

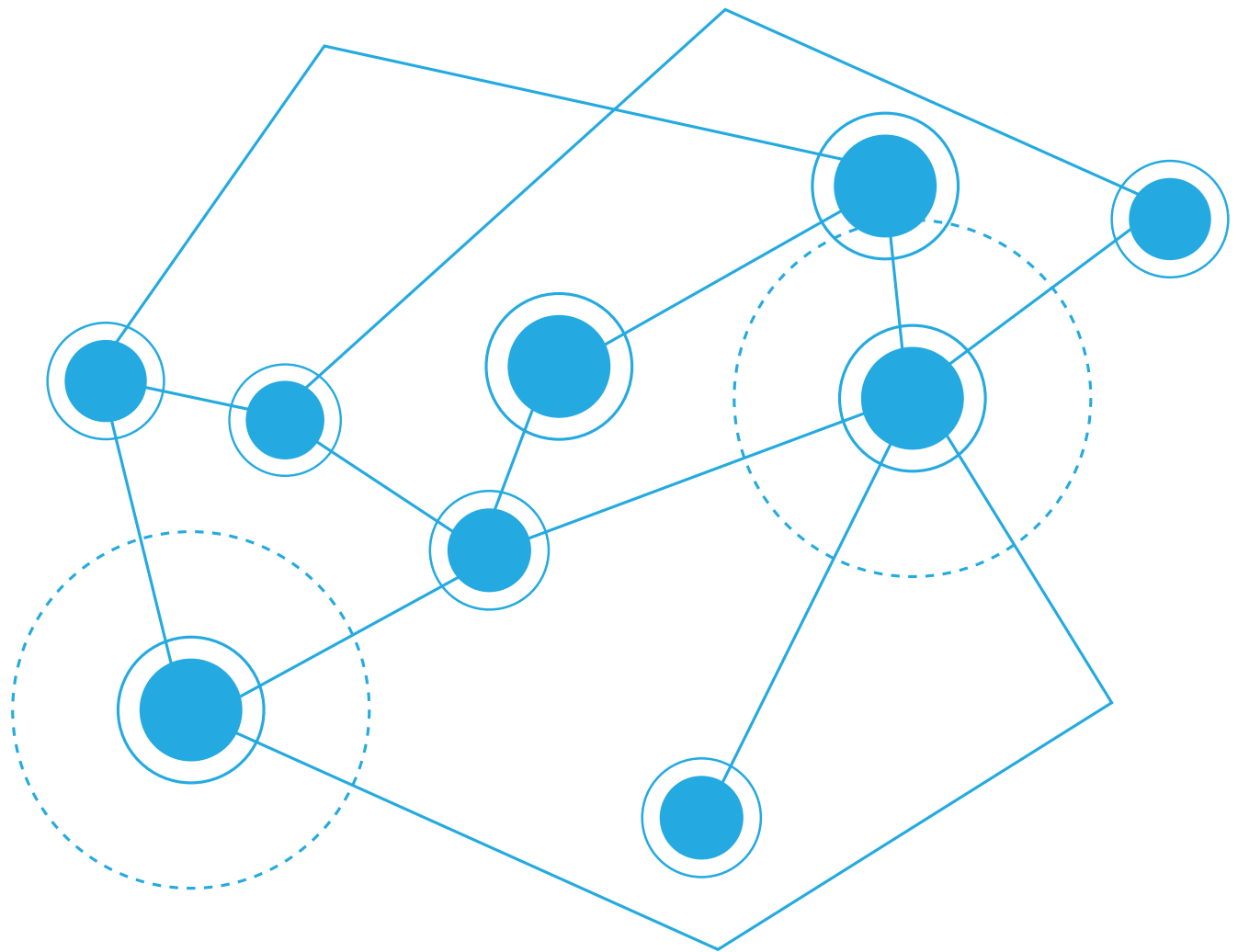


IBM Center for
The Business of Government

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Boundaries Series

Effective Leadership in Network Collaboration

Lessons Learned from Continuum of Care Homeless Programs



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Foreword

On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present *Effective Leadership in Network Collaboration: Lessons Learned from Continuum of Care Homeless Programs* by Hee Soun Jang, University of North Texas; Jesús N. Valero, University of Utah; and Kyujin Jung, Tennessee State University.

This report continues the IBM Center's long interest in collaboration. The report examines network collaboration in the context of Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless programs. The authors collected data from a survey of 237 homeless program networks across the nation, as well as in-depth reviews and interviews of four CoC homeless networks in three states. While this report focuses on homeless networks, its findings and recommendations are applicable to networks in all service delivery areas.

The trend toward using “collaborative” networks has been increasing in recent years; because of their increased use, new leadership approaches will be needed by executives who are “managing” networks in non-hierarchical situations. In contrast to the traditional hierarchical style of management in single agency bureaucracies, network leaders need to work across organizations and sectors.

After presenting findings from the authors' survey and case examinations, the authors present six recommendations for leaders facing the challenge of managing networks. It is clear that a new management style is required for networks. The authors' recommendations include: develop expertise, cultivate a collaborative culture, take risks, use inclusive leadership, use agile and adaptive management practices, and ensure effective use of performance indicators.



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The report builds on the Center's previous reports on collaboration and adds another example—homeless networks—where collaboration is being used to work across organizations and sectors. Previous IBM Center reports on collaborating across boundaries include *Inter-Organizational Networks: A Review of the Literature to Information Practice* by Janice Popp, H. Brinton Milward, Gail MacKean, Ann Casebeer, and Ron Lindstrom; *Collaboration Between Government and Outreach Organizations: A Case Study of the Department of Veterans Affairs* by Lael Keiser and Susan Miller; and *Implementing Cross-Agency Collaboration: A Guide for Federal Managers* by Jane Fountain.

We hope that this report will assist executives in better understanding the challenge of managing networks and the skills and abilities needed by collaborative network leaders.



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Executive Summary

Cross-sector collaboration has the potential to become a highly useful form of governance to effectively resolve difficult problems that cannot be addressed by a single organization or sector. While scholars and practitioners alike have a solid understanding of why organizations collaborate with one another, more research is needed about what effective collaboration looks like and the role that leadership style plays in the process.

