

Barbara Poppe and associates
The collective for impact

Key Findings and recommendations

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Analysis Approach

Contract Review

BPA reviewed each individual contract administered by the COA to address homelessness. The review included an analysis of contract scope, program activities, target population, budget amounts and sources, and intended program outputs and outcomes. As a next step, BPA then compared the complete set of contracts to strategies to address homelessness as identified in the community's ***Action Plan to End Homelessness***.

Key Stakeholder Input

The contracts review was followed by a site visit in March with a series of engagements as follows:

- Meeting with a range of homelessness assistance providers (e.g., prevention, permanent housing, outreach)
- Touring facilities and programs
- Ride-along with outreach providers, visiting encampments and other places where unsheltered people are found
- Meeting with COA staff who administer homelessness assistance contracts
- Facilitating a focus group of persons with lived experience of homelessness
- Meeting with the board and staff at ECHO — the Continuum of Care (CoC) lead agency — who coordinate policy decisions and planning for the CoC
- Engaging with the CoC Membership Council
- Meeting with COA leadership from the City Manager's office

These meetings were critical to understand how the homelessness assistance system in Austin is designed, how it operates, how COA contracts support strategic priorities throughout the community, and how funding and planning decisions across the community are aligned with strategic priorities.

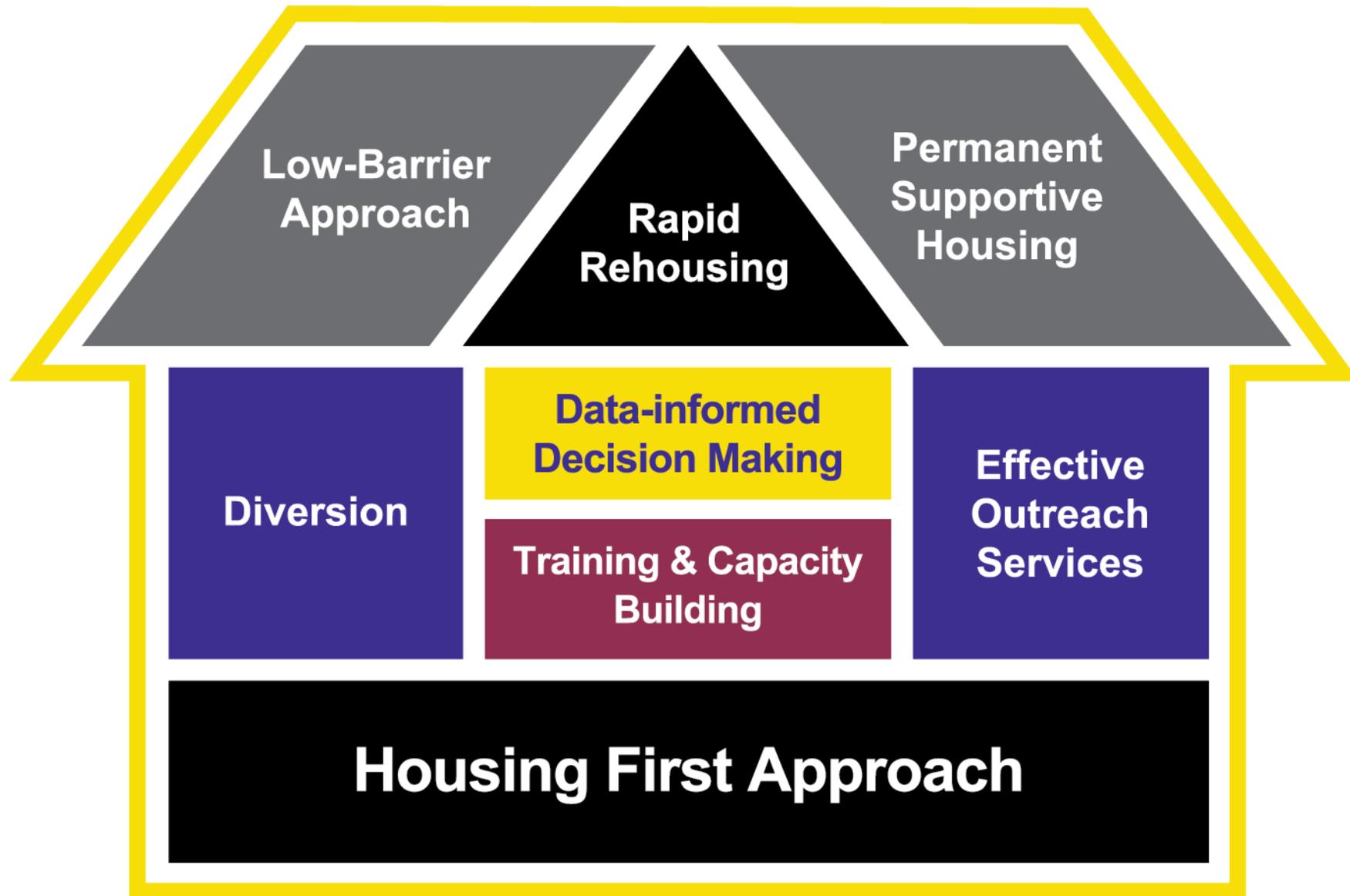
Throughout this initial site visit BPA staff focused the inquiry on how COA is implementing and supporting Austin's Action Plan to End Homelessness, and what re-alignment of current contracts is needed to better implement the plan and accelerate progress on the goals. Following the site visit BPA staff conducted follow-up interviews with contracting management staff from COA Departments of Public Health (APH), Downtown Austin Community County (DACC), and Austin's Department of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD). Additional interviews were conducted with the Austin Police Department, Integral Care, ECHO, and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA).

