What would it take to rehouse every person we enumerated?
- How can we leverage the attention the count brought to the homeless issue?
- Why are there rough sleepers when there are shelter spaces available?
- How do macro-economic trends impacting my community play out with respect to homelessness?

Module 2 –

Review

This Module 2 discussed the key tenets of performance management in a Housing First context and introduces the concepts of performance indicators and targets to enable program and system-level analysis. The CE's role in managing performance across funding streams, engaging stakeholders and leveraging integrated information systems and point-in-time homeless counts in performance management was also discussed.

Considerations for Smaller CEs

Smaller CEs in Alberta, like Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, use real-time information from their common database to track progress and adjust their approach. This has resulted in the development of common performance indicators across funded programs and benchmarks to analyse progress.

However, it may be overwhelming for some CEs to consider rolling out performance management processes in the absence of an integrated information system. There are ways to start the process however.

The cities of Hamilton and Ottawa, as well as the United Way of York Region have developed performance management systems which rely on data provided by sub-projects in Excel sheets to track results (see Resources section). These are monitored on an ongoing basis to determine corrective actions and investment decisions. In St. John's, HIFIS data from shelters is used in combination with program-level reporting to assess progress.

Based on the experience of these smaller CEs, you can consider:

- bringing community stakeholders together to present funder (including HPS) **performance targets** and discuss these in relation to your overall homelessness objectives;
- assessing the **data collection needs** shared across the stakeholders in order to demonstrate performance; use a **homeless count** to assess community progress as part of this process but also consider **leveraging existing data sources** - such as HIFIS - already in place;

- working to develop a **common set of performance indicators** and means of collecting these to meet the needs of the community as a whole, individual service providers, the CE and diverse funders - you can use the indicators provided in this Guide as a starting point;
- **pilot data collection on common performance measures** with several providers and develop reports to community based on their results; this can be expanded across the providers in time and used to track system and program-level changes, benchmark individual programs and the community overall progress.

Reflection Questions:

1. What would the implications of standardized performance management processes be for the network of services?
2. What capacity would the CE need to undertake performance management across funding streams?
3. What are some of the challenges the CE may face in introducing performance management with funded programs?
4. What is the state of data collection and analysis in your community? How is it used in performance management currently?
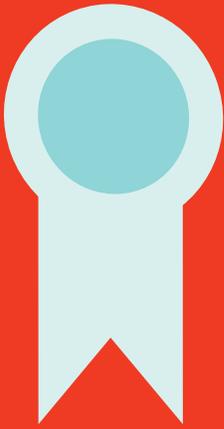
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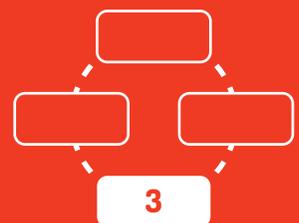
QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality Assurance links the numerical aspects of performance management already discussed to complementary qualitative processes in a feedback loop of continuous improvement.

CEs already undertake significant Quality Assurance activities to manage HPS funds; however, the administrative and procedural activities required to transition to Housing First should be tailored to align with system planning and performance management goals.

The CE can assess how funded programs fare from a Quality Assurance perspective through several strategies:

- Developing, monitoring and supporting common service standards across the homeless-serving system;
- Direct monitoring and remediation of service standards, financial, outcome and contract compliance information;
- Introducing and supporting risk management measures, particularly relating to safety and resolving grievances.

Note that financial monitoring will be discussed in Module 4 - Funding Allocation.

Service Standards

Service Standards articulate formalized expectations of services. In developing standards at the system and program-levels based on best practices, research and consultation, the CE can clarify expectations regarding quality of care and contractual obligations. Service standards can be developed at program and system-levels to assess quality across the homeless-serving system. Clients, funders, and service providers can hold each other accountable to agreed-upon quality expecations to ensure best possible client outcomes. Capacity building and technical assistance will be required to support programs in meeting set service standards, which are reinforced through monitoring and remediation processes.

Benefits of Common Service Standards

- Provide assurance for client, community, funders, that agencies services are meeting/exceeding expectations;
- Ensure alignment with local Plan, Housing First, HPS targets;
- Empower clients through participation in performance management at program and system-level;
- Promotes service integration across sector and with mainstream systems; and
- Reveal program gaps and priorities for investment.

Program Standards

There are various categories of standards that the CE can monitor with funded programs and can implement in its monitoring, as discussed below.

Strategic Alignment

Programs demonstrate:

- alignment with the broader homeless-serving system;
- strategic fit with the Community Plan and HPS goals;
- clearly articulated eligibility criteria appropriate for program type and target population;
- clear and consistent process of screening and intake of clients to ensure appropriate fit in the program;
- appropriate prioritization process for clients to access the program;
- well-articulated referral network into the program, and from the program.

Compliance

Programs demonstrate:

- grievance processes are in place for clients and communicated to them;
- serious incidents review processes are in place and appropriately reported to the CE;
- program is being operated in compliance with government privacy and information security requirements;
- reporting and evaluation activities meet contractual requirements and used in ongoing quality assurance efforts;
- appropriate staffing levels and qualifications are in place to operate the program effectively;
- training and capacity building activities are in place to support improved client outcomes.

Service Design

Programs demonstrate:

- operations align with principles of Housing First;
- activities contribute to the goal of permanent housing and are appropriate for the program type and target population;
- program is serving target population it was designed for;
- length of time and service intensity are appropriate for the target population and program type;
- clear and consistent graduation criteria are in place to move clients to self-sufficiency, while ensuring they are supported to reduce returns into homelessness.

For programs that deliver case management or housing placement services, monitoring should also assess additional areas.

Case Management

- acuity changes over time using an evidence-based tool demonstrating increasing stability;
- client visits of appropriate frequency;
- appropriate staff to client ratios;
- crisis plans are in place;
- discharge plan with aftercare and follow-up assessments.

