

2023-2024 Severe Weather Shelter After Action Report (AAR)

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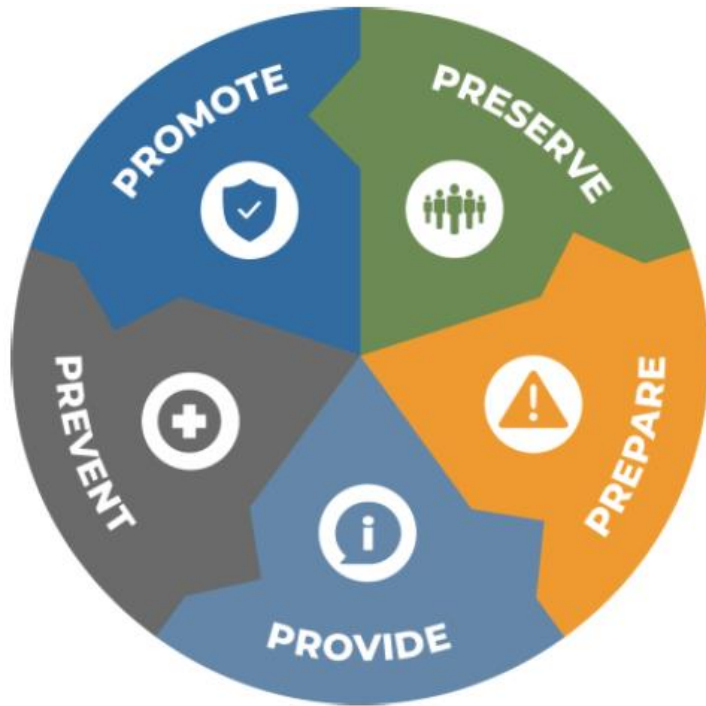
WHATCOM COUNTY
**HEALTH AND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**



WCHCS Purpose



We serve Whatcom County by advancing equity and partnering with our community to:



- Promote health through policy and systems improvement
- **Prevent disease and injury**
- Provide accurate and reliable health communication, information and data
- **Prepare for and respond to emergencies**
- Preserve a healthy environment where everyone can thrive

WCHCS SWS Participation



RFP for winter shelter operations posted in July 2023

- 3 Providers Responded
 - YWCA, R2H and Ferndale Community Services
- All 3 applicants were funded as well as added funding for DVSAS for additional motel rooms. The following amounts were committed to contract.
 - \$250,000 through an interlocal agreement with COB for R2H's seasonal nightly winter shelter. Actual operating cost was close to \$600k.
 - \$385,000 for seasonal motel-based sheltering program operated by the YWCA for unhoused women and children. Actual operating cost was about \$265k.
 - \$75,450 to Ferndale Community Services to operate a criteria-based SWS for up to 18 individuals per night.
 - DVSAS utilized \$26,058 for motel rooms to serve families with children.
 - Opportunity Council and Lydia Place expanded winter motel programs around \$300,000
- **These winter shelter projects spent around \$900,000 of those committed county funds.**

