

# SKAGIT COMMUNITIES FOR FUNCTIONAL ZERO (C4F0) INTRODUCTION

Formerly known as the Anchor Community Initiative (ACI)

## BROAD OVERVIEW:

Skagit County took on the [Anchor Community Initiative](#) in 2022 along with a cohort of five other communities (Whatcom, Thurston, Clark, Jefferson & Clallam). Walla-Walla, Pierce, Yakima, and Spokane took on the ACI in 2018, and we rely heavily on the path and strategies they've built to continue this work today. The Anchor Community Initiative built out a framework and provided coaching, and ensured resources like funding and technical assistance to achieve our goal of **functionally ending unaccompanied youth and young adult (12-24 yrs old) homelessness**.

A Way Home Washington, the organization which has historically driven the work of the Anchor Community Initiative, announced its closure and final sunset in October 2024. Since then, communities across the state have persisted in carrying this work forward and self-organized alongside support from the Washington State Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth (OHY). **This movement is now known as Communities for Functional Zero (C4F0)**. As of December 2024, OHY and all ten communities historically involved in this work are collaborating to determine the long-term partners and structure of this movement post-AWHWA.

Important Reminders:

- We use the most expansive definition of homelessness for young people, which includes unsheltered homelessness as well as couch-surfing or doubled-up, also known as the [McKinney Vento](#) definition of homelessness.
- Our goal does not translate to a utopia where homelessness does not exist, but rather to a realistic vision of a community with the effective responses to ensure that homelessness for young people is brief, rare, one-time, and centered on their individualized needs.
- [Functional Zero](#) = data measurements, where in a given month, the number of young people entering homelessness is less than those exiting into stable

housing, and that young people of color and LGBTQIA+ young people are housed at the same rate as their cis, hetero, white peers.

**We are achieving this goal through use of [a By Name List \(BNL\)](#):**

- The BNL is a full list of every unaccompanied young person in a community experiencing the most expansive definition of homelessness. It is real-time (updated regularly) and person level (demographic data collected, Client IDs, etc.).
  - Our BNL data is stored within the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
  - [The BNL is a giant excel sheet](#), sent from the Washington State Department of Commerce to our Data Lead with Volunteers of America of Western Washington, who then uses software to translate the data into visualizations.
  - Our BNL includes data pulled from young people currently receiving services (all housing providers enter information on clients served in HMIS) AND nontraditional pathways to HMIS/ housing providers with our [BNL Referral Flier](#) by way of a “catch-all” project within HMIS specifically for youth/young adults served outside the traditional homeless service system.
    - Previously, we were unable to account for youth/young adults sitting on an organization’s wait list, ineligible for programs, and those who may be disconnected from services after exiting a system of care. Our goal is to ensure young people are adequately being served once they are identified as experiencing homelessness and have support in place to navigate the complex housing system.

**Having a By Name List means:**

- We are making sure all youth/young adults are connected to housing supports by closing any gaps in services.
- Our responses to this issue can be tailored to the experience of young people and support our advocacy work.
  - We can use this data to identify any trends and test if our ideas are actually benefiting/serving young people.
- We’re addressing disproportionality and ensuring young people of color and LGBTQIA+ young people are housed at the same rates as their white, cis, hetero peers.
- Young people/our Youth Action Board (YAB) is involved in methods to build a By Name List. We want to collect data in the most informed way, and build

housing that supports what young people actually want; which means they must be meaningful decision-makers directly informing this work.

### **We have a structure of different teams to accomplish our goals:**

- This initiative is coordinated in Skagit County by the Skagit Valley Family YMCA. The **Skagit County Lead**, or primary point of contact at the agency, is Kat Lohman, Executive Director of Social Impact: [k.lohman@skagitymca.org](mailto:k.lohman@skagitymca.org)
- **Core Improvement Team:** A collection of front-line and program-level staff with housing providers, other service-based organizations and partners who have the capacity to work to address youth and young adult homelessness.
  - We meet every other week on Tuesdays from 9:30-11:00 am.
  - We work in cycles, establishing short-term goals and action items that reset every 8 weeks.
  - *This group continues to meet despite the AWHWA sunset.*
- **Work Groups:** Smaller groups who spinoff from the Core Improvement Team and meet 1-4x monthly to ensure progress on specific projects associated with the local C4F0 movement.
  - Work group participants may also be Core Improvement Team members, or they may only participate in Work Group meetings.
- **Youth Action Board (YAB):** Group of young people with lived experience who inform our work and any decisions we make as a system. They develop ideas and areas of improvement, take on projects and provide feedback.
  - *The YAB is currently suspended due to funding lost by the AWHWA sunset and is currently anticipated to restart under the Outreach program at the Skagit Valley Family YMCA in Q2 of 2025.*
- **Community Team:** Major stakeholders and those who need to be kept in the loop about improvements and progress made with this initiative. These folks may not have the capacity to attend Improvement Team meetings, but still want to be involved.
  - *Currently satisfied by collaboration with the North Star Advisory Group; may see further changes in 2025.*

## **FUNCTIONAL ZERO DEEP DIVE:**

*For those super interested/deeply involved in what we're doing!*

### **AWHWA ROLE:**

- A Way Home Washington historically provided technical support, training opportunities, data and coordination, and infrastructure for communities who have taken on the Anchor Community Initiative.