Housing Placement

- placement process aligned with principles of Housing First (client choice, housing permanency) in scattered site or place-based housing;
- placements in housing that is affordable for client incomes;
- housing meets relevant safety and habitability standards;
- transparent and fair process to determine financial subsidies for clients (rent, utility supports);
- appropriate leases, third party agreements, insurance, etc. are in place;
- process to resolve tenancy issues (arrears, safety, landlord/neighbour disputes) is articulated.

System Standards

Service standards can be developed to gauge quality at the system, organization, and program-levels. These can be further tailored to program types (i.e. Outreach, Permanent Supportive Housing) or shared activities (i.e. case management).

Level	Intended Improvement Areas	Examples
System	Integrated approach to service delivery	How the programs work as part of a coordinated homeless-serving system?
	Integration with mainstream systems	How does the program ensure clients have access to mainstream services?
	Strategic alignment with Community Plan	What priority area of the Community Plan does the program align with?
	Advocacy and public education and awareness	What role does the program have in advancing awareness about homelessness?
Organization	Governance	To what extent has the program been providing the level of service delivery as stated in the HPS funding agreement?
	Financial management	What monitoring processes does the agency have to ensure programs meet funder requirements with respect to use of funds?

Level	Intended Improvement Areas	Examples
Organization	Privacy and Security	What efforts does the service provider make to ensure policies and practice align with applicable privacy legislation?
	Human Resource Management	How does the agency ensure appropriate staffing levels and qualifications are in place at the program-level?
	Ethics and Rights	What code of ethics does the agency have and how is this enacted in practice?
	Health and Safety	What safeguards are there to ensure client, staff and organizational safety?
	Evaluation	What processes are there in place to ensure continuous improvement in the organization?
	Training	How does the agency support and encourage professional development with staff?
	Administrative and Management	How does the agency mitigate risk relating to conflict of interest?
Program	Consent	How is client consent obtained? Does the process align with privacy standards under which the program falls?
	Information management	How does the program ensure clients are aware of the use of information provided?
	Privacy	How are privacy breeches handled?
	Training	How are new employees on-boarded? What processes are in place to ensure training meets staff needs on an ongoing basis?
	Cultural Competency	How does the program ensure services are culturally sensitive to meet the needs of Aboriginal people, Veterans, immigrants, LGBTQ?
	Case Management	What case manager to client ratios does the program have? How is acuity assessed and what role does it have in developing case plans?
	Housing First	How are services aligned to the principles of Housing First?
	Program Design	How does the program prioritize access for clients?
	Safety	What measures does the program take to manage risks of clients exhibiting high risk behaviours?
	Program Exit	What criteria does the program use to graduate clients?
	Client Engagement	How are clients involved in case plans? What means does the program use to measure client satisfaction?
	Housing Placement	How are rent subsidies allocated? What processes are used to place clients in affordable and appropriate housing?

Level	Intended Improvement Areas	Examples
Program	Performance	How is the program faring with respect to CE target outputs and outcomes (i.e. housing stability, occupancy, public system interactions)? What processes does the program use to measure performance and how does this information feed into continuous improvement cycles?
Program-specific	Some standards are specific to certain program types only.	Permanent Supportive Housing, Affordable Housing, Emergency Shelter, and Transitional Housing Program facilities meet habitability standards and good neighbour agreements are in place. Scattered-site Housing First programs monitor that clients are not paying more than 30% of income on rent.

Program Monitoring

Program monitoring is an ongoing process focused on continuous improvement through technical assistance and capacity building. The CE should have a formalized process in place to monitor funded programs in the areas of:

- client outcomes,
- service service standards, and
- financial management.

Similarly, investigations of serious incidents and grievances, remediation and technical assistance should be undertaken on an ongoing basis. This requires that the CE has clarity on program design and expectations, reflected in contracts and monitoring tools with funded programs.

CE monitoring can include monthly, quarterly or annual site visits, staff interviews, reporting and data analysis, sample case file reviews, client interviews, observations and document reviews (policies, organization chart, staff job descriptions).

Site visits give the CE and program staff the oppotunity to have open conversations about what works well, and areas for improvement in the program and across the system. Formal reviews are a means for the CE to engage program staff in the ongoing continuous improvement process that becomes the basis of strategy development and a means to gauge homelessness trends and progress in the community. CE program monitoring can also support the Mid-Year Dialogue process that Service Canada engages in annually with CEs.

CEs should at a minimum develop and implement a formal program review annually to address key areas including:

- Service model effectiveness & program implementation;
- Community Plan alignment and impact;
- Privacy and information management;
- Financials (check expense claims, bank statements, and program/agency financial policies and procedures, adherence to eligible cost guidelines, etc.);
- Reporting and data collection system implementation;
- Agency and program capacity (staff turnover, training needs); and
- Continuous improvement efforts.

CE monitoring can include interviews with staff and clients, and reviews of key documentation:

- client case files;
- assessment tools;
- program policies and procedures;
- evaluation plans, measurement tools and reports;
- staff job descriptions and organizational charts;
- budgets;
- program-level outcomes reporting.

The CE can develop reports summarising the findings of program reviews and provide these to programs. Reports can cover areas of improvement, excellence, and general feedback based on reviews. In some instances, the report can outline major issues that require immediate remediation and can be part of the CE conditions for contract renewal.

Note that financial monitoring will be discussed in Module 4 - Funding Allocation.

Monitoring and Remediation

Monitoring should be tailored according to the needs of the agency or program. For example, when establishing a new initiative, the City of Ottawa provides more "hands on" assistance upfront, and scales it back as the program is up an running with positive results. Similalry, if a program runs into issues, the CE may scale up its monitoring and site visits to address emerging issues. The Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia provides similar support to their funded programs, working from a capacity building standpoint to support practice improvement.

In fact, the City of Ottawa has developed a standardised assessment (see Resources list) to determine the level of monitoring and remediation action required for funded programs. Depending on a program's score across a number of risk registers, the CE taylors the intensity of its monitoring and remediation actions.

