

# HIFIS 4 Deployment Options in British Columbia

March 2022

ACRE Consulting



Published March 2022

Report by ACRE Consulting

[www.acreconsulting.ca](http://www.acreconsulting.ca)

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Cover photo by Jess Barnett via Unsplash

This project was funded by the Government of Canada's Reaching Home program. The opinions presented within this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Government of Canada.

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## Executive Summary

In British Columbia, there are conflicting requirements from provincial and federal funders relating to the use of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). BC Housing, a provincial entity, requires its funded shelters and outreach teams to utilize a HIFIS Instance that it itself hosts and supports. Meanwhile, Reaching Home Community Entities (Community Entities) funded through the Designated Communities stream are required to use HIFIS to support local Coordinated Access, which requires all service providers within a community to collaborate under a streamlined service delivery approach (e.g., utilizing the same HIFIS Instance to document service plans and inform referrals for vacancies) and to support an outcomes-based approach (e.g., setting homelessness reduction targets for the community and tracking progress using a Unique Identifier List or “List”). However, BC Housing has historically not permitted service providers that they themselves do not fund to utilize their HIFIS Instance (thus limiting the scope of providers that can be onboarded) and there are currently no agreements in place to allow for data sharing with Community Entities (e.g., leveraging the BC Housing HIFIS Instance for the community’s List and using HIFIS for reporting community-level data).

Therefore, Community Entities are being required to deploy HIFIS to support Coordinated Access and their transition to an outcomes-based approach. Meanwhile, all BC Housing funded service providers are required to use the existing BC Housing HIFIS Instance and data is not being readily shared with other partners. In most communities, some service providers are Reaching Home funded, some service providers are BC Housing funded, and some receive funding from both sources. Communities in BC are understandably finding it difficult to chart a way forward through these conflicting requirements.

Although one possible solution is that the Reaching Home program be altered, this report was developed not to look at how Reaching Home could be redesigned, but to identify and assess as many options as are possible to address this challenge within the model that presently exists in BC. To that end, 10 different scenarios are described in this report, broadly grouped into 3 categories.

1. The first category describes scenarios in which all of the service providers that need HIFIS can be on-boarded onto a provincial HIFIS Instance. In one scenario, nothing substantial changes and the only HIFIS Instance being used by communities would continue to be led by BC Housing, but due to local circumstances, all service providers meet the requirements to utilize the BC Housing HIFIS Instance. It is anticipated that few, if any, communities would be able to fit into this scenario. The second scenario is similar, but HIFIS programmers develop and deploy a new supportive housing module, and perhaps address other gaps not yet identified by BC Housing to allow for all of their funded housing providers to use HIFIS, which results in BC Housing onboarding more service providers to their HIFIS Instance. The third scenario is also similar to the first two, but BC Housing alters their requirements to define what service providers can utilize the BC Housing Instance (i.e., to allow the full range of providers serving people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness to be onboarded to its HIFIS regardless of funding source). In the fourth scenario, BC Housing essentially grants permission to Community Entities to administer their own programs and service providers within the BC Housing Instance, which gives more control at the local level in terms of access to HIFIS and data sharing. The final scenario is more extreme: BC Housing ceases to host its HIFIS Instance and the same HIFIS Instance is transferred to another HIFIS Lead Agency for province-wide use, allowing for a change in leadership and governance.

2. The second group of scenarios are ones in which none of the service providers that need HIFIS are required to use a provincial HIFIS Instance. The first variation is also one in which nothing substantial changes, but due to local circumstances, no service providers are required to utilize the BC Housing HIFIS Instance, so the community can deploy their own HIFIS Installation without needing to account for any potential duplication. Again, it is anticipated that few, if any, communities would be able to fit into this scenario. The second scenario in this group is one in which BC Housing funded service providers are no longer required to utilize the BC Housing HIFIS Instance, and instead begin to use a new community-led HIFIS Instance.
3. The final set of options include three variations in which some service providers are required to use a provincial HIFIS Instance and some service providers are required to use a community HIFIS Instance, within the same community. These are generally the least desirable options explored. In the first scenario, a technological bridge tool is developed that allows the transfer of data between multiple HIFIS Instances (allowing for automation in how data are merged into one community-level dataset that can support Coordinated Access and the outcomes-based approach). In the second scenario, each service provider would only be required to enter data into one database, and the local HIFIS Lead Agency would manually “stitch together” or merge data from multiple sources to support Coordinated Access and the outcomes-based approach. In the final and least desirable scenario, staff at some service providers would be required to double enter data into multiple databases.

This report does not recommend any particular scenario as being objectively the best solution. Different stakeholders will have different opinions about the best option for them, since each scenario affects actors differently. One solution might be preferred by Community Entities while a separate one would be preferred by BC Housing. Instead, this report attempts to highlight the positives and negatives of each scenario, and its impact on different actors (clients, service providers, Community Entities, BC Housing, etc.).

Overall, three key themes have been identified:

1. First, the status quo is untenable. If no compromise is able to be made, everyone from funders to service providers to staff to clients will suffer. Therefore, it is in everyone’s interest to find a solution that is even marginally better than the status quo.
2. Second, most scenarios require BC Housing to adjust its practices in some way. There are a variety of possible ways that BC Housing could adjust, which could all lead to a better global outcome than the status quo. Therefore, some onus is on BC Housing to consider in which ways it is willing to adjust its practices.
3. Finally, the best outcomes result in all service providers within a single community being able to use a single instance that is shared between all these service providers. It matters less whether this is a provincial HIFIS Instance or a local HIFIS Instance, but this means that the scenarios in the first two categories are more preferable than those in which there are multiple HIFIS Instances operating within a single community. A single instance, supported by a governance model that ensures partners are able to meet their various HIFIS needs (e.g., to support service coordination at the client level and to use HIFIS data for provider- and community-level trend analysis and reporting), would give the best possible chance for Community Entities to fully implement Coordinated Access and transition to outcomes-based approach under Reaching Home.

## Definitions and Terms Used

**BC Housing.** BC Housing is a provincial Crown Corporation, that develops, manages, and administers a wide range of subsidized housing options and homelessness programming across the province, and is responsible for fulfilling the directives of the Ministry of Attorney General and Responsible for Housing's yearly mandate letter.

**Community Capacity and Innovation, CCI.** The Community Capacity and Innovation stream of the Reaching Home program supports communities with the implementation of Coordinated Access and to foster innovation in the sector. Communities can use Community Capacity and Innovation funding for Coordinated Access to, for example: hire a project manager to oversee local implementation; implement the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), if the Designated Community did not already have a comparable Homelessness Management Information System to HIFIS when Reaching Home launched in April 2019; establish governance structures and implement the various elements of a Coordinated Access system (e.g. privacy tools for Coordinated Access and HIFIS implementation).

**Community Entity, CE.** A Community Entity is normally an incorporated organization such as a municipal government or an established not-for-profit organization that enters into a funding agreement with ESDC. The Community Entity brings together community stakeholders to form a Community Advisory Board and works with the Board to develop a community plan. It then undertakes the responsibility for the implementation of the community plan, to solicit project proposals, approve projects, contract and monitor all agreements with third-party service providers, report on its activities and disbursements, collect and share data and information and report on the results.

**Consent form.** An agreement between the client and the service provider that provides consent on retaining and sharing of the individual's data. Generally, consent forms used in a HIFIS context clearly indicate that the information will be shared with other service providers utilizing the same HIFIS Instance.

**Coordinated Access, Coordinated Access System.** A Coordinated Access system is the process by which individuals and families experiencing or at-risk of homelessness are directed to community-level access points where trained workers help to address their housing challenges through triage (meeting immediate needs), assessment (determining need for additional services) and/or prioritization (matching and referring to housing resources).

**Data Provision Agreement, DPA.** This document, signed by the HIFIS Lead and ESDC, outlines the terms and conditions related to the HIFIS License that ESDC grants to the HIFIS Lead. Signing the DPA results in a HIFIS License.

**Data Sharing Agreement, DSA.** A document signed by each participating service provider that outlines a common understanding of what information is to be shared and why, detailing privacy and security protocol decisions, the quality of data to be provided, data entry protocols, and relevant data management practices.

**Emergency Shelter, Shelter.** Emergency shelters are temporary places to stay for anyone who is homeless. Currently, emergency shelters are one of a limited number of program types that are permitted to utilize the BC Housing HIFIS Instance. However, it is unclear how this term is defined by BC Housing in terms of their permission to use their HIFIS Instance.

**Employment and Social Development Canada, ESDC.** A branch of the Canadian federal government, who developed HIFIS and oversees the Reaching Home program. During the course of this project, Reaching Home was transferred to Infrastructure Canada.

**Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, HIFIS.** Developed by ESDC, HIFIS is a comprehensive data collection and case management system that supports the day-to-day operations of service providers.

**HIFIS Administrator.** Refers to one or more people, usually employed by the HIFIS Lead, who oversee various tasks related to administering and managing HIFIS, such as configuring the software, identifying and addressing bugs, ensuring that reporting needs can be met, ensuring that data quality is high, and so on. Sometimes, more than one person can act as a HIFIS Administrator. Occasionally, there are levels of HIFIS Administrator, such as a Super Administrator (who oversees the entirety of the HIFIS Instance) and a Local Administrator (who oversees only some part of the HIFIS Instance).

**HIFIS Instance.** A HIFIS Instance describes a deployed installation of the HIFIS software. The HIFIS Instance is deployed on a server and comprises a set of files, a unique database, and a URL. The HIFIS Instance is then managed by the HIFIS Lead and utilized by service providers who have signed Data Sharing Agreements with the HIFIS Lead. Each HIFIS Instance requires a HIFIS License.

**HIFIS Lead.** The holder of the HIFIS License. Usually also the Community Entity for a community, but not always. The HIFIS Lead signs the Data Sharing Agreement with ESDC and they hold a HIFIS License.

**HIFIS License.** A HIFIS License is a non-exclusive, non-transferable, and non-assignable right to use a registered copy of HIFIS. A HIFIS License is provided by ESDC to the HIFIS Lead and allows the HIFIS Lead to deploy a HIFIS Instance.

**Outcomes-Based Approach.** Under Reaching Home, communities are required to transition to an outcomes-based approach where progress with meeting homelessness reduction targets for core outcomes is tracked using a Unique Identifier List or “List”. Core outcomes include reductions in overall homelessness, new inflows to homelessness, returns to homelessness, Indigenous homelessness, and chronic homelessness. With the exception of chronic homelessness, which has a 50% reduction target by 2027/28, communities set their own targets and they can change over time.

**Outreach.** Outreach workers offer referrals, case management services, and housing assistance to clients on the street, in a shelter, or in a temporary place. Currently, outreach is one of a limited number of program types that are permitted to utilize the BC Housing HIFIS Instance. However, it is unclear how this term is defined by BC Housing in terms of their permission to use their HIFIS Instance.

**Reaching Home.** Reaching Home is a federally-funded community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness by providing direct support and funding to Designated Communities (urban centers), Indigenous communities, territorial communities and rural and remote communities across Canada.

**Service Provider.** A term that denotes an organization that provides services to clients experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. The term is also used in HIFIS to denote a structural unit that is defined by several aspects (e.g. a HIFIS Service Provider can only be one “type,” for example either an Emergency Shelter or Transitional Housing or a Day Centre/Drop-in, but not more than one of those). A Service Provider in real life

is not always the same as a Service Provider in HIFIS, but for the most part, this distinction is unimportant for the purposes of considering which scenario to pursue.

**Supportive Housing.** Supportive housing is subsidized housing with on-site supports for people at-risk of homelessness. These supports help people find and maintain stable housing. Currently, BC Housing-funded supportive housing programs are not eligible to use their HIFIS Instance. However, it is unclear how this term is defined by BC Housing.

