



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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ABOUT A WAY HOME WASHINGTON

- **What is A Way Home Washington?**

A Way Home Washington (AWHWA) is a statewide movement to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness, with a focus on prioritizing young people of color and LGBTQ+ youth who experience homelessness at higher rates than their white, straight, cisgender peers. Co-Chaired by First Lady Trudi Inslee, AWHWA unites passionate stakeholders across the state to build systems that respond to the unique needs of *all* young people.

- **What is Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in Washington?**

An estimated 13,000 – 15,000 young people in Washington are experiencing homelessness – the equivalent of nearly a quarter of the state’s entire high school graduation class per year.

The circumstances that lead youth (ages 12 to 18) and young adults (ages 18 through 24) to experience homelessness can vary from person to person. They may be rooted in family conflict, like running away from an abusive household or being kicked out of their home after coming out to their family as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or Queer/questioning. Other key contributing factors include racial disparities and systemic inequalities, lack of affordable housing, exiting from a system of care, poverty, mental health challenges, substance misuse and more.

When young people have a stable home, supportive connections and access to needed services, they have the opportunity to successfully transition into adulthood and thrive.

- **How does AWHWA define ‘youth and young adult homelessness’?**

Young people between the ages of 12-24 unaccompanied by a parent or guardian who are unsheltered or living in places unfit for human habitation, in shelter, or unsafely or unstably housed. This includes young people who are fleeing domestic violence and trafficking, and those who may be unsafely or unstably couchsurfing or doubled-up.

- **What do Functional Zero and Yes to Yes mean?**

A set of measures communities across the country used to determine whether a community has functionally ended homelessness. Communities know they have reached functional zero when they have the capacity to:

- prevent most homelessness
- quickly identify all the unaccompanied young people who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability at any given time
- quickly resolve homelessness with connections to safe and stable housing

Young people experiencing housing instability can access services they need and want quickly without leaving their home community and are no longer homeless in the process. When a young person says “Yes, I need help,” a community is able to say “Yes” back – Yes to Yes!

- **Why was AWHWA created?**

A Way Home Washington was started by a coalition of philanthropy, nonprofit, and government leaders who saw a gap in Washington state. There were many organizations doing important work, but no single organization was specifically responsible for improving systems to end unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness. Shortly after Governor Jay Inslee first took office in 2013, he and First Lady Trudi Inslee were approached by philanthropists Tricia Raikes and Sonya Campion. Out of these initial conversations, the ideas for both AWHWA and the state Office of Homeless Youth were born.

The Raikes Foundation, Campion Foundation, Satterberg Foundation, and other inaugural funders founded AWHWA, initially lending several members of their own staff to get the organization off the ground. For AWHWA’s first-ever Executive Director, they selected Jim Theofelis, a storied advocate for young people and founder of The Mockingbird Society.

Raikes, Campion and Satterberg remain funders of AWHWA, and have been joined over the years by funders such as Ballmer Group, the Schultz Family Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. After launching AWHWA and the Anchor Community Initiative, and numerous advocacy victories in the state legislature, Jim officially passed the baton to Julie Patiño at the end of 2020.

AWHWA is fortunate to have a leader and champion in the First Lady of Washington, Trudi Inslee. Mrs. Inslee has served as co-chair since AWHWA’s inception, and ending youth and young adult homelessness continues as a priority for Governor Jay Inslee’s administration.

ABOUT THE ANCHOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

- **What is the Anchor Community Initiative?**

The circumstances that lead to the experience of homelessness can vary greatly, so solutions also need to be varied. Tailoring approaches to prevent and end homelessness that are centered on the experience and expertise of young people and take into account their circumstances and the communities they live in is the focus of the Anchor Community Initiative, A Way Home Washington's flagship program.

