SCHENECTADY HOMELESS SERVICES PLANNING BOARD: 2021 RANK AND REVIEW PROCESS

Rationale

HUD's CoC (CoC) homeless assistance programs serve as a source of funding for homeless services in the County and City of Schenectady. In the 2020 NOFA, the Schenectady CoC received $4,379,886 from HUD to support 18 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 which most effectively serve the community at the local level, the community has implemented a Rank and Review Process for renewal and new 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 CoC (CoC) Committee with overseeing the Rank and Review process. As described in the HSPB Bylaws, the CoC 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. Each year the Rank and Review Written Process, Application and a Review Team are established by the CoC Committee, submitted to the Membership for review and then Board for approval.

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 Committee, shared in writing with the Board and Membership, and posted on the CARES website for the community to access, review and comment.

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.

Review and Approval of the Rank & Review Application

After the annual CoC Consolidated Application is submitted to HUD by the Collaborative Applicant, the CoC Committee reviews the prior year's Rank & Review Application, Written Process, and

feedback from reviewers and full Membership. With this feedback, the Committee proposes revisions to the Rank and Review Application and Written Process. In addition, the committee develops a list of Review Team members, considering the previous reviewers and potential new members. The CoC Committee presents the Written Process, Application Tools, and list of proposed Review Team members to the HSPB Board and Membership for one-week public comment periods. Any comments received from Membership are then considered by the committee. The Rank & Review Application and review team are then finalized by the Board and shared with Membership for projects to complete.

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 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.

- o **Phase 1** focuses on quantitative project and system outcome data using the Federal Fiscal year 2020 project APR and 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.**
- o **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.
- o **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 October 1, 2020. 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.

Projects that can be flagged for reallocation consideration include those which have demonstrated inadequate financial management, a history of expending funds on ineligible activities, a lack of full expenditure of funds, and those which consistently score low on the Rank & Review. Reallocation is recommended for any project *not* participating in Coordinated Entry, HMIS or the annual Point-in-Time. The Board may determine reallocation of a particular project as in the best interest of the CoC and essential to maintaining full funding. Further, agencies may voluntarily choose to reallocate funds from their own projects. New project proposals developed by agencies through reallocation of their own funds will be prioritized during the ranking process. All other proposed projects using reallocated funds will be ranked according to general ranking procedures.

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 Review Team reviews and scores all New project applications submitted. New project applications are required to interview with the Review Team. Interview questions will include specific criteria included in the NOFA. New project applications will be ranked, approved by the Board and presented to Membership. The same appeals process that applies to Renewal applications applies to new project applications.

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 CoC's 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 new project proposals. 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 project applications are required to interview with the Review Team. Interview questions will include specific criteria included in the NOFA. Bonus applications will be ranked by the review team, approved by the Board and presented to Membership. The community's goal is to apply for the maximum amount of available funds. The same appeals process that applies to Renewal applications applies to Bonus project applications. The same appeals process that applies to Renewal applications applies to **bonus** project applications.

Review Team

Members of the review team are individuals from non-CoC funded agencies in the community or neighboring communities who are knowledgeable about the CoC and its providers. Review team members are approached by either the Collaborative Applicant or members of the CoC Committee and asked to participate in the CoC's Rank & Review process. Once reviewers have agreed to participate and are approved by the Board, 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 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 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. The project ranking is then shared with the CoC Committee. Afterwards, the ranking is approved by the Board and shared with Membership.

Project Ranking and Tiering Approval

Once the review process is completed, the final ranking and tiering is presented by the CoC Committee to the Board who approves it. The approved ranking and tiering are 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, CoC 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.