In order to answer these questions, this report examines collaboration within the context of homeless policy networks, an area receiving significant policy attention in recent years. This report specifically investigates the role of managers leading continuum of care (CoC) homeless programs and the leadership behaviors that matter in achieving successful collaborative outcomes.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a CoC homeless program is “a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximize self-sufficiency. It includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness.” HUD identifies four necessary parts of a homeless continuum:

- Outreach, intake, and assessment to identify service and housing needs and provide a link to the appropriate level of both
- Emergency shelter to provide an immediate and safe alternative to sleeping on the streets, especially for homeless families with children
- Transitional housing with supportive services to allow for the development of skills that will be needed in permanent housing
- Permanent supportive housing with services to provide individuals and families with an affordable place to live, if needed

Based on research for this report, we found the following about the impact of leadership on effective collaboration:

- **Finding One:** CoC networks have positive impacts
- **Finding Two:** CoC networks raise awareness of homelessness
- **Finding Three:** CoC leaders enhance internal capacity of the network
- **Finding Four:** CoC leaders foster idea sharing and information sharing

The report concludes with six recommendations:

- **Recommendation One:** Develop expertise
- **Recommendation Two:** Cultivate a collaborative culture

- **Recommendation Three:** Take risks
- **Recommendation Four:** Be an inclusive leader
- **Recommendation Five:** Be agile and adaptive
- **Recommendation Six:** Use performance indicators effectively

Introduction

Cross-sector collaboration has become a prevalent form of governance for effectively tackling difficult problems that cannot be addressed by a single organization or sector. A scarcity of resources and efforts to reinvent the way government functions has also conditioned many public managers to pursue new approaches beyond organizational boundaries. To date, the assumption has been that collaboration is a good thing and that pooling resources will automatically result in positive outcomes.¹ Because the benefits of collaboration are too often assumed, there is little research about what effective collaboration means or looks like. Collaboration requires a real effort, coordination, and most importantly, effective leadership.² Thus, it is essential to understand the scope of leadership behaviors that lead to successful collaborations.

Leaders have choices in how they engage with member agencies and in how they achieve the mission and objectives of collaboration. Different styles of leadership will show different activities that either enhance or reduce effective collaborations. This is because a public manager who leads a collaborative network plays an incredibly important role in the process. Among other responsibilities, they are commonly tasked with bringing organizations together to participate, securing the necessary resources to achieve the goals of the network, and articulating a common vision and mission. Scholarly research has usually treated network leaders as agents of underlying organizational decisions driving the management of collaborations. But public managers leading collaborative efforts are real people who possess leadership qualities and skills that will influence effective collaboration in predictable ways.

This report, therefore, focuses on answering two practical questions:

- What does effective collaboration look like and does leadership matter?
- If leadership is important, what specific skills and qualities are valuable for leaders to possess and/or develop in order to lead successful collaborative efforts?

In order to answer these questions, we studied collaboration within the context of homeless policy networks, an area receiving significant policy attention in recent years. This report specifically investigates the role of managers leading continuum of care (CoC) homeless networks and the leadership behaviors that matter in achieving successful collaborative outcomes.

Report Objectives

Based on data collected from a nationwide survey of U.S. continuum of care (CoC) homeless networks and in-depth interviews with network leaders, this report has the following objectives:

1. Berry et al. "Three Traditions of Network Research: What the Public Management Research Agenda Can Learn from Other Research Communities," *Public Administration Review* 64, no. 5 (Sep/Oct 2004): 539-52.

2. Thomson, Ann Marie, and James L. Perry. "Collaboration Processes: Inside the Black Box," *Public Administration Review* 66 (2006): 20-32.

- **Develop measures of effective collaboration.** The report describes measures of effective collaboration that public managers can use to assess performance at two levels: *network* and *community*. Both of these levels are a reflection of the competing interests of two stakeholder groups: network members and community stakeholders.
- **Offer a network leadership model.** The report outlines a model of network leadership that highlights the important leadership behaviors in collaborative governance within the context of homeless policy. The leadership model consists of two leadership styles that we found have an impact on effective collaborations:
 - **Task-oriented behaviors** are focused on facilitating network goal achievement.
 - **Relationship-oriented behaviors** place a special focus on building positive social relations such as motivating and inspiring network members and ensuring that the individual needs of members are carefully addressed.
- **Assess the impact of leadership on effective CoC collaboration.** The findings in this report are based on survey findings and interviews that underscore the impact that leadership has on effective collaboration. The report highlights the degree to which public managers perceive that their networks are achieving successful outcomes and discusses key leadership behaviors in networked collaboration.
- **Generate implications for practice.** The report presents six recommendations that will serve as a guide for individuals charged with leading collaborative networks. These are identified as critical in a CoC homeless network and shed light on the leadership values that are primary drivers of public service collaborations.

Understanding Continuum of Care (CoC) Homeless Networks

A public service network is defined as a structure of cross-sector organizations working to jointly implement public policy.³ A homeless network is a structure of multiple organizations representing public, private, and nonprofit sectors that work together to address homelessness within their community.

The creation of homeless networks across U.S. communities has been promoted by federal policy. The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 was key in stimulating federal activity in this area. In 2014, through the use of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Exchange website⁴—which provides critical information and publishes data about HUD-funded programs—the authors identified a

What is a Continuum of Care (CoC)?

A continuum of care is a collaborative system for planning and providing services to a specific person or group of people on an ongoing basis. It involves tracking the progress of the services provided. The term is commonly heard in healthcare, but it also can apply to other fields employing an integrated service program. The concept frequently is used in social services contexts, which includes homelessness mitigation programs.

3. Agranoff, Robert, and Michael McGuire. "Big Questions in Public Network Management Research," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 11, no. 3 (2001): 295-326.

4. <https://www.hudexchange.info>

total of 382 community-based and self-organized CoC networks⁵ operating across the United States. Local communities that establish a homeless network are eligible to apply for competitive HUD funding on a yearly basis. In 2014 alone, over \$1.8 billion dollars was awarded to CoC homeless networks to implement a variety of programs and services to end homelessness in the United States.

The federal government encourages communities to think broadly about the causes of homelessness and to pool community resources to address the needs of homeless people through a CoC network approach. The underlying assumption in the promotion of CoC homeless networks as a tool to reduce and eliminate homelessness is that collaboration is the most effective way of tackling this difficult and complex problem.

The *2010 Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* argued that a cross-sector network approach is the most appropriate management tool to end homelessness:

Homelessness cannot be solved by a single agency or organization, by a single level of government, or by a single sector. Everyone should be reminded of the intricacies of homelessness as a policy area, and remember that preventing and ending homelessness will take real coordination, collaboration, and a constant exchange of ideas.⁶

According to the interim federal rule⁷ that governs the CoC approach, the primary purposes of a CoC homeless network are to:

- Promote community-wide goals to end homelessness
- Establish a board that oversees the operations of the network
- Design and operate a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) that tracks client data and service provision
- Engage in collaborative planning activities such as yearly counts of homeless people

The interim federal rule identifies the mix of organizations that should be a part of the homeless network. Table 1 lists organizations that are considered to be members of CoC networks. Fourteen types of organizations are mentioned in the interim rule and we categorized these into the following sector categories: public, private, and nonprofit. Nonprofit organizations seem to be primary players in the collaboration process; nonprofits include faith-based organizations, mental health agencies, and social service providers. This means that public managers must actively engage the nonprofit sector in the design and governance of CoC networks. This mix of organizations is also HUD's suggested model of organizations that should be included in a homeless network. It is important to note, however, that not all member organizations are HUD-funded; many are self-funded organizations.