Quantitative System Data

In addition to contract analysis, BPA staff reviewed system and program-level data from Austin's crisis response system. These data sources included the Austin Point-in-Time (PIT) count, Housing Inventory Chart (HIC), system performance measures from the longitudinal system analysis (LSA), and various custom reports generated from the Austin Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

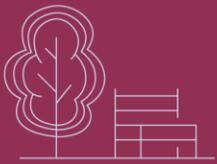
Key Assessment Questions and Data Sources

To complete the system analysis and develop a set of policy recommendations for a more impactful homelessness assistance system, BPA analysts



ADDRESSING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

There are four required components to successfully address unsheltered homelessness.

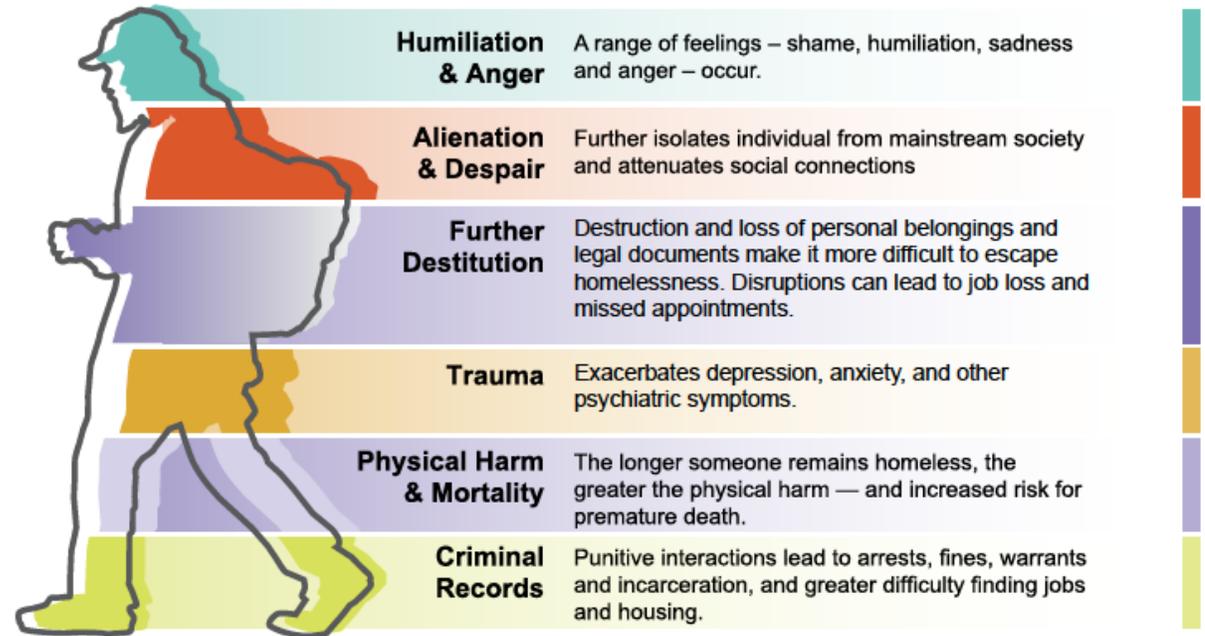
 <p>Reducing Inflow</p>	 <p>Crisis Response</p>	 <p>Housing Stabilization</p>	 <p>Public Space Management</p>
<p>RESPONSIBILITY: Public Systems</p>	<p>RESPONSIBILITY: Homelessness Assistance System</p>		<p>RESPONSIBILITY: City & County Government</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice • Anti-Poverty • Prevention • Health, including behavioral health • Child Welfare System • Affordable Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austin Public Health • Continuum of Care and ECHO • Outreach • Emergency shelter & temporary housing • Housing providers • First responders • Health, including behavioral health providers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor and City Council • City Manager • Code enforcement • Public Health • Law enforcement • Parks • Outreach • Libraries • Businesses and business organizations • Faith-based organizations
<p>Use data to identify how people are becoming homeless and target prevention strategies and policies to these areas.</p>	<p>Investment in housing stabilization capacity will make crisis response more effective and efficient.</p>		<p>To reduce expenditures, increase efforts to reduce inflow and expand homeless assistance system.</p>

INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACE MANAGEMENT

includes regulating uses, managing conflicts between uses, and coordinating interventions in the uses of public spaces to be inclusive of all, including people who are unsheltered and have no other feasible options.

