CONTEXT SETTING

A BHC Governance discussion took place on August 8, 2024, providing insights from a collaboratively reviewed document. Members expressed a desire to establish a clear mission and vision before developing the governance structure. To support this process, a survey was distributed to gather input on the Consortium's core purpose, goals, and governance from both collective and organizational perspectives.

VOTING-THEMED FEEDBACK SUMMARY

BHC members' feedback suggests a need for a **balanced, equitable, and efficient voting structure** that respects the diverse perspectives within the Consortium. The preferred approach should be **inclusive, adaptable, and transparent**, with the ability to differentiate between major and routine decisions. An effective voting structure will ensure that **all members have an equitable voice**, maintain efficient decision-making, and reflect the Consortium's core values of **collaboration, transparency, and equity**. (See Page 4 for voting model examples.)

DETAILED VOTING STRUCTURE FEEDBACK THEMES

Balance Between Organizational and Sector-Based Representation

- **Member Input**: Members have discussed the importance of striking a balance between ensuring that all **member organizations** have a voice in the voting process while also representing the **diverse sectors** involved in behavioral health (e.g., healthcare, law enforcement, housing, mental health, and substance use services).

- **Implication:** There is a desire for a structure that allows individual organizations to express their specific interests while ensuring that voting reflects the broader sectoral priorities and needs, preventing any one organization from dominating the process.

Simplicity & Efficiency of the Voting Process

- **Member Input:** A recurring theme is the need for a voting process that is **simple and efficient**. Members want to avoid overly complicated rules that slow down decision-making or make the process difficult to navigate.

- **Implication:** There is an emphasis on establishing a voting system that allows for timely decisions without sacrificing representation or collaboration. A process that can distinguish between **routine operational decisions** and **strategic or policy decisions** might be preferred to streamline actions when possible.

Equity & Avoiding Power Imbalances

- **Member Input:** Concerns were raised about ensuring that all voting members have an **equitable voice**, particularly smaller organizations or sectors that may feel marginalized. Members are keen to avoid any power imbalance where larger or more influential entities dominate the voting outcomes.

- **Implication:** The feedback suggests a voting structure where **equal voting rights** are favored, and mechanisms are put in place to ensure that all votes carry equal weight, regardless of the size or perceived influence of the organization or sector.

Consensus-Building vs. Majority Voting

- **Member Input:** There is a mix of opinions on whether decisions should be made by **simple majority voting** or whether they should require **consensus or supermajority agreements**. Some members feel that consensus-based decisions foster collaboration and buy-in, while others believe that consensus can slow down decision-making and lead to diluted outcomes.

- **Implication:** A mixed approach may be favored, where **major decisions (e.g., strategic planning, funding allocation)** require a **supermajority vote (e.g., 2/3)** to ensure broad support, while **operational or routine decisions** could be handled by a **simple majority** to maintain efficiency.

Flexibility & Responsiveness to Different Types of Decisions

- **Member Input:** The feedback highlighted the importance of flexibility in the voting structure, acknowledging that not all decisions carry the same weight or urgency. Members noted that the voting process should be able to **differentiate between high-impact strategic decisions and more routine, operational matters**.

- **Implication:** A **tiered voting structure** might be suggested, where different decision types (e.g., policy changes, budget approvals, operational updates) have specific voting thresholds or processes tailored to their level of importance and urgency.

Transparent Processes & Clarity in Voting Roles

- **Member Input:** Transparency in the voting process was highlighted as crucial, with a clear outline of who is eligible to vote, how votes are cast, and how decisions are reached. Members also want to know their role and responsibilities within the voting process.

- **Implication:** Governance documents need to clearly define **voting rules, eligibility, and processes**, ensuring that all members understand how their vote impacts decisions and the overall direction of the Consortium.

Inclusivity & Empowering All Voices in the Decision-Making Process

- **Member Input:** Ensuring that all voices are included in decision-making, particularly those who may represent underserved or marginalized communities, was noted as important. This inclusivity extends to voting, where all sectors, including those who may not traditionally have as much influence, are empowered to shape decisions.

- **Implication:** Voting structures should be inclusive, perhaps providing mechanisms to ensure that sectors representing vulnerable populations or unique perspectives are not overshadowed by larger or more established organizations.

Periodic Review of Voting Structure

- **Member Input:** Recognizing that needs and priorities may evolve over time, members have indicated support for **periodic reviews of the voting structure**. This ensures that the structure remains relevant, equitable, and efficient as the Consortium grows and its work evolves.

- **Implication:** A built-in process for **reviewing and potentially updating** the voting structure allows for the flexibility to adapt to changes within the BHC and the broader community's behavioral health landscape.

