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# HOW WE GOT HERE

ORIENTING THE EQUITY COMMITTEE IN ITS HISTORY IN THE HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SYSTEM



# EQUITY TASK GROUP

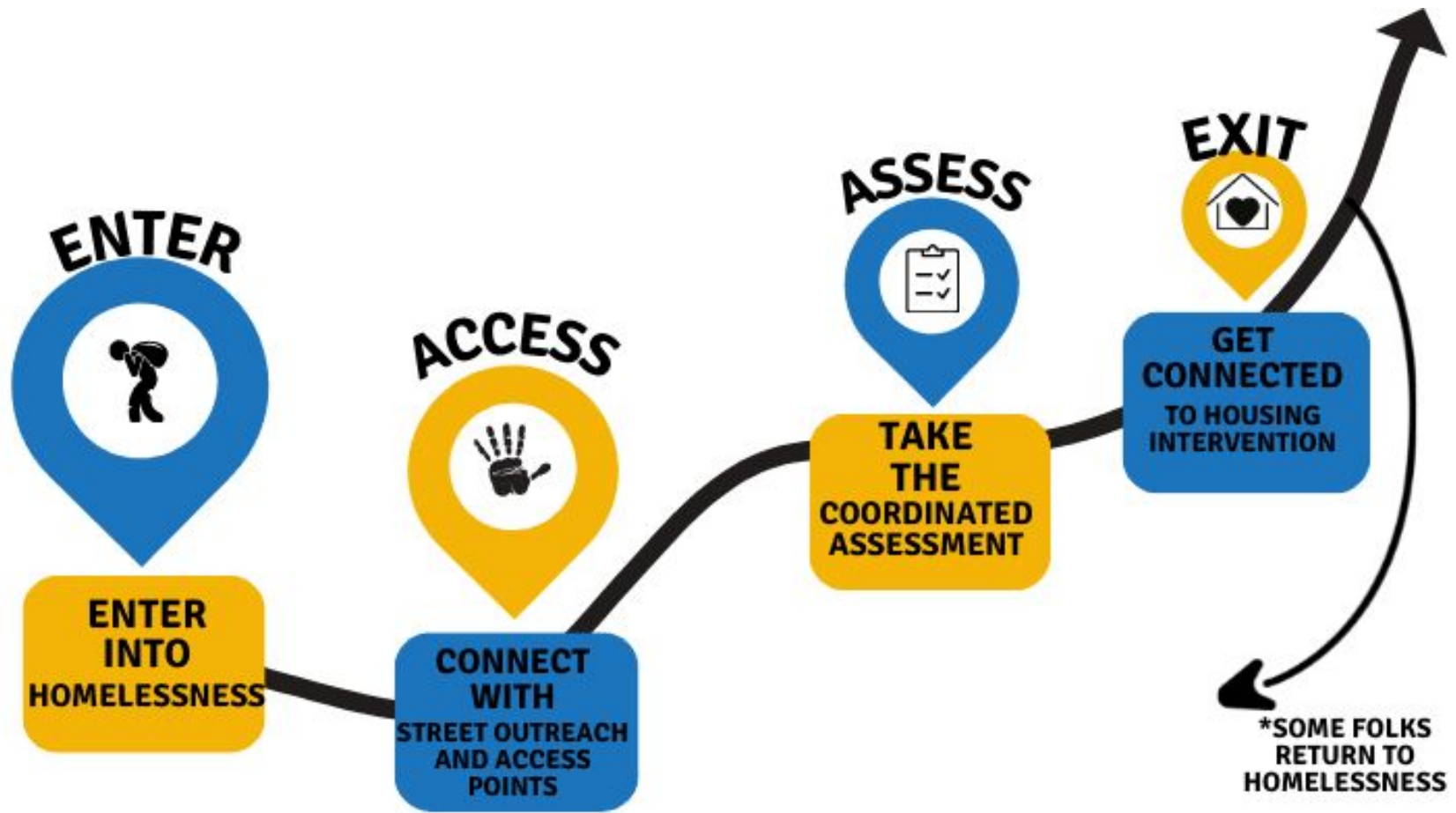
- The Equity Task Group was **established in December 2019** by a small group of Homelessness Response System staff across agencies who pushed for a space to address racial disparities in the Coordinated Assessment tool
- The scope of the Equity Task Group was widened by its members, who wrote the following mission statement:  
*The mission of this group is to eliminate racial disparities within the homeless response system, and to address intersections of marginalization of groups that would not be served equitably without explicit focus.*
- The Equity Task Group and its subcommittees have continued to meet and work together toward equity in the system since then, until the seating of the Equity Committee, which now takes its place in the governance structure



