



Senate Bill 5512 (2019) Budget Note

Report on Oregon's Homeless Management
Information System (HMIS)



September 2020

OREGON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Executive Summary

As long as homelessness has been a critical issue in Oregon, a wide array of dedicated individuals and organizations — from advocacy groups and shelters to local, state, and federal government agencies — have worked collectively to serve people and families seeking housing, shelter, and other services. Quality data is a critical component of these efforts and is necessary to inform and improve service delivery.

Documenting the number, characteristics, and needs of Oregonians experiencing homelessness, as well as the number of people receiving services and the capacity of these services, is essential to identifying the proper strategies to reduce housing instability and improve housing supports across the state. However, homeless services data is notoriously difficult to collect and leverage. It requires systems to be flexible enough to accommodate differing local circumstances, yet also consistent enough to aggregate local data to produce a holistic picture at the state level.

The Senate Bill 5512 Budget Note called upon OHCS to evaluate implementation options for a statewide homeless management information system (HMIS) that better enables clearer outcome tracking for individuals within the homelessness system. This report details the methodological process employed by OHCS to plan for both immediate and future improvements in data quality and use across the state.

Through an eight month collaborative process with HMIS community stakeholders and an experienced technical assistance provider, this report outlines three key recommendations for an improved Oregon HMIS:

1. OHCS becomes the HMIS lead for a multi-Continuum of Care implementation.
2. OHCS contracts and oversees the development and implementation of a statewide data repository.
3. OHCS participates and supports the creation of a statewide governance structure for the data repository and statewide data to be shared among HMIS stakeholders throughout Oregon.

These recommendations outline a collective desire to improve data collection, quality, and reporting to better support data-informed decisions within all levels of service delivery across the state. However, implementing these recommendations and finding success in outcomes requires investment in our HMIS data system beyond its current capacity. The collection and repository of valid and reliable data, alongside streamlined and aligned access, use, and governance structures, represents a tangible improvement in the homeless system. This ensures a better understanding of both the breadth and depth of housing instability and the rapid identification and utilization of efficient and effective resources targeted to specific needs within our communities.

To meet this larger system need and to be able to better respond to crises as they unfold, OHCS' 2021-23 agency request budget includes a funding ask to actualize these recommendations. An improved HMIS system provides the platform to streamline data reporting, improve data access, and build collective knowledge through greater understanding of the many nuances in the homeless system. Without this support, our data will continue to lag, restricting the ability to use it pointedly in both

the planning and evaluation of system performance. Investment in the HMIS system is critical to help drive policy and practice decisions that better support improved housing stability for Oregonians now and in the future.

Note

This report synthesizes approximately eight months of work, discussion, and research by the Stakeholder Review Team (SRT) and HUD technical assistance provider (ICF), and was assembled by Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS). The report does not reflect the personal opinion of any one Stakeholder Review Team member, but rather OHCS staff's attempt to capture the discussion and feedback from the work of the Stakeholder Review Team and ICF. The report and recommendations reached herein draw from research regarding national HMIS best practices, input and analysis by the HUD Technical Assistance provider, opinions and feedback from Oregon HMIS stakeholders, and OHCS staff. Any errors, omissions or other shortcomings should be attributed to OHCS, and not to the members of the Stakeholder Review Team or ICF.

Definitions

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are private or public non-profit organizations that were created by the federal government in 1964 to combat poverty in geographically designated areas. In order to reduce poverty in its' community, a CAA works to better focus available local, state, federal, and private resources to assist low-income individuals and families to acquire useful skills and knowledge, to gain access to new opportunities, and to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Community Action Partnership of Oregon (CAPO) is a non-profit association that serves the CAA network. CAPO is comprised of 18 member organizations (17 CAAs and Oregon Human Development Corporation), serving Oregonians in every county in the state.

Community-Wide Reporting uses reports to better understand the number of people experiencing homelessness and more effectively manage and coordinate programs to end homelessness. This is in contrast to running individual program output reports primarily to demonstrate effort to a funder. As an example, success is measured not by any one agency's work, but by the number of people experiencing homelessness in an entire community.

Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. CoC homeless service programs receive funding from a variety of sources including by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Continua are responsible for coordinating the full range of homelessness services in a geographic area, which may cover a city, county, metropolitan area, or an entire state.

Coordinated Entry and Assessment is a process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have a single or coordinated point of entry to the homeless delivery system. This type of entry allows homeless persons and those at-risk of homelessness to be quickly identified, assessed, referred, and connected to the appropriate housing resource available. It also facilitates the ability to prioritize the most vulnerable individuals and households for immediate assistance.

Data Repository allows for the consolidation of multiple data sources into one centralized database to report a regional and statewide picture of homelessness. Oregon's data warehouse will begin with a collaboration Continuums of Care and their respective Homeless Management Information Systems

(HMIS). This will enable agencies to collaborate across continuum and jurisdictional boundaries, and allow OHCS and policy makers to address homelessness issues on a statewide basis. Additionally, this collaborative endeavors to expand to include cross-system data sources necessary to develop a holistic picture of homelessness in Oregon while furnishing reliable, comprehensive data.

Data Sharing occurs when communities take every step possible to share information in a safe, confidentiality-focused, informed, and beneficial way to all partner agencies and systems of care. For example, folks receiving services have a conversation about their information being shared with partner agencies. If all agencies and systems of care in your community that are working to end homelessness are included in an agency privacy notice, then there is active sharing of data among these entities and the opportunity for improved service delivery.

End User means an individual who uses or enters data in an HMIS or another administrative database from which data is periodically provided to an HMIS.

Equity and Racial Justice is the first priority in the OHCS Statewide Housing Plan and a best practice in HMIS implementation, practice, and governance. OHCS is creating a system to analyze OHCS funded programs and to removing identified barriers to accessing opportunities within those programs by eliminating racial disparities from definitions, data collection, service provision and all reporting. HMIS administration must use a data driven approach to reduce disparities in housing and social service provisions by improving data collection and analysis that perpetuate barriers. HMIS governance must partner and coordinate with culturally specific agencies to ensure methodologies and data uses align.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the information system implemented by the local CoC to comply with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, 24 CFR part 578, and related HMIS Notices and is used to record and analyze client, service, and housing data for individuals and families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

HMIS Lead means a private, nonprofit, state, local government, or instrumentality of state or local government designated by the CoC in accordance with 24 CFR part 578 to operate the CoC's HMIS on its behalf.

HMIS Vendor means a contractor who provides materials or services for the operation of an HMIS. An HMIS vendor includes an HMIS software provider, web server host, or data warehouse provider.

HMIS Contract Holder oversees and manages the contract with the HMIS software vendor for the provisions of the HMIS instance.

HMIS Instance is a unique implementation of an HMIS software used by one or more CoC.

HMIS Software is the application used to carry out the functions of an HMIS, as required through the McKinney-Vento Act, 24 CFR part 578, and related HMIS Notices.

Housing Stability Council is OHCS' advisory body, which guides and advocates for agency work. The Council helps establish strategic direction and a policy framework for OHCS, specifically by issuing decisions regarding loans, grants, and funding awards. The Council helps OHCS leadership to foster

constructive partnerships with other state agencies and key partners engaged in housing and community services, informs the annual operating plan and biennial budget, and oversees OHCS operations through regular reports from the Executive Director. Two Housing Stability Council members participated in the Stakeholder Review Team.

Human-Centered Approach occurs when funder requirements to enter client level information into a Homeless Management Information System for continued funding and reporting is balanced with technology that matches peoples characteristics, ensures continued humanity and dignity, provides appropriate supports, allows for inclusion and flexibility and values the voice of those experiencing homelessness.

Local System Administrator (LSA) serves as a localized function of the system administrator, dependent on the HMIS implementation structure and agreements in place.

Oregon Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) is the State of Oregon’s housing finance agency and provides state and federal resources to promote housing stability. OHCS develops and implements policy, funding, and financing to support the creation and preservation of quality affordable housing and the provision of community-based services for lower and moderate income Oregonians.

Provider Coordination is an integrated, coordinated approach to homeless services and data management. HMIS relies on an integrated team of providers representing multiple systems of care, working together regularly. An example of a high-level of provider coordination include agencies that are part of weekly case/conferencing meetings.

Real Time Data Practices consist of using real time data practices, such as a by-name list, instead of annual point-in-time counts, can improve agency and community efforts, better inform data-driven decisions, and more accurately measure success. Selecting people assisted from a prioritized byname list is an example of real time data practices.

System Administrator manages the technical aspects of the day-to-day operations of the HMIS. They work directly with the end users and the HMIS software vendor to ensure authorized access to client information, accessibility of the HMIS software, software performance, correct setup and monitoring of system security, and adherence to CoC privacy policies within the software.

Quality Data Collection occurs when communities have reliable and valid data that represents the “real world” and can tell the story of the population experiencing homelessness. Agencies and systems of care follow HMIS data quality plans, are annually certified, enter data within 24 hours, establish clear definitions for data elements, and encourages staff to attend trainings.

Introduction and Background

In 2019, the Oregon State Legislature included a Budget Note in Senate Bill (SB) 5512. The Budget Note required a set of recommendations be delivered to the Legislature regarding the implementation of a statewide homeless management information system (HMIS) to enable clear outcome tracking for homeless individuals.

SB5512 Budget Note

“The Housing and Community Services Department will report to the legislature by June of 2020 on options to implement a statewide homeless management information system (HMIS) that enables clear outcome tracking for homeless individuals. The report will focus on a system implementation that meets federal and state requirements, improves data driven decision making, and aligns with national best practice. Specific items to address include a recommendation on the capabilities of an optimal system, system governance, models from other states that enable data driven decisions, the organization that is best positioned to administer the system, and an assessment of administrative workload options to fund administration.”*

**NOTE: OHCS faced an ambitious timeline for this body of work, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic fallout. With a rapid refocus on pandemic response, HUD pulled OHCS’ technical assistance supporting engagement and work planning, further stretching external and internal capacity and ultimately resulting in this late submission.*

In order to fully understand how critical the HMIS Budget Note work is to supporting homeless service programs throughout Oregon, it is imperative to understand the historical context. The HMIS Budget Note, and subsequent investments in its recommendations, is key to advancing statewide housing plan goals, critical to addressing equity and racial justice disparities, and fundamental for improving services to Oregonians experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Budget Note SB 5512 follows directly from ongoing work at OHCS. In 2018, the Oregon State Legislature included a Budget Note in House Bill (HB) 5201. Budget Note HB 5201 focused on the transformation of the homeless services delivery system in Oregon. In particular, the report required use of outcome oriented strategies. In practice, this requires high quality data for homeless service programs that must include analysis and benchmarking using data that can be disaggregated by demographics and fund sources. Outcome oriented data also allows providers to better understand promising practices and target funding and services that are demonstrating success in supporting housing stability.

Historically, the statewide HMIS implementation was not fully meeting these requirements, so in order to make the necessary critical advancements, the Legislature included Budget Note in SB 5512, which directly builds upon work completed during Budget Note HB 5201. The assessment and recommendations completed during the HMIS Budget Note process position OHCS—as well as stakeholders throughout the state—to improve collective understanding of the homeless service delivery system, data driven decision making, and lead to improved outcomes for individuals and families seeking services in Oregon.

Budget Note Process Methodology

In order to meet the requirements of the HMIS budget note and to arrive at optimal recommendations for an Oregon HMIS, OHCS built the budget note process on two key pillars:

- 1) Work closely with HUD approved technical assistance (TA) to align with national best practices, bring technical expertise, and facilitate an objective assessment of Oregon HMIS.**

- 2) Incorporate the expertise, feedback, and considerations of a wide range of Oregon HMIS stakeholders to ground-truth the HUD TA recommendations.

By incorporating HUD TA and stakeholder feedback in the budget note process, this final report brings together a confluence of nationally-recognized expertise with local perspectives and experience to ensure the adoption of best practices and a new structure that is relevant to and implementable in Oregon communities. The assessment, recommendations, and discussion stemming from this process provide a strong foundation for OHCS and stakeholders to pivot to implementation planning and execution of a new HMIS structure for Oregon.

OHCS partnered with HUD to select ICF as approved technical assistance. ICF brought national expertise and an objective lens to the assessment and recommendations for the optimal HMIS system in Oregon. They used diverse engagement and research methods to conduct multiple assessments and make recommendations. This included interviews, focus groups, and surveys of current Oregon HMIS users and stakeholders. Their assessment and recommendation methodology was based on three areas: 1) HMIS baselines and best practices, 2) HMIS governance, and 3) technology and software. ICF has years of experience providing HMIS related technical assistance to agencies, governments and programs across the United States as well as in Oregon; representing both rural and urban communities.

ICF produced a final report; *Oregon HMIS Budget Note Assessment Recommendations (ICF Final Recommendations addendum, page 13)*, which outlines the recommended model for Oregon, an overview of the HMIS structure, and recommendations for next steps. This report provides recommendations and guidance, but not a step-by-step mandate for Oregon. The recommendations represent the totality of the process conducted by ICF and provide a rigorous framework to advance HMIS related work in Oregon.

Affiliation
Continuum of Care OR 500 (Lane County)
Continuum of Care OR 501 (Multnomah County)
Continuum of Care OR 502 (Jackson County)
Continuum of Care OR 503 (Deschutes County)
Continuum of Care OR 505 (Clatsop County)
Continuum of Care OR 506 (Washington County)
Continuum of Care 507 (Clackamas County)
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
US Department of Housing and Urban Development –Portland Field Office
Portland Housing Bureau
Jackson Street Youth Services
Community Action Washington County
Housing Stability Council Member
US Department of Veterans Affairs

Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS)
Kaiser Permanente
Native American Youth and Family Center
Community Action Agency, Lane County
Oregon Primary Care Association
Helping Hands
Community Services Consortium
Oregon Housing and Community Services

However, an optimal statewide HMIS requires the collaboration and coordination of many diverse stakeholders, including their feedback specific to the ICF recommendations. In order to meet the broad scope of demands laid out by the HMIS Budget Note it was imperative to incorporate the input, opinions, and voices from the myriad people and institutions interacting with the Oregon HMIS. To fully engage the broad array of people and organizations that interact with HMIS, OHCS convened a work group representative of key Oregon HMIS stakeholders. This group is referred to as the Stakeholder Review Team (SRT). The goals of convening this group were to ensure local perspective and ownership of this process and the final recommendations. The SRT worked in close collaboration with the ICF and complimented and strengthened their work. The SRT adopted a consensus-building orientation that sought to ensure all members are given opportunity to be heard and differences of opinion are approached with good faith.

