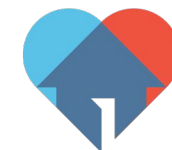# Spokane County ACI

Actively Homeless and Unsheltered Shifts
Oct 2021

A WAY HOME
WASHINGTON

This Case Study reviews the major lessons learned by the Spokane County Core Team between December 2020 and July 2021 as they made significant progress on reducing their overall actively homeless and unsheltered numbers for unaccompanied youth and young adults (YYA), including:

- ❖ Significant data points
- ❖ Journey to quality, reliable, By-Name-List Data
- ❖ Successful system innovations
- ❖ What's next for Spokane?

Spokane County

ACI Case Study

What is the Anchor Community Initiative (ACI)?

The Anchor Community Initiative is a project of A Way Home Washington (AWHWA) that supports communities to 1) accurately know all of the unaccompanied youth and young adults aged 12-24 experiencing homelessness and housing instability, and 2) use that data to make systems changes they need to end, not just manage, YYA homelessness by reaching functional zero. This includes ensuring just and equitable outcomes for youth of color and LGBTQ young people.

We provide strategic coaching, data infrastructure, subject matter expertise, and state level advocacy to local teams, who leverage their expertise, political will, and real-time data to transform into communities that can quickly provide every unique young person a pathway forward.
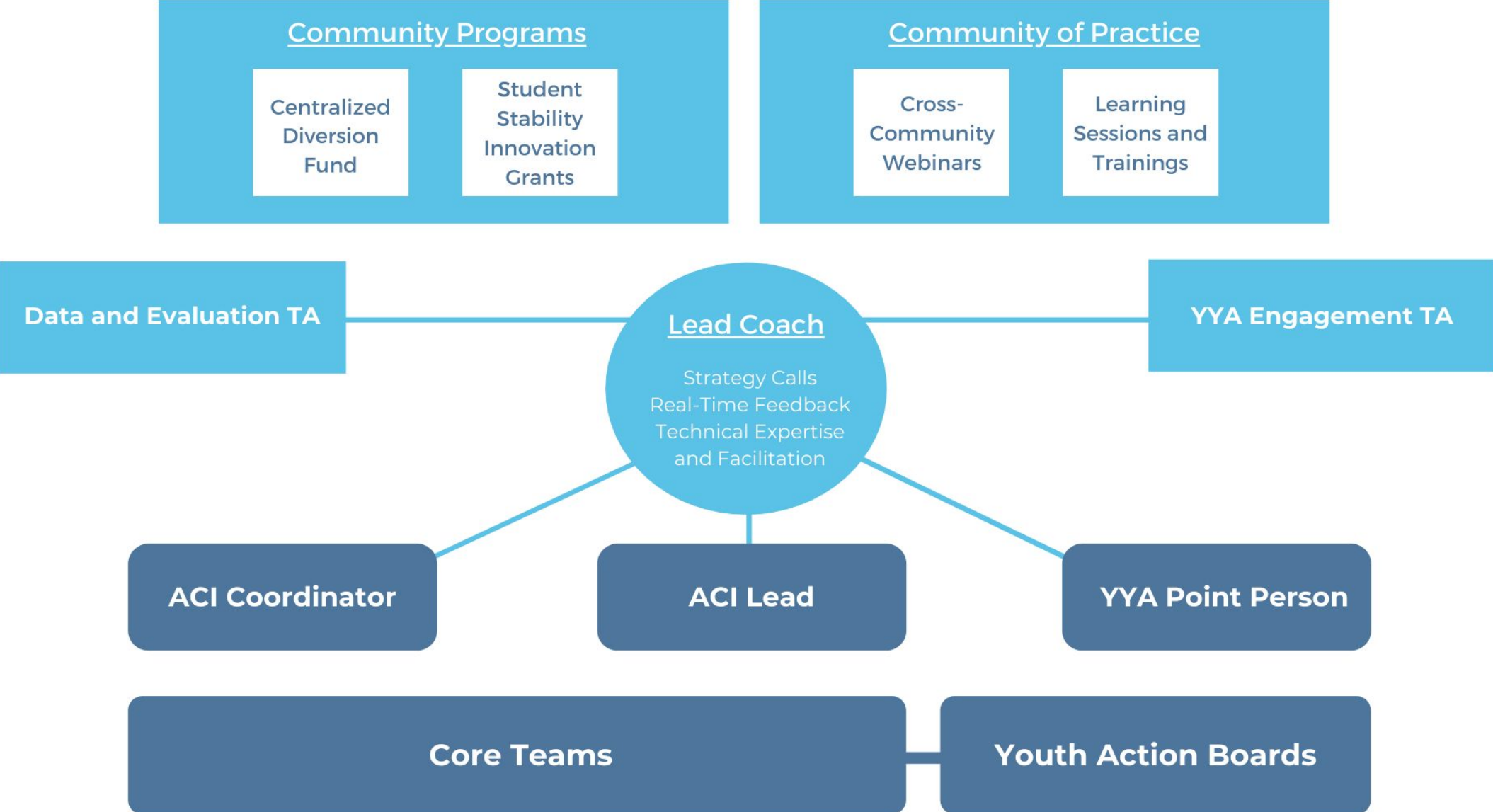**We call that Yes to Yes.**

Functional Zero Goal: We are successful when Anchor Communities:

1. Can **house** all the young people coming into their system in 30 days or less,
2. have 0 unsheltered young people, and
3. there are **equitable outcomes** for youth of color, LGBTQ young people, and trans and gender nonconforming young people

ANCHOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Community Programs

- Centralized Diversion Fund
- Student Stability Innovation Grants

Community of Practice

- Cross-Community Webinars
- Learning Sessions and Trainings

Data and Evaluation TA

Lead Coach

Strategy Calls
Real-Time Feedback
Technical Expertise
and Facilitation

YYA Engagement TA

ACI Coordinator

ACI Lead

YYA Point Person

Core Teams

Youth Action Boards

Using quality, real time data, communities can tell if system changes they make are having an impact month over month
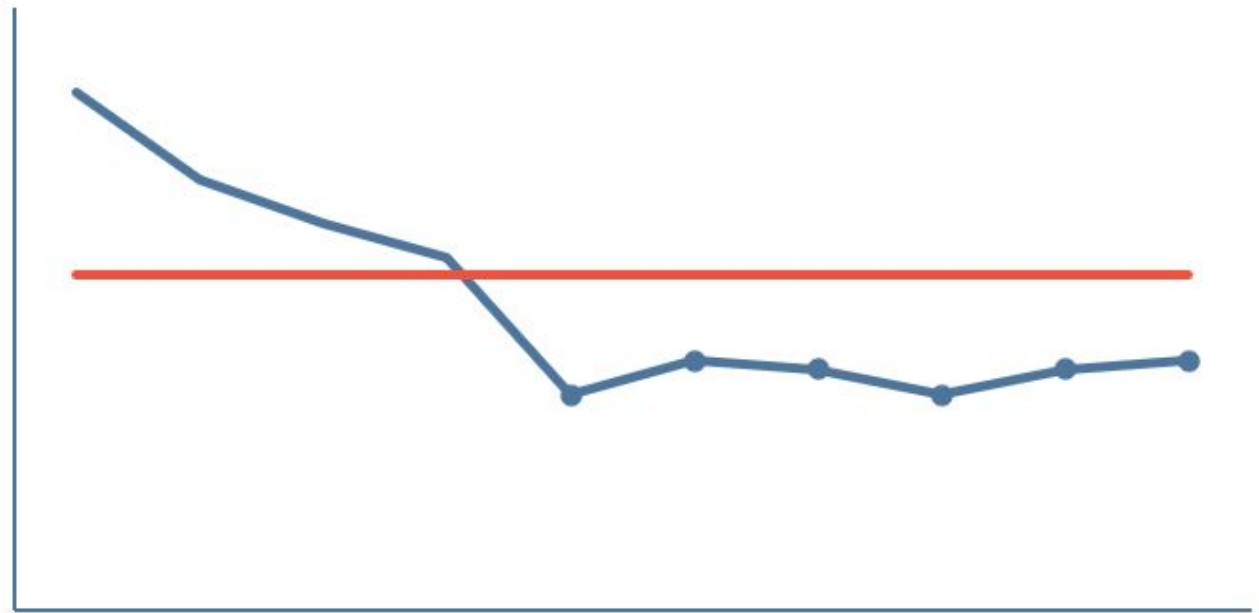
To be confident a homelessness system has fundamentally changed, we need to see **6 data points** below a system's baseline.

We call that a SHIFT

Spokane is the **first community in WA to measurably and sustainably reduce youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness**.

They are the 3rd in the nation, behind Built for Zero communities Rockford, IL and Gulf Coast, MS. However, they are the first in the nation for a community of their size to measurably reduce YYA homelessness - reach a "shift."

Spokane 2021 Team
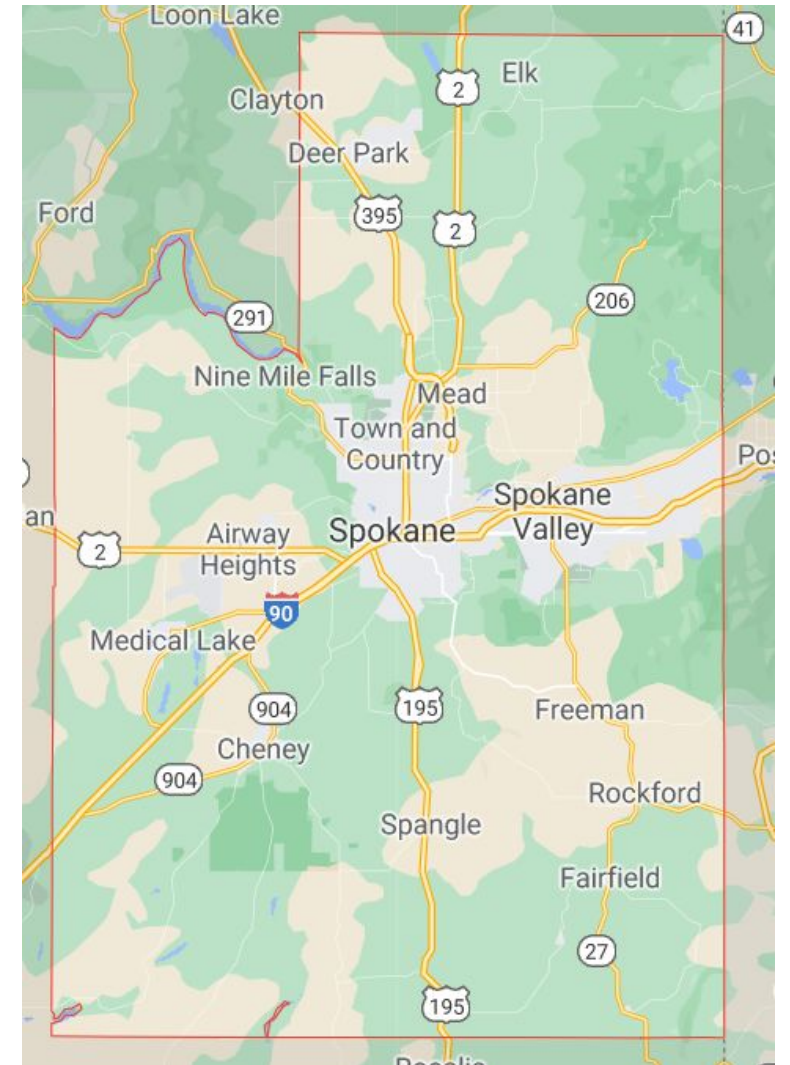
ACI Coordinator: Cecily Ferguson
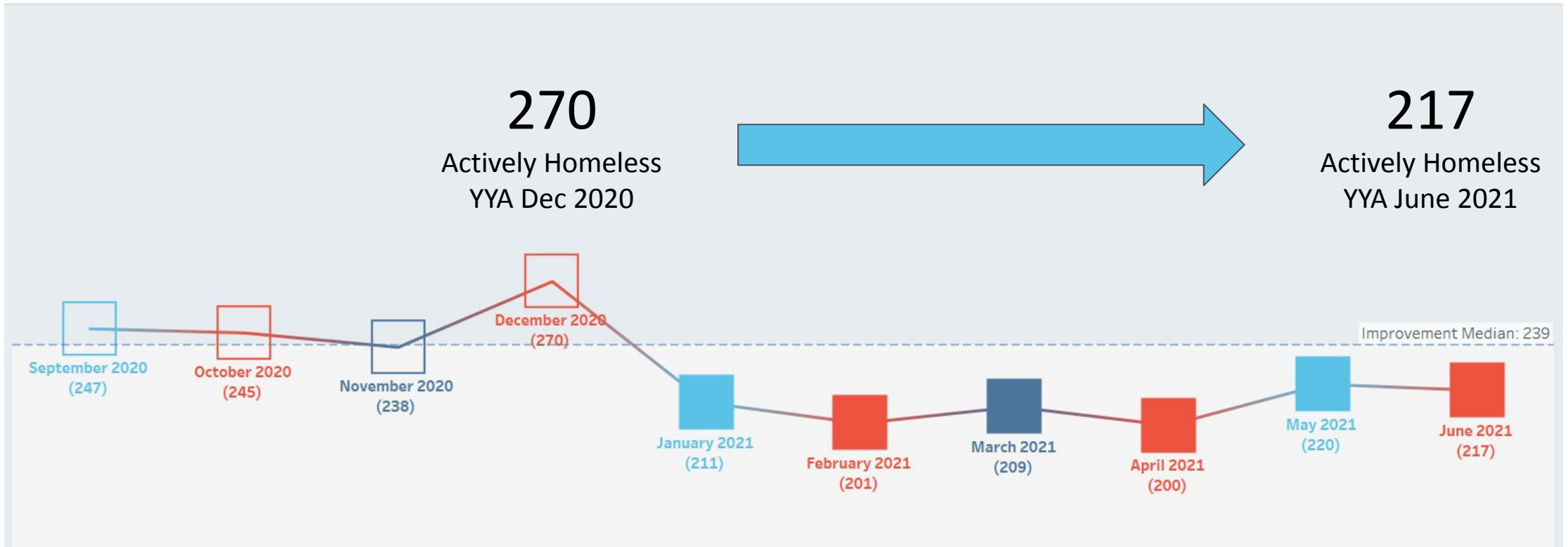
ACI Lead: Matt Davis (until August 2021)

