



Improving Coordination Across Homelessness Services in Santa Fe

Design and Discovery by Jeremy Zilar / EAD Design Corp
For The City of Santa Fe, (Spring 2025)

Over the past several months, we've worked with frontline teams in Santa Fe's homelessness response ecosystem—shelters, service providers, outreach workers, city staff—to discover what steps would meaningfully impact how services work together to support people experiencing homelessness.

What we found

Despite deep care and effort by all the organizations, coordination between services remains inconsistent and siloed, often at the expense of outreach staff and folks on the street.

- There is little coordination between services
- Everyone in the ecosystem has limited visibility of the problems
- There is no single source of shared truth
- There is a lack of ownership/governance around coordination
- Existing systems like HMIS are not designed to help with street outreach

What is needed

1. An active, locally managed by-name list to track who is unhoused, where they are, and what support they need
2. Lightweight coordination tools that help outreach and shelter teams share updates, flag needs, and avoid duplication
3. Clear agreements on data governance, including what is collected, who can access it, and how it's maintained
4. A regular case conferencing meeting focused on triage, matching people to services, tracking referrals, and coordinating care

What we set out to learn

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The City and its partners recognize that better coordination could improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness—but there hasn't been a clear plan for how to start coordinating.

What we set out to learn

- How can we start coordinating now?
- Where are the bottlenecks in the journey from street to housing?
- What are the current workflows and tools used by providers?
- What has worked in other cities—and what can we borrow?
- What kind of infrastructure (*tools, governance, relationships*) is needed to make change possible?

What we set out to learn

To understand the current system from the ground up, we interviewed providers and mapped their services, from first contact to housing.

We talked to the teams at:

- The Life Link
- St. Elizabeth's Shelter
- The HUGS Team at St. Vincent's

What we learned

Our society has systems and services designed to support people who are at risk of becoming homeless...

e.g. public benefits, food assistance, behavioral health services, eviction prevention programs, domestic violence support, addiction treatment...

Housing insecure, at-risk

On the Streets

...but once someone is living on the street, they fall out of care, and out of existing support systems.



On the Streets

They fall “out of the system,” literally

We don’t know who they are, what they need, how many people need help, or what critical services they need most to become stable and housed.



On the Streets

**Getting folks back in the care system
takes months of work on the ground
by outreach teams from multiple
services and shelters.**



**And without shared infrastructure,
frontline workers take on the heavy
lift of reconnecting people to care.**

**Often they don't know who else is involved or what
support has already been offered.**



The good news

This is a very solvable problem

*There are published methods, resources, best practices,
and proven frameworks we can follow*

Communities across the country are already doing this

From Colorado to California, rural towns to regional alliances—communities have shown that with shared tools, local coordination, and the right governance, it's possible to:

1. Build and maintain real-time by-name lists
2. Run effective case conferencing meetings
3. Coordinate across agencies in the field
4. Use data to make faster, fairer decisions

We don't have to start from scratch—we need start local.

What about the Coalition and HMIS?

The Coalition, as the CoC for the entire state, plays a critical role in determining who gets prioritized for housing.

But they enter the picture too late, long after the outreach teams have connected folks to services.

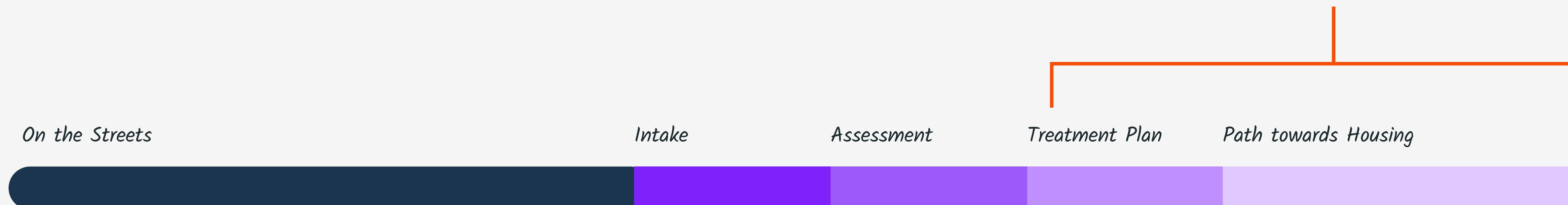


The Coalition and HMIS are designed for compliance, not engagement.

They focus on people already in a care system
(e.g., *shelter residents, voucher recipients*).

They don't focus on the early relationship-building or the informal encounters that outreach teams are doing.

The Coalition



**How The Life Link helps people
get the support they need to get
off the streets and into housing**

On the Streets *The line at the door* *Intake* *Assessment* *Treatment Plan* *Path towards Housing*



Spreadsheets



Paper Packet



EMR Bear



HMIS / SERVICENET

HMIS / CONNECT



THE LIFE LINK

On the streets

The Packet

Help them get the help they need

- encourage them to come in to Life Link
- provide them with immediate supplies

Hand them a packet

Requires

- personal details
- valid ID
- proof of insurance
- mailing address

Spreadsheets



Paper packet



THE LIFE LINK

The Packet

The Line at the Door

Packet Review

Enter the paperwork

30-45 minutes

Arrive at The Life Link

- Mon-Thurs 8-11am
- Line starts forming at 7am
- The packet needs to be completed
- only the first 4-5 people in line will be seen