The SRT convened seven times beginning in December 2019 with their final meeting held in late July 2020. We extend sincere gratitude for the SRT’s willingness to engage in difficult discussions, share their expertise and insights, and dedicate their time and energy to fulfilling the demands of the Budget Note and investment in the process to improve the homeless services delivery system.

Intermediary Milestones

Throughout the seven SRT meetings various outcomes were achieved and progress was continuous. Below are a few highlights from the months of work and convening preceding the final recommendations and SRT response.

- **Community participation.** HMIS affects federal, state, and local homeless services programs and intersects with many other social service systems. An ideal HMIS considers the connections and relation to these providers and systems. While the HMIS Stakeholder Review Team included an extensive number of agencies and people that interact with HMIS, OHCS wanted to create a space for broader community participation and feedback. To this end in December 2019 OHCS hosted a Budget Note Kickoff meeting where a wide range of stakeholders were invited. OHCS introduced the Budget Note process methodology, HMIS best practices, and the SRT members to provide the broader public with points of contact to express their thoughts and concerns related to HMIS.
- **Best practice feedback session.** SRT members participated in an in-person discussion of national best practices and a level setting exercises on how the Oregon HMIS implementation is meeting national best practices, areas for improvement, and top priorities for an improved

HMIS. The best practices unanimously endorsed by the SRT were: quality data collection, real time data practices, data sharing, provider coordination, community-wide reporting, a human-centered approach, and a commitment to racial justice. These best practices were also incorporated by ICF and formed the foundation of the technology, governance, and data integration discussions.

- **Summary of HMIS stakeholder assessment.** Through stakeholder interviews, ICF provided a summary of findings on the current status of HMIS operations and governance in Oregon. This assessment helped form the final recommendation report and included key findings:
 - Cross-CoC Coordination occurs at varying levels depending on CoCs' shared interests within specific regions and partnerships. Oregon has unique regions which require specific HMIS support and assistance.
 - CoCs' decision-making and governance structures operate in a compliant, albeit disjointed manner.
 - There are varying degrees of data collection, reporting, and HMIS participation in different regions throughout Oregon. While some CoCs strongly leverage their use of HMIS to inform their CoC work, other CoCs have greater opportunities to maximize their HMIS.
 - Reporting capabilities are largely dependent on CoC capacity and knowledge of the system. Currently there is no statewide report support. (*ICF Summary of Findings, addendum, page 41*)

- **Peer Learning.** Incorporating national best practices is integral to fully leveraging the HMIS to meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Other state partners have successfully adapted their HMIS to enact best practices and ICF arranged for the SRT to learn from other statewide implementations. One full SRT meeting was dedicated to learning about best practice implementation from other state partners. The goal was to provide context, understanding, and examples of the benefits and challenges of other systems. Katie Fallon from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency presented on the Ohio Human Services Data Consortium, discussed their data warehouse, how their processes works, and the HMIS steering committee that governs the warehouse work. Gerry Leslie from the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH) presented on Michigan's statewide data system. The Michigan implementation was motivated by connecting medical and housing data and the key to their success is collaboration and data sharing. The SRT team appreciated the insight and time of Katie and Gerry and learned from their implementations and experiences.

- **Technology Review.** A key component to an effective and optimized HMIS is the software. Currently all HMIS implementations in Oregon use WellSky Community Services (formerly ServicePoint). ICF conducted a technological review and assessment with CoC HMIS leads. Topics discussed during the assessment included minimum compliance requirements, software technology and customization capabilities, software use, vendor responsiveness and capacity, data sharing and privacy, and reporting functionality. Information gathered from the call helped ICF and the assessment participants to understand the HMIS software capacity in each CoC. There were several key findings from the assessment:
 - The current HMIS software is fully compliant with the HUD Data Standards.

- CoCs are using the HMIS software beyond the baseline and compliance-based functionality to meet the needs of their varied programs. WellSky Community Services software functionality extends beyond baseline compliance requirements and stakeholders attest to the functionality of the system to meet their diverse needs.
 - While the software is compliant and exceeds base requirements, there are still areas for improvement. The HMIS experts who participated in the assessment laid out multiple areas for improvement. Please see the final software assessment report for additional details (*HMIS Software assessment, addendum, page 46*).
 - The extent the HMIS software meets the needs of a given CoC is contingent upon each CoC's system administration. In regards to reporting, the HMIS software has the basic capabilities to provide reports, however the ability to fully utilize these functions is dependent on the training, capacity, and experience with these tools highlighting the disconnect between software functionality and the need for administrative support.
- **Equity and Racial Justice.** Nationally, people of color are consistently overrepresented in the homeless population¹ and stakeholders and policymakers must identify the myriad factors that contribute to causing, reinforcing, and perpetuating these racial inequities. HMIS plays a critical role in service delivery and if HMIS does not incorporate equity and racial justice into the implementation and practice, the HMIS tools will not be equitable and may potentially cause or perpetuate racial inequities. Recognizing the need for more understanding on this topic, ICF conducted a specific equity and racial justice assessment. The goal of the assessment was to understand CoCs' progress and goals related to advancing racial equity and justice across Oregon. Topics covered during the assessment include:
 - Understanding racial disparities through HMIS or non-HMIS sources
 - Engaging BIPOC partners and culturally relevant organizations
 - Making changes to service delivery and/or policies and procedures
 - Trainings used locally with CoC/HMIS staff
 - BIPOC Representation in CoC and HMIS governance and decision-making
 - Identifying capacity needs; where should HMIS resources be targeted to help CoCs?

ICF finds variation among CoCs regarding their levels of outreach and inclusion of culturally specific organizations and BIPOC-representative communities in CoC planning and operations. The majority of CoCs rely on population density and demographic composition of households seeking assistance across the geographic area to understand and incorporate equity and racial justice in homeless service delivery. In general, CoCs with greater administrative capacity dedicate more staff resources to reporting, analyzing, understanding racial disparities across their community through HMIS. Furthermore, highly resourced CoCs are also more likely to do intentional outreach to culturally specific organizations and encourage participation. Please refer to the final ICF recommendations for a complete synopsis of the assessment (*ICF Final Recommendations, addendum*).

- **Deconstructing the hybrid model of HMIS governance.** ICF presented a hybrid model of HMIS governance to the SRT. This model allows for each CoC of care to select the governance structure that works best for their local needs. The structure consists of at least one multiCoC implementation where an entity (the final recommendation states OHCS) is the HMIS lead for

¹ <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-inequalities-homelessness-numbers/>

the multi-CoC implementation. Additionally, other CoCs could have a one-to-one CoC vendor contract, where the CoC is their own HMIS lead and has a direct connection to the software vendor. Furthermore, the model allows for the creation of an additional multi-CoC implementation, which could meet region specific needs. ICF and the SRT dedicated time and energy understanding this model and how it could be effectively applied to meet the needs of Oregon HMIS stakeholders. The model and subsequent discussions formed a key component of the final recommendations.

ICF Final Recommendations

Please refer directly to the ICF produced final recommendation report; *Oregon HMIS Budget Note Assessment Recommendations (ICF Final Recommendations)* prior to reading the SRT response. The SRT response stems directly from SRT feedback and analysis of the ICF final recommendations.

Stakeholder Review Team Response to ICF Final Recommendations

The goal of the SRT is to ensure local perspective and ownership of this process and the final recommendations. Upon receipt of the final ICF recommendations, OHCS distributed the report to the SRT and the final SRT convening was dedicated to evaluating and documenting the SRT's agreement and dissent with the recommendation report.

Summary of recommendations. Based on the ICF and stakeholder review team process, the primary HMIS Budget Note governance recommendation is a hybrid multi-CoC statewide HMIS structure model with the following main components:

1. A new hybrid multi-CoC HMIS which is administered by OHCS;
2. A data warehouse/repository which has direct data upload capabilities by all CoC implementations and is administered by OHCS;
3. Flexibility for CoCs to choose an alternative method to participate in the statewide HMIS if they do not wish to join the new multi-CoC HMIS implementation. These alternatives include establishing a single CoC HMIS implementation which uploads data to a statewide HMIS or joining a different multi-CoC implementation, which would upload data into the system; and
4. Statewide governance to oversee how statewide data is used and reported for each participating jurisdiction across the state.

The following paragraphs summarize the ICF report through the lens of the SRT and highlight the various areas of consensus, concern, and clarification.

Consensus

The SRT expressed strong support and consensus for the recommendation that OHCS becomes the HMIS lead for the hybrid model multi-CoC Implementation. To date, the Continuums of Care; OR 502 (Jackson County), OR 503 (Central Oregon), OR 504 (Salem/Marion, Polk Counties), and OR 505 (Balance of State), have expressed their intent to join the new implementation led by OHCS. OR 500 (Lane County) has committed to remain with their current governance structure; a single CoC to vendor contract. The remaining three CoCs— constituting the Portland Metro Region—are in active conversations about governance structures that will best meet their local needs. The hybrid model provides

flexibility for additional CoCs to join the OHCS led multi-CoC implementation. OHCS will continue conversation with CoCs in the Portland Metro Region to support their HMIS governance decisions.

Strong support for this recommendation extends to foundational implementation for the OHCS led implementation work such as; OHCS will hire additional staff to oversee the administration of the multi-CoC implementation; OHCS provides statewide reporting on OHCS programs and analysis, including on racial disparities; OHCS facilitates draft baseline policies, procedures, and complementary guidance documents for the multi-CoC implementation; and OHCS will provide training to implementation administrators and end users on how to use reports to improve analysis, data interpretation, and reporting capacity.

The SRT expressed strong support and consensus for the creation a statewide HMIS data repository administered by OHCS with data upload ability for all Oregon CoCs. In the short-term, this will facilitate statewide reporting on all OHCS funded projects. In the long-term, through collaboration with CoC's and the statewide HMIS governance structure, the data repository will facilitate data integration and reporting across fund sources. Housing and homelessness overlap with the education, health, and other systems in Oregon and the data repository is the first step to aligning data across services to provide the most appropriate care for each individual. The data repository, by leveraging automatic matching processes, also adds an additional level of client information protection. Furthermore, data entered into the statewide repository will provide critical information and incorporate equity and racial justice in homeless service delivery.

The SRT expressed strong support and consensus for the creation for the statewide governance structure for all HMIS implementations (HMIS data repository). A robust governance structure through which decisions are made allows for clear and transparent decision making with representation and consultation from appropriate stakeholders. The statewide governance body should provide oversight of the HMIS repository on any decision that impacts how data is used and/or released to the public at the statewide level. This will not supersede governance at the multi-CoC level or single CoC level. Each implementation operating across the state should also have a specific governance structure to determine how data is collected, used, or released. All decisions by the statewide governance structure should be approved by and consistent with each CoC's governance structure for making HMIS-related decisions, whether the decisions being made at the statewide level, Multi-CoC level, or single CoC level.

Examples of overarching governance principles to be considered by a statewide structure include; develop a decision making structure that includes policies around representation, voting process, and other committee details; create and establish necessary formal agreements for the administration of the statewide governance structure; establish equity-based principles in governance, including inclusion and representation from groups of people most impacted by decisions.

The SRT expressed strong support and consensus that Community Services (formerly Service Point) software remain the HMIS software during the HMIS governance transition and establishment of new multi-CoC implementation. During the ICF technology review the software was found to be fully compliant, if underutilized. The SRT agrees that adopting a new software during a change in HMIS governance would further complicate the transition. CoCs should examine the viability of Community Services for each CoC implementation in the

coming years. In the interim, CoCs will identify ways to increase capacity among communities lacking staff time and skill to ensure a successful HMIS implementation.

Concern

The SRT expressed concern that the staffing recommendations detailed in the ICF report will be sufficient to meet the needs of the multi-CoC HMIS implementation, management of the data repository, and participation in the statewide governance structure. SRT members recognize the significant investment recommendations in the ICF report, but also highlighted the large bodies of work required for implementation of the budget note findings. The ICF staffing recommendation calls for five additional staff to fully meet the desired outcomes of the recommendation report. The SRT believes additional staff would be optimal to fully implement the totality of the recommendations and bodies of work and that the five additional staff are the minimum required to achieve the recommendations.

Some members of the SRT expressed concern that the Local System Administrator (LSA) model of CoC governance may not meet the needs of all CoCs. The ICF recommendations do not explicitly call for this model to be employed in any new HMIS implementation, but list it as an option. Each HMIS implementation and the CoCs within each implementation should make the local governance decision that works best for their particular circumstances. This may include continuing with their current LSA model or working with their HMIS lead on different options. The ICF recommendation report details additional structures. In particular, for the OHCS led multi-CoC implementation, OHCS will work with CoCs directly to discern the optimal governance structure.

Clarification

The SRT clarified the important distinction between local CoC decisions and statewide governance decisions. As detailed above, the SRT agreed on the need for a statewide HMIS governance structure. The SRT highlighted several key areas that should remain under the purview of the local CoC. These include local CoC governance structures that provide oversight for any decision that impacts local implementation configurations such as; data quality, privacy, and security policies among others. Local CoCs will participate in the statewide HMIS governance structure and insofar as statewide changes are implemented, local CoCs will have input and authority over those decisions.

Implementation and next steps

The SRT agreed that immediate action should be taken to enact the initiatives described in the report thus far, and also reached consensus regarding future efforts that should be undertaken to enhance the HMIS in Oregon. These are focused on three primary areas.

1. **New implementation readiness.** Each CoC has unique action items and will be working with their HMIS implementation lead. OHCS is coordinating the new implementation readiness and is in discussion with the HMIS software vendor to establish a contract for the new implementation.
2. **Development of the statewide data repository.** OHCS will take the lead to contract with the software vendor and begin next steps for the data repository implementation.
3. **Creation of a statewide governance structure.** OHCS commits to host a convening space to begin this process and will actively participate in the governance structure.

Conclusion

The work of the SRT and ICF was intended and executed as a collaborative process to implement short-term changes in the Oregon HMIS and to set into motion changes that will continue to take place over the next few biennia. Consensus reached by the SRT represent systemic changes in how HMIS is governed, administered, and delivered throughout the state, with significant impacts on CAAs and OHCS in the 2021-2023 biennium.