The analysis of CoC homeless networks helps to develop a deeper understanding of what effective collaboration looks like and the conditions that lead some networks to be more effective. In addition, our research can be used by other cross-sector collaborations that meet one or more of the following conditions:

5. Using CoC data from HUD's Exchange website (<https://www.hudexchange.info>), we identified 421 networks serving the 50 states. Of those networks, 39 were organized to serve an entire state and 382 served a city, county, or metropolitan area. Our discussion and analysis focuses on the 382 networks because they are community-based, self-organized networks engaged in collaboration.

6. United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. "Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness." 2010.

7. "Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing: Continuum of Care Program; Interim Final Rule," edited by HUD, 45421-45467.

- Address complex policy issues
- Involve a variety of non-state actors, such as nonprofit organizations and private firms
- Are self-organized at the local level
- Have ties to the federal government or federal policy

Table 1: Expected CoC Organizational Membership

| Sector | Type of Organization |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Public | Governments |
| | Public housing agencies |
| | Law enforcement |
| | School districts |
| Nonprofit | Faith-based organizations |
| | Mental health agencies |
| | Homeless service providers |
| | Victim service providers |
| | Social service providers |
| | Hospitals |
| | Advocates |
| | Veterans service providers |
| Private | Businesses |
| | Affordable housing developers |

Modified from Source: CoC Interim Federal Rule, 2012

CoC Homeless Networks Examined

We conducted in-depth reviews of four CoC homeless networks in the states of Utah, Texas (two networks), and New York to develop a deeper understanding about the different approaches to collaboration and the role of leadership.

Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (Texas)

This CoC homeless network has been in existence since 2002 and has approximately 50 active member organizations serving Dallas and Collin counties, Texas. The CoC established itself as a 501(c)(3) public charity and is named Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (MDHA). MDHA manages the network's daily operations (e.g., managing HUD grants and funding), but a board comprised of community stakeholders provides the overall direction, service priorities, and vision. MDHA is also the designated administrator of the network's HMIS (Homeless Management Information System). MDHA's current goal is to ensure that all organizations provide homelessness services report data (e.g., number of people served, etc.) back to the network—including for shelters that are not funded by HUD—and to understand the homeless service demand and sheltering resources available in real time. About half of its member organizations are HUD-funded.⁸

Denton County Homeless Coalition/Texas Homeless Network (Texas)

This homeless coalition was originally formed as its own CoC in 2007 to serve Denton County, Texas. In 2013, the CoC made the decision to merge with the statewide network known as the Texas Homeless Network.⁹

The decision to merge was predicated on the fact that the network was not as competitive for HUD funding as a stand-alone CoC and lacked administrative capacity. As a member of the statewide network, the coalition benefits from technical support and increased access to funding. The coalition reports its minutes to the statewide network to ensure efficient operation but still enjoys some autonomy. For example, the coalition—comprised of 40 member agencies—has its own governance system, made up of a steering committee and a general body membership, which provides direction for the network. The steering committee chair serves as the coalition's leader while the daily operations are shared between HUD-funded agencies within the coalition.

Salt Lake City and County CoC (Utah)

The Salt Lake City and County CoC has been in existence for over 20 years. Unlike previously discussed CoCs, this network is led by a local government entity—the Salt Lake County government. The county provides staffing and administrative assistance to the CoC to ensure that the network is able to maintain its daily operations and functions. As the lead agency, the county is also responsible for overseeing the organizations funded by HUD and evaluating their performance. The 25 member agencies elect a board that is representative of the membership, and the board is responsible for ensuring that all stakeholders fulfill their duties and responsibilities via memoranda of understanding.¹⁰

8. MDHA's website is <http://www.mdhadallas.org>.

9. The Texas Homeless Network website is <http://www.thn.org>.

10. The Salt Lake City and County CoC website is <http://slco.org/homeless-services>.

Cattaraugus County CoC (New York)

The Cattaraugus County CoC network was formally established in 2006 to be compliant with HUD funding requirements. Before its creation as a CoC, there had been informal meetings among agencies that served the homeless community. The network is comprised of 20 agencies, but HUD only funds four of them. The CoC describes its governance structure as led by a board of directors, but recently it has struggled to maintain an active board membership. While the CoC network prefers to maintain its own identity and autonomy, the loss of HUD funding and the absence of active board leadership has led the CoC to rethink its strategy and independence. Because the state of New York does not have a statewide network, Cattaraugus is considering merging with one of its neighboring CoC networks.

Examples of CoC Homeless Networks in Three States

| CoC Network | Homeless Population | Stand-Alone CoC Network | HUD Funding in 2013 | HUD-Funded Agencies |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Salt Lake City & County | 2,463 | Yes | \$5,678,852 | 11 |
| Dallas City & County | 3,447 | Yes | \$15,663,757 | 24 |
| Denton County | 216 | No (part of "Balance of State" system) | \$638,374 | 3 |
| Cattaraugus County | 38 | Yes, but seeking merger | \$417,058 | 4 |

Understanding Leadership in Effective Public Service Collaboration

What Does Effective Collaboration Mean for CoC Homeless Networks?

Policy and scholarly discussions have focused on understanding why organizations are likely to collaborate. There is, however, less research on what effective collaboration means or looks like. This is not surprising, as it is difficult to observe the complex interaction of cross-sector actors participating in the multiple stages of the collaboration process. It is even more challenging to identify collective goals shared among network members to measure collaboration outcomes. It is difficult to answer questions such as the following:

- If 20 organizations are working together to address a complex social issue within their community, how should they measure effectiveness?
- How do these organizations know that they are making a positive impact toward agreed policy goals?

These are important questions to answer if collaboration is to be a useful public management tool to address a complex community problem. One objective of this report is to develop practical measures of network effectiveness that public managers can use to assess their network's performance.¹¹

Because a collaboration effort has multiple stakeholders, including network member agencies and the community it serves, we consider what network effectiveness would mean for the two key stakeholder groups. Thus, we measure effective public service collaboration at two levels:

- Network
- Community

Managers can use measures of network effectiveness to assess the performance of their collaboration efforts at two levels. Using a five-point scale ranging from “did not experience success at all” to “experienced success to a very great extent,” public managers can take a close look at how well they are doing in achieving success during a set time period that varies from network to network, depending on the needs and preferences of key stakeholders (e.g., board of directors, funding agencies, and/or HUD). In doing so, it is important that public managers be candid about how well they are doing in the various effectiveness measures in order to strategize ways to improve their collaboration.