Common issues facing many Housing First programs relate to basic aspects of program design that service standards aim to address. The role of the CE is to assist the program to recognize these issues and address them in real-time, where feasible.

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Common issues facing many Housing First programs relate to basic aspects of program design that service standards aim to address. The role of the CE is to assist the program to recognize these issues and address them in real-time, where feasible.

When considering a program's performance, meeting housing targets cannot be considered in isolation from a consistent pattern of poor financial management: both aspects play into comprehensive analysis on the CE's part.

Some signs that a program may be experiencing challenges include:

- Consistent complaints from clients, landlords, partner agencies, other funders.
- Staff turnover, particularly across all organizational levels.
- Poor or no reporting on outcomes and outputs.
- Serious incidents: client deaths, fires, privacy breaches.
- Financial management concerns and inconsistencies.
- High rates of recidivism.
- Low occupancy despite high demand for the service.

Some of the most common causes of poor program performance relating to service quality include:

- Program intensity-client acuity mismatch.
- Poorly defined eligibilty and prioritization criteria.
- Unclear referral processes.
- Lack of clarity of program's role in the homeless-serving system.
- Undefined program rules.
- Lack of communication with partners.
- No consistent data collection and analysis.
- Partial Housing First adoption.
- Poor documentation practices.
- Limited or no client engagement and feedback.
- Insufficient resources to meet targets (alternatively, program may be over-resourced).
- Lack of risk mitigation measures.
- Training and skill development needs.
- Organizational design issues.
- Environmental trends and impacts unaccounted for.

Before making any decision, the CE should leverage the rapport built with the program to commence an investigation. An escalation process should be developed to assess the issue at hand and enable fair assessment and treatment across programs. This requires that the CE develop a tracking mechanism around common performance concerns and analyse this on a regular basis to gauge patterns and determine thresholds that require immediate action.

> When considering a program's performance, meeting housing targets cannot be considered in isolation from a consistent pattern of poor financial management: both aspects play into comprehensive analysis on the CE's part.

In serious incidences, such as those involving domestic violence or client death, the response from the CE must be decisive. These issues should be documented and tracked as part of the CE's due diligence.

Client Input

Client input should be incorporated in Quality Assurance processes wherever possible and appropriate. The CE can establish a Client Advisory Group to discuss elements of system planning, investment priorities to address service gaps, monitor trends and gain input on program performance and service quality.

The CE can also encourage and even require that funded programs develop processes to gauge client satisfaction, or hire external assessors to evaluate this. CE staff can undertake client interviews independently or use surveys across funded programs to assess their perspectives.

The City of Hamilton has shared the Terms of Reference from a client advisory group for a funded Housing First program - see Resources list at the end of this Module for this tool. The Calgary Homeless Foundation has also provided a sample of their Client Survey.

Risk Management

The shift to Housing First and prioritizing chronic and episodically homeless clients presents a different level of risk for CEs, funded programs, government, as well as clients. Ensuring client and staff safety is a paramount concern across stakeholders. For the CE, ongoing monitoring, investigation, remediation, and analysis processes must be in place to address these challenges.

Although CEs face a number of risks in the transition to Housing First, mitigation strategies can be developed to address these.

Risks	Mitigation Strategies
Inappropriate strategy leading to failure to meet targets	• Annual strategic review process leads to ongoing adjustment of approach for best impact • Implementation of Homelessness Management Information System to assess performance and gather information in real-time
Poor agency performance	• Program monitoring and quality assurance (service standards, safety guidelines) • Remediation with programs • Performance management process • Comprehensive training program for service providers • Homelessness Management Information System to identify performance issues
Client or staff serious incidents	• Incident review and investigation process • Safety guidelines and standards of practice • Quality assurance and monitoring process • Program design to address client and staff safety risks
Inadequate financial management	• Financial monitoring process, including eligible costs guidelines • Audit requirements • Cost benchmarking

The City of Ottawa has a risk management tool which is used to determine the level of monitoring and remediation action required for funded programs. Depending on a program's score across a number of risk registers, the CE taylors the intensity of its monitoring and remediation actions (also available in the Resources section of this Module).

The City of Ottawa assesses funded agencies in the following areas to determine remediation and monitoring actions:

- Number of years the service provider has been in existence
- Annual amount contracted
- Percentage of agency budget provided by CE
- Number of prior contracts the agency has had from the CE
- Number of previous contracts with this agency that were partially or completely terminated
- Formal partnership between agencies involved in contract
- Agency issues with meeting the contract requirements, eg.: late or incomplete deliverables, difficulties in communicating, resistance to compliance
- Past service targets have been met
- Agency integration into homelessness services community
- Demonstrated capacity to successfully resolve issues
- Financial record-keeping meets the requirements
- Operational and program capacity to provide program effectively
- Financial stability based on audit
- Agency governance effectiveness
- Number of complaints against the agency

A Note on Safety

The CE can provide valuable guidance to funded programs with respect to safety planning and can undertake monitoring to support its adoption in practice. While this may not be an immediate issue for communities, over time, as more Housing First clients become placed in scattered-site housing, the scale and intensity of safety issues may also increase.

Module 3 –

Review

This discussed key aspects of Quality Assurance in a Housing First context. We focused on the development and implementation of service standards articulating quality expectations across the homeless-serving, program monitoring and remediation processs. Risk management in a Housing First context was discussed with a focus on CE safety and incident response planning.

Considerations for Smaller CEs

Learnings from CEs in New Brunswick, Lethbridge, Kelowna, Kamloops, Halifax, Medicine Hat and St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador suggest several considerations for smaller CEs with respect to quality assurance.

