

Strategy Guide for Applying for Office of Homeless Youth Service Dollars

A RESOURCE
TO SUPPORT YOUR
COMMUNITY IN
APPLYING FOR
STATE SERVICE
DOLLARS TO MAKE
WASHINGTON
A YES TO YES!
STATE

May 2022



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Overview

At the conclusion of the 2021 Washington State Legislative session, \$2 million was successfully committed to support a second cohort of Anchor Communities for the remainder of the biennium budget. Each Cohort 2 Anchor Community has the opportunity to create a community service improvement plan leveraging this funding to bolster its youth homelessness service systems.

A Way Home Washington believes in supporting work across Washington to get us to a ‘Yes to Yes!’ state where every young person is able to access the services they need and want quickly – without having to leave their home community – resulting in stable housing. The Anchor Community Initiative, AWHWA’s flagship program, works across our state to transform their unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness systems and prove it is possible for communities to end, not just manage, homelessness for young people.

All Anchor Community work centers:

- » **Preventing and ending:** We know that ending homelessness requires a prevention approach, and the AWHWA definition of youth and young adult homelessness includes young people unsafely or unstably doubled up or couch-surfing.
- » **Ending Disproportionality for LGBTQ, BIPOC, and gender expansive young people:** Our work is not done until our systems equitably serve and house all young people.
- » **Data driven decision making:** If we know the young people in our system and can see how they move through it, we can pinpoint improvements and track progress to zero.
- » **Young people at the front:** Young people with lived experience are the best positioned to know where systems are failing and why. Nothing about us without us!
- » **Continuous Improvement:** If our systems aren’t getting the result we want, there is room to improve! In ACI, we learn by doing and learning along the journey.
- » **Collaboration and coordination between providers,** sectors that affect young people’s lives, and young people with experience of systems themselves, all working in concert to inform and drive solutions.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE



This guide has been developed as a resource to support your community as you prepare your plan to apply for service dollars that you will submit directly to Office of Homeless Youth (OHY). We will work with you to align the work your community is doing as an Anchor Community to meet the objectives of the Anchor Community Initiative, which is ultimately in service of creating a Yes to Yes! state.



Office of Homeless Youth

OHY and AWHWA share a mission to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness throughout Washington state and to do so in a manner that addresses disproportionality for young people of color and LGBTQ+ young people. Further, we know that we cannot do this without young people with lived expertise guiding the way. We also form the two pillars of public-private partnership, as financial resources and political will are aligned to move resources provided through legislative acts specifically to support the Anchor Community Initiative and Anchor Communities. AWHWA in turn marshals private dollars to seed the pathway forward for communities as they titrate to adoption, and then sustainability, arising from more direct local support resources.

GUIDEPOSTS



MAY – JULY 2022

Timeline for community decision-making



JULY 2022

Start of OHY's Fiscal Year



JULY 1, 2022 – JUNE 30, 2023

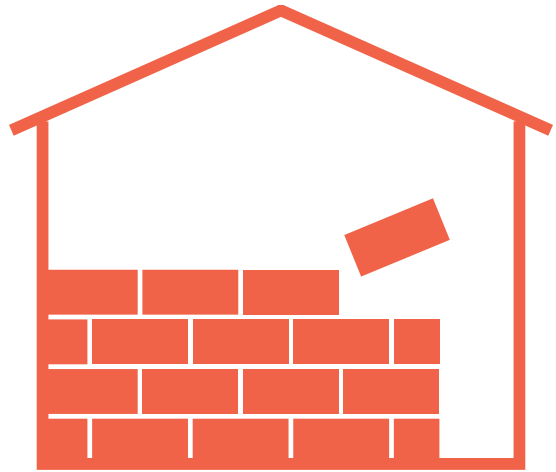
Funds can be used



~\$380K

Amount per Anchor Community for the fiscal year (after OHY's Admin fee is taken out)

Process for Building Your Community Plan



The key goal of this planning process is to create a community plan for improving your local service system that your community can rally behind, share decision making in, and that will set you up to be able to reduce youth homelessness. The Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) is foregoing their normal RFP process for these funds, and rather will seek to directly fund the projects identified and approved by communities in your plans.

