Achieving a Quality and Stable HMIS Staffing Pattern
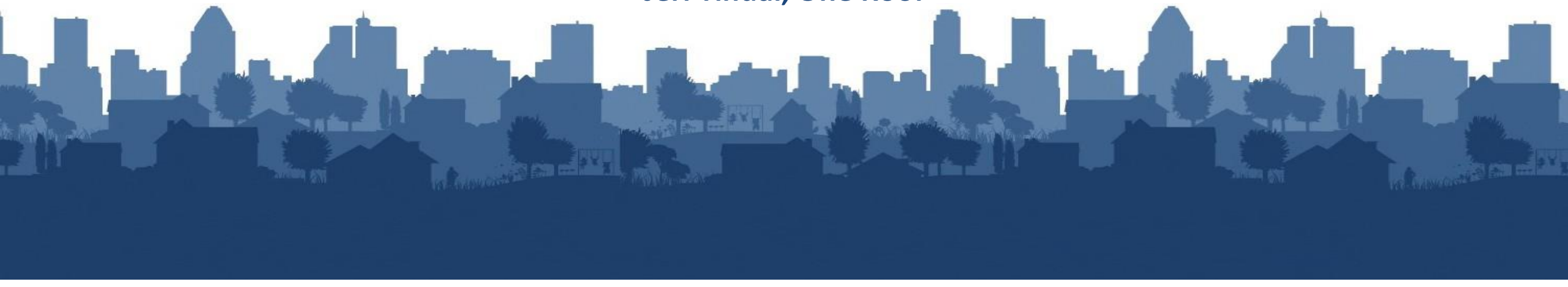
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Learning Objectives

- Identify questions to guide appropriate HMIS Lead staffing based on CoC size and need
- Summarize knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to manage and operate an effective HMIS implementation including roles and responsibilities
- Identify where funding opportunities may be available to support a functioning HMIS team
- Identify ways to invest in the professional development of your team

Characteristics of a Strong HMIS Lead

- Trusted by CoC to manage HMIS vendor relationships

- Supported by CoC and the CoC's Data Committee

- Enables a CoC-wide culture of performance

- Enhances data literacy and data-driven planning

- Demonstrates technical proficiency and policy expertise

- Outcomes-driven and transparent

- Implements feedback loops to improve performance

Guiding Questions

Identify guiding questions to develop an appropriate
HMIS Lead staffing model:

- **What** is the vision and goal for HMIS in your community?
- **How** are you building a culture to support the vision?
- **Who** do you have in positions to move the vision forward?
- **When** should we assess the expectations of the HMIS Lead?
- **Where** does the funding and resources to make progress come from?

