
POINTS NORTH HOUSING COALITION: 2021 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 Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Lewis. In the 2020 NOFA, the Points North CoC received \$1,369,553 from HUD to support ten projects for homeless individuals and families, one coordinated entry project, one HMIS, 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 Points North Housing Coalition (PNHC), the NOFA Committee is charged with overseeing the Rank and Review process. As described in the PNHC 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 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 the Board and shared with Membership.

Renewal Projects

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.

The 2021 Rank & Review Application process will occur in three (3) phases. The intent of a three-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 year project APR and Federal Fiscal year 2020 HMIS System Performance data to “prioritize” projects. **Projects will have 1-week from the date the data is presented during the Part 1/Data Training Session to review and sign off on their project data. If the sign off is not received the data will be considered final. No changes to data will be made after the 1-week review period.**
- Phase 2 focuses on qualitative project and system outcome data; allowing staff to explain unique circumstances that affect project performance and answer questions to local priorities.
- Phase 3 of the Rank & Review Process includes project interviews with the Review Team. After release of the NOFA, the CoC Committee will draft questions based on

specific criteria mentioned within the NOFA Application to be asked during project interviews. Projects will receive these questions prior to the interview and may provide the Review Team with written answers prior to the interview. Interviews may assist the reviewers in awarding additional points.

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, 2021. See Project Tiering below for more information on how these projects renewal projects will be included in the final tiering.

At the end of each phase have an opportunity to request a debriefing of their scores with the collaborative applicant.

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 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 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 (virtually). 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 from highest to lowest points with Bonus and Reallocated projects at the bottom. The review team provides any final comments to be shared with projects. 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. 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. 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. The project ranking is then shared with the Operations Committee. Afterwards, the ranking is approved by the Board and shared with Membership.

Debriefings

At the end of each phase renewal projects will receive a scorecard from the collaborative applicant and will have an opportunity to request a debriefing of their scores with the collaborative applicant.

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 within three 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 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 for a vote, and then shares it with Membership.

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. The same appeals process that applies to renewal applications also applies to bonus project applications.

Bonus Projects

Each year, there may be bonus funds available. The CoC is permitted to apply for bonus projects, which will compete nationally against other bonus projects on a HUD scoring system set forth in the NOFA. HUD will notify the Continuums regarding the criteria for bonus funds. The bonus project will complement and fill an unmet need. The application for a bonus project is a separate RFP. The reviewers will score and rank the bonus projects; however, there are no interviews for bonus projects. After the bonus projects are ranked, ranking is sent to the Board and membership. Bonus projects will be chosen with the goal of applying for all 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 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 PNHC 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. Applications for new projects will be ranked separate from renewal projects, and the final ranking will be presented to the CoC Board for approval and shared with membership.

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 CARES website, and reviews and comments on it.

The PNHC 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.

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