Consequences of Punitive Approaches

Displacement through move-along orders or arrest and citations for activities like sleeping, camping and “acts of living” laws are fundamentally unfair when individuals have no other reasonable alternatives, and prolong homelessness and increase the need for services from various public systems. *From RESEARCH & RESULTS: Human-centered solutions to unsheltered homelessness. Arnold Ventures, March 2020*





KEY OVERALL FINDING

Unsheltered people living with homelessness have been recently increasing in number, and as a group, they are more publicly visible. Communities have worked with heightened urgency to develop ways to address both the needs of homeless individuals and the concerns of residents and businesses who share public spaces. It has also led to questions about the best ways for service providers, police, first responders, and other stakeholders to address unsheltered homelessness.

The key overall finding based upon available evidence is:

Adopting more humane, person centered approaches brings about more efficient and effective outcomes than the more punitive policies that are often used throughout the U.S.

(RESEARCH & RESULTS: Human-centered solutions to unsheltered homelessness, Arnold Ventures, March 2020)

Figure 4. PIT Trends from 2015

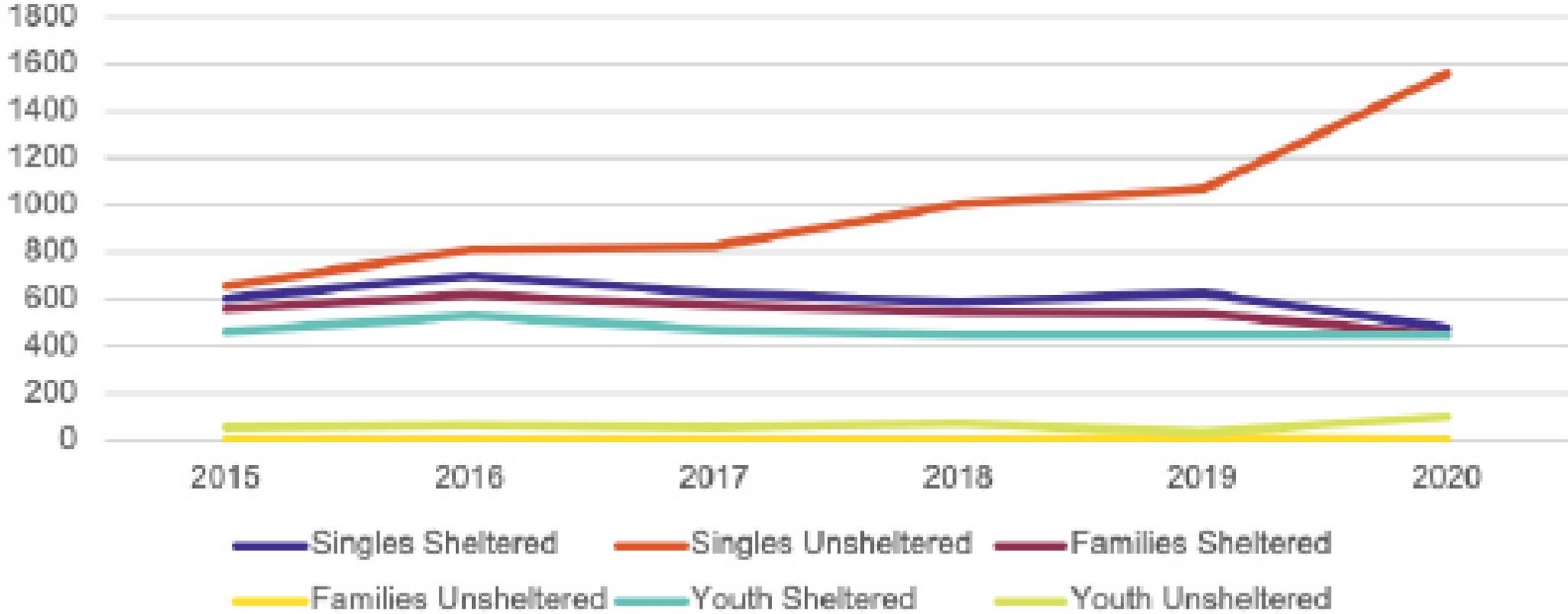
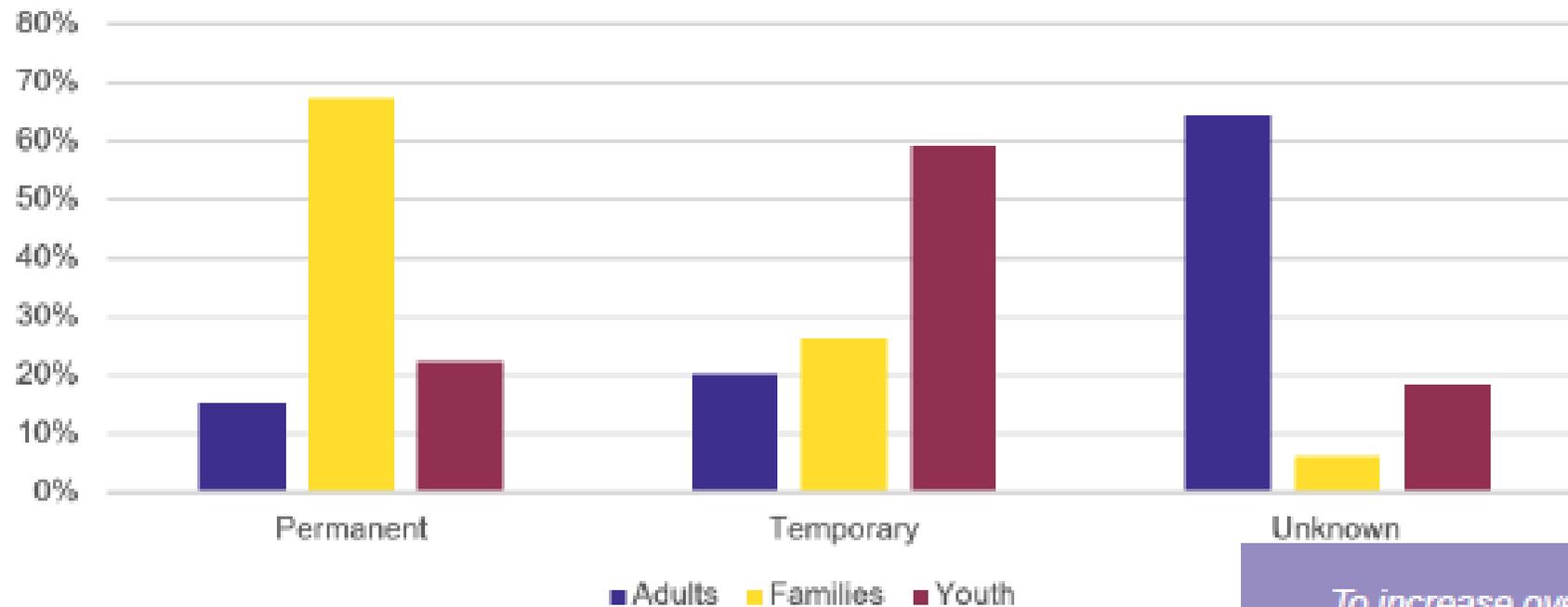