**Unique Identifier List, List.** A List under Reaching Home meets four minimum characteristics. It must:

1. Generate unduplicated information for each individual and family. Data from a List is different from counting service transactions or transitions between housing types, where the same client could be counted many times. In a List, duplication is eliminated using the unique identifier(s).
2. Be contained in one document or database. To generate a List, communities can use more than one data source, but the List itself needs to be separate and distinct from these sources.
3. Only include people who are currently experiencing homelessness. People who have housing are not on the List.
4. Include people who have given consent to be on the List. Often, when clients are asked for their consent to be on the List, they consent to being served through the Coordinated Access system at the same time.

## Introduction

Communities in British Columbia find themselves in a difficult situation.

Many service providers throughout British Columbia are funded by BC Housing, and a requirement of this funding is to utilize a HIFIS Instance for which BC Housing holds the HIFIS License. Meanwhile, a number of communities in BC also receive funding through the Reaching Home program, which requires communities to implement Coordinated Access at a local level and transition to an outcomes-based approach. More specifically, Reaching Home funded service providers are also required to use HIFIS, which in this context acts as a tool to support local Coordinated Access and reporting on community-level outcomes.

Due to these conflicting requirements, service providers within many communities are facing funding requirements that would require them to potentially utilize both a provincial HIFIS Instance and also a local HIFIS Instance, which is a situation that can only be described as suboptimal. Therefore, in the interest of exploring other options, this project was developed to identify as many paths forward as possible.

The intent of this report is to document options that are possible, within the model that currently exists in British Columbia, as a starting point for conversation. The intended audience is Community Entities within BC, who are responsible for navigating through these challenging requirements, and BC Housing, who plays a key role in the resolution of this situation.

The majority of scenarios include a Community Entity becoming a HIFIS Lead. Becoming a HIFIS Lead and implementing HIFIS can be a long and time-consuming process, but that should not be a deterrent. Dozens of Community Entities across Canada have gone through the process of adopting and implementing a Coordinated Access system and HIFIS and emerged on the other side well positioned to address and ultimately end homelessness within their communities. Some common tasks that will need to be undertaken are described in this document.

## Key Themes

The overall goal of this project is to find any possible solution that is acceptable to all actors involved: ESDC, BC Housing, Community Entities, service providers, staff, and clients. Fortunately, there are a number of possible options, each with distinct positives and negatives.

Before laying out the possible options, it is relevant to summarize some key themes identified through the exploration of these options:

- **The status quo is untenable.** If nothing changes, Reaching Home funded communities in BC will be required to implement a local HIFIS Instance within the next year to meet minimum requirements for the program. If Community Entities aren't able to meet their need for HIFIS with the BC Housing HIFIS Installation, many service providers could be required to use both provincial and local HIFIS Instances. This would result in a significant negative impact on most actors involved. Staff may be required to double-enter at least some of their data into multiple databases. This could as much as double the amount of time a staff is required to conduct data entry on a daily or weekly basis, resulting in either higher costs to the service provider (paying for more staff time), or a reduction in service levels (less time spent with clients). Since budgets are unlikely to be increased, it is likely that clients will suffer and will receive less assistance, resulting in negative progress towards the goal of ending homelessness. Staff will suffer from the added demands, and there is likely to be higher rates of burnout and staff turnover. From real world experience, we predict that data quality will also suffer despite the strictness of requirements, and communities will suffer from having an incomplete picture of homelessness, both locally and provincially. This could result in funding being suboptimally allocated due to a lack of knowledge about the needs of subpopulations, or clients being passed over for appropriate housing opportunities due to staff not being aware of their needs. As funders who receive data from their funded entities, both ESDC and BC Housing will receive incomplete data from their funded service providers. Everyone involved, from funders to service providers to clients, will experience a net negative outcome, where the intended result of all of these programs and funding requirements is to produce a net positive outcome.
- **Most scenarios require BC Housing to adjust.** Over half of the options presented require BC Housing to make some modifications to its current operating procedures with regards to HIFIS. There are a wide variety of scenarios that are possible, depending on what areas BC Housing is willing to be flexible on. These scenarios range from BC Housing ceasing hosting HIFIS altogether, to allowing their data to be exported to Community Entities, to being more permissive in terms of which service providers and programs can be onboarded to their own HIFIS Instance. However, if BC Housing is unwilling to make any adjustments at all, only the status quo is possible.
- **The best scenarios result in one instance being utilized community-wide.** Regardless of the specific scenario, ideal end states result in every service provider within a given community being able to utilize the same HIFIS Instance. This could be a single, province-wide HIFIS Instance utilized by every homeless-serving service provider in British Columbia, or it could be a single community-wide HIFIS Instance managed at a local level. The key element, however, is that every service provider within a community who assists clients experiencing or at-risk of homelessness should be able to collaborate with each other through a shared database. This is in line with internationally established best practices supported by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, ESDC, the National Alliance to End Homelessness in the United States, and the Institute of Global Homelessness.



## Common Tasks Related to HIFIS Implementation

This document outlines a variety of different scenarios that result in HIFIS being implemented. However, before discussing the variations, it is helpful to have an understanding of some of the common tasks that need to be completed prior to comprehensive and sustained HIFIS use.

In addition to the steps outlined below, the author of this report also recorded a 45-minute webinar entitled ***The Road to HIFIS*** which speaks in more detail about the necessary steps related to HIFIS Implementation. This presentation is currently hosted on the Homelessness Learning Hub, located at the following URL: <https://homelessnesslearninghub.ca/library/resources/the-road-to-hifis/>

An additional available resource is the ***HIFIS Toolkit***, authored by ESDC, which includes the HIFIS Implementation Guide: <https://homelessnesslearninghub.ca/library/resources/hifis-implementation-guide>

### Identify HIFIS Lead Agency

Where one does not currently exist, one organization must be identified to become the HIFIS Lead Agency. This entity is responsible for hosting and administering software, signing the Data Provision Agreement with ESDC and Data Sharing Agreements with other service providers. Typically, the HIFIS Lead Agency is also responsible for configuring HIFIS and providing training. Usually the HIFIS Lead Agency is an entity that currently exists in a position of leadership, such as the Community Entity, but other arrangements are possible.

### Arrange for Hosting

The HIFIS Lead Agency must arrange for hosting a server, including managing the server and deploying the software. This requirement has a financial cost associated with it, either by purchasing a server to host internally, or by purchasing some server space with a 3rd party host. IT support will be required to ensure that the software and server are up and running acceptably, that the server is adequately secured, and that there are no technological difficulties. After launch, it will remain necessary to keep the server running smoothly at all times.

### Develop and Implement Legal Agreements

The HIFIS Lead Agency must implement appropriate legal agreements. These include signing a Data Provision (DPA) agreement with ESDC (a step which results in obtaining a HIFIS License), creating Data Sharing Agreements with all participating service providers and programs, and developing and implementing new Consent forms. This component can take a substantial amount of time to complete and require the involvement of legal advisors along with buy-in from all stakeholders.

### Establish Governance Structures

Related to [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#), governance structures must be put in place. Questions must be answered like: Who has the authority to decide how the software will be used? Who is responsible for auditing? Who will be training staff? What reports and data exports will be available, and who can they be shared with?

## Conduct a Needs Assessment

Whenever there will be a new usage of HIFIS, whether that's service providers being onboarded for the first time, or new funding requirements, or an existing service provider expanding into a new program, it is important to first understand the data needs for that program. This may be as simple as asking stakeholders what data needs to be collected, but it may also be a more involved process that includes reviewing necessary reports and funding requirements and meeting with staff at all levels to ensure that data needs are well understood on all fronts. This task often involves multiple meetings with stakeholders.

## Design a Software Model

Usage of the software needs to be defined. The single biggest subtask here is designing rights templates for users, but there are a number of other settings that can be configured and drop-down menus to be modified and so on. This task is a fairly major undertaking because it requires a thorough understanding of the HIFIS software itself (and its various configuration options), and an understanding of the needs of stakeholders (see [Conduct a Needs Assessment](#)). Once designed, the software model should be tested and verified by end users to confirm it will meet their needs. Designing the software model is usually done independently by a subject matter expert, who then brings questions and templates to a team for review and approval.

## Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures

Related to [Design a Software Model](#), various policies and procedures will need to be in place. These policies and procedures may include:

- scripts to obtain consent from clients;
- policies on dealing with non-consenting clients;
- directions on where specific data points should be entered into HIFIS;
- policies concerning the timeliness, completeness, and accuracy of data in HIFIS;
- policies on when audits need to be completed and what would be audited;
- procedures related to adding and removing clients from a By-Name List;
- procedures to remove access to HIFIS for departing staff;
- policies to deactivate or archive clients that have not been seen in a while;
- and so on.

This list is not exhaustive, but meant to provide an idea of what this sort of task entails.

## Configure the Software

Once the software model is designed (see [Design a Software Model](#)), any configuration will need to be implemented. This could include things like setting up new service providers, adding or altering user rights templates, setting up new user accounts, defining programs, modifying drop-down menus, and so-on. Configuring the software is labour-intensive and is usually done by one or a few HIFIS Administrators, usually in a compressed timespan (i.e. over a few days or weeks).

## Meet Reporting Needs

Putting data into HIFIS is only half of the equation. The other half includes pulling data out in a useful way. The HIFIS Lead Agency must ensure that the reporting needs for all service providers using the HIFIS Instance

are being met. This could be arranged in a few different ways: verifying that existing reports will satisfy reporting needs; developing capacity to write new reports internally; or hiring a 3rd party to write new reports or customize existing ones.

### Train Users

Prior to utilizing HIFIS, all staff should be appropriately trained on what is expected of them. A training plan must be developed, including such information as who will be responsible for training staff, what is covered in the training agenda, how training will be delivered, when staff need retraining, whether staff need to be tested, and so on. Then, the training needs to be conducted for all staff that will have access to the HIFIS Instance. In terms of person-hours, this is one of the biggest requirements, due to sheer numbers. All staff will require at least a few hours of training, but from a logistics point of view, much of these hours can overlap.

### Onboard Additional Service Providers

Any time a service provider wishes to join an existing HIFIS Instance, a number of the tasks previously mentioned in this section must be undertaken on a smaller scale. First, legal agreements should be revisited to ensure that they cover the additional service provider(s). At a minimum, the new service provider(s) will need to sign Data Sharing Agreements with the HIFIS Lead Agency, but it's possible that consent forms or Data Sharing Agreements will need to be redeveloped and re-signed by other parties. Next, a needs assessment will need to be completed for the additional service providers, and the software model for these service providers may need to be developed (it's possible that the needs of the additional service providers may be identical to an existing service provider). The software will need to be configured for the additional service providers, additional staff will need to be trained, and the reporting needs for these providers must also be met.

### Develop Software

A few scenarios rely on new software being developed or modifications made to existing software. For these scenarios, the tasks are similar: stakeholders must define what the requirements are for the new piece of software; these requirements must be provided to the developer, who begins working on the software; the software is tested; once it is confirmed to meet the needs of stakeholders, it can be deployed. Depending on the complexity of the required software, this task could take from several months to years.

## Scenario 1: Province-Wide Instance

In the System Mapping Guide (see Homeless Learning Hub: <https://homelessnesslearninghub.ca/library/resources/system-mapping-guide-and-tool/>), ESDC has described scenario 1 as an option for communities that have only service providers that either are currently, or could be, utilizing the existing BC Housing instance of HIFIS 4.

*In Scenario 1, based on the system mapping results and discussions with provincial and federal partners, Community Entities find:*

1. *THAT all of the service providers that need HIFIS can be on-boarded onto BC Housing's HIFIS because:*
  - a. *They are already using BC Housing's HIFIS OR*
  - b. *They can use BC Housing's HIFIS because:*
    - i. *They are either an outreach or shelter provider AND*
    - ii. *They are funded by BC Housing and/or Reaching Home AND*
    - iii. *The user rights that will be granted to them by BC Housing will meet their data and information management needs.*
2. *AND BC Housing has the resources to onboard all of the service providers that are not already using its installation of HIFIS;*
3. *AND BC Housing is able to meet the Community Entity's data and information management needs (e.g., timely access to data and/or reports).*
4. *AND there is no other reason why the Community Entity does not want their service providers on-boarded onto BC Housing's HIFIS.*

Thinking about this scenario slightly more broadly, we will re-frame this scenario for the purposes of this options report:

***In Scenario 1, all of the service providers that need HIFIS can be on-boarded onto a provincial HIFIS Instance.***

In this section, we explore in more detail some of the variations of this scenario, and what they look like for communities, clients, and for BC Housing.

