

What data should we collect?

CAEH Conference 2023

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- Owner of **ACRE Consulting**
- Master's in urban planning (social planning)
- Previous experience with **OrgCode Consulting, Inc.** and **City of Kingston**
- Coach with **Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH)**



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Two shelters, both alike in dignity

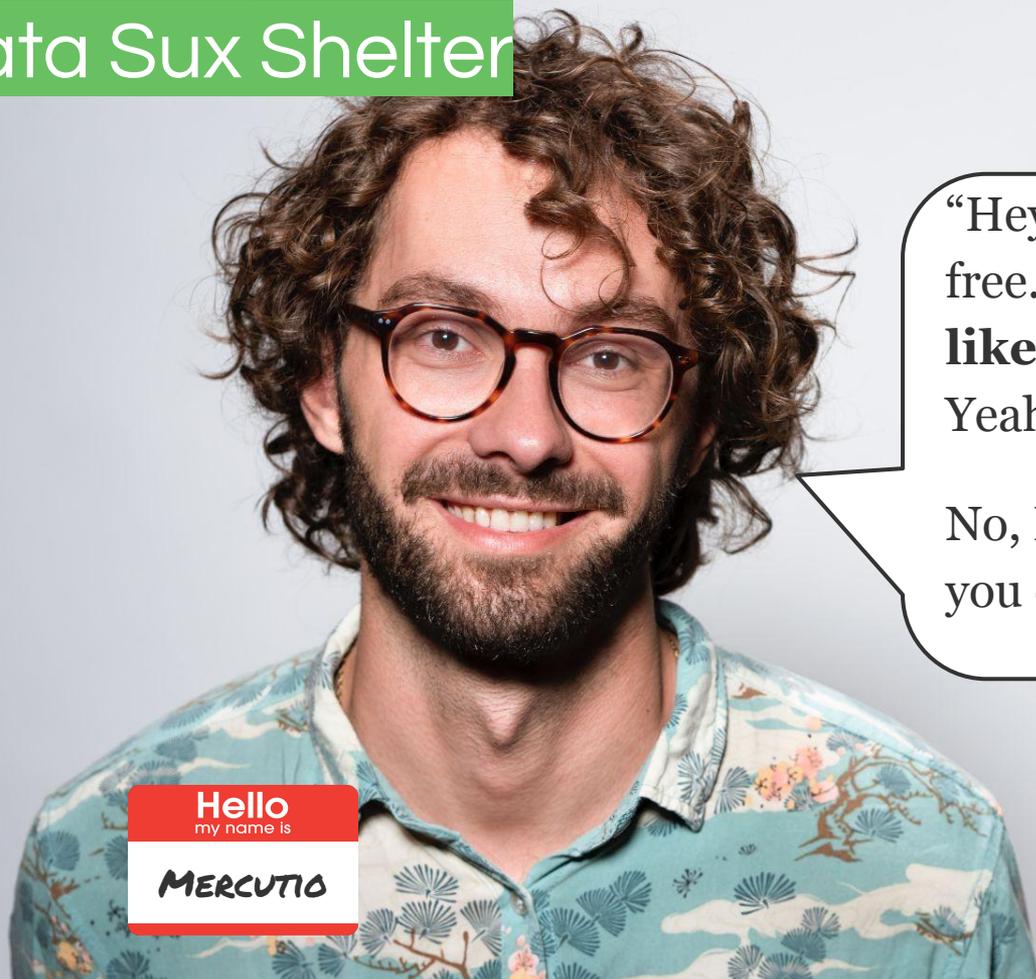
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,

Data Sux Shelter (run by the Montague Housing Corporation)

Data 'R Us Shelter (operated by Capulet Inc.)

Let's imagine that everything about them is perfectly equal. Staff are just as friendly, bathrooms are just as clean, one is down the street from the other, and they both have the same policies on genders and pets and so on.

Data Sux Shelter



Hello
my name is

MERCUTIO

“Hey, come on in, I think a bed is free. Let me go check - **it’s not like I keep a record of it!** Yeah, it’s all yours, friend.

No, I don’t need your name if you don’t want to share it.”