OHCS strongly supports these recommendations and initial implementation steps of the agreements reached in this report that are currently being executed by OHCS Homeless Services staff. To fully implement recommendations, OHCS included a legislative request for additional staff and resources to support ongoing efforts in the OHCS 21-23 Agency Request Budget through the HMIS Policy Option Package. Increased investments in the HMIS system will not only be fundamental to the successful fulfillment of these report recommendations, but also in supporting greater improvements in data collection, access, and use across the state. Ensuing data-informed decisions in homeless policy and practice will ultimately better support housing stability across all Oregon communities.



Oregon HMIS Budget Note Assessment Recommendations

HUD HMIS Technical Assistance

June 2020

(Last Updated: August 2020)

Submitted to:

Oregon Housing and Community
Services

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Summary & Background

Since January 2020 ICF has engaged with stakeholders in Oregon to assess and identify a recommended structure for a statewide HMIS in Oregon. This work came in direct response to the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) receiving the HMIS Budget Note (SB5512 Budget Note) which requested recommendations for the development of a statewide HMIS system that would enable *clear outcome tracking for homeless individuals, with a focus on system implementation that meets federal and state requirements, and would improve data driven decision making, and align with national best practice*. Through HUDfunded technical assistance (TA), ICF—the national TA provider identified by HUD— worked with OHCS, the HMIS Budget Note Stakeholder Review Team, Oregon CoCs, Community Action

Agencies (CAAs), and other community stakeholders through a series of in-person meetings, conference calls, and remote webinars to facilitate the assessment.²

Throughout the assessment period between February – May 2020, ICF developed three intermittent reports to stakeholders in Oregon which outlined the results of assessments: Current HMIS operations and environmental scan (March); Staffing model considerations for the HMIS lead (April 2020); and HMIS software assessment (April 2020). In addition, ICF shared a summary of the recommended statewide HMIS model in the April HMIS Budget Note stakeholder meeting.

These recommendations outline next steps from which Oregon HMIS stakeholders can move forward building out the needs of their statewide HMIS and developing a structure from which it be sustained. Through this particular model we are recommending, we hope the following objectives can be achieved:

- Access to and reporting of statewide data;
- Additional HMIS administrative capacity and support to CoCs participating in the multiCoC HMIS model;
- Greater alignment regarding how HMIS is used across the homelessness assistance system; and
- Stronger decision-making structure for CoCs statewide.

It should be noted that some of the recommendations highlight opportunities that are currently in the process of being established by key stakeholders in Oregon. As stakeholders in Oregon are reading this report we strongly encourage the continued collaboration that has been demonstrated throughout this assessment process.

Part I. Statewide HMIS Structure in Oregon

1. Recommended Model in Oregon: Hybrid Multi-CoC statewide HMIS model

Based on the assessment process to date from January to May 2020, ICF recommends a hybrid multi-CoC statewide HMIS structure as modeled in **Figure 1**. This statewide model has three major components:

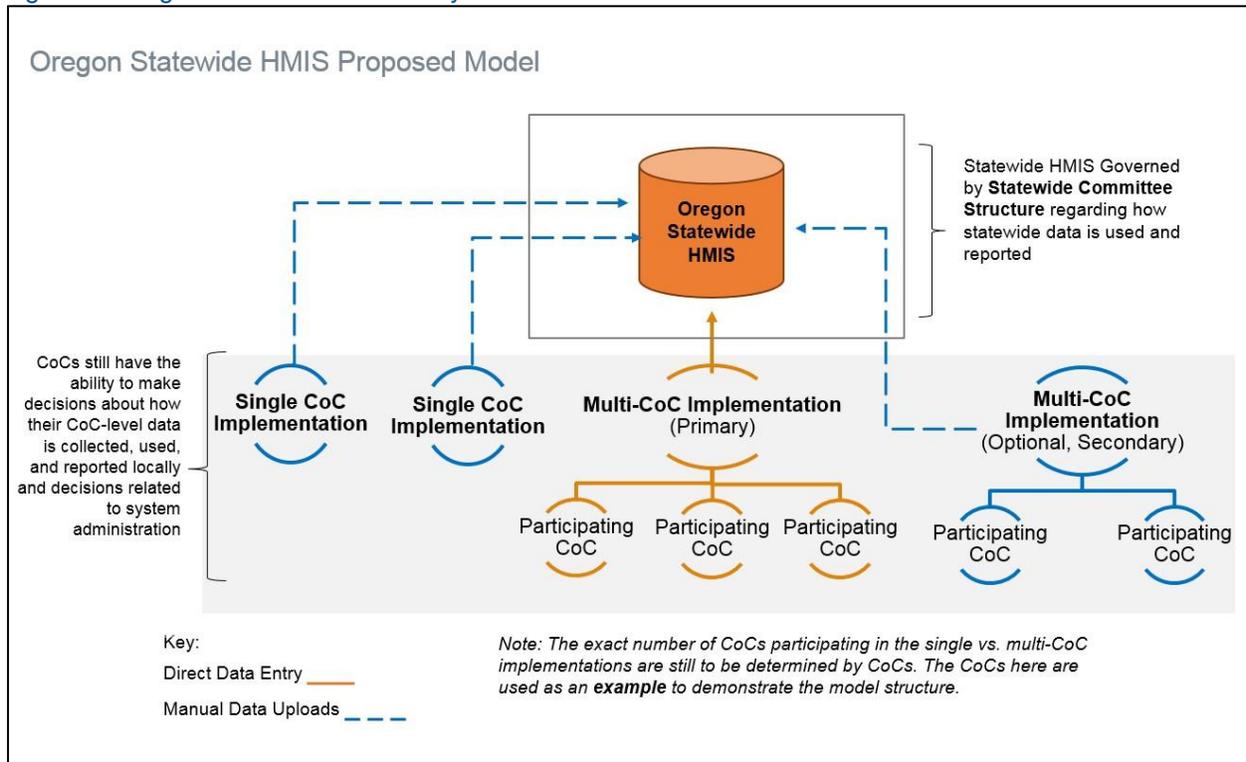
1. Statewide HMIS, which is administered by the state (or similar entity) and through which there are direct data entry capabilities by the primary multi-CoC implementation;
2. Flexibility for CoCs to choose an alternative method to participate in the statewide HMIS if they do not wish to join the primary multi-CoC HMIS implementation. These alternatives include establishing a single CoC HMIS implementation which uploads data to a statewide HMIS or joining a different multi-CoC implementation, which would upload data into the system;³ and

² Throughout this document we frequently refer to the term “CoC.” It should be noted this term CoC is intended to be used broadly as the collaboration of local stakeholders representative of relevant homeless services organizations and system partners that coordinate homeless services across a specific geography (i.e., this reference to CoCs goes beyond the scope of the CoC board or Collaborative Applicant). Often, Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are incorporated as part of the CoCs’ membership (if not already serving as the same entity as the CoC Collaborative Applicant).

³ Lane County CoC is the only CoC in Oregon that operates in a single CoC HMIS implementation (one CoC to one HMIS software contract); all other CoCs would need to establish and formalize this structure.

3. Statewide governance to oversee how statewide data is used and reported for each participating jurisdiction across the state.

Figure 1. Oregon Statewide HMIS – Hybrid Multi-CoC Statewide Structure



This structure is recommended as a result of the findings that emerged consistently throughout the assessment process. Stakeholders in Oregon have made it clear their preferred elements of a statewide HMIS would generally include the following:⁴

- Oregon CoCs and HMIS stakeholders have a desire to maintain their autonomy to make decisions impacting their homelessness response systems relevant to their geographic area;
- Oregon CoCs agreed that statewide collaboration has been beneficial and they would like to continue collaborating;
- There was support for a more formalized type of governance at the statewide level;
- CoCs in Oregon identified they could benefit from increased capacity for administering HMIS; this capacity should come from an informed perspective based on technical expertise and homeless services in the state;
- Allowance for flexibility – the structure should allow for flexibilities to meet CoCs where they are, whether operating a mature, sophisticated system or operating on at a basic level; and

⁴ In the March HMIS Budget Note stakeholder meeting, ICF presented four different statewide HMIS models to the HMIS Budget Note stakeholder group, including examples of integrated and non-integrated HMIS models from Washington, Michigan, California (proposed model), and North Carolina. The stakeholder group discussed preferred elements of a statewide model that could operate in Oregon.

- Appropriate level of governance and oversight; the governance should be formalized in a way that participating CoCs are able to make enhancements to the system in a transparent way.

2. Overview of the Structure

A multi-CoC implementation is an HMIS implementation in which more than one CoC is on the same instance of an HMIS solution. Each CoC must designate an HMIS lead and HMIS software to operate on behalf of the CoC and at least one entity holds the HMIS contract with the vendor, on behalf of the CoCs represented in the implementation. In this case, a governance structure is established that clearly defines each CoC's representation in the implementation. These are supported by formal agreements, backed by all participating CoCs.

In Oregon, we have applied a hybrid model in which there is a primary multi-CoC implementation (this would presumably have the majority of CoCs and/or a substantial portion of HMIS coverage across the state). **It is ICF's recommendation in this model that the same agency that plays the role of the HMIS lead for the multi-CoC implementation, such as OHCS, also hosts a statewide HMIS.**

Establishing a multi-CoC implementation in a way through which data may be uploaded to the statewide HMIS achieves the goals of the Oregon stakeholders to accomplish statewide homeless reporting. In addition, there is added capacity by having a statewide entity operate the administration of the statewide HMIS and the administration for a select few CoCs that would opt into participating in a multi-CoC environment. The ability for data uploads allows flexibility for the CoCs that want to maintain to a single CoC HMIS, through which it would hold its own contract with the HMIS vendor and designate its own HMIS Lead.

It should be noted there is also an option for another multi-CoC HMIS and then data would be uploaded from that HMIS into the primary multi-CoC HMIS. For example, this could be the case if CoCs wanted to stay on the existing HMIS implementation in which Portland Housing Bureau serves as the vendor contract holder for several CoCs.⁵

Finally, it is critical that the existence of a multi-CoC and/or statewide HMIS model must be accompanied by a commensurate HMIS governance structure. It is expected that the implementation of this model would utilize a statewide governance structure that establishes common standards to improve reliability in reporting, HMIS participation, and HMIS administration across the statewide implementation, including: Data quality; Training and technical support; and Reporting.

Note: Different characteristics of a CoC joining the statewide HMIS as a single CoC vs. through a multi-CoC implementation is explained further in [Appendix A](#).

⁵ As clarified in the earlier section, all CoCs except Lane County are currently on the same HMIS implementation in which Portland Housing Bureau holds the contract with the HMIS vendor.

Part II. ICF Recommendations to Implement the Statewide HMIS Structure

To ensure success in the model outlined above, we have the following recommendations for how the development of the statewide HMIS structure should proceed. These are organized by the following categories:

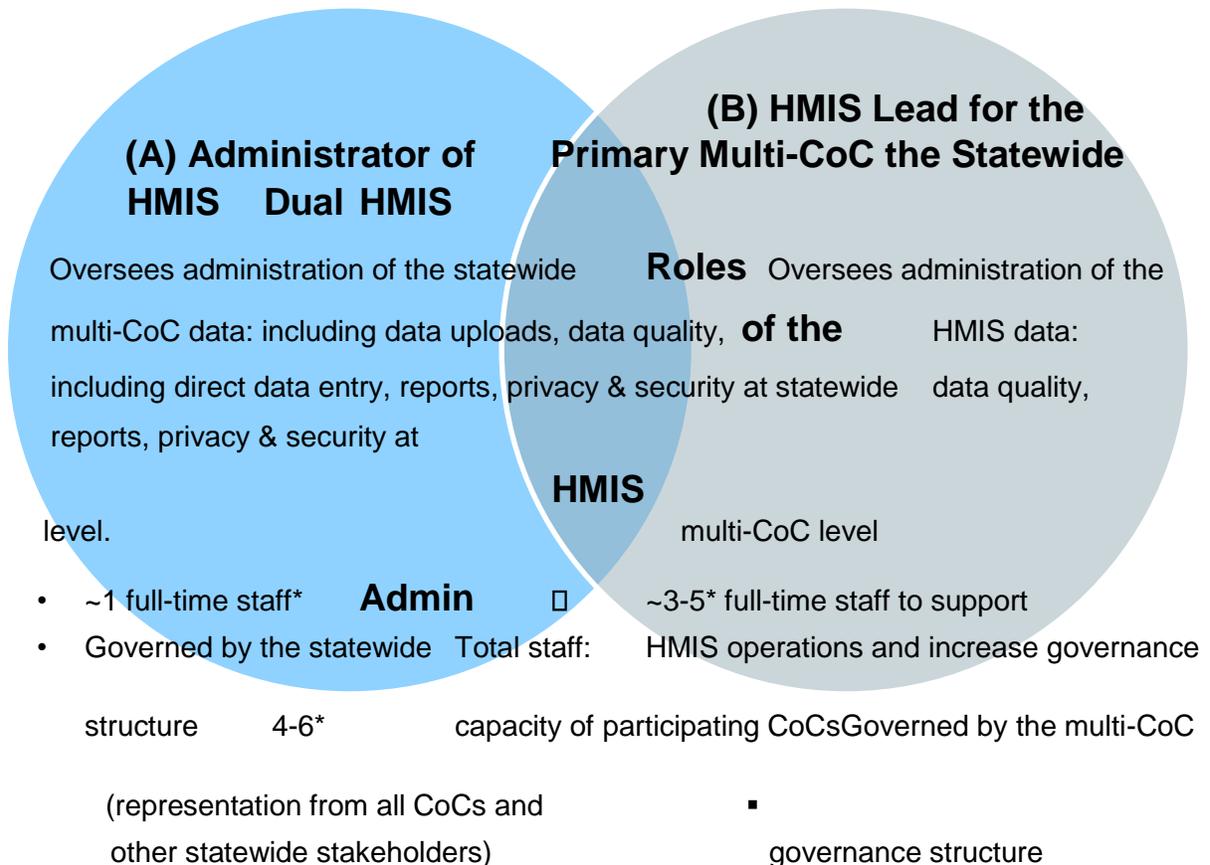
1. HMIS Lead Staffing & System Administration Support
2. Establishing a Multi-CoC and Statewide Governance Structure, including Equity-based Principles of Governance
3. Software and Technology

1. HMIS Lead Staffing & System Administration Support

Summary of Recommendations

The Oregon hybrid multi-CoC statewide model requires a single entity to serve as the HMIS administrator for the statewide HMIS and the primary multi-CoC HMIS implementation. For the latter role, this entity would assume the role as HMIS lead with participating CoCs. **Figure 2**, below, illustrates the dual roles of the HMIS administrator as they oversee the administration of the statewide HMIS (Circle A) and the primary multi-CoC HMIS (Circle B) in roles that are complementary, but ultimately covering different levels of data.