BNL Coordinator/Data Lead: Julius Henrichsen

YYA Engagement Lead: Lynsey Romero

Lead ACI Coach: Isaac Sanders

ANCHOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Measurable reduction in young people experiencing homelessness (SHIFT)

270
Actively Homeless
YYA Dec 2020

217
Actively Homeless
YYA June 2021

Improvement Median: 239

September 2020
(247)

October 2020
(245)

November 2020
(238)

December 2020
(270)

January 2021
(211)

February 2021
(201)

March 2021
(209)

April 2021
(200)

May 2021
(220)

June 2021
(217)

Total number of young people actively experiencing homelessness in
Spokane Sept 2020 to June 2021

ANCHOR
COMMUNITY
INITIATIVE

Spokane Timeline to Shift

ANCHOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

July 2019:
OHY state funds go towards BNL Coordinator, In-reach team and Crosswalk Youth shelter. Spokane secures vendor to start working on a custom BNL build.

Dec 2019:
Spokane starts submitting data disaggregated by race, age, gender and sexual orientation

June 2020:
HMIS build is overspent and unsuccessful. Community is forced to abandon it

June 2020:
Workgroups Launched

Nov 2020:
Sets a goal to increase their QTBIPOC housing placement rate by 50% by April 2021

Jan 2021:
Spokane creates a replicable logic and manual process for data submission, and completes final pieces of the BNL scorecard! Backdates quality data to April 2020

April 2021:
Sets a goal to reduce their actively homeless number by 40% by Oct 2021

May-June 2021:
Diverts 22 YYA during 30 Diversions in 30 Days Challenge

Spokane achieves its first sustained measurable reduction through testing of change ideas and strong data quality

COVID-19

March 2019:
BNL Coaching starts. Spokane Core Team takes BNL Scorecard for the first time, starts submitting monthly data

Oct 2019:
Cecily hired as local FTE ACI Coordinator

Jan 2020:
Starts case conferencing twice per month

May 2020:
Sets first reducing goal: Increase housing placement rate by 30% by Oct 2020

August 2020:
AWHWA Centralized Diversion Fund (CDF) Launches. Spokane completes first Coordinated Entry process map

November 2020:
Starts case conferencing weekly, alternating prioritization of unsheltered and QTBIPOC YYA

March 2021:
Spokane starts first Student Stability Innovation Grants projects

March 2021:
Spectrum intersectionality training for the Core Team

July 2021:
Submitted YHDP application written by YAB and Core Team using BNL and CDF data

August 2021:
AWHWA completes custom Python data transformation tool to automate data submissions

Spokane's Journey to Quality, Real-time Data

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By Name List Scorecard

May June July ... Aug Septe Octo Nove Dece Febr Marc Marc Marc ... April April May May ... Octo Dece
Marc 20.. .. 20.. ...

| 5 | 12 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 21 | 23 | 27 | 28 | 30 | 33 | 35 | 40 | 40 | 41 | **42** |

(Rows: 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4, 5A, 5B, 6A, 6B, 6C, 7, 8A, 8B, 8C, 9A, 9B, 10, 11, 12, 13A, 13B, 14A, 14B, 14C, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21A, 21B, 21C, 22A, 22B, 22C)

Spokane completed sections 1 and 2 of the scorecard by April 2020. Questions 17 and 20 (returns to homelessness and moves to inactive) were the last questions they were stuck on until they completed the scorecard in Jan 2021.