It is important to note that although these measures are developed within the context of homeless policy, they can be easily modified to fit other policy contexts.

11. In a seminal piece on assessing network effectiveness, Provan and Milward (2001) suggested that network effectiveness research could be conducted at three levels of analysis: organization, network, and community. This report uses network and community levels of effectiveness and creates measures of each by developing indicators.

Measuring Network-Level Effectiveness

At the network level, effectiveness is measured by considering the degree to which the network as a whole is able to achieve collective benefits. Here, the interest is not on individual organizational benefits but on the extent to which the network, as a whole body, achieves outcomes that benefit everyone.

Measures of network-level effectiveness include:

- **Increasing Membership.** By increasing membership, the network is showing signs of being able to convey a collective vision and mission. It also indicates that members work well with each other, which encourages others to become interested in joining the collaboration efforts.
- **Increasing Member Commitment.** In the process of growing a network's membership, or when it has achieved the desired level of membership, an effective network is able to maintain and increase the membership's commitment to the collaboration efforts. Without an increasingly committed group of organizations, the network will struggle to achieve its goals and objectives.
- **Increasing Range of Services.** The network is working well when it is not only adding new members, but also increasing the scope of services that it offers. This is indicative of a network that is conscientious of what it is currently capable of doing, understands the extent of community needs, and works to add to its line of services to address unmet needs.
- **Reducing Duplication of Services.** An efficient and effective network is also able to assess its current scope of services and eliminate any service overlap or duplication. This then allows for limited resources to be allocated to new ideas and solutions.

Measuring Community-Level Effectiveness

At the community level, the focus is on assessing whether the network is able to contribute value to the community it serves. Here, the network must think carefully about what being effective would mean for those members of the community that have a stake in the collaboration. The general question that public managers should be asking themselves is: Are we making a difference in the community we serve?

Measures of community-level effectiveness include:

- **Building Greater Awareness About Homelessness.** A CoC homeless network contributes value to the community it serves when it is able to build awareness of the problem. Do citizens, local elected officials, and community organizations understand the severity of the problem and what it is going to take as a community to eradicate homelessness?
- **Decreasing the Rate of Homelessness.** Homeless networks are primarily created to reduce the rate of homelessness within the geography they serve. Thus, to contribute value to the community means to reduce the severity of the problem. The same would be true of other types of networks created, for instance, to eliminate the number of students dropping out of high school or reducing the incidence of crime among young people in the community.
- **Lowering Service Cost.** A network achieves community-level effectiveness when it pools resources and community program coordination and is able to reduce the cost of homeless services, including housing, case management, and other needed services.

Elements of Effective Leadership in a CoC Homeless Collaboration

Another objective of this report is to create a leadership model that will help public managers lead positive outcomes of public service collaboration. This report develops a leadership model in the context of a networked environment with distinctions between a singular organization and a network. It is important to understand the leadership competencies necessary to function within a networked environment. Leaders must exhibit the right combination of task-oriented behaviors and relationship-oriented behaviors.

There are two types of behaviors seen in cross-sector collaboration:

- **Task-oriented behaviors** are focused on facilitating network goal achievement, such as identifying roles and responsibilities, holding network members accountable for performance, and putting plans into action.
- **Relationship-oriented behaviors** place a greater focus on building positive social relations, such as motivating and inspiring network members and ensuring that the individual needs of members are carefully addressed.

Both task and relationship behaviors are important for the effective management of a CoC homeless network. Network managers who engage in both types of behaviors will be more effective than others in achieving successful collaborative outcomes.

Defining Task-Oriented Leadership Behaviors

Task-oriented behaviors reflect the four task dimensions that are modified from McGuire and Silvia's (2009) leadership in emergency management networks:¹²

- **Activation** refers to the process by which the leader identifies key members of the network.
- **Mobilization** is concerned with building the support of important stakeholders both internally and externally.
- **Framing** refers to the process by which the leader identifies the mission and vision of the network.
- **Synthesizing** behaviors are focused on building consensus among network members and fostering an environment that results in productive interactions.

Indicators of each of the four dimensions are developed to observe key task behaviors in homeless service collaboration.

Defining Relationship-Oriented Leadership Behaviors

Relationship-oriented leadership behaviors are observed through four dimensions:

- **Idealized influence** refers to a leader who is a strong role model and whose behavior is led by strong ethical and moral standards.¹³

12. McGuire and Silvia (2009) tested collaborative leadership theory in an empirical manner in the emergency management context. Their study used a single, perceptual measure of effectiveness by relying on emergency managers' subjective assessments of their network performance. Their leadership instrument used a total of 34 indicators to measure the four components of collaborative leadership. The results of their analysis found that mobilizing, synthesizing, and framing behaviors matter in the collaboration process while activation did not. The limitation of their work, however, is that their study depends on a single and subjective measure of network effectiveness at the community level. In addition, the emergency management context is different from the human and social policy field; thus, the need to study this leadership theory in other policy contexts.

13. We use transformational leadership study done by Bass and Avolio (1994) to explore the leadership in the public service network context, and we specifically examine the relationship-oriented behaviors that are important for building relationships, commitment, and social capital. Bass, Bernard M., and Bruce J. Avolio. "Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership," Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1994.

- **Inspirational motivation** refers to leaders who motivate others by inspiring them to achieve mutual goals and who effectively link individual values and beliefs to the organization's mission.
- **Individualized consideration** refers to leaders who take an interest in the individual needs of others.
- **Intellectual stimulation** refers to leaders who foster an environment of innovation and creativity.

An effective leader is expected to motivate network members through inspiration to achieve common goals and objectives.

Study Findings

The findings presented below are generated from the analyses of a survey of 259 CoC networks nationwide. The survey was designed to:

- Learn more about how leadership is carried out by a leading agency
- Understand the collaboration process (i.e., governance structure, communication strategies, and membership)
- Investigate the degree to which public managers perceive that their networks are achieving successful outcomes¹⁴

Our findings discuss the degree to which networks perceive that they are being effective, the key leadership behaviors in networked collaboration, and the impact of leadership on effective collaboration.

Finding One: CoC Networks Have Positive Impacts

We asked network leaders to assess the performance of their CoC homeless networks in the various indicators of both network- and community-level effectiveness.¹⁵ These results are recorded in Figure 1.

With regards to the network level, leaders report that they are successful in all four indicators of effectiveness:

- Increasing CoC membership
- Increasing range of services
- Reducing duplication of services
- Increasing member commitment

This finding suggests that public managers can realize important benefits through networked collaboration—namely, reducing the duplication of services by pooling resources, coordinating efforts in the community to increase the range of services, and increasing member agencies of the CoC. A leader of a small CoC network in New York, for example, defines network level effectiveness as follows:

Being an effective CoC is having an effective service delivery system to address the needs of those that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is

14. The survey was sent to 382 CoC networks. From that, 259 networks responded, for a response rate of 68 percent.

15. Leaders were also provided with the opportunity to identify instances where they did not focus efforts in an area, which allows us to obtain a clearer picture of how networks are doing.

about collaboration and working together and thinking outside of the box to address those needs.