Data 'R Us Shelter

“Of course we have a bed for you. Please fill out this **8-page intake form**, sign these 3 different consent forms, we'll take a photo of you for our facial recognition software - don't smile - and here's your ID badge.

Just **wait 30 minutes** while I type all of this up, scan your consent forms, and back them up to the cloud.”

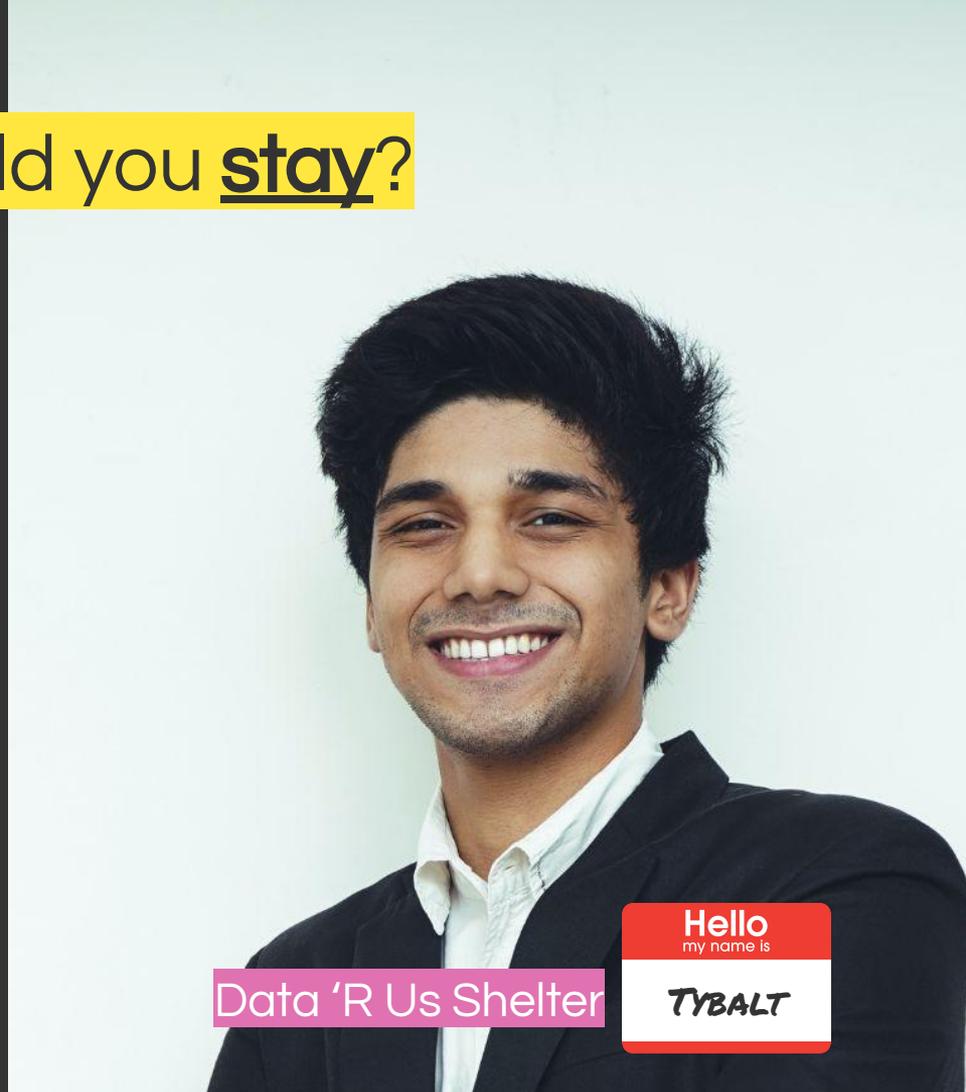


Where would you stay?



