Rensselaer County Homeless Services Collaborative:

2017 Rank & Review Process

The Rensselaer County Homeless Services Collaborative (RCHSC) NOFA Committee is charged with overseeing the Rank & Review process. As stated in the RCHSC Governance Charter, the NOFA Committee is responsible for “assisting the Collaborative Applicant in preparing and submitting the Continuum of Care application” including the design and operation of a collaborative process for developing and approving the submission of applications. Each year the Rank & Review Application and a Review Team is established by the Committee, which is then reviewed and approved by first by the Board and finally by full Membership.

The RCHSC emphasizes the importance and impact of using the Rank & Review Application as the primary tool to determine ranking within the Project Listing, submitted as part of the CoC Consolidated Application. The Rank & Review Application is revised each year considering HUD and CoC standards, national and local priorities, and balancing objective performance measures with somewhat subjective narrative descriptions of project operations.

**Review and Approval of the Rank & Review Application**After the CoC Application is submitted by the Collaborative Applicant, the NOFA Committee:

1. Discusses the prior year’s Rank & Review Application, Process, and feedback from reviewers and applicants.
2. Revises the Application based on information gained on behalf of the CoC in the past year.
3. Elicits feedback on Rank & Review tool from neighboring Continuum of Care NOFA Committees.
4. Recommends 3-5 Review Team members, considering previous and potential new reviewers.
5. Presents the revised draft of the Process, Reviewers and Applications (renewal, reallocated and bonus) to the RCHSC Board. Any subsequent recommendations for changing the Process, Reviewer and/or Applications from the Board (majority vote) will be made by the Committee.
6. Presents the revised Process, Applications and Review Team to full Membership for review during the required two-week comment period. The Committee considers any/all comments from Membership and any subsequent revisions are determined by the Board.
7. Finalizes and distributes the Rank & Review Application with Membership for agencies to complete.
8. Reviews the priorities outlined in the NOFA and strategically applies them to the CoC project ranking.
9. Opportunities for Reallocated and Bonus Projects are discussed with CoC Membership.

**Project Participation**

* **Renewal Projects** (with exception of HMIS, Coordinated Entry and Planning Projects) are required to complete a Rank & Review Renewal Application (using the most recent project application and prior year’s Calendar Year APR) and submit with all required attachments by the stated deadline in order to be shared with and reviewed by the Review Team.
* **Reallocated Projects**: Reallocation is the process by which the CoC shifts funds, in whole or in part, from existing eligible renewal grant(s) in order to create new projects which will meet unmet local need/s. CoC agencies which voluntarily choose to reallocate funds will receive priority in the Ranking Process (also overseen by the Review Team). HUD determines annually which project types can be developed through reallocation.
* **Bonus Projects:** Bonus funds may be available each year. The CoC is permitted to apply for Bonus Projects to compete nationally against other Bonus Project Applications based on a HUD scoring system set forth in the NOFA. Annually, HUD notifies the CoCs if Bonus Funds are available and allowable uses. Proposed Bonus Projects must complement and fulfill unmet need/s in the community, and require a separate application for scoring and ranking. Bonus Project proposals must be submitted by the same due date established for Rank & Review Applications, and will be selected in order to apply for all available funds.

**Review Team**
The Collaborative Applicant invites potential Review Team members to participate in the CoC’s Rank & Review process. Review Team members must be objective individuals knowledgeable about the CoC and its providers, who may work for non-funded agencies within the RCHSC or neighboring communities, and members or nonmembers of the CoC. Each reviewer receives a copy of project applications and score forms. The Review Team convenes to score each application which results in the CoC ranking from highest to lowest points. The Review Team provides any final comments to CARES which may be shared with projects or the NOFA Committee, and serves as the Appeals Committee in the event an appeal is submitted by a project.

**Project Ranking**
The Collaborative Applicant (CARES) first shares project scores and ranking with the NOFA Committee, then sends each agency a copy of their individual project score/s. Agencies may request a debriefing with CARES within two days of score/ranking notification. If a mathematical error is found during the review or debriefing, the score will be corrected and shared with the NOFA Committee. After any appeals are processed (see below) the NOFA Committee will adjust scores and ranking per Reviewer Team determinations. The final ranking is shared first with the Board, then CARES notifies agencies with project/s falling into Tier 2 regarding their ranking, and finally final ranking is shared with full Membership.

***Appeals Process***
Project appeals may be submitted to CARES *only after debriefings* occur and *within two business days after debrief*. The appeals process applies only to project scoring and ranking; there is no appeal for project tiering. Appeals will *not* be accepted for the following reasons: 1) failure to answer required question/s; 2) failure to submit the application with all required attachments, or 3) failure to submit by the required deadline. The Review Team also serves as the Appeals Committee. Representatives from each project may present their appeal either via written materials and/or 15-minute oral argument. After presentations, the Appeals Committee determines if project/s will receive any additional points. Projects will be notified about outcome within 24 hours.

***Threshold Review***
In addition to scoring criteria, all projects must meet a minimum threshold of 60 points. The Threshold Review will occur after the Rank & Review process is complete. If the threshold is not met, the Rank & Review Team may recommend possible reallocation/s or significant amendments to contract/s to the CoC Board.

Projects that may be automatically flagged for reallocation consideration:

* Projects with inadequate financial management
* Projects with a history of expending funds on ineligible activities or not expending funds at all

**Project Tiering**
When the NOFA is released, the national priorities and tiering outlined are strategically applied to project ranking by the CoC. Due to their essential nature, HMIS and Coordinated Entry projects are automatically placed at the bottom of Tier 1. Reallocated and New projects are placed below all Renewal, HMIS and Coordinated Entry projects, as well as any recently awarded projects still in the development phase (prior year New/Bonus projects). Planning Projects do not appear in the Tiering. The NOFA Committee presents the strategically applied tiering to the Board, which after approval is returned to Membership for a vote. After Membership voting, the tiering is submitted as the Project Listing in the CoC Application.