Of the four network level measures, “increasing member commitment” was ranked lowest. A CoC leader discussed the challenges of building member commitment:

One big part of effectiveness is that everybody is working together. It is important that the HUD-funded agencies recognize that they are getting a gift from the government and they have to participate in the committee in an active manner that is required by HUD because of the funding. There is a lot more to funding than just filling out a grant application in my opinion. I want the HUD-funded agencies to take ownership.

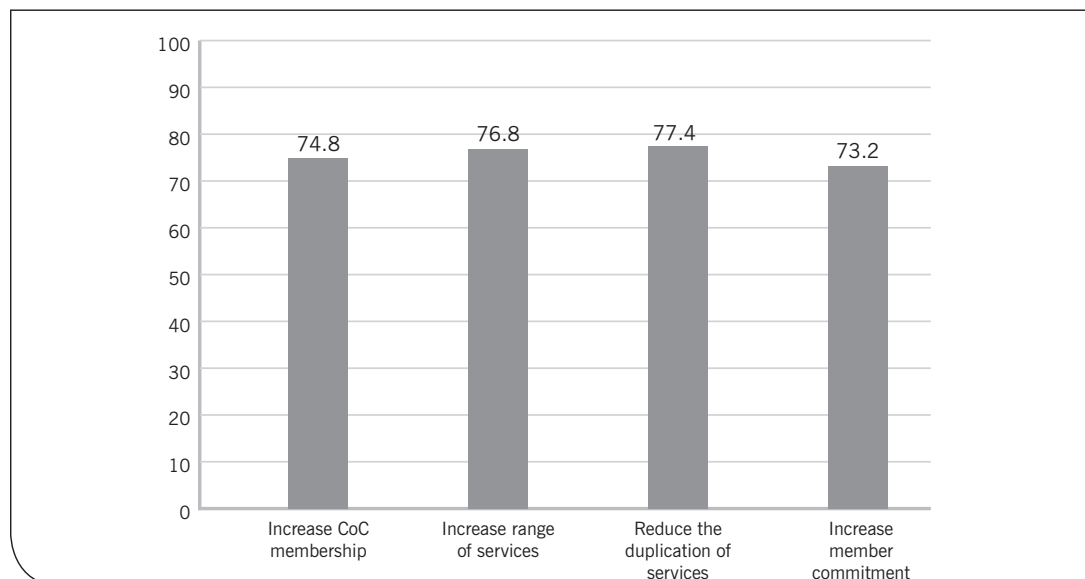
CoC leaders need to think carefully about ways of capturing and maintaining the interest of organizations to be active network members:

- Are members being consulted and engaged in the decision-making process?
- Are members involved in brainstorming new ideas and solutions?

These kinds of activities may prove useful in increasing network members’ commitment.

The Dallas City and County CoC in Texas, for example, recognized that it needs improvement in the area of increasing the number of partner organizations; it is proposing to do so through a change in leadership and by re-structuring the governance board. This CoC also has a staff member who dedicates a portion of time to work directly with member organizations and other community stakeholders. These efforts have allowed the CoC to be on track in its efforts to increase member commitment to the network’s mission and vision. The Dallas CoC interviewee spoke about the importance of leadership that can foster member commitment in response to the collective action challenge in this complex structure. She explained, “Leadership ... is involving and getting information out to the community, as well as recruiting other agencies to partner.”

Figure 1: Performance of CoC Networks at the Network Level



Note: Survey respondents were asked to assess the extent to which their CoC has been able to achieve success in the various dimensions by using a scale from 1 (did not experience success at all) to 5 (experienced success to a very great extent). The average was calculated and then multiplied by 20 to achieve a scale ranging from 0 to 100.

Finding Two: CoC Networks Raise Awareness of Homelessness

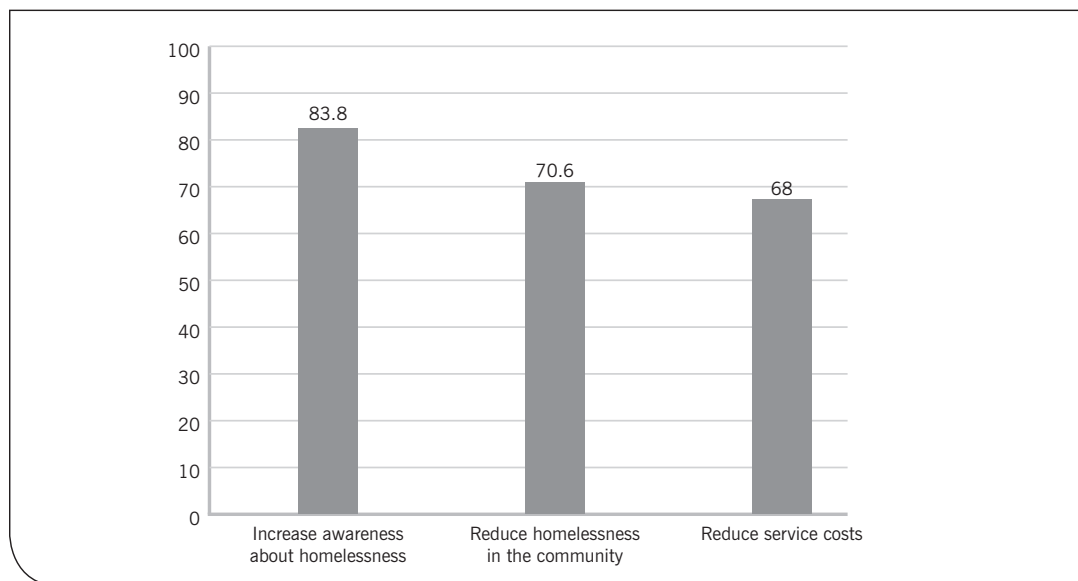
Network leaders report successes and challenges in contributing value to the communities they serve. In general, networks are most successful in increasing awareness about homelessness in their community.

This finding indicates that public managers should continue using the various tools and methods to educate and engage the community about what homelessness is and what can be done to resolve the problem. For example, a CoC leader highlighted the key role played by city officials in letting the community know what the city is doing and what the city cares about. The city also offers data assistance to better understand the multi-dimensional nature of homelessness.