Verify that the packet is complete

- Proof of insurance
- Proof if ID
- Lookup folks in Medicaid

Review

Enter the paperwork

20-30 minutes

Front desk staff adds records to EMR BEAR

- Insurance tracking
- Billing portal
- HIPA Compliant Medical Records

Meet with a therapist

30-60 minutes

Get a provisional diagnosis

- One therapist each day
- Notes are taken in EMR BEAR

Enter the paperwork

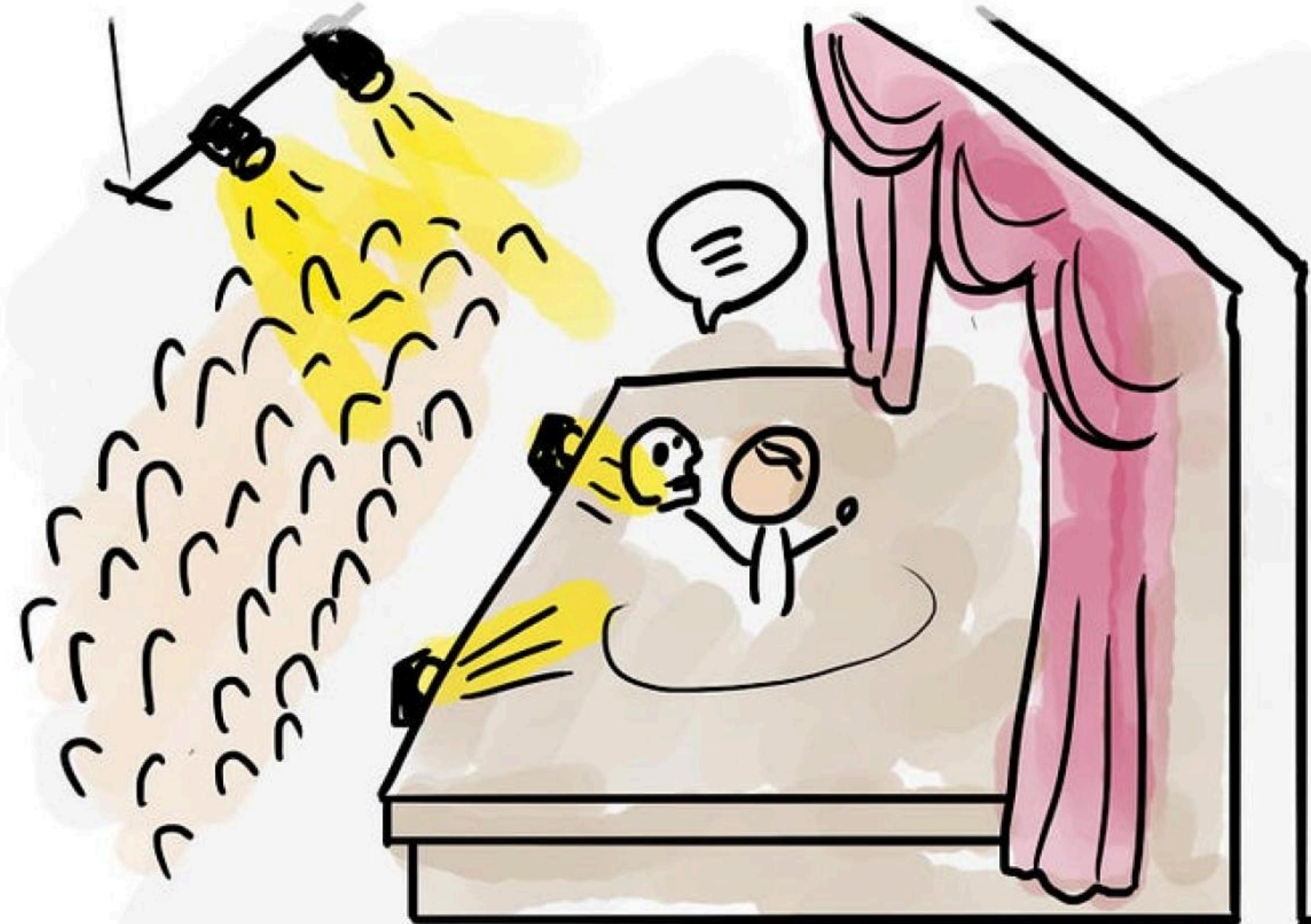
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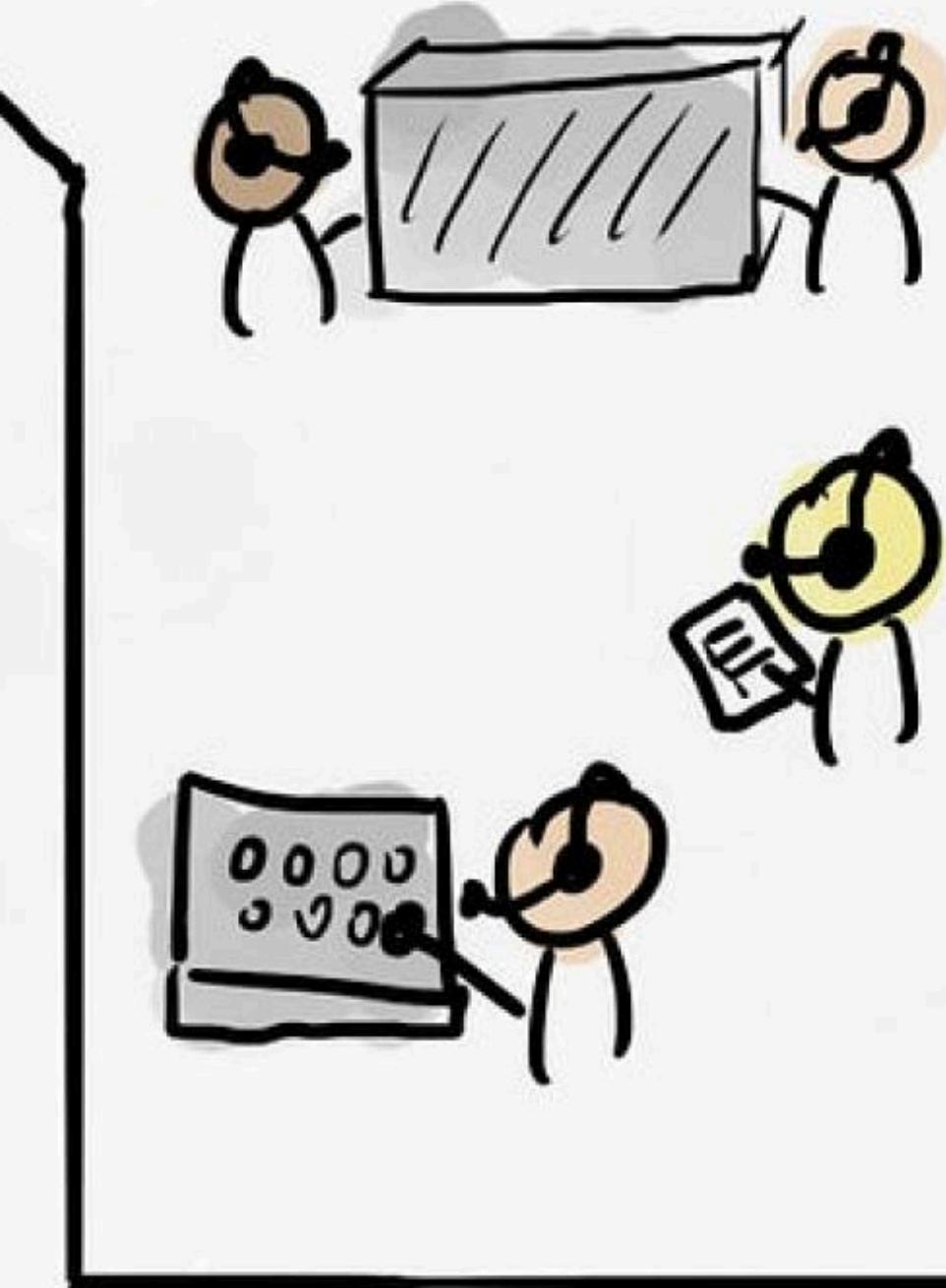
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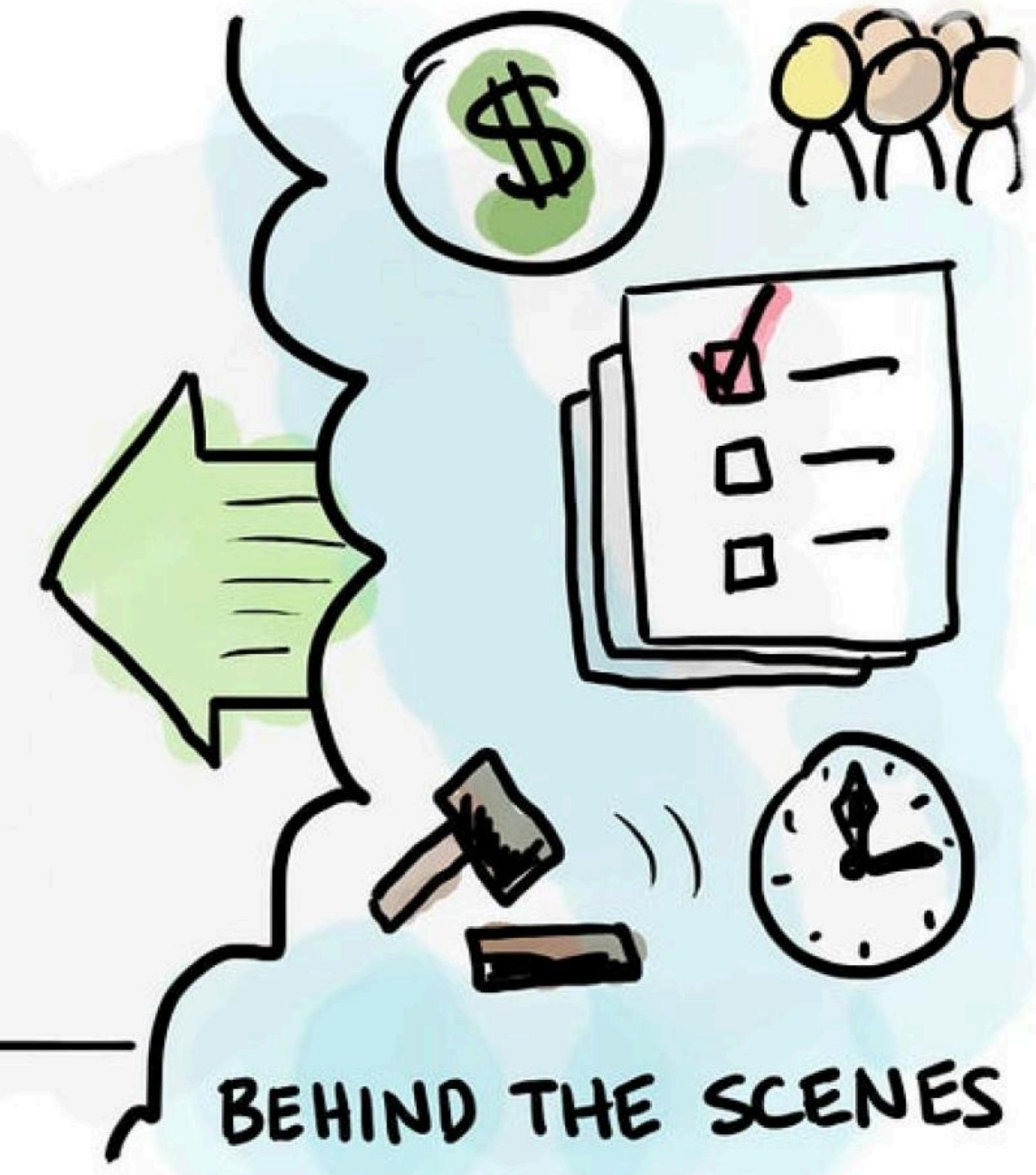
How can we make coordination 5% better?



