

# Future of the Canadian Point-in-Time Counts

**REACHING  
HOME**  
CANADA'S HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

**VERS UN  
CHEZ-SOI**  
LA STRATÉGIE CANADIENNE DE LUTTE CONTRE L'ITINÉRIANCE





# What is a PiT Count?



## Enumeration

How many people experience homelessness in a community on a given night

- This must include those staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, abandoned buildings, vehicles, outdoors in parks, on streets, etc.
- Many communities also include those spending the night in health and correctional facilities who otherwise do not have a home

## Survey

Collects information on demographics and service needs

- Survey is anonymous (except when combined with a Registry Week)
- Includes a minimum of 15 questions (with sub-questions)
- Communities can add locally-relevant questions

# What is unique about PiT Counts?

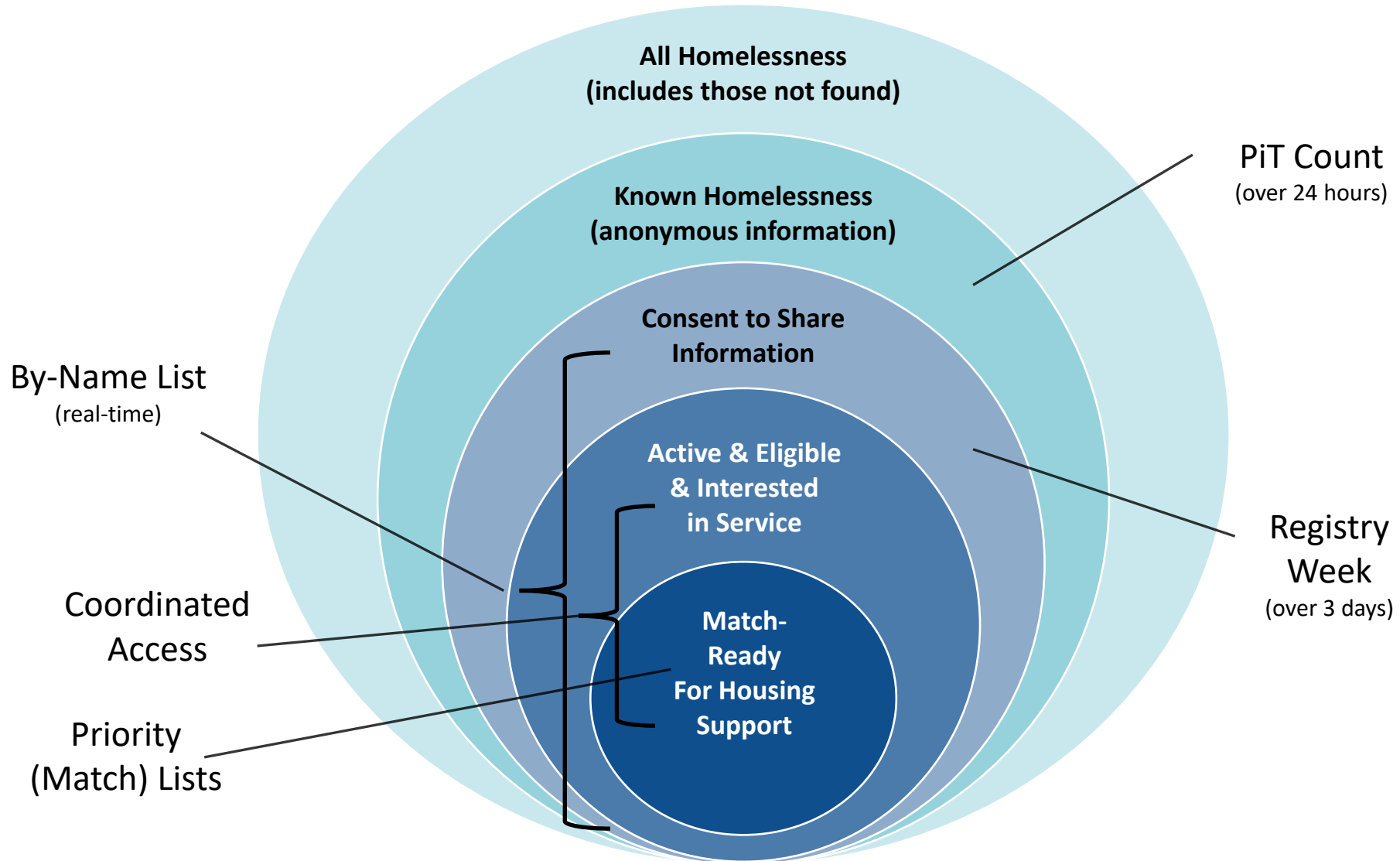
## Enumeration

- Inclusive: Includes individuals who do not access emergency shelters or other services
- National standard: Same core standards of methodology used in 65 communities across Canada
- International standard: Conducted using similar core elements in cities around the world