WCHCS Staff Planning and Operational Timeline

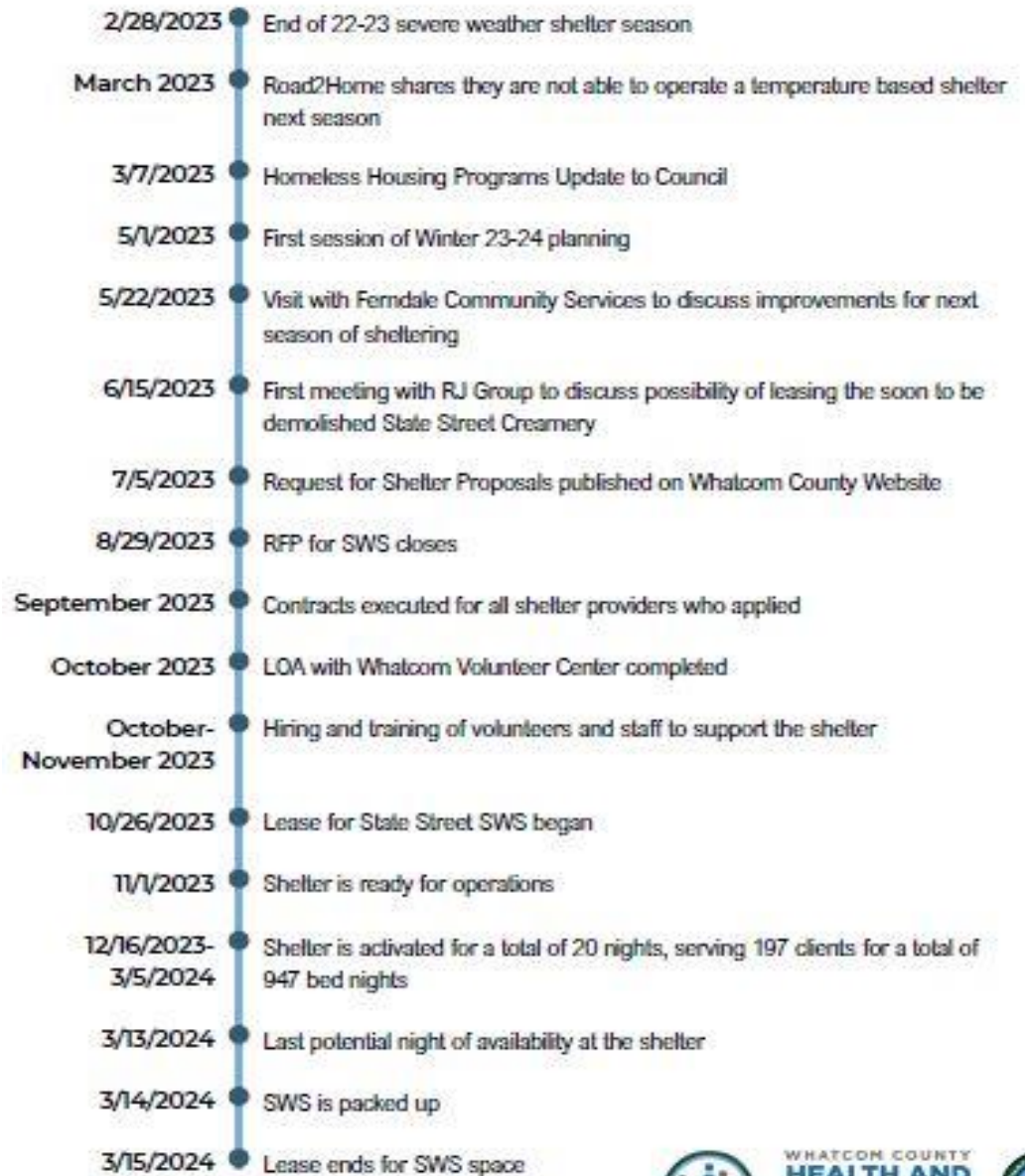
-First began planning in spring 2023

-Focused on creating two paths. One with a provider and one without.

-WCHCS staff led the operations, working with Facilities, Legal and Finance in the negotiation for the space and Human Resources for the hiring of temporary staff.

-Approximately 2 dozen WCHCS spent hundreds of hours to operate this shelter, outside of their normal duties.

2023-2024 SWS Timeline



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5 Main SWS Operations



Planning for the operations of the SWS were guided by the following 5 objectives:

1. When weather forecasts criteria are met, operationalize a facility to serve as a SWS from 11/1/23-2/29/24.
2. Recruit, train and schedule staff to safely operate the SWS when activation criteria are met.
3. Activate the SWS based on established temperature and weather-based criteria
4. Communicate SWS operational status to partner agencies and the public at least 48 hours before activation
5. Ensure safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers and guests.

5 Main SWS Objectives



Did we meet those objectives?

