Affordable Housing Trusts

REPORTING & EVALUATION TOOLKIT

cityhealth

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Enterprise

OVERVIEW

Across the country, communities and states have **established Affordable Housing Trusts** to respond to the growing housing-related needs of their residents. This toolkit is designed to help policymakers and program administrators strengthen their reporting and evaluation policies and practices and design Affordable Housing Trust policies and administrative processes.

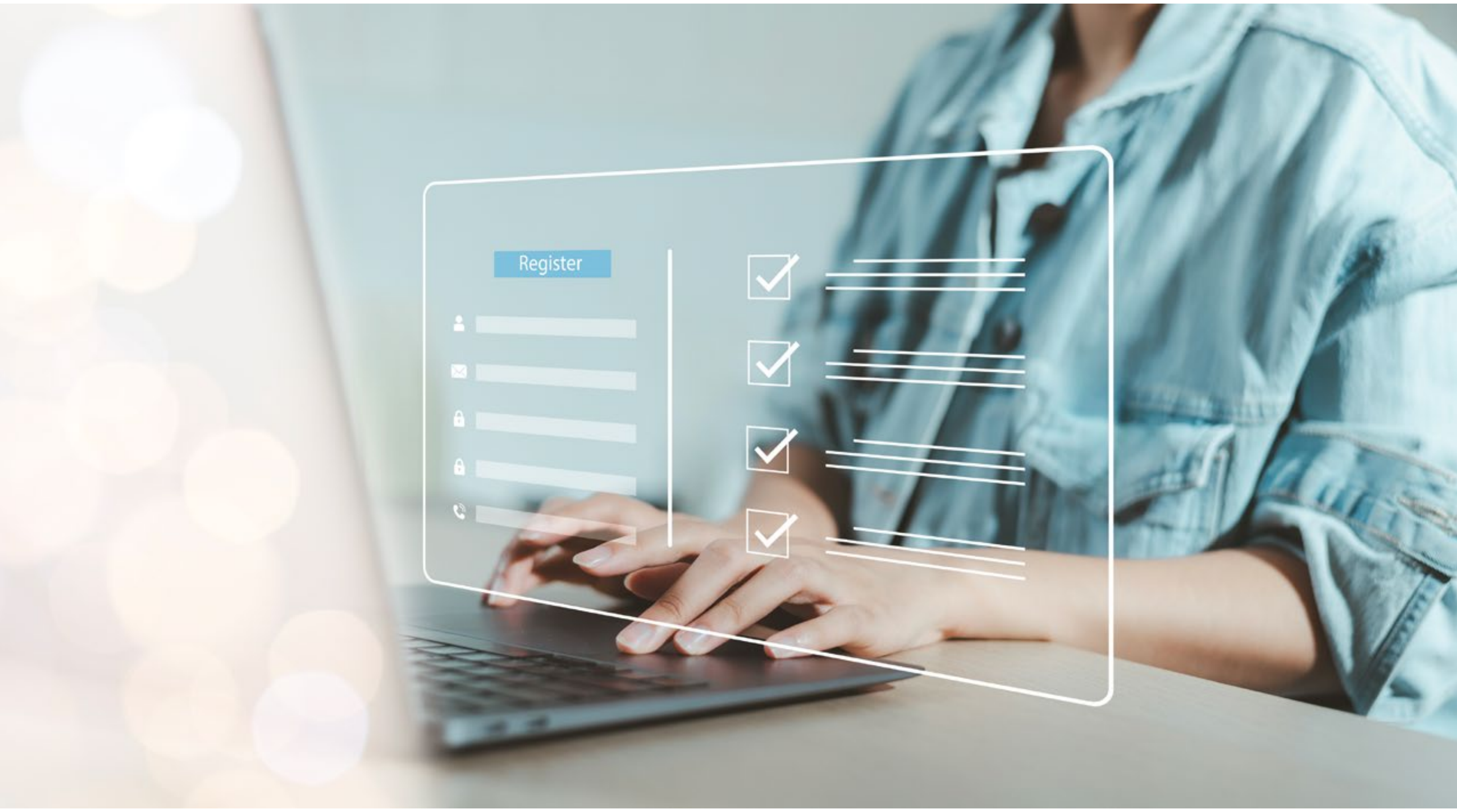
This toolkit will help you learn about:

