ALBANY COUNTY COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS:
2026 RANK AND REVIEW PROCESS

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1. Background

HUD's Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless assistance program serves as a source of funding for homeless services in Albany County, and the planning body coordinating these services is the Albany County Coalition on Homelessness (ACCH). Working with the CoC (ACCH) and providing support and technical assistance is CARES of NY, Inc., the Collaborative Applicant and Unified Funding Agent.

Through the CoC, HUD awards homeless assistance grants through an annual application process known as the CoC Program Competition.

HUD requires that the CoC (ACCH) prioritize programs which most effectively serve the community at the local level. To reach this goal, a Rank & Review Process has been implemented for applicants who wish to renew their project/s and for new and/or bonus projects (if bonus funding is available). The process of ranking and reviewing projects is designed to help the CoC (ACCH) learn about each project's performance and effectiveness.

The NOFO Committee of the CoC (ACCH) is charged with overseeing the Rank & Review process. As stated in the ACCH Bylaws, the NOFO Committee is responsible for "the design, operation, and implementation of a collaborative process for the development of funding applications, including funding priorities, and the number and type of applications." Each year the NOFO Committee reviews the Rank & Review Written Process and Application Tools and makes any changes necessary to reflect changing priorities. The NOFO Committee is also responsible for establishing a Review Team for the Rank and Review Application. The Written Process and Application Tools (Renewal and New/Bonus) are posted for public comment.

2. CoC Transparency

The annual Rank and Review process is conducted in a transparent manner to ensure a fair and consistent way to prioritize projects. Each year, feedback regarding the process and tools is solicited. The process is publicly announced by the CoC, distributed in writing to CoC Membership, and posted publicly on the CARES, Inc. website for all community members to review and comment.

3. FY 2026 Rank and Review Application

The ACCH emphasizes the importance and impact of using the Rank & Review Application as the primary basis for determining the Project Listing submitted to HUD as part of the CoC Consolidated Application. The Rank and Review Application is thoughtfully revised each year to meet both HUD and CoC standards, incorporate both national and local priorities, and balance objective performance measures with subjective narrative descriptions of project operations.

4. Review and Approval of the Rank and Review Renewal Application

After the annual CoC Consolidated Application is submitted to HUD by the Collaborative Applicant, the NOFO Committee reviews that prior year's Rank & Review process, including reviewer feedback and ACCH member comments. The NOFO Committee also develops a list of Review Team members, considering prior reviewers and potential new members.

In phases, the NOFO Committee presents the Written Process and Application Tools to the ACCH Board and Membership for one-week public comment periods. The NOFO Committee considers submitted comments for inclusion. The NOFO Committee updates the Board on any edits, incorporates any additional changes from the Board, and secures a vote for approval. Finally, the Written Process and Application Tools are shared with Membership.

5. Renewal Projects

Each Renewal project completes a Rank & Review Application. The Rank & Review process consists of Part 1 (quantitative scoring based on HMIS data), Part 2 (qualitative narrative responses), and may include Part 3 if HUD priorities require additional scoring following NOFO release. The 2026 Rank & Review Renewal Application process will occur in two parts. Parts 1 & 2 are distributed at the same time as one tool to all for adequate time to complete the full Rank & Review 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 Annual Performance Report (APR) in order to be considered completed. All completed applications will be shared with *CARES of NY, Inc. by the stated deadline to be considered complete and sent to the Review Team.*

Applications that are submitted after the deadline and/or submitted incomplete will automatically receive a 5-point deduction on their overall score.

* Please Note: Coordinated Entry, Planning, HMIS projects, and Renewal Projects with less than one federal fiscal year's (Oct. 1 – Sept. 30) worth of data at the time of the annual Rank & Review process are not required to fill out a renewal application.

Part 1 focuses on project and system outcomes, using project data entered in HMIS and objective questions to "rate" projects. The HMIS data used in Part 1 is from the previous HUD Fiscal Year (Oct 1 - Sep 30). This HMIS data used in Part 1 has been cleaned and reviewed for data quality errors when submitted to HUD for the Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA) report. The tool will indicate where agencies can find data for relevant questions. Agencies will also receive a data attachment to assist in completing their application. Data on this attachment will be based on the FY26 LSAs submitted in the beginning of the year.

