

# ARCORA

## Foundation

### Bending the Arc of Oral Health Toward Equity

#### Solutions Series Summary for July 16, 2025

Presenters: Danielle Wrenn, Spokane Regional Health District

Facilitators: Heather Wallace

Host: Arcora Foundation, in collaboration with Collective Mind and community partners

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#### **Purpose of the Session**

This session focused on exploring the participatory budgeting process developed and used by Smile Spokane. The process was designed to align annual planning, evaluation, and collaborative funding decisions across multiple community strategies. Participants examined lessons learned from Spokane's experience and discussed how these practices could inform other networks' work, including Pierce County.

#### **Project Overview**

The participatory budgeting model was created to ensure transparency, accountability, and shared ownership in how funds were allocated among Smile Spokane's anchor strategies. It used a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework and emphasized group planning and evaluation to achieve collective oral health goals.

#### **Key Partners:**

- Spokane Regional Health District (Evaluator: Danielle Wrenn)
- Smile Spokane network partners
- Arcora Foundation (funding and statewide network support)
- Anchor strategy leads and community-based organizations

#### **How It Works**

- Annual planning led by Spokane Regional Health District with each anchor strategy to define focus, logic model, and performance measures.
- Strategies reported progress through "story reports" that summarized activities, outcomes, and plans for the upcoming year.
- All partners participated in annual budget meetings to allocate funding based on collective priorities and performance.
- Trust and transparency evolved over time, shifting the group from competitive funding requests to collaborative decision-making and resource sharing.

#### **Lessons Learned**

Success Factors:

- Clear and consistent process for planning and funding decisions

- Strong culture of trust and group accountability
- Transparent data sharing and evaluation framework
- Collaborative solutions (e.g., in-kind resource sharing, reduced budget asks)

#### Challenges:

- Initial competitiveness in funding requests
- Reporting burden on strategy leads (mitigated by evaluator support)
- Partner discomfort with sharing imperfect data early in the process
- Balancing group priorities with individual program needs

#### Adaptations:

- Partial-year funding used to incentivize sustainable planning
- Match requirements introduced to encourage self-sufficiency
- Focus shifted from solely individual strategies to what benefits the collective whole

### **Group Sensemaking Highlights**

Using GroupMap, participants identified the following as most important:

1. Shared goals and priorities (highest-rated theme)
2. Transparent and meaningful evaluation processes
3. Accountability and group ownership of the collective work
4. Local sustainability, including finding external funding and reducing reliance on Arcora

### **Next Steps**

- Share Smile Spokane's facilitator guides and evaluation tools with Pierce County LIN and other networks.
- Pierce County LIN to explore integrating lessons learned to accelerate its own collaborative planning and sustainability efforts.
- Arcora Foundation to convene a meeting with both LINs to align on shared priorities, decision-making structures, and long-term sustainability strategies.