Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care

System Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

(Revised October 13, 2021)

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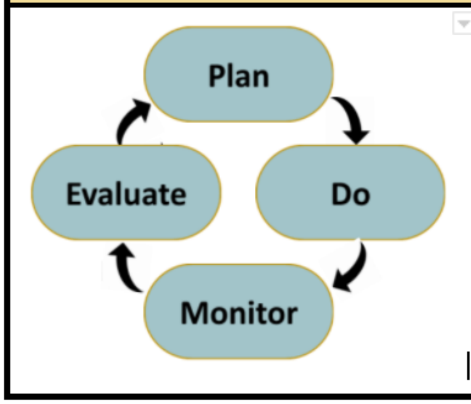
I. Overview

This System Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan will provide the Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care (CoC) and its Board the information to objectively assess and promote effective and consistent homeless service delivery throughout the system. By taking a structured approach to M&E, the CoC can further its mission to prevent and end homelessness within Planning District 16.

II. M&E Definition and Methods

M&E is an important management tool that is necessary to track progress and facilitate decision-making for current and future interventions. The two functions occur at separate points in time and for different purposes, but are interdependent and equally important to service planning and delivery (Figure 1)..

Figure 1. M&E Process



Monitoring is the routine checking of information related to project and system activities, so as to confirm that progress is occurring toward objectives, and to identify problems within the service system while they are most correctable. Monitoring commonly involves periodic or on-demand reporting on activities, outputs, and use of resources to ensure that what has been planned is going forward as intended. Monitoring typically assesses the following questions:

- Are interventions being delivered as intended?
- Are interventions and effects being appropriately documented?
- Do interventions seem to be working as expected?
- If not, what remedial actions can be taken?
- Is the project working within its timeline and budget?

Evaluation is used to ensure that the direction chosen is correct, and that the right mix of strategies and resources were used to get there. During an evaluation, information from previous monitoring processes, as well as other data collection activities, are used to understand the ways in which a project or system developed and stimulated change. Evaluation can typically be ***formative*** (helping to develop learning and understanding within stakeholders) or ***summative*** (i.e indicating the degree of achievement at the conclusion of an intervention or at predetermined intervals). Evaluations typically consider one or more of the following questions:

- Did the project address the needs of community members? (Formative)
- Did the project do so in a manner that was as cost-effective as possible? (Formative)

- Did planned interventions change over time or vary by site due to unforeseen circumstances? (Formative)
- Did the project or system change existing practices in a beneficial manner? (Summative)
- What were the overall effects of interventions? (Summative)
- Are the effects sustainable? (Summative)

Table 1 provides examples of how these tools differ yet are complementary in practice.

Table 1. Differentiating Monitoring and Evaluation	
Monitoring	**Evaluation**
Answers the question "Are we doing things right?"	Answers the question "Are we doing the right things?"
Continuous, on-demand, starting from project initiation	Periodic, at predetermined points in time
Measures progress toward objectives	Measures achievement of objectives
Provides information for immediate remediation	Provides information for lessons learned and long-term planning
Provides information for evaluation	Provides information for program and system planning

III. Transparency in M&E

The CoC recognizes its responsibilities to provide transparency in its M&E processes and findings. Transparency is exemplified by honesty, accountability and openness toward stakeholders, including donors, sponsors, funded projects, program beneficiaries, staff, Board. and the general public. To that end, the CoC routinely makes information regarding M&E activities and findings available through open Committee and Board meetings, the CoC website, newsletters, annual reports, reports to funders, and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

IV. CoC Monitoring Plan

A. Intent

This section describes the process through which CoC staff and committee members will review the performance of homelessness service providers using specific quality indicators. This process will consist of regular assessment of system and project performance, which may result in provider-specific or systemwide incremental improvements in service delivery.

B. Quality Indicator Reviews

1. System Performance Measures (HUD)

Purpose. The CoC will use the required Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Systems Measures Report (SMR) to inform internal discussion and decision-making. The SMR uses systemwide performance measures as defined in Section 427 of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Methods. The CoC Funding and Performance Committee will monitor SMRs as needed, but at least bi-monthly (six times per year) during a regularly-scheduled Committee meeting. The review will focus on (a) changes in system performance measures, positive and negative, from the prior report; and (b) potential causal and contributing factors related to negative changes; and (c) any corrective interventions that might be implemented.