- develop a **consultation process** with providers and clients to discuss service standards and their potential benefit;

- work with stakeholders to **identify program and system-level standards** and document these; you can start with the standards proposed in this Guide and modify them through community consultations;

- ask organizations and other funders to **endorse the standards** and incorporate adherence to the standards in your **contracts** with providers;

- develop **monitoring tools** to assess funded programs' adherence to service standards and undertake a **formal site** visit at minimum annually to assess compliance to standards and overall contract and report results to the providers;

- develop and provide **training** on key aspects of the service standards for providers;

- **review standards and monitoring processes** on an ongoing basis in consultation with clients and providers, aiming for continuous improvement;

- bring **clients** together on an ongoing basis to provide feedback on service quality, system functioning, and emerging trends as part of a formalized **advisory group**;

- **review CE risk management practices** and consider introducing formal protocols on handling **serious incidents and safety issues** based on the practices outlined in this Guide; communicate these expectations to funded programs and provide training.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is the capacity of providers to adhere to Housing First service standards and how will the CE support this capacity?

2. Would current monitoring processes align with the requirements of Housing First programs?

3. How would a program that does not meet performance targets be handled by the CE?

4. Would internal CE reorganization be needed to facilitate Housing First transformation with respect to quality assurance?

5. What are some of the risk mitigation measures your community has in place or can introduce in short order to address safety issues associated with Housing First programs?

6. How would the CE integrate client input across its quality assurance processes?
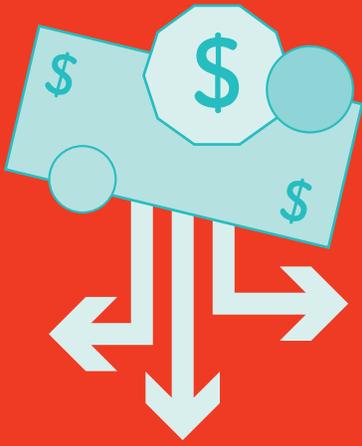
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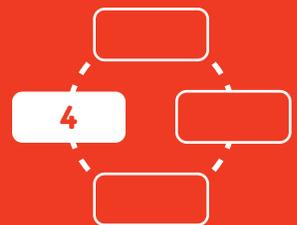
FUNDING ALLOCATION

The CE has a contractual obligation to effectively manage HPS and any other funding it may be responsible for. This could include provincial sources from multiple departments (health, justice, housing, social development, etc.), other federal sources or community groups like the United Way or Community Foundations, as well as private donors.

To this end, this module will discuss comprehensive financial monitoring as a powerful tool for performance management that ties together CE investment practices to broader system planning and quality assurance processes.

We then present CE practices regarding competitive funding allocation processes, via Requests for Proposals or Calls for Applications, etc. and contract renewals. These funding allocation practices should align with and reinforce performance management and quality assurance in annual cycles that incorporate funding allocation into strategic review and business planning processes.

Financial Monitoring

Financial monitoring may seem to be a solely administrative activity at first glance. Examining budgets and monthly expenditures against allowable costs is certainly an essential part of the CE's role. However, financial monitoring can be a powerful tool that can be leveraged in the CE's performance management and system planning work.

By linking financial information to its overall performance management processes, the CE can use program-level trends to analyse emerging program and system-level performance issues.

> By linking financial information to its overall performance management processes, the CE can use program–level trends to analyse emerging program and system–level performance issues.

The CE's financial monitoring process should minimally include ongoing, monthly analysis of financial reports to ensure adherence to approved budgets and eligible cost guidelines that align to funder requirements.

This ongoing financial monitoring can include:

- CE staff collecting and revieweing required financial reports on budget variances, material changes, and adherence to eligible costs guidelines;
- Remediation for any forecasted deficits or material changes; and
- Cost-per-client and service item analysis to benchmark costs.

Eligible Costs Guidelines

Well-developed eligible costs guidelines can help clarify the financial standards against which programs are monitored on a go-forward basis. As a funder, the CE should be specific in a detailed

and clearly communicated document outlining its eligible costs guidelines for funded programs. These guidelines must meet HPS and other funder requirements while providing additional guidance on the use of funds.

Eligible costs guidelines should be included in Calls for Proposals and contract packages to ensure programs are fully aware of CE expectations. In Medicine Hat, staff go through the eligible costs guidelines line by line to ensure funding recipients understand the terms of the agreement and the expectations of the CE. Edmonton's Homeward Trust is similarly prescriptive in its funding program staff positions and team makeup.

> Eligible costs guidelines should be included in Calls for Proposals and contract packages to ensure programs are fully aware of CE expectations.

Common cost categories found in Housing First programs include:

1. **Start-up Costs:** The initial costs incurred to set up a new program or an expansion of current services. These expenses are one-time cost at project inception and should not occur on a monthly basis.

2. **Staff Costs:** The salaries and wages, MERCs and staff development costs for staff directly involved in project activities. For most Housing First projects, staff positions are often limited to Case Manager, Housing Locator, and Team Leader/ Program Manager. Staff who are part of the "head office" or "administrative office" for the agency should be covered under Administrative Costs.

3. **Client Costs:** The costs incurred in supporting clients often include monthly rental subsidies, damage deposits, client travel, staff travel for client purposes, moving and set-up costs, and utilities subsidies.

4. **Administrative Costs:** The expenses related to administering a program occur at an agency-wide level. These can include staff benefits, staff communications, rent/mortgage, insurance, utilities, licenses/permits, banking, IT/communications, equipment, office supplies, contractors and organisational infrastructure. The CE should consider setting a limit on the administrative costs based on the program's staff and client costs. For example, administrative costs are limited to 10 to 15% of the program budget.

Benchmarking Costs

Over time, the CE can develop a database of information useful to analyze costs within the allowable costs categories. This type of per-item analysis and benchmarking can inform CE negotiations during contract renewal or funding processes, as well as ongoing monitoring.

For example, you may notice that rent subsidy costs are increasing significantly in one particular program, which can prompt further investigation. Or you may notice that programs are consistently coming in under projected budgets; this may lead to renegotiation and funding adjustments to allow the use of unspent funds in other areas.

