

MEMORANDUM

TO: Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Housing

FROM: HomeBase

RE: Community Responses to the 2010 NOFA Performance Measure Questions

DATE: February 18, 2011

In the 2010 NOFA Exhibit 2, HUD required non-HMIS projects to establish performance measure goals on placement into permanent housing and income levels,¹ and were also given the option of establishing up to three additional performance measure goals on which the project would report performance in the APR.

Some local CoCs responded to the new performance measure questions by establishing community-wide goals and benchmarks. Others adopted internal guidelines or suggested possible goals for their programs. This memorandum discusses the responses by the CoCs in San Francisco, Santa Clara, Contra Costa and Alameda.

I. Why Develop a Community-Wide Response?

The new performance measure questions appear to be HUD's first step toward aligning the NOFA with the CoC performance indicators set forth in the HEARTH Act.² In developing a community-wide response, the CoCs discussed below seem to have anticipated that HUD would continue to place greater emphasis on performance indicators and acted to stay ahead of the curve. Other possible reasons include:

- Ensuring a baseline level of performance among all of the CoC's programs
- Testing the CoC's ability to collect and report on additional performance outcomes—i.e., treating it as a practice run
- Improving cohesion among the CoC and its programs
- Seeking to find out more about how the CoC's programs are performing

¹Specifically, Exhibit 2 required projects to establish goals on: (1) persons remaining in permanent housing as of the end of the operating year; (2) persons exiting to permanent housing (subsidized or unsubsidized) during the operating year; and either (3) persons age 18 and older who maintained or increased their total income (from all sources) as of the end of the operating year or program exit; or (4) persons age 18 through 61 who maintained or increased their earned income as of the end of the operating year or program exit.

² The HEARTH Act's CoC performance indicators are: (1) the length of time that individuals and families remain homeless; (2) the extent to which individuals and families who leave homelessness experience additional spells of homelessness; (3) the thoroughness of grantees in reaching homeless individuals and families; (4) overall reduction in the number of homeless individuals and families; (5) job and income growth for homeless individuals and families; (6) success at reducing the number of individuals and families who become homeless; and (7) other accomplishments related to reducing homelessness.

- Anticipating that programs may need assistance in tracking/reporting on performance outcomes, and trying to identify what assistance is required

II. San Francisco

In San Francisco, in addition to setting benchmarks for the permanent housing and income questions, the CoC decided to establish: (1) a single community-wide performance measure that all programs would report on; and (2) one program group-specific performance measure that each program group chose on their own.

Because of the universal applicability of mainstreaming, San Francisco chose it as its community-wide performance measure. Specifically, San Francisco chose to measure: the percentage of households served who receive or maintain one or more mainstream resources at 12 months into the program or upon program exit, whichever occurs first. Each program group (SHP PH, S+C, TH, SSO Employment, SSO to People in PH, Other SSO Projects, Safe Haven) had slightly different benchmark percentages, based on the difficulty of connecting their client populations and keeping them connected to mainstream resources.

For purposes of the program group-specific measures, the projects were loosely grouped into 6 categories: PH (including S+C and SHP), TH, SSO Employment, SSO to People in PH, Safe Haven, and Other.

The resulting performance measures varied widely, but each measure was both constrained and informed by the organizations' (and to a lesser degree, HMIS's) ability to identify and collect the relevant data. The permanent housing-related projects utilized length of stay and housing outcomes data, both measurable by HMIS, and the transitional housing projects used the self-sufficiency matrix available in San Francisco's HMIS. The other projects relied on non-HMIS data, but typically used quantifiable, widely recognized measures such as the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), the Addiction Severity Index, and the Kessler Distress Scale.

III. Santa Clara

In Santa Clara, the CoC encouraged (but did not require) its McKinney-Vento projects to use the CoC's current community-wide goals for the standard performance measures (e.g., 80% or more of PH clients remain stably housed for 6 months or more).

The NOFA Committee did, however, establish an additional community-wide performance measure for all of its McKinney-Vento programs, utilizing the self-sufficiency matrix used in Santa Clara's HMIS.³ Specifically, the Committee chose to measure: persons age 18 through 61 who increased their total Self-Sufficiency Score (i.e., any increase in total Self-Sufficiency Matrix score in any domain).

³ The self-sufficiency matrix in use in Santa Clara County is based on the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix, as modified in the draft HUD HMIS Data Standards released in Spring of 2009. The SSM includes 18 domains: Income, Employment, Housing, Food, Childcare, Children's Education, Adult Education, Legal, Health Care, Life Skills, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Family Relations, Mobility, Community Involvement, Safety, Parenting Skills, and Credit History. Each domain is measured on a 5-point scale, with a score of 1 indicating low self-sufficiency from public assistance and a score of 5 indicating high self-sufficiency from public assistance.

IV. Contra Costa and Alameda

In Contra Costa, the CoC did not establish any community-wide benchmarks or guidelines. However, it provided the programs with sample performance measures drawn from its programs' current APRs, categorized into program type, and subcategorized into Housing-Related, Benefits-Related, Health-Related, Employment/Income-Related, and Services Access and Socialization outcomes. About half of Contra Costa's HUD-funded programs chose to include at least one optional performance measure.

The Alameda CoC also decided against establishing any community-wide benchmarks or guidelines. For HEARTH alignment and internal data-collecting purposes, however, the Alameda CoC has been utilizing a matrix of system-wide outcomes and efficiency measures. The matrix collects information, where applicable, on housing outcomes (including exit to PH, TH, and streets/shelter, and retention of PH), increase in income levels, recidivism, occupancy rates, and the length of time it takes to access permanent housing. Data for said matrix categories were already being collected by their HMIS or, in the case of recidivism, was beginning to be measured by a new entry in HMIS.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why would you adopt community-wide goals with respect to performance measures?
- What was your community's response to the new performance measure questions? Did you abandon your Question 16 APR goals in response? Why or why not?
- For those CoCs that did adopt a community-response, what were some of the challenges you faced during the process? What were some unanticipated challenges?
- Are you planning on adopting community-wide goals for next year's NOFA? What do you foresee as the major obstacles to adopting universal goals?
- Is your HMIS ready to capture the information required under the standard/optional performance measures? To report out on such measures?

POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS: Small group convening with representatives from each CoC to discuss performance measures, HEARTH legislation, strategies and methods, challenges and barriers, and help needed for implementation.

Other ideas?

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