1. Community Participation & Coverage

- Accounting for all young people experiencing homelessness
- Outreach coverage
- Providers reporting data
- Coordinated Entry Accessibility

2. Policies & Procedures

- Inactivity policy
- Non-consenting young people
- LGBTQ+ and race/ethnicity data collection

3. Data Infrastructure

- Tracking homeless status
- Unique identifier
- Accounting for newly identified and returning young people

Improving Quality Data

Successful Policies and System Improvements

1. **Collecting system-wide sexual orientation data for YYA**
   - Spokane had very few young adult specific services, and knew they needed to find a way to universally collect sexual orientation data if they were going to end disproportionality for queer YYA
   - Core Team advocated to the CoC to have a universal question about sexual orientation included in every HMIS entry for a 12-24 year old and organized local community SOGI data collection trainings to remove barriers
   - Spokane's sexual orientation categories are more expansive than the HUD requirement, based on feedback from YYA

2. **Improving System Partnerships**
   - Spokane mapped out clear policies around referral processes and protocols with key systems of care, and they created clear roles with their new InReach team to maintain relationships with local McKinney-Vento Liaisons and Inpatient Behavioral Health partners
   - Juvenile Justice Policy
   - Child Welfare Policy
   - Public Schools Coordinating Policy

3. **Yes to Yes Committee: YYA By-Name List Case Conferencing**
   - Providers are able to clean their BNL, update touchpoints and notice data collection issues in real time because of the frequency of case conferencing
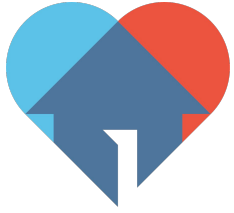
All Anchor Communities collect and use these system level data points each month

Inflow → **Actively Homeless** → **Outflow**

- New
- Returning (from housing)
- Returning (from inactive)

- > 90 days
- Unsheltered
- Sheltered
- Doubled up/couchsurfing
- Other/unknown

- Permanently housed
- Inactive
- No longer meets population criteria
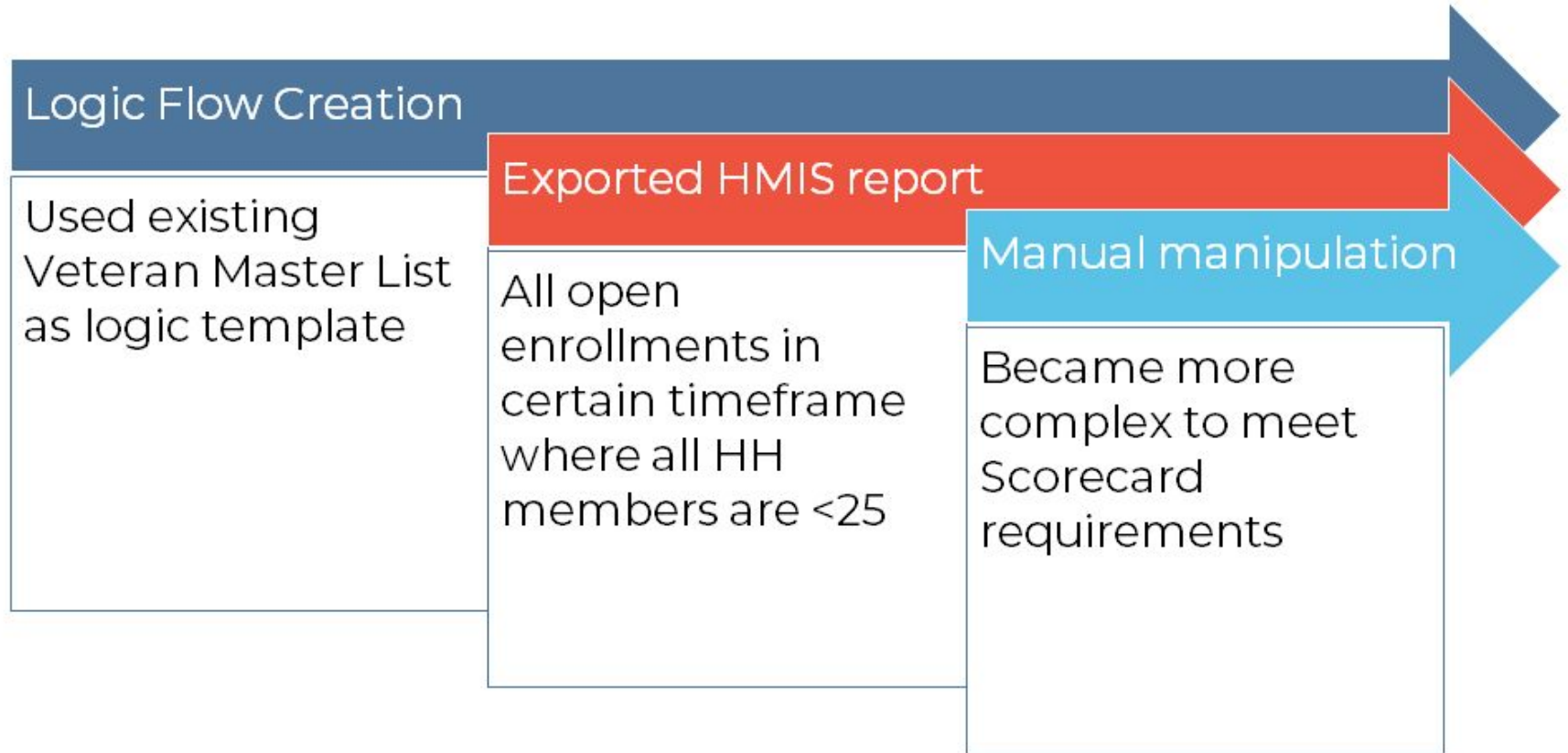- # of days from ID to permanent housing

Age   **YYA of Color**   **LGBQ**   **Gender Diverse**

By Name List Manual Process

For about a year, Spokane worked with developers to build a tool that would auto-populate a BNL in their HMIS system, but they were forced to abandon it because it was unsuccessful.

So, they developed a manual process based on a comprehensive logic flow document that would take 14 hours each month to complete.

