



A Tool to Address Supportive Housing Capacity

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Who We Are

- Contractor
 - Los Angeles Office of CSH, Danielle Wildkress, Project Director
- Researchers
 - Josh Leopold, Urban Institute, and Martha Burt, MRB Consulting, working with the Urban Institute
- Funder
 - Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- Venue
 - Los Angeles County for now, with hopes to expand if the tool proves useful

Why Create Yet Another Capacity Assessment Tool?

- Focus on *organizational* capacity to create ***high quality supportive housing***
- Can be used for self-assessment, technical assistance or to guide funding decisions
- Includes components for:
 - developing properties
 - running scattered-site programs
 - providing adequate and appropriate supportive services
 - Working with partners, both chosen and assigned

Steps in Developing the Tool So Far

- Examined existing nonprofit capacity assessment tools
 - Got good idea of general categories, areas of interest and concern.
 - But all much too general for our purposes
- Interviewed supportive housing developers, service providers, to identify “essential markers” of excellence as well as warning signs of capacity limitations
- Develop and refine rating criteria and questions
- Reviewed by interested parties
- Used, as pretests, by PSH developers, service providers, funders, in Los Angeles

Potential Uses for the New Tool

- **Self-assessment**
 - To identify strengths and weaknesses, as part of strategic planning or other purposes
- **External assessment**
 - To understand the quality of supportive housing in the community for targeting or TA purposes
 - As part of a funder's decision-making process, in response to requests for grants, loans, or other funding to create and operate supportive housing

The Structure of the Tool

- Part 1: The Assessment Itself – 5 Sections
 - Part A: Organizational philosophy/values, + basic functions such as personnel, financial and reporting, performance measurement
 - Part B: Developing supportive housing units
 - Part C: Operating scattered-site supportive housing programs
 - Part D: Operating supportive services programs in supportive housing
 - Part E: key aspects of working with partner agencies in supportive housing projects
- Part 2: Questions to augment self-assessment, that allow an external reviewer to gather more information about an organization to understand it better

Assessment, Part A General Organizational Capacity

- Criterion A1: Attitudes and Values
 - Housing/serving the hardest-to-serve chronically homeless population is a high priority for this organization
 - Organization has a track record of high retention rates in housing and high tenant/client quality of life as measured by systematic surveys
- Criterion A2: Community Standing
 - The organization's top management staff take leadership roles in professional organizations and advocate for policies and resources to benefit supportive housing in the community

Assessment, Part A, General Organizational Capacity

- Criterion A3: Organizational performance and quality improvement practices
 - Programming and organizational decisions are based on evaluation, assessment, and similar data, including tenant feedback
 - Staff at all levels understand and accept the review and improvement process, which is part of the organization's culture
- Criterion A4: Financial and IT Capabilities
 - Organization monitors its internal cash flow statements and forecasts, manages its finances well (e. g., books balance, on-time payments)
 - Organization has the technology needed to assure compliance with funder reporting requirements, codes and inspections, tenant/client records, service delivery, etc.

Recurring Content

- Commitment to hardest to serve population is part of the organization's mission
- Organization adheres to Housing First and Harms Reduction principles
- Staff at all levels have proper experiences and attitudes to work with this population
- Projects are adequately staffed to provide necessary supports
- Knowledge of, and experience with, key funding streams

Assessment, Part B Supportive Housing Development

- Criterion B1: Development Specifically for the Population
 - The organization is interested in and willing to develop supportive housing in communities that presently do not have an adequate supply
- Criterion B2: Building Community
 - The organization's buildings include structural features that promote safety and community-building
 - The organization practices strong and ongoing outreach to neighborhoods once buildings are open and occupied

Assessment, Part B Supportive Housing Development

- Criterion B3: Special Practices for the Population
 - Cross-training occurs with property management and supportive services staff to assure full understanding of roles, responsibilities, and policies
- Criterion B4: Staffing
 - The organization's senior staff are established leaders in developing supportive housing, and have a reputation for innovation and high quality developments
 - The organization's development staff has extensive experience acquiring sites, complying with zoning requirements, obtaining variances if needed; getting construction done on time and on budget, etc.

