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## How Can Boise State University Engage with Ada County Stakeholders to End Homelessness?

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## How Can Boise State University Engage with Ada County Stakeholders to End Homelessness?

### Abstract

How can Boise State University engage with local stakeholders to end homelessness? To answer this question, Boise State University's Blue Sky Institute and Idaho Policy Institute partnered to analyze the local homelessness service provider network. We used Interfaith Sanctuary, a nonprofit network member, as a focal point. Research included a SWOT analysis, mapping the network and funding distribution, interviewing stakeholders, and analyzing provider operations.

This report demonstrates that this service network functions best when stakeholders collaborate. This report recommends that Boise State University pursue both short-term and long-term opportunities in the network in order to assist the community's efforts.

### Comments

Vanessa Fry is co-affiliated with the Idaho Policy Institute.

# HOW CAN BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

## ENGAGE WITH ADA COUNTY

### STAKEHOLDERS TO END HOMELESSNESS?

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To answer this question, Boise State University's Blue Sky Institute and Idaho Policy Institute partnered to analyze the Ada County, Idaho, homelessness service provider network. Research included conducting a SWOT analysis, mapping the network, interviewing stakeholders, and analyzing provider operations.

While this research project used Interfaith Sanctuary, a nonprofit homelessness service provider in Ada County, as its focal point, it also analyzed and addressed the entire homelessness service network in the county.

**This report demonstrates that the Ada County homelessness service network functions best when stakeholders collaborate to address the issue of homelessness. Ultimately, this report recommends that Boise State University pursue both short-term and long-term opportunities in the network in order to assist the community's efforts to address and end homelessness.**

### METHODS

**17 internal interviews** were conducted with Interfaith staff, board and shelter guests.

**19 external interviews** were conducted with stakeholders identified through the

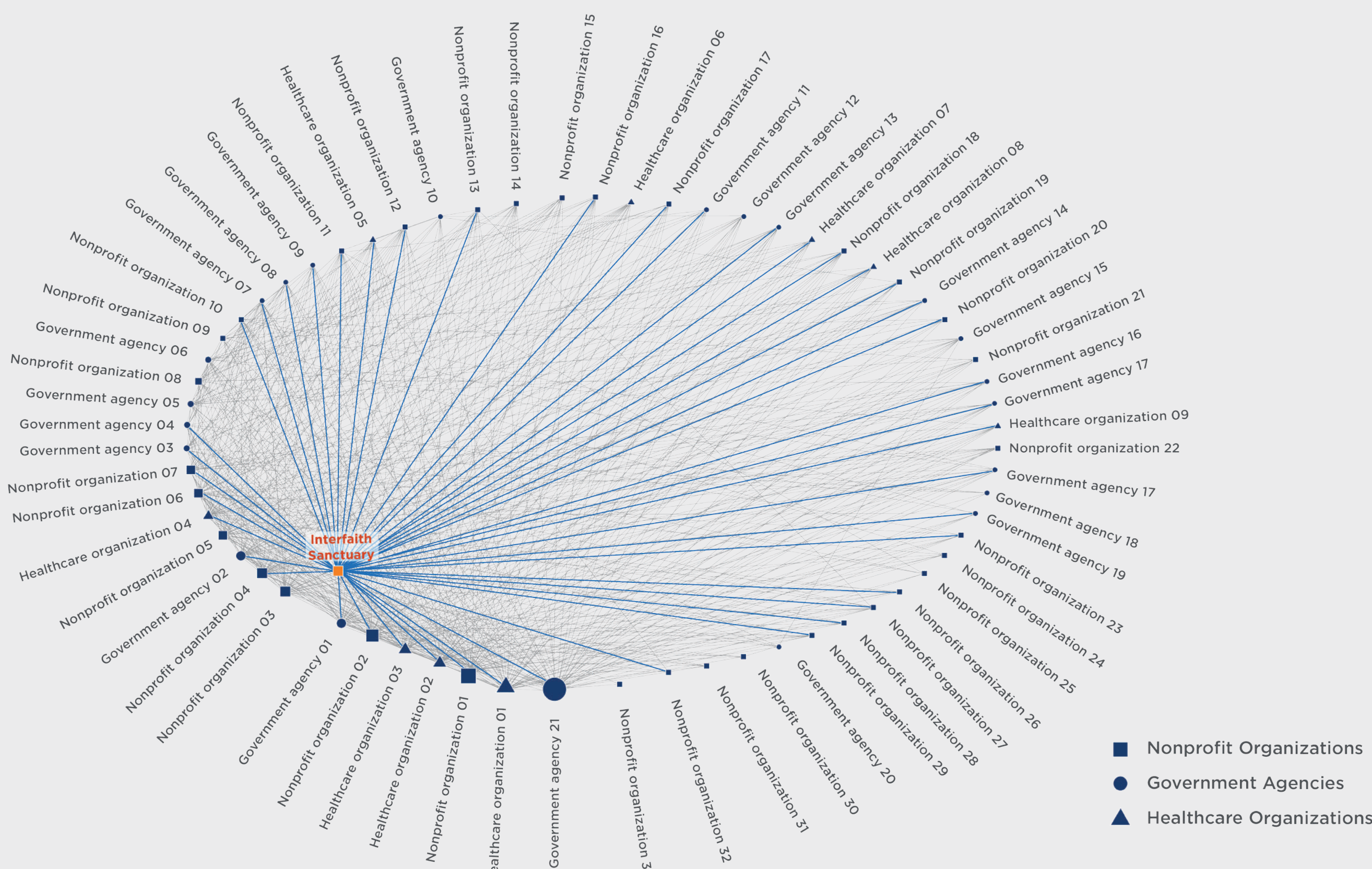
research team's pre-existing knowledge of the service network and through the recommendations made by interviewees. The selection of key stakeholders included state agencies, nonprofits, healthcare providers, criminal justice representatives, funders, and advocacy groups.