Logic Flow Creation

Used existing Veteran Master List as logic template

Exported HMIS report

All open enrollments in certain timeframe where all HH members are <25

Manual manipulation

Became more complex to meet Scorecard requirements

Spokane Logic Flow

The Spokane Team painstakingly created a logic flow document with every possible scenario a young person entering and exiting HMIS could experience. They then morphed it into what we call the "IF/ELSE" document that allowed AWHWA Data & Evaluation Manager, Vishesh Jain, to translate the logic into an automated data transformation tool in Python.

Spokane's logic flow has been adapted to improve other Anchor Communities' data transformation processes. It has also been shared with communities nationally to help jumpstart their youth BNL efforts.

Automated Python Solution

Spokane's logic flow *(screenshot to the right)* outlines the 8 manual processes that they use to transform their HMIS export into monthly system level data. Using Python (a coding language) and the IF/ELSE logic statements, Vishesh transformed the processes into a script that:

- Reduces the processing time from almost 14 hours to ~1 min

- Is completely automated

- Significantly alleviates the likelihood of any manual errors

- Allows scalability and standardization of ACI data definitions

- Is forming the basis of a canned Looker reporting solution for WA Balance of State communities.

Zero Process (Manual): Run and review initial HMIS Export
- Run HMIS export
- Review for anomalies (many more or fewer enrollments than expected, etc.)
- Remove enrollments that appear to be for "test clients"
- Remove SSVF enrollments from Idaho Balance of State CoC
- Remove all enrollments that began after the current reporting month

First process: establish top record
- Review every record in current month HMIS export
  - IF relationship to head of household is 'Self'
  - THEN retain record for evaluation

  - IF Count of Case Members equals 1 AND
  - IF relationship to head of household is NOT 'Self'
  - THEN retain record for evaluation

  - ELSE record is excluded
- Create Event Date field for each head of household in current month HMIS export
  - IF project type is Other
    - THEN record is excluded
  - IF Exit Date is NOT NULL AND
    - IF Exit Date Month = Current Reporting Month AND
      - IF project type is NOT CE
      - THEN Event Date = Exit Date

Spokane Data and Run Charts

Unsheltered rate, Permanent Housing Placements and Reducing Goals

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Measurable reduction in unsheltered homelessness

Between September 2020 to June 2021 Spokane decreased unsheltered homelessness by over 50%
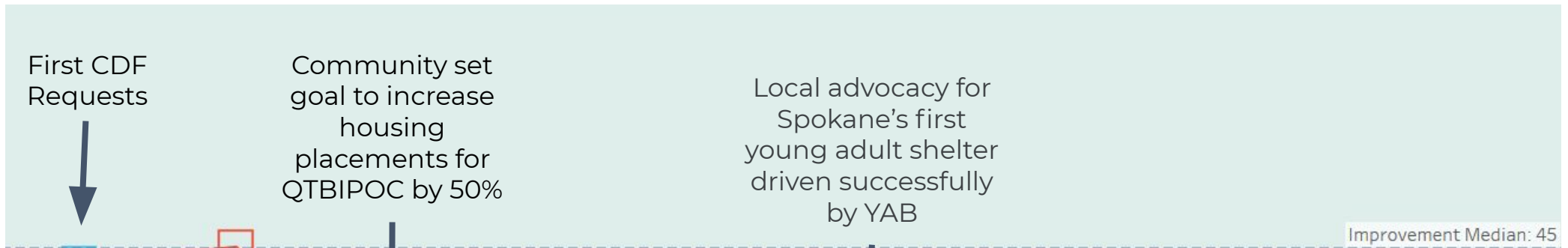
First CDF Requests

Community set goal to increase housing placements for QTBIPOC by 50%

Local advocacy for Spokane's first young adult shelter driven successfully by YAB

Opened new young adult shelter

Housing placements surge

Started prioritizing QTBIPOC and unsheltered YYA in case conferencing

InReach team fully staffed

Targeted effort to design collaborative relationship between street outreach teams, Coordinated Entry, InReach, and young adult shelter staff

Improvement Median: 45

September 2020 (44)

October 2020 (45)

November 2020 (35)

December 2020 (43)

January 2021 (24)

February 2021 (37)

March 2021 (34)

April 2021 (19)

May 2021 (25)

June 2021 (19)

Increased Permanent Housing Placements

In May 2020, Spokane set a goal that they would increase housing placements above their median of 23 by 30% by October 2020.
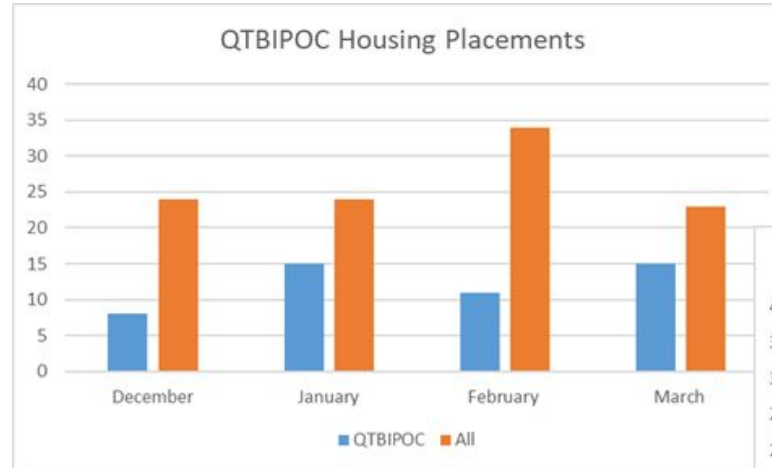

Reached 30% housing placements increase goal

Inreach team attempted to engage all YYA waiting for a housing resource in a diversion conversation

Housed 19 households during 30in30 Diversion Challenge

Started weekly case conferencing

Targeted effort to house more QTBIPOC YYA using CDF

October 2020 (42)

February 2021 (45)

January 2021 (33)

November 2020 (24) **December 2020 (24)**

March 2021 (28)

April 2021 (30)

May 2021 (31)

June 2021 (28)

Improvement Median: 23

Started using the CE Next Step form

ACI advocated for CE to remove Rapid Rehousing YYA vulnerability score threshold when there is no wait pool

September 2020 (18)

CDF advertisement directly to YYA through by/for and social media channels

Homebusters Housing Search Group launched

ANCHOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Disproportionality-focused Housing Placements Goal

In November 2020, Spokane became the first Anchor Community to set a goal specifically focusing on disproportionality, centering their work on housing placements for LGBTQ+ and POC YYA.