Hello
my name is
MERCUTIO

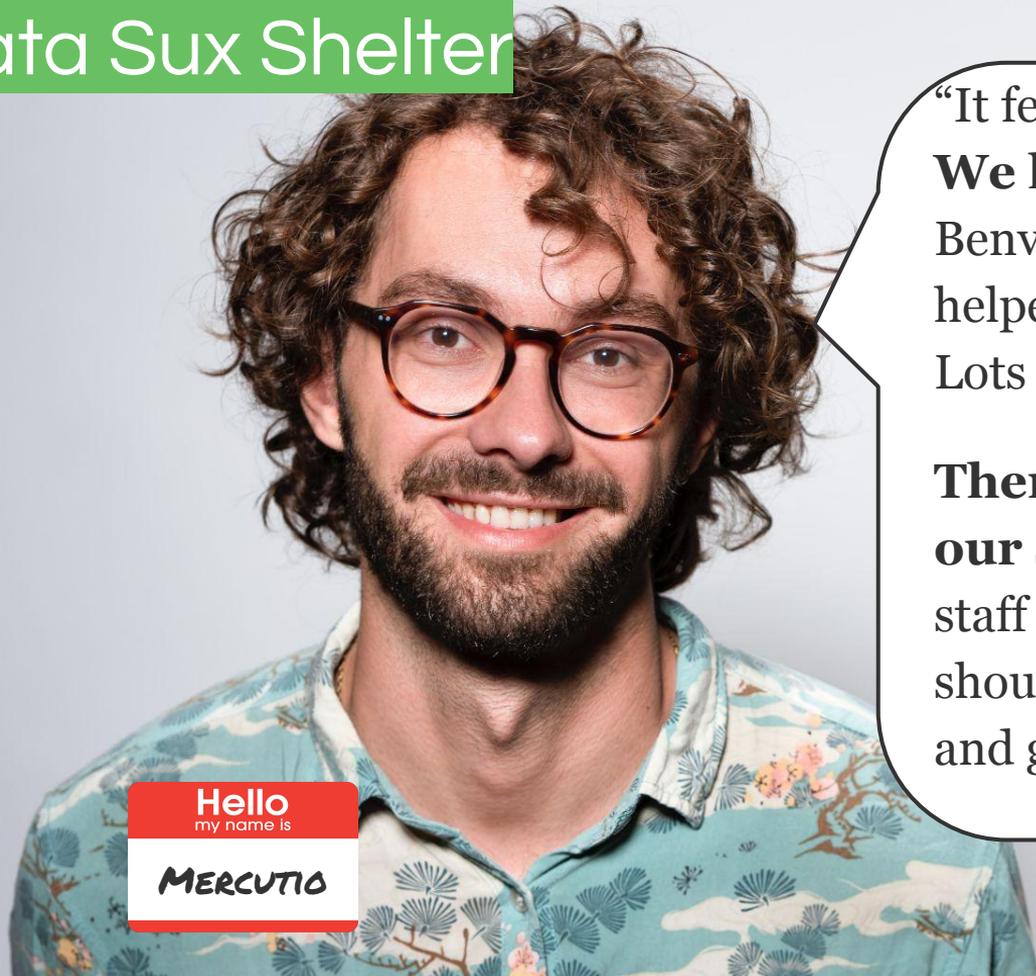
Data Sux Shelter



Data 'R Us Shelter

Hello
my name is
TYBALT

Data Sux Shelter



Hello
my name is

MERCUTIO

“It felt like a super busy year!
We helped lots of people, like Benvolio, he says we really helped him get back on his feet. Lots of people tell us that!

There’s a really big need for our services for sure. All our staff are working too hard. You should fund us for another year, and give us more money please.”