By monitoring financial trends on a per program type and system-level, you can distinguish emerging issues. High turnover in a program may be signalled by underspent staff costs, for example. Client

damage cost overruns may be a red flag for poor service quality in a program. Just like output and outcome indicators, financial information can be used to enhance performance management.

The CE can also develop cost-per-client information based on benchmarking across funded programs and against other communities. Engaging other CEs in discussions about their program-level costs can provide valuable information on how funded programs compare. Of course, there will be a divergence across regions, yet costs should still come within a reasonable range per program type.

Below is an example based on reviews of existing Housing First programs. Note that the case load per program should be calculated based on the appropriate case manager to client ratios.

Program Type	Est. Total Cost per Client	Case Load/Case Manager
Permanent Supportive Housing *Higher cost for place-based vs. scattered site programs and higher acuity clients.*	$15,000-$25,000	1:10/15 for high acuity clients 1:20 for moderate acuity clients
Assertive Community Treatment *HPS does not fund ACT*	$15,000-$20,000	1:10 for high acuity clients
Intensive Case Management	$13,000-$18,000	1:20 for moderate acuity clients
Rapid Rehousing	$5,000-$10,000	1:25 for lower acuity clients

The CE can develop cost benchmarks over time based on average cost per client information for each program type. This information can be used during budget negotiations, to develop new funding competitions, or to gauge whether a program is on track during the course of monitoring activities. Cost-per-client information can also be incorporated into the program dashboards and monitored by CE staff on a go-forward basis as part of performance management.

On an regular basis, the CE can undertake comprehensive, formal financial reviews of funded programs to ensure funds are used for the purpose approved in the contract. During site visits, CE staff can verify the use of funds against contract terms. Monitoring during site visits can also examine insurance, policies, budgeting process, cash handling, donation receipt checklist to identify areas of excellence and improvement.

The CE can develop cost benchmarks over time based on average cost per client information for each program type. This information can be used during budget negotiations, to develop new funding competitions, or to gauge whether a program is on track during the course of monitoring activities.

Requests for Proposals

The CE is responsible for aligning investments with the Community Plan and HPS eligible activities and ensuring Housing First fidelity through performance-based contracts. Allocating available funds through a competitive RFP process, except in exceptional circumstances, will help to meet this responsibility. The RFP should be made publicly available and easily accessible to a range of potential applicants. To ensure a transparent and competitive process, the CE should consider the following measures:

- Engage non-conflicted CAB members to preside over the selection panel that reviews proposals and makes recommendations for funding.
- Ensure proponents declare conflicts of interest.
- The RFP should further outline how the funding available aligns with HPS or other funder priorities, as well as Community Plans.
- Outline criteria for qualification and disqualification of proponents in the RFP, marking criteria, including weighting of various elements. Examples include the requirement for proposals to demonstrate value or outline the operating budget and monthly financial forecast of the program.
- The RFP has a clear and transparent formal appeal process.
- Ensure the RFP document reserves the right for the CE and selection panel to request proponents participate in an interview, site visits, and presentation to the panel.

The selection panel can include representation of the CAB, CE staff, and subject matter experts. The CAB can nominate non-conflicted members to the selection committee to review and rank proposals, and give a recommendation to the CE and CAB. No officers, directors, board members, or any employee of a proponent should participate in the selection committee.

Aligning RFPs to System Planning

The RFP package aligns the investment allocation to the Community Plan, performance management and system planning frameworks. The more specific and targeted the RFP package is, the likelier proponents are to understand the objectives of the funding and requirements.

The reasons for being very explicit in the RFP process are to:

- ensure alignment with CE system-level goals on Housing First and reducing homelessness;
- level the playing field around expectations from proponents by being clear on requirements;
- align the RFP and contracting process for maximum efficiency;
- increase awareness about Housing First and Community Plan priorities to reduce homelessness.

The expected target population should be very well defined in the RFP, including specific eligibility criteria the CE expects from the successful proponent. Clear alignment between the eligible program activities and the target client group served should be evident as well. Further, the expected targets

and performance measures should be articulated accordingly, and aligned with HPS or other funder outcome expectations. This will ensure that proponents have a clear understanding of the who they are expected to serve, what activities they can undertake and what they are expected to accomplish. The following sections provide more details on developing RFP content that aligns with performance management and system planning.

Target Population, Eligibility and Prioritization Criteria

The RFP should be explicit about the target population, eligibility and prioritization criteria. Clear definitions should be provided to clarify the intent of the funding, for example, chronically homeless individuals, who have been homeless for more than one year; prioritizing those who have been homeless the longest and have the highest acuity. See the section on Target Population, Eligibility and Priority Criteria under System Planning for more information.

> Clear definitions should be provided to clarify the intent of the funding, for example, chronically homeless individuals, who have been homeless for more than one year; prioritizing those who have been homeless the longest and have the highest acuity.

Asking proponents to articulate how proposed interventions will lead to reduced chronic homelessness, emergency shelter use or inappropriate public system use, can be a key vehicle to ensuring community priorities are met and increase sub-project understanding of the role of programs in the local and national movement to reduce homelessness. It is important that prioritization at the client-level is aligned with community priorities.

There should be clarity on how clients are prioritized for intake into the program: where two clients who meet the definition of chronically homeless are seeking entry into only one available space in the program, how will staff determine which client to accept?   Do you pick the client that has been waiting the longest or the one with the most acute needs? These are different populations which can lead to different system impacts.

Program Type & Activities

The RFP should be targeted towards particular program types and their associated activities. Of course, these should be allowable under the agreement between the CE and HPS (or other funders).   The RFP can outline the CE's definition of the program type for which the funding is intended, along with eligible and ineligible program activities. For example, eligible activities include referrals to substance abuse and mental health treatment, but direct delivery of these services are ineligible activities.