Upon getting to work, they realized that getting intersectional data was extremely challenging given their manual BNL processes.

Spokane's lead and BNL Coordinator worked together to create an excel solution using by name list data to calculate and de-duplicate an LGBTQ+ and POC list. They manually calculated this monthly during the action cycle.

QTBIPOC Housing Placements

Month	Non-QTBIPOC	QTBIPOC	Grand Total
Dec	16	8	24
Jan	10	15	25
Feb	23	11	34
March	8	15	23
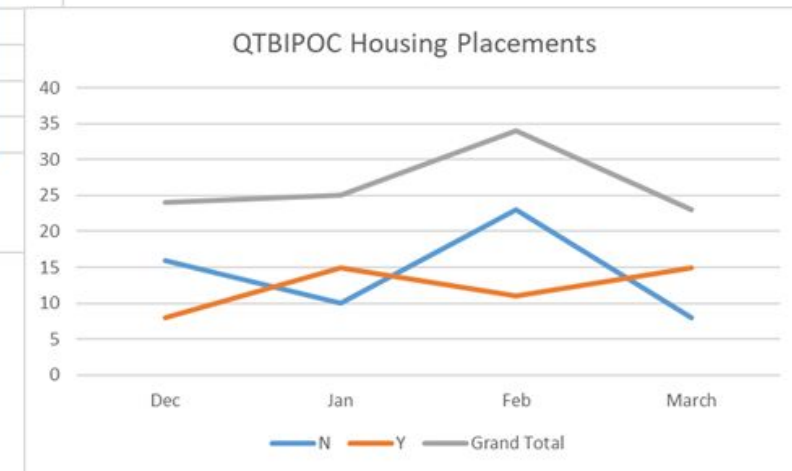
Goal: Increase housing placements for YYA who identify as LGBTQ+ and/or POC by 50% by April 30, 2021

ANCHOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

How did Spokane achieve a shift?

Youth Advisory Board

Data Innovations

System Changes eg. InReach

Case Conferencing

Community of Practice

Spokane's Youth Advisory Board

In ACI, all communities strive to reach a Gold Standard of YYA Engagement, meaning that they:

1. Have at least 2 young people participating on their Core Teams as full members
2. Have a youth action board (YAB) meeting at least once per month to discuss ACI change ideas, system issues and ACI projects
3. Young people are stipended for all ACI work

See our ACI Gold Standard here.

Dedicated 0.5 FTE YYA Engagement Specialist: Lynsey Romero

Housed at Volunteers of America (VoA)

- Young leaders with lived experience of homelessness
- Work with partners to provide ACI team members feedback, input and ideas for systemic changes
- Develop improvement projects with ACI Core Team including the CE Next Step Form
- Young people have voting membership on CoC Youth Subcommittee and participate in ACI Core Team meetings
- YAB advocacy locally was critical to bringing the new Young Adult Shelter in
- Worked with VoA to identify and implement policies and rules at new young adult shelter
- Wrote major portions of Spokane's YHDP Application

InReach Team

Schools · Inpatient behavioral health · Other systems of care → In-reach

System based outreach program

Innovative outreach project to directly and sustainably connect the homelessness system with local systems of care

Funded by ACI-OHY passthrough dollars in Fall 2019

Takes referrals (including self-referrals) under any definition of homelessness as of August 2020. Their focus is on relationships with McKinney-Vento Liaisons and inpatient behavioral health partners

Ensures that young people are included on the BNL by actively enrolling them in HMIS and connecting them with services, including housing

Actively collaborates with street outreach teams

Community-focused mindset enables the InReach team to focus energy and change direction towards system changes as they are identified by the ACI Core Team

Weekly Case Conferencing

- Led by Julius Henrichsen (BNL Coordinator), a position funded by OHY passthrough funds

- Originally were case conferencing their BNL 2x per month, but switched to weekly in Nov 2020, and started alternating prioritization between unsheltered and QTBIPOC young people. These changes have led to new system insights:
  - Focusing on unsheltered every other week has highlighted important gaps in street outreach
  - Added a process step to CE assessments for single and family providers to offer direct referrals to YouthREACH (street outreach) team and young adult shelter, if a young person indicates they are sleeping unsheltered
  - Launched Housebusters, a YAB-developed collaboration between Rapid Rehousing/InReach/Young Adult Shelter to offer coordinated housing search assistance to YYA

- Service provider communication and collaboration has improved and efforts to house YYA are more streamlined
  - For example: Landlord Liaison began attending regularly and brings housing lists when available; Employment Specialist sends updated employment list each week

Since making this system change to weekly case conferencing, the team has noticed clear success for unsheltered YYA, but has not seen the same success in QTBIPOC case conferencing - the team is now digging into why their system is less able to permanently house QTBIPOC YYA and test system changes around it

Community of Practice

Spokane is a highly collaborative community, taking an all-hands-on-deck approach to **ending**, not just managing YYA homelessness.

Spokane has recently started a partnership with Built for Zero to work on ending homelessness for single adults and families. They are using the skills and tools they have built through ACI work to impact all populations experiencing homelessness.