Objective #	Objectives	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Performed (U)
1	Operationalize a facility to serve as a SWS from 11/01/23 through 02/29/24.			M	
2	Recruit, train, and schedule staff to safely operate the SWS when activation criteria are met.			M	
3	Activate the SWS based on established temperature and weather-based criteria.			M	
4	Communicate SWS operational status to partner agencies and public at least 48 hours before activation.		S		
5	Ensure safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers, and guests.		S		

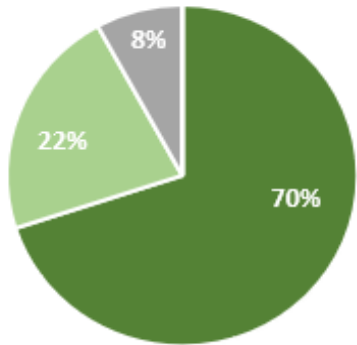
Let's Talk Numbers Served

20 nights of operation from 11/1/23-3/14/24.

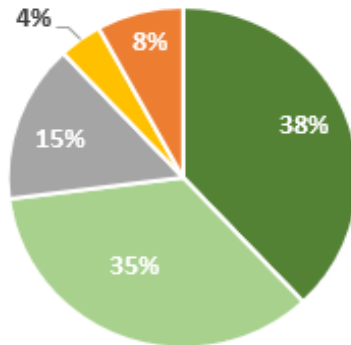
- **197** Unique Guests Served
- **947** Bed Nights
- Average of **47** guests a night
- Highest number of guests served in one night **69**



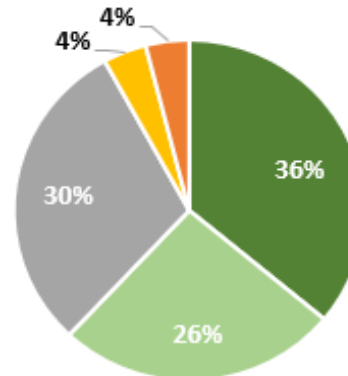
Guest Feedback



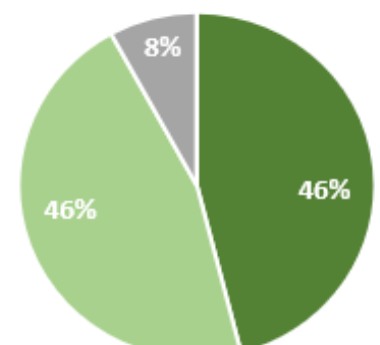
How would you rate the quality of your interactions with the staff during your stay?



How would you rate the quality of your sleep during your stay?



How well were you able to access basic needs like water, food, and sanitation during your stay?



How would you rate your overall experience staying at this shelter?

The logo features a circular emblem with a light blue border. Inside the circle are five stylized human figures of varying heights and colors (light blue, light green, light blue, light blue, and light blue). Below the emblem, the text "AAR Findings" is written in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

AAR Findings

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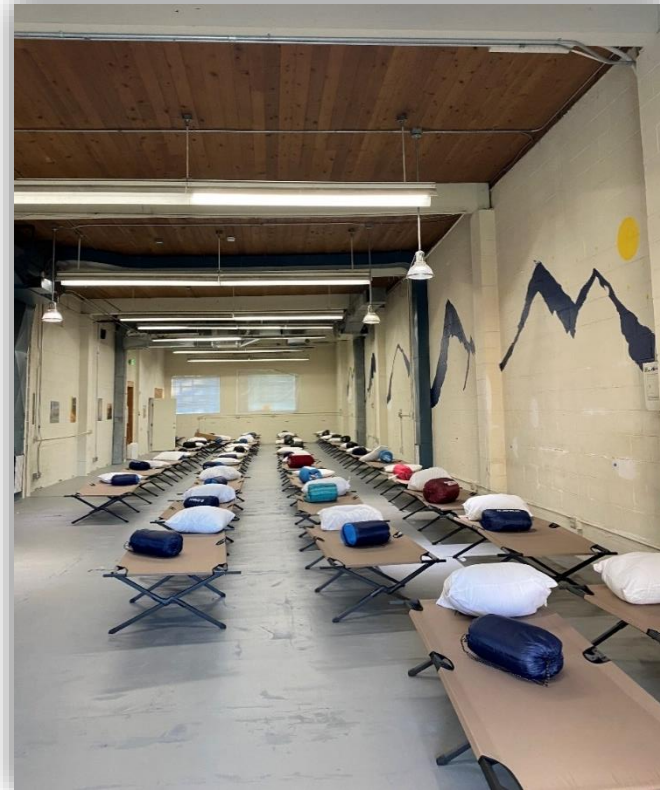
Shelter Space and Set up

Strengths and Room for Improvement...