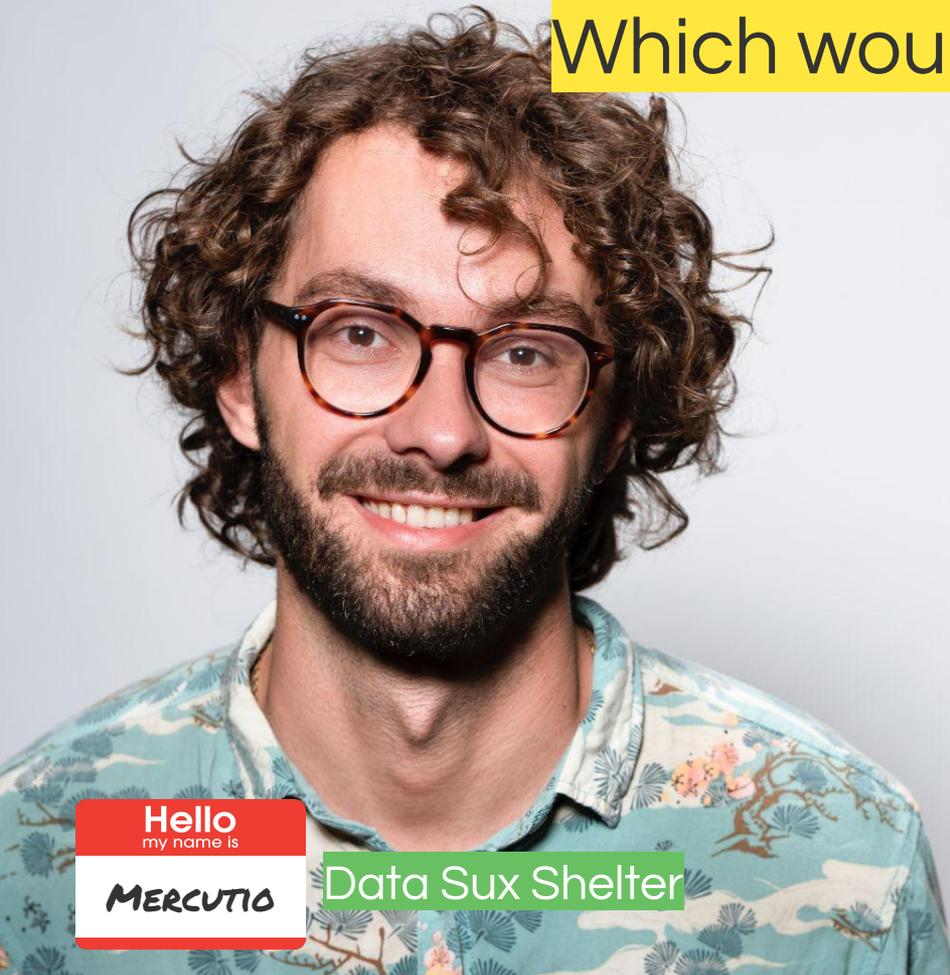
Data 'R Us Shelter

“This year we provided 6,387 shelter bed-nights, which is a **12% increase over last year** and an 18% increase over the previous year. We also housed 153 households, of which **88% are still in housing 6 months later.**

We’ve also noted a 308% increase in the number of refugees this year, and would like increased funding so we can hire an immigration specialist who can provide translation services.”