## Scenario 1A: Status Quo

In this scenario, BC Housing continues to act as the HIFIS Lead agency for a province-wide HIFIS Instance, and very little changes in terms of their operating practices. All BC Housing funded agencies would continue to use this database, and some Reaching Home funded agencies may be able to be onboarded, as long as they meet certain criteria.

Because this is the status quo, there would be very little impact on clients or service providers currently using HIFIS. Any new service providers that require onboarding would sign data sharing agreements with BC Housing (if not already in place), and begin using the client consent forms already developed by BC Housing.

### Preconditions

This scenario could **only** be adopted if:

- All service providers and programs that assist clients experiencing or at-risk of homelessness within a community are BC Housing funded and are currently permitted or required to use the BC Housing HIFIS Instance; and,
- Either:
  - No service providers or programs within the community are Reaching Home funded, or,
  - The Community Entity is able to meet reporting requirements for Reaching Home by extracting local data from the BC Housing HIFIS Instance.

### Necessary Steps

- [Onboard Additional Service Providers](#): Some additional service providers may require onboarding, if permitted to do so and are interested in doing so.
- [Meet Reporting Needs](#): Some reports may be required to allow communities to access local Coordinated Access data and community-level outcomes in order for them to meet Reaching Home requirements.

### Positives

The benefit to this approach is primarily to BC Housing; since nothing is effectively changing, they will not be required to change any practices.

There is no major drawback for communities if they meet the preconditions for this scenario (which is unlikely).

### Negatives

It is anticipated that very few, if any, communities would meet the preconditions for this scenario.

Because HIFIS is centrally governed by BC Housing, in the absence of a new governance model that shares decision-making with Community Entities, there would be less opportunity for local communities to customize their data practices, which may result in the inability to collect particular data pieces that are deemed significant locally but are not significant to BC Housing. A *hypothetical* example would be if local communities wanted to track shelter turnaways but BC Housing did not provide users rights to the Turnaways module.

Local communities are likely to desire reports that pull data that is relevant to their community alone, and since HIFIS would be centrally governed, it may be difficult for Community Entities to extract local data needed. BC Housing would control what reports are added to HIFIS and also who has access to given reports.

### Impact on BC Housing

- **Neutral:** no significant change to current practices

### Impact on ESDC

- **Positive:** fewer HIFIS Licenses to support and manage
- **Neutral:** minimum Reaching Home program requirements implemented
- **Positive:** Data is more easily included in National Datasets

### Impact on Community Entities

- **Positive:** no requirement to arrange for hosting
- **Positive\*:** all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance. \*May not be possible.
- **Negative:** lack of control over local data practices
- **Negative:** lack of governance
- **Negative:** difficulty extracting local data

### Impact on Service Providers

- **Positive:** would only use one HIFIS Instance
- **Positive:** could collaborate with other local service providers
- **Positive:** could access files from out-of-town clients
- **Positive:** could make out-of-town referrals
- **Neutral:** go to BC Housing for support, which may be fast or slow

### Impact on Clients

- **Neutral:** clients sign consent for all providers across the province. This has some advantages but may result in more clients declining to consent to information collection and sharing.
- **Positive:** clients would not have to retell their story, avoiding retraumatization

## Scenario 1B: Status Quo with Supportive Housing

This scenario is identical to [Scenario 1A: Status Quo](#), with one major difference: supportive housing providers (and perhaps other housing provider types) funded by BC Housing are also onboarded to HIFIS. It is understood that currently, supportive housing providers in the province utilize a different data system. The ability for BC Housing funded shelters and BC Housing funded supportive housing to better share data about mutual clients would be a significant step towards system and data integration, and would result in many benefits.

### Necessary Steps

- BC Housing would need to be in agreement
- [Develop Software](#): A viable supportive housing option in HIFIS 4 would be required. This option would need to be accepted and approved by BC Housing, who would need to express interest in using it for their supportive housing service providers.
- [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#): Existing data sharing agreements and consent forms may require modifications.
- [Design a Software Model](#): Configuration for new supportive housing programs and service providers would need to be designed, including rights templates, service providers, programs, mandatory and disabled fields, and lookup tables.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): New policies and procedures may be required for new program types.
- [Configure the Software](#): Some new programs and service providers would need configuration.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): Policies and procedures would need to be developed and implemented for supportive housing.
- [Train Users](#): Training would need to be developed and implemented for newly onboarded programs.
- [Onboard Additional Service Providers](#): All supportive housing service providers would require onboarding. As in [Scenario 1A: Status Quo](#), some additional service providers may require onboarding, if permitted to do so and are interested in doing so.
- [Meet Reporting Needs](#): Some reports may be required to allow communities to access local Coordinated Access data in order for them to meet Reaching Home requirements.

### Positives

All service providers funded by BC Housing would be utilizing the same data system, which would result in significant benefits for BC Housing as an agency: they would have the option to consolidate data systems and reporting, removing the need to support two different systems. In addition, training could be streamlined.

For clients and service providers, more service providers within a community would be able to share data regarding mutual clients. This can result in improved outcomes for clients and time saved for both clients and staff.

### Negatives

The majority of the negatives from [Scenario 1A: Status Quo](#) will still be present.

In addition, a solution for recording supportive housing in HIFIS 4 would need to be established, as well as any other gaps that need to be filled for other types of housing providers funded by BC Housing. At present, there is

no recommended option for tracking supportive housing in HIFIS 4. However, if a new module were developed that would meet the needs of BC Housing and their supportive housing and other housing providers, this problem would be solved. The negative, therefore, is that this option does not yet exist and will likely take months if not years for a solution to exist. However, other options may also take a long timeframe to implement, so it may not be as big a negative as it first appears.

### Impact on BC Housing

- **Positive:** could use HIFIS for all of funded service providers, including supportive housing
- **Positive:** only expansion to HIFIS use is for its own funded service providers

### Impact on ESDC

- **Positive:** fewer HIFIS Licenses to support and manage
- **Neutral:** minimum Reaching Home program requirements implemented
- **Positive:** Data is more easily included in National Datasets
- **Negative:** required to develop and deploy changes to HIFIS
- **Positive:** software is improved as a result of accommodating BC housing programs

### Impact on Community Entities

- **Positive:** no requirement to arrange for hosting
- **Positive\*:** all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance. \*May not be possible.
- **Negative:** lack of control over local data practices
- **Negative:** lack of governance
- **Negative:** difficulty extracting local data

### Impact on Service Providers

- **Positive:** would only use one HIFIS Instance
- **Positive:** could collaborate with other local service providers
- **Positive:** could access files from out-of-town clients
- **Positive:** could make out-of-town referrals
- **Neutral:** go to BC Housing for support, which may be fast or slow

### Impact on Clients

- **Neutral:** clients sign consent for all providers across the province. This has some advantages but may result in more clients declining to consent to information collection and sharing.
- **Positive:** clients would not have to retell their story, avoiding re-traumatization

## Scenario 1C: More Permissive Onboarding

In this scenario, BC Housing is willing to accept more service providers onto its existing HIFIS Instance, beyond those service providers currently permitted and/or required to use it. This would constitute a significant expansion of use, and move HIFIS beyond simply managing shelters and outreach in BC to also including a great deal of other organizations who also serve clients experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This could include day centres, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, housing first, eviction prevention, and other programs. Note that this expansion may or may not include supportive housing or other types of housing providers; see [Scenario 1B: Status Quo with Supportive Housing](#).

In summary, if BC Housing is willing to onboard service providers that do not fall under its current parameters, it could be possible to have only one HIFIS Instance, used province-wide. Although this may seem like a daunting proposition, the provinces of Saskatchewan (the HIFIS Lead is the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership, see sidebar) and New Brunswick (Saint John Human Development Council), along with the territories of Yukon (Safe at Home Society) and the Northwest Territories (City of Yellowknife), are also pursuing (or have pursued) province/territory-wide models for HIFIS.

### Case Study: Saskatchewan

Although the province of Saskatchewan has not yet gone live with HIFIS 4, the plan in this province is to have a single cluster for the entire province (with the potential exception for some shelters serving victims of domestic violence).

The HIFIS Lead in Saskatchewan is an entity known as Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), based in Saskatoon, and they are working collaboratively with stakeholders from Regina and Prince Albert. Because there are few population centres in Saskatchewan, it was relatively straightforward to get the necessary buy-in for this approach.

Note that the provincial government plays no role in HIFIS in Saskatchewan. There is no top-down directive pushing towards integrated data; it was a community-led decision.

### Necessary Steps

- BC Housing would need to be in agreement
- [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#): Existing data sharing agreements and consent forms may require modifications.
- [Establish Governance Structures](#): Although BC Housing will be the HIFIS Lead, some negotiations will need to be made regarding the role of Community Entities in this scenario.
- [Design a Software Model](#): Configuration for new programs and service providers would need to be designed, including rights templates, service providers, programs, mandatory and disabled fields, and lookup tables. In this scenario, this task is led by BC Housing.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): New policies and procedures may be required for new program types.
- [Configure the Software](#): Some new programs and service providers would need configuration.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): Policies and procedures would need to be developed and implemented for new service providers and programs.
- [Train Users](#): Training would need to be developed and implemented for newly onboarded programs.
- [Onboard Additional Service Providers](#): Many additional service providers will require onboarding.

- **Meet Reporting Needs:** Some reports may be required to allow communities to access local Coordinated Access data and community-level outcomes in order for them to meet Reaching Home requirements. Other reports may be required for additional service providers and programs to meet other data needs.

## Positives

This scenario would generally be a very positive one for Community Entities. They would not need to worry about the hosting or administration of HIFIS themselves as it would be managed by a third party. Furthermore, all of their service providers would be using the same system, which would create an ideal environment for Coordinated Access.

Clients, too, would benefit from this approach, since they would be required to complete far fewer intakes and tell their story fewer times. Not only would all service providers within a community be able to collaborate with each other about shared clients, but referrals from one community to another would also continue to be possible.

Staff would generally benefit, because there would be very little confusion as to which HIFIS database to log into. In addition, staff would receive fairly uniform training across the province and it would therefore be relatively easy for them to transfer from one role to another, whether that would be due to changing employers or moving to another community.

In terms of universal efficiency, this scenario saves the most time overall, since:

- There are the fewest number of HIFIS Instances in the province, meaning that the least amount of time (collectively) would be spent maintaining the server (i.e. by deploying updates);
- BC Housing already has a server, a HIFIS Instance, and applicable supports and policies in place;
- No service providers would need to migrate away from one HIFIS Instance to another;
- Front line staff would avoid duplicating their work; and,
- Clients would avoid having to re-tell their story and complete unnecessary additional intakes.

## Negatives

As the HIFIS Lead Agency, BC Housing would see a significant increase in responsibilities.

At present, BC Housing has a well-documented HIFIS Instance with complete training materials. It is assumed that BC Housing would prefer to continue with sole governance over the HIFIS Instance, despite the fact that additional programs would begin using HIFIS that are not funded by BC Housing. Therefore, new rights templates and training materials would need to be developed, and training and support would be required for a substantially increased number of users who are using the system in new ways.

In order to mitigate the increased demands on BC Housing, there are several strategies available:

- A third party could provide recommendations for new rights templates that meet the needs of other service providers, thus reducing the requirement that BC Housing develop these new rights templates;
- A third party could develop training materials to accompany the new rights templates and/or provide training to new users; and/or,
- Individual communities may be willing to contribute some of their own resources to BC Housing to pay for support and training. This would be with the recognition that if they were hosting their own HIFIS

installation, they would be required to bear all associated costs. Note that this is the intended purpose for Community Capacity and Innovation (CCI) funds.