Figure 2: Dual roles of the HMIS Administrator



(representation from all participating CoCs)

**A recommended staffing model is provided in [Appendix B](#). Note that 4-6 HMIS staff is an estimate for*

this example. Staffing will ultimately depend on the expected roles of this entity and the capacity that's needed to meet the needs of the statewide and multi-CoC systems.

In **Circle A**, the HMIS administrator oversees administration of the statewide data, which includes data uploads, data quality, reports, privacy, and security, among other responsibilities at the statewide level. This role could typically be played by a single technical administrator (see [Appendix C](#) for the staff description) at the direction of the HMIS manager, though if additional responsibilities are added the HMIS administrator could add more staff to support the statewide HMIS.

Circle B requires the HMIS administrator oversees administration of the multi-CoC HMIS data, including direct data entry, data quality, reports, privacy & security at multi-CoC level. There are multiple staff needed to fill this position since this role essentially serves as the HMIS lead for participating CoCs. This means, in addition to general system administration and general oversight over data quality, privacy, and security, this role will also require additional capacity for developing trainings and guidance regarding how data is collected, reported, and analyzed. This role also can help add capacity to participating CoCs by leading the development of baseline policies and procedures based on the collective direction and oversight of the multi-CoC governance structure.

To fully ensure staffing can be met sufficiently for the multi-CoC HMIS, ICF recommends the following:

- **Implement an LSA model for the primary multi-CoC HMIS:** For the primary multi-CoC implementation, utilize a local system administrator (LSA) model to help administer HMIS on behalf of CoCs locally to meet their needs. LSAs could be responsible for assigning user licenses, delivering training, reports, data quality, TA and help desk support, etc. (See the [Appendix D](#) for a sample list of LSA roles and responsibilities). The staff of the HMIS lead entity is then responsible for system configuration and functionality, developing HMIS-wide training curriculum, developing baseline HMIS-wide policies and procedures (to be locally adapted). In addition, since the HMIS lead holds the contract with the vendor for the HMIS that reports statewide data, they can also focus on vendor and contract monitoring, in coordination with the participating CoCs.
- **Staff the HMIS Lead entity sufficiently** to meet the needs of the statewide HMIS and CoC participating in the primary multi-CoC HMIS: A brief description of ICF's staffing recommendations for staffing the HMIS lead is provided in [Appendix B](#). While the guiding principle for HMIS lead staffing is generally 1 HMIS staff member to every 75 end users (plus the HMIS manager), in a decentralized model in which LSAs are used by participating CoCs to add local capacity, it can be assumed 1 HMIS staff to 125 users will be needed to support CoCs in a decentralized model. This is staff *in addition* to the two roles of the HMIS manager and the role of the HMIS technical administrator to support the needs of the statewide HMIS.

Opportunities to Further Expand Capacity for HMIS Staffing and Expertise

It is important that staffing for the HMIS lead is sufficiently funded and equipped in technical and homeless services expertise and can help facilitate the collaboration of other partners as needed. Based on the direct feedback of Oregon stakeholders, ICF recommends building up sufficient staffing and capacity for the following.

- **Reporting capabilities:**
 - Supporting the structure to develop standardized reports. In addition to common reports such as the HUD-required reports for compliance and performance indicators, this role should support project- and CoC-level HMIS reports on disparities in access to services and housing. Furthermore, data should be disaggregated by race and ethnicity, gender, household size, and the intersection of those demographics to assess needs by population.
 - Providing training to LSAs and/or end users on how to use the reports. This could help add capacity in smaller CoCs or CoCs with less reporting capacity who currently do have access to the reporting functionality in the ways they want it to be used to show data on projects and system performance. This could also help demonstrate the importance of HMIS to stakeholders and increase buy-in in communities where HMIS participation is lacking.
 - Training on how to interpret and analyze local reports, including connections to resources across Oregon that can help provide localized context to the reports. For example, connecting with universities and other research entities, and organizations focusing on special populations that can add help add context behind the reporting analysis. CoCs should also be supporting this effort by establishing partnerships locally with culturally specific organizations and persons from those communities to help inform those findings to make decisions.
 - Providing system-wide reporting and analysis, including reporting on racial disparities and data disaggregated by race and ethnicity.
- **Policy and procedure development:** The HMIS lead for the primary multi-CoC implementation is expected to play an important role helping to draft baseline policies and procedures and complementary guidance documents (e.g., policies and procedures for establishing a privacy structure, security, and data quality) that are informed by the collective multi-CoC implementation. This could help add capacity for CoCs that can take the baseline policies and add additional policies based on local needs. This also serves as an opportunity for the HMIS lead to work with the CoCs directly to continuously assess feedback from stakeholders and identify when policy and procedure changes are warranted to reflect changing priorities from the participating CoCs in the multi-CoC implementation. While this role would primarily benefit the CoCs participating in the multi-CoC HMIS, note this capacity can also be leveraged at the statewide level by having the designated staff member draft policies and procedures across the statewide system that are then reviewed, approved, and adopted by each participating CoC and other participating stakeholders of the statewide system.
- **Training:** In addition to the training described above on reporting capabilities, the multiCoC HMIS lead should help with providing training for data quality and understanding data privacy. This could help ensure data entered into HMIS is accurate and meets the privacy requirements, which can help reinforce service delivery and coordination in a way that meets the participating CoCs' needs.

Note: [Appendix C](#) provides staffing descriptions regarding the different roles that can support the HMIS lead in the primary multi-CoC HMIS and statewide HMIS.

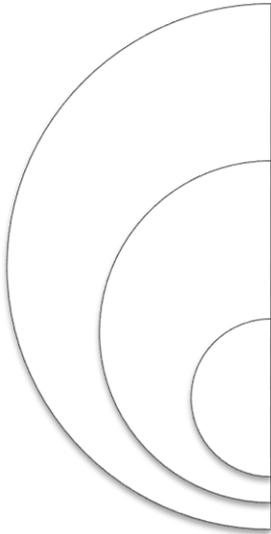
2. Establishing a Governance Structure for the Statewide and Multi-CoC HMIS

Summary of Recommendations

This statewide model must be governed by **a statewide governance** structure that oversees any decision that impacts the statewide HMIS configuration, how data is used, and/or released at the statewide level. **At the multi-CoC level and for each single CoC implementation operating across the state**, there should also be a specific governance structure that governs how data is collected, used, or released. All decisions should be approved by and consistent with each CoC’s governance structure for making HMIS-related decisions, whether the decisions being made at the statewide level (relevant to the statewide HMIS implementation) or Multi-CoC level (related to the multi-CoC implementation). Therefore, it is imperative that the structure through which decisions are being made allows for clear and transparent decisionmaking with representation and consultation from appropriate stakeholders. **Figure 3**, below, demonstrates the distinctions in the different levels of governance and authority.

Figure 3: Different levels of HMIS governance

(A) Statewide Governance	Statewide governance should account for any decision that impacts the statewide HMIS configuration, how data is used, or released at the statewide level (e.g., frequency of data uploads, statewide aggregate reports, etc.)
(B) Multi-CoC Governance	Multi-CoC or single CoC governance should account for any decision that impacts the corresponding HMIS implementation’s configuration, and how data is collected, used, or released (e.g., coordinated entry-HMIS workflow, uses and disclosures of data, etc.) at the single CoC or multi-CoC level.
(C) Single CoC Governance	



HMIS policies developed at the Statewide vs. Multi-CoC or single CoC level

- **HMIS Governance Policies at the Statewide Level:** There should be statewide governance that govern the statewide HMIS, including decisions that impact the statewide HMIS configuration, how data is used, or released at the statewide level, etc. (e.g., statewide aggregate reports). In this structure, CoCs in Oregon should agree upon and establish a governance structure that can eventually make decisions on the following policies across their respective geographies: policies on reporting; policies for data access, use, and retention; data quality and integrity standards; data privacy and confidentiality standards; data sharing at the aggregate or client-level (identifiable and/or unidentifiable); frequency of data uploads; data analysis and research agreements; and funding and cost to support the administration of the statewide system.
- **HMIS Governance Policies at the Single CoC or Multi-CoC level:** The governance structure should account for any decisions that impact the HMIS implementation's configuration, how data is collected, used, or released at the corresponding single CoC level and/or multi-CoC level as applicable (e.g., coordinated entry-HMIS workflow). These policies include, but are not limited to: data quality, privacy, and security policies; reporting; data analysis and research agreements; and funding and cost to support the administration of the single-CoC or Multi-CoC HMIS system. Much of the policies may overlap with the policies of the statewide model; however, it is important to clarify that the levels of authority differ and the policies for data quality, security and privacy must be consistent for a CoC participating in the statewide HMIS.

Overarching principles for the development of both the multi-CoC HMIS governance structure and the statewide HMIS governance structure

- **HMIS decision-making structure:** *(Note this applies for both the statewide and multiCoC governance structure)* There should be formal policies in place that describe how decisions are made related to the governing structure, including representation across each CoC and stakeholders across the state, voting power distribution, voting process and quorum guidelines, meeting attendance, appeals, committee or sub-committee structures, and guidelines for the documentation of decisions and meeting minutes. Each CoC participating in the statewide HMIS should have representation in

this structure and this structure should be approved by and consistent with each CoC's governance structure for making HMIS-related decisions.

- **Need for equity-based principles in governance:** It is critical that the process by which CoCs are identifying needs and making decisions related to data collection, reporting, and analysis are informed by a diverse set of stakeholders across each CoC; in particular, inclusion and representation from the groups of people that will most impacted by the decision, process, or policy being made. Specifically, Black people, Indigenous people, people of color (BIPOC), those with lived experience of homelessness, and other marginalized populations should be part of the teams actively involved in making funding allocation decisions and developing policy guidelines for the way in which HMIS data is collected, used, and reported. For the Oregon statewide HMIS, stakeholders and CoCs in Oregon must consider the best process for including the consultation and direct representation from BIPOC communities and persons with lived experience in their statewide HMIS governance structure (e.g., who should participate as voting member or, at a minimum, consulted before a policy decision is made).
- **Documents and agreements in place:** Formal agreements must be in place to formalize the governance structures across the statewide HMIS and primary multi-CoC HMIS, as applicable to CoCs and participating entities. This includes but is not limited to: the Joint HMIS governance charter and/or HMIS committee by-laws, MOU, Cost sharing agreements, Contract for services, data sharing agreements, and other documents/agreements as necessary. In addition, the HMIS lead and governance structure should ensure documents that would be impacted (e.g., ROI, Privacy Notice, operating procedures) are updated and reflect current policies and procedures in the joint governance model, statewide and/or across a multi-CoC environment.

Opportunities to Further Strengthen Governance

- To leverage this growing collaboration, stakeholders in Oregon should continue to hold statewide meetings, such as Collaborate Oregon for Everyone Everywhere (COFEE), to showcase the work of the HMIS across the state and build capacity for stakeholders who are not able to directly participate in the statewide governance structure. CoCs and stakeholders in Oregon have a history of working together when there are shared interests (e.g., Built for Zero). The state should capitalize on this shared collaborative environment to further align and strengthen homeless services across the state. For example, there could be more coordination and sharing of resources among the different communities that have access to specialized staff that have expertise and focus on racial equity in data collection practices and reporting.
- CoCs are at varying levels regarding the type of outreach and inclusion they have with culturally specific organizations, and BIPOC-representative communities in CoC planning and operations (view a summary of ICF's HMIS and racial equity calls with CoCs in [Appendix E](#)); however, even the CoCs with lesser capacity and resources dedicated towards racial equity today noted how they could benefit from additional capacity at the statewide level to support their community (e.g., through trainings and guidance on effective outreach practices). As a start, one way that the HMIS governance structure can play a role advancing racial equity is by setting a collective vision and mission by

which the communities across Oregon can follow when adopting policies that have impacts across homeless services and guides decisions about who should be participating in the committee. While CoCs are in different places regarding how their systems are designed, resources available, and populations they serve, this could serve as a foundation from which all the CoCs can continue to collaborate together and work towards shared goals trying to reduce racial disparities for households experiencing homelessness and housing instability across Oregon.

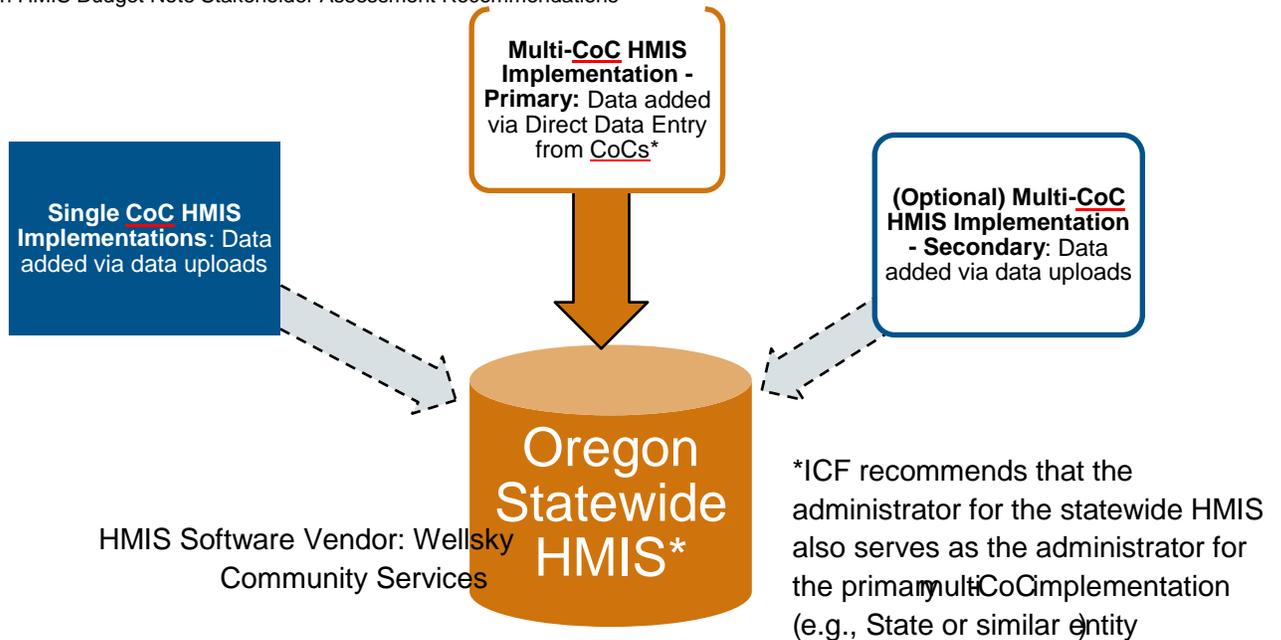
- As mentioned in previous sections, incorporating representation in the HMIS governance structure that is reflective of the diversity of the homeless services programs and persons served by the programs is critical. This means, the executive decision-making body of the governance structure *should not* exclusively be comprised of CoC and HMIS staff, unless there has been intentional linkages in decision-making power. The governance committee charged with overseeing the statewide HMIS and/or primary multi-CoC HMIS should also ensure any decisions made as a result of analysis from program and system-level outcomes in HMIS includes the perspective and expertise of persons with lived experience and BIPOC representation to the extent feasible; particularly, as it impacts how resources will be allocated across the system. Adopting a commitment to racial equity and specific examples how the committee will be incorporating racial equity principles into their decision-making process (as outlined in the above bullet) will help guide this work moving forward as a start.