Being clear and transparent about the eligible and ineligible activities and adherence to Housing First principles ensures proponents fully understand the intent of the funds. The RFP documents should include your definition of Housing First as program type and approach.

Performance Targets

The RFP should also articulate specific client and program-level outcomes the CE expects from successful proponents. These expectations should be aligned with the program type and target

population of the RFP. For example, expecting a high acuity client requiring Permanent Supportive Housing to graduate to complete self-sufficiency within 3 months is unrealistic, whereas it would be an acceptable timeframe for someone requiring rapid rehousing.

Any requirements that HPS or other funders have should also be articulated, along with means of data collection required and reporting timelines. Clear benchmarks in the RFP can also ensure the program works towards system-level goals and strives for excellence from the start.

If any other requirements exist, these should be included as well. For example, Alberta's Seven Cities require programs to participate in a province-wide integrated information system. Some CEs, such as the Cities of Ottawa and Hamilton, have well developed service standards and program policies and procedures that all funding recipients must adhere to. If any other system-level planning work is occurring in which the successful program is expected to participate, such as Coordinated Intake or System Planning Committees, etc. this should also be included in the RFP.

> Clear benchmarks in the RFP can also ensure the program works towards system-level goals and strives for excellence from the start.

Contract Negotiations

By obtaining a detailed proposal that aligns with CE requirements from the start, the development of the contract for the project can be significantly streamlined. The proposal application of the RFP and budget can become schedules or sections of the resulting contract. In this manner, the CE can leverage the RFP process to streamline implementation.

An explicit RFP process also allows the proponent to carefully consider whether they are interested or able to meet the requirements of the funding. As Housing First can be a major divergence from their current practice, having clarity on what the CE means by Housing First and reflecting on what this will mean in practice, the proponent can use the preparation for the RFP response as reflection and internal planning to either take on Housing First, or not.

The RFP process becomes a key means for the CE to inform service providers about Housing First and how funding requirements drive towards community goals and HPS expectations. It is important to include RFP information sessions that are widely publicized to this end. The CE can answer questions and concerns in a transparent manner to potential proponents in a public forum and clarify their intent through the RFP. These information sessions can go a long way towards increasing community awareness about Housing First and the CE's role in community as well.

Annual Funding Cycles

Although a particular program has been awarded multi-year funding via the RFP process, this does not stop the CE from undertaking a contract renewal process on an annual basis. Taking into account the performance of each program as well as system-level needs, the CE can and should make necessary adjustments to contracts on a regular basis.

The CE may work with the program to add capacity in order to meet an emerging demand for the

particular program. Alternatively, the CE may determine the need to scale a program down in light of low occupancy or to redesign it significantly to meet emerging needs. Some programs may even require defunding as result of poor performance or due to system-level changes.

Over time, the CE can consider introducing performance-based contracts which link funding allocations to program performance. A first step is to ensure contracts include clear performance expectations, as outlined in the section on RFPs above.

Aligning the RFP and contract renewal forms is advised. In this manner, the program descriptions, budget sheets, and appendices (eligible costs guidelines, reporting requirements, etc.) are consistently applied.

As noted in the section on developing a the homeless-serving system structure, continuous assessment of the current service landscape in relation to demands and goals of the Community Plan can ensure funding is used for most impact. For example, as shelters become increasingly underutilized, can funds be reallocated to ICM or PSH programs? High-level analysis of the CE and community funding envelope, which consists of multiple funders of homeless services, can facilitate investment decisions that drive towards improved client and system outcomes.

This type of analysis can break down investment trends by:

- funding source (HPS, provincial, private, etc.)
- program type (emergency shelter, transitional housing, ICM, ACT, etc.)
- target population (chronically homeless, Aboriginal, youth, etc.)
- budget line item (rental subsidies, staffing costs, etc.)

# Strategic Reviews & Business Planning

The strategic review and business planning process (which also supports the Mid-Year Dialogue):

- Documents learnings over the past year to ensure implementation of the Community Plan as a living document;
- Uses data from research, program and housing data, environmental scanning, and implementation learnings;
- Seeks input and feedback from key stakeholders, including CAB and mainstream partners;
- Proposes focus areas to shape business planning in the coming fiscal year;
- Considers implications on priority areas of action and investment moving forward;
- Discusses system-level priorities moving forward, such as information management system implementation, shelter closures, adding PSH capacity, etc.;
- Indicates the use of HPS funds towards community priorities; further, how community goals align with HPS priorities;
- Specifies number of unique individuals the local system will serve annually and what

percentage will be attributed to HPS funding - these should be outlined by program type and aggregated at the system-level;

- Describes CE actions to ensure funding allocation is transparent, thorough, and competitive. This includes reference to the role of CAB and other external stakeholders in the allocation process;

- Identifies policy level changes required to further priorities, emerging gaps, and progress; and

- Considers any risks associated with meeting priorities (i.e. inability to reach goals/targets due to factors such as increasing rental prices, etc.) and provides risk mitigation strategies.

This annual cycle ensures that implementation of the Community Plan is consistently reviewed and adjustments to implementation are made. Ultimately, it is the linking of the seemingly mundane activities of administration to broader systems thinking that is one of the hallmarks of a systems approach to reducing homelessness. In this manner, the CE is not simply a funding administrator, but rather, the key driver and catalyst for change in communities transitioning to Housing First.

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Module 4 –

Review

This module discussed CE funding allocation practices by linking Housing First performance management, system planning, and quality assurance to investment practices. Financial monitoring, competitive funding allocation (RFPs) and contract renewals were addressed, along with role of annual funding cycles linked to strategic reviews and business planning.