- **The importance of policy evaluations** and public reporting practices
- **The ways that thoughtful evaluations can inform** and strengthen policies for greater impact
- **Intentional data collection** processes

This toolkit is designed to help policymakers and program administrators strengthen their reporting and evaluation policies and practices and design affordable housing trust policies and administrative processes. It was developed by Enterprise Advisors, the consulting arm of Enterprise Community Partners, in partnership with CityHealth.

- **Communicating the impact** of Affordable Housing Trust funds to stakeholders

Additionally, it includes practical tools that you can download and share.



EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Reporting and evaluating have different functions in administering Affordable Housing Trusts, but both are necessary for transparency, accountability, and effectiveness.

WHAT IS REPORTING?	WHAT DOES EVALUATING INVOLVE?
■ **Provides a clear snapshot** of how resources are allocated and outputs (e.g., units developed, homebuyers assisted, etc.) ■ **Demonstrates** if policy requirements for the fund are being met ■ **Ensures stakeholders** are informed on a regular basis ■ **Fosters trust with the public** and enables informed decisions about future allocations or investments	■ **Provides a deeper analysis** of a fund's impact in terms of outcomes, rather than outputs (e.g., increased resident economic mobility, improved housing stability among residents) ■ **Works to assess** if the fund is meeting the intended policy goals ■ **May examine barriers** to greater impact (i.e., policies, procedures, capacity, developer landscape) ■ **Helps ensure** that resources are used effectively to address local priorities ■ **Provides tangible recommendations** to strengthen policies and procedures

EVALUATIONS ARE IMPORTANT for a variety of reasons. Further, evaluations can take many forms, each with a unique desired outcome. The different types of evaluations include:

- **Formative Evaluation:** Conducted during the development or early implementation phase to improve program design and delivery.
- **Process Evaluation:** Focuses on how the program is being implemented, assessing whether it aligns with the original plan and engages participants effectively.
- **Summative Evaluation:** Measures the overall success of the program, assessing whether it achieved its objectives and delivered the intended outcomes.
- **Impact Evaluation:** Examines the long-term effects of the program, determining the causal relationship between the intervention and its broader outcomes.

The evaluation type, or types, you choose depends on what you hope to learn through your evaluation. For example, a formative evaluation of an Affordable Housing Trust would be helpful for cities with newly established trusts that would like to improve the function and administration of the trust. Comparatively, an impact evaluation observes the longer-term impacts of the Affordable Housing Trust and can inform future investment priorities or policy changes.

Together, reporting and evaluation help city leaders understand the impacts of their Affordable Housing Trust. Reporting provides the data and transparency needed to track progress while evaluation interprets data to guide improvements and shape evidence-based policies. By integrating both practices, Affordable Housing Trusts can continuously adapt, improve, and make meaningful strides toward addressing housing affordability challenges.

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Timeline

The frequency of evaluation and reporting may depend on policy and regulatory requirements (e.g., annual, biennial, every five years). Annual reporting is encouraged to demonstrate progress and impact on housing and to build support for continued funding.

To earn a gold medal through CityHealth for an Affordable Housing Trust policy, your city must engage in regular reporting and evaluation on use of funds. CityHealth allows for individual cities to interpret what 'regular reporting' may look like at the local level considering diverse housing landscape and local contexts. However, it is important that the evaluation and public reporting be both regular in the sense that it occurs on a defined schedule, and consistent in the information that is shared through each subsequent report.