We collected network data by sending an **online survey** to 66 members. Of the 66 recipients, 29 recipients, or 43.9%, fully completed the survey. Organizations that did not respond to the survey may be somewhat less represented in the **visual network**, as their participation had to be measured from the responses of other organizations.

The research team also used public budget data to construct a **Sankey diagram illustrating funding relationships** originating from government agencies.

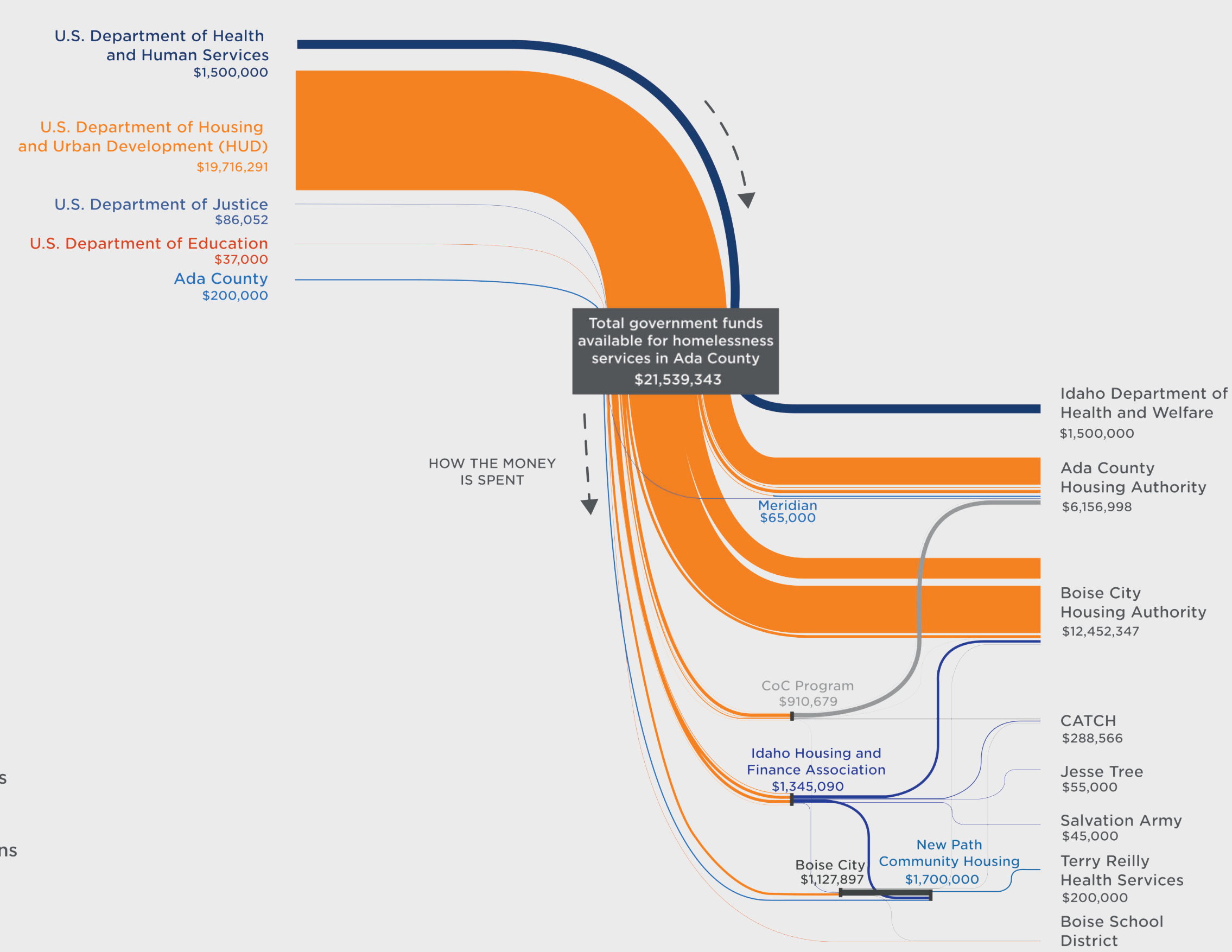
### network analysis

This is a visual representation of the Ada County homelessness service network. The size of the shape associated with each organization represents its potential influence in the network. The shape itself represents the type of organization.



### funding distribution

The following flow diagram illustrates each government funding source (divided by color) that provides money within the service network as well as the organizations that directly received this funding in 2017.



## RESULTS

Our SWOT analysis (below) shows that Interfaith employees operate with an **awareness of the humanity of their guests** and **strive to communicate the stories** of their guests to the community. Interfaith employees also have a notable **ability to start new programs**, and **gather community resources** to bring their visions to fruition.

However, Interfaith **struggles to responsibly steward their data, manage secondary trauma** and **share information** with the Ada County homelessness service provider network. These are their weaknesses.