- They used to contract and partner with OHY, providing funding and channels of advocacy for ACI communities. Partnerships with Commerce allowed for restructuring of data systems, troubleshooting and tailored reports.
- The ACI framework was inspired by [Community Solutions Built for Zero](#), a nation-wide movement that has proven to reduce and end chronic and veteran homelessness.

## **BNL SCORECARD & PHASES OF WORK:**

*Phase One: Scorecard/Building a BNL - Skagit County's phase from January 2022-June 2024*

- We know we have successfully built a By Name List when we've answered yes to all the questions on the [BNL Scorecard](#). Finalizing the Scorecard is the first phase of this initiative.
- The Scorecard is a list of 24 yes/no questions that guide how and who should be considered when building our By Name List.
- The scorecard was built for communities across the nation, including those without any data infrastructure, like HMIS. So, a few questions were immediate 'yes' because we have HMIS, existing publicly funded youth providers, etc.
- We as a community decided what a "yes" means to us.
- The work of the Improvement Team in our first two years was largely guided by the Scorecard. It helps us continue to determine how young people's feedback is considered, cross-system collaboration, etc.
- Skagit's Scorecard & BNL has been certified by AWHWA as of 2024. This required knowledge capture, documentation of our work to date, and 3 months of data reliability.

*Phase 2: Reducing - Skagit County's current phase as of June 2024 - The details of this phase are likely to further shift in 2025 as OHY and previous ACI communities settle long-term roles and terms for how this work continues post-AWHWA.*

- Teams use data to set goals for progress and identify strategies to improve outcomes around those goals.
- We dissect data to develop strategies to address inflow (preventing YYA from becoming homeless) and reducing the numbers of young people experiencing active homelessness (strategies to increase permanent, stable housing).
- Progress is tracked through gathering baseline data, locking in an improvement median, setting weekly, bi-weekly or monthly goals, and tracking progress through run charts. During this phase, communities will also

need to set up backend data infrastructure to align measurement with the USICH benchmarks.

### *Phase 3: Ending YYA Homelessness*

- Reaching the ACI definition of **functional zero** which includes **ending disproportionality** for young people of color and LGBTQ+ young people.

### *Phase 4: Sustaining*

- Ensuring the systems, capacity, and feedback loops previously established persist for the community long-term and appropriately adapt to new environmental factors.

## **C4F0 STRATEGIES:**

*What else does the C4F0 provide tools for? How are we using data?*

### **HPDF:**

- Centralized, low barrier and flexible Homeless Prevention & Diversion Fund for unaccompanied young people at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- To submit a request for funding on behalf of a young person, individuals must attend a certification training (previously with AWHWA's Training Team). ANYONE in our community can be certified to submit requests, allowing more open doors to housing solutions for YYA across our county.\*
- Funded directly through the Office of Homeless Youth and only available for previous ACI/FZ communities.
- Those receiving HPDF will be entered into HMIS, allowing reports to be pulled, transformed, and presented on dashboards.
  - This reporting allows us to track the success of HPDF and answer the question: Are we actually diverting young people from interacting with our homelessness system?
- HPDF provides centralized funds. North Sound ACH holds the contract and funds. North Sound ACH, as fiscal administrators, determine eligibility, reports to OHY, and cuts checks within 72 hours of approval.\*\*

*\*Certification/training opportunities for new providers seeking access to HPDF have been suspended since AWHWA's sunset, but providers with existing certification may continue submitting requests through the usual process.*

*\*\*Providers seeking more about HPDF may reach out directly to the Skagit County Fiscal Admin, Mario Morales: [mario@northsoundach.org](mailto:mario@northsoundach.org) OR to initiate an HPDF*

request for a client, reach out to Northwest Youth Services [via this form](#) or reaching out directly at (360) 336-1988.

### **Case Conferencing:\***

- Case Conferencing ensures each person on our BNL has a plan for safe and stable housing and that all providers feel jointly accountable for all of our young people.
- Each week, providers address the needs and goals of those prioritized (Unsheltered, minors, LGBTQ+ & BIPOC YYA)
- Prioritization is identified through trends seen in the data and is identified by a data element.
- Meetings are actionable, collaborative, and confidential. We ask:
  - What is this individual's goal, and how does it support them on their path to safe, stable housing?
  - What barriers exist for them to move toward achieving their goals?
  - How can those in the room support?

*\* Case conferencing is on hold as of this last document update due to a reduction in capacity post-AWHWA sunset by the loss of the full-time Skagit ACI Coordinator.*

### **Training & Data Literacy Opportunities:**

- A big part of this initiative is destigmatizing the experience of homelessness.
- Providers should feel comfortable and confident completing intakes with young people in a way that is informed directly by young people themselves.
- Methods to train staff, deepen collaboration and set a standard of quality data have been built:
  - Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Data Collection and Best Practices: Facilitated by Bethany Sparkle ([b.sparkle@skagitymca.org](mailto:b.sparkle@skagitymca.org)).
  - System-Specific Training: offered by request and can cover a range of topics (diversion-first approaches, navigating housing conversations, crisis & conflict mitigation, working with minors, etc.). Can be tailored to any audience (service providers, community members, boards, etc.).