## Survey

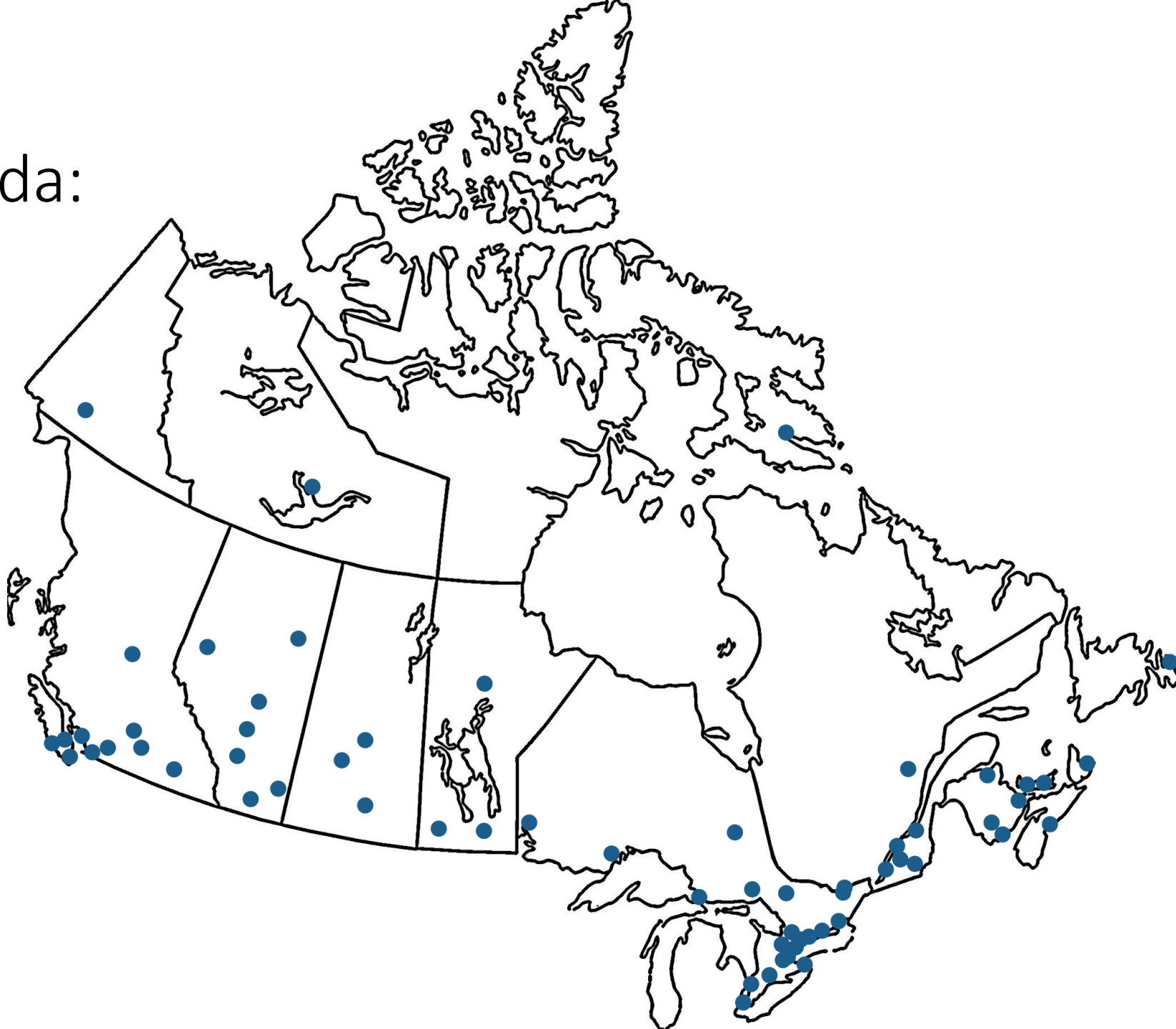
- Unique data points:
  - Sexual orientation
  - Gender identity
  - History with foster care
  - Age of first homelessness
  - Immigration and migration
  - Health challenges
  - Racial identity
- Collects rich data from unsheltered

