
SCHENECTADY HOMELESS SERVICES PLANNING BOARD: 2018 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 and City of Schenectady. In the 2017 NOFA, the Schenectady CoC received \$3,975,845 from HUD to support 17 projects for homeless individuals and families. HUD awards homeless assistance grants through an annual application process known as the CoC Program Competition.

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 helps the CoC gain knowledge of project performance and effectiveness within the full CoC system.

The Schenectady Homeless Services Planning Board (HSPB) has charged the Continuum of Care Committee with overseeing the Rank and Review process. As described in the HSPB bylaws, the Continuum of Care Committee has the responsibility to prepare and carry out plans related to the design, operation, and implementation of a collaborative process for the development of funding applications, including funding priorities and the number and type of applications. Each year the Rank and Review Process, Application and Review Team are established by the CoC Committee and then submitted to the Board for review and approval. Once the Process and Application has been Board approved, it is then sent to the full Membership for comment.

Review and Approval of the Rank & Review Application

Once the prior year's CoC Application has been submitted by the Collaborative Applicant, the CoC 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 committee presents the revised draft of the application and the potential reviewers to the HSPB Board. Any additional changes to the application or review team suggested by the Board considered by the committee. Once the Continuum of Care committee has updated the Board, the proposed application and review team are presented to full Membership for the two (2) week comment period. Any comments received from Membership are then considered by the committee. The Rank & Review Application and review team are then finalized and shared with Membership for projects to complete.

Project Participation

Each renewal project completes a Rank & Review Application using the previous Calendar Year APR. Each application must be completed (including all required attachments) and submitted on time in order to be considered complete and passed to the review team. Late submissions of Rank and Review Applications will automatically have a 5-point penalty.

With the release of the NOFA additional specific criteria mentioned within the application may be identified. If this occurs, an addendum to the Rank and Review Application will address these additional questions. Projects will receive these questions and be given sufficient time to complete this application addendum. The Review Team will be supplied with the Rank and Review application and the completed Addendum prior to the interview.

Following the release of the NOFA, each project/agency is given the option to set up an interview time with the review team. Participation in the interview process is optional with no penalty if the agency chooses not to meet with the review team. The interview allows the Project Applicant to fill in any gaps that were not addressed within the application which may potentially enhance the applicant's score.

Reviewers

Members of the review team are individuals from the community or neighboring communities who are knowledgeable about the CoC and its providers. Reviewers are non-funded and objective individuals who are not members of the CoC. Review team members are approached by either the Collaborative Applicant or members of the Continuum of Care Committee and asked to participate in the CoC's Rank & Review process. Once reviewers have agreed to participate, reviewers are provided a copy of project applications, project addendums and score forms. It is an expectation that all project applications will be reviewed prior to the applicant interviews. A day is scheduled for Rank & Review project interviews and scoring to take place. Each reviewer must be available for the full extent of the interview process. Once the review team convenes and conducts interviews with each project, the review team scores each application. These scores result in the ranking. The review team provides any final comments to be shared with projects or the Continuum of Care Committee. It is also expected that the Review Team will remain available after the scoring is complete in the event of an appeal.

Project Ranking

Using the CoC approved Rank and Review tool, all projects seeking funding are scored and placed in numerical order, referred to as the "ranking". Ranking places an applicant in either Tier 1 or Tier 2 based on the criteria established by HUD in the NOFA and CoC priorities. The project ranking is first shared with the Continuum of Care Committee. The committee reviews the process and all scoring in order to adopt the ranking. Projects that fall into the bottom of the ranking, Tier 2, are contacted and notified of their ranking and offered the opportunity to go over the project's scores. Afterwards, the ranking is shared with Membership. At that time, each project receives a copy of their individual scores and is given the opportunity to meet with the Collaborative Applicant to debrief. If during this debriefing, a mathematical error is found

by the project, the error can be corrected, and notice of the correction will be provided to the CoC Committee and the Board.

Project Ranking and Tiering Approval

Once the review process is completed, the final ranking and tiering is presented by the Continuum of Care Committee to the Board who approves it. The approved ranking and tiering is then shared with the full Membership.

Appeal Process

1. Who May Appeal?

An agency may formally 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?

The Appeals Process only applies to project scoring and ranking. There is no appeal for project tiering. 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 ranking.

3. Timing of an Appeal

Formal appeals can be submitted by a project only after a debriefing has been completed. Projects have one week from their debriefing with CARES to request an appeal in writing. Written appeals should be sent to the following entities: HSPB Co-Chairs, Continuum of Care Committee Chair, and CARES. 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. The Review Team will also serve as the Appeals Committee. Agencies will be notified of the outcome of their appeal within two (2) days of the Appeal Committee's decision. The Appeals Committee decision is final.

Bonus Projects

Each year, there may be bonus funds available for HUD determined priority programming. Bonus projects will first be reviewed and ranked locally and then compete nationally against other bonus projects. The criteria for submission of a bonus project application is to complement and fill an unmet need. A separate application is completed for bonus projects. The reviewers will score and rank the bonus project submissions. There are no interviews for bonus project applications.

After the bonus projects are ranked, ranking is sent to the Board for approval and then to full membership.

Reallocation

Reallocation is the process by which the CoC shifts funds, in whole or in part, from existing eligible renewal grants to new projects that can better address prioritized community need(s). Reallocating funds is one of the most important tools by which communities can make strategic improvements to their homelessness system. The CoC can decide to repurpose a project that is underperforming or may be more appropriately funded from other sources to fill that need. Criteria to assess performance or underperformance will include scoring/rank and review results, participation in Coordinated Entry, participation in Point in Time, participation in the local CoC and participation within HMIS. Additionally, if a project consistently demonstrates unsatisfactory project performance outcomes and fails to make significant changes to improve its performance, that project may be recommended for reallocation. A threshold review will take place after the Rank and Review process to ensure the threshold requirement has been met by each project. If the threshold has not been met, the Rank and Review team can recommend to the CoC Board possible reallocation or substantial amendments to the contract.

CoC funded agencies may also voluntarily propose to reallocate CoC funds. These proposals will be reviewed by the Rank and Review team as well. Should an agency choose to voluntarily reallocate they will receive priority in the reallocation ranking process.

CoC Transparency

The CoC conducts this Rank and Review Process in a transparent manner to ensure fairness. Each year, the process is publicly announced by the CoC, shared in writing to the entire CoC, posted on the CARES website for the community to access, and reviewed and commented on by the entire CoC.

Rank and Review Application

The HSPB 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, incorporating both national and local priorities, balancing objective performance measures with subjective narrative description of project operations.