If errors are identified in the Data Attachment, the agency must contact CARES by the deadline noted when the data attachment is released. If the request is a calculation error, CARES staff will correct the error and resubmit the Data Attachments for the agency's review. Note that scores for part 1 are done by the agency completing the tool and verified by CARES staff.

Part 2 focuses on qualitative project and system outcome data, which allows the project to explain unique circumstances that may affect project performance. Part 2 includes narrative questions to further evaluate the efficacy of each renewal project. Questions are derived from the NOFO committee based on HUD and local priorities Part 2 is intended to allow agencies to explain unique circumstances which may affect project performance. Questions on part 2 are scored by the external review team. Scores will be determined by averaging the scores provided by all of the reviewers.

Part 3 form may be released following the release of the annual NOFO for the CoC to demonstrate the incorporation of HUD priorities into our annual Rank & Review process. If there are no significant HUD priorities identified or all major priorities are addressed in Part 1 and Part 2, this form will not be released.

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 without a full fiscal year of data. See Project Ranking below for more information on how these projects are included in the final tiering.

6. New Projects

New projects are created through bonus funds or reallocated funds. A separate application is required for Bonus and Reallocated project proposals. If additional money becomes available through reallocation after the ranking process, a new project RFP may re-open. RFPs submitted during the second application process will automatically be ranked below projects from the first round in Tier 2. The Review Team reviews and scores all New/Bonus project applications submitted. New project applications will be integrated into the ranking according to project type and the PH–TH–SSO rotational sequence (described below), then 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 New/Bonus project applications. New applicants (not currently CoC funded) will be invited to a recommended info session to discuss CoC funding requirements and program administration logistics before final scores are tallied.

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.

7. Bonus Projects

Each year, HUD *may* offer bonus funding and the NOFO outlines how the funds may be spent. Bonus project proposals must fill an unmet need as noted within the CoC's Strategic Plan or locally determined priorities. Bonus applications will be ranked and approved by the Board and presented to Membership. The community's goal is to apply for the maximum amount of available funding. The same appeals process that applies to Renewal applications applies to New/Bonus project applications.

**Note that "Bonus Projects" encompasses all projects applied for with new funds, including DV Bonus and regular CoC bonus funding.*

8. 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 to fill an unmet need within the community, such as balancing the types of projects available throughout the continuum. Reallocation is one of the most important tools by which communities can make strategic improvements to their homeless services system.

The CoC determines candidates for reallocation due to low performance or less needed projects as a tool to make strategic improvements to the homeless system. The reallocation process starts with UFA Fiscal monitoring, as mandated by the UFA Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The Fiscal Committee regularly reviews expenditure percentages & SOP benchmarks to ensure all funds will be spent, identifies projects that have a history of inadequate financial mgmt. or recaptured funds, & recommends reallocation of poor performing projects to the Board. The Review Team flags projects that a) demonstrate ongoing poor project performance outcomes and/or b) consistently score low on the Rank & Review tool. The Board makes the final decision to reallocate funding to create a new high performing project by reviewing the project's performance outcomes, populations served and the need for the project and shares its decision with CoC Membership. If a project is considered needed in the community (i.e. uniquely serves a hard-to-serve population), the Board works with the Collaborative Applicant to provide TA to address underperformance. If it is decided reallocation would be a better use of CoC funds to best serve homeless clients, funding is made available through the new project Rank & Review process. 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 while renewal applications are submitted for rank and review.

Project proposals developed with reallocated funds must fill an unmet need and submit a New/Bonus application. Reallocated and Bonus applications will be evaluated alongside Renewal Projects within a unified competitive ranking process. Each project will be scored using the appropriate tool and placed in the overall PH–TH–SSO rotational sequence. Reallocated projects will receive additional points to support HUD's intent to incentivize reallocation. The final ranking will be approved by the Board presented to CoC Membership.

9. Review Team

Reviewers must be individuals from the community who are not CoC-funded or from neighboring communities and knowledgeable about the CoC process, services, and providers. Review Team members are considered by the NOFO Committee and invited by the Collaborative Applicant (CARES) to participate. After reviewers agree to participate, they are given project applications and scorecards and instructed to score applications with an objective lens. Three reviewers are recruited each year to score the narrative portions of each application.

Reviewers are provided a copy of each project's full application for review and score forms to complete. Scores for each application are averaged between the 3 reviewer scores to create the final score.

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.