# Landscape of client-level data



# PiT Counts in Canada: A brief history

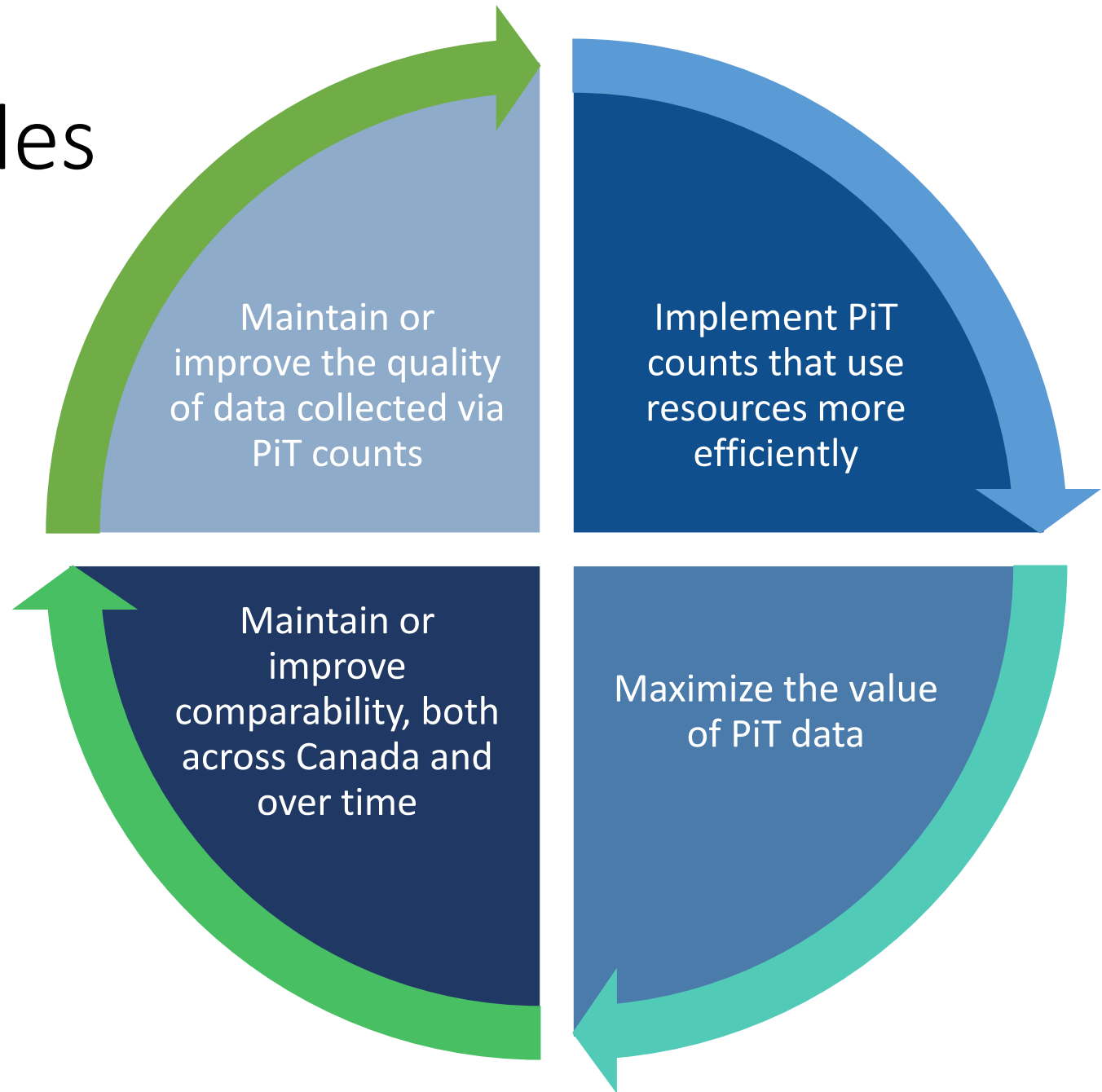
- Pre-nationally-coordinated counts
- 3 nationally-coordinated counts
- PiT is a requirement in Reaching Home agreements with 65 communities