Responsibilities. Data administrators and/or case managers within the projects will be responsible for ensuring their client data are complete, accurate, and timely. CoC staff will communicate with data administrators at each project as necessary to support and guide data administrators and case managers with this function. CoC staff will be responsible for compiling SMRs for review and discussion by the CoC Funding and Performance Committee.

Timeline. This activity will occur bi-monthly (six times annually) during regularly-scheduled Funding and Performance Committee meetings.

2. Homeless Outcomes Report (DHCD) and Homelessness Helpline Call Logs

Purpose. The CoC will use the required Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Homeless Outcomes Report to monitor system performance and inform internal discussion and decision-making. The data elements and quality standards established in the Homeward Community Information System Policies and Procedures (most recent version: Sept. 2020)

Methods. CoC staff will compile the following HUD Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and Homelessness Helpline Call Log data for review by the Funding and Performance Committee The review will focus on (a) changes in system performance measures, positive and negative, from the prior report; and (b) potential causal and contributing factors related to negative changes; and (c) any corrective interventions that might be implemented.

- Total number of households assessed
- Total number of households referred to services
- Total number of households housed
- Time between assessment and referral
- Time between referral and housing

- Time between assessment and housing

Responsibilities. CoC staff will compile relevant HMIS reports and information from Coordinated Entry Logs for review and discussion by the Funding and Performance Committee. CoC staff will communicate with data administrators at each shelter as necessary.

Timeline. This activity will occur bi-monthly (six times annually) during regularly-scheduled Funding and Performance Committee meetings.

3. Coordinated Entry

Purpose. Monitoring of Coordinated Entry (CE) is focused on measuring the effectiveness of connection to services and to identify areas for improvement.

Methods. As detailed in the Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures, CoC staff will administer surveys to CE participants and providers in order to assess the following:

Participant Surveys

- Ease of locating access points
- Efficiency of intake and assessment processes
- Effectiveness of referrals

Provider Surveys

- Ease/difficulty of participation within system
- Quality of referrals
- Recurring issues

Responsibilities. CoC staff will coordinate monitoring of CE through the administration of surveys. CoC staff will compile relevant information from surveys and from Coordinated Entry Logs for review and discussion by the Funding and Performance Committee.

Timeline. This activity will occur bi-monthly (six times annually) during regularly-scheduled Funding and Performance Committee meetings.

C. Quarterly Data Quality Checks

Purpose. As established by the HMIS Policies and Procedures, projects will be assessed based on the completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of associated HMIS data.

Responsibilities. CoC staff will run data quality reports on projects within HMIS to submit to projects for correction. Data administrators and/or case managers will be responsible for ensuring their client data is complete, accurate, and timely.

Method and Timeline. CoC staff will send quarterly data quality reports to program directors and/or agency HMIS administrators during the week following the end of each quarter (i.e. first week of October for Q1, first week of January for Q2, etc.). This will also allow time for programs to update any data quality issues before the 15th of the month following the end of a quarter, the deadline established by the HCIS Policies and Procedures.

V. CoC Evaluation Plan

A. Intent

This section will describe activities conducted annually to assess the impact of CoC projects and activities on reduction of homelessess and negative consequences of homelessess for individuals and families (including targeted priority populations) in Planning District 16. In addition, the evaluation is designed to compile required information for HUD and DHCD funding.

B. Annual Point-in-Time and Housing Inventory Counts

Purpose. The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is an annual census of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. HUD requires that CoCs conduct an annual count of people experiencing homelessness who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. CoCs also must conduct a count of unsheltered people experiencing homelessness every other year (odd numbered years). The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) is a point-in-time inventory of provider programs within a CoC service area that provide beds and housing units dedicated to serve people experiencing homelessness (and, for permanent housing projects, where homeless at entry), categorized by five program types: Emergency Shelter; Transitional Housing; Rapid Re-housing; Safe Haven; and Permanent Supportive Housing.