Space was flexible to surge
Staff made valuable connections
WTA route/Downtown location

What to improve:

- Only 1 restroom
- No kitchen/fridge
- No showers/laundry
- Limited space for belongings
- Hours of operation challenging



Recruiting, Training , and Staffing SWS

Strengths

- Robust training module
- WCHCS's Response Systems Division staff helped keep operations running

Areas for Improvement

- Current full time staff were doing multiple jobs
- Lost many volunteers along the way
- Hiring temporary staff was challenging



Activate SWS at Threshold

Strengths

- Staff were observant and flexible to adjust openings based on observed thresholds and previous outcomes from those thresholds.

Areas for Improvement

- Significant feedback from community on threshold of 28 degrees
- Challenging to navigate windchill and precipitation factors
- Shorter season when based on temperature threshold



Communicate Opening of SWS



Strengths

- Majority of stakeholder reported timely notification of shelter opening
- WCHCS winter shelter webpage provided centralized online and telephonic communication

Areas for Improvement

- Added time sensitive workload to WCHCS staff who were updating webpage and phone message
- Centralized phone number is owned by another party and doesn't allow for user analytics

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Winter Shelters for Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness

Page Last reviewed: April 5, 2024 at 2:42 p.m.

Additional overnight shelters for the 2023-24 Winter season are closed as of March 31, 2024

Safety of Staff, Volunteers and Guests



Strengths

- Ongoing supply of food available reduce overall tension in the shelter
- Staffed with nurses met wound care needs
- Staff and volunteers managed to deescalate most of behavior with mix of experienced behavioral health staff
- Substance use was a challenge, but by building rapport and relationships with guests, staff were able to monitor for overdoses

Areas for Improvement

- Hard to monitor between activations, encampments would begin to form
- Staff members had to be stationed near indoor restroom as it was in high demand. Had to be stationed outside as well to help monitor for safety.



SWS Project Expenses



Four Components to Project Expenses

Total of \$403,598 to operate the SWS for the 2023-24 season.

Facilities included the lease, modifications and ongoing utilities.

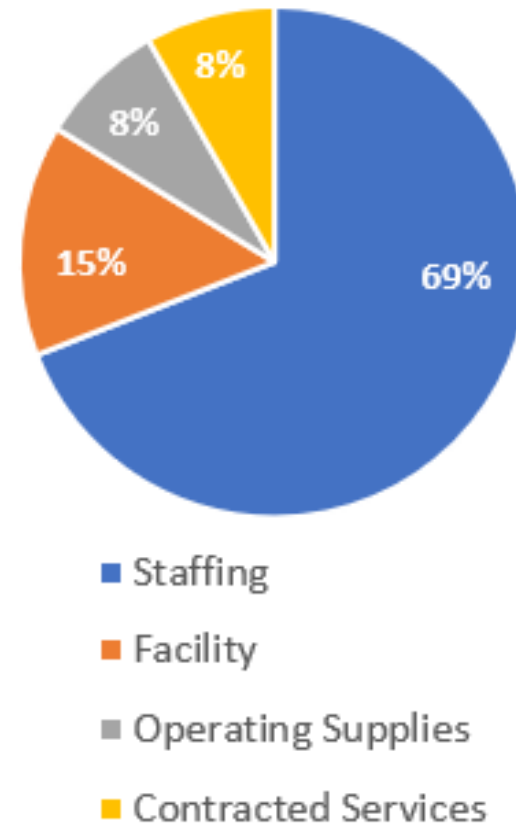
Operating Supplies included cots, sleeping bags, food, medical supplies and many other things.

Contracted Services included porta potties, cleaners, laundry and security.

Staffing was the most expensive piece of this and utilized staff who already had FTE

\$426/person for each night open!