FRONT STAGE

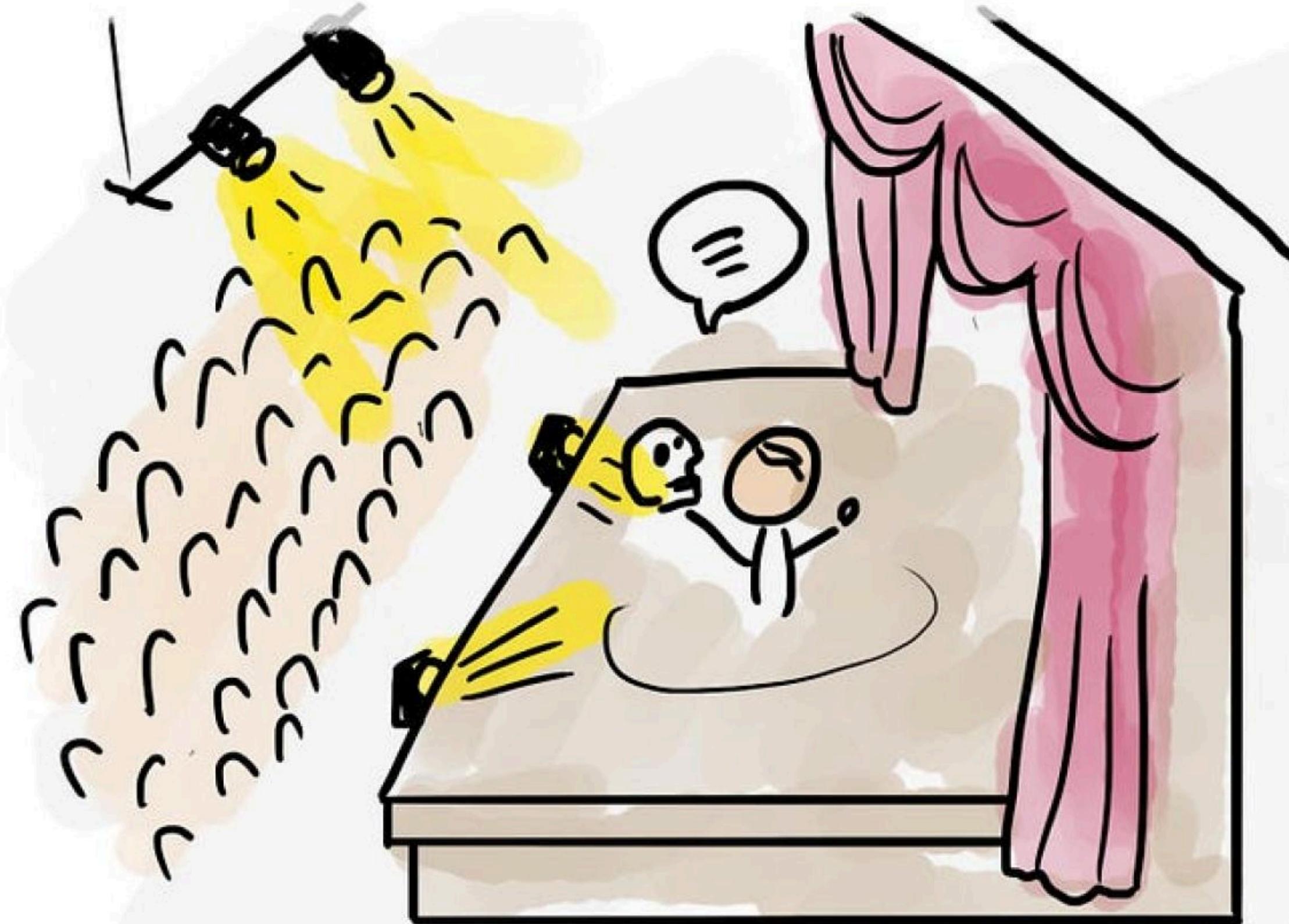


BACK STAGE



BEHIND THE SCENES

This is how the public will
experience our work



FRONT STAGE



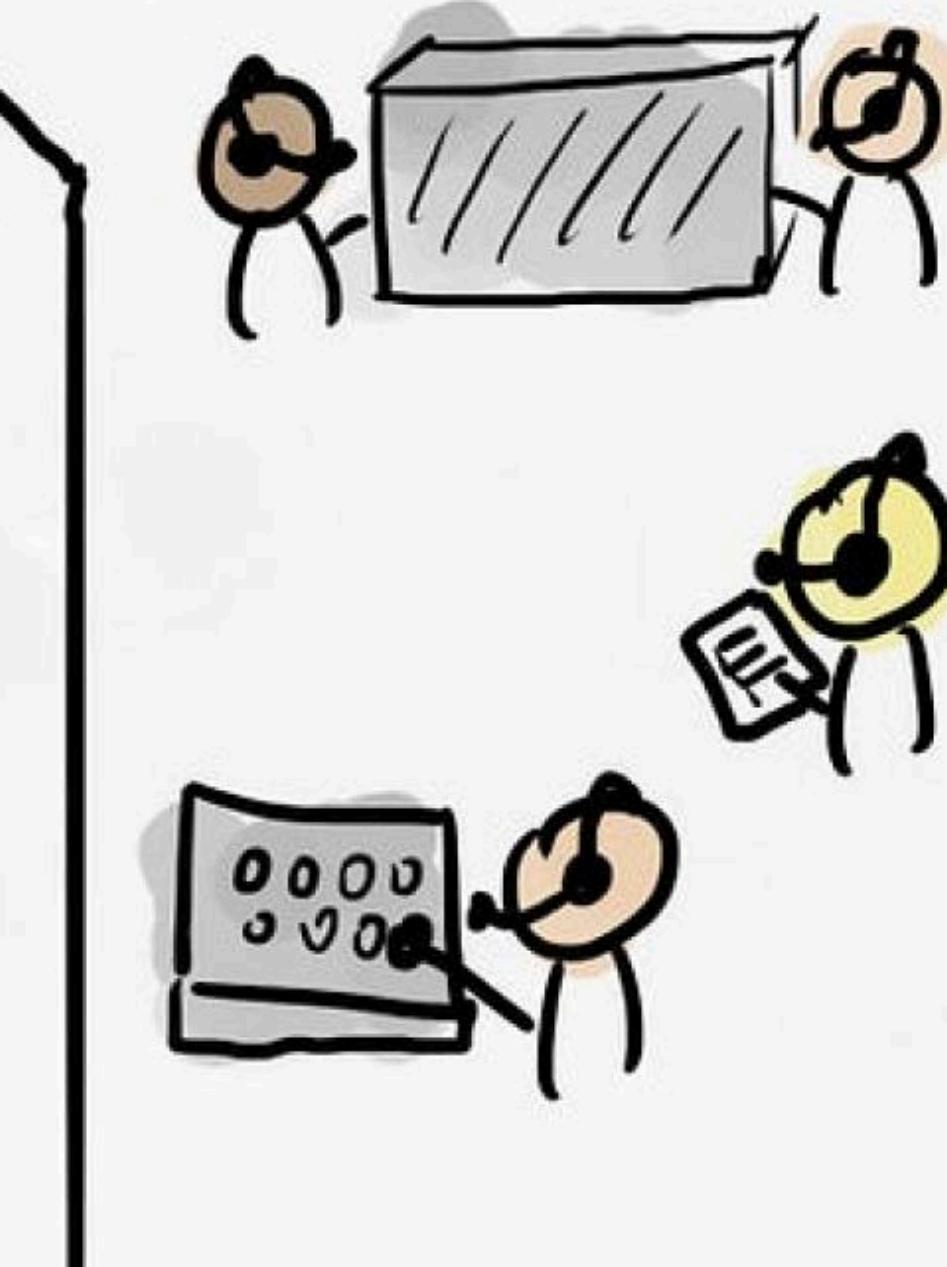
BACK STAGE

BEHIND THE SCENES

and this is how we'll cooperate
experience our work together



FRONT STAGE

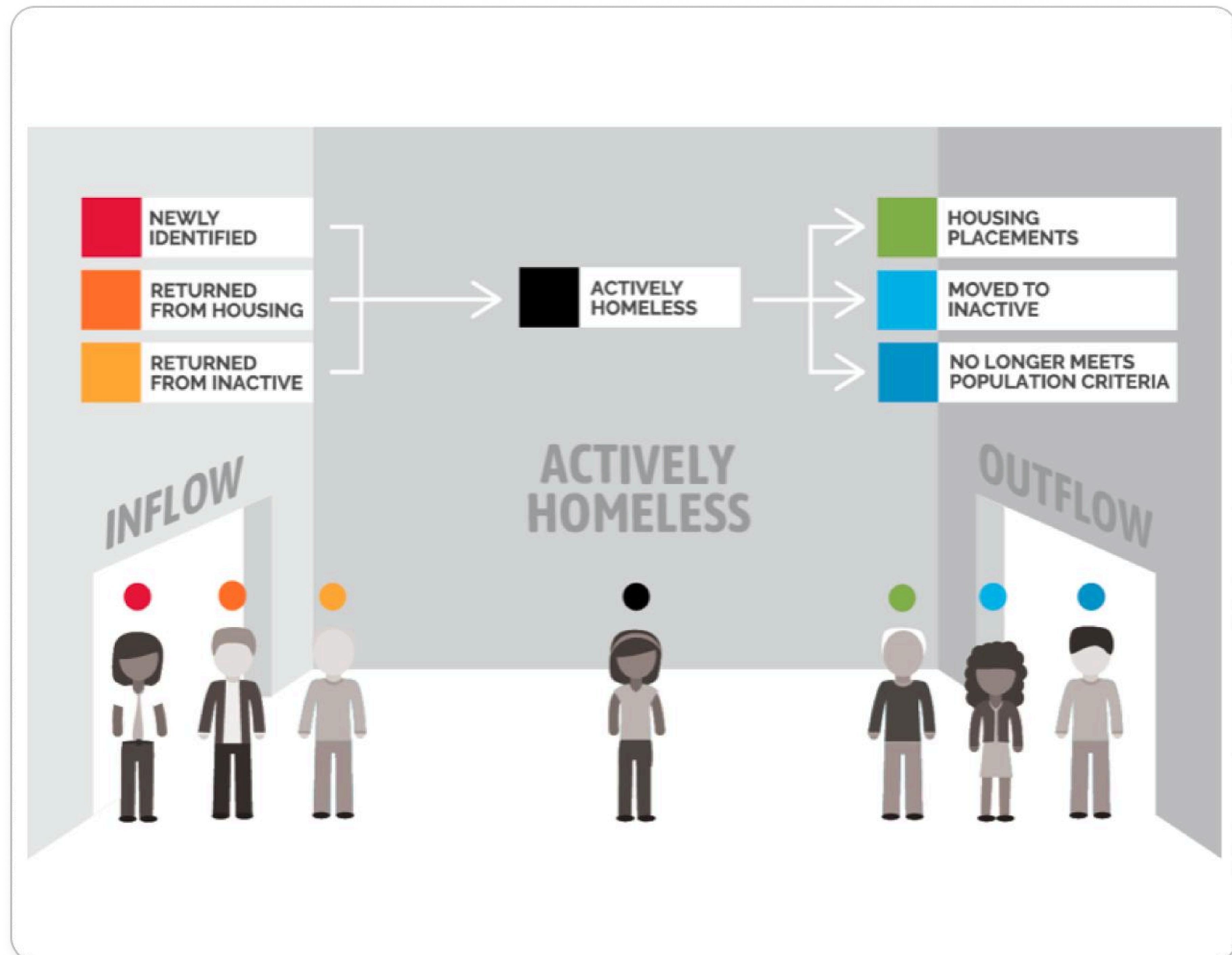


BACK STAGE



BEHIND THE SCENES

...and this is what makes all of
your work possible



Recommendations

Recommendations

1. Build a lightweight outreach application

- Allow outreach and shelter teams to log the people they're working with
- Include a way to mark and update encampment locations on a shared map
- Log outreach encounters and notes
- View shared lists of people and encampments across teams in real time
- Design mobile-first for use in the field
- Keep it simple, fast, and flexible

Recommendations

2. Launch local case conferencing

- Meet regularly to review the active by-name list
- Prioritize people based on urgency and available services
- Share updates, coordinate placements, and reduce duplication
- Include outreach, shelter, behavioral health, and city teams
- Keep meetings structured, focused, and action-oriented

Recommendations

3. Establish shared governance

- Decide together what gets tracked and how it's used
- Set policies on who can view, edit, or delete records
- Build trust through transparency and shared responsibility