Figure 5. Exit Destinations from Homelessness in 2020



To increase overall system effectiveness Austin will need to focus on new resources for adults and investigate the types of programs and service strategies that contribute most to their success, and broaden the reach of these successful programs and strategies so more single adults are able to exit homelessness successfully.

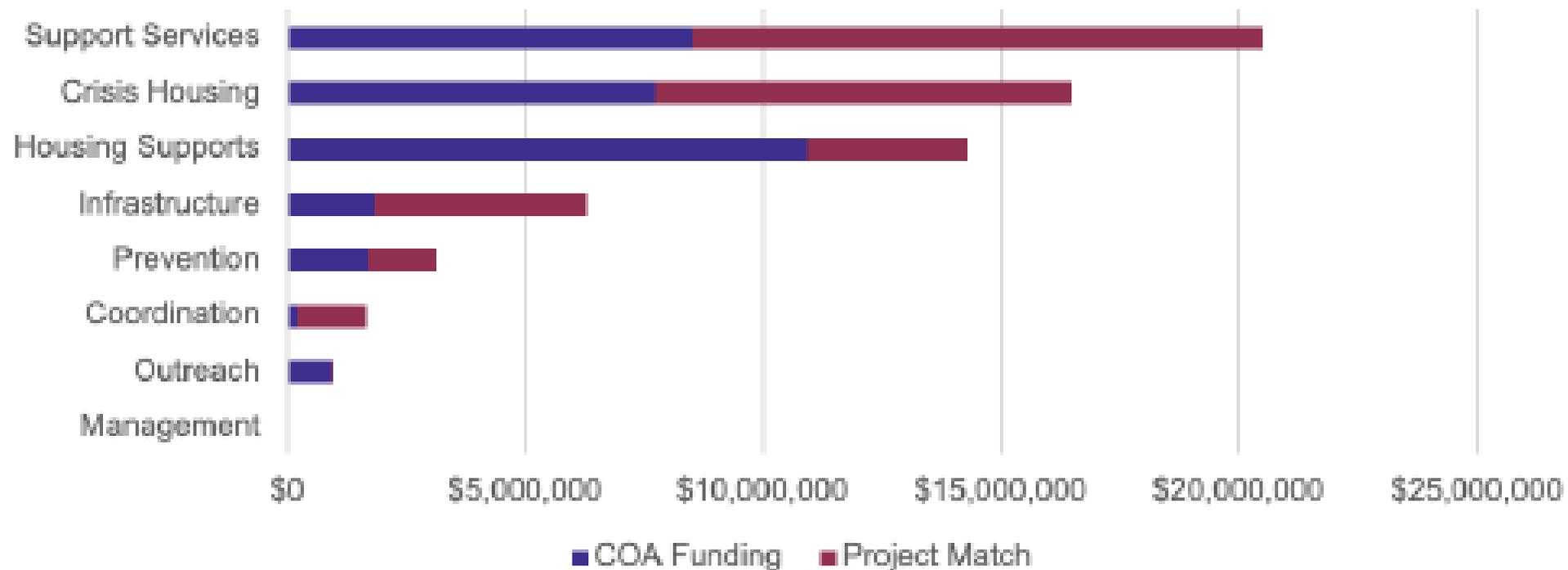
Figure 11. FY2020 COA Administered Homelessness Funding by Source