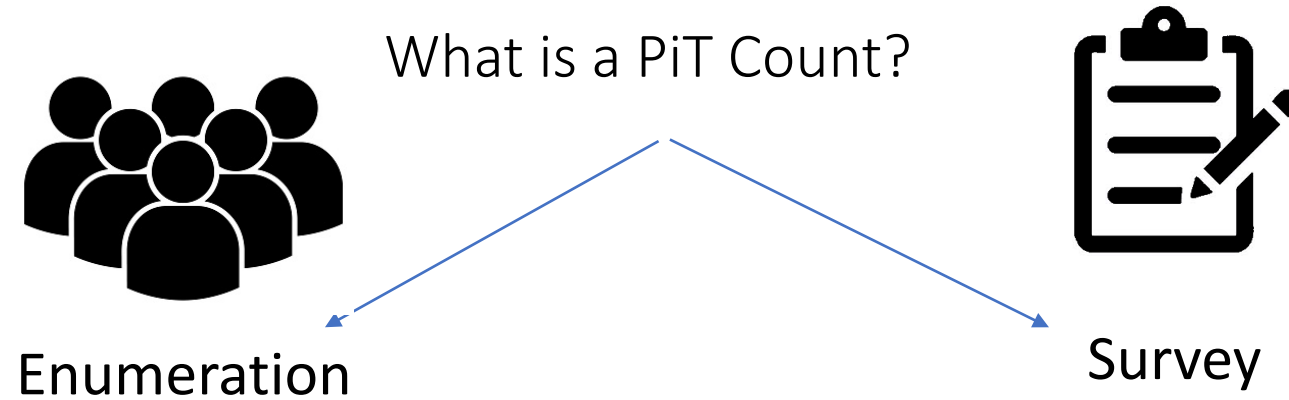
# Factors Driving change



# Guiding principles



# First, a word



- When considering adjustments, we considered the 2 elements that currently make up a PiT count *separately*
- A working group was convened from the Homelessness Data Advisory Committee (HDAC)



# Identified potential areas for adjustment

1

**Frequency of enumeration**

# Identified potential areas for adjustment

1

**Enumerate annually (not a full PiT count)**

# 1

## Enumerate annually (not a full PiT count)

*Why make this change?*

- Annual enumeration data would provide a more frequent measurement of the impact of policy, program, and economic changes on the number of individuals experiencing homelessness across the country
- Smooth data gaps and more accurately measure change over time

# 1

## Enumerate annually (not a full PiT count)

### *Considerations*

- Shift from planning a larger event every second year to planning a smaller event annually
- May require an information campaign to create a culture shift
- May require a shifting of resources

# 1

## Enumerate annually (not a full PiT count)

### *Additional questions*

- What are the minimum data that should be collected?

# Identified potential areas for adjustment

**1**

**Enumerate annually**

**2**

**Frequency of survey administration**

# Identified potential areas for adjustment

**1**

**Enumerate annually**

**2**

**Reduce survey frequency**

# 2

## Reduce survey frequency

*Why make this change?*

- Reduce burden of PiT count on local homeless-serving sectors
- Important data points haven't seen rapid changes
- More data is being regularly collected at the national level through other tools



# 2

## Reduce survey frequency

### *Considerations*

- Institutional knowledge about the local details of administering surveys can be lost with this long of a gap between implementations
- Some data points are unique to the PiT survey (e.g. LGBTQ2S+ identity, migration, reason for most recent housing loss), and reducing the frequency of the survey will result in longer gaps on those data points

# 2

## Reduce survey frequency

### *Additional questions*

- Would this be frequent enough for communities that use PiT data for planning purposes?
- Would it be appropriate to add any of the data points that are unique to the PiT survey to another existing collection tool?