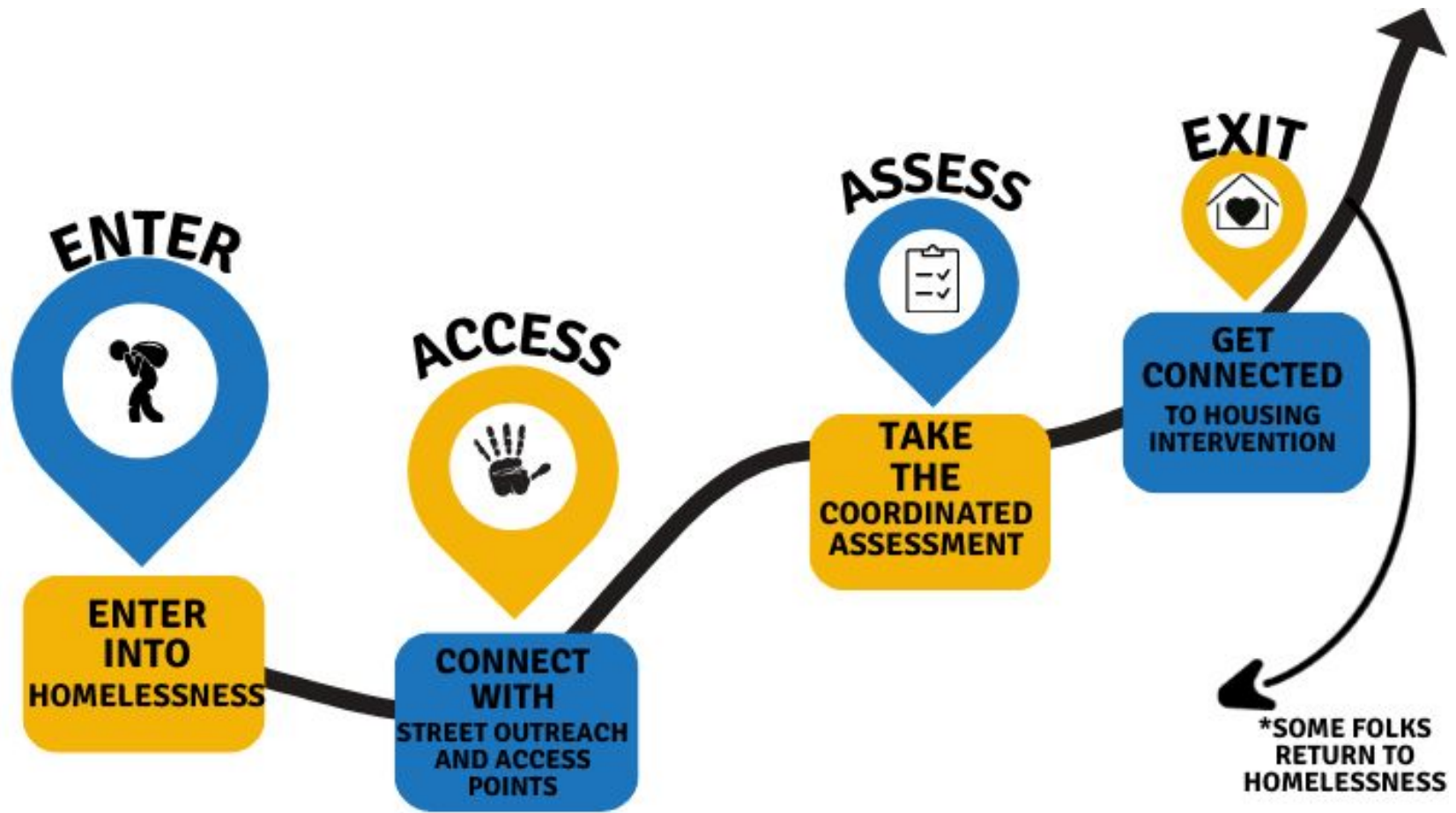
The Equity Task Group created a tool to replace the prior Coordinated Assessment tool, which was approved by Leadership Council for implementation and use in August 2021