DATA NEEDED

Reporting

Data to collect for reporting purposes often include:

- **Goals and expected outcomes** for the Affordable Housing Trust
- **Amount of Affordable Housing Trust funds** available for the reporting period and deployed (total and by activity)
- **Number of affordable units** and developments created and preserved with support from the Affordable Housing Trust, broken down by income level
- **Geographies where housing has been developed** or preserved with Affordable Housing Trust funds
- **Affordable homes sold** to homebuyers
- **Households served** by programs supported by the Affordable Housing Trust (e.g., owner-occupied repair, eviction prevention, down payment assistance, etc.) by income level
- **Other data that align** with compliance requirements (e.g., procurement policies that guide how cities bring on additional staff for finite tasks)

Data reporting for different audiences

Local housing trusts involve various stakeholders, each with unique data needs. Administrators should consult with these stakeholders to understand their values and needs so that they can collect relevant data and showcase the Affordable Housing Trust's impact on the broader local housing ecosystem.

Publicly available reporting on fund performance can help stakeholders understand how proposed uses of funds relate to the goals of the trust fund and how the uses of funds compare to previous allocations. They can use information about prior allocations to encourage private sector investment. Finally, these reports can help increase public trust in the way the fund is being implemented.

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

A first step in developing reporting is to identify key stakeholders. You can do this by using available stakeholder mapping resources.

For example, the Grassroots Collective has created downloadable resources and step-by-step directions for stakeholder mapping: **How to do a Stakeholder Analysis for Community Development**. Miro has created a guide on the process and benefits of stakeholder identification and management: **What is Stakeholder Mapping? Guide to Stakeholder Maps | Miro**

You can also use datasets provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), such as **Comprehensive Housing Affordability Data,** which documents housing problems and needs. These data are used by local governments to plan how to spend HUD funds. Finally, you can use the **State of Cities Data Systems** (SOCDF), which provides data for individual metropolitan areas, central cities, and suburbs.

Evaluation

The evaluation of Affordable Housing Trust data is an important process that supports future programmatic, administrative, or regulatory changes to improve the function of the fund. A first step in evaluation is to ensure you have clear outcome-based goals for the effort. This will make your measurement and reporting work much easier. Next, build an evaluation framework with core questions that your city wants to answer with data. Examples questions might include:

- What has the Affordable Housing Trust achieved this year relative to our outcome-based goals?
    - Who has been impacted by Affordable Housing Trust dollars this year? What contribution has the Affordable Housing Trust made toward local housing needs?
    - How do key stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of the Affordable Housing Trust?
- What was difficult about program administration and implementation?
- What might be changed or adjusted to improve the performance of the Affordable Housing Trust?

Understanding Potential Sources

You can use this tool to map out potential data sources, as well as how you/your team define the data points.

DATA TO COLLECT	POTENTIAL SOURCES	DEFINITION
What is the data?	**Where can these data be found?**	**For consistency across years, how do we define what is being reported?**
DATA FOR REPORTING		
Dollar amount of funds accrued during the year	*Ex. In 2023, $69 million was accrued to produce and preserve affordable housing.*	*Ex. Between the months of January 2023 to December, the dollar amount of funds accrued by all contributing sources.*
Dollar amount of funds provided by activity (e.g., housing development, infrastructure improvements, preservation, and home repairs)		
Number of affordable units brought online		
Developments invested in		
Affordability of units produced and preserved		
Households supported through programs (breakdown by program)		
Goals for future provision of trust fund dollars		

DATA TO COLLECT	POTENTIAL SOURCES	DEFINITION
What is the data?	**Where can these data be found?**	**For consistency across years, how do we define what is being reported?**
	DATA FOR REPORTING	
Location of funded developments	*Ex. Of the 1,400 units produced or preserved across 100 projects, 1,000 are located in XX ZIP code. *list the neighborhoods that received investments and the product of that investment.*	*Ex. Identifying where the fund has invested at a neighborhood scale using GIS or an alternative geo-spatial tool.*
Location of program participants (by neighborhood, census tract, or ZIP)		
Record of developers, organizations, or institutions invested in		
Dollar amount of trust fund dollars provided to key population groups (women and children, seniors, individuals with disabilities, etc.)		
Number of jobs created through development opportunities made available with trust fund dollars rates for income levels addressed with trust fund dollars)		
Demographic/market conditions (broad need for affordable housing, cost burden)		
Experience of developers/partners navigating local processes		

