

FUTURE OF LAND AND HOUSING

Recommendations for Creating National and Local Eviction Data Systems

To create a robust and informed anti-eviction strategy, like one championed by the [National League of Cities](#) and others, we must understand the scope of evictions and their devastating impact on communities over time. We need to know who is most impacted, and where, and understand the range of actors and activities that undergird the system, from the process servers that inform tenants of an eviction filing to the outcome of each court case.

New America estimates that [roughly 900,000](#) households lose their homes to eviction each year. Yet, there is no system to track evictions nationwide and locally. Some states, counties and cities collect and analyze eviction data, but this collection is far from ubiquitous and is not standardized or centralized. To better understand evictions and their effects on communities, governments at both the local and federal levels must develop an eviction data infrastructure that is easy to use; easy to access; standardized; centralized; of comprehensive and reliable quality; and ethical and privacy preserving.

Creating this infrastructure will require significant collaboration from a number of stakeholders, all of whom stand to benefit from the standardization and centralization of data. The ultimate goal of an improved and coordinated data infrastructure is to decrease the number of evictions that occur over time and mitigate the instability experienced by renter households most at risk of housing loss.

Black renters face evictions at much higher rates than white renters, and women, especially Black and Latinx women, are evicted at higher rates than men. It is clear that the communities that are disproportionately impacted by evictions stand to benefit from data collection and analysis that exposes how certain policies worsen inequities for those that are already vulnerable.

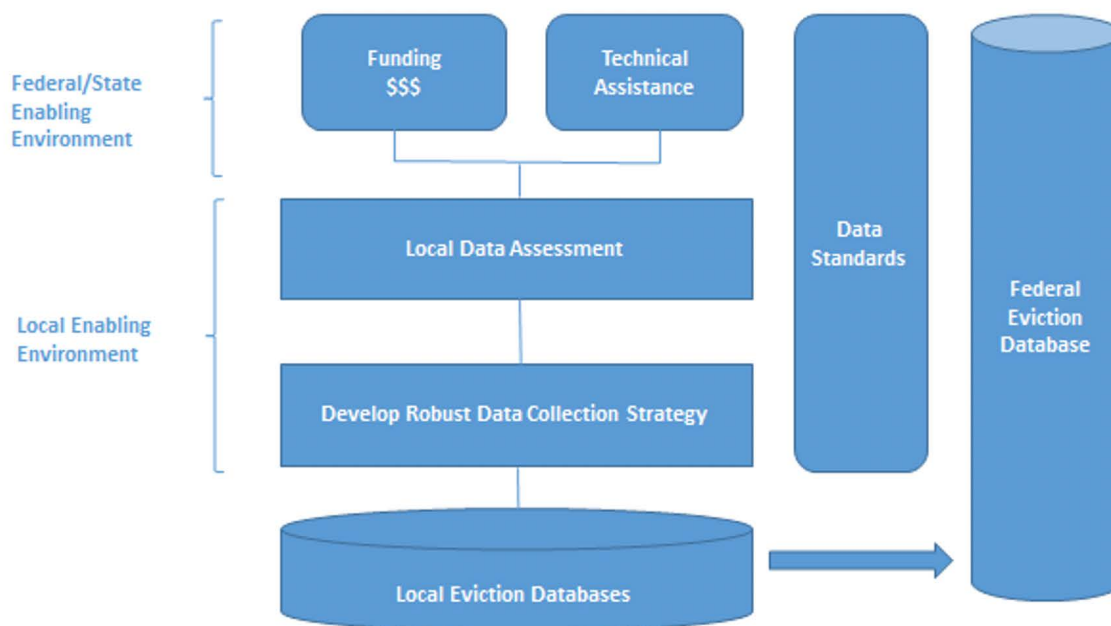
However, streamlining data collection and standardization benefits other stakeholders as well.

Uniform standards for collecting and reporting eviction data will help local courts increase their operating efficiencies and allow them to provide insights to their government and non-government partners.

Better eviction data will also help cities and counties save money, by allowing them to better target and cost rent assistance and other measures.

Ultimately, if improving eviction data results in reducing evictions, it will produce system-wide cost savings as the resources spent on homelessness and mitigating the other adverse impacts of evictions are diverted.

Framework for Creating Local and National Eviction Data Systems



As illustrated in the diagram above, these recommendations present a framework for improving the local and national level eviction data landscape, with the goal of creating local eviction databases that feed into a national level database. The framework has three major components:

- Creating a Federal/State Enabling Environment
- Creating a Local Enabling Environment
- Creating Local and National Eviction Databases

Operationalizing this framework at the local and federal level will require work.

We note, but do not dwell, on several outstanding questions around the best way to achieve universal collection and standardization and who should enforce this; for more on those considerations, please see an [expanded recommendations section](#) in our report “Why is eviction data so bad?”

Finally, given the variation in municipalities across the country, these recommendations do not suggest which level of local government (e.g., state, county, city) should be at the forefront of advancing eviction data systems. As such, we use “local” and “jurisdiction” to mean states, counties, and/or cities.

Creating a Federal/State Enabling Environment for Eviction Data

A comprehensive effort to standardize, aggregate and analyze eviction data nationally requires a federal-level enabling environment that consists of funding, data standards, and technical assistance for local jurisdictions. The following four recommendations are directed to the federal government and in some cases state governments, with the goal of creating the most appropriate environment for local jurisdictions to collect and steward eviction data:

1. **Provide Federal Funding to Advance Eviction Data Infrastructure in Local Jurisdictions.** HUD or another relevant federal agency should provide funding to jurisdictions to bolster their eviction data systems and reduce the harmful effects of evictions. The needs of local jurisdictions will vary, and the administering agency should consider the scope of jurisdictions’ needs when allocating funding, from hiring new staff to building tools to create a more robust data collection system. While funding will expand a jurisdiction’s capacity to undertake specific activities, the availability of federal funding will increase local political will and buy-in. In addition to the volume of funding (which should be significant enough to invest and transform local data infrastructure), there are a number of other key considerations. These include how to target funding; who should distribute funding and who should receive it; and a timed horizon for implementing data systems and achieving results.

