

# SACRAMENTO CONTINUUM OF CARE 2023 COC REVIEW AND RANK POLICIES (APPROVED)

## THE CONTINUUM OF CARE NOFO REVIEW AND RANK PROCESS

The Continuum of Care Program Annual Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) requires all Continuums of Care throughout the country to review projects receiving Continuum of Care funding and prioritize projects based on performance outcomes. The Sacramento Continuum of Care Continuum of Care (CoC) adopts the following procedure to review both renewal projects and proposed new projects as part of the Continuum of Care Program competition. The provisions of this policy are subject to change annually depending on the Department of Housing and Urban Development's specific requirements in that year's NOFO.

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## 1. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS

- A. **Annual Performance Report (APR)** data is generated from project inputs to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This data can only be modified through corrected HMIS inputs. The data in the Annual Performance Report will be processed and formatted using an application web tool, and then presented to the Review and Rank Panel as part of the local NOFA competition.
- B. Projects that primarily serve survivors of domestic violence will generate their APRs using data from an alternative, non-HMIS database. If no such data is available, the project's program director or executive director may hand-tabulate the relevant data and sign a statement under penalty of perjury confirming that the director has personally reviewed the data and that the data is accurate.
- C. APR data will cover the full calendar year beginning April 1, 2022 and terminating March 31, 2023.
- D. All projects that began operations on or before April 1, 2022 will be required to cooperate in preparing an Annual Performance Report to be used in the local competition, as follows:
  - i. **On June 9**, the HMIS Lead ran APRs for all CoC-funded projects and shared those reports with those projects and Housing Tools and/or Sacramento Steps Forward. Agencies are encouraged to begin correcting their APR data as soon as they receive their draft APRs. This may require, e.g., completing annual follow-up evaluations on old clients, doing research to determine the final destination of clients who have left a program, and transferring data from paper case notes to HMIS.
  - ii. For **the next four weeks [unless constricted by NOFO timeline]**, Sacramento Steps Forward will help agencies answer questions regarding their APRs to help providers troubleshoot any errors in those reports. Although most errors will need to be fixed via additional data entry or by discussing issues with the HMIS lead, Sacramento Steps Forward will provide technical assistance to agencies who proactively request it. In order to confirm that all corrections have been successful, agencies are encouraged to request new APRs from the HMIS Lead and review the new APRs.
- E. By **July 11 at 5pm**, all projects are required to have finished cleaning and correcting their APR data. Providers who are tardy in finalizing their APRs without a valid reason will lose up to 5 out of 100 points in the local competition.

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## II. NOFO RELEASE AND KICKOFF CONFERENCE

- A. Upon publication of the CoC Program NOFO, the Collaborative Applicant will review the currently adopted scoring tools for all project types and ensure they comply with the NOFO. In the event the scoring tools do not comport with the NOFO, changes will be made and adopted prior to the use of the tools in the competition. All changes will be presented to and approved by the CoC Board with input from the Project Review Committee members and project applicants encouraged. Formal input may be given if time allows.
- B. Upon publication of the CoC NOFO, the Collaborative Applicant will schedule and announce a time and date for a Kickoff Conference where details about the funding opportunity and the process are provided. These details will be distributed to the entire CoC via listserv, email, posting, and any other method appropriate to ensure full distribution to the CoC.
- C. **All applicants/potential applicants are required to participate in the NOFO Overview Kickoff Conference.**
  - i. At the Kickoff Conference, the Collaborative Applicant will present an overview of the HUD CoC Program NOFO, including details about available funding and any major changes in the application from previous years.
  - ii. Applicants will also be oriented to the process for reviewing and ranking applications, which will cover any supplemental local application materials, the scoring tools and applicable dates.
  - iii. Applicants will also have the opportunity to ask any questions they have about both the local and HUD application processes.
  - iv. A portion of the Conference will be dedicated to orienting potential new applicants to the funding opportunity to prepare them for the application process and provide all necessary information about the Continuum of Care program.
- D. At the Kickoff Conference, Housing Tools and/or Sacramento Steps Forward will distribute a local competition schedule that includes a deadline for submitting the Local Application (see Section III of these policies).