In each Anchor Community, a diverse coalition brings together all parts of a community with partners committing to work across systems and silos, sticking with their collective approach until they have functionally ended youth homelessness. Each community's plan and approach is unique, typically covering a prevention network, emergency response, housing and supportive resources, treatment services, employment and educational attainment.

- **What is required to be an Anchor Community?**

Communities interested in participating in the Anchor Community Initiative must be willing and able to partner with AWHWA to address youth (ages 12 to 18) and young adult (ages 18 through 24) homelessness, with a focus on prioritizing young people of color and LGBTQ+ youth who experience homelessness at higher rates than their white, straight, cisgender peers. Local communities must be able to commit to:

- **Ongoing community buy-in and key stakeholder support** for participation in this initiative, including the CoC Lead Agency and HMIS Lead;
- Upholding the **values and aim** of the Anchor Community Initiative, including authentic youth engagement and a commitment to end disproportionality for YYA of color, LGBTQ and trans/gender nonconforming YYA;
- **Authentic engagement** with young people with lived experience as partners and leaders, including supporting an active YAB and ensuring that all young people are compensated for their work;
- **Setting specific, measurable goals** to drive a functional end to YYA homelessness in your community;
- **Identifying and securing key local positions** (a community lead, data lead, and agency to host the local Coordinator and the Youth and Community Engagement positions) *within the first quarter of 2022;*
- **Convening cross sector teams** (both a Community Team and an Improvement Team) working in sync with youth action boards (YABs) who are responsible for making progress towards functional zero, uplifting youth voice, and centering racial and LGBTQ+ justice in the work

Convening your local Improvement Team *twice a month*

Hosting Youth Action Board meetings *at least monthly*

Hosting Community Team meetings *at least quarterly*

- **Engaging in meaningful relationships** with partners outside of the homeless response system, including by/for organizations, school, child welfare, inpatient behavioral health and juvenile justice systems;
 - **Building and using a quality and reliable By-Name List (BNL)** of all unaccompanied young people experiencing homelessness in your community;
 - Using your BNL data to **reduce the number** of young people experiencing homelessness and **reach functional zero**, including an **end to disproportionality** for BIPOC, LGBTQ and trans/gender non-conforming young people;
 - Monthly system-level **data reporting**;
 - **Participating in a Community of Practice**, which includes attending **Learning Sessions** (*2x per year*) and other trainings, webinars, and peer-sharing opportunities;
 - Engaging in robust analysis around how **systemic racism, homophobia and transphobia** are showing up in your system and programs, and taking concrete action to transform it; and
 - **Being brave and innovative** - willingness to honestly interrogate your system and creatively test new ways of doing things, even when there is a possibility of failure
- **How can I learn more about the ACI Expansion and prepare for the Expression of Interest process?**
Review the ACI expansion Expression of Interest packet of information. You can also learn more by visiting our [website](#) and join us for informational webinars on Zoom on 10/13/21 at 4:00 PM ([register here](#)) and on 11/4/21 at 3:00 PM ([register here](#)). Please note that **final submissions of Expressions of Interest are due on 11/19/21**.
 - **How did you come up with this model?**
Our model was originally based on the Community Solutions Built for Zero framework. AWHWA adapted this model for systems change work with youth and young adults and further embedded the goals and implements necessary to address the gross disproportionality of LGBTQ+ and young people of color. We work with communities to address homelessness and disproportionality at the same time by disaggregating data to ensure that these young people are seen by the ‘system’ and that targeted efforts can be marshalled to drive reductions both to flow into the system, as well out of the system. This level of disaggregation and tactical support add a layer of complexity to the work but also operate to address arguably the biggest unmet need in the homeless system – that of addressing the disparate impact and harm to young people of color and those with intersectional identities (LGBTQ+).
 - **What relationship does the ACI have to the 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. AWHWA is also able to provide in-depth support to communities without a local cost to communities due to philanthropic partners who are mission-aligned.