As stated previously, because HIFIS is centrally governed by BC Housing, in the absence of a new model of shared decision-making with Community Entities there would be less opportunity for local communities to customize their data practices, which may result in the inability to collect particular data pieces that are deemed significant locally but are not significant to BC Housing. A *hypothetical* example would be if local communities wanted to track shelter turnaways but BC Housing did not provide users rights to the Turnaways module.

Local communities are likely to require reports that pull data that is relevant to their community alone, and since HIFIS would be centrally governed, it may be difficult for Community Entities to extract local data needed. BC Housing would control what reports are added to HIFIS and also who has access to given reports.

### Impact on BC Housing

- **Negative:** increase in responsibilities including designing and configuring software, developing policies and procedures, training staff
- **Neutral/positive:** potential added resources to offset increase in responsibilities
- **Neutral:** it may be possible to allow more permissive onboarding without significantly altering existing configuration, training materials, or policies/procedures

### Impact on ESDC

- **Positive:** fewer HIFIS Licenses to support and manage
- **Neutral:** minimum Reaching Home program requirements implemented
- **Positive:** Data is more easily included in National Datasets

### Impact on Community Entities

- **Positive:** no requirement to arrange for hosting
- **Positive\*:** all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance. \*May not be possible.
- **Negative:** lack of control over local data practices
- **Negative:** lack of governance
- **Negative:** difficulty extracting local data

### Impact on Service Providers

- **Positive:** would only use one HIFIS Instance
- **Positive:** could collaborate with other local service providers
- **Positive:** could access files from out-of-town clients
- **Positive:** could make out-of-town referrals
- **Neutral:** go to BC Housing for support, which may be fast or slow

### Impact on Clients

- **Neutral:** clients sign consent for all providers across the province. This has some advantages but may result in more clients declining to consent to information collection and sharing.

- **Positive:** clients would not have to retell their story, avoiding re-traumatization

## Scenario 1D: Partial Transfer of Governance

This scenario would be similar to [Scenario 1C: More Permissive Onboarding](#), except that BC Housing would delegate some authority to Community Entities to self-administer portions of HIFIS by operationalizing a shared governance model.

In this model, BC Housing would continue to operate as HIFIS Lead of the province-wide HIFIS Instance, but would delegate some authority to local communities. There would be a shared governance structure in which BC Housing governs the BC Housing-funded programs, but local Community Entities would govern their own, non-BC Housing-funded programs.

### How would delegated authority work?

As an example, let's imagine that a community wishes to onboard a service provider that offers a housing resource/drop-in centre. This may be outside of BC Housing's mandate, and for argument's sake we will state that this service provider is not Reaching Home funded, either. The local Community Entity would be tasked with governing, managing, and administering this program in HIFIS, including but not limited to setting up the Service Provider, Program(s), Rights Templates, and User Accounts, as well as providing training, support, and documentation for staff at this Service Provider.

Meanwhile, BC Housing-funded shelters and outreach in the same community would be governed, managed, and administered by BC Housing, and the local Community Entity would not be responsible for (or even have the freedom to) configuring HIFIS, training, or supporting staff for these service providers.

HIFIS has the capability to manage this whole arrangement by granting local Community Entities user rights and access only to manage their own service providers and programs. For more discussion, see [Appendix: Delegated Authority](#).

### Case Study: Charlottetown-Summerside

As a small community, the province of Charlottetown-Summerside felt that it wasn't the most efficient use of resources to implement and support their own installation of HIFIS. So they looked around for another HIFIS Instance that they could piggyback on, landing on the HIFIS Instance in Halifax.

Halifax allowed Charlottetown-Summerside to come onboard their HIFIS installation and allowed them to administer much of their own programs while utilizing the same server.

### Necessary Steps

- BC Housing would need to be in agreement
- [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#): Existing data sharing agreements and consent forms may require modifications.
- [Establish Governance Structures](#): New governance structures will need to be defined, clarifying the role of BC Housing's governance versus the local community's governance.
- [Design a Software Model](#): Configuration for new programs and service providers would need to be designed, including rights templates, service providers, programs, mandatory and disabled fields, and lookup tables. In this scenario, this task is led by the Community Entity. In addition, the details of how delegated authority would work would need to be defined.

- [Configure the Software](#): Some new programs and service providers would need configuration.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): Policies and procedures would need to be developed and implemented for new service providers and programs. Some policies and procedures would need to be documented more clearly than in other scenarios. For instance, clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities for the local Community Entity versus BC Housing would be essential. If a staff locks their account, do they ask the local authority or the provincial authority for assistance?
- [Train Users](#): Training would need to be developed and implemented by the local Community Entities for newly onboarded programs.
- [Onboard Additional Service Providers](#): Many additional service providers will require onboarding.
- [Meet Reporting Needs](#): Some reports may be required to allow communities to access local Coordinated Access data and community-level outcomes in order for them to meet Reaching Home requirements. Other reports may be required for additional service providers and programs to meet other data needs.

## Positives

The demands on BC Housing's resources would be far less than in [Scenario 1C: More Permissive Onboarding](#). Unlike Scenario 1C, BC Housing would not be given an immediate increase in responsibilities. The additional responsibilities would be taken on by local administrators in each community.

Community Entities would benefit from heightened control over the service providers in their community. If a community-specific report is required, for example, the Community Entity would be empowered to develop and deploy the report on their own rather than having to request it from BC Housing.

In addition, all of the positives from [Scenario 1C: More Permissive Onboarding](#) would remain true.

## Negatives

The main impact on BC Housing would be a loosening of control over its HIFIS Instance, which may be seen as a negative. While this may sound alarming, there are a number of tools in HIFIS that allow for hierarchical delegation of authority. For example, Rights Templates are "owned" by a particular Service Provider and cannot be modified by users without access to that Service Provider. In other words, a Rights Template "owned" by BC Housing could not be modified by a Community Entity. Furthermore, users cannot grant rights that they themselves do not have, so BC Housing could limit use of the software in that way. For more discussion on this topic, see [Appendix: Delegated Authority](#).

A negative impact on users may be that it may be unclear who they should contact, should they need support. Some service providers may be managed by the local Community Entity while others may be managed by BC Housing (while still using the same HIFIS Instance), and a given user may not always be aware of how to get assistance if, for example, they have trouble logging in.

As in many scenarios, Community Entities would be acting as HIFIS Administrator for some or all of their service providers. Because of this, Community Entities would need to undertake a needs assessment of their service providers and design and develop a model for using HIFIS, configure the software, train staff, and meet reporting needs. However, this challenge is not unique to this scenario, nor is it unique to British Columbia. This is one of the purposes for the CCI funding stream.

## Impact on BC Housing

- **Neutral:** no/minimal increase in responsibilities
- **Negative:** loosening of control over the system

## Impact on ESDC

- **Positive:** fewer HIFIS Licenses to support and manage
- **Positive:** Reaching Home program implemented as intended
- **Positive:** Data is more easily included in National Datasets

## Impact on Community Entities

- **Positive:** no requirement to arrange for hosting
- **Positive:** all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance
- **Negative:** increase in responsibilities including designing and configuring software, developing policies and procedures, training staff
- **Positive:** control over local data practices
- **Positive:** governance and ownership of own programs
- **Positive:** easier to extract local data

## Impact on Service Providers

- **Positive:** would only use one HIFIS Instance
- **Positive:** could collaborate with other local service providers
- **Positive:** could access files from out-of-town clients
- **Positive:** could make out-of-town referrals
- **Neutral:** go to Community Entity or BC Housing for support, depending on circumstances

## Impact on Clients

- **Neutral:** clients sign consent for all providers across the province. This has some advantages but may result in more clients declining to consent to information collection and sharing.
- **Positive:** clients would not have to retell their story, avoiding re-traumatization

## Scenario 1E: Complete Transfer of Governance

This scenario would be similar to [Scenario 1C: More Permissive Onboarding](#), except that BC Housing would not be the HIFIS Lead. Instead, another entity would take on the role and BC Housing would no longer manage HIFIS. As a funder, BC Housing would still be able to access required data.

### How would BC Housing get its data?

As a funder, BC Housing would be able to mandate certain aspects of HIFIS use for its funded service providers. For example, BC Housing could require that their funded agencies record contributing factors for all their clients upon intake. They could provide training materials, if desired, to ensure that its funded service providers are training their staff in an approved manner. Thus, even though BC Housing would have funded service providers that are no longer utilizing BC Housing's HIFIS Instance, they would still retain the authority to ensure that required data is being collected in an appropriate manner.

In addition, BC Housing would also be able to obtain necessary data from funded service providers. They could provide reporting templates (i.e. Crystal Report files) and require that they be used. One potential model would permit BC Housing staff the ability to log in to the community HIFIS Instance, but only have access to their own funded programs and only their own reports (this could be managed through rights templates and user accounts). A second potential model is not to grant BC Housing any ability to login to the community HIFIS Instance, and instead to require funded service providers to run required reports and submit them via email or an online form to BC Housing.

This option is worth mentioning if it turns out that BC Housing is unable to expand and invite a sufficient amount of Service Providers on board, and all or nearly all Community Entities are interested in pursuing HIFIS at a provincial level, **and** also if BC Housing is willing to allow some other entity to manage HIFIS for the BC Housing-funded agencies.

### Case Study: Winnipeg

Winnipeg wanted to launch HIFIS 4 in their community but had no established governance structure: who would be the HIFIS Lead Agency? They undertook a novel approach and formed the Homeless Information Partnership of Winnipeg (HIPW), which used a cooperative model.

This new entity was formed with the sole purpose of managing HIFIS. Service providers could opt in; they needed to pay an annual fee in order to pay for staff and other costs of hosting HIFIS. Because it was a non-hierarchical model, service providers voted on priorities and pursued enhancements (such as more training or more reports) according to members' wishes.

### Necessary Steps

- BC Housing would need to be in agreement
- [Identify HIFIS Lead Agency](#): A new HIFIS Lead would need to be identified. Some potential options include:
  - A large Community Entity such as the one in Vancouver
  - The provincial government
  - A non-profit like CAEH
  - A newly formed information partnership like in Winnipeg

- [Arrange for Hosting](#): The new HIFIS Lead would need to obtain server space and deploy HIFIS.
- [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#): New data sharing agreements would need to be developed and signed between all service providers, Community Entities, and the new HIFIS Lead. New consent forms may need to be developed.
- [Establish Governance Structures](#): The collective of communities using the new provincial HIFIS Instance would need to decide how HIFIS would be governed. This may be a more complex task since there are many parties collaborating. A great number of questions will need to be asked concerning at what level certain aspects will be managed. For example, would communities be responsible for training their own staff, or would training be centralized?
- [Design a Software Model](#): Some software configuration could be imported from the existing BC Housing Instance. Configuration for new programs and service providers would need to be designed, including rights templates, service providers, programs, mandatory and disabled fields, and lookup tables.
- [Configure the Software](#): Some new programs and service providers would need configuration.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): Policies and procedures would need to be developed and implemented.
- [Train Users](#): Training would need to be developed and implemented.
- [Onboard Additional Service Providers](#): Many additional service providers will require onboarding.
- [Meet Reporting Needs](#): Some reports may be required to allow communities to access local Coordinated Access data and community-level outcomes in order for them to meet Reaching Home requirements. Other reports may be required for additional service providers and programs to meet other data needs. A strategy for BC Housing to obtain its data would need to be developed.

## Positives

Most Community Entities (except whatever organization is selected as the HIFIS Lead) would not need to worry about the hosting or administration of HIFIS themselves as it would be managed by a third party. Furthermore, all of their service providers would be using the same system, which would create an ideal environment for Coordinated Access.