This tool is called the **Austin Prioritization Index (API)**, and it is now the official Coordinated Assessment tool for the Austin/Travis County Homelessness Response System Coordinated Entry System



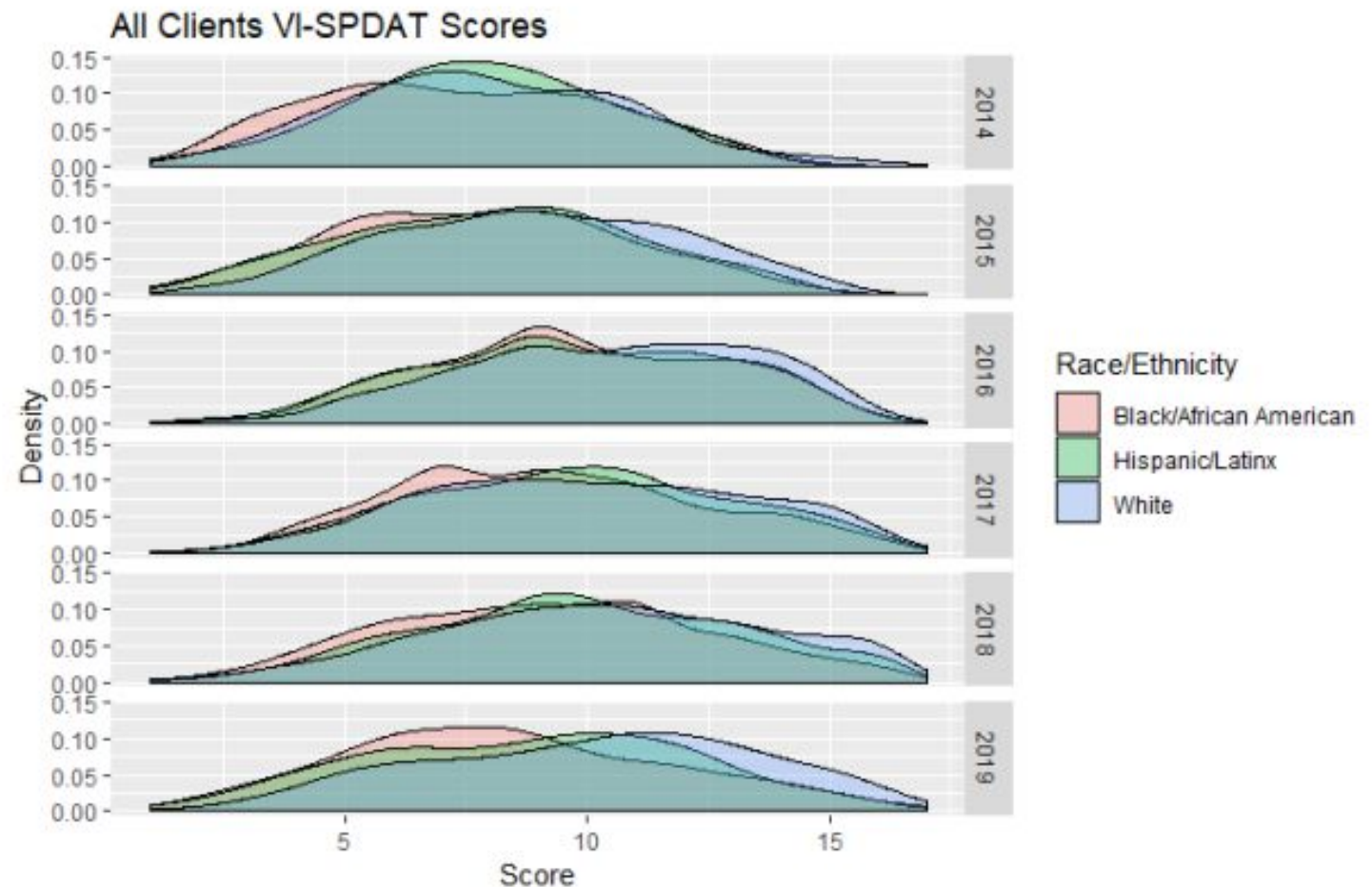
Coordinated Entry is the **consolidated housing application process** whereby anyone experiencing homelessness in Austin/Travis County can apply for all possible housing programs at the same time and get the same answer about all immediate and future program openings.