Funding Source	Total FY2020 Funding
City - General Funds	\$24,973,224
HUD - CDBG	\$1,804,699
HUD - HOPWA	\$1,609,938
HUD - HOME	\$1,135,365
City - Downtown Density Bonus	\$950,000
HUD - ESG	\$726,385
State of TX - TDHCA	\$554,843
City - Housing Trust Funds	\$387,200
Core Homelessness Services Total	\$32,121,624

Figure 12. COA Funding vs. Leveraged Funding

Leveraged Funding	Amount
Amount of All Homelessness Project Funding Administered by COA	\$32,121,624
Total Budget for all Homelessness Projects (including leverage)	\$64,191,441

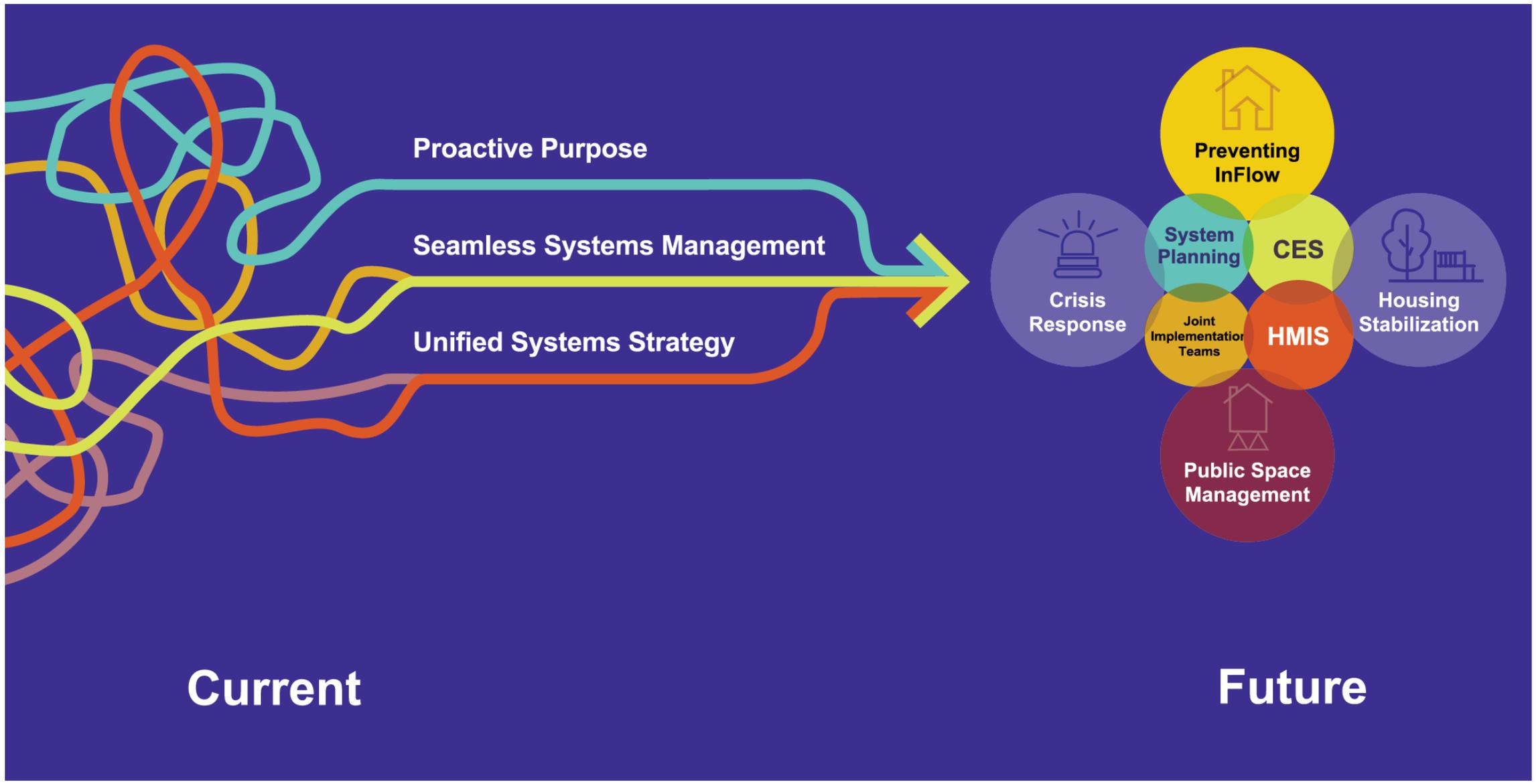
Figure 13. COA Funding Amount by Activity