2023-24 SWS Costs



Total County Winter Expenditures



- Nearly \$900,000 for support of Road2Home, Ferndale Community Services, DVSAS, YWCA, Opportunity Council & Lydia Place
- Just over \$400,000 for internal temperature based Severe Weather Shelter Operations
- Approximately \$1.3 million dollars spent during the winter season on temporary shelters.

AAR Recommendations



1. **Prioritize nightly** sheltering capacity during the coldest months instead of sporadic, criteria-based severe weather
2. **Expand** both length of winter sheltering **season** and hours of operation
3. **Utilize a dedicated single purpose location** with specific capacity, necessary amenities and within proximity to other community services
4. **Identify a contracted provider OR establish a dedicated division/departments/quasi-governmental agency** to operate and manage a nightly winter shelter as described above



Future Sheltering Options

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Types of Short Term Shelter



Night by night shelter (low barrier or dry shelters)

Emergency Shelters (up to 60 days)

Severe Weather Shelter (overnight through bouts of severe heat/cold/snow)

2024 PIT Count and Current Shelters



Families with children

- **Unsheltered: 15 households (41 individuals)**
- **Sheltered: 61 households (190 individuals)**
 - Providers: Agape, DVSAS, Interfaith, Lydia Place, New Way Ministries, OC, YWCA

Singles

- **Unsheltered: 202**
- **Sheltered: 410**
 - Providers: Ascent, Basecamp, DVSAS, Engedi, Gardenview, Homes Now, LWC, Lydia Place, NWYS, Road2Home, Sun House, YWCA

Primary Goals of a Low Barrier Shelter



1. Reduce fatalities

2. Alleviate burden on emergency service system by offering basic needs and first aid on site

3. Reduce unsheltered homelessness throughout the county

Low Barrier = High Service Cost

Most individuals that would utilize a low barrier shelter have been experiencing homelessness for months if not years

As we saw at the SWS - many guest had been exited from programs like Basecamp and PSH due to behavior

The elevated level of need leads to increased staffing minimums


Core Low Barrier Shelter Behavior Expectations



- 1. No violence or physical assault***
- 2. No smoking inside the building***
- 3. No theft***
- 4. No discriminatory language or harassment***

****Introducing more requirements will result in the exclusion of individuals who have limited or no alternative shelter options**

Local Annual Cost Range for Shelter



Gardenview Emergency Shelter \$540,000(+/-)

- 36 Tiny Homes
- Serving 55 (+/-) individuals a year


Base Camp \$1M (+)