Your community can determine the process that works best for you locally, and this section lays out process steps AWHWA suggests communities move through in some form. As you determine how your community will use these service dollars, please keep in mind that this process should be designed to be a holistic and inclusive strategy to identify what it will take to end youth homelessness in your community. You should identify a funding strategy that is unique to the needs of YYA in your community. We encourage you to be intentional with the planning process and think about the impact this funding will have on the work you are doing locally.

Think about the following questions:

- » In what ways is the process inclusive of diverse perspectives that may not be included at your current planning tables?
- » In what ways are young people with lived

experience of homelessness leading in the planning efforts?

- » In what ways will your plan support building a more equitable system?
- » How will the community use the opportunity these service dollars provide to explore promising innovations in addressing youth homelessness and helping you reach a Yes to Yes state?

At a bare minimum, your Services Improvement Plans must:

- » Meaningfully involve at least 2 young people with lived experience of homelessness in planning and decision making
- » Be approved by your Local Improvement Team
- » Be approved by your Youth Action Board or other body of young people

MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

We strive for meaningful youth engagement in all the work we and Anchor Communities do, and work to support communities to achieve the [Youth Engagement Gold Standard](#). In this process, we see meaningful youth engagement as, at minimum:

- » Young people are present and are participating in the decision-making process
- » Young people feel confident saying their ideas and opinions
- » Young people's ideas are seriously considered
- » Young people should feel safe and supported while sharing, without having to worry about risking their own services or being on their best behavior in front of providers that hold power over them
- » Your Youth & Community Engagement Coordinator (or other designated point person) is ensuring that young people are prepared and have the baseline knowledge they need to participate in meetings

REMINDER

All young people involved in ACI work should be compensated according to the ACI [Stipend Policy](#).

There are lots of resources on the [ACI Resource Hub](#) to support you, and your Lead Coaches can strategize with you around this! Check out the [Coaching Support Menu](#) if you don't know what to ask for but need help!

A WAY HOME WASHINGTON'S ROLE

We will support you to start off your planning process at the ACI Learning Session on May 24th and 25th, and your Lead Coaches will support you as needed to strategize how you want to move forward with these decisions in your community.

AWHWA will provide final approval for your community's service improvement plans, and we will approve all plans that meet the minimum requirements listed above.



A WAY HOME
WASHINGTON

Recommended Process Steps

Communities are encouraged to build a brainstorming and decision making process that works for you. Below are some of the steps we would recommend moving through together as a community, along with some questions to consider and ideas for content. This is meant to be a guide, not a checklist!

ACTION STEP	WHAT THAT INCLUDES
STEP 1 Identify + Convene Planning Team	Identify key partners and determine who will lead the coordination of this process. *This will be done at the May ACI Learning Session
STEP 2 Determine Decision-Making Structure	Determine where this process will live (with the Improvement Team or in a subgroup/separate planning workgroup), how decisions will be made and who will be the final approvers of the identified projects. *This will be done at the May ACI Learning Session
STEP 3 Interrogate Your Data	Utilize your local data to understand the need in your community and to "tell your story."
STEP 4 Problem Identification	Identify where you see the biggest gaps and barriers, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data.
STEP 5 Solution Identification	Once you identify the needs and gaps, identify creative strategies to address those needs. Work with the players in your system to outline a feasible approach to the solutions that have been identified.
STEP 6 Prioritize Projects to Fund	Narrow down how to best utilize funding to get to your ideal system.
STEP 7 Draft Your Services Improvement Plan	Compile descriptions of your projects, agencies that will be contracting with OHY, and budget.
STEP 8 Approval and Signatures	Final approval, including required signatures.
STEP 9 Submit your Plan to OHY	Once all required approvals/signatures, OHY will contract directly with agencies

STEP 1: IDENTIFY + CONVENE A PLANNING TEAM, INCLUDING YOUTH/YOUNG ADULTS WITH LIVED EXPERTISE

Planning to end youth and young adult homelessness should be an iterative process that is inclusive of a diverse group of stakeholders and intentional partnerships, including the coordination and prioritization of funding. You will need to determine who will be involved in the planning process and who will make the final recommendations and decisions about this funding.