10. *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 ACCH Board consider reallocation or amendments to the project application/s with said agency. Projects that have underperformed (fallen below the threshold), for 3 consecutive years will be recommended for reallocation to the board during that year's NOFO.

11. Project Ranking

HUD requires that the CoC conduct a transparent and objective process to review and rank all Renewal and New/Bonus projects.

Using the CoC-approved Rank & Review Tool, all projects; Renewal, Reallocated, and Bonus, will be scored using within a unified competitive ranking process, using tools with the same total possible points. After scoring, projects will be grouped and ranked within their project type (PH, TH, SSO). These ranked lists will then be combined into the final ranking using a rotational sequence (PH - TH - SSO - Infrastructure) starting with renewal projects. Infrastructure grants – HMIS and Coordinated Entry, HMIS, and DV Coordinated Entry projects will be placed into the overall ranking (in that order) according to the rotational sequence, following each PH, TH, and SSO grouping. All agencies receive their project scores and are offered the opportunity to debrief with the Collaborative Applicant.

Debriefing allows agencies the opportunity to request clarification regarding how/why Application question/s receive certain scores.

Debriefings are required if agencies are considering an appeal. Agencies may choose to appeal project score/s within the allotted time frame (see the Appeals Process outlined below).
After all debriefings with the Collaborative Applicant are completed and appeals considered by the Review Team, renewal project applicants that fall into Tier 2 will be notified and then the project ranking is presented to the Board for review/approval then shared with Membership. If the board determines that

changes to project ranking should be made on behalf of the CoC, the board must make those determinations unanimously and inform all agencies whose ranking may be impacted by the changes.

12. Project Tiering

HUD requires that the CoC ranks projects into two tiers based on the funding allocation released in the NOFO. Tiering prioritizes projects for funding. Tier 1 is considered "safe" for continued funding and HUD specifies the percentage of the ARD amount that will make up Tier 1 each year when the NOFO is released. HMIS and Coordinated Entry Projects are placed at the bottom of Tier 1. Tier 2 is the percentage of CoC funding that is at risk each year, per HUD's announcement in the NOFO. Being in Tier 2 does not guarantee that funding will be lost, but it does place projects at risk if the CoC is low performing in the national competition. .

Using the project ranking, the Collaborative Applicant tiers projects (New/Bonus projects are always placed at the bottom of Tier 2) and present the results to the Board. When the NOFO is released, priorities outlined in the application may be strategically applied by the CoC to project tiering. Final tiering results are presented to the Board for approval, and membership is informed of the results.

13. Debriefings

All agencies receive their project scores and are offered the opportunity to debrief with the Collaborative Applicant. Debriefing allows agencies the opportunity to request clarification regarding how/why Application question/s received certain scores. Debriefings are required if agencies are considering an appeal. Agencies may choose to appeal project score/s within the allotted time frame (see the **Appeals Process** outlined below).

After all debriefings with the Collaborative Applicant are completed and appeals considered by the Review Team, renewal project applicants that fall into Tier 2 will be notified and then the project ranking is presented to the Board for review/approval then shared with Membership. If the board determines that changes to project ranking should be made on behalf of the CoC, the board must make those determinations unanimously and have approval from all agencies whose ranking may be impacted by the changes.

14. Appeals Process

Who May Appeal?

An agency may appeal a decision concerning a Renewal or New/Bonus project application submitted by that agency. If a project was submitted by a collaboration of agencies, only a joint appeal may be submitted.

What May Be Appealed?

The appeals process applies to project scoring and ranking ***only***. *There is no appeal for project tiering.* An appeal may ***not*** be based on the following:

- Failure to answer any question/s on the application
- Failure to submit required attachments to the application
- Failure to submit the application by the required deadline

Any mathematical errors found by an applicant will be corrected by the Collaborative Applicant.

Timing of an Appeal

Formal appeals may be submitted by a project within **three (3) business days** of debriefing. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Collaborative Applicant (Mlipscomb@caresny.org), who will then forward to the Review Team. The written appeal must consist of a brief statement no longer than one page, and can be in the form of a letter, memo or email.

Appeals Decisions

The Review Team for the Rank & Review also serves as the Appeals Review Team. Appeals are decided by majority vote of the Review/Appeals Team, and once decided, are final and may not be overturned by the NOFO Committee, Board or Membership.