Clients, too, would benefit from this approach, since they would be required to complete far fewer intakes and tell their story fewer times. Not only would all service providers within a community be able to collaborate with each other about shared clients, but referrals from one community to another would also continue to be possible.

Staff would generally benefit, because there would be very little confusion as to which HIFIS database to log into. In addition, staff would receive fairly uniform training across the province and it would therefore be relatively easy for them to transfer from one role to another, whether that would be due to changing employers or moving to another community.

HIFIS could be managed by an organization that is able to accommodate both provincial and federal funding requirements.

BC Housing would experience a major change, but overall a significant lessening, of their responsibilities related to HIFIS. They would no longer be responsible for managing the system including providing training and support, developing rights templates, configuring the software and otherwise ensuring that it meets the needs of users. Instead, some other entity would take on that responsibility.

BC Housing would most likely retain access to the HIFIS database, but as a funder as opposed to a HIFIS Administrator. Staff at BC Housing would be able to extract necessary data for the purposes of reporting, but would no longer be required to act as the custodian of data.

## Negatives

BC Housing would no longer act as the HIFIS Lead for their funded programs. That means that its employees will no longer act as HIFIS Administrators. BC Housing would therefore need to be granted permission to access data from the new HIFIS Lead. However, as a role reversal from [Scenario 1D: Partial Transfer of Governance](#), it could be an option for BC Housing to act as a Local Administrator and govern only their funded programs.

This scenario requires the most coordination between many parties: BC Housing would need to be in agreement, and 15 or so Community Entities would need to agree to this scenario not only in principle but also agree with the details.

## Impact on BC Housing

- **Positive:** decrease in responsibilities
- **Negative:** no control over the system
- **Neutral:** retain ability to receive necessary data from funded service providers

## Impact on ESDC

- **Positive:** fewer HIFIS Licenses to support and manage
- **Positive:** Reaching Home program implemented as intended
- **Positive:** Data is more easily included in National Datasets
- **Negative:** new Data Provision Agreements required with the new HIFIS Lead

## Impact on new HIFIS Lead (likely one Community Entity)

- **Negative:** would be required to arrange for hosting
- **Negative:** increase in responsibilities including designing and configuring software, developing policies and procedures, training staff
- **Positive:** would need to receive funding from other Community Entities

## Impact on other Community Entities

- **Positive:** no requirement to arrange for hosting
- **Positive:** all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance
- **Positive/Neutral:** negotiable control over local data practices
- **Positive/Neutral:** negotiable governance and ownership of own programs
- **Positive/Neutral:** negotiable ability to extract local data

## Impact on Service Providers

- **Positive:** would only use one HIFIS Instance
- **Positive:** could collaborate with other local service providers

- **Positive:** could access files from out-of-town clients
- **Positive:** could make out-of-town referrals
- **Neutral:** go to HIFIS Lead for support

### Impact on Clients

- **Neutral:** clients sign consent for all providers across the province. This has some advantages but may result in more clients declining to consent to information collection and sharing.
- **Positive:** clients would not have to retell their story, avoiding retraumatization

## Scenario 2: Single Community-Wide Instance

In the System Mapping Guide (see Homeless Learning Hub: <https://homelessnesslearninghub.ca/library/resources/system-mapping-guide-and-tool/>), ESDC has described scenario 2 as an option for communities that have only service providers that are not required to use the existing BC Housing HIFIS Instance.

*In Scenario 2, based on the system mapping results and discussions with provincial and federal partners, Community Entities find:*

1. *THAT none of their service providers are already using BC Housing's HIFIS.*
2. *AND none of the service providers that need HIFIS can be on-boarded to BC Housing's HIFIS because:*
  - a. *They are not an outreach or a shelter provider OR*
  - b. *They are not funded by either BC Housing or Reaching Home-funded OR*
  - c. *The user rights that will be granted to them by BC Housing will not meet their data and information management needs.*
3. *OR BC Housing does not have the resources to onboard all of the service providers that are not already using its installation of HIFIS;*
4. *OR BC Housing is unable to meet the Community Entity's data and information management needs (e.g., timely access to data and/or reports).*
5. *OR there is another reason why the Community Entity does not want their service providers on-boarded to BC Housing's HIFIS.*

Thinking about this scenario slightly more broadly, we will re-frame this scenario for the purposes of this options report:

***In Scenario 2, none of the service providers that need HIFIS are required to use a provincial HIFIS Instance.***

In this section, we explore in more detail some of the variations of this scenario, and what they look like for communities, clients, and for BC Housing.

## Scenario 2A: Status Quo

In this scenario, BC Housing continues to act as the HIFIS Lead agency for a province-wide instance, and very little changes in terms of their operating practices. All BC Housing funded agencies would continue to use this database.

Some communities may not have any BC Housing funded service providers and would be able to proceed with a community HIFIS Instance with no impact to existing BC Housing funded service providers (because there are none).

### Preconditions

This scenario could **only** be adopted if:

- Either:
  - No service providers or programs that assist clients experiencing or at-risk of homelessness within a community are BC Housing funded, or,
  - No service providers or programs that are BC Housing funded are required to use the BC Housing HIFIS Instance.

### Necessary Steps

- [Identify HIFIS Lead Agency](#): A community-based HIFIS Lead would need to be identified, most likely the Community Entity.
- [Arrange for Hosting](#): The new HIFIS Lead would need to obtain server space and deploy HIFIS.
- [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#): New data sharing agreements would need to be signed between all service providers and the new HIFIS Lead. New consent forms will need to be developed.
- [Establish Governance Structures](#): The community would need to decide how HIFIS would be governed.
- [Design a Software Model](#): All software configuration would need to be designed, including rights templates, service providers, programs, mandatory and disabled fields, and lookup tables. Some software configuration could be imported from the existing BC Housing Instance.
- [Configure the Software](#): All software configuration would need to be implemented.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): Policies and procedures would need to be developed and implemented.
- [Train Users](#): Training would need to be developed and implemented.
- [Meet Reporting Needs](#): Some reports may be required for service providers and programs to meet their data needs.

### Positives

Communities would not select this option if they had any service providers that are required to use the BC HIFIS Instance (see [Scenario 3: Multiple Instances per Community](#)), so service providers would not be impacted by double-entry requirements.

### Negatives

It is anticipated that very few, if any, communities would meet the preconditions for this scenario.

As in many scenarios, Community Entities would be acting as HIFIS Administrator for some or all of their service providers. Because of this, Community Entities would need to undertake a needs assessment of their service providers and design and develop a model for using HIFIS, configure the software, train staff, and meet reporting needs. However, this challenge is not unique to this scenario, nor is it unique to British Columbia. This is one of the purposes for the CCI funding stream.

The Community Entity would need to obtain server space and related infrastructure and be prepared to commit resources to its long-term maintenance and support.

### Impact on BC Housing

- **Neutral:** no impact

### Impact on ESDC

- **Negative:** more HIFIS Licenses to support and manage
- **Positive:** Reaching Home program implemented as intended
- **Positive:** Data is more easily included in National Datasets

### Impact on Community Entities

- **Negative:** would be required to arrange for hosting
- **Negative:** increase in responsibilities including designing and configuring software, developing policies and procedures, training staff
- **Positive:** all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance
- **Positive:** full control over local data practices
- **Positive:** governance and ownership of own programs
- **Positive:** full ability to extract local data

### Impact on Service Providers

- **Positive:** would only use one HIFIS Instance
- **Positive:** could collaborate with other local service providers
- **Neutral:** go to HIFIS Lead for support

### Impact on Clients

- **Neutral:** clients sign consent for all providers across the community, a more limited scope than a province-wide consent form.
- **Positive:** clients would not have to retell their story, avoiding re-traumatization

## Scenario 2B: Exit from BC Housing

In this scenario, BC Housing ceases to require funded service providers to use the BC Housing instance. Instead, a community could deploy their own community HIFIS Instance. As in [Scenario 2A: Status Quo](#), a community-based HIFIS Lead would be identified (this is likely to be the Community Entity). They would be responsible for deploying HIFIS and designing the local configuration, in consultation with the service providers in their community.

As described in [How would BC Housing get its data?](#), although BC Housing would no longer be directly managing HIFIS for all its service providers, it could still mandate how HIFIS would be used by its funded service providers, and would still be able to obtain its necessary data.

### Case Study: HUD

The United States and Canada approach homelessness data requirements very differently. In the USA, the federal government has laid out requirements that a Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) must be capable of meeting, then said to funded communities: go pick an HMIS that meets these requirements, so we know we will get usable data from you.

In contrast, the federal government in Canada has developed their own HMIS, then said to funded communities: deploy this in your community if you don't already have something better, so we know we will get usable data from you.

BC Housing has gone a step beyond the Canadian federal government's approach and procured, deployed, and administered their own HMIS, then said to funded service providers: use this, so we know we will get usable data from you.

This case study serves to illustrate that there are different methods used by funders to obtain usable data from funded communities and service providers.

### Necessary Steps

- BC Housing would need to be in agreement
- [Identify HIFIS Lead Agency](#): A community-based HIFIS Lead would need to be identified, most likely the Community Entity.
- [Arrange for Hosting](#): The new HIFIS Lead would need to obtain server space and deploy HIFIS.
- [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#): New data sharing agreements would need to be signed between all service providers and the new HIFIS Lead. New consent forms will need to be developed.
- [Establish Governance Structures](#): The community would need to decide how HIFIS would be governed.
- [Design a Software Model](#): All software configuration would need to be designed, including rights templates, service providers, programs, mandatory and disabled fields, and lookup tables.
- [Configure the Software](#): All software configuration would need to be implemented.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): Policies and procedures would need to be developed and implemented.
- [Train Users](#): Training would need to be developed and implemented.
- [Meet Reporting Needs](#): Some reports may be required for service providers and programs to meet their data needs. A strategy for BC Housing to obtain its data would need to be developed.

## Positives

HIFIS would be managed at a community level, which would mean that the community would be able to take ownership of its data and manage homelessness locally. The Community Entity would be able to implement Coordinated Access at a local level.

No service providers would be required to enter data into more than one database.

Clients and staff would generally benefit from having data shared across the community they live in.

BC Housing would experience a change, but a significant overall lessening of their responsibilities related to HIFIS within this community. They would no longer be responsible for HIFIS Administration including providing training and support, developing rights templates, configuring the software and otherwise ensuring that it meets the needs of users. Instead, some other entity would take on that responsibility.

BC Housing would most likely retain access to the HIFIS Instance, but as a funder as opposed to a HIFIS Administrator. Staff at BC Housing would be able to extract necessary data for the purposes of reporting, but would no longer be required to act as the custodian of data.

## Negatives

BC Housing would no longer act as the HIFIS Lead for their funded programs. That means that its employees will no longer act as HIFIS Administrators. BC Housing would therefore need to be granted permission to access data from the new HIFIS Lead. However, as a role reversal from [Scenario 1D: Partial Transfer of Governance](#), it could be an option for BC Housing to act as a Local Administrator and govern only their funded programs.

BC Housing would need to be in agreement. The Community Entity would need to work closely with BC Housing to implement this solution.

As in many scenarios, Community Entities would be acting as HIFIS Administrator for some or all of their service providers. Because of this, Community Entities would need to undertake a needs assessment of their service providers and design and develop a model for using HIFIS, configure the software, train staff, and meet reporting needs. However, this challenge is not unique to this scenario, nor is it unique to British Columbia. This is one of the purposes for the CCI funding stream.