3. Software and Technology Needs

Summary of Recommendations

The recommended statewide HMIS structure utilizes a hybrid multi-CoC model by which CoCs that choose *not* to participate in the primary multi-CoC implementation may choose to either operate a standalone single CoC implementation or join a secondary multi-CoC HMIS implementation (*view **Figure 4** in the section below*). In either of these two alternative options, data must be uploaded to the HMIS of the primary multi-CoC implementation to comprise of a statewide HMIS.

Figure 4. Direct data entry vs. uploads for the statewide HMIS model



Currently, WellSky Community Services (formerly ServicePoint) is the HMIS software and vendor that is being utilized by all CoCs across the state of Oregon. At this time ICF recommends that CoCs in Oregon *do not* change the HMIS software or vendor. It is ICF’s assessment that the current HMIS software has the capacity to serve as the software for a potential statewide HMIS. ICF found that the current HMIS software, Well Sky Community Services (formerly ServicePoint), met baseline functionality standards as set from HUD’s 2004 Data and Technical Standards and the most recent version of the HMIS Data Standards and is compliant with HUD’s requirements.

CoCs are using the HMIS software beyond baseline and compliance-based capabilities at varying levels. Since these differences are primarily dependent upon HMIS staff capacity and available skillset, this provides a promising opportunity for strengthened governance and staff capacity at the multi-CoC and statewide level (see Part 2 – HMIS staffing and HMIS governance) to provide additional resources and guidance to improve the capacity of CoCs utilizing the software, all aforementioned governance recommendations considered. In addition, being on a single software statewide could make for a more streamlined approach for the HMIS lead to share new guidance on the software capabilities, highlight emerging practices that are working, or troubleshoot reporting or functionality errors from the HMIS lead(s) to participating CoCs.

Opportunities to Further Strengthen Use and Administration of the Software:

To ensure that the software continues to meet the needs of CoCs and key HMIS interests across the state, stakeholders participating in the statewide HMIS should:

- Review the various functionality within the current HMIS software to ensure communities are using the system to its full capacity to meet local needs, including for coordinated entry.
- Ensure a strong governance structure that allows for collaboration and equitable decision-making among the participating CoCs. Decisions on the functionality and

improvements in a shared HMIS should clearly reflect the priorities of the CoCs and should be reflected in the interactions with the HMIS vendor.

- Communities lacking staff time and skill set to ensure a successful HMIS implementation, including reporting capabilities, should identify ways to increase capacity (e.g., consider the role and efficacy of joining the primary multi-CoC implementation)
- Monitor and evaluate the software and software vendor annually to ensure the HMIS software continues to meet the needs of the communities.

It should be noted that is not a requirement to have CoCs utilize the same HMIS software to be considered a statewide HMIS implementation; the Washington model, for example, integrates data from multiple HMIS software vendors. However, staying on the same software could make for a timelier and less resource-intensive transition to a statewide HMIS. If CoCs end up choosing this path to change their software and/or vendor,⁶ this decision from CoCs should be clearly communicated to statewide HMIS stakeholders and planned at least 8-10 months in advance before being pursued to account for vendor contract changes and budget and costs associated with integrating data from a different vendor.⁷ HUD would also expect this process for changing the software to be completed after attempts to monitor and evaluate the software and vendor performance and through which concerns from a broad array of stakeholders—including CoC leadership, end users, and service providers—could not be rectified.

Next Steps & Conclusion

1. Next Steps

Due to the uncertainty with COVID-19, the process that stakeholders in Oregon take next and order of next steps may not be a linear process. Nonetheless, ICF would like to address the following next steps Oregon CoCs, OHCS, and other relevant HMIS stakeholders should take to help move the development of a statewide HMIS forward.⁸

- **Oregon CoCs should identify under which part of the statewide HMIS model they fall: participating in a multi-CoC HMIS, or establishing a single CoC HMIS**
 - Clarify roles and responsibilities they need HMIS lead
 - Confirm the technology solution they are looking for that could support their needs
 - start researching cost estimates that could be feasible to support technology and HMIS staffing needs
- **Identify and secure the HMIS lead entity (this will be informed by the governance process outlined in Part 2) and formalize agreements with the participating CoCs and relevant entities**
 - Based on ICF's assessment process to date, ICF recommends that OHCS serves in this role as HMIS lead for the statewide configuration, directed by the governance process adopted by participating CoCs in this statewide collaboration

⁶ As a reminder, each CoC has the ability to designate an HMIS vendor, as defined in § [578.7\(b\)](#).

⁷ Keep in mind that a CoC choosing to change their HMIS software will have impacts on the contract that is held with the vendor; if the CoC is participating in a multi-CoC HMIS implementation, this change will need to be made in coordination with the CoCs part of the multi-CoC implementation.

⁸ Please note these next steps do not take into account timelines of the Oregon State Legislature and/or other localized constraints.

(outlined in Part 2). OHCS has expressed their commitment to serving as the HMIS lead entity on behalf of CoCs across the state. Furthermore, they are the best identified candidate due to their familiarity in HMIS and across the Oregon homeless services environment, and their demonstrated capacity to take on this role overseeing the statewide HMIS.⁹

- **Establish budgetary and financial commitments to support the HMIS lead; confirm budgetary amounts for utilizing the statewide HMIS model with data uploads and cost expectations for participating CoCs**
- **Establish a governance structure that supports the statewide HMIS administration and a governance structure that supports CoCs participating in the multi-CoC HMIS implementation**
 - Formalize membership and leadership roles for governance (assign chair, cochair, committee leads)
 - Establish a governance structure that leads with equity. Allow time for CoCs to go back to their communities to obtain feedback on the participation process, identify persons that should be represented with voting power, and ensure there is a feedback loop to ensure appropriate persons and groups of people are consulted before a decision is made that impacts them. CoCs and HMIS stakeholders should clarify and document this process locally.
- **At the statewide level and for each multi-CoC HMIS structure, establish objectives and priorities for the next 6-8 months.**
 - Before getting started, develop and vision and mission statement for the statewide HMIS structure and governance. The statewide structure should also clarify its goals and objectives using the statewide HMIS to advance racial equity and justice across the state.
- **From now until the launch of this statewide HMIS, conduct a continuous assessment of state, CoC, HMIS stakeholder, and consumer needs as budgets and service priorities change amid the pandemic.**
 - ICF recommends establishing a regularly occurring meeting with stakeholders to plan the implementation of the statewide HMIS structure, including development of the governance structure.

2. Conclusion

Amid the health and economic impacts of COVID-19, there is an unprecedented level of uncertainty regarding local and state funding and provision of services to communities across the country. Data systems, including HMIS, will be charged with playing an ever-increasing role to help local decisions makers and CoCs identify the needs in their communities and assisting with service coordination across homeless service providers and across multiple systems, including hospitals, public health, and other key cross-system partners. Thus, increasing investments and aligning strategies for HMIS will be critical during this time.

⁹ Please note, in the event OHCS is unable to play this role, CoCs will need to identify which other entities may be interested in serving in this role as the HMIS lead across the state. In this case, CoCs should follow local procurement policies of their CoC and organization when considering a change in the HMIS lead.

Discussions around statewide collaboration in response to this pandemic have already taken shape, such as coordination with several CoCs in Oregon, OHCS, and Collective Medical, for example. ICF recommends building on initiatives such as this to further continue discussions across the state regarding next steps to explore the needs of the statewide HMIS to begin establishing the statewide governance structure and obtaining sufficient resources for staffing the HMIS administrator. Ultimately, adopting elements from this recommended statewide model will allow for a stronger governance structure and administration of HMIS to better position homelessness assistance programs in Oregon to be coordinated, more informed at the regional and statewide level, and responsive to change.

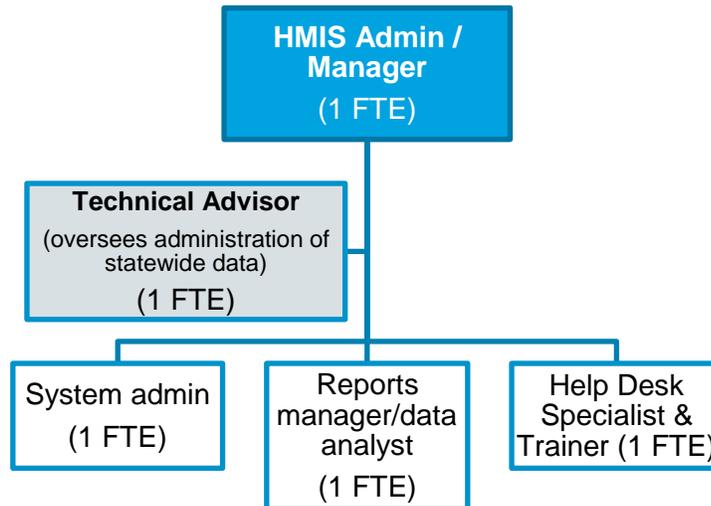
APPENDICES

Appendix A. Key elements of the Oregon statewide HMIS model for single CoC and multi-CoC implementations.

Key Element	Oregon’s Hybrid Multi-CoC Statewide HMIS model	
Descriptor	<i>If CoC choose not to join the multi-CoC Implementation (i.e., Single CoC Implementation)</i>	<i>If CoCs opt into a multi-CoC Implementation</i>
Options for different HMIS software/vendors	Single (unless otherwise designated by the CoC*)	Single (unless otherwise designated by the participating CoCs)
HMIS contract holder	One-to-one	One-to-many
Governance Structure & decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must abide by CoC-level governance and policies and procedures; and • Must abide by statewide-level governance and policies and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must abide by CoC-level governance and policies and procedures; • Must abide by statewide-level governance and policies and procedures; and • Must abide by regional/multi-CoC level governance and policies and procedures
System administration	One-to-one	One-to-many: Centralized at HMIS Lead level, with support from LSAs
Added capacity for CoCs administering HMIS	No	Yes
“Real-time” data for service coordination	Not Likely at the state level (but up to CoC at local level)	Likely (but contingent on HMIS timeliness standards at the state and local level)
System integration / data upload needed?	Yes – CoCs will be expected to upload data to the statewide HMIS environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, if joining the primary Multi-CoC HMIS implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CoCs doing direct data entry into statewide system • Yes, if joining other form of multi-CoC implementation ○ Data uploads expected to statewide HMIS
Statewide Reporting Capabilities	Yes, through statewide HMIS	Yes, through statewide HMIS

Appendix B. Proposed Staffing Structure for the HMIS Administrator

Example staffing structure for team of 3 FTE staff supporting the primary multi-CoC implementation, plus the HMIS manager and technical manager. This example assumes there is support needed for ~375 end users with the use of Local System Administrators at the CoC-level for CoCs participating in the multi-CoC HMIS.



HMIS Implementation Size Estimate	Number of End Users	HMIS Staff FTEs
(Relative size of the system, by # end users)	(Example indicators)	(1 FTE : 125 users, rounded)
Low Estimate	130 users	1 FTE + HMIS manager + Technical Adviser
Medium Estimate	350 users	2.75 FTE + HMIS manager + Technical Adviser
High Estimate	500 users	4 FTE + HMIS manager + Technical Adviser

Appendix C: Staffing Descriptions - Example Position Descriptions for HMIS Lead Staff

HMIS Administrator (HMIS Project Manager)

Position Description: The HMIS Administrator manages the administrative, budgetary, operational and regulatory aspects of the HMIS implementation. The HMIS Administrator has primary responsibility over project set-up, grant management and administration, HMIS vendor relations, HMIS user relations, capacity building, strategic planning and policy and procedure development.

Allocation per week (%)	Task	Responsibility
30%	Grant Administration	The HMIS Administrator will manage the grant application process for dedicated HMIS projects, manage post-award grant administration, monitor draw-down rates of HMIS budget line items across agencies, and account for the use of HMIS grant funds across the CoC.
10%	Contract Monitoring and Compliance	The HMIS Administrator will provide ongoing management and oversight of contracts held between the CoC, HMIS Lead Agency and HMIS vendor to ensure that all terms and conditions of the contract are upheld, that the vendor complies with all applicable Scopes and Statements of Work and that deadlines and milestones are met. The HMIS Administrator will also administer, review and approve payments to the HMIS vendor. As needed, the HMIS Administrator will lead the development and solicitation of RFPs, and will serve as the liaison with the HMIS vendor to facilitate contract amendments or changes to the terms and conditions
20%	Policy and Procedural Development	The HMIS Administrator will be the primary entity for developing, implementing and enforcing HMIS Privacy and Confidentiality policies, procedures and written standards. The HMIS Administrator will coordinate with the appropriate governing and legal entities to develop or revise, as necessary, written consent forms, releases of information, and privacy notices and practices to ensure compliance with all applicable federal, state and local privacy statutes and regulations. Policies and procedures will be developed using a lens of diversity & racial equity in alignment with the participating CoCs' goals and objectives for administering HMIS.
20%	Change Management and Knowledge Transfer	The HMIS Administrator will establish quality improvement practices to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations and to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge to internal staff members and HMIS end users. This includes the facilitation of and participation in CoC meetings, HMIS workgroups and committees, attendance at HMIS conferences and other applicable learning opportunities, establishing guiding principles for the administration and utilization of HMIS, obtaining guidance related to HMIS administration and performance
		measurement from HUD and the HMIS vendor, and implementing change management practices across and HMIS end users.