Method and Responsibilities. CoC staff will establish methods for conducting PIT and HIC counts and submit to the full Board for review, discussion, and when appropriate, modification. CoC staff will be responsible for completing the counts and reporting requirements.

Timeline. PIT and HIC counts will be scheduled and conducted each January.

C. Annual Data Aggregation

Purpose. Annually, the CoC will complete an aggregation of all collected data for comparison with prior years' data. The purposes for this activity are to (a) obtain a broad perspective of the CoC's progress toward achieving its mission to end homelessness in Planning District 16, (b) gain insights into areas of need within the service system, and (c) compile information for required reporting to HUD and DHCD and for potential grant applications.

Method and Responsibilities. Aggregated data will include HUD System Performance Measures, DHCD Homeless Outcomes Report measures, anb CE provider and participant. CoC staff will be responsible for compiling the data for review and discussion by the full Board.

Timeline. This activity will occur annually in July.

D. Annual Gap Analysis

Purpose. Gap analysis (also referred to as need assessment) involves comparison of actual performance with potential or desired performance. The CoC Annual Gap Analysis will be designed to indicate opportunities for system improvement by comparing the current types, levels, and effectiveness of services provided by the CoC to current resources and unmet community needs.

Method. A number of methods and tools exist for conducting a gap analysis, which can be classified as either qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative methods and tools are subjective; they attempt to gain insight through collection of narrative data. Quantitative methods and tools are objective; they attempt to gain insight through collection and analysis of numeric data.

Common qualitative tools for gap analysis are focus groups and individual interviews. Both can be conducted in either face-to-face settings or by telephone or videoconference. Data, in the form of participant responses to questions, are analyzed by extracting common themes and observations. Quantitative tools typically use surveys with rating scales to measure the respondent's attitudes, knowledge, perceptions, etc., with data analyzed statistically.

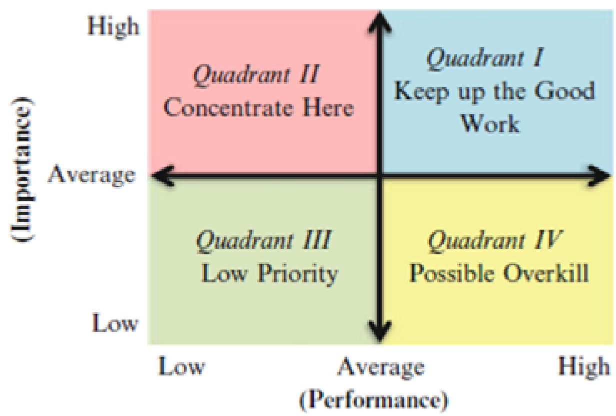
A gap analysis tool that can be used with either quantitative or qualitative data is Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA). To conduct an IPA, members of a project's stakeholder groups (in this case project staff, CoC Board members and staff, representatives of funding organizations, and service recipients) rate aspects of service on two dimensions, (a) its relative importance to the service system and/or service recipients, and (b) how well it is currently performed (see Figure 2 for an example). The aggregated ratings allow planners to focus effort and resources where they would have the greatest impact and benefit for service recipients (see Figure 3).

Whichever methods of gap analysis are used, including participants from each of the CoC's stakeholder groups is critical, and also that data can be analyzed separately by stakeholder group. This could be accomplished through homogeneous focus groups (i.e., all members are from the same stakeholder group) or including a survey item for the respondent to indicate group affiliation.

Figure 2. Sample IPA Item

Rapid rehousing following an episode of homelessness...	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
.. is very Important for the FRCoC system and its clients					
.. is performed very well by the FRCoC system					

Figure 3. Service Prioritization Using IPA



Responsibilities. Annually, the System Planning Committee will determine the method(s) for conducting the gap analysis and approve the tool(s) to be used. CoC staff will be responsible for collecting and aggregating data. Gap Analysis discussion will take place during regular Committee meetings and will be facilitated by CoC staff. Identified system deficiencies will be directed to the most appropriate Committee for possible action.

Timeline. The Annual Gap Analysis will take place in March.