- Identify a neutral party (or parties) to help steward the system
- Define clear roles for app management and data upkeep

Recommendations

4. Design a data-sharing plan

- Agree on what data is shared across teams and agencies
- Extend access to partners beyond shelters (e.g., libraries, public works)
- Use common formats to make coordination easier
- Respect privacy while supporting better care
- Clarify who hosts the system and how it's funded long term

An Outreach Application

Proposed Structure for a City-Supported Prototype (2025)

We've observed that the City of Santa Fe and its partners in the homelessness response ecosystem lack a shared, real-time view of who is being engaged and where support is most needed.

We believe that if we build a lightweight outreach application that allows teams to log encounters with individuals, track encampments, and help coordinate care between organizations, it will result in better-informed decisions, smarter allocation of City funds, and will make it clear for everyone where resources need to be focused.

Ultimately, this will lead to more consistent follow-up, improved coordination between teams, and more personalized service and care for the individuals we're trying to support.

Proposed Structure for a City-Supported Prototype (2025)

City Funding (~\$60,000) would cover:

- Design & Development of a lightweight, mobile-friendly app (*Next.js + Airtable or Directus*)
- Facilitation of workshops with outreach teams and shelter providers
- Define core data to be collected
- Determine access levels and data protections
- Drafting of governance protocols
- Establish clear guidelines for data ownership, privacy, and use
- Identify and support community leaders to manage the system long-term

Project Outcomes

A functional MVP, designed, built, tested, and used by local outreach teams

A shared data model informed by the people doing the work

A governance framework to ensure sustainability and shared ownership

A clear path forward:

- Transition to nonprofit ownership
- Or preparation for a larger RFP and continued city investment

Startup Software Costs

2025 Estimate

Airtable Enterprise	HIPAA-compliant data management	\$450-\$800
Vercel Enterprise	HIPAA-compliant hosting and API support for Next.js front-end	\$300/mo
PostHog Cloud	HIPAA-compliant analytics & user behavior tracking	\$0-\$40

Total: \$750 – \$1,140 / month

Outreach Application Overview

The Outreach Application will support street outreach and shelter coordination efforts by providing a simple, mobile-first tool for logging, tracking, and sharing information about individuals experiencing homelessness and the places they are encountered.

It is designed to be lightweight, easy to use in the field, and interoperable with future systems.