Centering Equity in Evaluation

Cities working to understand racial and economic inequities/disparities may also want to ask more specific evaluation questions and collect additional data points. These data may include:

- Race of households assisted with funding
- Racial demographics of geographies (i.e., neighborhoods or census tracts) where the most/least funds were invested/granted
- Race of the developers/contractors who received funds

INEQUITIES VS. DISPARITIES – WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Disparity refers to a noticeable, significant, or impactful difference between two subjects. Disparities exist at multiple levels such as income, race/ethnicity, gender, education level, and many more. In the context of this toolkit, disparities refer to the disadvantages experienced at the household level as a result of racial and economic injustices.

Inequity denotes some type of injustice and is one factor that produces disparities. In the context of this toolkit, housing policies and practices have historically perpetuated segregation and unjust access to housing resources and homeownership and, therefore, produce inequities.

Data on how your city's Affordable Housing Trust Fund dollars have been allocated can highlight where disparities and inequities in the allocations exist. For example, you may look at who is benefiting from AHT funding demographically and whether there are significant differences, or disparities, in who is benefitting. To look at potential inequities, you might try to understand how the Affordable Housing Trust is targeting communities that have been historically marginalized/disinvested.

Collecting such data may support cities with existing racial equity priorities to measure progress toward stated goals. However, data collection of Affordable Housing Trust fund allocations can also serve as an entry point into centering racial equity considerations as more descriptive data is collected and analyzed. Below you will find a variety of resources to guide thinking through racial equity questions for data and evaluation.

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RACIAL EQUITY RESOURCES

The **Equitable Evaluation Framework (EEF),** developed by the Equitable Evaluation Initiative, provides a thoughtful and practical approach to conducting evaluations with a focus on equity. It challenges traditional ideas about what constitutes valid and objective evaluation, encouraging the use of diverse methodologies and ways of knowing. The framework includes several key elements: principles that guide evaluation practices; orthodoxies, which are established norms and beliefs that need to be questioned to achieve more equitable outcomes; mindsets,

referring to the attitudes evaluators should adopt to support equity; tensions, which address the challenges that come with change; and sticking points, which are obstacles that offer opportunities for growth. By incorporating these elements, the EEF not only emphasizes the importance of examining equity in evaluations but also calls for evaluations to be conducted in ways that themselves promote equity. This means aligning practices with stated values, embracing complexity, and recognizing a wide range of evidence and perspectives. Ultimately, this approach ensures that evaluations contribute to meaningful change and support greater equity in all contexts.

A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED TOOL from Louisville, KY, the **Racial Equity Worksheet**, helps governments analyze policies, programs, and budget decisions through a racial equity lens to reduce institutional racism and avoid unintended consequences.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation **Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Within Data Integration** was developed by a national workgroup of civic data stakeholders and aims to support efficient data sharing and integration. The toolkit encourages centering racial equity and community voice within the context of data integration and use.

The **Urban Institute Centering Racial Equity in Data Use** presentation provides essential background information on the importance of racial equity, along with resources, datasets, and potential partner organizations to support effective implementation.

DATA COLLECTION

The previous section details which data are needed to evaluate an Affordable Housing Trust. This section offers guidance on *how* to collect and evaluate the data. As a first step for data collection, define:

1. The timeline
2. The roles and responsibilities
3. Data collection tools and resources

Roles and responsibilities

Collecting data, evaluating trust performance, and reporting findings may require additional resources for localities if these tasks are new. The number of staff needed for this can vary. Some cities have dedicated personnel, while others assign these duties to staff with other responsibilities.