VOTING MODEL EXAMPLES

Organizational Representation Voting Model

Overview: Each organization that is part of the BHC has one designated voting member, who votes on behalf of their organization.

Benefits

- **Clear Representation**: Ensures that each organization's interests and perspectives are represented directly in decision-making.

- **Streamlined Voting Process:** Decisions can be made efficiently since each organization casts a single vote, simplifying the process.

- **Accountability:** The voting member is clearly responsible for representing their organization's stance and communicating decisions back to their group.

Challenges

- **Limited Sector Representation:** If an organization represents multiple sectors or serves a diverse population, this model may limit how those broader sector needs are directly voiced.

- **Potential Imbalance:** Larger or more influential organizations might dominate decision-making if their interests are prioritized over smaller organizations or sectors.

Sector-Based Representation Voting Model

Overview: Voting members represent broader sectors (e.g., healthcare, public health, law enforcement, housing) rather than individual organizations. Each sector selects one or more representatives to vote on their behalf.

Benefits

- **Holistic Sector Perspectives:** Ensures that key sectors are well-represented, allowing a more comprehensive view of how decisions impact the entire behavioral health system.

- **Equitable Voice Across Sectors:** Allows for balanced representation across different sectors, preventing any single organization from having disproportionate influence.

- **Facilitates Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Encourages voting members to consider the needs and priorities of the entire sector rather than just their own organization.

Challenges

- **Consensus Building Required:** Representatives must actively engage with their sector to understand and represent the sector's position, which can be time-consuming and require substantial effort.

- **Risk of Diluted Organizational Input:** Individual organizations may feel their specific interests are not fully represented if they are grouped into a broader sector vote.

- **Complex Decision-Making:** Reaching consensus within sectors may be challenging, leading to longer decision-making processes.

Hybrid Model: Organizational & Sector-Based Voting

Overview: Combines elements of both organizational and sector-based representation. Voting members may represent their own organizations while also considering the broader sector's priorities, or certain votes are reserved for sector-wide decisions while others are organizational.

Benefits:

- **Balanced Representation:** Ensures that both individual organizations and broader sectors have a voice, creating a more holistic decision-making process.

- **Flexibility:** Can adapt to different types of decisions; some decisions might be best made with sector-focused input, while others might require direct organizational input.

- **Encourages Broad Engagement:** Members are encouraged to represent both their own organizational interests and the broader sector needs.

Challenges:

- **Potential Complexity:** The dual representation structure may make voting processes more complex and require additional clarification on when decisions are organizational vs. sector-based.

- **Possible Overlap or Confusion:** It may be unclear at times whether a voting member is representing their organization's interests or the sector's perspective, which could lead to conflicts or mixed messaging.

- **Decision-Making Process Clarity:** Governance documents must clearly outline when to apply organizational vs. sector-based voting to avoid confusion.

Consensus-Based Decision-Making Model

Overview: Decisions are made only when all voting members reach consensus, or at least a supermajority (e.g., 2/3 or 3/4 agreement), to ensure broad support across the group.

Benefits:

- **Inclusive & Collaborative:** Ensures that all voices are heard and considered, promoting a culture of collaboration and mutual understanding.

- **Builds Strong Buy-In:** Achieving consensus means decisions are well-supported and less likely to be met with resistance or conflict after the vote.

- **Encourages Comprehensive Dialogue:** Encourages thorough discussion on all issues to achieve agreement, ensuring that all perspectives are fully explored.

Challenges:

- **Time-Consuming:** Consensus-building can be a lengthy process, potentially slowing down decision-making and delaying action on urgent matters.

- **Difficulty in Achieving Consensus:** Reaching full or supermajority agreement may be difficult, particularly on contentious issues, leading to potential deadlocks.

- **Risk of Compromise on Effectiveness:** In seeking consensus, decisions might become watered down to accommodate all viewpoints, potentially reducing the impact of the final action.

Weighted Voting Model

Overview: Voting power is allocated based on specific criteria, such as organization size, funding contribution, or level of service provision. Some members may have greater voting weight based on these criteria.

Benefits:

- **Reflects Contribution & Impact:** Recognizes the different levels of investment and involvement among members, aligning voting power with the organization's contribution to the Consortium.

- **Streamlines Critical Decisions**: In cases where larger organizations or sectors have greater stakes in decisions, weighted voting can lead to more practical, efficient outcomes.

Challenges:

- **Equity Concerns:** Smaller organizations or those with fewer resources may feel they have less voice or power in decision-making.

- **Complex Process:** Calculating and managing voting weights can add complexity to the decision-making process, requiring additional clarity and transparency.

- **Potential Power Imbalance:** There is a risk that a small number of organizations with greater voting weight could dominate decisions, reducing the perceived inclusiveness and fairness of the process.