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Looking back on the project, the HIMS team articulated a number of the lessons learned during the prototype development process. Some of these lessons may prove useful for other organizations that are considering building their own data repositories.

- More data issues arise as more data sources are utilized.
- Business rules need to be developed throughout the process.
- Data definitions and standards need to be decided throughout the process.
- Collaboration among data providers and the state will continually need to be fostered.
- The system can be developed to answer a core set of questions proving value to the state and provider community.
- Communication channels need to be identified and maintained throughout the process.
- Avoiding negative key stakeholders will cause the project to fail.
- There is more to the cost of the system than just the hardware and software.
- It's important to recognize all cost categories to ensure the success of the project.
- All issues and barriers need to be reviewed from policy, management, and technology perspectives. Each should be revisited as the project progresses.
- People who understand the project and the data need to be part of the project team.
- The project team should be comprised of people with the authority to make decisions about the project progress, as well as any necessary program changes.
- Acknowledge that the infrastructure is key at all levels, including hardware and software procurement, as well as training, administrative, and development costs.

The team learned these lessons when dealing with the management, policy, and technology issues surrounding the project.

The management issues focused on the "who, what, where, and how" of the project. Numerous discussions considered: who should be involved, who the stakeholders are, what roles need to be filled, what the system will do, where the data will come from, and how to obtain it. It's vital to answer these questions in the early stages of the project.

Policy issues also garnered a lot of attention. Business rules were agreed upon. Data and their definitions were standardized. Confidentiality policies were applied to protect clients. Multiorganizational data sources were included to ensure a robust data sample. And a service evaluation model was developed collaboratively by BSS and a group of service providers with assistance from CTG.

After identifying the management and policy issues, the team was prepared to tackle the technology end of the project. This involved agreeing that the prototype is an informational system for tracking, trending, and analyzing homeless services. The team realized that the amount of data work would increase as the number of disparate data sources increased. This work involved identifying links between new data sources and the repository, transforming data according to the established rule structure, and cleansing the data. Project participants also recognized that you need people on the team who understand the data, as well as the programs and services that they describe.

By answering the key management, policy, and technology questions, the team was able to effectively design and build the HIMS prototype. Some of the critical factors leading to the success of the project were:

- Participants continuously invested time in building relationships to ensure the engagement of the necessary local, nonprofit, and state partners throughout the process and beyond.
 - Partners were willing to engage in a true collaborative process.
 - The conversation about the prototype system will continue and the key partners will stay involved.
- The prototype affirmed the idea that potential users saw the system as valuable and therefore would invest in its success.
 - Partners saw that it was possible to develop standards across their programs.
 - This included the critical elements of creating data definitions and business rules.

Lessons Learned

- The team members possessed the right mix of skills necessary to make key decisions and resolve issues quickly and effectively.
 - This enabled important management, process, and programmatic decisions.
- Participants invested time at the beginning of the project to fully understand the key questions: what was to be achieved and why, who needed to be involved and why, and what were the best ways to achieve the goal and why.
- The team clearly defined the purpose and scope of the prototype project.
 - These definitions were reiterated at each meeting with the data community.
- Strong project management techniques were utilized at several levels-internally with the project team and externally at homeless provider meetings.
- Participants matched the technology to the job.
 - This helped them avoid becoming seduced by the technology and neglecting to deal with the management and policy issues.
- The team followed a prescribed methodology in the process and technological areas.
 - This aided in communication and consensus decisions.