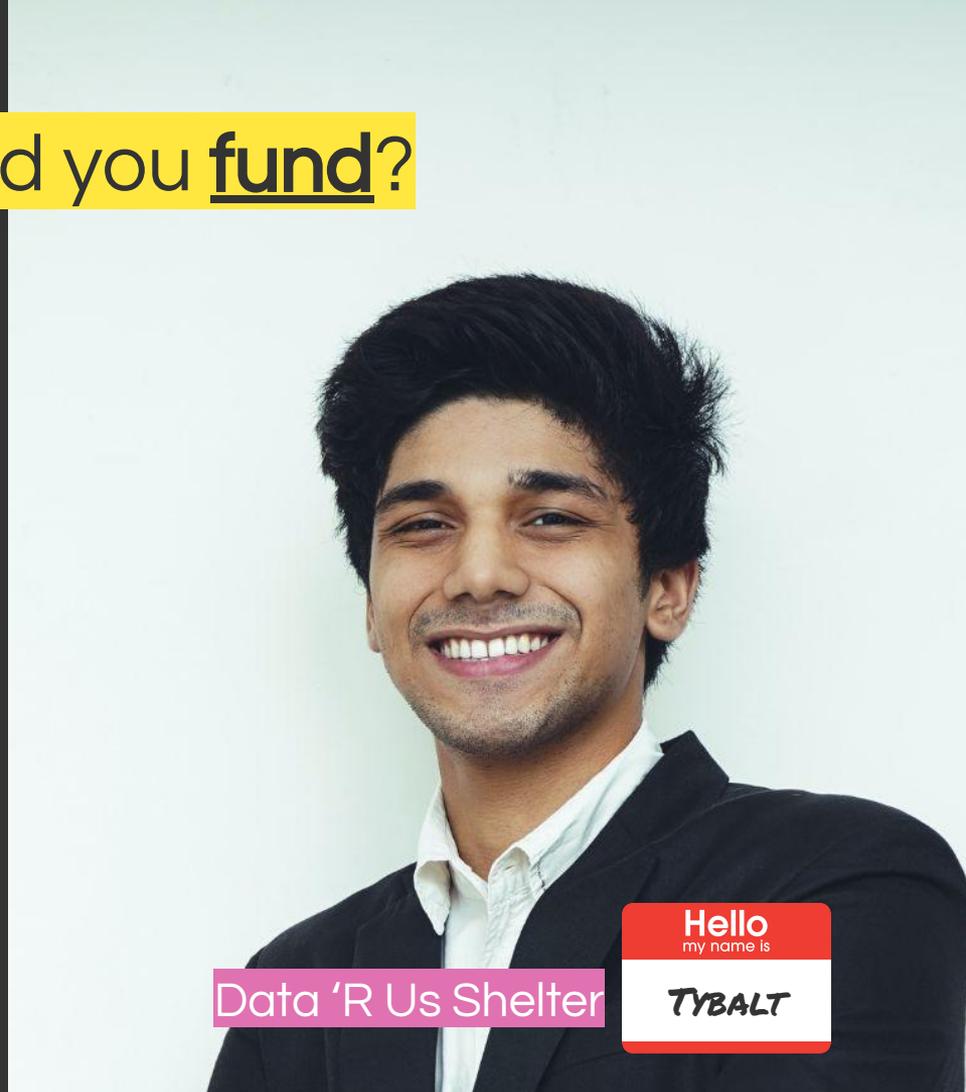


Which would you fund?