We found that CoC networks make good use of social media outlets to raise awareness about the incidence of homelessness and the service needs that homeless people may have. Recent research has found that social media outlets such as Facebook can be helpful in raising awareness about homelessness, engaging stakeholders, and increasing the profile of the network in the community.¹⁶

Networks struggle most in reducing service costs. Here, public managers need to engage not only their membership but also community stakeholders in pooling resources and identifying a community plan by which to create more affordable access to services for their homeless population. The Denton County CoC in Texas, for example, is proactive in gathering unique data that can then be used to advocate for new HUD-funded programs. This may then lead to the creation of programs that are either totally or partially subsidized by HUD funding. Figure 2 presents survey findings.

Figure 2: Performance of CoC Networks at the Community Level



Note: Survey respondents were asked to assess the extent to which their CoC has been able to achieve success in the various dimensions by using a scale from 1 (did not experience success at all) to 5 (experienced success to a very great extent). The average was calculated and then multiplied by 20 to achieve a scale ranging from 0 to 100.

16. Jung, Kyujin, and Jesús N. Valero. "Assessing the Evolutionary Structure of Homeless Network: Social Media Use, Keywords, and Influential Stakeholders," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* (2015).

Finding Three: CoC Leaders Enhance Internal Capacities of the Network

We asked CoC leaders to report the degree to which they engage in task-oriented leadership behaviors, and the results are presented in Table 2. Here, we show the behaviors that occur in greater frequency and the specific tasks that public managers pay the most attention to.

First, we find that public managers rate engaging in *activation* behaviors—one of the task-oriented behaviors—with greater frequency than the *framing*, *synthesizing*, and *mobilizing* behaviors. This suggests that network managers may find identifying resources and actively engaging network stakeholders as the most important activities to lead a collaborative network. Stakeholder mapping is crucial both to selecting partners fitting the mission of collaboration and helping the network achieve its mission.

Second, with regards to specific behaviors, CoC network leaders overall realize that addressing homelessness is not a task that can be accomplished by any single entity alone. The survey about task-oriented behaviors indicates that CoC leaders are engaging in some key task behaviors that will help them build a real team in the collaboration process by treating all network members as equals, sharing the leadership role with other members, putting suggestions of members into action, and freely sharing information among network members. These are all highly-rated task behaviors. By engaging in these behaviors, network members may be more likely to feel that they are an integral part of homelessness collaboration, and thus have a greater motivation to fully participate in the activities undertaken by the network.

In general, these findings suggest that public managers emphasize establishing and building the capacity of the CoC homeless network by ensuring that it has the necessary resources and involves the right people (e.g., potential leaders and members) in the collaboration efforts.

Table 2: Rating of Task-Oriented Leadership Behaviors

| Task-Oriented Leadership Behaviors | Mean | Rank |
|---|------|------|
| Treating all network members as equals (activation) | 4.6 | 1 |
| Freely sharing information among network members (synthesizing) | 4.5 | 2 |
| Identifying resources (activation) | 4.4 | 3 |
| Identifying stakeholders (activation) | 4.2 | 4 |
| Sharing leadership role with other network members (framing) | 4.1 | 5 |

Note: Survey respondents were asked as follows: “How often do you engage in the following behaviors?” Respondents then used a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The mean for each survey item was calculated to understand the degree to which public managers (on average) engaged in these leadership behaviors.

Finding Four: CoC Leaders Foster Idea Sharing and Information Exchange

Within relationship-oriented leadership, we find that CoC network managers are most engaged in *intellectual stimulation*—suggesting that network leaders care most about fostering an environment of open communication to discuss new and innovative ideas and solutions. Table 3 lists the most highly-rated relationship-oriented dimensions and activities. Creating this type of environment may prove to be rewarding during the yearly competition for HUD funding, as

Table 3: Rating of Relationship-Orientated Leadership Behaviors

| Relationship-Oriented Leadership Behaviors | Mean | Rank |
|---|------|------|
| Seeking the counsel of key network stakeholders (intellectual stimulation) | 4.4 | 1 |
| Being open to the ideas and suggestions of network members (intellectual stimulation) | 4.3 | 2 |
| Instilling fairness in the process of managing resources in the network (idealized influence) | 4.2 | 3 |
| Inspiring network members to work cohesively for a common purpose (inspirational motivation) | 4.1 | 4 |
| Helping network members look at issues from different perspectives (intellectual stimulation) | 4.0 | 5 |
| Considering the needs of network members before those of my own organization (idealized influence) | 4.0 | 5 |
| Expressing the need to adhere to ethical standards among members of the network (idealized influence) | 4.0 | 5 |

Note: Survey respondents were asked as follows: “How often do you engage in the following behaviors?” Respondents then used a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The mean for each survey item was calculated to understand the degree to which public managers (on average) engaged in these leadership behaviors.

networks with the most innovative approaches to ending homelessness are likely to score more points. In addition, allowing network members to contribute to the discussion of ending homelessness may strengthen ties to the effort of solving the problem as a collective unit as opposed to through individualized efforts. One interviewee indicated that: “People show up to the member meetings just because they care about homelessness.”

In discussing the need for cultivating an environment of exchange, she explained:

I need to let members decide what the focus of the CoC network should be. I ask them if there are any new projects that they think we need to be working on. I take the proposals to the steering committee and the steering committee votes on the top one that they really want to look at.

Cultivating a culture of sharing ideas and solutions can prove to be rewarding for networks that are looking for new ways to eradicate homelessness. In addition, including the voice of network members will send a clear message to members that their thoughts and values matter—which encourages member commitment and support for the efforts of the network.

The survey found that network managers focus on both respecting partner differences and cultivating an environment of openness, fairness, and inspiration. For instance, “seeking the counsel of key stakeholders of the network” was the most frequent relationship-oriented leadership behavior reported by CoC leaders. The finding indicates that the desired impact of collaboration can be realized by gauging the interests and buy-in from key stakeholders.

The report found that “being open to the ideas and suggestions of network members” was the second most frequent relationship behavior reported, which confirms that network leaders

make efforts to balance the collaboration's vision with participating organizations' missions and visions. The collaboration members are likely to commit to the network mission if their unique approaches to the collaboration goals are acknowledged and accepted.

Establishing a fair process in managing resources and considering the individual needs of partner organizations is clearly an important task for leaders, and they do it frequently. This means that there is recognition by network leaders that each organizational member differs, and as such, learning about the needs and interests of member agencies and ensuring that their requests are fairly considered helps build and strengthen relationships.

For example, a CoC leader describes a key value of relationship-oriented leadership:

What makes a good leader is definitely listening to the constituents, making a determination, and sticking with your guns on it—finding the best course of action once you have looked at the playing field and everything that is required to meet your goal whatever that goal might be. Then it is important for the leader to be able to make that determination and exhibit confidence that you are going to lead them to success.

While it is important for a network leader to be attentive to the ideas, thoughts, and solutions of members and other stakeholders, the leader must ultimately decide what course of action to take and to sell the final product to all network stakeholders. This shows network members and others that the leader respects differences in opinions but is committed to the goals and objectives of the network.