Some possible structures could be:

- » The current ACI Improvement Team works on the planning/recommendations as a whole team; or
- » Designate a smaller planning group to create a proposal and make recommendations to the Improvement Team

Whichever way your team is structured, your team should be made up of a variety of community partners and stakeholders, including youth and young adults with lived expertise/

experience of homelessness. On some level, you should involve your:

- » ACI Coordinator
- » ACI Community Lead
- » Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator
- » Key Youth Providers (particularly any that may want to submit for projects)
- » CoC or local government representative
- » YYA with lived experience of homelessness (at a minimum, you must have at least two YYA involved in this process)

Tip: Keep the group to a reasonable size in order to focus on the process in an expedited way (for example create a smaller work group to do this planning who can bring recommendations back to a larger group/the Improvement Team. You should also identify who is responsible for convening the group, scheduling, and keeping things moving.

STEP 2: DETERMINE YOUR DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

Once you have convened your team, you should determine how the group will make decisions/recommendations. For example, how will this group come to agreement/consensus, who are the final “approvers,” who needs to sign-off on the projects, etc. Documenting the decision-making process, including who is involved in decision making and how disagreements will be managed,

increases transparency and accountability to community partnerships.

At a minimum, the Improvement Team and the YAB (or at least 2 YYA who have been involved in the planning) must approve/sign the final Community Plan in order for AWHWA to sign off and the Office of Homeless Youth to Fund these projects.

STEP 3: INTERROGATE YOUR DATA

Before you determine how you want to utilize the funding, it is important to look at your local data to help you understand the actual need of YYA experiencing or at risk of homelessness in your community. It provides the best information you have on the numbers of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness through quantitative, qualitative, and anecdotal data and describes those experiences so that everyone understands the problem you are trying to solve.

While you don't have a real-time Quality By-Name List yet, you have some data sets that you might want to review and get curious about, including:

- » [BNL Scorecard](#)
- » Coordinated Entry, HMIS and/or your HIC data

- » Previous needs/gaps assessments
- » Your ACI Coordinator's Landscape Scans
- » Insight from young people

We recommend taking some time to sit with your data without jumping to solutions – get curious about it! Questions you may want to ask yourselves:

- » What are you noticing when you look at these data sources? What are you curious about?
- » Who is accessing your services; which young people are waiting the longest to get housed?
- » What projects are most successful? Why do we think that might be?
- » Which demographic groups of young people do you know are underrepresented in your data?

STEP 4: PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Using the data (from above), you should go through an intentional process to identify gaps in the youth homelessness response system.

- » Determine what are the biggest gaps/barriers that can be addressed with additional service dollars in your community.
- » Look outside of the data – Direct service staff's perspectives can help your community "read between the lines" to better understand gaps in your system. Young people know what they need from the system; their input will give you further insight about why certain barriers exist and how they impact your data.

Questions you may want to ask yourselves:

- » What will you need additional funding for in order to change a "No" to a "Yes"?
- » What service gaps are most prominent in your community?
- » What are young people actually saying are the barriers they face most often when accessing the system or with finding/remaining in stable housing?

Hot tip: The solution to some problems may require funding, while other problems can be solved by altering a practice or policy. Keep track of any major problems your group notices that require process changes – you will spend the next few years solving those!

IDEAS FOR CENTERING YOUTH VOICES

- » Convene a focus group or invite your YAB to broadly identify the key problems they see in your local homelessness system (see the rad examples in our [Supporting Young People to Develop Change Ideas guide here](#))
- » Ask young people to talk about and compile their ideal/dream youth homelessness system – what would be happening that isn't happening now?