Considerations for Smaller CEs

Financial monitoring and competitive funding processes are well-established across many smaller CEs. Based on the experiences of smaller communities who have already funded Housing First, you can consider the following:

- **review current RFP and contract boilerplate materials** and assess whether these clearly outline your expectations in light of system planning, performance management and quality assurance goals;

- **introduce changes** in these materials based on your review and ensure clear communication with funded programs, particularly if these changes are rolled out during contract renewal processes;

- **review current financial monitoring practices** and consider whether these can be leveraged as part of your performance management approach; for example, you may consider developing a comparative costs analysis according to program type to determine trends in funded projects;

- **introduce cost and performance benchmarks in your contracts;** monitor these on an ongoing basis and incorporate them into your funding allocation process;

- bring CE and CAB stakeholders together to reflect on the **integration** of the following in your practice: strategy and business plan development, funding allocation, quality assurance, program monitoring, performance management and system planning;

- develop a predictable, formal **annual cycle** to ensure implementation of your Community Plan is consistently reviewed and adjustments are made.

Reflection Questions:

1. What capacity does the CE have or need to implement comprehensive cost benchmarking across funded programs?

2. How can financial information be leveraged as part of system planning and performance management?

3. What are some common indicators of service quality or performance issues that can be gleaned from financial information?

4. What would transitioning to performance-based contracting mean at the community level?

5. What are the implications of Housing First for funding allocation processes involving CABs?

RESOURCES

System Planning Resources

Topic	Resource	Description
Housing First	Housing First	In this online Homeless Hub document, Steve Gaetz discussed key tenets of Housing First: http://www.homelesshub.ca/housingfirst
	HPS Website	More details on the HPS Housing First approach can be found here: http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/housing_first/supports.shtml http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/housing_first/service_delivery/index.shtml
	Mental Health Commission Housing First Toolkit	This web-based toolkit provides step-by-step guidance on the development and implementation of Housing First programs, aimed for service providers. http://www.housingfirsttoolkit.ca
System Planning	System Planning Framework (CHF)	This document produced by the Calgary Homeless Foundation outlines the system of care in place in Calgary. It offers a practical application of system planning from the CE perspective.
Program Matching	Advisory to Funded Agencies: Referrals into CHF Funded Programs (CHF)	This Calgary Homeless Foundation advisory outlines expectations from the CE on referrals and eligibility in funded programs using a system planning approach.
Acuity Assessment	Calgary Acuity Scale (CHF)	This link provides information to the Calgary Acuity Scale tailored for youth, families, and singles- used across homeless programs to determine level of need. http://calgaryhomeless.com/agencies/
	Denver Acuity Scale	This link provides an outline of the Denver Acuity Scale (see Appendix A of the document): http://calgaryhomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Calgary-Singles-Acuity-Scale-toolkit.pdf
	Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT)	This link outlines the tenets of the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT), another acuity assessment tool: http://www.orgcode.com/spdat/
	Visual Acuity Tool (VAT)	
Coordinated Intake	Coordinated Intake (CHF)	This link provides information on the CHF Coordinated Access initiative: http://calgaryhomeless.com/what-we-do/coordinated-access-and-assessment/

Topic	Resource	Description
Integrated Information Systems	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)	This link provides information on the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS): http://hifis.hrsdc.gc.ca/index-eng.shtml
	Homeless Management Information System (CHF)	This link provides information on the Calgary's Homeless Management Information System: http://calgaryhomeless.com/hmis/
	HMIS Privacy Impact Assessment (CHF)	This document presents the CHF privacy impact assessment, accepted by the Alberta Privacy Commissioner to operate HMIS.
	HMIS Policies and Procedures (CHF)	This document outlines the CHF HMIS operating procedures in specific detail, along with key data collection and consent forms, data sharing protocols, privacy audit functions.

Performance Management Resources

Sources:

- Calgary Homeless Foundation - CHF
- City of Ottawa - CO
- City of Hamilton - CH
- Edmonton Homeward Trust - EHT
- Medicine Hat Community Housing Society - MHCHS
- United Way of York Region - UWYR

Topic	Resource	Description
Reporting	Rapid Rehousing Monthly Report (MHCHS) Rapid Rehousing Data Spreadsheet (MHCHS)	These documents provide reporting examples from Medicine Hat Community Housing Society. Information submitted is corroborated with data, direct observation, or review of case files from the CE. For example, the Rapid Rehousing Data Spreadsheet is cross-referenced with data in the integrated information management system. If there are inconsistencies, it is caught immediately by staff, and then assistance provided to the teams to correct the information. The programs also need to submit written monthly report. The MHCHS Rapid Rehousing Monthly Report contains information that is cross-referenced with financial statements. For example, if there are high rehousing costs in the financials, and no client was rehoused that month based on the written report and spreadsheets, an explanation is requested or their detailed General Ledger.
Dashboards	Program Dashboard (CHF)	This example of a program dashboard shows how the Calgary Homeless Foundation uses HMIS to assess performance on a quarterly basis. More examples can be accessed here: http://calgaryhomeless.com/hmis/data-analysis/

Topic	Resource	Description
Data Collection Forms	Client Intake Interview (CHF) Client Follow Up Interview (CHF) Client Exit (CHF) 6-month Post-Exit Client Interview (CHF)	These documents are examples of the data collection tools used at the program level across Calgary Homeless Foundation's funded programs at various intervals (intake, follow-up, etc.). The data is collected to measure progress at the client and system levels. http://calgaryhomeless.com/hmis/forms/
	Hamilton Data Tool (CH)	This is the City of Hamilton's tool used to collect demographic, qualitative and outcome data from funded agencies. It is submitted on a monthly basis. Staff aggregate the information on the back end to assist the CE with community planning initiatives and completing HPS results reporting.
HPS Indicators	HPS Measurement Indicators (HPS)	These are the national-level indicators provided by HPS to designated communities across Canada.

