
FRANKLIN ESSEX HOUSING COALITION: RANK AND REVIEW PROCESS

HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless assistance programs serve as a source of funding for homeless services in the Counties of Franklin and Essex. In the 2017 NOFA, the Franklin Essex CoC received \$90,731 from HUD to support two projects for homeless individuals and families and one CoC planning project. HUD awards homeless assistance grants through an annual application process known as the CoC Program Competition.

In order for the CoC to gain insight into programs that are best serving the community, it has implemented a Rank and Review Process for new and renewal projects. This process will help the CoC gain knowledge of project performance and effectiveness within the full CoC system.

In the Franklin Essex Housing Coalition (FEHC), the NOFA Committee is charged with overseeing the Rank and Review process. As described in the FEHC bylaws, the NOFA Committee prepares and carries out plans related to the design, operation, and collaborative process for the development of funding applications, including funding priorities and the number and type of applications. Each year the Rank and Review Application and review team are established by the Committee which is then reviewed and approved by full Membership.

Review and Approval of the Rank & Review Application

The Rank and Review process begins once the Collaborative Applicant submits the Grant Inventory Worksheet. Once submitted, the NOFA Committee:

1. Discusses the previous year's Rank & Review application, process, and reviewer and project feedback.
2. Considers information gained on behalf of the CoC over the past year and, if necessary, revises the application.
3. Suggests possible review team members, with consideration to previous reviewers and potential new members.
4. Presents the revised draft application and the potential reviewers to the Board.
5. Has discretion to implement any Board-suggested changes to the application and/or review team.
6. Updates the Board on application and review team.
7. Presents the R&R team to the full Membership for comment.
8. Considers submitted comments for inclusion.
9. Finalizes application and review team and shares with Membership for projects to complete.

Project Participation

Each renewal project completes a Rank & Review Application per project. The 2018 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

The review team is made up of individuals from the community or neighboring communities who are knowledgeable about the CoC and its providers. Reviewers are non-funded and objective individuals. The Collaborative Applicant or members of the NOFA Committee invite prospective review team members to participate in the CoC’s Rank & Review process. Once the review team is finalized, Rank & Review project interviews and scoring are scheduled. Each reviewer is provided a copy of project applications and score forms. The review team convenes and scores each application. These scores result in the ranking. The review team provides any final comments to be shared with projects or the NOFA Committee.

Project Ranking

First, the project ranking is shared with the NOFA Committee. The Committee reviews the process and all scoring in order to adopt the ranking. Projects projected to fall into 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.

Appeal Process

1. Who May Appeal?

An agency may appeal a decision concerning its project application. If the applicant was 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 ranking. There is no appeal for project tiering.

3. Timing of an Appeal

Formal appeals can only be submitted by a project 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 of its appeal, no longer than one page. The written appeal can be in the form of a letter, memo or email. Any appeal via email must be sent to sbarnaby@caresny.org.

Project Tiering

When the NOFA is released, the priorities and tiering outlined in the application are strategically applied by the CoC to the project ranking. Reallocation, new projects, and other CoC priorities are considered through CoC discussions. The NOFA Committee presents the tiering to the Board, which approves it for distribution to Membership for a vote. Membership votes on the tiering and approves the Project Listing and the CoC Application.

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 fill an unmet need within the community. Reallocation is one of the most important tools by which communities can make strategic improvements to their homeless services system.

Projects that can be flagged for reallocation consideration include those that have displayed: inadequate financial management, a history of expending funds on ineligible activities, a lack of full expenditure of funds, and consistent low scores during the Rank and Review process (under 140). 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 FEHC may be considered for reallocation. Further, agencies may choose to reallocate their project funds. New

projects developed through the reallocation of the agency's 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 interview with the Review Team. 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 the funding sources.

CoC Transparency

The CoC conducts this Rank and Review Process in a transparent manner to ensure fairness. Each year, the CoC publicly announces the process, distributes it in writing to the entire CoC, posts it on the Network's website, and reviews and comments on it.

The FEHC emphasizes the importance and impact of 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 revised thoughtfully 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.