Regardless of team size, the evaluation and reporting activities remain consistent. Below is a list of activities involved in assessing housing trust performance.

List of activities:

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Data Collection	■ Collect data ■ Clean and standardize data ■ Analyze data
Evaluation	■ Compare performance against stated goals ■ Identify gaps in populations/geographies served ■ Identify policy adjustments to improve performance in the future ■ Identify additional goals or priorities for future allocations of funds
Policy and Programmatic Adjustments	■ Changes to policy to reflect needed improvements identified in evaluation ■ Adjustments to funding allocations ■ Changes or additions to staffing and responsibilities for staff
Reporting	■ Updates on policy changes ■ List of developments funded ■ Plan for future funds ■ Clarity on changes in goals/priorities based on evaluation

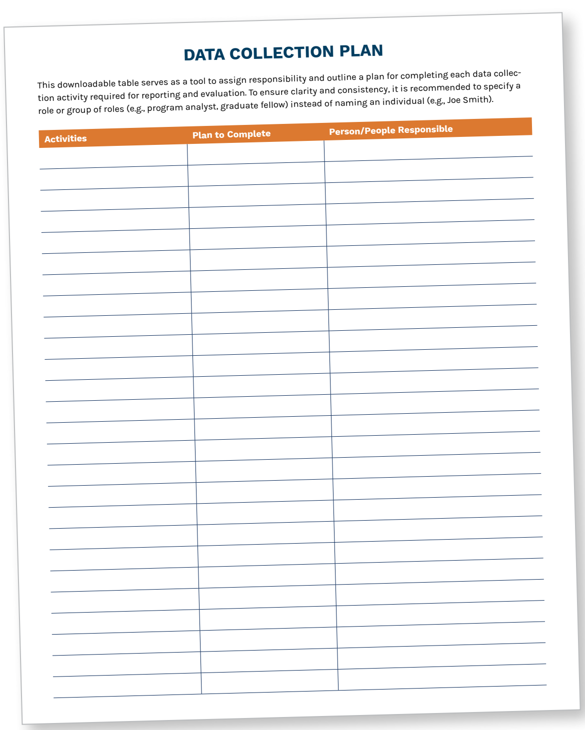
Local housing trusts vary in size, affecting their administration teams. If your local Affordable Housing Trust needs more support, consider these questions:

- **Financial:** Is there adequate funding to cover reporting and evaluation activities? What is the financial impact to improve reporting and evaluation practices in your city?
- **Personnel:** Do you have dedicated staff with sufficient time? Can staff from other departments, such as government innovation, grants management, or GIS in planning, help? What gaps in skills or support exist that relate to reporting and evaluation needs?
- **Expertise:** Does your housing fund team have the training and skills for performance evaluation and reporting?

Third-Party Capacity

If you have limited internal capacity, you may consider contracting with an outside research and evaluation partner, which can offer additional staff capacity, quantitative and qualitative research skills, and an objective lens.

This downloadable table serves as a tool to assign responsibility and outline a plan for completing each data collection activity required for reporting and evaluation. To ensure clarity and consistency, it is recommended to specify a role or group of roles (e.g., program analyst, graduate fellow) instead of naming an individual (e.g., Joe Smith).



DATA COLLECTION PLAN

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Activities	Plan to Complete	Person/People Responsible

A Few Important Notes on Data

DATA SOURCES

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau is recognized as the most consistent and comprehensive data available at the local level. However, the American Community Survey (ACS), through which census data is annually collected, aggregated, and analyzed, may fail to accurately represent data from multiple populations including communities of color, immigrants and migrants, non-English speakers, and individuals with disabilities, among others. Therefore, while data from the ACS is valuable in the data collection process, cities may find additional benefit in collecting data from alternative sources to complement census data.