InReach

Youth Advisory Board

Young Adult Shelter

Systems of Care

Diversion

Coordinated Entry
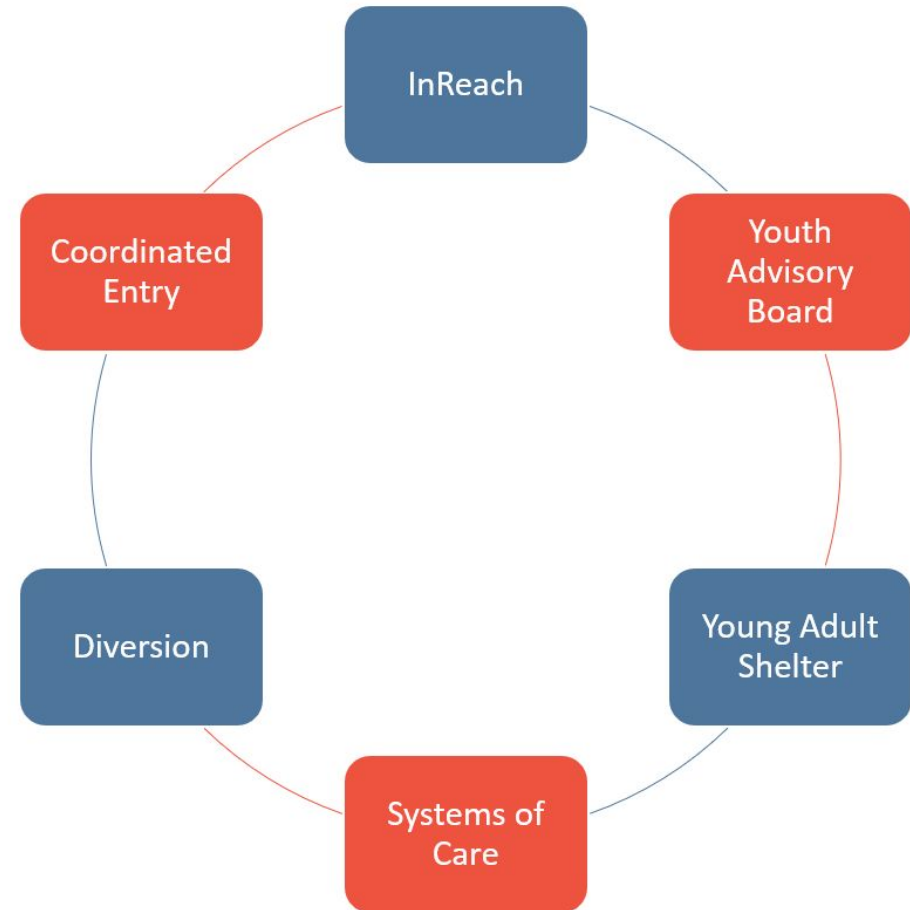
Innovative Housing Success:
Centralized Diversion Fund

AWHWA's Centralized Diversion Fund (CDF), in partnership with the Office of Homeless Youth, provides flexible funding to eliminate barriers for YYA to safe and stable housing outside of the homelessness system, including for YYA at risk of homelessness or who are unstably housed.

See our recent report here for more information!

Spokane has identified the CDF as a major factor in their success. So far they have:

- Served 136 households with $203,000
- Average $1493 spent per household served
- 2 day median processing time for requests
- Spent down all of Year 1 OHY funds
- Most common fund type requests: Rental assistance/arrears, housing deposits and application fees
- Providers trained across the community, including faith based providers and systems of care
- Targeted innovations on increasing CDF requests, including efforts currently underway to ensure every YYA has a diversion conversation within 72 hours of contact with the system

