A FACILITATION GUIDE FOR THE MN DASH TO END HOMELESSNESS

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INTRODUCTION

The MN Dash to End Homelessness is a tool to help you and your community monitor ongoing trends in your homelessness response system, highlighting demographic detail, key performance metrics, and system movement.

The information in the dashboard comes from Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). In HMIS, the information comes from two source reports: the 030 Core Homeless Programs and the 271 Returns to Homelessness. Together these reports can show the total picture of movement into, within, and out of the homelessness response system.

WHAT IS THIS GUIDE?

This document contains guiding questions to help you facilitate discussions using data from the dashboard to support system monitoring and planning.

WHO ARE THESE TOOLS FOR?

The data in the MN Dash to End Homelessness is relevant to anyone involved in homelessness response in your community. Continuum of Care boards, data committees, planning teams, individual agencies, advocates, and others can use information from the dashboard to plan and track their community's response to homelessness. This guide is meant for anyone working collaboratively to learn from their community's HMIS data.

RESOURCES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DATA EXPLORATION

Here we offer suggested strategies for approaching these data exploration conversations:

- Brainstorm contextual factors that could affect trends over time, including those you wouldn't normally include.
- When faced with a question about the information, try asking "why" five times to reach the root cause.
- Prepare to be surprised, and make note of what surprises you! What you see in the data might not match your assumptions – those gaps are rich sources of learning.
- Don't forget to document what you have learned, where you go from here, and how you can use this tool consistently to help guide your community. You can use the dashboard to measure the effects of your plans.

For more data dialogue facilitation tools, check out the Turning HMIS Data into Insight guide. You can also reference our Breaking Down the Dataset guide, which details a 6-Step approach to supplement the guiding questions below.

EXPLORING WITH THE DASHBOARD

The following section of this guide offers discussion topics to consider as you review the dashboard. Each sub-section shows an example question to explore, an observation you might find, a conclusion you might draw based on that observation, and example questions to consider or topics to dive deeper.

Welcome to the dashboard! On its home page we can observe how many persons were served by the homelessness response system, and the concentration of persons served across regions and interventions. It is meant to be a flexible overview from which users can find lots of data at a glance.
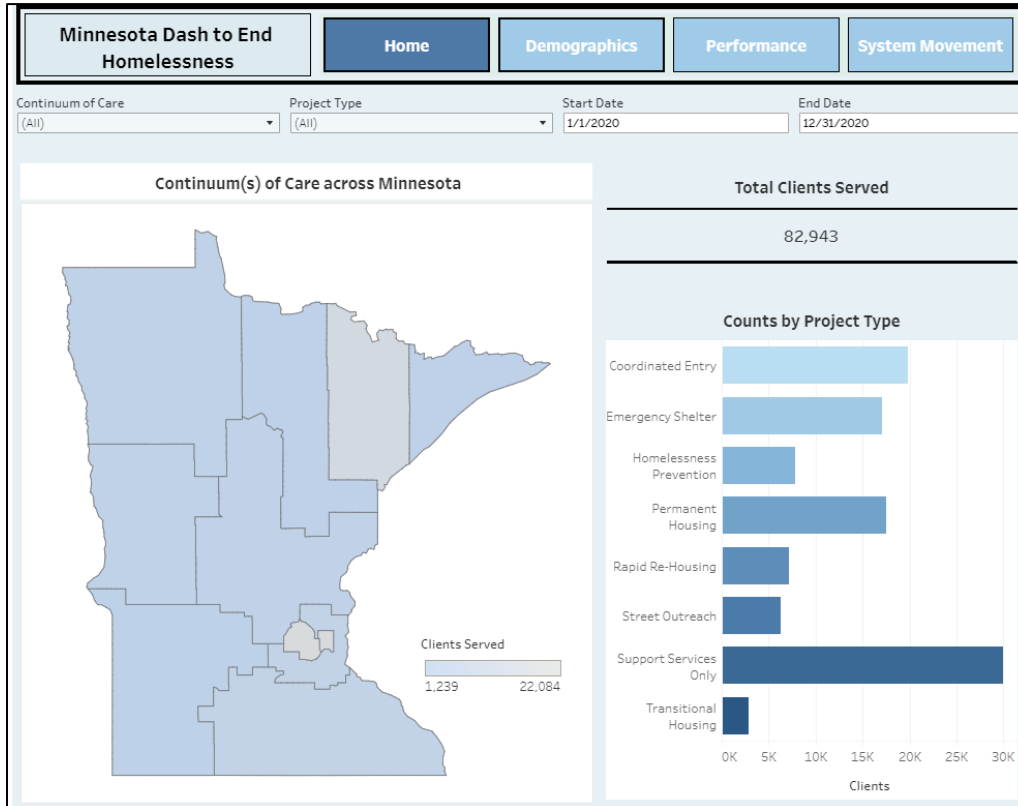
Example for Exploration: Experiment with the start and end dates. As you adjust these time frames, keep the project types in mind and think if there were any significant changes in the number of projects of a specific type.