- Night by night shelter
- 200 beds
- 1:25 staff to client ratio

Families w/ Children Emergency Shelter \$1.7M

- Est. from 2022 Lydia Place proposal
- 30 units serving 90 annually

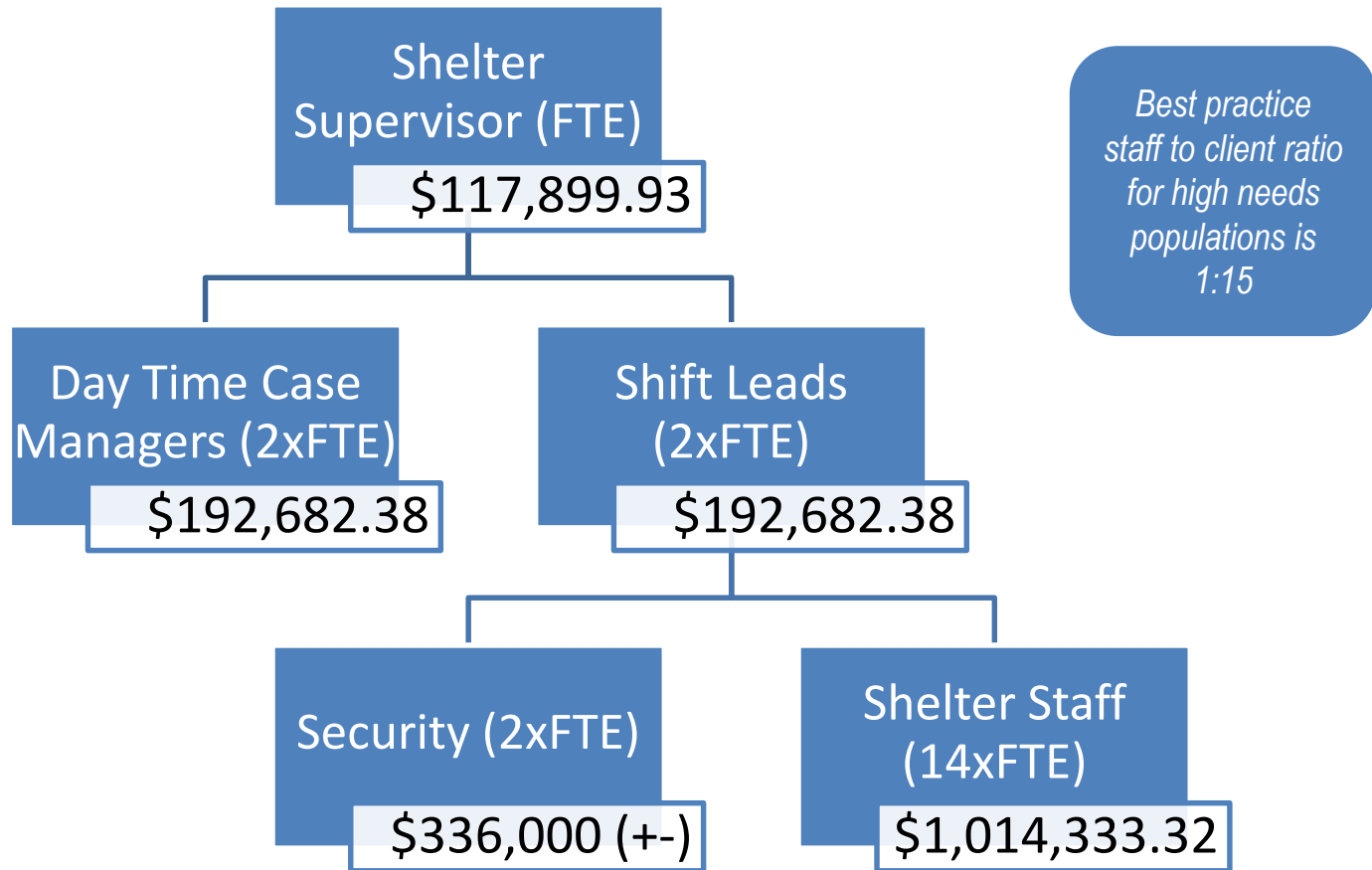
County Operated Low Barrier Shelter \$2.5M(+/-)

- 100-150 beds
 - Night by night shelter
 - 1:15 staff to client ratio
- 

Shelter Org Chart Using Comparable County Work Plans and Wage Scales



For a 100 bed shelter with the capacity to add 50+ beds in severe weather conditions



Base Est. Low Barrier Shelter Annual Shelter Operating Cost



For a 100 bed night by night shelter with the capacity to add 50+ beds in severe weather conditions using comparable county work plans and wage scales.

Personnel: \$ 1,853,598.01 (+-)

Rent or Mortgage/Utilities: \$100,000 (+-)

Food (Avg. \$3.33 per meal) : \$365,000 (+-)

Supplies: \$30,000 (+-)

TOTAL EST. : \$2,348,598.01 (+-)
(Nightly single bed cost: \$64.34/annual \$23,484.10)

Road2Home Winter Shelter (Nov-March) single bed by night cost: **\$125**

County Severe Weather Shelter single bed by night cost: **\$426**

A year long shelter would serve more individuals annually at a lower daily cost per bed than a winter shelter or severe weather shelter.