2. **Incentivize Local Collection and Standardization of Eviction Data.** To track and analyze evictions nationwide, jurisdictions must collect a minimum set of viable data (e.g., docket number, eviction address, date, case outcome) in a standardized manner. To ensure consistency, the federal government and/or state governments should incentivize the collection of this data, and tie incentives to a significant amount of funding. Key considerations include whether data collection and standardization criteria is determined and enforced at the federal or state level, and whether the entity responsible for carrying out the activities is a government agency or a third party.
3. **Create Eviction Data Standards.** A federal agency, or state agencies in close coordination with one another, should develop data standards that provide clarity on how eviction data is described and documented at the local level. The creation of data standards should take into consideration the variation in local eviction terms, formats, definitions, and structuring of all the jurisdictions included in standardization and draw from the experiences of other areas that have standardized data (e.g., EPA environmental data standards or Fatal Analysis Reporting System).
4. **Provide Technical Assistance to Local Jurisdictions to Build a Robust Eviction Data Infrastructure.** Building or improving data infrastructure is a complex technical undertaking with multiple components, from assessing eviction data availability through the local court systems to developing aggregation and data verification processes. HUD or a different federal agency, or State agencies, should offer robust technical assistance for jurisdictions to build and/or improve their eviction data infrastructure. Assistance providers should assess jurisdictions based on differing levels of technical need and prescribe a menu of technical assistance options along the spectrum of data capacity, including by helping jurisdictions focus on community outcomes as a result of new data systems. Technical assistance should be available for a range of activities and be tailored for jurisdictions at all stages of eviction data maturity. Assistance should be funded by the federal government, and provided by either a team within a federal agency or through a third party organization. Assistance should be coordinated with Recommendation 1, particularly related to staffing, so that all assistance can be mainstreamed locally and work can continue once federal or state assistance ends.

Creating a Local Enabling Environment for Eviction Data

Local jurisdictions will need to operationalize increased federal funding and technical assistance to build and/or improve their data capacity and competencies. An open question is which entity at the local level should be held accountable for complying with data standards and using the funding and technical resources to advance the eviction data infrastructure.

The following two recommendations are directed to local jurisdictions, with the goal of creating an enabling environment for them to collect and steward eviction data:

5. **Assess Local Capacity to Support A Robust Eviction Data Infrastructure.** As a first step, local governments should assess the maturity of their eviction data infrastructure. This assessment should include:
 - The current state of eviction data (i.e., data accessibility, availability, type, granularity);
 - The capacity to carry out and maintain consistent collection (e.g., personnel, systems);
 - Political will for building and/or improving data systems;
 - A review of open data laws, regulations and policies to ensure data processes are ethical, and properly account for misuse; and
 - The evaluation of data based on who is most impacted (Black, Indigenous and people of color households, low income communities, women, among others) and evidence-based decision-making in response to these outcomes.
- Technical support provided in Recommendation 4 should offer hands-on assistance with this diagnostic assessment, as well as developing detailed plans to advance the collection, stewardship and analysis of data at the local level.
6. **Develop a Robust Strategy to Enhance Local Eviction Data and Analytic Capabilities.** Based on the assessment, local jurisdictions should collaborate with a broad coalition of stakeholders (e.g., government officials, courts, housing agencies, legal aid, state legislatures, renters, landlords, third-party data vendors, community-based organizations, and technical experts) to develop a strategy for advancing the collection, stewardship and analysis of eviction data. This strategy would include the collection of a minimum viable dataset currently collected by eviction courts (e.g., docket number, address of rental property, dates, etc.) that comports with the data standards developed through Recommendation 3.

In addition, local jurisdictions should work with communities disproportionately impacted by evictions and with advocates on the ground (e.g., legal aid providers, community leaders, tenant organizers) to collect data that is not currently collected by courts but is critical for minimizing the harmful effects of evictions, including data on race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality, whether the property is federally assisted/backed, and also data on ‘informal’ evictions that are not catalogued by courts.

Creating Local and National Eviction Databases

The following two recommendations are directed to local governments and the federal government, with the goal of creating a network of local eviction databases that feed a national eviction database.

7. **Create Local Eviction Databases.** Local jurisdictions should use federal funding and technical assistance to build local databases that comply with federally-established eviction data standards and roll up to a national database. Some jurisdictions may wish to build a database at the county level (since most evictions are heard by county courts), while others may prefer to build at the city level or at a multi-county or state level. Regardless of the scope, the goal is for the

entirety of the United States to be covered. Each database would contain the minimum number of variables required by the data standards and be publicly accessible. The database should be updated regularly, be easy to use and access, of comprehensive and reliable quality, and privacy preserving. The data should be in a format that can be seamlessly aggregated into larger databases, for example statewide databases and a national database.

8. **Create a National Eviction Database that Aggregates Local Data.** One of the primary goals of standardizing local eviction data is to aggregate and track evictions at the national level. There must be a national, publicly-accessible database that pulls directly from the local databases and displays data and analytics with at least three levels of granularity: county/city; state; and national. Ideally, this database would link eviction data with demographic, socio-economic, and housing datasets to explore the relationships between evictions and a host of neighborhood characteristics as well as the differences between various geographies.