Implications for Practice: Recommendations for Leaders in Collaborative Networks

From our survey, interviews with network leaders, and review of literature, we have generated six recommendations that can serve as a guide for leaders who are responsible for outcomes of collaborative policy arrangements.

In general, our findings indicate that leadership matters in explaining the effective implementation of cross-sector collaborations. It is important to note that these recommendations include both the leadership skills and leadership qualities that public managers should aim to possess and/or develop, especially in the context of homeless policy. Nevertheless, as suggested earlier in this report, our recommendations do not only speak to homeless network leaders but also to individuals leading networks in other policy areas.

Recommendation One: Develop Expertise

Managing networks requires the development of expertise in a subject matter policy area. This recommendation is centered on the idea that managers need to be equipped with extensive knowledge, expertise, and best practices in order to be an effective network leader.

Leaders of policy networks can gain knowledge of policy priorities and funding by becoming well connected to local stakeholders and existing national associations. For example, it may be useful for homeless networks to connect to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, which provides technical support, research, and hosts a yearly conference. A network leader has to have access to rich information and resources in order to lead the network effectively. Leaders lacking policy understanding or expertise in homelessness must rely on longtime homeless-serving leaders, both local and national, to be connected to the network of experts.

A Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (MDHA) interviewee spoke about the value of a knowledgeable leader:

[Our network leader is] very knowledgeable about the demographics that we serve. I believe it is very important to be knowledgeable about service populations, so that you know what is going to take to actually end homelessness in your local community. She is also an expert in the field of homeless policies. She has been serving on several national committees on homelessness to be on track of what is going on in state and federal policies.

The interviewee also noted that the network leader was well connected with community stakeholders and had at least 15 years of experience in homeless services. Having extensive knowledge, experience, and community connections is especially important when a network is focused on addressing a complex social problem, which involves having an understanding of the causes of the problem.

Community connections provide the network leader with innovative ideas and local supports to accomplish goals and objectives. And for new network leaders, community stakeholders may possess institutional memory that can prove helpful in moving him or her through the learning curve. The experience in public funding, in terms of application and allocation, is the key to success in government-funded services. Participation in national-level associations will provide opportunities to be updated about policy priorities and best practices in the field of homeless services.

To be effective in their positions, leaders have to be knowledgeable about the best practices in the field, including:

- What are the best ways to manage a homeless network?
- What are other networks and leaders doing that is resulting in positive outcomes?

This not only means knowing what colleagues are doing well, but also what they're not doing so well. The Salt Lake County CoC network, for example, has understood that best practices must be followed to tackle homelessness. Their network has adopted a "housing first" approach by housing homeless people first and then treating their array of needs.¹⁷ As a result, Salt Lake County and the State of Utah have been successful in significantly reducing the rate of chronic homelessness. Their effectiveness has been documented in national media and has captivated the attention of scholars and practitioners alike.¹⁸

It is important for collaborative networks to have a solid understanding of the institutional context under which they operate, including the relevant laws and expectations of any publicly funded programs they may possess. Homeless networks, for example, are promoted by federal policy, and network leaders need to have a good understanding of the HEARTH Act and the federal rules. Both the act and the federal rules establish expectations and definitions, in addition to providing other key pieces of information that can help a network operate more efficiently and effectively. In addition, network leaders should make efforts to build a line of communication with HUD regional offices and/or program officers who can be a source of information and support when making strategic decisions or when unsure of how to apply new standards and expectations.

It is also important for a network leader to stay up-to-date with new administrative procedures established by HUD and informal rules that may be in effect. For example, one interviewee noted how HUD had been encouraging networks to merge by establishing incentives to merge and providing technical support. The Denton County Homeless Coalition, serving Denton County, Texas, operated independently as a stand-alone CoC for several years before making the decision to merge with the Texas statewide network, called the Texas Balance of State.¹⁹ The network leadership had a good understanding of the benefits of joining the statewide network and the rules governing the process. As a result, the network has enjoyed success in securing needed resources, training, and funding for its local programs via the strategic decision to join a larger and more resourceful network.

17. See "Organizational Change: Adopting a Housing First Approach" (2009) by the *National Alliance to End Homelessness*.

18. See "Utah Reduced Chronic Homelessness by 91 Percent; Here's How" by NPR, December 10, 2015. <http://www.npr.org/2015/12/10/459100751/utah-reduced-chronic-homelessness-by-91-percent-heres-how>

19. Homeless networks are established to serve all 50 states and the U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico. A single network may cover a city, county, metropolitan area, or entire state. See, for example, HUD's 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, which chronicles the homelessness rate reported by CoCs. Our analysis focuses on the 382 networks because they are community-based, self-organized networks engaged in collaboration.

Recommendation Two: Cultivate a Collaborative Culture

The collaborative process is about constant communication, building trust among network members, and just as importantly, cultivating a culture that welcomes both competition and collaboration. Traditional notions consider competition to be at the opposite end of the spectrum from collaboration, but we suggest that encouraging competition in the collaborative process can be a healthy exercise.

In the context of federal homeless policy, networks compete for federal funding on a yearly basis. As such, homeless networks have to submit an application that is innovative, results-driven, and collaborative in nature to score high points and achieve funding. Each network is only able to submit one application to HUD, comprised of various program proposals to be carried out by member organizations. Because not all proposals by member organizations can be chosen as part of the single application, network leaders are presented with an opportunity to cultivate a sense of competition among network members to see who is able to produce the most innovative and impactful project. Creating competition, therefore, can result in the stimulation of new ideas and solutions.

At the same time, it is important to nurture and maintain a collaborative culture. One interviewee has noted that: “During the Notice of Funding Availability period, you ask them (member agencies) to compete against each other and talk about how better they are than the other agencies, and the next month you ask them to play nice again as a team.”

While some member organizations may not be funded through HUD during one funding cycle, the network leader should continue encouraging collaboration by reminding members that there are other benefits to be enjoyed through the process of working together, including tackling homelessness as community partners as opposed to in silos. In addition, network leaders should be careful to continue communicating a common vision and how selecting certain projects to be included in the application will help the network be one step closer to achieving its goals and objectives as a collective.

Recommendation Three: Take Risks

Previous research on the management of networks indicates that establishing ground rules and holding members accountable are important responsibilities of a network leader.²⁰ In our research, we find that network leaders should *not* be afraid to risk relationships with other members of the network when necessary—particularly when enforcing shared norms, rules, and expectations. Risking relationships means being a bold leader and communicating expectations to network members, whether some members may like hearing those expectations or not. This may be particularly germane to individuals who are new to the leadership role and are interested in taking the collaborative efforts in a new direction.