The app would be designed to be lightweight, easy to use in the field, and interoperable with future systems.

Outreach App: Core Functional Requirements

1. People & Encounter Logging

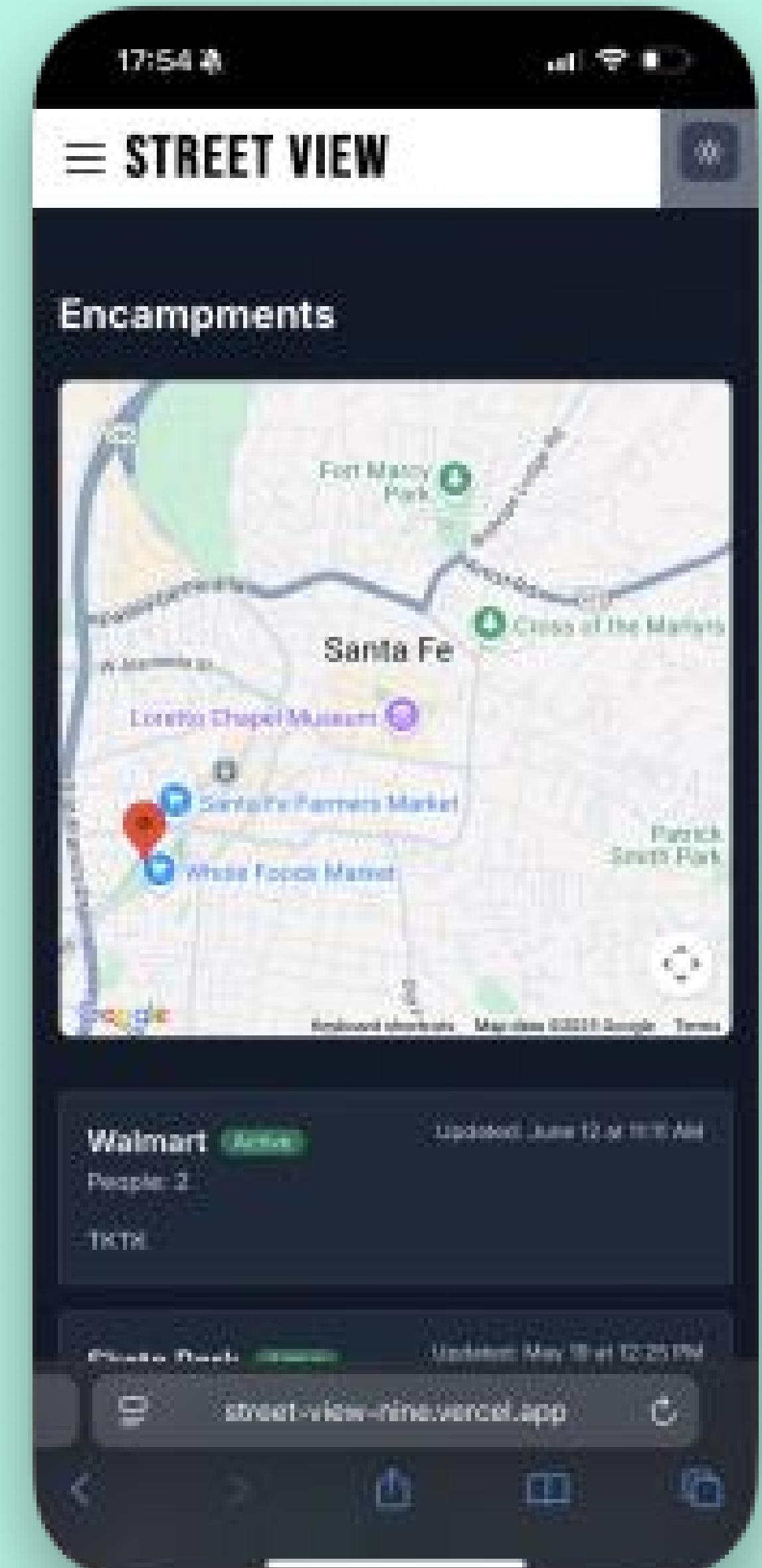
- Help outreach teams to log individuals they meet during outreach or shelter intake, using a minimum set of fields (*name or alias, gender, approximate age, needs, etc.*)
- Support repeated encounters, with notes and time-stamped updates.
- Enable anonymous logging when individuals decline to share identifying information.
- Support tagging or categorizing individuals (e.g., *priority need, referral status, location found*).



Outreach App: Core Functional Requirements

2. Encampment Mapping

- Users can log a new encampment with a short description and estimated number of people
- Easily drop a pin on the map to mark location (*mobile-friendly with GPS support*)
- All encampments are moderated/approved by a designated admin before being published
- Encampments can be updated or marked as active/inactive as conditions change
- Map displays active, inactive, and under review encampments with filter options
- Individuals can be linked to a specific encampment location for follow-up tracking



