RENSSELAER COUNTY HOMELESS SERVICES COLLABORATIVE: 2026 RANK AND REVIEW PROCESS

Background
HUD's Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless assistance program serves as a source of funding for homeless services in Rensselaer County, and the planning body coordinating these services is the Rensselaer County Homeless Services Collaborative (RCHSC). Working with the CoC (RCHSC) and providing support and technical assistance is CARES of NY, Inc., the Collaborative Applicant.

HUD requires that the CoC (RCHSC) prioritize programs which most effectively serve the community at the local level. To reach this goal, a Rank and 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 (RCHSC) learn about each project's performance and effectiveness.

The Rensselaer County Homeless Services Collaborative (RCHSC) NOFO Committee is charged with overseeing the Rank and Review process. As stated in the RCHSC Governance Charter, the NOFO 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 & Review Application Tool (Renewal and New/Bonus) and a Review Team is established by the Committee, which is then reviewed and approved by both the Board and full Membership.

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 the full CoC Membership, and posted publicly on the CARES, Inc. website for all community members to review and comment.

FY 2026 Rank and Review Application
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, balancing objective performance measures with subjective narrative descriptions of project operations.

Review and Approval of the Rank & Review Renewal Application
After the annual CoC Application is submitted to HUD by the Collaborative Applicant, the NOFO Committee begins discussing that prior year's Rank and Review Written Process and Application, based on feedback from reviewers and applicants. The NOFO Committee:

1. Establishes a tentative timeline annually for the Rank and Review Process, working around the

NOFO release.

2. Discusses the prior year's Rank & Review Application Tools, Written 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. Recommends 3-5 Review Team members, considering previous and potential new reviewers.
5. Presents the revised Written Process, Application Tools and Review Team to full Membership for review, allowing for a one-week comment period per HUD NOFO guidance after each phase. Any comments from Membership are considered by the Committee and any further revisions are determined and accepted by the Board.
6. Presents the revised draft of the Written Process, Reviewers and Application Tools (Renewal, New/Bonus) to the RCHSC Board in phases. Any subsequent recommendations for changing the Written Process, Reviewers and/or Application Tools from the Board (majority vote) will be made by the Committee.
7. Finalizes and distributes the Rank & Review Application Tools with Membership for agencies to complete.
8. Opportunities for New/Bonus Projects are discussed with CoC Membership.

Renewal Projects

Each Renewal project completes a Rank and Review Application. The 2026 Rank & Review Application process will occur in two (2) parts. Parts 1 & 2 are distributed at the same time as one tool to all for adequate time for all agencies 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 complete. 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. *Any applications that are submitted* after *the established deadline or are missing required attachments will automatically receive a 5-point deduction on their overall score.*

* Please Note: Coordinated Entry, Planning, HMIS and Renewal Projects with less than one full 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. CE and HMIS will be placed above a project that may be straddling tier 1 and tier 2.

*Project Data for a consolidated project will be combined manually during Rank & Review, until the project has been consolidated as one in HMIS.

- **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 the application. Data on this attachment will be based on the FY22 LSAs submitted in the beginning of the year. Agencies must confirm Part 1 Data Attachment accuracy within five business days of receipt. During the Part 1/Data Training Session, agencies will be instructed on how to confirm the accuracy of the Data Attachment values.

If errors are identified on 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.

Part 1 will be scored by CARES. These scores will then be made available to the Review Team.

- **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 have affected 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.

- Parts 1 & 2 of the Application, along with any requested supporting documentation must be submitted to CARES of NY, Inc. by the stated deadline to be considered complete; CARES will send all applications to the Rank & Review Panel. Any applications submitted past the deadline, or missing required attachments will receive a 5-point deduction.

- An optional 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.

New/Bonus Project Proposals

New projects are created through bonus funds or reallocated funds. A separate application is required for New/Bonus and Reallocated project proposals. The CoC will create this application for new/bonus projects proposals. New/Bonus proposals will be scored and ranked against others. New/Bonus project proposals will automatically be ranked below renewal projects in Tier 2. The Review Team reviews and scores all New/Bonus project applications submitted. 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.

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.

New/Bonus Projects: Bonus funds may be available each year. The CoC is permitted to apply for

New/Bonus Projects which will compete nationally against other Bonus Project Applications based on a HUD scoring system set forth in the NOFO. HUD notifies the CoC if Bonus Funds are available annually and how funds may be used. Proposed New/Bonus Projects must complement and fulfill unmet need/s in the community. The CoC will create a separate application for new/bonus projects proposals (separate RFP), and new/bonus 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. New/Bonus Projects will be selected to apply for all available funds.

Reallocated Projects: Reallocation is the process by which the CoC shifts funds, in whole or in part, from existing eligible renewal grant(s) to create new projects which will meet unmet local need/s, 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. . Project types that can be developed through reallocation are decided annually by HUD.

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 is outlined in the Rank & Review Written Process, which is reviewed, updated, posted for public comment, and approved by the NOFO Committee and CoC Board on an annual basis. The project review team flags projects that demonstrate inadequate financial management, a history of expending funds on ineligible activities, a history of returning funds that could have been utilized, ongoing poor project performance outcomes, and consistently low scores on the Rank & Review tool. From Rank & Review and monitoring, recommendations are made regarding reallocation to the Board. 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 the agency 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.

Project proposals developed with reallocated funds must fill an unmet need and submit a New/Bonus application. Applications for New/Bonus projects will be ranked separately from Renewal projects, and the final ranking will be approved by the Board and presented to CoC membership.

Review Team

Members of the Review Team include individuals from the Continuum who are not CoC funded or from neighboring communities knowledgeable about the CoC process, services, and its providers. Reviewers are non-funded, objective individuals who may be members and non-members of the CoC. Review Team members are considered by the NOFO committee and invited by the Collaborative Applicant to participate in the CoC's Rank & Review process. After reviewers agree to participate, each reviewer is provided a copy of project applications and score card forms and are instructed to score applications with an objective lens. Three reviewers are recruited each year to score the narrative portions of each application. Scores for each application are averaged between the 3-5 reviewers scores to create the final score.

In the event project applications receive the same score it is the responsibility of the Review Team to reconsider scoring to break the tie. The Review Team provides any final comments to CARES to be shared with projects or the NOFO Committee and will also serve as the Appeals Committee if an appeal is

submitted by a project.

Project Ranking and Tiering

HUD requires that the CoC conduct a transparent and objective process to review and rank all Renewal and New/Bonus projects. 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. 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 CoC-approved Rank and Review Tool, all Renewal projects seeking funding are scored and placed in numerical order by scores. New/Bonus projects are scored and placed in numerical order beneath Renewal Projects in Tier 2. HMIS and CE projects are placed at the bottom of Tier 1 above the lowest scoring projects.

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. 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.

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. If a mathematical error is found during the review or debriefing, the score will be corrected. 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 Rank & Review Team, renewal projects 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.

Appeals Process

Formal appeals can be submitted by an agency only after debriefings occur. Appeals must be submitted to CARES (sallen@caresny.org) within five 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. If appropriate the NOFO committee will adjust scores and ranking per the Review Team determinations.

Threshold Review

In addition to scoring criteria, all projects must meet a minimum threshold of 50% of total possible application points. A Threshold Review will occur after the Rank and Review process is complete and final scores tallied. 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.