Defining Your HMIS Vision

Vision → Strategy → Execution

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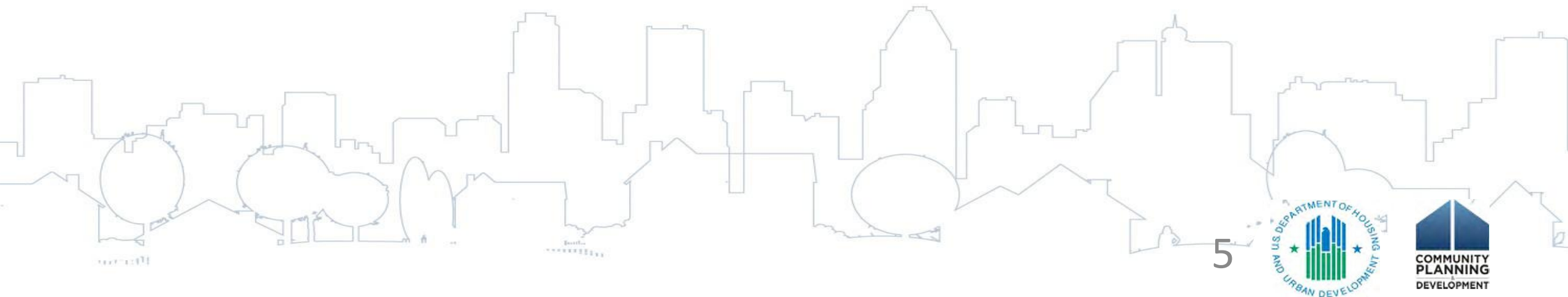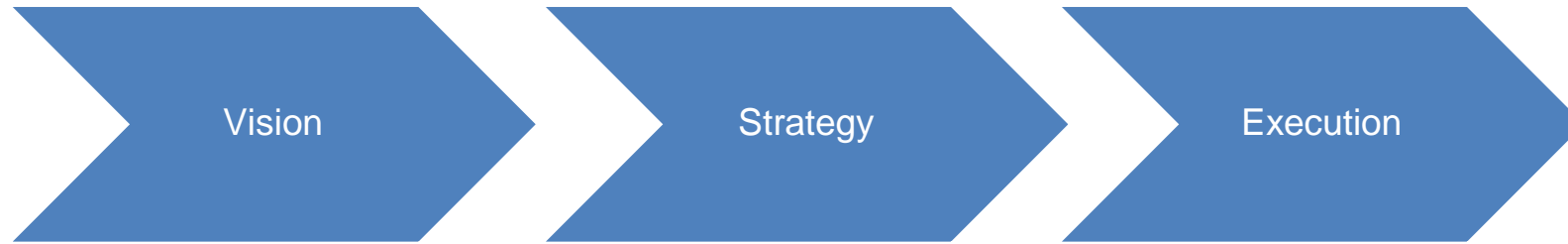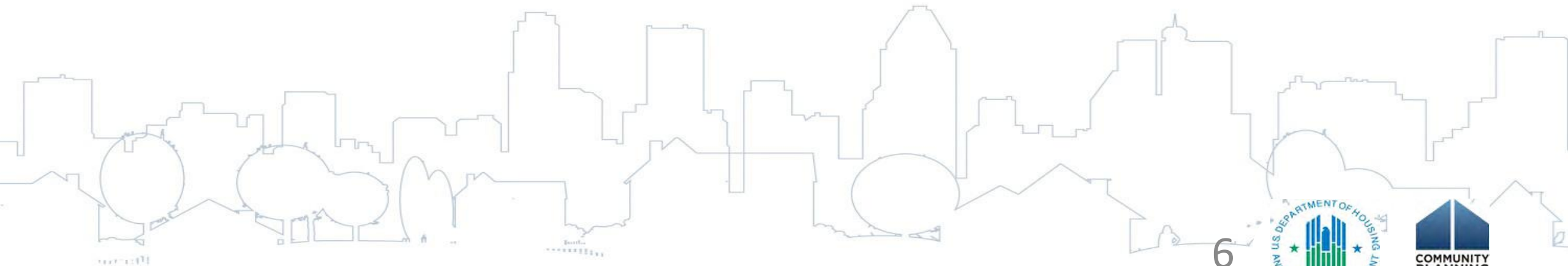
Vision as "The What"

What role does HMIS play in your community?

- Is there a common vision, goal or understanding of HMIS?

- CoC and HMIS leadership should jointly and clearly articulate the vision for HMIS and how the Lead will achieve it. Lead staff need to understand how their contribution fits into the bigger picture.

- Important to find ways to infuse this sense of purpose on an ongoing basis for the continued growth of the team.
  - Consider both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators

Vision as "The What"

What are the expectations of the HMIS Lead Agency?

1) Identify how the HMIS is currently being used in your community:
- State/local reporting
- Data matching
- Funding opportunities

2) Do the expectations of HMIS align with the CoC's vision of HMIS?
- Clearly define vision and goals of data as a tool to help end homelessness
- Set expectations for the HMIS Lead to meet
  - Formalized in the HMIS-CoC MOU
- Allow room for transparent assessment of matching needs and expectations with resources and strategy

Vision as "The What"

What are the expectations of your HMIS Lead Staff?

