

---

## ALBANY COUNTY COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS: 2017 RANK AND REVIEW PROCESS

---

### ***Rationale***

HUD's Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless assistance programs serve as a source of funding for homeless services in the County of Albany, which together form the Albany County Coalition on Homelessness (ACCH). In the 2016 NOFA, the Albany CoC (ACCH) received \$5,154,071.00 from HUD to support 38 projects for homeless individuals and families. HUD awards homeless assistance grants through an annual application process known as the CoC Program Competition in response to the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA).

In order for the CoC to prioritize programs that are most effectively serving the community at the local level, the community has implemented a Rank and Review Process for new and renewal projects. This process will help the members of the CoC gain knowledge of project performance and effectiveness within the full CoC system.

On behalf of the Albany County Coalition on Homelessness (ACCH), the NOFA Committee is charged with overseeing the Rank and Review process. As stated in the ACCH bylaws, the NOFA Committee is responsible for "the design, operation, and following of a collaborative process for the development of funding applications, including funding priorities and the number and type of applications". Each year the NOFA Committee reviews the Rank and Review Process and Application and makes revisions to reflect changing priorities. The NOFA Committee is also responsible for establishing a Review Team. The written Process, the Application and the Review Committee are submitted annually during the first quarter of the calendar year for approval by the Board. The Board shall review the Process and the Tool no later than the March Board meeting. Once Board approved, the Written Process and Application are posted for review and comment by full Membership.

### **Review and Approval of the Rank & Review Application**

Once the CoC Application has been submitted by the Collaborative Applicant, the NOFA Committee begins discussion of the previous year's Rank & Review application, process, and feedback from reviewers and full membership. With this feedback, the Committee proposes revisions to the Rank and Review Application and Process. In addition, the committee develops a list of Review Team members, considering the previous reviewers and potential new members. The revised draft of the application, process and the potential Review Team are presented to the ACCH Board, and subsequent edits may be made by the NOFA Committee. Once the NOFA committee has updated the Board, the application and the process are presented to full Membership with a comment period of fourteen (14) days. Any comments received from Membership are then considered by the Committee for final decisions regarding further revisions. The Rank & Review Application, Process and Review Team are approved by the Board and shared with Membership.

Formatted: Underline, Font color: Red

Formatted: Font color: Red

## Project Participation

Each renewal project completes a Rank & Review Application per project. The 2017 Rank and Review Application process will take place in three (3) phases. The intention behind breaking down the Rank and Review process into 3 phases is to allow agencies adequate time to complete the full Rank and Review application at their convenience.

- Rank and Review Application Phase 1 focuses on project and system outcomes, using a project APR and HMIS System Performance data to “rate” projects. Each project will utilize the previous Calendar Year APR to complete the Rank & Review application Part 1. Each application must be completed, including all required attachments. Late submissions of Rank and Review Applications will automatically have a 5 point penalty.
- Rank and Review Application Phase 2 of the Application consists of narratives, which allow the projects to explain unique circumstances that may affect project performance. Part 2 Applications must be submitted on time to CARES, Inc. to be considered complete and passed on to the Review Committee. Late submissions of Application will automatically have a 5 point penalty. At the time of submission each agency/project is assigned an interview time with the review team.
- Project interviews will be the last phase, Phase 3, of the Rank and Review Process. After the NOFA is released, the NOFA Committee will draft questions based on the specific criteria mentioned within the application. These questions will be part of the project interview. Projects will receive these questions in advance of the interview and will supply the Review Team with written answers prior to the interview. Interviews may assist the reviewers in awarding additional points.

## Reviewers

Reviewers must be individuals from the community (who are not members of the ACCH) or neighboring communities and must be knowledgeable about the CoC process, services and providers. Suggested Review Team members are approached by the Collaborative Applicant and asked to participate. Once reviewers have agreed to participate, one to two days are scheduled to conduct Rank & Review project interviews and for scoring to take place. Interviews will be scheduled for a date after the NOFA is released to allow for any HUD specific criteria to be incorporated into the interview process, as described above. Each reviewer is provided with a copy of each project’s full application and score forms. Once the Review Team convenes and conducts interviews with each project, the Review Team scores each application. These scores result in the project ranking. The Review Team provides any final comments to be shared with projects or the NOFA committee.

## Project Ranking

The NOFA requires that the CoC conduct a transparent and objective process to review and rank all applications for renewal of existing projects and applications for new projects. Using a CoC-approved Rank and Review tool, all projects seeking funding are scored and placed in numerical order based on scores. All projects will receive their scores and will be offered the opportunity to debrief and review their project scores with the Collaborative Applicant. that fall into Tier 2 are contacted by the Collaborative Applicant and offered the opportunity to review their project scores. Projects will have the

ability to submit an appeal, within the allotted time frame, regarding their score following their debriefing (See the **Appeals Process** outlined below). Following any debriefings and appeals, the project ranking is then shared with the NOFA committee. The committee reviews the process and all project scores. The ranking is then presented to the Board for review. ~~Prior to the membership meeting, individual projects will receive a copy of their scores.~~ The ranking is then shared with Membership. ~~Each project is given the opportunity to meet with the Collaborative Applicant to debrief. If a mathematical error is found by the project, the error can be corrected, and notice of the correction will be provided to the NOFA Committee and the Board.~~

Formatted: Font: Bold

### **Appeal Process**

#### 1. Who May Appeal?

An agency may appeal a decision concerning a project application submitted by that agency. If a project was submitted by a collaboration of agencies, only one joint appeal may be made.

