
RENSSELAER COUNTY HOMELESS SERVICES COLLABORATIVE: 2019 RANK AND REVIEW PROCESS

The Rensselaer County Homeless Services Collaborative (RCHSC) NOFA Committee is charged with overseeing the Rank and 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 and Review Application and a Review Team is established by the Committee, which is then reviewed and approved by both the Board and full Membership.

The RCHSC emphasizes the importance and impact of using the Rank & Review Application as the primary basis for determining the ranking within the Project Listing submitted as part of the CoC Consolidated Application. The Rank & Review Application is thoughtfully revised each year to include both HUD and CoC standards, incorporating both 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 begins discussing the prior year’s Rank and Review Process document and Application, based on feedback from reviewers and applicants. The NOFA Committee:

1. Establishes a tentative timeline annually for the Rank and Review Process, working around the NOFA release.
2. Discusses the prior year’s Rank & Review Applications, Process, and feedback from reviewers and applicants.
3. Revises the Applications based on information gained on behalf of the CoC in the past year.
4. Elicits feedback on Rank and Review tool from neighboring Continuum of Care NOFA Committees.
5. Recommends 3-5 Review Team members, considering previous and potential new reviewers.
6. 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.
7. Presents the revised Process, Applications and Review Team to full Membership for review, allowing for a one-week comment period per HUD NOFA guidance after each phase. Any comments from Membership are considered by the Committee and any further revisions are determined and accepted by the Board.
8. Finalizes and distributes the Rank & Review Applications with Membership for agencies to complete.
9. Reviews the priorities outlined in the NOFA and strategically applies them to the CoC project ranking.
10. Opportunities for Reallocated and Bonus Projects are discussed with CoC Membership.

Project Participation

- **Renewal Projects** are required to complete a Rank & Review Renewal Application. An application must include responses to all questions as well as required data and/or attachments from the most recent project application and Calendar Year APR in order to be considered complete. All completed applications will be shared with and reviewed by the Review Team. Late submissions, including incomplete submissions, will receive a 5-point penalty. The 2019 Rank & Review Application process will occur in two (2) phases. The intent

of a two-phased process is to allow agencies adequate time to review project-level and system-level data.

- Phase 1 focuses on quantitative project and system outcome data using the prior calendar year project APR and HMIS System Performance data to “prioritize” projects.
- Phase 2 focuses on qualitative project and system outcome data; allowing staff to explain unique circumstances that affect project performance.
- The following renewal project types are exempt from the requirement to complete the Rank and Review Renewal Application: projects which fund only HMIS, Coordinated Entry, or Planning activities; as well as any newly created project which was not operational on January 1, 2018. See Project Tiering below for more information on how these projects are included in the final tiering.
- **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). Project types that can be developed through reallocation are decided annually by HUD. The CoC will create a separate application for new projects proposals (separate RFP), and new proposals will be scored and ranked against other.
- **Bonus Projects:** Bonus funds may be available each year. The CoC is permitted to apply for Bonus Projects which will compete nationally against other Bonus Project Applications based on a HUD scoring system set forth in the NOFA. HUD notifies the CoCs if Bonus Funds are available annually and what they may be used for. Proposed Bonus Projects must complement and fulfill unmet need/s in the community. The CoC will create a separate application for new projects proposals (separate RFP), and new proposals will be scored and ranked against other. The CoC will issue public notification of the amount of Bonus funding available, if any, along with a deadline to respond to the Request for Proposals. Bonus Projects will be selected in order to apply for all available funds.

Review Team

Members of the Review Team include individuals from the continuum or neighboring communities knowledgeable about the CoC and its providers. Reviewers are non-funded, objective individuals who may be members and nonmembers of the CoC. The Collaborative Applicant invites potential Review Team members to participate in the CoC’s Rank & Review process. Each reviewer is provided 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 to be shared with projects or the NOFA Committee, and will also serve as the Appeals Committee if an appeal is submitted by a project.

Project Ranking

Project scores and ranking are first shared with the NOFA Committee, then each agency receives a copy of their individual project score/s and are offered the opportunity to debrief with the Collaborative Applicant (within two days of 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 Review Team determinations. The final ranking is first shared with the Board, then agencies with project/s falling into Tier 2 are contacted/notified of their ranking by the Collaborative Applicant, and finally shared with full Membership.

Appeals Process

Formal appeals can be submitted by a project only after debriefings occur. Appeals must be submitted to CARES within two business days after debriefing. The appeals process applies only to project scoring and ranking; there is no appeal for project tiering. An appeal may not be based on the following: 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 have 15 minutes to present their appeal either via written materials and/or oral argument. After presentations, the Appeals Committee determines if project/s will receive any additional points and projects will be notified within 24 hours.

Threshold Review

In addition to scoring criteria, all projects must meet a minimum threshold of 100 points. A Threshold Review will occur after the Rank and Review process is complete. If the threshold is not met, the Rank and Review Team may recommend possible reallocation/s or significant amendments to the 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 the essential nature of HMIS and Coordinated Entry projects, these projects are automatically placed at the bottom of Tier 1. Projects that were not yet operational on January 1, 2018 will be placed at the bottom of Tier 1 with the HMIS and Coordinated Entry projects. Reallocated and Bonus projects are placed below all renewal projects and the project types listed above in this section. Planning Projects do not appear in the Tiering per HUD NOFA guidelines. The NOFA Committee presents the strategically applied tiering to the CoC Board, which after approving is returned to Membership for a final vote. Membership votes on the tiering, which is submitted as the Project Listing in the CoC Application.