STEP 5: SOLUTION IDENTIFICATION

As you identify the key gaps and barriers, identify new strategies that would eliminate these gaps or address the needs YYA have identified. Think about what creative/innovative ideas or new projects you can try.

Questions you may want to ask yourselves:

- » What new ideas have you wanted to try to address gaps that you have not been able to in the past?
- » How can you better coordinate or collabo-

rate amongst each other to fill a need?

- » What innovative ideas do young people have?
- » Is this idea actually filling a gap, or is the process/role that exists not filling the purpose we need?

Use this opportunity to look strategically at what would eliminate or address the problems raised in step 4, not just to fill funding gaps.

IDEAS FOR CENTERING YOUTH VOICES

- » Host focus groups of young people that have experience with the particular problem areas that have been highlighted (ie: Coordinated Entry, outreach, shelter, supportive services, etc) to identify targeted solutions (see our [focus group guide](#) and our [Big Goal, Small Question](#) resources for ideas!)
- » Invite your YAB to identify and prioritize a few key projects they want to see funded and ask them what would have to be true about them for them to be effective

STEP 6: PRIORITIZE PROJECTS FOR FUNDING

Once you have determined the strategies that you think would effectively address the gaps, utilize a process to determine how you will prioritize the strategies identified.

- » What are your community's highest priorities for these service dollars?
- » If you do not already have a current youth gaps analysis, consider doing some type of System Modeling or projections exercise to concretely see the different ways

young people are accessing services and what types of projects they could utilize to most effectively and quickly move them to safe, stable housing (to determine what & how much of each housing & service type projects are needed).

- » Ensure that the agencies that might be responsible for implementing these projects participate and are bought in

IDEAS FOR CENTERING YOUTH VOICES

- » Ask your YAB to prioritize the projects in a process that runs parallel to the larger group's prioritization process.
- » Invite additional YAB members to the prioritization meeting to collect input from more perspectives and backgrounds
- » Weight young people's votes
- » Give the young people that have been part of your planning team veto power

STEP 7: DRAFT YOUR SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Once your projects are prioritized, draft your plan and submit it via the Jotform link you will receive in June. Key components you will need to include:

- » Project Descriptions, including agencies that would implement each project
- » Budget
- » Description of how young people with lived experience were involved in the process

- » For any projects outside of typical ones funded by OHY (ie [Outreach Services](#), [Housing Programs](#), [Licensed Group Care Programs](#)), please include outcome measures/deliverables

Be detailed in how the projects should be designed so that funded projects are implemented in alignment with the ACI.

IDEAS FOR CENTERING YOUTH VOICES

- » Ask your YAB members to weigh in on the details of how projects should be implemented – what would make them exceptional? What would cause them to fail? How can we center equity and justice? (this can even happen parallel to the contracting process)
- » If you come up with an out-of-the-box idea, ask young people to help develop the outcome measures for it

STEP 8: APPROVAL AND SIGNATURES

Once your plan is flushed out, obtain the required signatures and/or letters of support.

- » ACI Improvement Team
- » YYA representative(s) or YAB
- » Agencies receiving funds
- » AWHWA

STEP 9: SUBMIT YOUR PLAN TO OHY

Once you have final approval and signatures, we will work together to submit your plan to OHY and support you to get contracts in place.

What Happens Later?

After Plans have been approved, the Office of Homeless Youth will proceed with contracting directly with agencies and working to set up HMIS projects, if needed, via a sole source contracting process.

In spring 2023, your Lead Coach will assist your community, if desired, to reflect on what you learn over the next year of reaching quality, reliable By-Name-List data. What is working? What needs to be tweaked? Would something else actually serve young people more effectively? If changes to this plan need to happen, we will support those efforts!

Note that the 2023 Legislative Session will be an important one for all of the Anchor Communities, as we will need to work collectively to secure continued funding to both sustain and propel progress towards your community reaching Functional Zero and becoming a community that is wired to solve for zero! We will work alongside you to advocate for these vital supportive resources! Please be on the lookout for legislative engagement opportunities as we plot this path forward!



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