#### 2. What May Be Appealed?

An appeal may not be submitted if the basis of the appeal is one of the following: the applicant did not answer all the questions on the application, the applicant did not submit the application with all required attachments, or the applicant did not submit by the required deadline. The appeals process applies only to project **scoring and** ranking. There is no appeal for project tiering. If a mathematical error is found by the project, the error can be corrected, and notice of the correction will be provided to the NOFA Committee and the Board.

Formatted: Indent: Left: 0.5"

#### 3. Timing of an Appeal

Formal appeals can only be submitted by a project **3 business days** after a debriefing has been completed. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Collaborative Applicant who will forward them on to the Review Team. The written appeal must consist of a short statement, no longer than 1 page, of the agency's appeal. The written appeal can be in the form of a letter, memo or email. Any appeal via email must be sent to [JTabankin@caresny.org](mailto:JTabankin@caresny.org) and cc the **ACCH NOFA Committee chair**.

Formatted: Font: Bold, Underline

#### 4. Appeals Decisions

The Review Team also serves as the Appeal Team. Appeals are decided by majority vote of the Appeal Team. Once decided, all appeals are final and may not be overturned by the NOFA Committee, Board or Membership.

Formatted: Numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: 1, 2, 3, ... + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

### **Project Tiering**

HUD requires that the CoC ranks projects into two tiers based on the funding allocation released in the NOFA. The Collaborative Applicant uses the project ranking to tier the projects and presents the tiering to the NOFA Committee. When the NOFA is released, the priorities and tiering outlined in the application are strategically applied by the CoC to the project ranking (which may also affect tiering). Tiering results are then presented to

the Board and, with Board approval, to Membership for a vote. Membership votes on the full application, including the tiering.

### ***New Projects***

New projects are created through bonus funds or reallocated funds. A separate RFP will be completed for new projects. If, after the ranking process, additional money becomes available through reallocation, and if all new projects have been approved and there is additional money, the new project RFP will re-open for submission in an effort to use all available funds. RFP's submitted during the second application process will automatically be ranked below the round 1 projects.

### ***Bonus Projects***

Each year, HUD may offer bonus funding, and guidance is provided within the NOFA as to how the funds must be spent. Bonus projects compete nationally against other bonus projects.

A separate application is required for bonus project proposals, and the proposals must fill an unmet need, as noted within the Strategic Plan. Applications for bonus projects are accepted at the same time that renewal applications are submitted for rank and review. Agencies interested in applying for bonus funding will be given the opportunity to present their proposals to the CoC membership as well as meet with the Review Team for an interview. Bonus applications will be ranked, and the final ranking will be presented, within the full ranking, to CoC membership for approval. When the NOFA is released, the Review Team will decide which, if any, proposals fit the criteria outlined within, and agencies will have the opportunity to resubmit their proposals to meet HUD's criteria for bonus funding. The community's goal is to apply for the maximum amount of available funds. The same appeals process that applies to renewal applications also applies to bonus project applications.

### ***Reallocation***

Reallocation is the process by which the CoC shifts funds, in whole or in part, from existing eligible renewal grants to create new projects that fill an unmet need within the community, as noted within the Albany Strategic Plan and the HMIS Quarterly Report. Reallocation is one of the most important tools by which communities can make strategic improvements to their homeless services system.

Projects from which funds are-can be reallocated include those who have displayed inadequate financial management, a history of expending funds on ineligible activities, a lack of full expenditure of funds, and those which have consistently scored low during the Rank and Review process. Additionally, funds from any project not participating in Coordinated Entry, not participating in the Point-In-Time, not participating in HMIS, or operated by an agency that is not a member in good standing of the ACCH may be considered for reallocation. Further, agencies may voluntarily choose to reallocate funds from their projects. New projects developed by agencies through the reallocation of their own funds will be prioritized during the ranking process. This prioritization allows that agency to apply for a new project with those reallocated funds. All other proposed projects using reallocated funds will be ranked according to general ranking procedures.

A separate application is required for projects being developed with reallocated funds, and the proposed projects must fill an unmet need, as noted above. Applications for these projects are accepted at the same time that renewal applications are submitted for rank and review. Agencies interested in applying for reallocated funds will be given the opportunity to present their proposals to the CoC membership as well as meet with the Review Team for an interview. Applications for new projects will be ranked, separate from renewal projects, and the final ranking will be presented to CoC membership for approval. Projects being created from reallocated funds are ranked independent of bonus projects since they are funding funding sources.

#### ***CoC Transparency***

The Rank and Review process is conducted by the CoC in a transparent manner in order to ensure a fair and consistent process for prioritizing projects. Each year, feedback on the process is solicited. The process is publicly announced by the CoC, distributed in writing to the full CoC membership, and posted publicly on the CARES website for all community members to review and comment.

#### ***FY2017 Rank and Review Application***

The ACCH emphasizes the importance and impact of using the Rank & Review Application as the primary basis for determining the Project Listing submitted as part of the CoC Consolidated Application. The Rank and Review Application is thoughtfully revised each year to include both HUD and CoC standards, incorporate both national and local priorities, and balance objective performance measures with subjective narrative description of project operations.