- **What specific equity components are in the ACI definition of Functional Zero and why did you choose these measures?**

The three specific equity measures built into the ACI definition of functional zero are:

- Zero disproportionality in returns from housing: People of color and LGBQ and trans and gender nonconforming young people are returning to homelessness from housing at the same or lesser rate than others;
- Zero disproportionality in permanent housing: People of color and LGBQ and trans and gender nonconforming young people are being housed at the same or higher rate than they experience homelessness; and
- People of color and LGBQ and trans and gender nonconforming young people spend equal or less time experiencing homelessness than others.

These measures were chosen as key indicators to ensure that a community's homelessness system is not reproducing disproportionality for these key populations, while being measurable and useful for guiding communities to improve their system. These measures are unique to the ACI, and we have been collaboratively working with other initiatives to center equity and justice in our efforts to end YVA homelessness.

You can find more information in our Functional Zero 1-Pager [here](#).

- **What are the benefits to communities participating in the Anchor Community Initiative?**

Communities that are selected as an Anchor Community can expect the following benefits and supports:

- Strategic coaching, data infrastructure, subject matter expertise, and state level advocacy support from a dedicated team who use a data-driven, continuous quality improvement model to support local communities in setting measurable goals, identifying system changes, and using system data to track results;
- A Lead Coach who will support communities to reach their local goals;
- Focused support for the collection and utilization of quality data;
- Connection to other Anchor Communities across the state through facilitated, cross-cohort calls, various learning opportunities, ACI learning sessions, and access to shared material, best practices, tools, data dashboards, and resources through the ACI Resource Hub;
- Targeted data and evaluation tools to uncover inequities and make progress towards key milestones;

- Strategic support for staff in key local positions, including securing host agencies for the Local ACI Coordinator position and Youth & Community Engagement Coordinator roles; and
 - Access to state-level funding and policy advocacy based on local needs.
- **What successes have been achieved by the original four Anchor Communities?**
 - Spokane became the largest U.S. community to achieve a reduction in youth and young adult homelessness (see Spokane Case Study)
 - All communities have established data supports that allowed them to reach quality, real-time data for YYA and are working on sustainability
 - All communities have Youth Advisory Boards doing ACI work, with two communities are meeting the ‘Gold Standard’
 - All communities have set reducing goals
 - Three communities are universally collecting Sexual Orientation Gender Identity data, a key implement to addressing LGBTQ+ disproportionality
 - Key supportive resources such as the Centralized Diversion Fund and AWHWA’s School-centered Innovation Grant Program are embedded and leveraged to drive prevention and diversion efforts
 - All ACIs are acculturated to tracking and making use of real-time strategy insights that continually drive innovation, improvements, and learning (see Spokane Case Study).

- **How much do AWHWA and the Anchor Communities work on advocacy?**

AWHWA and the Anchor Communities are prominent advocates on the state and local levels, working closely with elected officials and government agencies to advance policies and secure resources that support our collective mission. In Olympia, AWHWA and communities collaborate with a statewide coalition of progressive housing and homelessness advocacy groups, called the Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy (WACHYA). This includes partner organizations like The Mockingbird Society and Building Changes.

AWHWA also has successfully advocated for millions of dollars from the state that flow from the Office of Homeless Youth and go directly to the Anchor Communities in support of their efforts to end youth and young adult homelessness.

- **Do members of both political parties support the Anchor Community Initiative?**

Yes. A Way Home Washington is a bipartisan initiative with support from both Democratic and Republican legislators. Some of the earliest champions of the Anchor Community Initiative include former Mayor of Spokane David Condon, State Senator Curtis King, and former State Senator Maureen Walsh, all Republicans. On the Democratic side, we are fortunate to have champions in legislators like Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig, Speaker of the House Laurie Jenkins, and former Speaker Frank Chopp.