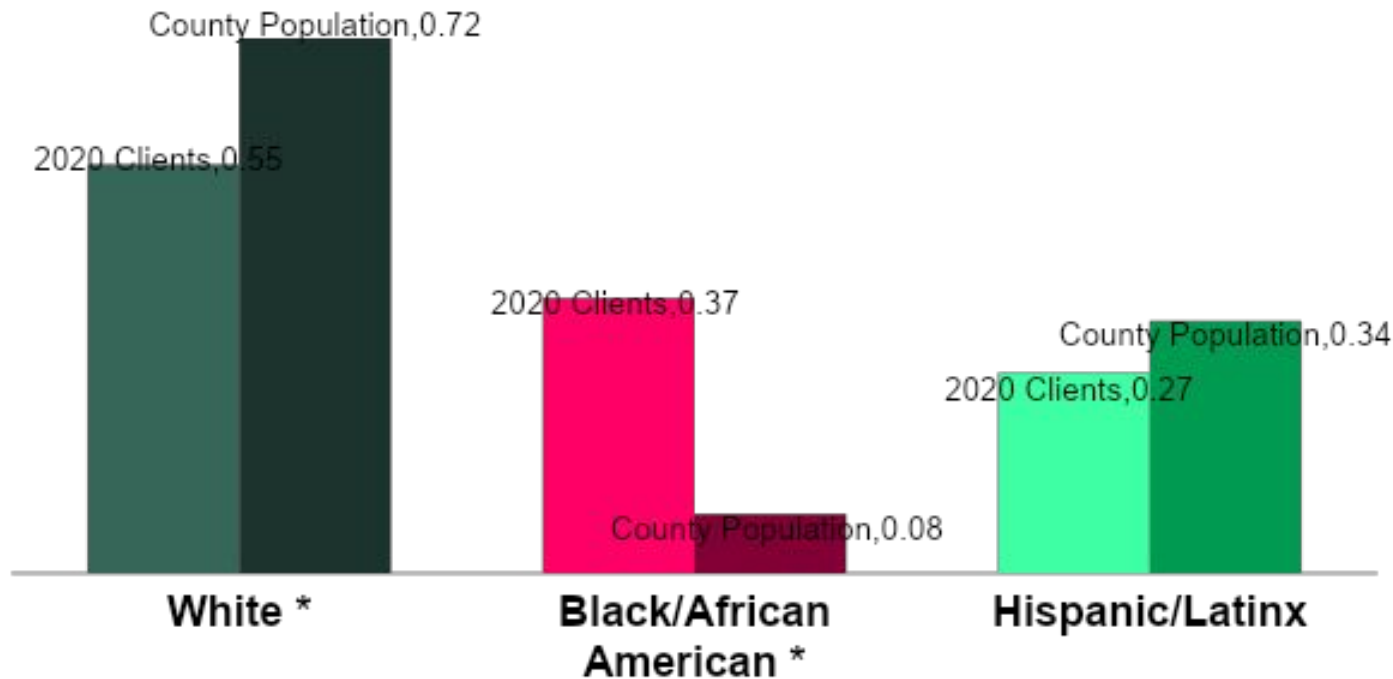
Coordinated Entry uses a prioritization tool (Austin Prioritization Index) to match clients with program openings as they occur. *Prioritization is only necessary because there are fewer units and services available relative to the number of people who need them.*

