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# ELMIRA, STEUBEN, ALLEGANY, LIVINGSTON, CHEMUNG, SCHUYLER COUNTIES COC: 2023 RANK AND REVIEW PROCESS

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## **Background**

HUD's Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless assistance programs serve as a source of funding for homeless services in the City of Elmira, and Counties of Steuben, Allegany, Livingston, Chemung, and Schuyler which together form NY-501. In the 2022 NOFO, NY-501 received \$2,011,031 from HUD to support 12 housing projects for homeless individuals and families. HUD awards homeless assistance grants through an annual application process known as the CoC Program Competition in response to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

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

Southern Tier Entry to Programs and Services (STEPS) has charged the Rank and Review Committee with overseeing the Rank and Review process. As described in the Continuum's bylaws, the Rank and Review Committee is responsible for "the design, operation, and following of a collaborative process for the development of funding applications, including funding priorities. Each year the Rank and Review Committee reviews the Rank and Review Process and Application and makes revisions to reflect changing priorities. The Rank and Review Committee is also responsible for establishing a Review Team. The Written Process, the Application and the Review Committee are submitted annually for approval by the Board. Once Board approved, the Written Process and Application are posted for review and comment by full Membership.

## **CoC Transparency**

The CoC conducts the Rank and Review Process in a transparent manner to ensure fairness. Each year, the process is publicly announced by the CoC, shared in writing with the full CoC membership, and posted publicly on the CARES website for all community members to review and comment.

## **FY 2023 Rank and Review Application**

NY-501 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, and balancing objective performance measures with subjective narrative description of project operations.

## Review and Approval of the Rank & Review Renewal Application

After the annual CoC Consolidated Application is submitted to HUD by the Collaborative Applicant, the Rank and Review Committee:

1. Reviews the previous year's Rank & Review Application, Written Process, and 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 application and review team to the Board and membership for public comment.
5. Considers submitted comments for inclusion
6. Updates the Board on application and review team edits and secures a vote of approval.
7. Application and review team shares final with Membership for projects to complete.

## Project Participation

Each agency applying for a renewal project completes one Rank & Review Application per project. 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 Annual Performance Report (APR) in order to be considered complete. All completed applications will be shared with and reviewed by the Review Team.

The 2023 Rank and Review Renewal Application process will take place in three (3) parts. Parts 1 and 2 are distributed at the same time as one tool. The intention behind breaking down the Rank and Review process into 3 parts is to allow agencies adequate time to complete the full Rank and Review application.

\* Please Note: Coordinated Entry, Planning, and HMIS projects are not required to fill out a renewal application.

\*Renewal projects should have one federal fiscal years' worth of data (10/1-9/30) so should be in operation for one full federal fiscal year.

- **Part 1** focuses on project and system outcomes measured by data from the HMIS, using a project APR run by the HMIS Administrator to "rate" projects. Agencies serving victims of domestic violence will provide the APR from the comparable database to the HMIS Administrator. The HMIS Administrator will prepare a completed draft "Part 1" application using each project's previous Federal Fiscal Year APR and send the draft to the agency applying for the project. The agency will complete and submit the application, including all required attachments. Projects will have 1 week from the date the data is distributed by HMIS Lead via email 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.
- **Part 2** focuses on qualitative project and system outcome data, which allows the projects to explain unique circumstances that may affect project performance and answer questions on

local priorities. After submission, each agency/project is assigned an interview time with the review team.

**Late submission, including incomplete submissions, of Rank & Review Applications will automatically have a 5-point penalty.**

- Project interviews will be the last part, **Part 3**, of the Rank and Review Process. After the NOFO is released, the Review Team will review & approve questions provided by the planning lead 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. (Interviews may assist the reviewers in awarding additional points for Parts 1 and 2, up to the maximum number of points available for each question).

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, 2022. See Project Ranking below for more information on how these projects are included in the final tiering.

### ***New Projects***

New projects are created through bonus funds or reallocated funds. A separate RFP will be completed for new projects. If additional money becomes available through reallocation after the ranking process, the new project RFP will re-open for submission. RFPs submitted during the second application process will automatically be ranked below the round 1 projects, unless otherwise determined by the Board. New project applications will be ranked and presented to the Board and to Membership for approval. 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 New/Bonus project applications.

### ***Bonus Projects***

Each year, HUD *may* offer bonus funding, and guidance is provided within the NOFO as to how the funds must be spent. Bonus projects compete nationally against other bonus projects.