One CoC network leader discussed her approach of leadership by saying, “I think in order to be effective you have to have members who are committed.” This involves asking members whether they are prepared to make the needed commitment or whether the leader needs to make decisions to find other members who are more committed. She advised, “If the person is not plugged into the network mission, then replace that person with someone else that is. Unless you can look at the collective impact, you will be single focused and get frustrated, and you won’t be effective.”

20. Ansell, Chris, and Alison Gash. “Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 18, no. 4 (2007): 543–71; Milward, H. Brinton, and Keith G. Provan. “A Manager’s Guide to Choosing and Using Collaborative Networks,” IBM Center for the Business of Government (2006).

In this case, the CoC network leader needs someone who is going to spend hours a week on a project and actually commit to it and answer e-mails. The network leader realized that some members were not meeting their end of the bargain. Thus, taking risks should be exercised by taking actions such as:

- Reminding members of their responsibilities
- Providing the members with options (e.g., actively participate or allow someone else to take that role)

By doing so, the leader may be taking a risk and potentially losing a member. A leader must be focused on the collective efforts of the network and realize that there are others ready to work.

Recommendation Four: Be an Inclusive Leader

Research shows that homelessness is a multidimensional problem requiring a cross-sector strategy that engages a wide array of supportive programs and services.²¹ As a result, any intervention to eradicate homelessness will take real coordination and a diverse group of stakeholders. The same is likely true for other types of public services in response to difficult social problems.

This reality requires network leaders to be inclusive of community stakeholders such as local governments, nonprofit shelters, food pantries, church-operated soup kitchens, school districts, and others. Community leaders should be invited to take an active role within the network, as well as in the network's governance, by participating in working groups, task forces, steering committees, and so on. This allows local stakeholders to have a voice in the homeless services in their community. In addition, by being an inclusive leader, the network may benefit from new and fresh perspectives. One network leader described the importance of being an inclusive leader. She reflected, "In this collaboration, every person that comes to a meeting is important." Here is the one example of being an inclusive leader and its benefit to the effective network:

We have chronically homeless persons that regularly attend our general meetings and they have a voice. Their input is very useful because sometimes we will be talking about something and they will shake their heads and say that on the streets this is what it looks like. I didn't realize how big an impact that would have. What I love is the fact that they are welcomed like any other member of the community. I'm real proud of our general membership because each of the members is just like anybody else regardless of if they are HUD-funded or not.

Local stakeholders also will be an invaluable resource, especially for CoCs with little to no paid staff capacity. Member agencies with strong capacities may offer technical or administrative support for CoC network operations. A significant proportion of the networks that responded to our national survey reported that they have a governance structure that is shared among member agencies. Only a few networks were established as a stand-alone 501(c)(3) public charity. From this finding we learned that the daily management of the network will be left to the member organizations without designated personnel for the administration of grant applications and management of funding. Thus, the inclusion of community stakeholders and

21. Cunningham, Mary. "Preventing and Ending Homelessness: Next Steps," Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2009; Fargo, et al. "Community-Level Characteristics Associated with Variation in Rates of Homelessness among Families and Single Adults," *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no. Suppl 2 (2013): S340-S47.

affording them an opportunity to serve can help the network overcome challenges from lack of administrative capacity and help them advance the mission and vision.

One network leader described benefits of having a city official in their network: “We have a liaison from the city. She helps our agendas and makes sure all of our network members get their e-mail notifications. She also assists the point-in-time count data collection, too. The city is really huge for our homeless network.”

Recommendation Five: Be Agile and Adaptive

Leadership is critical in balancing the reality and interests of the local community while maintaining team spirit valued by network members including policy makers, government managers, nonprofit service providers, religious communities, advocacy groups, and so on. Like an organization, networks evolve over time—sometimes the network evolves for good and other times it does not. In this process, network leaders must stand ready to accept the reality of their network’s status and adapt as necessary. Effective leaders must understand reality and adapt quickly to the new normal for the best interest of the community.

A good leadership example from a CoC network that is adapting to the new reality is a board consisting of four members that leads Cattaraugus County’s CoC in New York. In the most recent HUD funding cycle, the network lost funding for its programs and the network board was left with a membership of two. This required the network leader to think carefully about the future of the network. She realized that the network could not be sustained and led by a single individual. As a result, the network is considering several options, one of which is to merge with a neighboring network. Here, the network leader has accepted the reality of the network’s evolution and is ready to adapt as necessary, rather than staggering. In this process, it is also important not to be afraid to ask for help, especially when the network lacks administrative capacity. This is when having a strong local and national network of contacts is important to tap into for support and advice.

Recommendation Six: Use Performance Indicators Effectively

Network leaders must realize the advantage in having access to data and information, and they must use them properly. Funding agencies, community stakeholders, and others come to expect data in order to understand the severity of a problem, allocate funding, and develop objective metrics of success in implementing local homeless programs. Securing new and unique data on the homeless population certainly creates an advantage. For instance, the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance has developed a coordinated assessment tool and a comprehensive and up-to-date HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) to track homeless services in the area. This allows the network to make a stronger case for why funding is needed and important for a new area of service.

However, homelessness itself presents a major challenge to acquire data that measures the multi-dimensional nature of homelessness. One network leader spoke about the data challenge. She describes her network making an effort to improve data constantly. However, data is difficult because “the homeless population is difficult to nail down. People on the street don’t want to talk. So it’s really difficult to get the data that you really want to know.”

We suggest that CoC networks use an inventory of currently available data sources that may aid their data efforts. The HUD Exchange website²² makes data on all of the CoC networks—such as homelessness estimates and funding allocations—readily available. The HUD website allows users to generate reports for each homeless network in spreadsheet format. It also provides access to the contact information of regional offices and other network leaders. Smart use of the data will help CoCs develop comparative analyses to understand where each network stands in the national standards. These data sources can be used to create an advantage when applying for funding or making a case for new programs.

22. <https://www.hudexchange.info/>

Appendix: Methodology—Survey and Interviews

The findings and recommendations reported here are drawn from a study of effective public service collaboration within the United States. This report is the product of data collected from 237 homeless networks via a national survey distributed in the fall of 2015. The survey contained extensive questions about how the networks are managed, the number of members, forms of communication used, how the networks measure effectiveness, and the self-reported leadership style of the network leader.

The report gathered secondary data from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and performance reports published by CoC networks in order to obtain homeless estimates, HUD funding awards, and other key demographics on the regions served by the homeless networks.

In addition to the survey and secondary data, the research team conducted several telephone interviews with network leaders in Texas, Utah, and New York to obtain more detailed accounts of the evolution of the CoC network, its performance, and the impact that leadership has had on the network. The team also reviewed documents published by HUD on how homeless networks should be structured and operate as well as the federal law and interim rule governing the network approach to homelessness in the United States.

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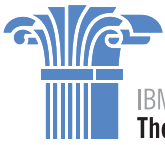
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