# THE NEED TO REPLACE THE PRIOR COORDINATED ASSESSMENT

- In September 2019, ECHO released an analysis of Coordinated Assessment data for the assessment tool that was used at the time in Austin/Travis County, the VI-SPDAT.
- This assessment revealed that Black clients AND Hispanic/Latinx clients had been consistently been scoring lower than white clients, with Black clients scoring the lowest overall between the three groups



# THE NEED TO REPLACE THE PRIOR COORDINATED ASSESSMENT



- The results of that analysis, coupled with overall local statistics for the racial composition of people experiencing homelessness vs. the population at large, revealed that the Coordinated Entry System could have been contributing to the racial disparity in homelessness.
- The Austin Prioritization Index was built by the Equity Task Group to counteract this racial disparity, rather than contribute to it. Black clients on average score higher on the API than do white clients.

# JOURNEY TO THE AUSTIN PRIORITIZATION INDEX

**September  
2019**

ECHO publishes the 2019 Racial Disparities Report, revealing the inequity of the VI-SPDAT for Black and Hispanic/Latinx clients in Austin/Travis County

**December  
2019**

The Austin/Travis County Homelessness Response System establishes the Equity Task Group to build a replacement assessment tool

Developing and piloting

**August  
2021**

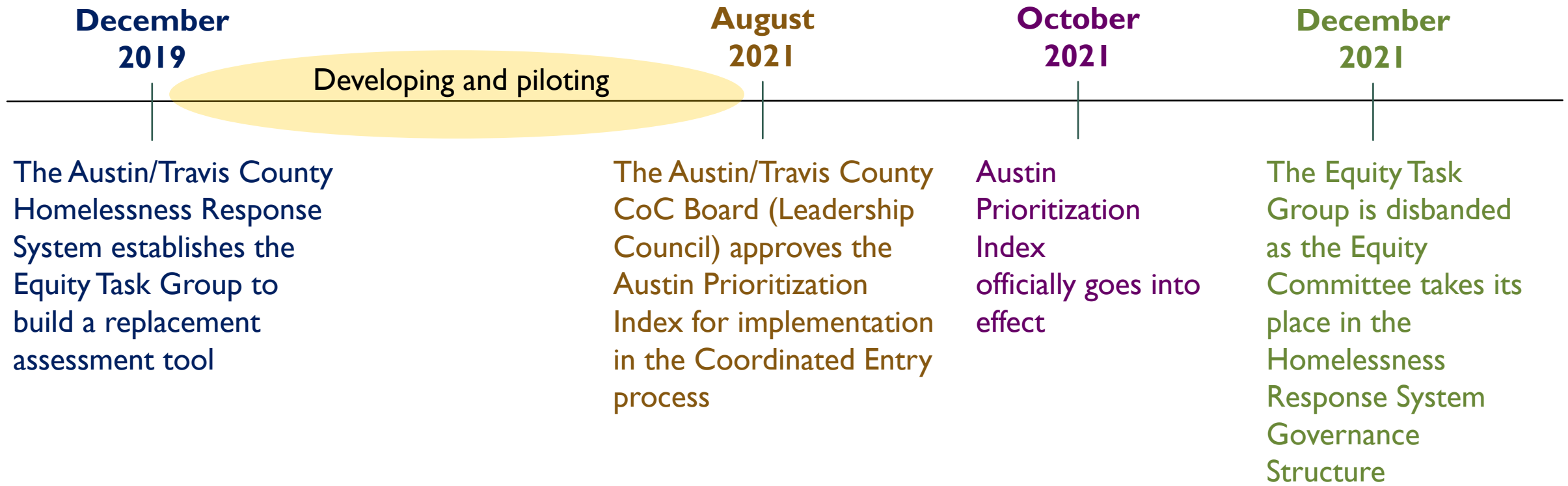
The Austin/Travis County CoC Board (Leadership Council) approves the Austin Prioritization Index for implementation in the Coordinated Entry process

**October  
2021**

Austin Prioritization Index officially goes into effect



# ...AND BEYOND



# ...AND BEYOND



The Equity Committee is responsible for monitoring and continuously improving upon the Austin Prioritization Index



All other responsibilities and priorities are up to us!