## Impact on BC Housing

- **Positive:** decrease in responsibilities
- **Negative:** no control over the system
- **Neutral:** retain ability to receive necessary data from funded service providers

## Impact on ESDC

- **Negative:** more HIFIS Licenses to support and manage
- **Positive:** Reaching Home program implemented as intended
- **Positive:** Data is more easily included in National Datasets

## Impact on Community Entities

- **Negative:** would be required to arrange for hosting
- **Negative:** increase in responsibilities including designing and configuring software, developing policies and procedures, training staff
- **Positive:** all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance
- **Positive:** full control over local data practices
- **Positive:** governance and ownership of own programs
- **Positive:** full ability to extract local data

## Impact on Service Providers

- **Positive:** would only use one HIFIS Instance
- **Positive:** could collaborate with other local service providers
- **Neutral:** go to HIFIS Lead for support

## Impact on Clients

- **Neutral:** clients sign consent for all providers across the community, a more limited scope than a province-wide consent form.
- **Positive:** clients would not have to retell their story, avoiding retraumatization

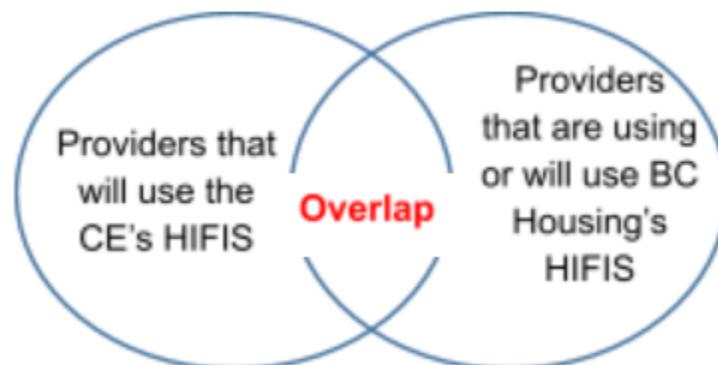
## Scenario 3: Multiple Instances per Community

In the System Mapping Guide (see Homeless Learning Hub: <https://homelessnesslearninghub.ca/library/resources/system-mapping-guide-and-tool/>), ESDC has described scenario 3 as an option for communities that have some service providers that are required to use and some that are prohibited from using the BC Housing instance.

*In Scenario 3, based on the system mapping results and discussions with provincial and federal partners, Community Entities find:*

1. *THAT some of their service providers are already using BC Housing's HIFIS.*
2. *AND/OR some of the service providers that need HIFIS can be on-boarded onto BC Housing's installation of HIFIS, but others cannot because:*
  - a. *They are not an outreach or a shelter provider OR*
  - b. *They are not funded by either BC Housing or Reaching Home-funded OR*
  - c. *The user rights that will be granted to them by BC Housing will not meet their data and information management needs.*
3. *OR BC Housing does not have the resources to onboard all of the service providers that are not already using its installation of HIFIS;*
4. *OR BC Housing is unable to meet the Community Entity's data and information management needs (e.g., timely access to data and/or reports).*
5. *OR there is another reason why the Community Entity does not want their service providers on-boarded to BC Housing's HIFIS.*

*In Scenario 3, there is a need for a community-specific HIFIS license, as illustrated in Figure 3 below. There is also a need to determine whether the service providers in the overlapping portion of Figure 3 should be on BC Housing's HIFIS or the community-specific HIFIS installation. In some cases, some or all of the service providers in the overlapping portion may already be using BC Housing's HIFIS.*



Thinking about this scenario slightly more broadly, we will re-frame this scenario for the purposes of this options report:

***In Scenario 3, some service providers are required to use a provincial HIFIS Instance and some service providers are required to use a community HIFIS Instance.***

In this section, we explore in more detail some of the variations of this scenario, and what they look like for communities, clients, and for BC Housing.

## Scenario 3A: Technological Solution

In this scenario, BC Housing continues to operate its own HIFIS Instance as it currently does. Meanwhile, the community would separately set up and deploy their own HIFIS Instance. Some service providers would be required to utilize the BC Housing instance while others would be required to utilize the community instance.

In order to compile local data, a technological solution will be implemented. For the purposes of this report, we will call it a “bridge tool” - software that would be able to transfer data between databases. Note that this technology does not yet exist (though its creation would be viable).

### What would the bridge tool look like?

The bridge tool would be a plugin that would add on to HIFIS 4. Most likely, it would be developed by a third party software developer for a fee. This tool could be developed by ESDC, but it is unclear how the development of such a tool would be prioritized against other desired enhancements for HIFIS.

This plugin would synchronize (sync) data between the BC Housing HIFIS Instance and the local community HIFIS Instance. The bridge tool may either sync data in one direction (i.e. import data from BC Housing’s instance to the local community instance), or it may sync data in two directions. Either one could be possible depending on the community’s, and BC Housing’s needs.

Before it is developed, many questions would need to be answered, including: which clients would sync, what data about those clients would sync, how frequently synchronization would occur, and how to resolve conflicting data about the same client.

Notably, any client that might appear in both databases would require additional consent. For example, a client who appears in the BC Housing HIFIS Instance would have consented to share their information with BC Housing and the BC Housing funded service providers, but not to share their information with other local service providers. Before copying data from one database to another, consent must be obtained.

Furthermore, the data in the BC Housing HIFIS Instance is governed by BC Housing. It is possible that even if a bridge tool existed, BC Housing may be unwilling to share data with the Community Entity. Therefore, it would be necessary to work in partnership with BC Housing on the development of such a bridge tool.

Finally, it is important to note that a bridge tool may be of interest to other Community Entities within the province of British Columbia, and therefore it may be possible to pool resources towards the development of this tool.

### Necessary Steps

- BC Housing would need to be in agreement
- [Develop Software](#): A bridge tool would need to be developed.
- [Identify HIFIS Lead Agency](#): A community-based HIFIS Lead would need to be identified, most likely the Community Entity.
- [Arrange for Hosting](#): The new HIFIS Lead would need to obtain server space and deploy HIFIS.

- [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#): New data sharing agreements would need to be signed between all service providers and the new HIFIS Lead. New community-level consent forms will need to be developed. Special data sharing agreements between the Community Entity and BC Housing will be required. Special consent forms will be required for clients appearing in multiple databases.
- [Establish Governance Structures](#): The community would need to decide how HIFIS would be governed.
- [Design a Software Model](#): All software configuration would need to be designed, including rights templates, service providers, programs, mandatory and disabled fields, and lookup tables.
- [Configure the Software](#): All software configuration would need to be implemented.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): Policies and procedures would need to be developed and implemented.
- [Train Users](#): Training would need to be developed and implemented.
- [Meet Reporting Needs](#): Some reports may be required for service providers and programs to meet their data needs.

## Positives

No service providers would be required to enter data into more than one database.

Clients and staff would generally benefit from having data shared across the community they live in.

The Community Entity would manage some of their data, and have access to local data about homelessness. The Community Entity would be able to implement Coordinated Access at a local level and report on community-level outcomes.

BC Housing would not be required to onboard any additional service providers, or significantly change their operating procedures.

## Negatives

The technology to implement this scenario does not yet exist. There is a real monetary cost associated with developing the bridge tool which may be prohibitive for a smaller community. The timeline to develop and test the bridge tool may be lengthy. Ultimately, while the tool is theoretically feasible, there may be any number of various unforeseen challenges that arise during development that may make such a tool impractical.

An important note is that legal agreements would need to be revisited. It is doubtful that current clients have consented to allow their personal, identifying information to be exported to a third party, so new client consent forms would need to be developed. Additional Data Sharing Agreements are likely to be required between BC Housing and Community Entities. Existing Data Sharing Agreements between service providers and BC Housing may also need to be revisited.

BC Housing would need to be in agreement. The Community Entity would need to work closely with BC Housing to implement this solution.

As in many scenarios, Community Entities would be acting as HIFIS Administrator for some or all of their service providers. Because of this, Community Entities would need to undertake a needs assessment of their service providers and design and develop a model for using HIFIS, configure the software, train staff, and meet reporting needs. However, this challenge is not unique to this scenario, nor is it unique to British Columbia. This is one of the purposes for the CCI funding stream.

## Impact on BC Housing

- **Neutral:** no significant change to current practices
- **Neutral:** would permit outside entities to access exported data from its database
- **Negative:** would require new legal agreements at all levels

## Impact on ESDC

- **Negative:** more HIFIS Licenses to support and manage
- **Negative:** although ESDC would not be developing the bridge tool, there may be some demands on its HIFIS Client Support Centre as they provide assistance to the software developer and Community Entities developing the bridge tool (i.e. providing documentation, troubleshooting, etc.)
- **Negative:** Reaching Home program not implemented as intended
- **Negative:** multiple databases will result in difficulty cleaning and deduplicating data for inclusion in National Datasets

## Impact on Community Entities

- **Negative:** would be required to arrange for hosting
- **Negative:** increase in responsibilities including designing and configuring software, developing policies and procedures, training staff
- **Negative:** not all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance
- **Negative:** must arrange for development of bridge tool, which could be expensive and take time to develop
- **Neutral:** control over some local data practices
- **Neutral:** some ability to extract local data

## Impact on Service Providers

- **Positive:** would only use one HIFIS Instance
- **Neutral:** could collaborate with some other local service providers
- **Neutral:** go to HIFIS Lead or BC Housing for support, depending on circumstances

## Impact on Clients

- **Negative:** clients may need to sign more than one consent form, resulting in barriers to service and potential confusion

## Scenario 3B: Two Instances, Avoiding Double-Entry

In this scenario, BC Housing continues to operate its own HIFIS Instance as it currently does. Meanwhile, the community would separately set up and deploy their own HIFIS Instance. Some service providers would be required to utilize the BC Housing instance while others would be required to utilize the community instance.

In order to minimize the negative impact on service providers and their staff, the Community Entity opts to come up with an arrangement where service providers or programs are only required to enter data into one HIFIS Instance. For example, this may include not requiring the service providers using the BC Housing Instance to utilize the local HIFIS Instance at all. This approach makes a deliberate decision to sacrifice the possibility of having complete data in a shared HIFIS Instance to mitigate the negative impacts felt by front line staff. Instead, the Community Entity would bear the negative impacts by having to consolidate data, if possible, from multiple HIFIS Instances (i.e. to report community-level outcomes).

### How would this work in practice?

Communities are likely to come up with their own solutions, however, here is one example:

Within a community, many emergency shelters and outreach programs are BC Housing funded and are therefore required to use the BC Housing HIFIS Instance. Since this constitutes the majority of the access points, the community decides that their community's Unique Identifier List (also referred to as a By-Name List) will primarily consist of data extracted from the BC Housing HIFIS Instance. They use the available tools and/or develop a new custom report to extract a community-level List, which is exported to Excel. This Excel document is then manipulated, with some additions and/or modifications to fill in any missing data. The community makes decisions based on this primary dataset.

The remainder of service providers in the community use a separate, community-level HIFIS Instance. When a client first accesses any of these non-BC Housing service providers, they must sign a consent form for the data to be collected and shared locally, even if a file may already exist for them in the BC Housing HIFIS Instance. All service providers not funded by BC Housing use the community HIFIS Instance for the bulk of their day-to-day work.

### Necessary Steps

- [Identify HIFIS Lead Agency](#): A community-based HIFIS Lead would need to be identified, most likely the Community Entity.
- [Arrange for Hosting](#): The new HIFIS Lead would need to obtain server space and deploy HIFIS.
- [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#): New data sharing agreements would need to be signed between all service providers and the new HIFIS Lead. New community-level consent forms will need to be developed.
- [Establish Governance Structures](#): The community would need to decide how HIFIS would be governed.
- [Design a Software Model](#): All software configuration would need to be designed, including rights templates, service providers, programs, mandatory and disabled fields, and lookup tables.
- [Configure the Software](#): All software configuration would need to be implemented.
- [Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures](#): Policies and procedures would need to be developed and implemented.
- [Train Users](#): Training would need to be developed and implemented.

- **Meet Reporting Needs:** Some reports may be required for service providers and programs to meet their data needs. It is likely that Community Entities will require the ability to extract some amount of local data from the BC Housing HIFIS Instance that can then be consolidated into the local HIFIS Instance, so a report that allows this to happen is necessary.