ABOUT THE ACI EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

- **What is the timeline for responding to the AWHWA Expression of Interest?**
The Expression of Interest will be open for 6 weeks (from October 12 - November 19). Final submissions are due no later than 5PM on November 19, 2021.
- **When can communities expect to hear if they were selected?**
Communities will be notified by the end of the year. We anticipate notifying selected communities by late December 2021.
- **What constitutes a ‘community’ for the sake of this application?**
A “community” can be defined by the applicant. It can be a HUD-defined Continuum of Care (CoC), a county, city, a group of counties within the Balance of State, or any other geographically defined area. The key factor to consider is whether your defined ‘community boundary’ will be able to easily access HMIS data and have the ability to pull/utilize a collective By-Name List.
- **Can anyone be the lead applicant for this EOI proposal or does it have to be a specific person (i.e., the CoC lead or county/city representative)?**
In the Expression of Interest, we do not explicitly state who should or must be the lead point of contact for submitting the response. We do ask that communities take a collaborative approach when putting their EOI materials and response together; however, it is critically important for the designated ACI Community Lead to have readily available access to data to support the work of the ACI goals, as well as the ability and capacity to bring your community stakeholders/teams together.
- **There are questions related to our community capacity, experience and infrastructure (for example, what other initiatives we have participated in). We don’t have a lot of services or access to initiatives like this – will we still be a competitive applicant?**
Yes, absolutely! These questions are really for us to better understand what else is currently happening in your community or where local focus has been in the past. While other initiatives or technical assistance can help build your work in the ACI, it certainly isn’t a prerequisite for being a successful Anchor Community.

Additionally, if you have participated in other initiatives related to this work, we would like to hear how you think the ACI will either support the work you are currently doing, or build off of what you have started.

- **What makes a community a good candidate for the Anchor Community Initiative?**
The ACI is for communities that are ready to join their colleagues from across the state to prove that we can end youth and young adult homelessness. Communities need to be

able to bring a community team together to set ambitious goals, honestly interrogate their system's problems, be willing to take risks and be innovative, and they need to bring their energy, passion and belief that reaching functional zero is possible in their community! Importantly, communities also need to be ready and excited to dive into the work of building systems rooted in justice for LGBTQ+ and BIPOC young people.

- **What is a by/for organization?**

Organizations or programs that are created by community, for community. Specifically, we are interested in knowing more about the integration and collaboration your homelessness system has with LGBTQ+, QTBIPOC and BIPOC – serving organizations that are also run by LGBTQ+, QTBIPOC and BIPOC leaders.

- **How will communities be selected?**

Community responses to the EOI will be reviewed by a Selection Committee that will include representatives from AHWHA and the Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) who bring a variety of backgrounds and experiences (including data expertise and young people with lived experience of homelessness). Community selection will be based on the following:

- Clarity and completeness of proposal
- Current community capacity and ability to support the work of the ACI
- Geographic diversity
- Community coordination and cross-sector support
- Commitment and ability to create and use a quality, real-time By-Name List
- Engagement with young people with lived experience
- Commitment to and vision for ending youth homelessness, including disproportionality

Responses submitted that meet the minimum threshold to be scored will be invited to participate in an interview with the selection committee prior to a final selection being made. Up to four communities will be invited to join the Anchor Community Initiative.

- **Who is required to be a part of this application process?**

We encourage communities to engage local YYA homelessness system partners and leaders, as well as young people with lived experience of homeless in the ACI Expression of Interest process. However, the only representatives that are required to formally be a part of the submittal (signing a statement of support) are the agencies that will be hosting the local positions, the CoC lead agency, your HMIS data representative, and your Youth Advisory Board (if you have one). We are also asking that you demonstrate formal support from local political leadership.

- **If we are invited to interview, who from our community should attend?**

At a minimum, we would like to have your (anticipated) community lead, agencies that will be hosting the local positions, your CoC lead agency representative, and youth and young adults, as appropriate.