Local data sources can provide extensive, detailed demographic data, housing supply and housing market data, and information on lived experiences. While data at the local level will vary, your city likely has a local or regional planning department that has conducted a housing needs assessment. These assessments will incorporate community perspectives that offer additional insight into existing conditions. Other sources include **Zillow** for housing market data, open data portals and geo-spatial analyses, and local housing plans.

This Montgomery County Housing Needs Assessment is an example of the type of local data inputs that can inform Affordable Housing Trust investments and policy. You can find the assessment here: **Montgomery County Housing Needs Assessment**.

The following is an example of a local open data portal. Comprised of datasets published by city government, local partners, and community organizations, the NYC Open Data Portal offers publicly available data relevant to city residents. Access the data portal here: **NYC Open Data**

While conducting evaluations, the following questions should be considered.

- Which populations may be historically over-represented in your data sources? Which populations may be historically under-represented, or excluded, in your data sources? How can the city collect data from harder to reach populations?
- How does the city typically collect data from the community? What are the ways the city validates goals and priorities for affordable housing and the housing trust dollars? How might the city diversify the methods of engagement?
- What other sources might complement Census data to tell a more comprehensive story? Has anyone else recently conducted a housing assessment that included resident interviews, focus groups, or surveys?

PRIVACY

If releasing data on programs that are designed for individuals/households such as down payment assistance, home repair initiatives, or eviction prevention efforts, it is essential to protect the privacy of your recipients. The addresses or names of individuals should not be released. However, you can aggregate data on resident-oriented programs by ZIP code. This is an important practice for any recordkeeping your city does. There are many ways to clean and store data, but it is integral to ensure that all personally identifiable information (PII) is cleared to protect privacy. For more information on tools to support recordkeeping and data cleaning, refer to the Tools and Resources section found later in this toolkit. Additionally, if you have staff who are experienced with GIS, they should be able to assign individual addresses to broader geographies (e.g., census tract, neighborhood, planning area, council district, etc.) that will ensure privacy.

METHODS OF REPORTING

Public Reports

A public report is a written document that is published and accessible for any interested stakeholder. In many cases, they are submitted to the oversight body of a Housing Trust Fund and local governing body (e.g., city council) while also being available on a government website. It is a best practice to include an executive summary that provides key takeaways for the reader. Additionally, the creators of reports are encouraged to use graphics, including charts and pictures, to convey information. It is best practice that local governments publish reports for regular reporting as well as periodic evaluations.

Presentations

Some local governments request that staff provide public presentations. Often using a tool like PowerPoint or **Canva**, key findings are conveyed verbally alongside a graphic presentation. In some places, presentations to the oversight body or local governing body meet their reporting requirements. While the findings of an evaluation may be presented publicly, they are most often accompanied by more detailed reports (whether published or not). It is also a recommended practice to present to other stakeholder groups on the impact of your Affordable Housing Trust.

Dashboards

A dashboard is a data visualization tool that regularly provides updates and insight into an Affordable Housing Trust fund's activities, financials and outcomes. A dashboard is a valuable tool for reporting on Affordable Housing Trust Funds because it presents data in easy-to-understand graphics, making complex information accessible to a broader audience. It enables users to explore and dig into the data further, fostering transparency and engagement. Kansas City, Missouri, has used **Microsoft PowerBI to create a dashboard** showing the impact of nearly $39million in housing trust fund dollars.

Tools and Resources

Multiple tools and resources exist to support evaluation and reporting practices. The size and experience of your team, and the resources available to dedicate to reporting and evaluation are two factors to consider when identifying the best tools to utilize. Additionally, the utility of some resources may be preferred over others, for certain communities. Listed below are various activities that data tools can support throughout evaluation and reporting:

- **Data visualization:** Tools to support the geographic impact of the Affordable Housing Trust fund will help answer questions related to *quantity* of housing developed or preserved by the trust, in addition to *where* this housing is located in your city. Geographic visualizations may contribute to case-making for location-specific priorities for future funding or demonstrate progress toward pre-determined geographic priority areas.
  - GIS (Geographic Information System)
  - NearMap (Efficient Land-Use)
- **Data coding and analysis:** Tools to store, organize, and categorize data are critical for analysis. These tools can support cleaning data and filtering information to ensure the most relevant information is gathered and presented.
  - Qualtrics
  - Excel
  - Airtable

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- **Program management software:** Many cities use systems that help them manage applications and compliance for their housing/community development funds. These platforms often have built-in reporting/dashboarding functions that allow data to be easily exported.
  - Neighborly
- **Financial system management:** Track funds, expenditures, and revenue streams
  - QuickBooks
  - SAP
- **Performance dashboards:** Tools to visualize data and demonstrate impact are useful resources for reporting, as these visualizations can increase accessibility, readability, and interactivity with reporting practices on the Affordable Housing Trust. Performance dashboards offer an interactive and easily updated platform to share progress and performance of the trust. Dashboards can include historic data and existing activities, while also offering predictions for future funds and their expected impact in the community.
  - Power BI
  - Tableau

USING EVALUATION TO IMPROVE POLICIES

Evaluation practices can help improve policies related to programming and administration of the Affordable Housing Trust. The previous sections of this toolkit offer guidance on data collection, evaluation, and reporting to ensure cities implement comprehensive and efficient processes. Cities can use data to guide adjustments to their policies and practices. Cities can go further to use these data related to performance of the trust to determine the necessary actions based on the analysis of information. Consider the following checklist and potential actions for reconciliation related to policy improvements justified by evaluation and reporting practices.

CHECKLIST ITEM	OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT
Does the policy/program meet the intended objective?	■ Adjustments to qualifying or eligible development plans ■ Make recommendations to increase funding levels or explore additional revenue streams
Are there any major population groups, needs, or regions excluded from impacts?	■ Incorporate preference or priority selection standards to meet existing gaps in impacts
Is the policy/program functioning at its full capacity?	■ Refer to Roles and Responsibilities section in this toolkit and determine where the city wants to be compared to where staffing capacity currently is ■ Consider flexible use of funds if functioning under financial capacity
Is the policy/program aligned with local housing goals?	■ Community surveys or public forums to gauge public opinion on alignment of use of funds with community needs ■ Review local housing needs assessments and other documents defining local goals and priorities, and adjust priorities and trends in use of funds as needed
Is there any missing data that would help tell a more comprehensive story?	■ Refer to Data Needed section in this toolkit and ensure there is balance between Baseline Data and 'Gold Standard' data collected for evaluation purposes

Future Policy Decision Implications

Local responses to the above checklist may suggest changes to written policy regarding the evaluation and reporting practices for the Affordable Housing Trust. As a result, these changes may have multiple policy impacts:

1. Updates to written policy on reporting and evaluation requirements, including data collection
2. Adjustments to budget allocations for the Affordable Housing Trust
3. Policy priorities related to housing, affordable housing, and development that will shape future allocations and uses of Affordable Housing Trust fund dollars
4. Updates to administrative rules and regulations that inform the implementation of the fund

CONCLUSION

As housing affordability challenges continue to mount across communities of all sizes, Affordable Housing Trust funds are increasingly important and powerful tools. Quality reporting practices are one way that local governments can transparently share the results of their efforts. Embedding reporting requirements into policy ensures that there is consistency and clarity in what is reported year after year, regardless of staff and/or leadership changes. Furthermore, strong evaluation practices allow policymakers to identify what updates may be needed to make their Affordable Housing Trusts more impactful and aligned with their policy goals.

Evaluations offer opportunities for an Affordable Housing Trust to evolve with the unique and changing needs of communities. While both reporting and evaluation practices require time, they are investments with great return since they foster trust, improve results, and maximize the impact of every dollar spent. By prioritizing transparency and continuous improvement, local governments can ensure their Affordable Housing Trust funds are both effective and responsive to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

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