Key system stakeholders, including homelessness assistance providers, lack clarity about who is responsible for managing the homelessness assistance system or how key decisions ultimately get made.



Cross-Cutting Finding



Current

Future



Key Recommendations

Adopt a Systems Approach

Reduce Inflow

Crisis Response

Housing Stabilization

Public Space Management

**COA provides \$32M
in annual funding for
the homelessness
assistance system.
HUD Continuum of
Care funding is \$10M.**

An integrated
and
comprehensive
investment
strategy is
critical

Recommendation 1: Establish a *unifying system strategy* for homelessness system planning, management and investments. In partnership with ECHO define or update the existing strategic action plan for the homelessness assistance system with addition of focused strategies for reducing unsheltered homelessness and other strategies discussed below. Identify impactful actions COA will take to significantly reduce unsheltered homelessness and encampments.



Recommendation 2: Strengthen system management. Clarify system management roles and stakeholder partnerships to ensure all critical partners are working in a concerted effort towards aligned system goals and objectives.



Strengthening partnerships – clarifying roles



COA currently has primary responsibility for development and implementation of community-wide affordable housing strategies to increase the supply of rental housing. COA should also assume lead responsibility for planning, coordination, and implementation of strategies to reduce inflow beyond the current efforts through the Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC).

Before assuming new accountabilities and responsibilities, ECHO should upgrade its expertise and functionality to better support providers, programs, and the homelessness assistance system to increase alignment with best practices, achieve better results, and operate with greater efficiency and effectiveness. ECHO should support the COA grantmaking processes and provide routine performance reports, as well as data analysis on emerging issues.

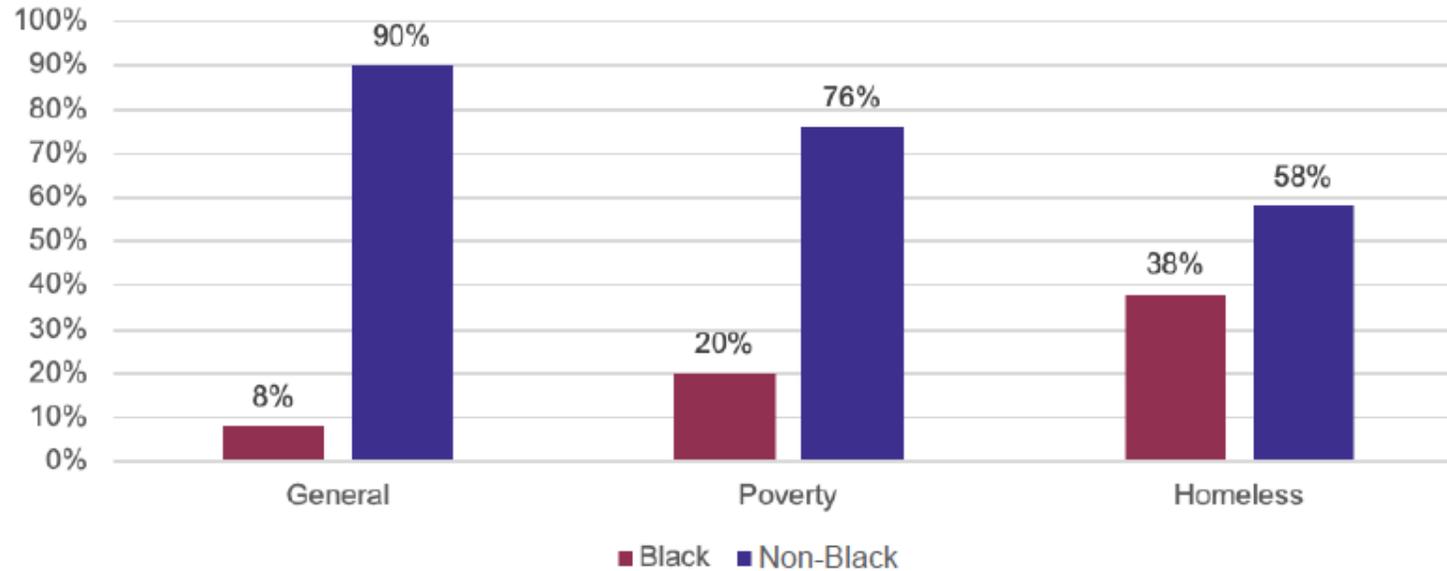
Recommendation 3: Adopt a more results-oriented contract management approach. Streamline and standardize the COA contracting process by establishing uniform procurement schedules, contracting templates, resource allocation decision making, and contract management practices.

