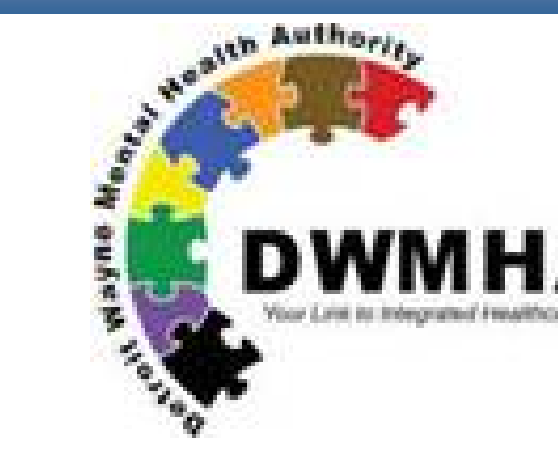


Strategies to Support Long Term Evaluation Participation and Data Quality

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Background

Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. (AHP) and Southwest Counseling Solutions (SWCS) Evaluation Staff recently completed a long-term evaluation of an eight-agency permanent supportive housing (PSH) initiative serving nearly 300 consumers. The project was launched in summer 2012 and continued through the end of September 2015. Monthly data submission on all active consumers was required to best inform performance monitoring and quality improvement efforts.

As agency staff had to work the responsibility for data submission into an already demanding workload, key evaluation challenges included:

- Building & maintaining staff capacity for data submission
- Fostering staff engagement in the evaluation
- Providing opportunities & incentives for ensuring data accuracy

This poster describes the strategies the evaluation team used to overcome these challenges.

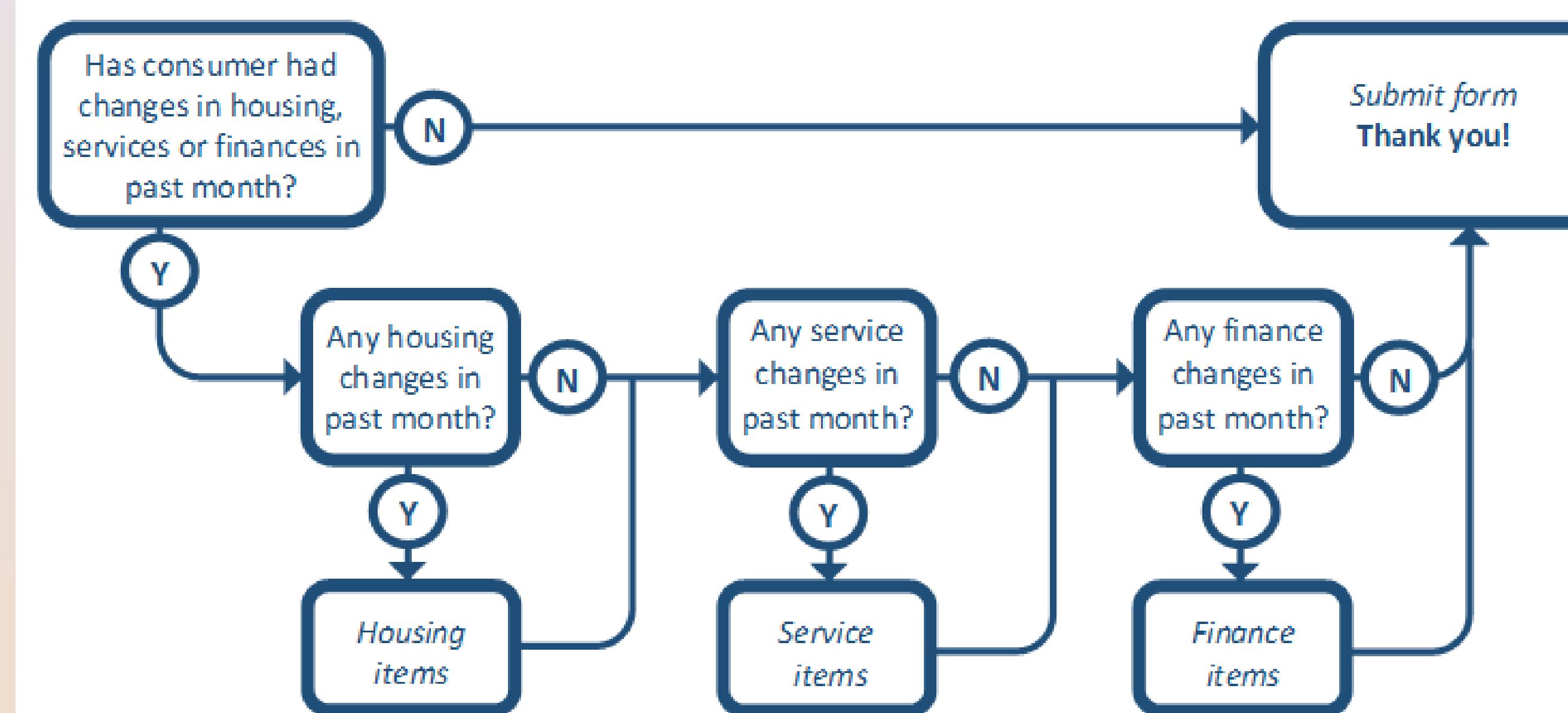
Training and Communication are Critical

Provider training, and communication between evaluators and agencies were used throughout the project to build and maintain staff capacity and engagement. Training and communication were primarily the responsibility of the local evaluator, who had the advantage of proximity and in-depth familiarity with the local service system.