# Identified potential areas for adjustment

1

**Enumerate annually**

2

**Reduce survey frequency**

3

**Enabling data linkages**

# Identified potential areas for adjustment

**1**

**Enumerate annually**

**2**

**Reduce survey frequency**

**3**

**Enable linkage of PiT data to identified client data**

# 3

## Enable linkage of PiT data to identified client data

*What does this mean?*

- In HIFIS, linkages would be enabled in the PiT count module to attach survey data to an existing client file in HIFIS
- A PiT survey could be used to start a client record or to add to an existing record
- A client record could be used to start a PiT survey with information pre-filled for confirmation

# 3

## Enable linkage of PiT data to identified client data

*Why make this change?*

- Streamline data collection processes
- Reduce the number of times that a client is asked the same question
- The PiT count could be used to add people to the Unique Identifier List/By Name List who may otherwise be missed
- PiT data could be used to help inform service delivery
- Increase the value of PiT data to front-line service providers
- Reduce acuity of data collection process

# 3

## Enable linkage of PiT data to identified client data

### *Considerations*

- Anecdotal reports from some communities that anonymity of the PiT survey leads to higher participation
- This would entail work to update HIFIS or local HMIS

# 3

## Enable linkage of PiT data to identified client data

### *Additional questions*

- How many communities would be interested in adopting this change?
- Will communities who manage their own non-HIFIS HMIS have the capacity to make this change?
- How many clients will agree to forgo the anonymity of the PiT survey to allow linkage to their record in local HMIS/HIFIS?



# Identified potential areas for adjustment

**1**

**Enumerate annually**

**2**

**Reduce survey frequency**

**3**

**Enable linkage of PiT data to identified client data**

**4**

**Alignment of data collection activities**

# Identified potential areas for adjustment

**1**

**Enumerate annually**

**2**

**Reduce survey frequency**

**3**

**Enable linkage of PiT data to identified client data**

**4**

**Add collection of shelter provider information  
into the annual PiT enumeration**

# 4

## Add collection of shelter provider information into the annual PiT enumeration

*What does this mean?*

- We currently collect data from communities to create the National Service Provider List (NSPL) annually
- This would move to align the PiT count data collection with the NSPL data collection
- Data to be collected would include: name of shelter, type of shelter, target clientele, gender(s) served, and number of beds

# 4

## Add collection of shelter provider information into the annual PiT enumeration

*Why make this change?*

- Streamline data collection processes
- There is already a good deal of overlap in these 2 processes
- This would help with system mapping and service planning, providing an annual record of the capacity of the homelessness-serving system

# 4

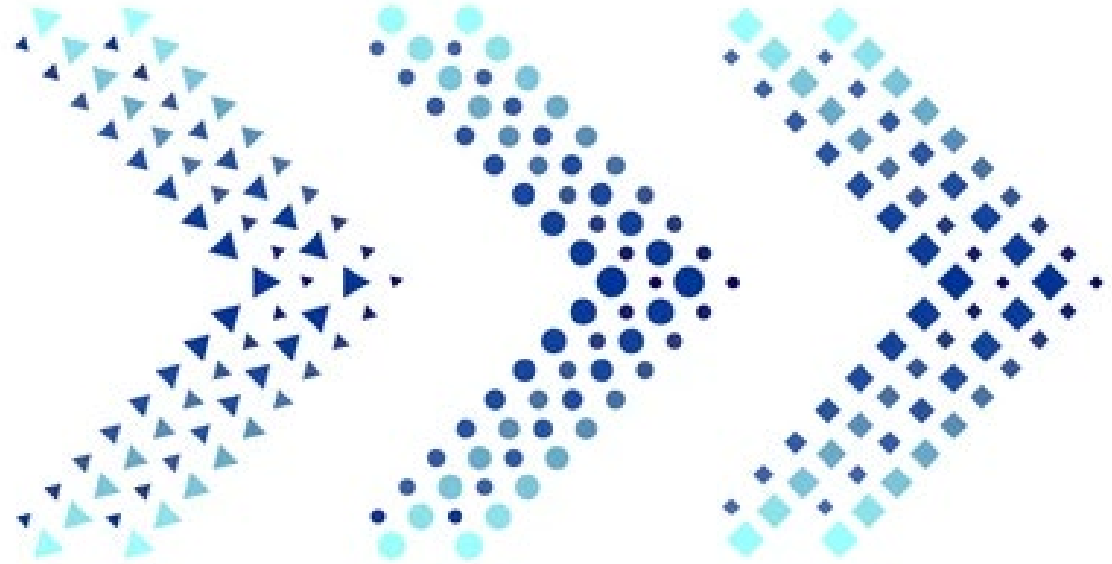
## Add collection of shelter provider information into the annual PiT enumeration

### *Considerations*

- For many communities, there is currently staff overlap for these 2 requirements. Some may not have that overlap

# Next Steps

- Timing of future counts
- Alignment in timing



# Feedback and discussion

- What do you think about the proposed changes?
- What changes would increase the value of PiT counts to you?

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