Assessment, Part B, Supportive Housing Development

■ Criterion B5: Funding

- The organization keeps track of potential new **capital** funding sources and plans ahead to position itself to take advantage of what's coming up

Assessment, Part C Scattered-Site

- Criterion C1: Scattered-site Units Specifically for the Population
 - The organization has operated scattered-site supportive housing programs in different neighborhoods and areas, including underserved areas of the community
 - The organization offers clients/tenants a choice of housing units and allows clients/tenants the right to reject a reasonable number of units (e.g., 2-3)
- Criterion C2: Special Practices for the Population
 - The organization works with service provider partners to assure staff with skills appropriate for working with the tenants it places in scattered-site supportive housing
 - Tenant/staff ratios for tenants who are in their first year of occupancy are about 10 to 1

Assessment, Part C, Scattered-Site

- Criterion C3: Staffing
 - The organization has staff, or a whole department or division, dedicated to landlord development and relations; it maintains, improves, cultivates, and expands relationships with landlords
 - The organization hires/uses people with wide experience in the real estate market to recruit and work with landlords
- Criterion C4: Funding
 - The organization has historically been able to adapt to changes in funding availability (e.g., sequestration, other funding shortfalls)

Assessment, Part D Supportive Services

- Criterion D1: Supportive Services Specifically for the Population
 - The organization's Board of Directors includes members/committees with supportive housing-specific interest and expertise
- Criterion D2: Special Practices for the Population
 - Staff work with clients, health and behavioral health providers, and benefits agency staff to facilitate successful applications for SSI or SSDI
 - Retention rates in supportive housing for the organization's hardest-to-serve formerly homeless supportive services clients are at least 90% at 6 months, 85% at 12 months, and 80% at 24 months

Assessment, Part D, Supportive Services

- Criterion D3: Staffing
 - The organization's supportive services staff spend a lot of their time out of their offices, meeting clients where they live or in other community venues
 - The organization maintains a clear delineation of roles between housing staff and service provider staff, whether it provides both functions itself or works with one or more partner agencies that do one or another component of the work
- Criterion D4: Funding
 - The organization has developed strategies that allow it to be reimbursed for services delivered in the community (i.e., out of the office), 3rd party contacts (i.e., talking with a health or behavioral health care provider when the client is not present), and participation in multidisciplinary team meetings as needed

Assessment, Part E Partnerships

- Criterion E1: Partnering Practices in General
 - At least one member of the organization's Board of Directors is committed to developing and maintaining successful partnerships
 - There are clear and appropriate expectations for the roles of developer, property manager, and service provider for all partnerships that the organization enters into for PSH projects
 - Organization has staff with competence to monitor, supervise, and if needed modify, the activities of partner agencies

The Rating Scale—What Should It Be?

- Currently each item is rated against a scale of “Organization Meets the Criterion...”
 - (4) Mostly or Completely;
 - (3) Moderately;
 - (2) Somewhat;
 - (1) Little or Not at All
- With a final column for comments or explanations
- Should there also be some way for the organization to indicate motivation to improve / interest in improving / interest in TA to improve?

Information for an External Rater/Funder

- Basic organizational documents (e.g., org. charts, annual reports, staff descriptions, MOUs)
- Responses to vignettes drawn from actual PSH experiences
- Linked to each rating criterion
- Probes for additional information for each rating criterion

Feedback

- Does a tool like this seem useful?
 - Can you imagine using it for your own organization?
 - Do you see uses for it in your community?
- Are there parts of it that seem more important than others?
 - Which ones? Why?
- What issues/topics have we left out that you think should be included?
- What should the rating scale be?
- What qualities do you look for in a partner? Or potential grantee?
- How do you approach partnerships where you don't have full control over selecting/managing a partner?
- Other issues or comments?