Potential Additional Operating Cost Considerations

Renting existing building or buying property to build or place tiny homes on

Regular janitorial assistance to mitigate pests, communicable disease, and biohazards

Additions of laundry and hygiene facilities

Personal care supplies (100 people per day @ \$.25 per person minimum)

Building maintenance, landscaping, and replacement reserves

On-site Behavioral Health or Medical Support

Winter surge supplies

Additional programming like events and activities

Adding housing programming or longer term shelter stays to assist long term stabilization of guest



Comparing Costs of Other Interventions



County low barrier shelter annual bed cost est.: **\$24,000 (+-)**

- Median annual cost of single night by night shelter bed in WA: **\$13,421.05**
- WA Commerce median annual PSH unit cost: **\$13,349.31**
 - The cost fluctuates (+/-) depending on the level of need of the pop. served and size of housing program
- Avg. annual cost for bed in federal prison **\$35,347**
- Est. cost of one Tiny Home annually at Gardenview: **\$15,000**
- Avg. cost of bed per year in 2022 at 22 North: **\$25,000**
 - *22N is the lowest barrier PSH program in Whatcom***
- Avg. annual Whatcom jail single bed cost in 2022 **\$45,000**
- Median annual cost of motel/hotel room in Whatcom **\$48,000**
- Uninsured overnight at hospital **\$9,300** (*\$279,000 monthly/\$3,394,500 annually*)
 - Uninsured daytime visit to the hospital **\$2,607**

Getting to Functional Zero Unsheltered Homelessness



2024 PIT Counts for Unsheltered Homelessness

Families with children: **41**

Singles: **202**

Creation of all shelters options should be paired with the development of long term affordable and supportive housing options to create pathways to exit shelter programs for guests

Singles

Creation of a 100+ bed low barrier shelter in tandem with the opening of Light House Ministries Program could address the current need.

Current est. shelter need: **\$2.3M+**

Families with Children:

Using a 2022 proposal from Lydia Place for a trauma informed families with children shelter, 30 units serving 90 families a year