E. Annual Project Self-Assessments

Method. Organizations will complete annual self-assessments with their HUD and Virginia Homeless Solutions Program (VHSP) project applications, the earliest of which typically occurs in between July and September. Project applicants are encouraged to begin their self-assessments earlier within the funding cycle to provide time to assess current policies and practices within their agencies. Depending on the requirements of the funding source sought by applicants, adherence to Housing First principles, participation in CoC Coordinated Entry, and data collection processes are items that may be addressed through self-assessments.

Responsibilities. Funding applicants will complete self-assessments for their projects and organizations. CoC staff will conduct an initial review of the self-assessments.

Timeline. This activity will occur annually, typically in September.

F. Annual Project Site Visits

Method. Funding and Performance Committee Members will tour program facilities, shadow client interactions with the service provider, and discuss program activities and procedures with administrators. Through these activities, Committee members will assess adherence to Housing First principles, participation in Coordinated Entry, alignment with relevant Community Standards, and progress towards the stated goals of the project.

***Responsible Parties*.** Funding and Performance Committee Members will be primarily responsible for conducting the sire visit, with logistical support from CoC staff.

Timeline. Site visits will take place annually between May and July. Timing towards the end of the fiscal year allows for the Funding and Performance Committee to reference past self-assessments, organizational review documents, and other monitoring materials while visiting each organization.

VI. Project Technical Assistance

A. Intent

Technical Assistance (TA) is non-financial support offered to service providers. This includes but is not limited to: sharing research on new program models, connecting providers with community partners for skills training, and advising on updates to current service processes. TA is also offered as an actionable opportunity for service providers to review and improve upon needs and gaps identified during M&E activities.

B. Process

1. Initial Consultation

Methods. CoC staff will meet with project directors individually to discuss the results and any concerns raised by the systemwide and project-specific performance metrics gathered during the M&E process. Together, projects and CoC staff will identify opportunities to address identified community needs that contribute to the mission and vision of the project and the CoC.

The result of this initial consultation will be a project-specific action plan that defines clear, measurable goals regarding program offerings and processes. Projects will also work with CoC staff to prioritize which action steps are most urgent and should be addressed first.

Responsible Parties. Organization directors, program directors, and other relevant organization staff (case managers, volunteers, etc.)

Timeline. Initial consultation and action planning will typically take place annually in November but may be requested by projects at any point in time.

2,. Implementation

Methods. Service providers will implement action steps drafted during the initial consultation with CoC staff. TA may be delivered by CoC staff, consultants, or by directing the recipient to publicly-available resources.

Responsibilities. Organization directors, program directors, and other relevant organization staff (case managers, volunteers, etc.)

Timeline. Action towards improvement goals can be gradual, long-term efforts. However, organizations will be expected to begin some implementation of action steps within the three months following their initial consultation.

3. Follow-Up

Methods. Service providers will discuss progress towards organization-specific goals defined during the initial consultation with CoC staff. Together, CoC staff and organization and/or program directors will assess the successes and barriers that providers experienced during their initial implementation phase. The result of the follow-up will be renewed strategies for improvement and a plan to support ongoing implementation.

Responsible Parties. CoC staff, organization/program directors.

Timeline. Technical assistance follow-ups will take place annually during March.

4. Disciplinary Action

Methods. CoC staff will review any concerns regarding compliance with grants, project applications, and community standards with the relevant organization during the initial consultation. If out of compliance, organizations will be expected to make significant progress towards correcting the concern by the date of their technical assistance follow-up. Lack of significant progress towards compliance will de-prioritize or nullify future CoC project applications from the provider. Additionally, the CoC Board will discuss the compliance concern and evaluate the role organization within the CoC.

Responsibilities. CoC staff, Funding and Performance Committee, CoC Board.

Timeline. Disciplinary action begins if projects are non-compliant by their annual technical assistance follow-up in March, and will continue indefinitely until the project and/organization is compliant with community standards and grant requirements.

Appendix A. Timeline of Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Review HUD System Performance Measures												
Review DHCD Homeless Outcome Measures												
Review Coordinated Entry Surveys												
Quarterly Data Quality Checks												
Annual PIT and Housing Inventory Counts												
Annual Data Aggregation												
Annual Gap Analysis												
Annual Project Self-Assessments												
Annual Project Site Visits												
Project Technical Assistance												

Appendix B. M&E Resources

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