- **Should the Community Lead, ACI Coordinator and Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator all be based at the same agency?**

This is at the community's discretion, but we have found it to be the most successful in communities where leadership and accountability are shared across the community. Ideally, one of the positions should be located with the city or county, and the other two based in youth providers or local philanthropic agencies.

- **What if we don't know exactly who will fulfill the role of Community Lead (or which agency will host the local positions)?**

If you do not already have an agency/person in mind for these roles, you should describe your process for identifying and securing those positions within the first 30 days after being selected as an Anchor Community.

- **Can you clarify who should be on the Community and Improvement Teams?**

Improvement Teams include:

- At least 2 young people with lived experience of homelessness
- Members of the Leadership Team
- Youth homelessness providers
- A representative from the Continuum of Care
- Representatives from organizations that primarily serve BIPOC and LGBTQ+ young people
- Representatives from partner systems, including Department of Children Youth and Families, juvenile detention, schools and behavioral health
- Public sector representatives

Community Teams are broader groups of community stakeholders and decision makers that support the work Improvement Teams are doing on the ground. These teams pave the way for larger systems change, remove barriers to testing new ideas, provide thought partnership and build political will across the community to end youth homelessness.

See the [ACI Model and Core Components](#) for more information.

- **If we do not already have any kind of formal Youth Action Board in place right now, will we be excluded from being selected as an Anchor Community?**

No! We will provide expert YYA engagement technical assistance to all Anchor Communities. It is important to us that communities show a strong commitment to empowering young people as leaders in their systems change work.

- **Do the people we listed in our EOI (who helped put the application together) have to be on the Improvement Team?**

No. While it will likely be several of the same people, if you are selected to be an Anchor Community your coaches will help you identify who else should be a part of your local teams.

- **What qualities are important for an Anchor Community?**

All Anchor Communities must be excited to work toward preventing and ending unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness using the AWHWA definitions and measures. In addition, strong Anchor Communities are ones that:

- Bring energy and commitment
- Have strong youth leadership
- Have a commitment to ending disproportionality
- Bring an improvement mindset
- Demonstrate buy-in and commitment to participate from a broad group of key partners/stakeholders (are able to identify and engage local champions)
- Have local leadership to support and coordinate local teams on the ground to carry out systems change work. Buy-in and prioritization from system leadership for their staff to actively participate in local ACI work is critical for success!

- **If we are selected as an Anchor Community, do we get a million dollars from the Office of Homeless Youth?**

The Office of Homeless Youth will open a process specific for Anchor Communities to fill targeted service gaps in summer of 2022. No selected Anchor Community is guaranteed a specific amount of funds, but agencies in Anchor Communities will be eligible to apply for these restricted services dollars. Utilization of these service dollars is intended to be part of a coordinated effort by the local ACI to measurably prevent and end homelessness in the ACI community.

- **Do we have to submit responses through a PDF AND through the online form?**

No, you will only respond using the link in the EOI through the online form. The questions in the PDF Expression of Interest Packet are for your reference only, you do not need to submit your responses through that document. You will include all attachments (including links to any videos or additional materials) in the online form itself. After submitting the form, you will be sent a copy of your submission. You may edit your response after submission UNTIL 5PM on Nov. 19, 2021.

- **If we are selected, when should we plan to start the work?**

Communities will be notified by the end of the year if they are selected and should plan to hit the ground running in January 2022!

- **I am having trouble with the application – who should I contact?**

Please email your questions to ACIDepartment@awayhomewa.org .

- **Where can we get more information about the Anchor Community Initiative and get specific questions answered as our community works on our application materials?**

There are several ways you can get your questions answered and stay informed of any updates:

- Join the Expression of Interest informational webinar on 10/13 at 4PM ([Register here](#))
- Join the Informational Q&A session about the EOI, with guest speakers from the current Anchor Communities on 11/4 at 3PM ([Register here](#))
- Check the [website](#) often for updates to the FAQ or for additional posted materials
- Submit any questions you have to ACIDepartment@awayhomewa.org