COA investments require data-driven decision making, investments aligned with strategy, and performance-based contracting.



Recommendation 4: Shift to data-informed decision-making process to support strategy development, resource allocation, etc. This must include using a racial equity lens to shift practice, policy and funding decisions to foster greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in all work around addressing racial inequities in housing and homelessness.

Figure 8. Racial Inequity Analysis



Sources: statisticalatlas.com/place/Texas & Stella-p.hudhdx2.info

Recommendation 5: Identify the extent of discharges from public systems such as justice, child welfare, and physical and behavioral health that contribute directly to homelessness. Engage these systems in discharge planning and homelessness prevention initiatives.



Recommendation 6: Implement a *system-wide Outreach and Diversion strategy* to explore engagement and problem-solving opportunities for all persons needing crisis assistance at all CES entry points and engagement locations. Expand crisis housing capacity using low barrier approaches for single adults who are unable to divert from emergency shelter.

Diversion

Aimed at helping households stay safely in current housing or, if that is not possible, move to other housing without requiring a shelter stay first. Priority is given to households who are most likely to be admitted to shelters or be unsheltered if not for this assistance.

Low-Barrier Approaches

Low-barrier approaches involve minimizing the requirements placed on people who wish to utilize services, shelter, or housing. The objective with this approach is to have services “meet people where they are”, as long as this does not negatively affect other residents or staff. A low-barrier approach is consistent with a harm reduction philosophy.

Best Practice

Smaller-scale shelters with evidence-based, trauma-informed, client-centered, housing-focused services.



Strategic investment in best practices emergency shelter that is balanced with strong investment in housing resources will increase throughput and reduce unsheltered homelessness.

Housing Stabilization

Recommendation 7: Expand the *housing stabilization infrastructure* to support persons experiencing homelessness who require additional housing and service supports to obtain housing and maintain that housing without returning to homelessness. For single adults significantly expand Rapid Rehousing and build out PSH capacity. All housing options should use a Housing First approach.



Housing First

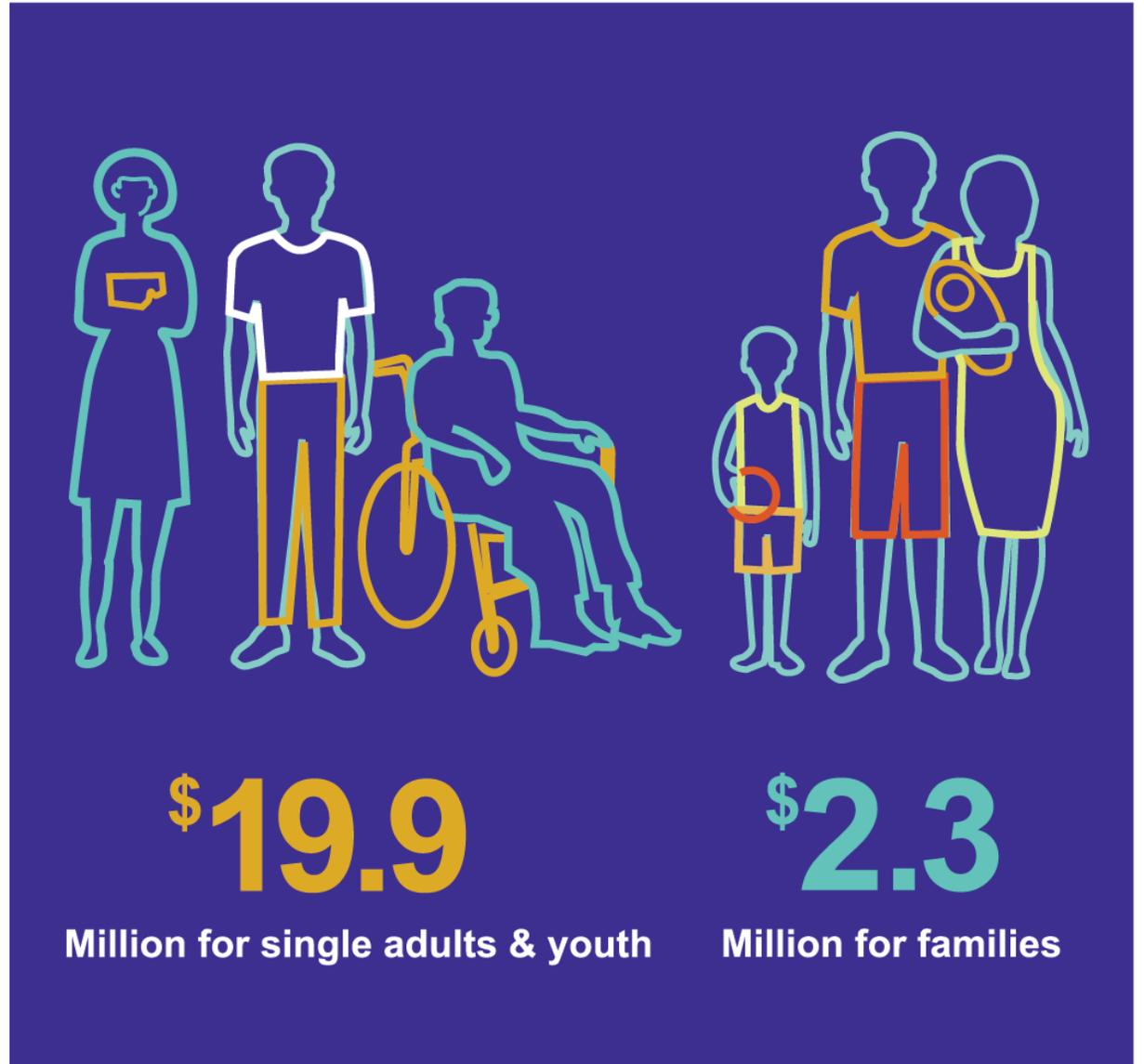
An approach to ending homelessness that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible — and providing services as needed. The basic underlying principle of Housing First is that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed.