Example Observation: Your CoC sees a significant spike in total clients served, specifically for rapid re-housing, when comparing a more recent period and a less recent period.

Example Conclusion: What could be the reason for this? Your community may have seen an increase in funding and projects.

Guiding Questions to Go Deeper: Did your community see any new programs or providers during that time? Have these additional programs addressed your community's needs? Think about when these programs opened; is their data represented here? Do you see corresponding decreases in other project types?

A strong driving force in the work we do and an objective of the MN Dash to End Homelessness is to make continued observations of the demographics we serve. This provides an excellent resource for determining who you are serving.
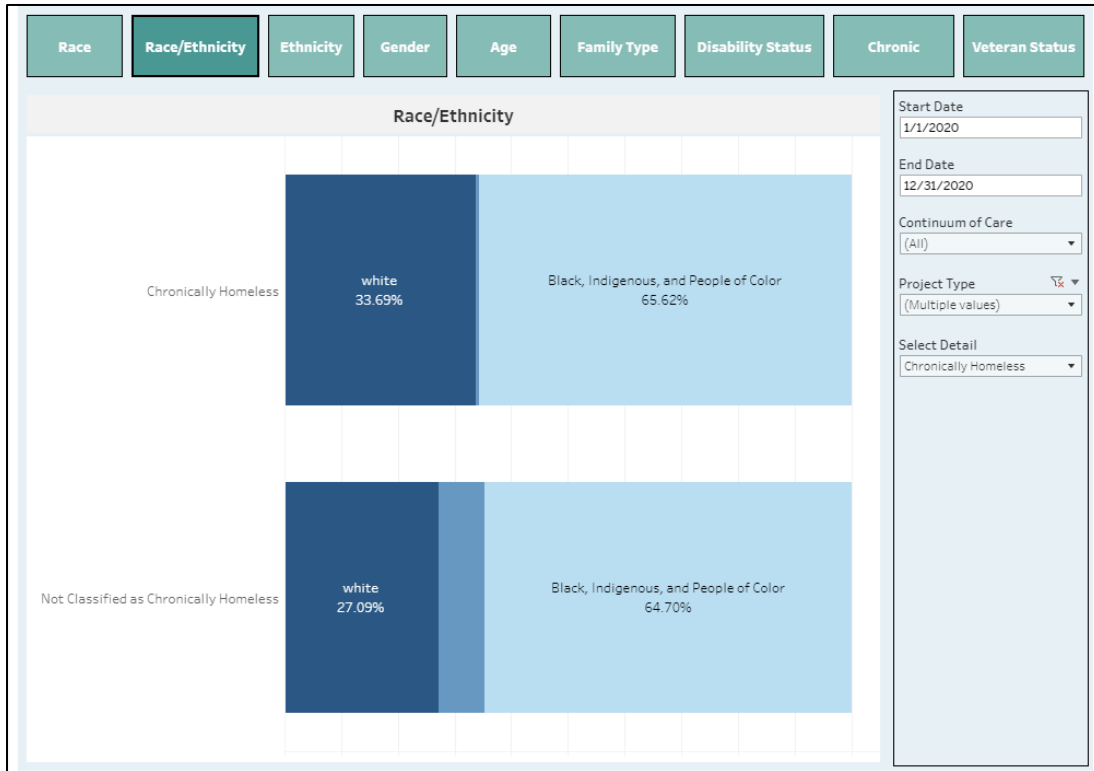
Example for Exploration: Using multiple wide date ranges, adjust the project types and compare the race/ethnicity results. Try adding additional detail to understand the representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in other groups, like among those who are chronically homeless.