Hello
my name is
MERCUTIO

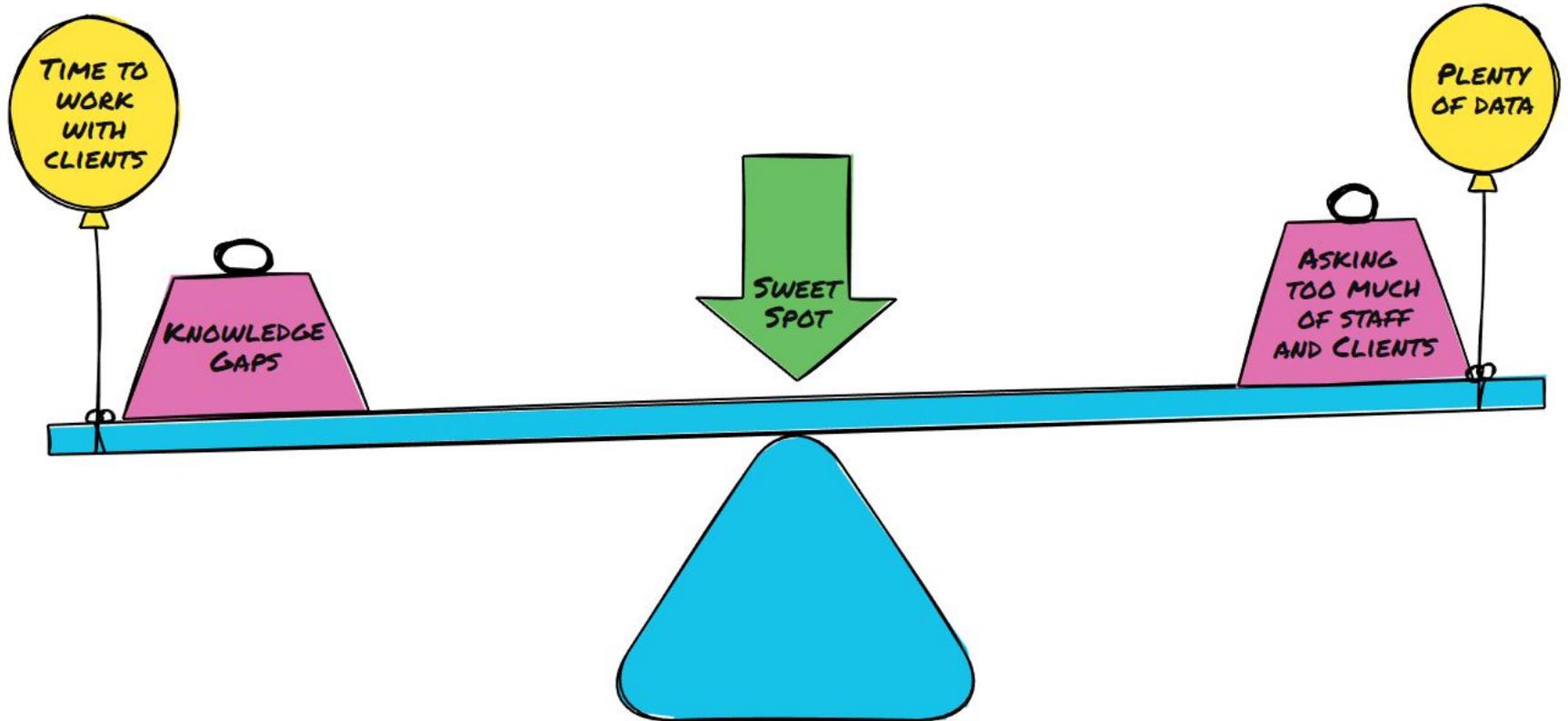
Data Sux Shelter



Hello
my name is
TYBALT

Data 'R Us Shelter

It's a balancing act



But which data to collect?

- Information that is **required by funders**
- Information that will **help staff do their jobs**
- Information that **addresses local priorities**

Sexual Orientation



Golden Rules

- 1. Always ask why we are collecting this**
- 2. Respect your staff's time**
- 3. Less is more**
- 4. You really do need to know about the client's history of homelessness**

How Hamilton is Actioning Purposeful Data Collection

November 10, 2023 - CAEH 2023



Laura Stanford

City of Hamilton



Hamilton

Learning Objectives



Inspire ways your community data and continuous quality improvement (CQI) projects can include the golden rules



Promote overall benefits of thinking about community data projects in this way

Quick facts about Hamilton's current homeless population and emergency shelter system size

Homeless population:

- Approximately 1800 individuals experiencing homelessness

Shelter Bed System:

- 345 permanent beds (singles) and 20 rooms (families)
- 20 temporary beds (singles) and 52 rooms (families)

How we got here



2019
Launched **Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)**

Programs onboarded between 2019-2023:

- Drop-In Programs
- Housing Focused Street Outreach Program
- Emergency Shelter Early Intervention Supports
- Emergency Shelters
- Transitional Living Programs
- Rapid Rehousing Programs
- Intensive Case Management Programs
- Permanent Supportive Housing Programs



2023
Added new roles to the HMIS team

- Senior Project Manager
- Quality Assurance Specialist
- Performance Reporting & Evaluation Specialist



2023
Started significant continuous quality improvement (CQI) work and set out to:

- Prioritize data collection that meets operational, system planning, and funder reporting needs
- Improve transparency of reporting
- Provide refresher training for HIFIS

Refresher Training

Respect Staff Time

- Sector-based
- Planning & flexible scheduling
- Focus on data-entry priorities

Less is More

- Clear data entry guidance (use cases) and priorities
- Quick Reference Resources (What to Ask and When, Where to Check in HIFIS and When)
- Streamline HIFIS design to help staff navigate the system more easily

Client Housing History

- Focus on importance and utility
- Provide scenarios
- Clear data entry guidance

Respect Staff Time

- Clear linkages between data collection and reporting
- Purpose-built reports
- Drop-In sessions & ongoing engagement

Less is More

- Prioritize reports that meet operational, system planning, and funder reporting needs
- Up to date dropdown lists
- Up to date reporting tools for programs not using HIFIS

Client Housing History

- Detailed client reports that show current housing status
- Summary and detailed client reports for housing placement records

Overall benefits to thinking about projects in this way

- Challenging us to ask questions about what data we are collecting, how, and why
- Helping us to prioritize
- Golden rules are simple to hold ourselves accountable

Questions?



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