Externally, Interfaith and other Ada County homelessness service providers have opportunities to **foster better, more strategic, partnerships**, and **invest in network-wide data** collection and utilization. Additionally, service providers can improve how they **share and use resources in the community**, to avoid duplication of services and create a more streamlined delivery of services.

Threats to the network include the **shifting demographics** of the homeless community, **competition of providers for funding** and **liability issues** that providers might encounter.



### CONCLUSION

Homelessness services providers in Ada County interact within a complex network of shared information, ideas and resources. Taking this into consideration, it is incorrect to believe that the success or failure of the network-wide mission to end homelessness in Ada County rests on the back of any one organization. The greatest opportunities to create lasting change can be found in relationships and strengthened through facilitation and coordination.

**Furthermore, if Boise State is to play a role in this change, it must not consider itself immune from engagement in the network, as both a peer and a consultant. Boise State University is in a uniquely advantageous position to aid in ending homelessness in Ada County.** Academic research is in high demand among homelessness service providers looking for data to determine and support best practices among their peers. Faculty, staff and students can provide program evaluation, technical assistance, training and facilitation network-wide.

Finally, by supporting the provider network and serving as an "honest broker," Boise State can offer context and perspective to the Network and encourage service providers to coordinate their resources and services in a way that maximizes Network capacity and reduces the duplication of services.