Current est. shelter need: **\$1.7M+-**

Est. total shelter funding need: \$4M+-



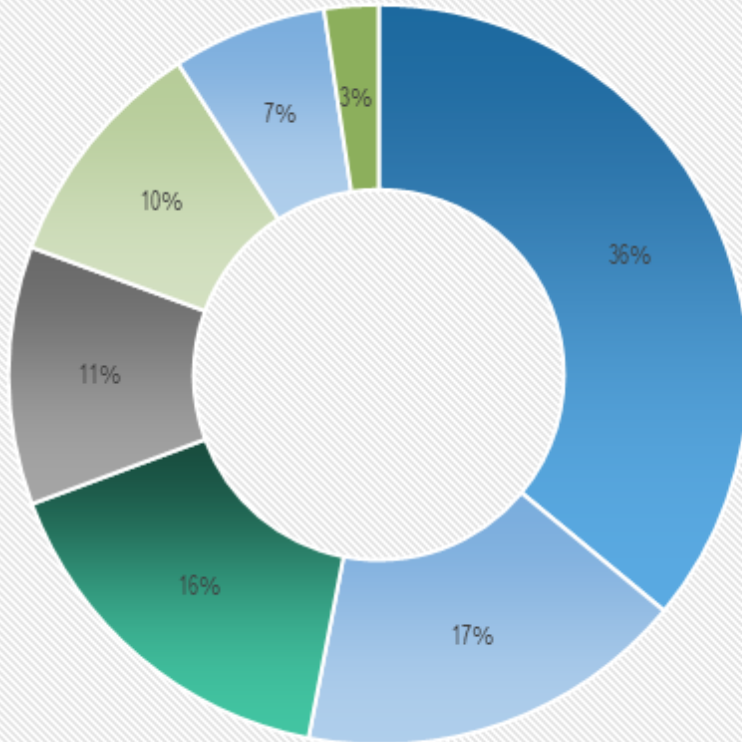
Funding

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2024 Housing Budget



Housing Program Budget 2024

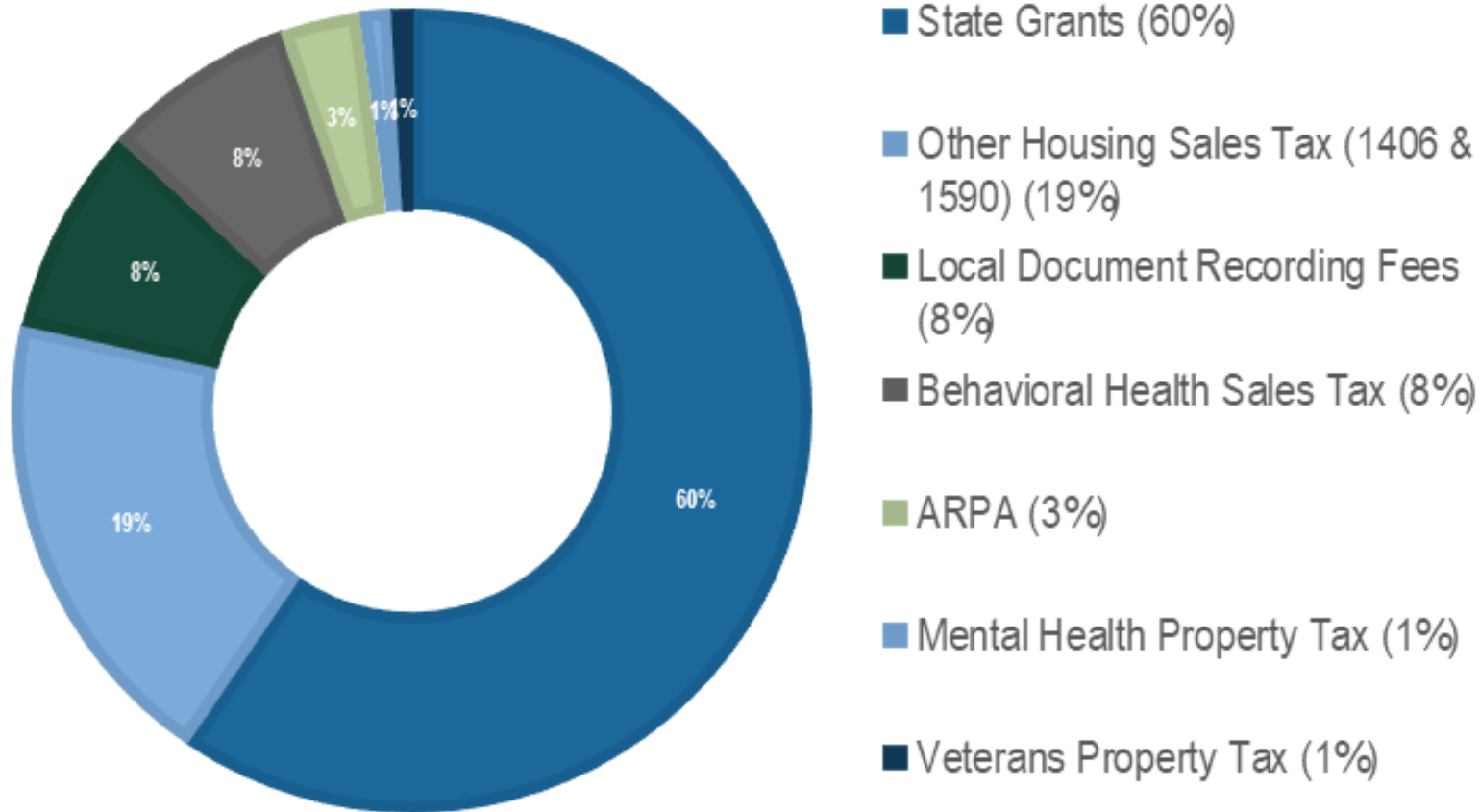


- Rapid Re-Housing w/ Limited Rental Assist and Svcs (36%)
- Shelter (17%)
- Permanent Supportive Housing for Formerly Homeless (16%)
- Create New Units (11%)
- Prevent Homelessness (10%)
- System Admin & Coordination (7%)
- Outreach and Hygiene (3%)

2024 Funding Sources



2024 HOUSING PROGRAM EXPENDITURES (\$18 MILLION)



The logo features a stylized illustration of five human figures of varying heights and colors (gray, yellow, blue, orange, and light blue) standing within a circular frame. The word "Questions?" is written in a bold, dark blue font across the middle of the logo.

Questions?

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