Example Observation: Your CoC serves more Black, Indigenous, and People of Color than white persons in emergency shelter and street outreach, and more Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are chronically homeless than white people.

Example Conclusion: Why might there be such a large disparity? White people may not experience homelessness at the same rate as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in your community.

Guiding Questions to Go Deeper: Check to see how these totals and demographics compare to other interventions, such as rapid re-housing and permanent housing. Are the trends similar? If you see more white people served in long-term interventions like rapid re-housing and permanent housing than the proportion served in emergency shelter and street outreach, how can your CoC work to address these disparities? What caused them to begin with? Explore using these metrics to measure your CoC's ongoing progress toward equitably moving people toward stability from the instability of homelessness.

This section of the dashboard offers the chance to look at several key performance metrics, month over month in a rolling two-year period, and to break out these metrics by subpopulation. These charts can also be filtered by CoC and project type.
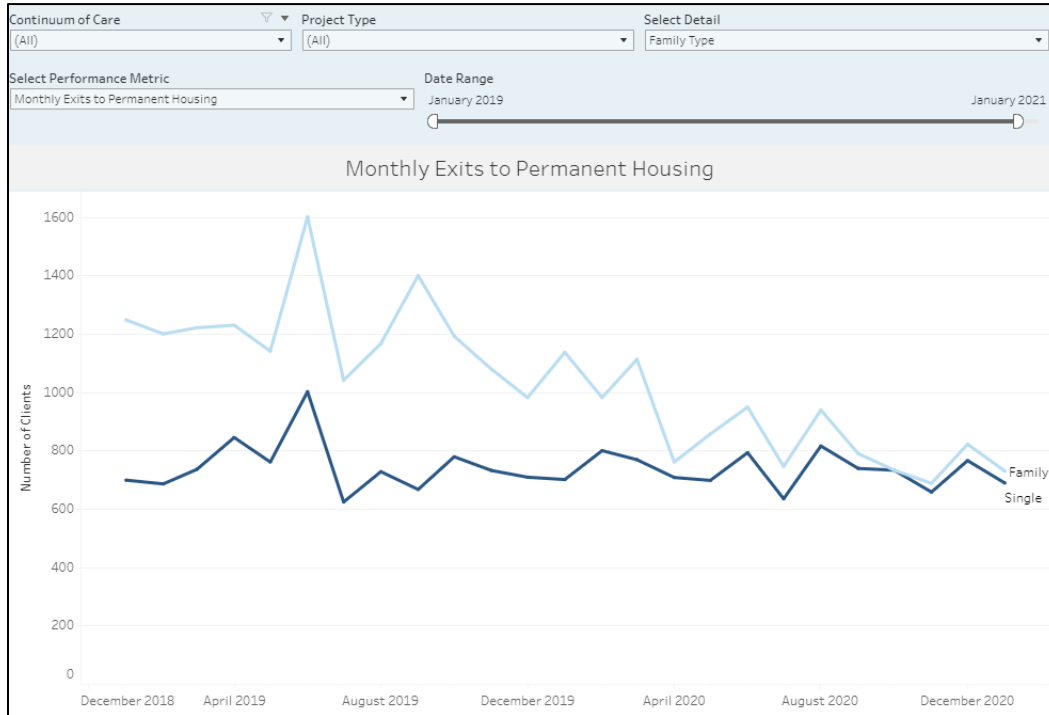
Example for Exploration: Try comparing your community's Exits to Permanent Housing by family type to Total Clients Exiting by family type. Exits to permanent housing are a subset of the total monthly exits, so you can use these two metrics together to get the percentage of positive exits in a month.