CDF System-wide Impact
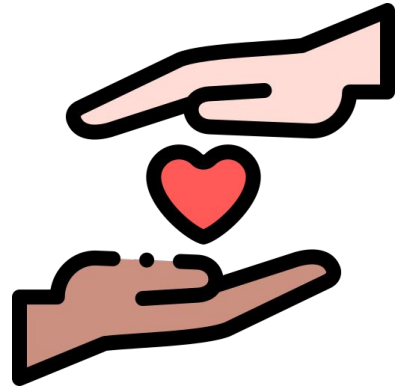
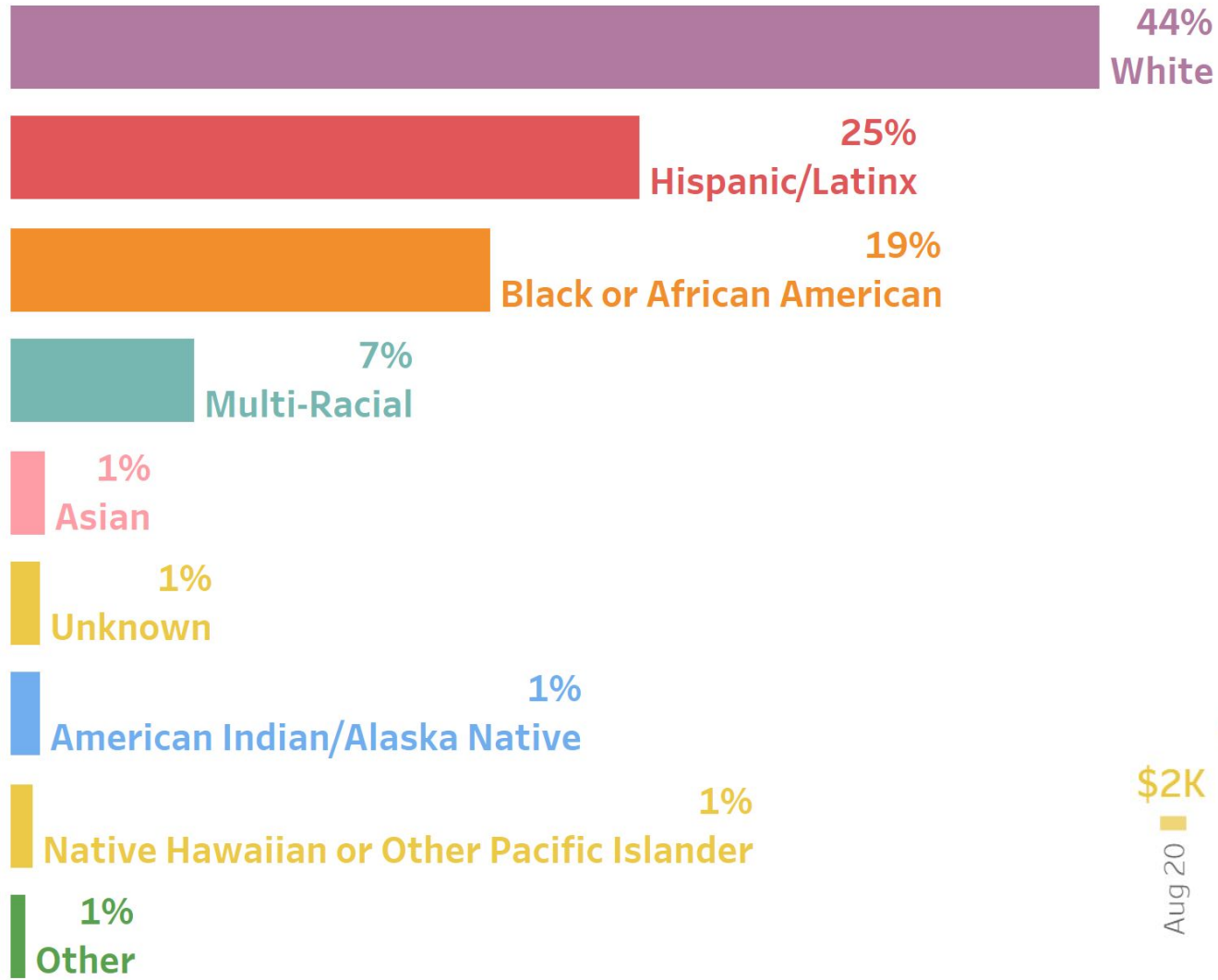**Movement to Diversion-First system**
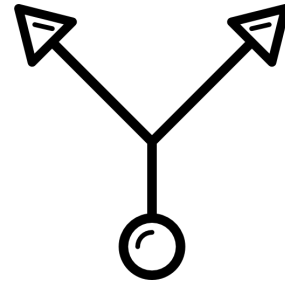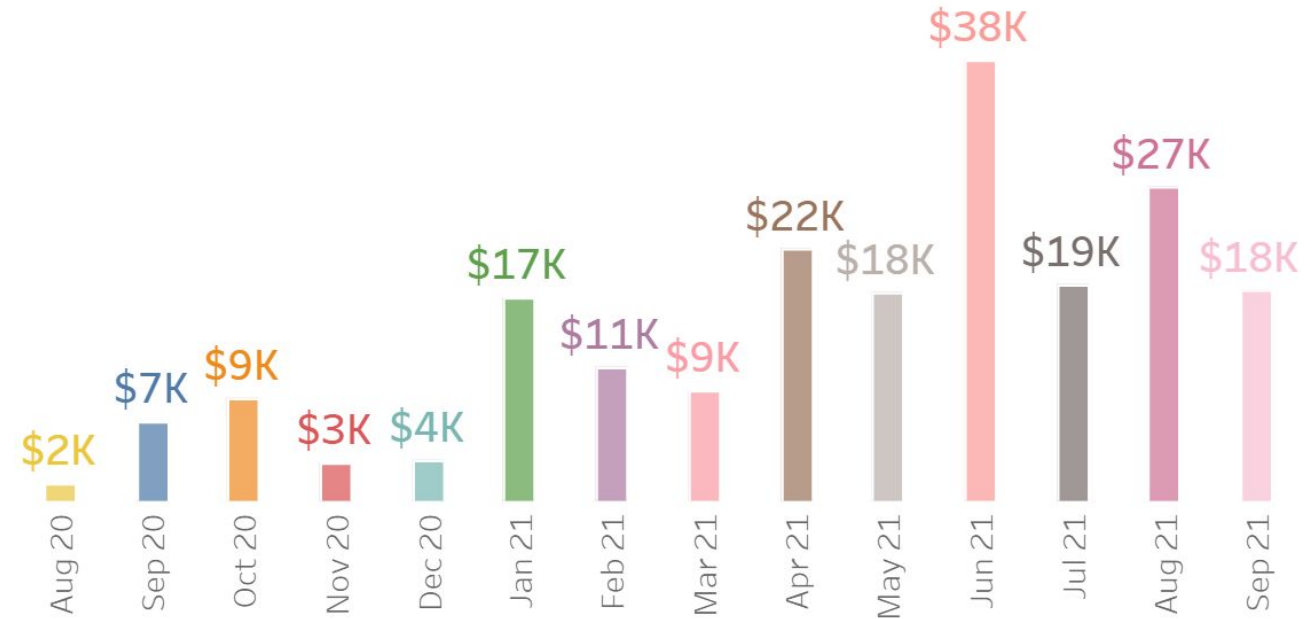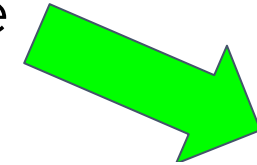
CoC Diversion Sub-Committee

Housing services for at-risk and couch-surfing YYA

CDF Creative Housing Solutions

Karate Instructor
A minor youth who had been in emergency shelter began a dependency process with their martial arts instructor and CDF helped solidify their stability with a gift card for the last couple items needed

Lease Takeover
Three young adults working with the Inreach team were able to secure housing through a lease takeover with move in cost support from the CDF

Fleeing gang violence
A young person had to flee their home due to gang violence. The CDF helped cover their rental arrears so that they had housing when they were able to return home.

Plane Ticket Spokane-Seattle
A young mother fleeing DV was relocating to the east coast and needed to catch her flight in Seattle

Spokane will be setting their next reducing goal at the end of October!

Stay Tuned!

What's Next?

- ❖ Working with AWHWA to pilot a new **racial equity machine learning analysis** to pinpoint areas of racial inequity in their housing system

- ❖ Seeking out pathways forward to build a **youth-specific Coordinated Entry** system

- ❖ Finish the job and <u>**END**</u> **Unsheltered YYA Homelessness**

- ❖ **Making Spokane truly Diversion-First**: How can Spokane ensure that every young person encountering their system is actively connected to a support person and receives a diversion conversation within 72 hours? Stay tuned!

- ❖ Building **broad local community buy-in** to end youth homelessness, beyond the typical service system

- ❖ Work on making the most of their new **YHDP Grant**!

Congratulations Spokane!