20%	HMIS Staff Management	The HMIS Administrator will provide general oversight and management of the HMIS staff to ensure attainment of goals and duties, monitor and measure deliverables and other required activities, provides learning opportunities and capacity building initiatives where appropriate, and sets goals for continuous improvement. They will also maintain a current and accurate organization chart that clearly identifies all team members, roles and responsibilities, and general work activities/functions.
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System Administrator

Position Description: The System Administrator implements operational requirements related to the administration of the HMIS implementation. The System Administrator provides ongoing technical support and leadership related to data-sharing initiatives, data exchange capabilities with HUD and other Federal Partners, data quality and performance measurement, and assists the HMIS Administrator in the management of HMIS vendor contracts and the monitoring of HMIS end users for compliance regarding data quality, privacy and security, and data configuration.

Allocation per week (%)	Task	Responsibility
20%	System Administration	The System Administrator carries out system administration tasks related to the maintenance of HMIS end user accounts, system configuration and functionality, development and design of system workflows, dashboards, collection forms and reporting tools, and the accurate reporting of HUD Project Descriptor Data Element to ensure accurate reporting and referral capabilities.
30%	System Maintenance and Upgrades	The System Administrator will ensure proper functionality to meet HUD and Federal Partner requirements, as well as any CoC-specific functionality required by participating CoCs. The System Administrator will coordinate with the vendor to develop system interfaces, develop conversion routines as needed, and conduct requirements gathering in advance of new system functionality.
40%	Data Management	The System Administrator is responsible for coordinating all inter-agency electronic data sharing protocols and activities. Data sharing in HMIS includes the data entered into the HMIS by Federal Partner programs and other participating agencies, and includes the data exchanges utilized by HUD and Federal Partners. The System Administrator will be responsible for ensuring correct file formats (XML, CSV, etc.) and functionality for data exchange and data sharing, and will be responsible for coordinating with the local CARES data management system. In addition, as the role of HMIS in the Coordinated Entry System is more fully developed, the System Administrator will have primary management for the development of HMIS functionality, including, but not limited to: client intake, case notes and case management, service

		and referral tracking, outreach and contacts, eligibility screening and referral, and daily management of bed vacancies.
10%	Change Management and Knowledge Transfer	The System Administrator will work with the HMIS Administrator to establish quality improvement practices to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations and to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge to internal staff members and HMIS end users. This includes the facilitation of and participation in CoC meetings, HMIS workgroups and committees, attendance at HMIS conferences and other applicable learning opportunities such as MARHMIS, establishing guiding principles for the administration and utilization of HMIS, obtaining guidance related to HMIS administration and performance measurement from HUD and the HMIS vendor, and implementing change management practices across and HMIS end users.

Technical Advisor

Position Description: The Technical Advisor will dedicate a portion of their time to advising the HMIS Administrator on information technology issues affecting HMIS and other data management, technical and security issues. The Technical Advisor will ensure that the HMIS is compatible with other data management systems within the CoC, and will enforce required HMIS security functionalities to ensure compliance with federal, state and local regulations.

Allocation per week (%)	Task	Responsibility
50%	Information Technology Coordination	The Technical Advisor will serve as a liaison between the HMIS Administrator and other data management systems across the CoC and across the implementation to ensure compatibility and functionality (e.g., management of the statewide HMIS). The Technical Advisor will ensure proper data sharing and exchange protocols between HMIS and other data management systems to provide necessary privacy protection of client-level data and appropriate data transfer protocols.
50%	Information Security and Enforcement	The Technical Advisor will receive and review HMIS system security protocols and procedures, as well as monitoring HMIS security functionality to ensure that the HMIS is appropriately managing tasks including, but not limited to: transmission of encrypted data, password format enforcement, security breaches, multi-mode or workstation authentication, failed login lockouts, disabling of user IDs and audit trails. The Technical Advisor will also review active user reports to ensure that account access is current based on agency staff.

Reports Manager

Position Description: The Reports Manager develops, generates and disseminates canned and ad hoc reports necessary to inform data-driven decision making at the project and system levels. The Reports Manager manages client merge and unduplication processes to improve data quality, and develops and manages a process for delivering reports in a timely and efficient manner. The Reports Manager will also work with the HMIS vendor to ensure all logic and calculations required to measure System Performance and other metrics are correctly programmed into HMIS.

Allocation per week (%)	HMIS Admin Role	Responsibility
40%	Reports Development and Generation	The Reports Manager will generate reports including, but not limited to, the following: Missing Values reports, PIT and HIC reports, Data Quality reports, System Performance Measures, Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA), APRs, required Federal Partner reports, and will assist agency staff as needed to produce project-level reports. The Reports Manager will also monitor data quality to ensure timeliness, accuracy and completeness of data entry practices.
10%	System Maintenance and Upgrades	The Reports Manager will ensure that the HMIS is properly programmed to calculate and produce all reports mandated by HUD and Federal Partners, in addition to state and local reports. The Reports Manager will ensure that reporting capabilities are accessible to staff as well as appropriate agency staff, and will assist agency staff as needed in generating ad hoc reports. The Reporting Manager will also conduct knowledge transfer to end users on available HMIS reporting functionality.
40%	Data Quality Management	The Reports Manager will work with the HMIS team and CoC Stakeholders to develop a data quality management and monitoring plan that includes but is not limited to implementation of the plan, establishing data quality benchmarks, procedures for correcting data, generating regular reports for data completeness, a timeframe for ongoing monitoring of the data quality. The Reports Coordinator will work with the Training Specialist and HMIS System Admin to ensure data collection on the front end is streamline across all providers for intake, assessment, and exit. They will work with stakeholders throughout the CoC to provide transparent access to the data quality plan, reports, correction required and review on a regular basis.
10%	Change Management and Knowledge Transfer	The Reports Manager will participate in HUD learning opportunities and will collaborate with the vendor to ensure all HMIS functionality, programming specifications and report logic is accurate. Changes to data element definitions and calculations should be disseminated to stakeholders as needed.

HMIS Data Analyst

Position Description:¹⁰ The HMIS Data Analyst collects, reviews, and analyzes national, state, and local data to create an accurate picture and representation of homelessness within the CoC. The HMIS Data Analyst works with the Reports Manager and System Administrator to run reports and gaps analysis to ensure the resources are being utilized and targeted in the most appropriate way and to help improve the overall system planning, coordination of care, and performance. The HMIS Data Analyst shares this work with various stakeholders throughout the CoC with data visualization tools and dashboards to inform stakeholders of the priorities that should exist within the community to provoke systems change.

Allocation per week (%)	Task	Responsibilities
30%	Data Analysis and System Modeling	The HMIS Data Analyst utilizes reports, data and resources available at the national, state, and local levels from HUD Exchange, HDX 1.0, HDX 2.0, Sage, CAPER, and HMIS to support a more data driven system modeling process that will inform local CoC Leadership and programs to ensure the efficient and effective allocation of resources in the community to address the actual needs and preferences of those being served. The HMIS Data Analyst uses the HUD CoC Analysis tool as well as other tools that are available to facilitate the analysis of the racial and ethnic disparities among people experiencing homelessness within the local CoC to inform and educate local system leaders, policies, procedures and programs to promote systems change and close gaps that exist. They HMIS Data Analyst also uses data to identify, analyze, and interpret trends in complex data sets as requested throughout the CoC. The HMIS Data Analyst will work on local and ad hoc data analysis as requested by the CoC and for any additional data analysis needs relevant to supporting funding opportunities.
20%	Data Visualization	The HMIS Data Analyst creates compelling and “publicly digestible” infographics, presentation visuals, and dashboards to communicate the complex ideas, issues and trends gleaned from statistical reports, following a branding style guide and integrating input from various internal and external stakeholders.
30%	System Improvement & Planning	The HMIS Data Analyst works with the HMIS Project Manager, Lead System Admin, and Reports Coordinator to establish system level performance goals and benchmarks. The HMIS Data Analyst works closely with the Reports Manager to leverage HUD data resources that are available to devise a system improvement plan, incorporate continuous quality improvement strategies, foster communication and feedback loops, and practice iteration with participating agencies and stakeholders throughout the CoC.

¹⁰ Keep in mind the roles of the HMIS Data Analyst will be dependent on the CoC’s defined expectations for this role and system capabilities. Much of these roles are present in high functioning HMIS implementations, but are not required by HUD.

20%	Change Management	The HMIS Data Analyst works closely with the Reports Coordinator, Training Coordinator, and Help Desk Specialist to provide technical support to HMIS participating agencies to ensure that data entered into HMIS is complete,
	and Knowledge Transfer	accurate, and entered in a timely manner to meet reporting deadlines. The HMIS Data Analyst will work with the HMIS team to assist in leading and facilitating the discussion of data in CoC meetings, HMIS workgroups and committees, attendance at HMIS conferences and other applicable learning opportunities.

HMIS Training Specialist

Position Description: The HMIS Training Specialist conducts trainings for end users and provides learning opportunities through a variety of modalities to agency HMIS staff. The Training Specialist assists the HMIS Administrator and System Administrator in communicating the roles and responsibilities of data quality, data entry practices and privacy policies and procedures to agency staff and HMIS end users.

Allocation per week (%)	HMIS Admin Role	Responsibility
60%	Training and Learning Opportunity Provision	The HMIS Training Specialist conducts trainings for end users and provides learning opportunities through a variety of modalities to agency HMIS staff. HMIS trainings must be conducted for all new HMIS users, and should be held on a regular basis for current end users. The HMIS Training Specialist will remain current on all HMIS reports (including HIC, PIT, APR and LSA), data elements and definitions, and privacy policies and practices in order to disseminate this information to agency staff. The HMIS Training Specialists must remain proficient in, and provide trainings for, the following topics: HMIS operating procedures, client privacy and consent, HMIS security features and practices, HMIS software features and functionality, system administration and reporting/data analysis. Other training topics will be provided to end users as identified by the HMIS Administrator, System Administrator and HMIS Training Specialists.
30%	Policy and Procedural Development	The HMIS Training Specialist will coordinate with the HMIS Administrator to develop training manuals for the implementation of policies and procedures and disseminating all necessary information to HMIS end users through a variety of modalities. The HMIS Training Specialist will ensure consistent application of policies, procedures and written standards through the delivery of trainings and learning opportunities, and will ensure necessary competencies are attained by HMIS end users regarding policy and procedure implementation.

10%	Change Management and Knowledge Transfer	The HMIS Training Specialist will coordinate with the System Administrator to identify gaps in knowledge or application of consistent practices across HMIS end users, and develop appropriate trainings and learning opportunities in order to increase capacity and core competencies of HMIS end users.
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HMIS Help Desk Specialist

Position Description: The Help Desk Specialist will provide support to HMIS end users to ensure appropriate usage of and access to the HMIS system. The Help Desk Specialist will troubleshoot system issues as appropriate, and will escalate issues to the HMIS vendor in accordance with the protocols outlined in the Service Level Agreement. The Help Desk Specialist will ensure timely resolution of end user issues to provide quality control regarding data quality, system utilization and HMIS operation.

Allocation per week (%)	HMIS Admin Role	Responsibility
75%	Technical Assistance and Help Desk Support	The Help Desk Specialist will provide technical assistance and Help Desk support to HMIS end users. The Help Desk Specialist will ensure that HMIS end users have access to the system, have appropriate clearances for and access to various system functionality based on user role, and will provide Help Desk support ¹¹ to HMIS end users to assist in the day-to-day operation of HMIS. The Help Desk Specialist will escalate issues that require vendor support to the HMIS vendor in accordance with the protocols outlined in the Service Level Agreement, and will ensure timely and satisfactory resolution of the issue. The Help Desk Specialist will maintain an issue tracking system to ensure resolution of all end user system issues.
25%	Change Management and Knowledge Transfer	The Help Desk Specialist will provide feedback to the HMIS Administrator, System Administrator and HMIS Training Specialists regarding the frequency and types of system and end user issues resolved on a regular basis to inform the planning and delivery of training and learning opportunities, and to identify and respond to gaps in system functionality or end user capacity. The Help Desk Specialist will utilize audit trails, ticket tracking system data and issue resolution knowledge base to inform the planning and delivery of trainings and learning opportunities.

¹¹ This level of help desk support should be clearly defined in policies and procedures.

Appendix D. Local System Administrator Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities of a local system administrator (LSA):¹²

1. Demonstrate competence in required training in privacy, security and system operation (e.g. provider page, workflows and reports).
2. Assign licenses to Agency Administrators and/or users. When necessary or requested, the Local System Administrator will purchase additional licenses directly for the CoC.
3. Support data organization and completion of Provider Pages for participating agencies.
4. Host local HMIS operations meeting(s) and/or assure that Agency Administrators are attending the Statewide User Meetings.
5. Provides front-line technical support/technical assistance for users and agencies within the CoC they support. This support includes resetting passwords and troubleshooting/problem solving for users and agencies within their CoC. Where applicable, the Local System Administrator may train Agency Administrators to do fundamental system support activities, minimizing the burden for support on the Local System Administrator.
6. Assure that all users are trained in privacy, security and system operation.
 - a. The Local System Administrator will inform Agency Administrators and local users of required and recommended system trainings that are available through the HMIS training website (which is managed by the HMIS lead).
 - b. The Local System Administrator will provide localized training to CoC users and agencies for issues or items of importance related to the local community (in addition to trainings available at the multi-CoC implementation level). These may include local PIT/HIC training, guidance on local data cleanup, or specific guidance on proper workflow and system usage that are identified through an audit process.
7. The Local System Administrator will work directly with Agency Administrators and agencies, through a collaborative process to ensure proper visibility is established for the provider pages in the CoC they serve
8. The Local System Administrator will host regular User/Agency Administrator meetings for system users in the CoC(s) they serve.
9. The Local System Administrator will work directly with CoC leadership to complete CoC wide HUD reporting activities such as the AHAR, PIT/HIC, System Performance Measures and the CoC HUD NOFA submission.
10. Participate in the annual PIT count process and support publication of local reports.
11. The Local System Administrator is responsible for providing reports to the CoC. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Required HUD reports, such as the LSA, PIT/HIC, SPMs, CoC Program Competition reports, and CoC APRs.
 - b. CoC wide demographics, performance outcomes, and data quality reports that are used for informational and evaluation purposes.
 - c. The Local System Administrator will assist the CoC with work surrounding state and local funding initiatives which require data from the HMIS.