Inclusive Public Space Management

Recommendation 8: When adequate access to safe shelter or housing is not provided, people who are unhoused have few options other than living in public spaces. While Austin is scaling up capacity for crisis response and housing, being attentive the needs of people who are unsheltered is critical to ensuring health and well-being despite the hazards associated with living unsheltered. CoA should continue undertaking a proactive and inclusive approach to public space management with nonpunitive policies. Additional enhancements are recommended.



By July 1, 2022, the Homelessness Assistance System investment must increase for both single adults/youth and families.



Investment Recommendations

New, Annual Dedicated Resources for Down Payment on Progress Toward a More Equitable Impact

Figure 6. Investment Planning Based on Modest System Expansion for Single Adults & Youth – annual operating and services costs only

Single Adults + Youth	Average Cost* per Unit/Person Served	Modest Unit Expansion by 7/1/2022	Additional Annual Investment Needed
Prevention	\$10,000	-	-
Diversion	\$1,000	800	\$800,000
Emergency Shelter	\$6,000	75	\$1,800,000
Transitional Housing	\$23,000	-	-
Rapid Rehousing	\$14,000	200	\$2,800,000
Permanent Supportive Housing	\$29,000	500	\$14,500,000
Total			\$19,900,000

*Average costs represent operational costs and do not reflect capital acquisition or rehab

Investment Recommendations

New, Annual Dedicated Resources for Down Payment on Progress
Toward a More Equitable Impact

Figure 7. Investment Planning Based on Modest System Expansion for Families – annual operating and services costs only

Families	Average Cost* per Unit/Person Served	Modest Unit Expansion by 7/1/2022	Additional Annual Investment Needed
Prevention	\$10,000	-	-
Diversion	\$1,200	180	\$216,000
Emergency Shelter	\$6,000	-	-
Transitional Housing	\$23,000	-	-
Rapid Rehousing	\$33,000	50	\$1,650,000
Permanent Supportive Housing	41,000	10	\$410,000
Total			\$2,276,000



Investing for Results



Implemented strategically, with investments tied to proven solutions, the homelessness assistance system will ensure that homelessness for Austin's most vulnerable neighbors becomes a rare, brief, and one-time experience.



P3

**Austin's
Public-Private
Partnership
Task Force to End
Homelessness**



Partners

Jointly Convened By:

City of Austin and
Ending Community Homelessness Coalition

Current Membership:

Downtown Austin Alliance, Caritas of Austin, Front Steps, Integral Care, LifeWorks, and Salvation Army



Roles

Shared recognition that **solutions to homelessness in Austin will require robust, coordinated activities and investments across both the public and the private sectors**, and must engage a wide range of systems, organizations, and programs

Driving **progress on some Report recommendations and some strategies within Austin Action Plan to End Homelessness**

Specific focus on **prioritizing and implementing opportunities to expand and scale interventions** needed to respond to scale of need



Collaboratively setting **short-term and long-term goals/targets** across:
Reducing Inflow; Crisis Response; Housing Stabilization; and Public Space
Management

Creating a **funders collaborative of public and private partners** to
collectively invest for results

Strengthening data and **strategic use of data**

Supporting the development of an **implementation plan for Austin's
Action Plan to End Homelessness**