## Positives

No single program would be required to enter data into more than one HIFIS Instance. For example, a given shelter would only use one of the two HIFIS Instances; a given Housing First program would only use one of the two HIFIS Instances; a given day centre would only use a single HIFIS Instance. A service provider that has some programs that are funded through Reaching Home and others that are funded through BC Housing may have their staff be required to use different HIFIS Instances at different times (which could be confusing for staff), but staff would not be expected to record the same service transaction multiple times into multiple HIFIS Instances.

The Community Entity would manage some of their data, and have access to local data about homelessness. The Community Entity would be able to implement Coordinated Access at a local level and report on community-level outcomes.

BC Housing would not be required to onboard any additional service providers, or significantly change their operating procedures.

## Negatives

Overall data quality about homelessness in the community would be worse than in some of the other scenarios. There would be holes and gaps in the data that would derive from having to consolidate multiple data sources. Some of these gaps would be acceptable and known, while others could mean significant blind spots for the community.

Some staff who might work in multiple programs (for example a staff who works part time at a shelter and part time as a homelessness prevention worker) may be required to use different systems at different times.

Clients who access multiple programs within the same community will often be required to complete multiple intakes.

Potentially, multiple intakes per client may be required of the same staff (i.e. the same staff might be required to create two different client files for the same client). For example, a staff who works at a BC Housing funded shelter may be required to obtain the client's personal information and then record a shelter stay in the BC Housing HIFIS Instance. Then the same staff, in their role as a Reaching Home funded Rapid Re-Housing program may be required to begin a housing placement for the same client in the community HIFIS Instance, which could require the staff to create a second client file.

There would be a significant burden on the Community Entity to consolidate data from multiple sources. Some communities in Canada are currently operating within a similar situation (for example, some data on an Excel spreadsheet and other data in HIFIS) and report that it takes a significant amount of time to compile and clean data in this manner.

As in many scenarios, Community Entities would be acting as HIFIS Administrator for some or all of their service providers. Because of this, Community Entities would need to undertake a needs assessment of their

service providers and design and develop a model for using HIFIS, configure the software, train staff, and meet reporting needs. However, this challenge is not unique to this scenario, nor is it unique to British Columbia. This is one of the purposes for the CCI funding stream.

Despite the fact that Community Entities would be managing some of the local service providers, they would still lack many of the tools necessary to best encourage working as a community to end homelessness.

### Impact on BC Housing

- **Neutral:** no significant change to current practices

### Impact on ESDC

- **Negative:** more HIFIS Licenses to support and manage
- **Negative:** Reaching Home program not implemented as intended
- **Negative:** multiple databases will result in difficulty cleaning and deduplicating data for inclusion in National Datasets

### Impact on Community Entities

- **Negative:** the Community Entity would be the one required to consolidate data from multiple sources, and coordinate various actors working in different environments
- **Negative:** would be required to arrange for hosting
- **Negative:** increase in responsibilities including designing and configuring software, developing policies and procedures, training staff
- **Negative:** not all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance
- **Negative:** lacking control over local data practices

### Impact on Service Providers

- **Positive:** would only use one HIFIS Instance
- **Neutral:** could collaborate with some other local service providers
- **Negative:** would not have complete data on most clients
- **Neutral:** go to HIFIS Lead or BC Housing for support, depending on circumstances

### Impact on Clients

- **Negative:** clients may need to sign more than one consent form, resulting in barriers to service and potential confusion

## Scenario 3C: Multiple Instances per Service Provider

In this scenario, BC Housing continues to operate its own HIFIS Instance as it currently does. Meanwhile, the community would separately set up and deploy their own HIFIS Instance. Some service providers would be required to utilize the BC Housing instance while others would be required to utilize the community instance.

In order to compile local data, some service providers may be required to enter data in more than one database (i.e. double-entering data). **This is a significant drawback that should be avoided at all costs.** If it is impossible to avoid this scenario, then steps should be taken to mitigate this drawback.

The least burdensome approach is to determine as a community what is the minimum amount of data that is necessary to be entered into the community HIFIS Instance.

### What's the minimum amount of data required?

The answer to this question depends on the community's needs and priorities. However, here is one example:

The community needs to know about clients who are deemed high enough priority to be considered for prioritized housing resources. Perhaps the community implements a policy indicating that once a client has been homeless for 30 days, they are assessed and asked if they wish to participate in the Coordinated Access System. Clients who meet these criteria (i.e. have been homeless 30 days, with an assessment, and who agree to participate in Coordinated Access) must be added to the community HIFIS Instance. Therefore, if a client had previously only appeared in the BC Housing HIFIS Instance, staff serving the client must now add the client to the community HIFIS Instance, and enter enough data about the client for them to fully participate in the community's local Coordinated Access System. The staff would: add a new client file, record the results of the assessment, and indicate that the client has been staying in their shelter for 30 days.

Staff may be required to also provide periodic updates about the clients in the local Coordinated Access System who are residing in the shelters, perhaps updating files once per month to indicate that they continue to be actively homeless.

However, staff would not be required to exceed the minimum threshold. In the example above, for example: staff would not be required to enter clients who are only homeless for one or two days, nor what services were provided to any clients, nor any other personal information about a client (e.g. source of income, phone number) that is not necessary for Coordinated Access.

### Necessary Steps

- [Identify HIFIS Lead Agency](#): A community-based HIFIS Lead would need to be identified, most likely the Community Entity.
- [Arrange for Hosting](#): The new HIFIS Lead would need to obtain server space and deploy HIFIS.
- [Develop and Implement Legal Agreements](#): New data sharing agreements would need to be signed between all service providers and the new HIFIS Lead. New community-level consent forms will need to be developed.
- [Establish Governance Structures](#): The community would need to decide how HIFIS would be governed.
- [Design a Software Model](#): All software configuration would need to be designed, including rights templates, service providers, programs, mandatory and disabled fields, and lookup tables.
- [Configure the Software](#): All software configuration would need to be implemented.

- **Develop and Implement Policies and Procedures:** Policies and procedures would need to be developed and implemented, particularly surrounding what data entry standards are expected for service providers required to use multiple databases.
- **Train Users:** Training would need to be developed and implemented. Training may be particularly difficult since some users would be required to remember two different sets of instructions.
- **Meet Reporting Needs:** Some reports may be required for service providers and programs to meet their data needs.

## Positives

The Community Entity would manage their data, and have access to local data about homelessness. The Community Entity would be able to implement Coordinated Access at a local level and report on community-level outcomes.

BC Housing would not be required to onboard any additional service providers, or significantly change their operating procedures.

## Negatives

Some staff would need to enter data into two places, which would place a significant burden on these staff and increase the amount of time they are required to spend doing data entry, rather than assisting clients.

Community data is likely to be of lower quality. In order to minimize demands on staff time, communities may sacrifice the collection of desirable but not completely necessary data. In addition to this intentional sacrifice, data quality may also suffer due to late or incomplete data entry, or confusion as to what needs to be entered where.

Clients may be required to sign more than one consent form just to receive services at one service provider. This is an administrative burden, but beyond that, clients may not understand why there are multiple forms to sign. In practice, some clients may ultimately sign only one of the forms, which will cause confusion and disorganization.

As in many scenarios, Community Entities would be acting as HIFIS Administrator for some or all of their service providers. Because of this, Community Entities would need to undertake a needs assessment of their service providers and design and develop a model for using HIFIS, configure the software, train staff, and meet reporting needs. However, this challenge is not unique to this scenario, nor is it unique to British Columbia. This is one of the purposes for the CCI funding stream.

Despite the fact that Community Entities would be managing some of the local service providers, they would still lack many of the tools necessary to best encourage working as a community to end homelessness.

## Impact on BC Housing

- **Neutral:** no significant change to current practices
- **Negative:** impact on their funded service providers likely to result in worse performance

## Impact on ESDC

- **Negative:** more HIFIS Licenses to support and manage

- **Negative:** Reaching Home program not implemented as intended
- **Negative:** multiple databases will result in difficulty cleaning and deduplicating data for inclusion in National Datasets

### Impact on Community Entities

- **Negative:** would be required to arrange for hosting
- **Negative:** increase in responsibilities including designing and configuring software, developing policies and procedures, training staff
- **Negative:** not all local service providers using the same HIFIS Instance
- **Negative:** lacking control over local data practices

### Impact on Service Providers

- **Negative:** service providers would be required to manually double-enter data in multiple databases
- **Neutral:** could collaborate with some other local service providers
- **Neutral:** go to HIFIS Lead or BC Housing for support, depending on circumstances

### Impact on Clients

- **Negative:** clients may need to sign more than one consent form, resulting in barriers to service and potential confusion

## Scenario 4: Last Resort Options

Hopefully, at least one of the scenarios listed above will be acceptable to all relevant stakeholders. However, there is a possibility that no compromise can be made that everyone can agree to. In that event, the question remains: what options are left on the table? It is important to note that all of these final scenarios have very significant costs associated with them and should not even be considered unless all other scenarios have been considered and discarded.

### Scenario 4A: No Agreement Is Reached

If no agreement can be reached and no funder is willing to make any adjustments, Community Entities will be bound by having to adhere to multiple funding requirements. In this case, the only scenarios that remain are [Scenario 3B: One Instance per Service Provider](#), which is favourable to service providers and staff but not to Community Entities, and [Scenario 3C: Multiple Instances per Service Provider](#), which is favourable to Community Entities but not to service providers or staff.

### Scenario 4B: Voluntarily Declining Funding

A second option on the table for Community Entities and/or service providers is to voluntarily decline available funding from one of the two funding streams. Relinquishing Reaching Home funding places communities squarely in [Scenario 1A: Status Quo](#), while giving up BC Housing funding places communities in [Scenario 2B: Exit from BC Housing](#). Although this is simpler for communities and service providers in terms of not having to deal with multiple conflicting funding requirements, the cost is a significant amount of resources which would in turn reduce the amount of services that can be provided to clients, likely resulting in worse outcomes.

### Scenario 4C: Termination of Data Provision Agreement

A third extreme scenario involves ESDC acting on a clause in the Data Provision Agreement:

#### *12. Termination*

*Either Parties may terminate this Agreement **for any reason**, including failure to comply with any term or conditions of this Agreement upon 60-days of written notice.*

If ESDC cancels the Data Sharing Agreement with BC Housing, BC Housing would no longer have a HIFIS License and would be required to delete their HIFIS software (while retaining the data). They would no longer have permission to use HIFIS for their funded service providers. In this event, the only options that would remain available would be [Scenario 1E: Complete Transfer of Governance](#) or [Scenario 2B: Exit from BC Housing](#).

### Scenario 4D: Reaching Home Directives Change

Finally, while not part of the scope of this project, it is worth noting that a last possible solution is for the Reaching Home directives to change. This could include removing the requirement for Community Entities to use HIFIS, allowing Coordinated Access to be undertaken at a provincial level, or another solution.

## Conclusion: Recommendations

When thinking about what is the best, the first question that must be asked is: “best for whom?” It is certainly easy to think only of the areas that directly affect oneself, without looking at a broader picture.

The ideal scenario for BC Housing is likely one in which they are not required to change any of their operating practices: scenarios [Scenario 1A: Status Quo](#), [Scenario 2A: Status Quo](#) or [Scenario 3B: One Instance per Service Provider](#). However, Scenarios 1A and 2A are unlikely to be options for most communities, and there are options that are better for clients and for Community Entities than Scenario 3B.

An ideal scenario for Community Entities is either a scenario in which they do not have to do much work but still gain a beneficial outcome, such as [Scenario 1C: More Permissive Onboarding](#), or a scenario in which they gain control over all of their local data, such as [Scenario 2B: Exit from BC Housing](#).

The best outcome for staff is one in which there is the greatest amount of data sharing, which generally reduces the amount of time that is required of them to ask clients about information that has already been collected. This includes [Scenario 1C: More Permissive Onboarding](#), [Scenario 1D: Partial Transfer of Governance](#), and [Scenario 1E: Complete Transfer of Governance](#). Interestingly, it is these three scenarios that would also likely benefit clients the most.

It is noteworthy that very few scenarios were listed in more than one of the above paragraphs.