Key responsibilities of the HMIS Lead staff include many different activities, including:

- Policy and Planning
- System Administration
- Reporting and Analysis
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Training and Technical Support
- Coordinated Entry Support
- Communication and Capacity Building

Vision → Strategy → Execution
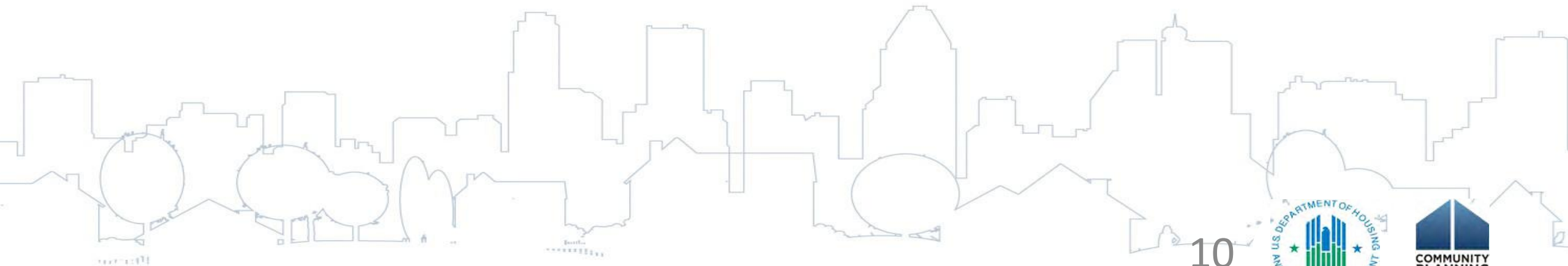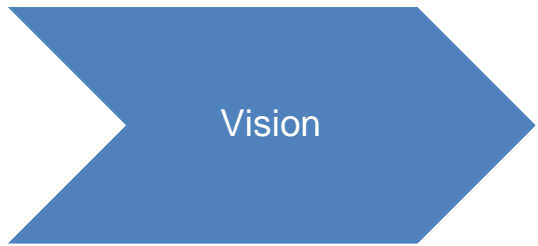
Strategy as "The How"

How do you align HMIS resources with the CoC's vision for data?

Begin by asking yourself the following questions:
How do I know if I...
1) Understand the CoC's vision for data?
2) Have the right resources to support the vision?
3) Am developing the right skills across the HMIS Lead team?
4) Am aligning staffing models and competencies with the CoC's needs?

Assess Your System to Identify Staffing Needs

Consider whether your HMIS implementation is growing and expanding
- Increase in agency participation in HMIS
- Increase in request for user licensees
- Increase in projects within HMIS
- Increase in end users
- Increase in CoC expectations

Budgeting for future growth and expansion
- Importance of a forward-thinking approach when creating a budget
- Diversify funding sources to align with projected system growth
- Create a strategic plan that accounts for the demand of increased system usage

Assess Your System to Identify Staffing Needs

The CoC and HMIS Lead should regularly assess:

- The number of HMIS Lead staff
    - Consider staffing ratio to HMIS end users
    - Consider system administration roles and responsibilities across all stakeholders
- The focus areas and skill sets of HMIS Lead staff
    - Coordinated entry
    - Custom reports
    - Data quality
    - Data matching
    - New initiatives (YHDP, Pay for Success, etc.)

Staffing Needs: Equity Capacity Building

The CoC and HMIS Lead's staffing assessment should also include:

- A racial equity audit of staffing

- The development of a mission statement that centers racial justice

- Collectively-developed principles, values, and goals

Key practices to build internal equity capacity:

- Hiring practices that promote equity and organizational accountability

- Supervision that promotes leadership, retention, and opportunities for feedback

- Ongoing training opportunities for staff to deepen their understanding of racism and equity

For more information, visit the HUD Exchange:
Equity Capacity Building: Hiring, Supervision, Training

Who is moving the HMIS vision forward?

HMIS Lead Roles and Responsibilities

- Policy and Planning → Project Manager
- System Administration → System Administrator
- Reporting and Analysis → Report Writer and/or Data Analyst
- Monitoring and Evaluation → Shared across CoC and HMIS leadership
- Training and Technical Support → Technical Trainer and Help Desk Staff
- Coordinated Entry Support → Shared across CoC and HMIS leadership
- Communication and Capacity Building → Project Manager and shared CoC and HMIS leadership

Identify Ideal Skill Sets

HMIS Technical Staff

- Customer support experience
- Written and oral communication skills
- Technical knowledge and experience
- Task efficiency
- Understanding of CoC programs and projects
- Skills supporting a culture of teamwork
- Passion for homelessness

ALSO: Strong policy orientation and working knowledge of HUD's definition of homelessness.