- **Successful use of multiple approaches to training** including kickoff trainings provided on site at each agency; initiative-wide refresher trainings; and targeted troubleshooting and trainings for new staff and those encountering data submission difficulties
- **Valuable ongoing communication between evaluators and staff** originating from a monthly, individualized data request sent from the local evaluator
- **In person presentations for providers** to enhance buy-in and gather suggestions for additional strategies to support staff in data submission
- **Sharing outcomes** with initiative administrators, program managers, and staff to give the data collection process more meaning

Combined Strategies Better Address Complicated Challenges

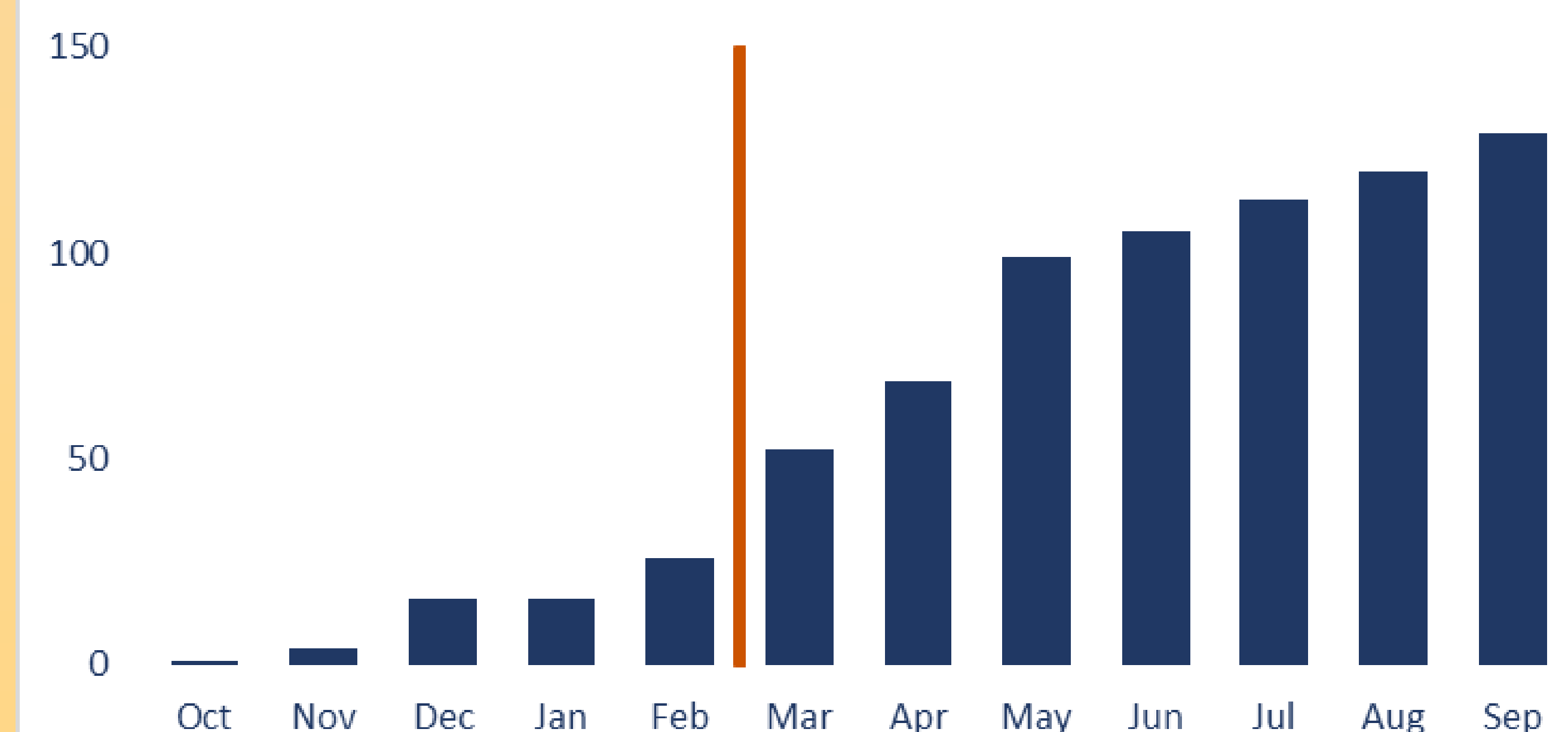
Form Design Minimizes Staff Burden



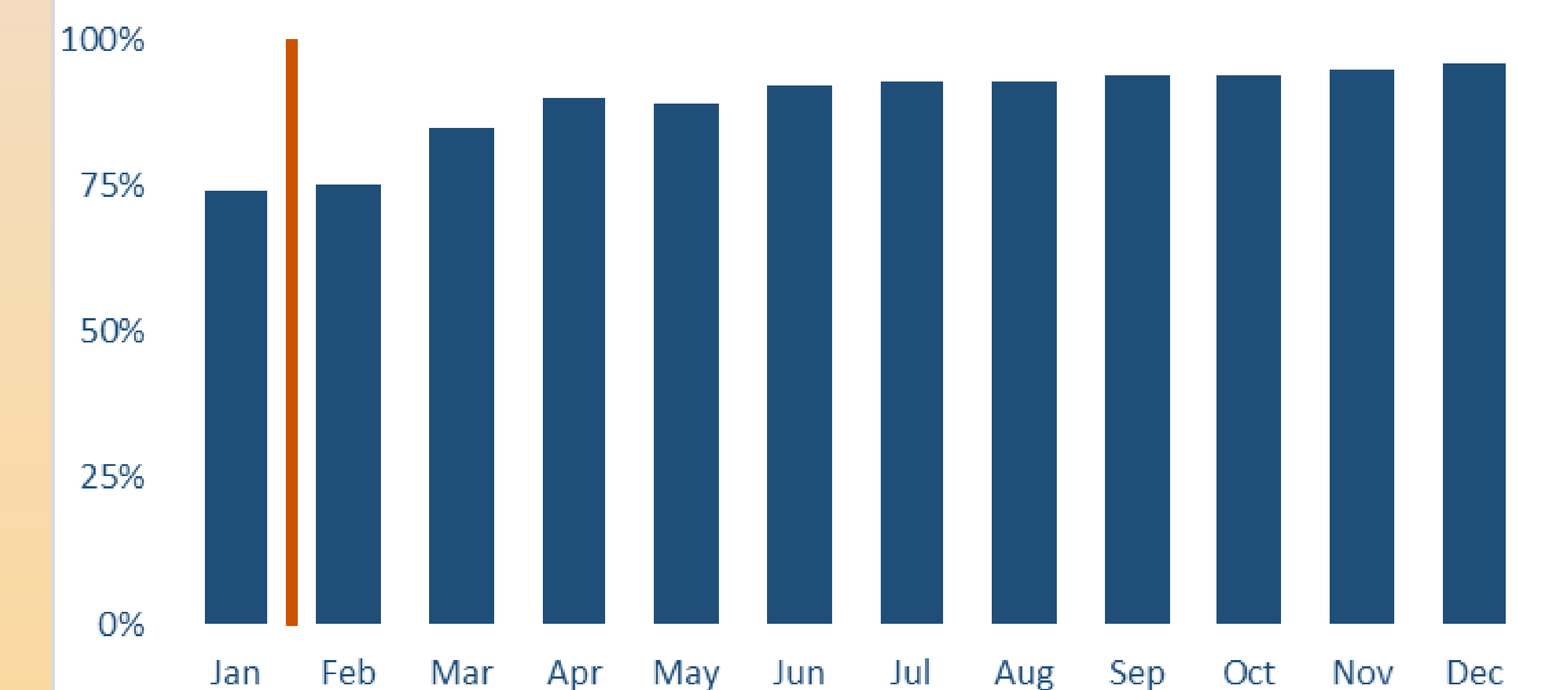
- Evaluators improved the data collection system at the end of the 2011-2012 fiscal year and by October 2012 it was fully implemented. Some programs quickly adapted to submitting monthly follow-up data while others had more difficulty with the adjustment.
- In January the evaluators instituted a data submission feedback mechanism: Every month, each program received a list of its real-time follow-up completion rate for each active consumer, giving programs a single measure of data completeness and allowing them to track the impact of improved reporting practices.
- 2013 saw significant improvement in follow-up rates, from 74% in January to 90% in April, finishing the calendar year at 96%.

- Pitfalls to data collection included overburdening staff, and the low rate of occurrence of reportable changes.
- System innovation made data collection more efficient by allowing a response to a single item—*Has this consumer had changes in housing, services, or finances within the past month?*—to fulfill monthly follow-up data submission requirements for any consumers who had not experienced changes since the previous reporting period.
- Further skip patterns made data submission even more user friendly: For consumers who did experience one or more target changes within the previous month, staff were able to bypass entire sets of questions that did not apply to the consumers' recent changes.

Housing Reporting Increases Following Implementation of Housing Feedback Mechanism



Cumulative Follow-up Rates Improve After Launch of Data Submission Feedback Mechanism



- Follow-up rates markedly improved after the start of the feedback mechanism, yet consumer move reporting was lower than expected.
- To further improve move reporting, evaluators implemented a housing feedback mechanism following the February reporting period: Every month, each program received a list of the consumers with qualifying moves represented in the dataset.
- Cumulative moves reported for the fiscal year jumped from 26 in March to 69 in April and then 99 in May.
- The training and motivational communication strategies were successful and well-received by staff.