A new project application is required for bonus project proposals, and the proposals must fill an unmet need, as noted within the Strategic Plan. The reviewers will score and rank the bonus projects; however, there are no interviews for bonus projects. Once ranked, the final ranking will be presented to the Board then CoC membership for approval. The community's goal is to apply for the maximum amount of 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 create 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 by the review committee for reallocation consideration include those who have displayed inadequate financial management, a history of expending funds on ineligible activities, a lack of full expenditure of funds, and those which have consistently scored low during the Rank and Review process. Additionally, funds from any project not participating in the implementation of 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 in NY-501 may be considered for reallocation. Further, agencies may voluntarily choose to reallocate funds from their projects. New projects developed by agencies through the reallocation of their own 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 new project application is required for projects being developed with reallocated funds, and the proposed projects must fill an unmet need. Applications for new projects will be ranked, separate from renewal projects, and the final ranking will be presented to CoC membership for approval.

### **Review Team**

Reviewers must be individuals from the community or neighboring communities who are knowledgeable about the CoC process, and its providers. Individuals on the Review Team must not be CoC-funded within NY-501. Suggested Review Team members are approached by the Collaborative Applicant and asked to participate and approved by the Rank & Review Committee. Once reviewers have agreed to participate, one to two days are scheduled to conduct Rank & Review project interviews and for scoring to take place. Interviews will be scheduled for a date after the NOFO is released to allow for any HUD specific criteria to be incorporated into the interview process, as described above.

Each reviewer is provided with a copy of each project's full application and score forms to complete prior to the interview. The Review Team has the authority to 1) allot additional points to questions in Part 1 and Part 2 based on responses given by agencies during the interview; and 2) allot points based on responses given by agencies to Part 3 interview questions. Once the Review Team convenes and conducts interviews with each project, the Review Team discusses and finalizes scores for each application. These scores result in the project ranking. In the event project applications initially receive the same score, it is the responsibility of the Review Team to reconsider scoring to break the tie. The Review Team also considers any submitted appeals (see **Appeals Process** outlined below) and provides any final comments to be shared with agencies. Final scores result in the project ranking. The Review Team provides any final comments to be shared with projects or the Rank and Review committee.

### ***Threshold Review***

In order to ensure CoC projects are high performing, all project applications must also meet a minimum scoring threshold of 50% of total possible application points. The Threshold Review will be conducted by the Review

Team after the Rank and Review process is complete and final project scores determined. If the pre-determined threshold is not met, the Review Team may recommend the Board consider the possibility of reallocation or amendments to the project application/s with said agency.

## **Project Ranking**

The NOFO requires that the CoC conduct a transparent and objective process to review and rank all applications for renewal of existing projects and applications for new projects. Using a CoC-approved Rank and Review tool, all projects seeking funding are scored and placed in numerical order based on scores, **with the exception that HMIS and CE Infrastructure projects are ranked at the bottom of Tier 1.** All projects will receive their scores and will be offered the opportunity to debrief and review their project scores with the Collaborative Applicant. Projects will have the ability to submit an appeal within the allotted time frame regarding their score following their debriefing (See the **Appeals Process** outlined below). Following any debriefings and appeals, the project ranking is shared with the Rank and Review Committee. The Committee reviews the 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 (see Project Tiering section on page 5 for further information.) The ranking is presented to the Board for review and final approval. The ranking is then shared with Membership.

## **Debriefings**

At the end of each part, 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 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?**

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 scoring and ranking. There is no appeal for project tiering. If a mathematical error is found by the project, the error can be corrected, and notice of the correction will be provided to the Rank and Review Committee and the Board.

### **3. Timing of an Appeal**

Formal appeals can only be submitted by a project **5-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, no longer than 1 page, of the agency's appeal. The written appeal can be in the form of a letter,

memo or email. Any appeal via email must be sent to the Collaborative Applicant, CARES of NY, ([agraves@caresny.org](mailto:agraves@caresny.org)) and cc the NY-501 Rank and Review Committee chair.

#### **4. Appeals Decisions**

The Review Team also serves as the Appeal Team. Appeals are decided by majority vote of the Appeal Team. Once decided, all appeals are final and may not be overturned by the Rank and Review Committee, Board or Membership.

#### **Project Tiering**

HUD requires that the CoC ranks projects into two tiers based on the funding allocation released in the NOFO. Higher ranked projects will be assigned to Tier 1 and lower ranked projects will be assigned to Tier 2. The purpose of this two-tiered approach is for CoCs to indicate which projects are prioritized for funding. The Collaborative Applicant uses the project ranking to tier the projects and presents the tiering to the Rank and Review Committee. Reallocation, new projects, and other CoC priorities are considered through CoC discussions. Tiering results are then presented to the Board and, with Board approval, to Membership for a vote. Membership votes on the full application, including the tiering.