Outreach App: Core Functional Requirements

3. Shared Lists and Coordination

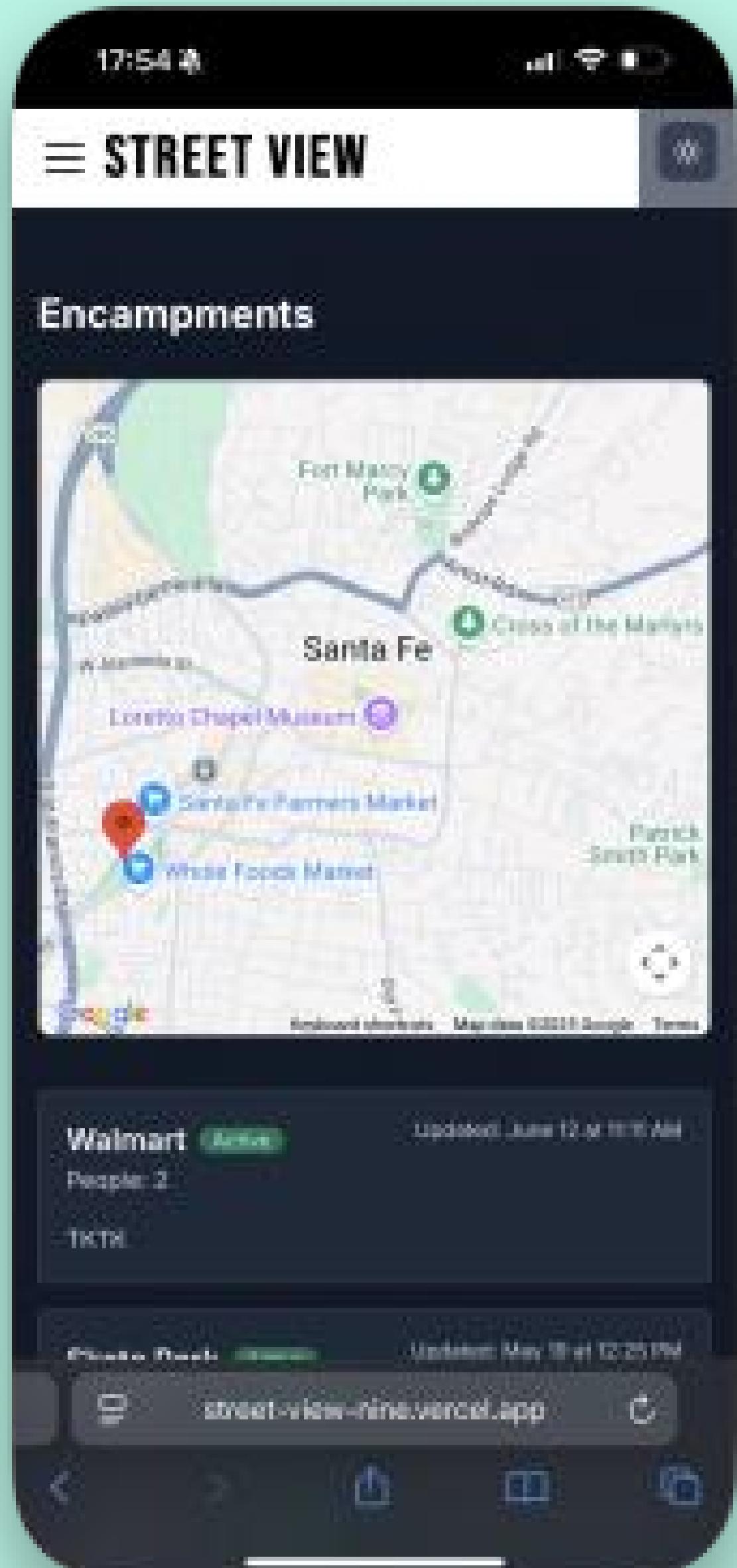
- Provide a shared, real-time view of people, encounters, and encampments across all teams
 - Show recent activity and updates, helping reduce duplication and missed follow-up
 - Optional status indicators (e.g., *seen today, accepted referral, in shelter*)



Outreach App: Core Functional Requirements

4. Mobile-First Design

- Optimized for use on mobile phones and tablets
- Minimal training required – clean UI and intuitive flows



Outreach App: Core Functional Requirements

Data & Privacy Considerations

- Only minimal personally identifying information (PII) is required
- All data must be encrypted at rest and in transit
- Comply with HIPAA and local data protection policies
- Include role-based access control (e.g., *some users can see names; others only encounter logs*)
- Allow for data export (CSV, JSON) for manual sharing or migration

Outreach App: Core Functional Requirements

Integration & Extensibility

- Should be able to integrate with existing systems (e.g., *HMIS*, *shelter management tools*) in future phases
- Expose REST API endpoints for data syncing
- Allow for user-created forms or fields with minimal admin overhead

Outreach App: Core Functional Requirements

Reporting & City Insights

This data would help the City in its overall planning

- Total number of unique individuals logged over time
- Number of new encounters by day, week, or month
- Most commonly reported needs across all individuals
- Time between first encounter and referral or service connection
- Number of repeat encounters per individual, showing patterns of engagement
- Top locations for new outreach activity
- Shelter turnover reports, showing beds opened and filled over time
- Current bed availability vs. total number of beds needed (*based on recent encounters or demand trends*)

Outreach App: Core Functional Requirements

Reporting & Provider Insights

- Encampments by status (*active, resolved, under review*)*
- Encounters by location, team, or outreach zone*
- Shelter referrals made vs. accepted, if available*
- Downloadable reports (CSV/PDF) for meetings, briefings, and/or public dashboards

*To maintain trust with the community, some information will need to remain private to select providers and individuals, like encampment locations

Simple list

First thing

Add a quick description of each thing, with enough context to understand what's up.

Second thing

Keep 'em short and sweet, so they're easy to scan and remember.

Third thing

If you've got a bunch, add another row, or use multiple copies of this slide.