Example Observation: A higher number of persons in families exited to permanent housing than singles, but many more singles than persons in families exited overall. Persons in families have a higher rate of positive exits month over month.

Example Conclusion: Your community may have more effective resources for persons in families than for singles.

Guiding questions to go deeper: Do these trends hold true across project types? Does your community have more stabilizing resources for families than for singles? What is the makeup of total persons served between singles and persons in families? What do returns to homelessness look like for these subpopulations – are exits to permanent housing also sustained at a higher rate for families than for singles?

SYSTEM MOVEMENT

These charts are meant to tell the story of how persons move around and through the homelessness response system in Minnesota. Use the filters and date selection at the top to choose a base population. The tables below will show, for that base population, all the CoCs and project types they were active in during the period and where they were at the end of the period. Put together, they form a statement about the activity and outcomes for any group of persons active in the homelessness response system.

Select Continuum of Care	Select Project Type	Start Date	End Date
All	Coordinated Entry	1/1/2020	12/31/2020

Active in Other CoCs

MN-500 - Hennepin	4,392
MN-501 - Ramsey	4,712
MN-502 - Southeast	2,509
MN-503 - Suburban Metro..	1,462
MN-504 - Northeast	1,292
MN-505 - Central	1,839
MN-506 - Northwest	1,313
MN-508 - West Central	836
MN-509 - St. Louis County	3,925
MN-511 - Southwest	365

Active in Other Project Types

Coordinated Entry	19,833
Emergency Shelter	6,289
Homelessness Prevention	539
Permanent Housing	2,468
Rapid Re-Housing	1,975
Street Outreach	2,136
Support Services Only	3,548
Transitional Housing	663

and at the end of the Period

Exited to Institutional destination	460
Exited to Permanent Housing	5,564
Exited to unknown destination	8,809
Stayed in the system	15,019

Example for Exploration: In your community, among persons active in Coordinated Entry in the last year, explore the other communities and project types where those persons were served.

Example Observation: A low proportion of persons in Coordinated Entry in your community are also active in emergency shelter. A high proportion of persons are also active in permanent housing and rapid re-housing. A high proportion are active in other CoCs.

Example Conclusion: Your community may serve a high proportion of unsheltered persons in Coordinated Entry, or persons in shelters not in HMIS. Your community may be effective at connecting persons in Coordinated Entry to housing, or your community may have a need to close the records of persons no longer in need of connection to housing through Coordinated Entry.

Guiding Questions to Go Deeper: What is the status of people active in Coordinated Entry in your community at the end of the period? If many "stayed in the system", do people in your Coordinated Entry system tend to stay on the Priority List for a long time? Or are they staying in the system because they were connected to permanent housing?

There are many important questions beyond the above examples that your community may be interested in tracking as you plan for and monitor progress toward ending homelessness. Below are a few additional examples of questions, and the location on the dashboard where you can find answers.

Main

- Where across the state are the most persons served in each project type? Has that changed over time?

Demographics

- Are permanent housing resources distributed at the same rate by race and ethnicity as emergency resources? Has that changed over time?

Performance

- Which interventions have the most positive rate of exits to permanent housing? Has that changed over time?
- When people return to homelessness, where do they return?
- When people are new to the system, where do they appear?

System Movement

- Do persons seeking emergency resources travel across the state to find them? Has that changed over time?
- What proportion of people are staying in the system at the end of a given period? Is this similar across interventions?