¹² This example is based on the North Carolina Statewide HMIS Model. Note that a statewide or multi-CoC HMIS implementation may adopt their own roles and responsibilities, as relevant to the participating CoCs' needs and formalized in written agreements.

- d. The Local System Administrator will provide support/technical assistance for agencies completing the CoC APR within their CoC. This includes providing technical assistance with problem solving data quality issues, reporting issues, etc.
- e. Support general requests for data of interest to the local CoC
- a. The Local System Administrator will train local Agency Administrators and users on how to run reports at the agency level to monitor data quality and outcomes on a regular basis.
- b. Will audit agencies and projects to ensure compliance (including privacy, DQ, security)
- c. Support the CoC's Continuous Quality Improvement efforts.

Appendix E. Overview of HMIS & Racial Equity Calls

Background: To better understand CoCs' progress and goals related to advancing racial equity and justice across Oregon, ICF held a series of calls with CoCs in Oregon throughout April 2020. This document provides a brief summary of findings and common themes across the calls. Below are the overarching topics of questions that were discussed in each call.

Understanding racial disparities through HMIS or non-HMIS sources	Engaging BIPOC partners and culturally relevant organizations	Making changes to service delivery and/or policies and procedures
Trainings used locally with CoC/HMIS staff	BIPOC Representation in CoC and HMIS governance and decision-making	Identifying capacity needs – where should HMIS resources be targeted to help CoCs?

Summary of the calls: CoCs are at varying levels regarding the type of outreach and inclusion they have with culturally specific organizations, and BIPOC-representative communities in CoC planning and operations. In general, population density and demographic composition of households seeking assistance across the geographic area played a large role for CoCs' familiarity and understanding of this topic and provision of homeless services. In general, CoCs with greater administrative capacity were able to dedicate more staff resources reporting, analyzing, understanding racial disparities across their community through HMIS. They were also more likely to do intentional outreach to culturally specific organizations and encourage CoC participation.

Of the CoCs that ICF interviewed,¹³ one CoC had a racial equity officer working closely with many aspects of CoC and HMIS planning and operations; this contrasted with another CoC that had not yet incorporated racial equity in its CoC planning activities due to capacity limitations. Other CoCs were in the middle and were actively working to diversify their CoC board and decision-making structure, while others focused on reporting racial disparities through HMIS data as a start to this work.

While CoCs are at different levels regarding their efforts to incorporate racial equity into CoC planning activities, even the CoCs with lesser capacity and resources dedicated towards racial equity noted how they could benefit from additional capacity at the statewide level to support

¹³ ICF interviewed six CoCs across Oregon for the calls (all CoCs except Lane County CoC). While ICF did not hold a call with Lane County CoC, there was helpful information gleaned from Lane County CoC's website regarding efforts to understand racial disparities, which ICF used to help inform their understanding.

their community. At a minimum, the increased capacity of the HMIS lead could play a helpful role supporting CoCs in the following ways:

- Providing assistance developing reports and analyzing data on racial disparities and gaps in services at the project and systems level
- Training resources - adding or enhancing training to staff such as trauma-informed care training; racial bias training, training specific to best practices for collecting race/ethnicity data
- Coordinating with other CoCs and/or staff with racial equity expertise across the state and sharing emerging practices across the state (e.g., best practices for engagement with persons with lived experience, particularly BIPOC, and making connections with culturally specific organizations).

Ultimately, ICF recommends that racial equity be prioritized as a topic that is further discussed between the HMIS administrator and CoCs participating in the statewide HMIS to better understand needs across the state. In particular, CoCs and other relevant HMIS stakeholders across the state should clarify the type of role the statewide HMIS should play to help them address local regional strategies and goals to further racial equity and justice in their communities. This feedback should inform the planning and capacity of the HMIS lead to support these goals, as well as be directly incorporated in the governance and decision-making structure of the statewide HMIS and/or multi-CoC HMIS.



Summary of Findings from Stakeholder Interviews

Oregon Statewide HMIS Budget Note HUD TA | March 2020

Background

Between January-February 2020, ICF, one of HUD's national TA providers, participated in calls with CoC and HMIS stakeholders to gain a better understanding about current HMIS operations and governance.¹⁴ Information gathered from these calls will help inform recommendations to OHCS and HMIS stakeholders regarding feasible options from which to implement a variation of a statewide homeless management information system. This document is intended to share a summary of ICF's findings to date based on results from the calls and additional meetings that took place since the January 13, 2020 statewide HMIS Budget Note Stakeholder meeting. This document is also intended to help frame important considerations Oregon stakeholders should be mindful of when choosing an adequate statewide HMIS structure as this process moves forward.

Summary of Findings

(1) Cross-CoC Coordination Occurs at Varying Levels Depending on CoCs' Shared Interests within Specific Regions and Partnerships

Some level of coordination is currently occurring across CoC geographies, but this is primarily among specific regional-based connections across the state. Coordination tends to occur as a result of partnerships that are mutually beneficial for each CoC involved. For example, Multnomah-Clackamas-Washington County CoCs coordinate regularly to share and strategize coordinated entry practices which helps to strengthen the regional homeless response system. In another example, as a result of Built for Zero, the participating communities of Lane County, Washington County, and Clackamas County CoC collaborate to share reporting tips and troubleshoot software issues. Other than these examples, however, there does not appear to be a consistent platform through which CoCs can share resources regularly or strategize with other CoCs across the state to improve current practices. To receive help from other CoCs regarding troubleshooting errors or developing workarounds for reporting, for example, CoCs reach out to each other on an ad hoc basis. Generally, assistance is provided in the collaborative spirit of *wanting to help others out*; however, the extent of the resource sharing and troubleshooting that actually occurs is carried out in an inconsistent manner and ultimately depends on the CoC staff capacity of the entity offering assistance.

It should be noted the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB) of the Multnomah County/Portland CoC shares its HMIS resources and trainings openly to other CoCs on the same implementation— other CoCs reported they utilize these trainings regularly as supplemental training materials to their end users. CoCs also mentioned statewide meetings, known as COFEE, targeted to CoCs statewide as an example of statewide collaboration. While these are positive examples that show CoCs are interacting together, they also appear to be focused on one-way information-sharing and/or stakeholder education on a time-limited basis and not as focused on informing cross-CoC HMIS strategies. This provides an

¹⁴ Community representatives who participated in the interviews are listed in Appendix A.



opportunity for establishing more formal collaborations across the state to consistently share best practices and collectively identify solutions that improve delivery of services.

(2) CoCs' Decision-making and Governance Operating in a Compliant, but Disjointed Manner

Each CoC values its autonomy in making HMIS and data decisions for its geographic area. Each CoC has its own defined process for developing, reviewing, and updating its HMIS policies and procedures, consistent with compliance requirements of § 578.7(a)(5). In nearly each CoC, there is some form of a data committee, subcommittee, or work group that is focused on HMIS policies, there is a process for an entity in the CoC updating the policy, and then it is approved by the CoC's executive committee or CoC Board. ***While these practices are expected and encouraged in single CoC HMS implementations, for a structure that has multiple CoCs in the same HMIS instance, applicable to 6 out of the 7 CoCs in Oregon, ICF would expect to see more structure around shared decision-making and oversight of any policies and procedures that could have cross-CoC impacts.***

There are five other CoCs on the same HMIS instance as Portland/Multnomah CoC. In this HMIS instance, Portland Housing Bureau (PHB) holds the contract with the HMIS vendor for the software on behalf of all the CoCs that participate. While the software functionality in each CoC operates consistently across all six CoCs participating in the HMIS instance, there does not appear to be a method for aligning each CoC's policies and procedures in a way that meets CoCs' needs collectively. Respondents stated Portland/Multnomah County CoC openly shares copies of their policies to which CoCs can then use to model their own set of applicable policies and procedures. However, some respondents stated that if there was ever a situation that arose where a CoC's desired policies (e.g., updating HMIS functionality or visibility settings) conflicted with the HMIS' current structure, they do not know how they could move forward resolving that difference. PHB hosts regular meetings for HMIS leads who are participating in the same HMIS implementation, so some respondents noted those meetings provide an opportunity to discuss HMIS policies on the horizon and potential impacts on the system; however, other respondents felt those meetings were used primarily for information-sharing of changes already decided and not typically used for strategizing policies across the instance.

Overall, ICF sees this as a potential opportunity to strengthen the governance structure and decisionmaking processes for any involved entities of a multi-CoC HMIS instance. This could help ensure CoCs with access to these technical capabilities can make informed decisions about the system in a proactive manner, while also being clear about how to update system-impacted policies and processes when necessary.

(3) Varying Degrees of Data Collection, Reporting, and HMIS Participation

ServicePoint, the HMIS software used by each CoC in Oregon, is incorporated into CoCs' homelessness data systems (beyond federal reporting requirements) at varying levels. All CoCs across Oregon are using HMIS in a manner that allows them to meet federal reporting requirements by HUD,¹⁵ OHCS reporting requirements,¹⁶ and embedded within each CoC's corresponding coordinated entry system. However,

¹⁵ Note that Salem/Marion and Polk County CoC is currently in the process of splitting from OR BoS. For this document, we are not including them as a separate CoC since the split is not completed.

¹⁶ This is applicable to the extent entities are funded by OHCS and required to use HMIS, such as Community Action Agencies.



some communities have embraced the software more than others as part of their local data strategy to collect, review, analyze and make decisions on the local homeless system. This is evidenced by very different levels of HMIS bed coverage (which ranges from 100% to some communities, to 44% in others).¹⁷ Achieving a high bed coverage rate for HUD-funded and non-HUD-funded organizations is important and aligns with the [SNAPS Data TA Strategy to Improve Data and Performance](#), as HUD understands it will take more than federally required organizations participating in HMIS to fully inform a robust data strategy to prevent and end homelessness.

Through the interviews, ICF observed differences between what rural and multi-county CoCs are experiencing and what most 'single county' CoCs are experiencing.¹⁸ For rural and multi-county CoCs, they stated increased difficulties gaining buy-in with the software with their non-HUD-funded homeless service providers. These CoCs stated they lack the extra capacity to focus staff time on outreach and engagement to motivate these organizations to start participating in HMIS.

For Community Action Agencies, whose partnerships and priorities cover a broader range of services in addition to homelessness and housing, there were differences in the way in which HMIS was used locally. One Community Action Agency from a 'single county' CoC stated they were using ServicePoint for all their data collection needs (homeless housing and non-housing programs). This contrasts with practices from another Community Action Agency in a multi-county CoC that stated ServicePoint was only used for homeless housing projects required to use HMIS. Since their business needs were not exclusively covered by HMIS, they stated they must use multiple data systems for their data collection/reporting, which was a point of frustration.

When asked about current monitoring practices and staff capacity to assess their system needs, at least one respondent noted they do not have the information or know-how to determine whether ServicePoint can meet the needs of the organizations within their CoC. In addition, another respondent stated their CoC is just starting to realize the extent of their oversight role being able to designate the software for their CoC. From these responses, it shows there are multiple CoCs that could benefit from receiving additional capacity to help assess their holistic data needs for data collection and reporting and identify solutions to those needs in a locally informed manner.

(4) Reporting Capabilities Dependent on CoC Capacity and Knowledge of the System

Reporting was a point of contention with most CoCs ICF interviewed. When asked about their specific challenges to reporting, ICF heard differing responses depending on a CoC's capacity and historical knowledge and training on the reporting capabilities. CoCs with staff who understood the reporting functionality the best and has the least complaints about reporting were the CoCs with staff who were able to identify work arounds and were well versed developing custom reports. The CoCs that expressed the biggest frustrations with ServicePoint's reporting stated they would like to do more with the reporting functions to meet the demands of their CoC, but they do not have the expertise to do it efficiently in ServicePoint due to their lower staff capacity. As stated in the section above on

¹⁷ ICF collected this information from the CoC Pre-Survey (administered to CoCs in January 2020) and through HUD HIC reports in HDX.

¹⁸ In this context, 'single county' means CoCs that have one county in their geographic area (typically representing a large metro area). Examples include OR-500, OR-501, OR-506, OR-507.



coordination, CoCs seem eager to help share reporting solutions and workarounds, but generally only when asked and approached on an ad hoc basis (other than the specific partnerships noted where resource-sharing seems to occur on a more regular basis). Finally, several respondents stated their frustrations about the reporting capabilities in Qlik, such as issues with the functionality and the lack of communication about training opportunities or how to use Qlik.

Considerations for choosing a statewide HMIS structure from which to move forward:

There was a consensus among all CoCs and stakeholders ICF interviewed that statewide reporting and having the ability to understand the current state of homelessness is important. And yet, from these initial discussions, respondents seemed hesitant to jump to the conclusion that there was a single method at this point in time that could meet the state’s reporting needs while also meeting their own. For example, one respondent noted the efficiency advantages of establishing a data warehouse for reporting but also the disadvantages of not having access to real-time data to use for improving the delivery of services for a client at the time they are being served in the homelessness assistance system.¹⁹

It is clear that there are additional discussion points to address collectively among the CoCs and HMIS stakeholders regarding the particular direction they want to go next. For example, based on these findings, the extent to which CoCs would like to (and have the ability to) alter existing practices will have a significant impact on the success and direction of the statewide HMIS that is implemented. For example, a full statewide HMIS structure requires a high level of CoC-to-CoC coordination and a governance structure that does not yet exist in the current HMIS structure. These collective discussions will be forthcoming in future HMIS Budget Note stakeholder meetings and in additional meetings with CoCs.

Whichever proposed recommendation ultimately takes hold, it is critical that it must seek to improve the capacity for administering HMIS across Oregon. Nearly each CoC stated they could benefit from additional staff capacity to improve HMIS administration locally. When asked if the CoC felt it had the administrative capacity to meet the HMIS demands of the CoC, nearly each respondent stated their CoC could always utilize additional capacity to further improve their ability to meet the CoC’s data-driven service coordination, reporting, and planning needs.²⁰

Appendix A. List of Participants Interviewed by ICF

Affiliated Organization & CoC	Names of Participating Stakeholders
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¹⁹ It should be noted the “real time” nature of data housed in a data warehouse is ultimately dependent on the frequency of data uploads to the warehouse. The higher the frequency, the more “real time” the data becomes, and the more financial investment would be required.