Considering that there is no perfect solution that will completely satisfy every stakeholder, scenarios are presented on a scale, below, ranking each scenario from most to least optimal.

Most Optimal Scenarios		
<a href="#">Scenario 1A: Status Quo</a>	<a href="#">Scenario 2A: Status Quo</a>	<a href="#">Scenario 1B: Status Quo with Supportive Housing</a>
<a href="#">Scenario 1C: More Permissive Onboarding</a>	<a href="#">Scenario 1D: Partial Transfer of Governance</a>	<a href="#">Scenario 2B: Exit from BC Housing</a>
<a href="#">Scenario 1E: Complete Transfer of Governance</a>		
<a href="#">Scenario 3A: Technological Solution</a>		
<a href="#">Scenario 3B: One Instance per Service Provider</a>		
<a href="#">Scenario 3C: Multiple Instances per Service Provider</a>		
Least Optimal Scenarios		

## Summary

### Summary of Positives

	1A	1B	1C	1D	1E	2A	2B	3A	3B	3C
No change for BC Housing	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓
Easy to implement	✓					✓			✓	✓
All service providers in community using same instance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Local governance						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province-wide governance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Broad data sharing			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Easy for front line staff	✓	✓	✓	✓?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓?	

### Summary of Negatives

	1A	1B	1C	1D	1E	2A	2B	3A	3B	3C
Unlikely to be an option for most communities	✓					✓				
Impact on BC Housing requiring their agreement		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓?	
Many service providers require onboarding		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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Additional cost to BC Housing			✓?							
Additional cost to community				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Requires technology that does not yet exist		✓						✓		
Complex governance/management				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Communities lack control over their community-level data	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
BC Housing lacks control over its funded agencies					✓		✓			
Migration of data from one database to another					✓		✓			
New server space would be required					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New HIFIS configuration would be required		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Burdensome for front line staff									✓	✓
Burdensome for local Community Entities									✓	
New agreements and consent forms would be necessary for existing service providers			✓?	✓?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Appendix: Delegated Authority

[Scenario 1D: Partial Transfer of Governance](#) relies on a suggestion that a local Community Entity could be onboarded onto the BC Housing HIFIS Instance and have authority over their own programs and service providers but not be able to interfere with BC Housing funded service providers. HIFIS can handle this, but the configuration is somewhat nuanced. Therefore, this Appendix will explore the specific details of how that would play out in practice.

Note that this Appendix is not unique to BC Housing or its configuration, but instead provides general information about how HIFIS is designed.

This Appendix could also possibly be useful if [Scenario 1E: Complete Transfer of Governance](#) is pursued; Community Entities may wish to pursue a decentralized governance model, and therefore the Local Administrator concept could also be applied to that scenario.

Below is a selection of noteworthy administrative rights that appear in HIFIS with notes about whether they should or should not be offered to Local Administrators (i.e. local Community Entities). Prior to reviewing the rights and notes below, a key point must be noted:

A Local Administrator, like any user, has a list of Service Providers that they *have access to*. This concept of *having access to* a Service Provider is referenced multiple times in the table below. It is assumed that a Local Administrator would only have access to the Service Providers that they themselves are administering, i.e. the Service Providers in their community that are not BC Housing-funded.

A primary concern for BC Housing (the Super Administrator), for delegating authority to Local Administrators, is likely their potential ability to make modifications that affect other areas of the software outside of the Service Providers they have access to. Therefore, the table below examines which rights are potentially damaging to the overall system.

In the chart below, the first column indicates user rights that the Super Administrator (BC Housing) is likely to have, while the second column indicates rights that a Local Administrator (Community Entity) could possibly be granted. If the right is recommended, it is highlighted in **green**; if there is some debate, it is highlighted in **yellow**; if it is not recommended, it is highlighted in **red**. In the third and final column, an explanation is provided as to why or why not the right is recommended for Local Administrators.

Super Administrator (BC Housing)	Local Administrator (Community Entity)	Notes
Application Settings	<b>Application Settings</b>	Used to alter software application-wide, including cluster settings and Geographic Regions. The Local Administrator may wish to make alterations, but these should be put as requests for the Super Administrator to implement if appropriate.
Audit Log	<b>Audit Log</b>	Cannot be used to alter the software. Therefore, there is no risk to the overall system by granting this right.
Client Merge	<b>Client Merge</b>	Debatable. With this permission, users can merge two

		single clients that they look up that are within the same cluster, regardless of Geographic Region. However, it's a manual and inconvenient process which is difficult to do by accident, and there is likely value for the Local Administrator to be able to do this task. Overall, we recommend that the Local Administrator should have this right, but arguments can be made on either side.
Client Service Delete	Client Service Delete	Debatable. With this permission, users can delete services belonging to a single client that they look up, regardless of what service provider owns the service. However, it's a manual and inconvenient process which is difficult to do by accident, and there is likely value for the Local Administrator to be able to do this task. Overall, we recommend that the Local Administrator should have this right, but arguments can be made on either side.
Custom Tables Manager (+ child rights)	Custom Tables Manager (+ child rights)	When a Custom Table is made, the creating user specifies which Service Providers can access the Custom Table. Local Administrators would only have access to their own Service Providers so they would not be able to add a Custom Table for use by a Service Provider in another city, or one funded by BC Housing. Therefore, there is no risk to the overall system by granting this right.
Data Export	Data Export	Used to export application-wide data to ESDC.
Express Goods and Services Templates (+ child rights)	Express Goods and Services Templates (+ child rights)	When an Express Goods & Services Template is made, the creating user specifies which Service Provider owns the template and which Service Providers can access the template. Local Administrators would only have access to their own Service Providers so they would not be able to add a record for use by a Service Provider in another city, or one funded by BC Housing. Therefore, there is no risk to the overall system by granting this right.
Food Bank Items (+ child rights)	Food Bank Items (+ child rights)	Debatable. When a Food Bank Item is created, it is available to all Service Providers. However, the utility of this module is low, and the impact for adding extra food items is minor, and if a Local Administrator wanted to use the Food Banks module, adding Food Bank Items would be necessary. Overall, we recommend that the Local Administrator should have this right, but arguments can be made on either side.
Housing Continuum	Housing Continuum	Can be used to alter application-wide settings. Not recommended for Local Administrator use.
Look-up Tables	Look-up Tables	Users can add values to a lookup table (drop-down

<p>(+ child rights)</p>	<p>(+ child rights)</p>	<p>menu) but can only activate these values for Service Providers a user has access to. Likewise, they can only customize drop-down menus (reordering, adding/removing options) for Service Providers they have access to. Local Administrators cannot modify lookup values created by other Service Providers. Therefore, there is no risk to the overall system by granting this right.</p>
<p>Programs (+ child rights) including: Complete Programs List</p>	<p>Programs (+ child rights) except for: Complete Programs List</p>	<p>When a Program is made, the creating user specifies which Service Provider owns the Program and which Service Providers can administer the Program. Local Administrators would only have access to their own Service Providers so they would not be able to add a record for use by a Service Provider in another city, or one funded by BC Housing. Therefore, there is no risk to BC Housing by granting this right.</p>
<p>Questionnaires (+ child rights)</p>	<p>Questionnaires (+ child rights)</p>	<p>When a Questionnaire is made, the creating user specifies which Service Provider owns the template and which Service Providers can access the template. Local Administrators would only have access to their own Service Providers so they would not be able to add a record for use by a Service Provider in another city, or one funded by BC Housing. Therefore, there is no risk to the overall system by granting this right.</p>
<p>Rights Templates (+ child rights)</p>	<p>Rights Templates (+ child rights)</p>	<p>When a Rights Template is made, the creating user specifies which Service Provider owns the template and which Service Providers can access the template. Local Administrators would only have access to their own Service Providers so they would not be able to add a record for use by a Service Provider in another city, or one funded by BC Housing. In addition, users can only grant rights that they themselves have, so they cannot potentially evade governance structures by creating a user that has more rights than they have. Therefore, there is no risk to the overall system by granting this right.</p>
<p>Service Providers (+ child rights) including: Add Service Providers Edit Other Service Providers</p>	<p>Service Providers (+ child rights) except for: Add Service Providers Edit Other Service Providers</p>	<p>There is no issue with allowing a Local Administrator to modify the existing Service Providers that they have access to. However, given that it is impossible to delete Service Providers once they exist, and it is possible to add new entire Clusters when a new Service Provider is created, there is the possibility, if granted the permission to Add Service Providers, that Local Administrators could add extra Service Providers in error. While this wouldn't affect end users unless a series of additional errors are made, merely adding Service Providers when they shouldn't have been added is an uncorrectable mistake. Generally speaking,</p>

		<p>when there is the possibility of someone making uncorrectable mistakes, the power to do so should reside with the fewest number of people possible.</p>
<p>Users (+ child rights) including: Complete User Account List</p>	<p>Users (+ child rights) except for: Complete User Account List</p>	<p>A Local Administrator can only grant users access to Service Providers they themselves have access to. They can only make modifications to Service Providers they have access to. However, it is important to note that some users may require access to more than one Service Provider. For instance, a staff might work part time at two different agencies. In most communities, this is handled by issuing a single user account to the staff, with access to multiple service providers. If this is the approach taken, the Local Administrator could modify (i.e. reset password, disable account, unlock account, change email address on file) the user account for a staff that is employed by a different agency. An alternate approach is for these staff to have two separate accounts, one for each Service Provider, but this could be confusing for staff. There is a minor risk to the overall system, but one that could be mitigated to zero.</p>
<p>Reports Manager (+ child rights) including: Delete Reports Download Reports Edit Reports Update Reports Upload Reports</p>	<p>Reports Manager (+ child rights) except for: Delete Reports Download Reports Edit Reports Update Reports Upload Reports</p>	<p>Once a report is uploaded, its settings define which Service Providers have access to it. A Local Administrator could upload a new report and then only grant permissions for users at the Service Providers they have access to to run the report. However, there are a few risks here. First, a report could access any data within the database, and could theoretically even <u>alter the database itself</u>. Reporting is a powerful tool. The latter risk (altering the database) could be mitigated by permissions on the server. Still, however, reporting grants users access to any data that bypasses rights and clusters and other data safeguards. The second risk is much less significant: users with permission to Edit or Delete Reports could do so for reports that are shared between multiple providers, for example a generic report that shows client demographics. The report might be accessible by multiple Service Providers, therefore Local Administrators at any of those Service Providers could make changes to it such as changing the name or description, recategorizing it, or removing access from other Service Providers. Still, an advantage of granting delegated authority to Local Administrators means that the Super Administrator does not need to satisfy all of the data and reporting requirements for every Service Provider, so it may be beneficial to allow Local Administrators to develop and upload their own reports, despite the risks.</p>

<p>Directory of Services (+ child rights) including: Add Places Delete Places Edit Places</p>	<p>Directory of Services (+ child rights) except for: Add Places Delete Places Edit Places</p>	<p>The Directory of Services is sometimes used as its title suggests, as a directory tool for staff to look up appropriate referrals. Other times, the Directory of Services is used simply as another Look-up Table, since it also governs the content of the Referred From and Referred To fields. Some communities choose to grant everyone, including front line staff, the ability to add and modify the records within, given that it doesn't have a terrible impact on other users if a new Place is added in error. Others choose to lock it down and only allow administrators to modify it. Opinions on this module vary greatly. It is true that if a Place is added to the Directory of Services, it will be available for users at other Service Providers, but Places can be deactivated if incorrectly added, and the overall impact is minor. Therefore, granting it or not is also a debatable recommendation.</p>
<p>Coordinated Access</p>	<p>Coordinated Access</p>	<p>Debatable. The Coordinated Access module shows a list of all clients within the current Cluster. It can be filtered by Geographic Region, but by default it displays all clients. However, users including the Local Administrator have access to all client files within the same Cluster anyway, so this isn't exactly new information. Also, this module cannot be used to alter the software. Therefore, there is no risk to the overall system by granting this right.</p>