Quality Assurance Resources

Sources:

- Calgary Homeless Foundation - CHF
- City of Ottawa - CO
- City of Hamilton - CH
- Edmonton Homeward Trust - EHT
- Medicine Hat Community Housing Society - MHCHS
- United Way of York Region - UWYR

Topic	Resource	Description
Service Standards & Program Policies	Articles of Agreement for Housing First (EHT)	Edmonton Homeward Trust's document presents the service quality requirements for funded programs, as contractually required.
	Case Management Accreditation Manual (CHF)	The Canadian Accreditation Council and CHF's Case management accreditation manual outlines the standards of practice across Housing First programs that provide case management.
	Improvements to Practice (EHT)	This is a schedule for contracts with Edmonton Homeward Trust that outlines required service expectations.
Service Standards & Program Policies	Housing First Service Manual (EHT)	Homeward Trust has developed a slate of comprehensive policies for funded programs, as outlined in this manual.
	Program Policy 1, Policy 2, Policy 3, Policy 4, Policy 5, Policy 6 (CH)	These are the set of Policies and Procedures which govern the Transitions to Homes (T2H) program, Hamilton's HPS-funded Housing First program for single chronically homeless males.

Topic	Resource	Description
Monitoring	Monitoring Process Flow (CHF)	These documents outline various organization's tools for site visits and ongoing monitoring.

They include preparatory materials for CE staff conducting site visits, as well as actual monitoring checklists and questionnaires. |
	Program Monitor (MHCHS)	
	Monitoring Tool (CHF)	
	Program Review Instrument (CHF)	
	Monitoring Form for Sub-Projects (UWYR)	
	Program Monitoring Prep Sheet (CHF)	
	Program Review Client File Checklist (CHF)	
	Program Review Financial File Checklist (CHF)	
	Remediation Process (CHF)	
	Program Audit Prep Table (CO)	
	Agency Review & Monitoring Visits (CO)	
	Agency Review Format (CO)	
	Sample Report Template - Agency Review (CO)	
	Staff Interviews - Agency Review (CO)	
Client Engagement	Hamilton Transition to Home Consumer Advisory Group Terms of Reference (CH)	The City of Hamilton's Transition to Home, run by Wesley Urban Ministries, has a Consumer Advisory Group in place. This document presents their Terms of Reference. The Group comprises mainly persons with lived experience as an internal advisory and planning committee. The language within the TOR is intentionally kept straight forward and direct. The committee has been in place since the program began and attached are their Terms of Reference.
	Client Survey (CHF)	The CHF Client Survey is provided across funded programs by the CE and results are analysed centrally to assess client perception of service quality and impact.
	Client Interviews - Agency Review (CO)	This example of client interviews from the City of Ottawa is incorporated in regular monitoring processes.

Topic	Resource	Description
Risk Management	Risk Assessment (CO) *Safety* • Safety Planning in Funded Programs (CHF) • Critical Incident Review Process (CHF) • Serious Incident Reporting Form (CHF) • Serious Occurrence Reporting Form (CO) • Serious Occurrence Internal Procedure (CO) *Grievances* • Responding to Complaints (UWYR) *Privacy* • Policy 6 - Confidentiality (CH) • Privacy Information Advisory to Funded Agencies (CHF) • FOIP Notification (EHT) • Consent to Client File Transfer (EHT) • Consent to Disclosure (EHT) • FOIP Requirements (EHT)	These policies, procedures, and advisories provide examples from various CEs with respect to risk management. They include critical incidents, grievances, safety and privacy related documents.

Topic	Resource	Description
CE Practice Changes	HPS Administrative Review (CH)	In 2013, a review was completed of the City of Hamilton's internal administrative practices. This document summarizes the main recommendations for changes the Division will be making to its HPS administrative processes. The main changes are centered around four (4) main themes: Alignment of Administrative Practices, Coordination of Monitoring Practices, Evolution of Payments processes and the Modernization of Program Records. These changes are being implemented in phases, with the aim to be fully implemented by April 2016.
	HPS Administrative Implementation (CH)	This is an early version of the work planning document that outlines the steps being taken to implement the first series of administrative recommendations (listed above) planned to be implemented early in 2014.

Funding Allocation Resources

Sources:

- Calgary Homeless Foundation - CHF
- City of Ottawa - CO
- City of Hamilton - CH
- Edmonton Homeward Trust - EHT
- Medicine Hat Community Housing Society - MHCHS
- United Way of York Region - UWYR

Topic	Resource	Description
Request for Proposals/ Funding Competitions	RFP Project Advisory Committee Guide (CHF) Request for Proposals (CHF) Project Description (EHT) HPS Call For Application Form (CH) Call For Application Guidelines (CH) Conflict of Interest Policy, CAB (CO) CAB Terms of Reference (CO)	Various CEs have provided sample Requests for Proposals/ Calls for Applications used to date. Some have also provided supplementary documents on background information to applicants. A sample contract renewal form is provided by CHF, along with background definitions for applicants.

Topic	Resource	Description
Contracts	Contract Renewal Application (CHF) Contract Renewal Definitions (CHF)	A sample contract renewal form is provided by CHF, along with background definitions for applicants.
	Articles of Agreement for Housing First (EHT)	Edmonton Homeward Trust's document presents the service quality requirements for funded programs, as contractually required.
	Improvements to Practice (EHT)	This is a schedule for contracts with Edmonton Homeward Trust that outlines required service expectations.
	Service Agreement Tracking (CO) Schedule A of HPS Funding Agreement (CO) Insurance Requirements (CO) Workers Safety Contract Requirements (CO)	Sample contract materials from the City of Ottawa specific to HPS-funded sub-projects.
Financial Monitoring, Eligible Costs & Budgets	Eligible Costs Guidelines (CHF) Eligible Costs (EHT) Budget Worksheet (CHF) Cashflow Summary (EHT) Financial Monitoring Form (CH) Financial Schedule (UWYR) Financial Requirements (CO) Quarterly Eligible Expenses (CO) Financial Review Checklist (CO) Financial Review Site Visit (CO)	The financial monitoring tools include forms used in ongoing assessments and site visits, as well as guidelines on eligible costs and budget forms.

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