Proposed Plan for North Carolina's HMIS Implementation

As an experienced Homeless Management Information Systems provider, and a national consultant in the field of HMIS, the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness is grateful for the opportunity to potentially collaborate with the Continuums of Care in the State of North Carolina. We believe we will provide an exceptional product and level of service to North Carolina's homeless service providers, and continue to advance the use of the North Carolina HMIS as a tool to end homelessness.

For the State of North Carolina, MCAH recommends leveraging the strengths of the Bowman ServicePoint platform with the technical experience and training background of our staff. The key to this proposal's success hinges around two key objectives:

- Build a strong presence of HMIS trained system administrators, agencies and users at the CoC level within the state of North Carolina

- Where applicable, translate successful policies, procedures and best practices used in the State of Michigan into the North Carolina implementation.

The success of the Michigan implementation has been a planned and calculated process, it did not happen by mistake. We created strong partnerships with local communities, giving them ownership of their own data, and showing them how to successfully run reports, view outcomes and present information to their key stakeholders as part of the decision making process.

Key Objective 1: Building a Strong Presence of HMIS Administrators, Agencies and Users at the Local CoC Level
Michigan's HMIS implementation has been successful because it developed a strong user and administrative base at the CoC level. The reality is that the users on the system who are closest to the clients work at the local level. Therefore, when there are problems within the local homeless service delivery system, they are the first ones to recognize it.

Developing quality practices to make process improvements and monitor outcomes happen best when they are part of the culture of the local CoC. MCAH would work with each of the 12 North Carolina CoCs to ensure they have local System Administrators committed to working on the ground level. These individuals would serve as the local lead and be responsible for mastering the operational curriculums.

Our collaborative model places significant responsibility with the local CoCs and ensures that the project has shared ownership. This approach has been extremely successful and where applicable MCAH would leverage this same basic strategy in North Carolina.

Key Objective 2: Where Applicable, Translate Successful Policies, Procedures and Best Practices Used in the State of Michigan into the North Carolina Implementation
A key to success in any HMIS implementation is to develop a consistent and stable approach to training and service delivery, particularly when it comes to privacy, workflows, measuring outcomes and continuous

quality improvement. Michigan's approach towards standardization within its HMIS implementation has become a national best practice, which has been modeled by other projects across the country.

If selected, Michigan would adapt these tools for use in North Carolina. And while other specific North Carolina programs and practices will need to be written exclusively for local use, the principles and core strategies honed within the MSHMIS implementation would still provide a solid foundation for the North Carolina project.

Proposed Model for the North Carolina HMIS Implementation

Within Michigan, MCAH has developed a collaborative model that places significant responsibility with the local CoCs and ensures that the project has shared ownership. This approach has been extremely successful and where applicable MCAH would use this same basic strategy in North Carolina. A few of the proposed steps we would take in building the structure for the North Carolina model would include:

- Each CoC will have a North Carolina based System Administrator (SA). With MCAH support, smaller CoCs will function with a part-time person, likely shared with other North Carolina CoCs, with that person serving as the local lead and having responsibility for mastering the operational curriculums. Large urban CoCs in Michigan have 1 to 1.5 FTE SAs, and we would anticipate a similar pattern in North Carolina. The exact number of final FTEs allocated to CoCs would be determined after an extensive review of the North Carolina implementation. The North Carolina System Administrators would be supported by both the project staff in the North Carolina state office, and by additional MCAH staff based in Michigan. Also, dollars from the existing SHP Grants to the Statewide Lead will be focused on building capacity at the local level in addition to supporting State-level activities.

- As an experienced training organization, MCAH would ensure that the local CoCs and participating agencies have a stable training curriculum designed to comply with the reporting requirements of their major funding sources. MCAH would develop a series of training videos, complete with certification quizzes to ensure trained users have a solid grasp of the operational curriculum. MCAH would also implement a regular Statewide System Administrators meeting to keep CoCs informed on critical system news, in addition to working with local CoCs to develop their own Agency and User meetings. Regular topics of discussion at these meetings may include privacy training, workflows, the use of reporting tools, data analysis and continuous quality improvement activities. Where needed, MCAH staff may also hold in person trainings from time to time at the local or regional level, to ensure staff have appropriate mastery of the system.

- Transition steps may involve some reorganization of the existing data structure to allow for jurisdictional reporting. Additionally, each participating agency has an assigned local Agency Administrator (AA) and that Administrator works with System Administrators in organizing agency data to optimize reporting and manage visibility.

- Local CoCs will be responsible for selecting and recruiting local agencies to participate on the system.

- Based on North Carolina's agreed upon sharing rules, local agencies and CoCs will determine the actual sharing partners as well as what is shared. This may be reviewed to ensure the sharing protocol aligns with any federal or state regulations regarding privacy and client protection.

A key principle at the heart of MCAH's "strong" CoC model is ensuring that all CoCs have the capability to interact with their own data. Within Michigan, this model has resulted in a robust and diverse implementation. CoCs run their own reports and have the tools to problem-solve quality issues. To make this possible, an appropriate data structure must exist, extensive access to both Ad Hoc (design) and view licenses to the reporting tool must be available, and carefully managed visibility and reporting groups need to be in place. MCAH also encourages agencies to use the HMIS extensively to meet a wide variety of information demands by mapping the system to the business processes of their organization. This results in data that is used and therefore useful.

Recommended HMIS Software Vendor: Remain with Bowman Systems
If selected, MCAH would continue to use Bowman Systems ServicePoint software as North Carolina's HMIS vendor. MCAH has a proven track record of working with Bowman, and we are confident they will continue to provide the best HMIS product, both now and in the future.

By staying with ServicePoint, costs associated with data migration would be minimal, as well as retraining costs associated with shifting the users of North Carolina to a new system. However, we anticipate some costs associated with reorganization of the data structure, the scope of which will be defined after an extensive system evaluation.

Agency Overview: The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH)

The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH) is an experienced HMIS provider, operating one of the largest single HMIS implementations in the United States. Based on Bowman Systems ServicePoint software, the Michigan State HMIS has a track record for providing a strong, integrated and flexible implementation for collecting and disseminating data to federal, state and local stakeholders. MCAH has led several statewide initiatives surrounding outcome measurement and continuous quality improvement that have been recognized as best practices and modeled by other HMIS implementations across the country. Additionally, MCAH staff are frequently consulted on national technical assistance projects, assisting implementations with improving their own capacity and service delivery.

Organization and Program Capacity:
The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH) serves as the Lead Agency for the Michigan statewide HMIS implementation, directly administering the Balance of State CoC HMIS grant and providing indirect support for the remaining 20 CoCs. Michigan is composed of 21 CoCs (which is further broken down into 83 counties consisting of 574 HMIS-participating agencies). The MCAH team has 10 years of experience in running the MSHMIS project,10 years of national consulting expertise on data, HUD standards, systematic best practices, and over 30 years of data analysis at both the local and national level. MCAH also administers other statewide homeless programs including an AmeriCorps section that works with housing agencies throughout the state, and oversees the Michigan "Project Homeless Connect" grants which implements homeless service and housing resource fairs for Michigan communities.

Regarding the HMIS Project, MCAH provides the following services:

- Manages the Statewide Vendor Contract.

- Provides Training for Users Statewide through recorded video presentations, webinars and live training

- Hosts the statewide coordination meeting – the Monthly System Administrator call-in.

- Hosts routine user meetings for BOS participating agencies.

- Defines privacy and security protocols that allow for the broadest possible participation.

- Provides Statewide Operating Policies and Procedures that represent the minimum standards for participation. Individual CoCs may add additional requirements as negotiated locally.

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