Identify Ideal Skill Sets

Analysis/Reporting Staff

- Logical, problem solving skills
- Ability to analyze large data sets
- Ability to query data using SQL and other analysis tools, such as Excel, R, SAS, or SPSS
- Understanding of HUD programming and reporting specifications
- Ability to assess data assumptions and vendor report parameters

ALSO: Strong policy orientation and working knowledge of HUD's definition of Homelessness.

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Policy: An Often-Overlooked Skill

HMIS Lead roles and responsibilities are about 50% policy and 50% technical

Job descriptions and staffing plans weighted too heavily one way or the other will leave gaps in local HMIS leadership and capacity

Policy oriented skills:
- ✔ Knowledge of Federal strategic initiatives to prevent and end homelessness
- ✔ Working knowledge of HUD's 4 categories of homelessness, as well as the chronic homeless definition
- ✔ Familiarity with federal, state, and local privacy statutes and regulations

Vision → Strategy → Execution
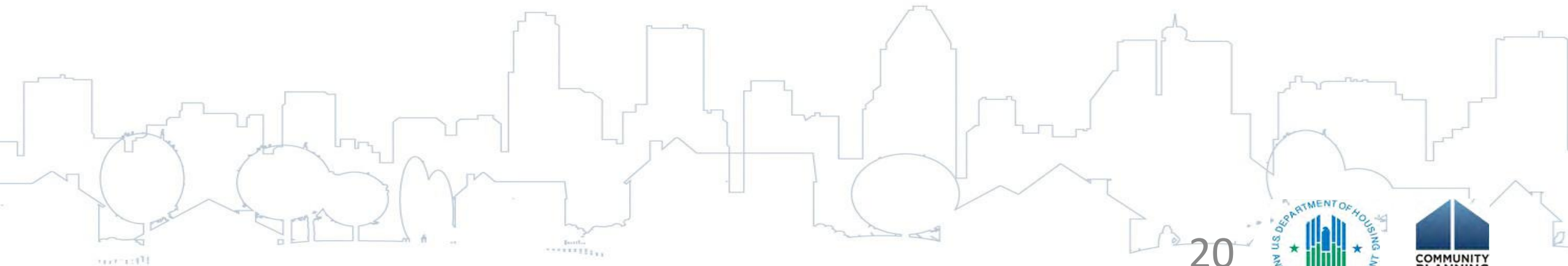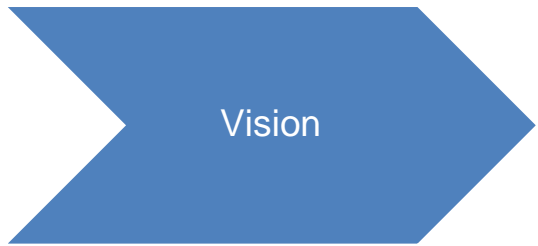
Lead Staffing and "When" to Adapt

- Smaller HMIS implementations with few users to support, one or more of these functions may be combined in the same staff role

- Will need to have a multitude of relevant skills

- Larger HMIS implementations should ensure adequate staffing to cover the distinct task and time requirements of the multiple staffing roles needed to achieve CoC goals

- Must objectively consider level of commitment needed to avoid staff burnout and turnover

Strengthen and Improve Staff Capacity

Create a culture of flexibility yet accountability

❑ Be prepared to wear different hats if the needs of your CoC change

❑ Cross-train HMIS Lead staff to understand how their position affects the roles of others

❑ Clearly communicate roles and responsibilities when expectations change

❑ Create a holistic view of how the role of the HMIS Lead works within the greater CoC

Strengthen and Improve as a Team

Schedule regular meetings:
- By developing relationships and getting to know your team members, you will begin to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and skills yet to be developed.
- Take the time to learn how to motivate your team to go beyond what is expected of them.

Give proactive, constructive feedback:
- Instead of waiting until a problem occurs and then giving feedback, develop a habit of regularly letting your team members know how they are doing and what areas they could improve

Ensure supervision is prioritized and consistent:
- Take time to listen and provide guidance to your staff. Consistency communicates that your team is valued and heard, creating a trusting space to work through issues as they arise.

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Thank you!

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