²⁰ On multiple occasions, respondents were adamant that new staff hired had to have the adequate skillset to bring value to the position; otherwise, they were better off not adding new staff.



Continuum of Care OR 500 (Lane County CoC)	Lise Stuart
Continuum of Care OR 501 (Portland/Multnomah County CoC)	Antoinette Pietka Wendy Smith
Continuum of Care OR 502 (Medford/Jackson County CoC)	Connie Wilkerson
Continuum of Care OR 503 (Central Oregon CoC)	Katie Jordan Molly Heiss Lindsey Stailing Autumn Rackley
Continuum of Care OR 505 (Oregon BoS CoC/ROCC)	Jessica Adams Justina Fyfe Janet Merrell David Mulig
Continuum of Care OR 506 (Washington County CoC)	Annette Evans
Continuum of Care 507 (Clackamas County CoC)	Abby Ahern
Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS)	Hunter Belgard Megan Bolton Samuel Kenney
Community Action Washington County (CAA, part of Washington County CoC)	Cecelia Bonvino Katherine Galian
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Summary of Findings from the Oregon HMIS Software Assessment

Oregon Statewide HMIS Budget Note HUD TA | April 2020

Background

On April 6, 2020, ICF, one of HUD's national TA providers, facilitated a call with the State of Oregon's CoC and HMIS stakeholders to assess the HMIS software. The assessment was primarily based on the framework of HUD's published [HMIS Software Vendor Capacity Checklist](#). The current HMIS software used by the CoCs across the state of Oregon is WellSky Community Services (formerly ServicePoint). Participants involved in the assessment were asked to react to questions about various functionalities and uses of their current HMIS software. Topics discussed during the call included minimum compliance requirements, software technology and customization capabilities, software use, vendor responsiveness and capacity, data sharing and privacy, and reporting functionality. Information gathered from the call helped ICF and the assessment participants to understand the HMIS software capacity in each CoC. This document is intended to share a summary of ICF's primary findings based on the April 6, 2020 call. This document is also intended to help frame key opportunities and challenges regarding software capacity and inform final recommendations to OHCS and HMIS Budget Note Stakeholders.

Summary of Findings

1. The current HMIS software is compliant

The [HUD 2004 Data and Technical Standards](#) sets forth the results of HUD's deliberative process to develop national data and technical standards for locally administered HMIS implementations. HMIS has transformed the way communities collect and report on clients at risk of and experiencing homelessness and the importance of accurate and complete HMIS data in informing stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels is only increasing. HUD and the federal partners expect that all HMIS implementations, regardless of what software is used, can meet baseline functionality standards, as laid out in the above-referenced standards and the most recent version of the [HMIS Data Standards](#).

Stakeholders responded affirmatively to questions about compliance capacity within the HMIS software. The current system contains all HUD-defined Project Descriptor Data Elements (PDDEs), Universal Data Elements (UDEs), Program Specific Data Elements (PSDEs), and Metadata Elements (MEs). The software also has the ability to de-duplicate client records and includes industry-standard security protocols to ensure information within HMIS is protected.

Stakeholders agreed that the current software provides up-to-date HUD-required reports, including the Annual Performance Report (APR), Longitudinal System Analysis (LSA), System Performance Measures (SPMs), Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER), and Data Quality Framework. Furthermore, the software provides current federal partner reports.

The current HMIS software can protect client-level data to the different federal and local laws, as needed, including compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and 42 CFR Part 2. Stakeholders agreed that the system can allow for various degrees of data sharing and while this takes a lot of work on the system administrator end, data sharing within the system is flexible. The software allows for users to access the system in tiered levels, allowing users to only access what they need in order to fulfill the duties of their job. It also ensures that any user accessing the system has a unique username and password.

- 2. CoCs are using the HMIS software beyond baseline and compliance-based capabilities** The results of the HMIS software assessment indicate that CoCs are using the HMIS software beyond and baseline and compliance-based functionality. Not only does the software meet baseline compliance requirements, but stakeholders also responded affirmatively to other functionality of the system that is useful in practice. Access to a testing environment or training site allows for building out functionality and training users prior to making changes directly in the live site. The software provides the ability to upload documents and other attachments to client records in the system, including photos that help identify clients. There is minimal unanticipated downtime, which is important to ensure that users can access the system when they need it. The system can be accessed securely from multiple devices, including computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile devices. The HMIS software includes features that can be used as a case management tool, including case plans, case notes, goals, services, and assessments. The ability to use bar codes and scan cards with the software can streamline user workflow and create efficiency in data entry processes, especially in high volume emergency response systems. The system allows the ability to build out definitions for terms and data elements directly in the workflow that users can easily access. Users can reset their own password to access the system without system administrator assistance.

At the same time, stakeholders expressed several thoughts on how the HMIS software could be leveraged to better align with community needs and ensure efficient and effective data entry by users. Furthermore, the current HMIS software can be used for the purposes of Coordinated Entry and stakeholders stated that the various ways in which Coordinated Entry is functioning in communities determines the degree to which HMIS is used for this process. The direct use of HMIS to operationalize, track and report on Coordinated Entry strategies vary across

communities. The current HMIS software includes access to several different reporting tools and the degree to which those tools are used varies among communities.

2.1. Stakeholders provided examples of how the system could be improved upon While the software allows users to check for existing client records before creating a new record for any given client, stakeholders suggested additional features could improve this functionality and ensure fewer duplicate client records are created. Similarly, while the software provides the ability to enter data at different points throughout the data collection process, stakeholders mentioned that the respective workflow is not ideal and could be more streamlined. Users can manage households within the software and while stakeholders agreed this can be done, it requires significant training and data quality checks to ensure this is done correctly.

There was discussion on ways in which the system could be customized in order to streamline the Coordinated Entry process, with consideration to how any given community's customization needs for Coordinated Entry could impact a potential statewide system. Stakeholders acknowledged that the Coordinated Entry process functions differently enough in each community that ad hoc reporting will be required to fully implement Coordinated Entry in HMIS.

Discussion of the current HMIS software's ad hoc reporting functionality is when stakeholders spoke most about how the system may not be meeting their current community needs. Currently, the software has four different reporting tools with varied levels of functionality: Advanced Reporting Tool (ART), ReportWriter, canned reports, and QlikSense. ART is built on an outdated structure and the reporting needs of communities are outweighing ART's ability to consistently support. While ART is still available, communities struggle with allocating staff time and resources to invest in building reports in ART with the knowledge that it is expected to become obsolete. ReportWriter can be used to create quick, live-time custom reports; however, it is not powerful enough to build complex reports and users must have a solid understanding of the system's table structures to build reports that show data accurately. Canned reports can also be run live-time and include the ability to drill down by client to ensure the data contained within the reports is valid. Canned reports can only be created by the HMIS vendor and the report's structure is unavailable to system administrators to manipulate or verify. QlikSense is currently available only to users who have an ad hoc ART license and is not fully developed.

2.2. The way in which the current HMIS software is used is largely dependent upon system administration

The degree to which each community is using the different reporting tools is dependent upon need, HMIS staff capacity, and available skillset. Understanding the strengths and limitations of each reporting tool available in the system can help communities navigate through their HMIS reporting needs successfully. While the software has the technical capabilities to produce reports or allow HMIS staff to build ad hoc reports needed by communities, much of how the data is used and analyzed locally seems dependent upon the capacity of the CoC and knowledge of the reporting tools, which requires significant staff time and investment. Stakeholders noted not all CoCs have the capacity needed to dedicate towards reporting and data analysis.

WellSky is currently at a pivot point related to reporting tools and the functionality within each tool available. Ensuring communities have the local skill sets available to be flexible with the various reporting tools and functionality will allow for more successful reporting capabilities. Ad hoc reporting in the current HMIS software is possible and while navigating through varied reporting tools with varied functionality is not ideal in the short-term, the long-term goal is for the HMIS software to have a stronger, more robust reporting tool that is easier to use and can report in live time. Stakeholders stated that not all communities have the capacity either in staff time or skill set to successfully use the various reporting tools available in the current HMIS software, and that would be an issue regardless of which software is used for HMIS.

For Coordinated Entry, each community will continue to determine to what degree HMIS will play a role in their Coordinated Entry process, which will include a review of current HMIS staff capacity. The degree to which HMIS is used for the purposes of Coordinated Entry did not seem to be an issue of system functionality as much as a decision at the community level regarding how much to use the system for this purpose. As communities continue to assess what role HMIS will serve in their Coordinated Entry process, a governance structure that allows for flexibility and customization of HMIS at the local level is paramount.

ICF has identified [features available](#) in the software that are not currently being utilized by some communities that could help streamline the workflow and HMIS experience for users. This is further described in the next section.

Considerations for a Potential Oregon Statewide HMIS

There was consensus among all stakeholders involved in the HMIS software assessment that the current HMIS software meets minimum compliance requirements and federal partner

requirements. Overall, it is ICF's assessment that the current HMIS software has the capacity to serve as the software for a potential statewide HMIS.²¹

While the HMIS software is compliant, there are some ways in which the system could be improved to further meet community needs. A stronger and more transparent governance structure that is representative of all participating CoCs and has clear decision making capabilities and ongoing communication could enable community-informed decision-making and priority setting for HMIS. With this structure, the HMIS lead(s), guided by a clear set of priorities informed by the CoC(s), could negotiate with the vendor to make specific improvements, where it is feasible.

From the responses provided during the HMIS software assessment, the HMIS vendor is responsive, with response time depending on the specific issue and level of complexity it would take to resolve. However, it should be noted that there are only two stakeholders that work directly with the HMIS vendor (Portland/Multnomah County CoC and Lane County CoC), representing the two entities that hold direct contracts with the vendor. In multi-CoC implementations—including implementations in which one organization serves as the HMIS Lead on behalf of multiple CoCs—transparent and well-defined governance structures that allow all participating CoCs to monitor and contribute direct feedback on vendor performance and responsiveness are generally adopted.

Stakeholders commented on specific features of the HMIS software, including ideas about how the system could be more user friendly, less “clunky” or laborious, and more easily customized. A strong governance structure that allows for communication with the HMIS vendor about suggestions on behalf of all participating CoCs will begin to address this.

Examples of topics that were addressed during the HMIS assessment and could be communicated to the HMIS vendor, in a succinct and inclusive manner, as suggestions for improvement or feature enhancements include:

- How to improve the user experience related to searching for existing client records to prevent duplication

²¹ Please note, as part of the HMIS Budget Note Assessment, ICF will be making a recommendation about a potential solution that allows for statewide reporting of HMIS data. This could include a statewide HMIS or other type of data repository, depending on the assessment findings and feedback from relevant stakeholders. It should also be noted that the technological capacity of the software does not take into account the financial feasibility and costs that would be required of a statewide HMIS. These projections will be addressed in a separate process from this Software Assessment report.

- Adding or updating data at specific points in time during a client’s project enrollment
- Managing households and household members

Additionally, there are features available in the system that are not currently utilized by communities that could help streamline the workflow and HMIS experience for users.

Examples of features that were discussed that are either not currently in use or could be used in expanded ways include:

- Use of ShelterPoint to create current bed/unit availability in any project type beyond Emergency Shelter projects
- Turning on the Client Note alert functionality that would allow for popup messages for important information
- Working with the HMIS vendor to archive client records that have not been touched in at least the last 7 years
- The way in which referrals and referral outcomes are informed “in real life” can help facilitate accurate recording of these in HMIS
- Use of ART and ReportWriter to include enough details that reports include drilldown functionality and the ability to troubleshoot, when needed.

*Considerations for a more equitable system: As CoCs work together towards greater collaboration and strengthening their governance structure to improve HMIS software functionality, it is critical that **how** CoCs are identifying needs related to data collection, reporting, and analysis are informed by a diverse set of stakeholders across each CoC. While this assessment focused primarily on how the system is currently being used by CoCs and the software’s functionality, CoCs should continuously consider how HMIS could be improved upon based on the holistic needs of their community to prevent and end homelessness. For decisions made about HMIS, including software, this involves the inclusion and representation of service providers, partners that represent special populations such as DV, LGBTQIA, veterans, youth, and chronically homeless households, as well as persons with lived experience, and representation from marginalized communities and persons of color.²²*

Recommendations

Overall, ICF’s recommendations for strengthening the use and administration of the software include the following as CoCs and HMIS stakeholders move forward in this process. CoC and HMIS stakeholders should:

- Ensure a strong governance structure that allows for collaboration and equitable decision-making among the participating CoCs. Decisions on the functionality and improvements in a shared HMIS should clearly reflect the priorities of the CoCs and should be reflected in the interactions with the HMIS vendor.

²² Throughout April 2020, ICF is meeting with CoCs in Oregon to understand each CoC’s progress and goals related to advancing racial equity, current plans and practices that are being implemented, as well as any considerations that should be incorporated into the proposed statewide HMIS to help the CoC achieve these goals. ICF will incorporate these findings into the final HMIS Budget Note assessment report.

- Review the various functionality within the current HMIS software to ensure communities are using the system to its full capacity to meet local needs.
- Continue reviewing how HMIS will function within each community’s Coordinated Entry process and determine what is needed for implementation.
- Communities lacking staff time and skill set to ensure a successful HMIS implementation can review the [HMIS Budgeting and Staffing Toolkit](#) for ideas on how to increase capacity.²³
- Explore how additional HMIS administration capacity can be leveraged in their CoC through the advancement of the Statewide HMIS in Oregon.
- Monitor and evaluate the software and software vendor annually to ensure the HMIS software continues to meet the needs of the communities.

Appendix A. List of Participants Involved in the HMIS Software Assessment Call

Affiliated Organization & Continuum of Care	Name of Participating Stakeholder(s)
Continuum of Care OR-500 (Lane County CoC)	Lise Stuart
Continuum of Care OR-501 (Portland/Multnomah County CoC)	Wendy Smith
Continuum of Care OR-506 (Washington County CoC)	Annette Evans

²³ In addition, as part of the HMIS Budget Note Assessment, ICF will be working with OHCS and relevant CoC stakeholders to share HMIS staffing resources for HMIS Lead entities and system administrators which will help outline expected roles and responsibilities and associated budget considerations for filling staff roles.

Continuum of Care OR-507 (Clackamas County CoC)	Abby Ahern
Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS)	Hunter Belgard
Community Action Washington County	Cecilia Bonvino