### III. LOCAL APPLICATIONS

- A. At the Kickoff Conference, shortly after publication of the CoC Program NOFO, Housing Tools and/or Sacramento Steps Forward will distribute the Local Application, which will include Supplemental Questions to be answered by each project, as well as a list of Attachments to be submitted by each project. For Renewal Projects that have been operating for at least **eighteen months (from the e-LOCCs operating start date)**, the Local Application is also considered to include the APR.
- i. The **Supplemental Questions** provide Project Applicants with the opportunity to report on project success and provide explanations for the objective project performance data contained in the APR.
  - ii. **Attachments:** The attachments to be collected include e-snaps materials such as the applicant profile and the project application that needs to be submitted to HUD as part of the national competition. Attachments may also be used to collect or verify objective information not captured in HMIS, particularly as it relates to project budgets, grant performance, and financial audits application. All of this information can be reviewed by the Review and Rank Panel to determine eligibility and ensure project design is appropriate for HUD funding.
- B. Answers to all Supplemental Questions must be completed online, using the web tool to be provided. Agencies will receive login information immediately following the Kickoff Conference. Agencies who decide to submit new projects after the Kickoff Conference but before the local application deadline should request web tool logins from Housing Tools and/or Sacramento Steps Forward via e-mail.
- C. As the Supplemental Questions are answered, the web tool report will be updated in real-time. It is each agency's responsibility to review its web tool reports and confirm that the reports are correct prior to the local application deadline. Projects may make use of the essay questions and short-answer questions to clarify the context of their objective performance data, but Housing Tools and/or Sacramento Steps Forward cannot and will not edit a project's scores based on a project's assertions about its own performance. The only way to correct objective performance data is by entering new data into HMIS, which should be done before the Kickoff Conference (see Section I of these policies).
- D. **Late penalties:** A project that turns in Local Application materials after the deadline (or insists on modifying Local Application materials after the deadline) will be subject to late penalties. Late penalties are imposed at the discretion of the Review & Rank Panel, based on the following guidance:
- i. Materials received up to 10 minutes late may be accepted without penalty.

- ii. Materials received between 10 minutes and 24 hours after the deadline will cause the applicant to receive a two-point score deduction in the local competition.
  - iii. Materials received between 24 hours and 72 hours after the deadline will receive a five-point score deduction.
  - iv. Materials received more than 72 hours after the deadline **may be excluded** at the discretion of the Panel. If a Local Application is still substantially incomplete or non-compliant 72 hours after the deadline, then, at the discretion of the Panel, the project may be **rejected** and **denied entry into the local competition**.
- E. **Changes to Web Tool Reports:** Starting 72 hours after the Local Application deadline, changes to the web tool reports will be made only to correct transcription errors on the part of Housing Tools and/or Sacramento Steps Forward. The underlying information, such as APRs and Supplemental Answers, will not be changed.

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#### IV. REVIEW AND RANK PROCESS

- A. The Review and Rank Panel (Panel) shall consist of the non-conflicted members of the Project Review Committee. Selection of those members is subject to the rules governing the Performance Review Committee and subject to the Conflict of Interest policy adopted by the Performance Review Committee or the Governance Committee, as applicable.
- B. If a person or an organization believes there is a conflict of interest that would exclude a Review and Rank Panel Member, it needs to be brought to the attention of Housing Tools and/or Sacramento Steps Forward staff within three calendar days of the announcement of the Review and Rank Panel membership. The concerned person/organization would need to provide specific and substantial information regarding the alleged conflict to allow the Collaborative Applicant to conduct a fair evaluation
- C. The Panel shall be announced to the Continuum of Care Competition applicants no later than two weeks before the Review and Rank meeting.
- D. The Panel shall receive a training from Housing Tools and/or Sacramento Steps Forward on the use of the web tool system, the CoC Program and local competition, and their responsibilities as Review and Rank panelists. This training may be conducted via videoconference at the convenience of the Panel.
- E. The Panel shall review the web tool reports and supplemental project information prior to the scheduled Review and Rank meeting.
- F. The Panel shall meet in person or virtually to discuss the applications submitted as part of the Continuum of Care Competition.
- G. All projects submitted as Renewal Projects will need to be on call during the Review and Rank meeting to answer questions from the Review and Rank panel.
- H. All projects submitted as New Projects may be invited to attend the Review and Rank Meeting to be interviewed by the Panel, at the discretion of the Panel. These interviews would be scheduled prior to the Review and Rank Meeting. Failure to cooperate with an invitation by the Review and Rank Panel may result in a project not being funded.
- I. All projects submitted as Renewal Projects may be asked clarifying application questions over email, at the discretion of the Panel. These questions will be sent at a time identified prior to the Review and Rank Meeting. Questions will be sent in a single email from the neutral facilitators of the competition. Projects will have 48 hours to respond to the email. If additional clarification is needed, the Panel may schedule a call with the agency to ask the questions.
- J. The ranked list is created by the following procedures:
  - a. One ranked list is prepared based on a compilation of Review and Rank Panel raw scores for each application.

- b. Those applications that do not meet certain threshold requirements (as detailed on the scoring tool) will not be included in the ranked list.
- c. The Review and Rank Panel determines if any renewal project should receive a decrease in funding. Any funding captured from an existing project will be made available for reallocation to a new project that meets the requirements in the NOFO. See the section below labeled “Reallocation of Funds” for more details.
- d. Certain project types will automatically be ranked in the bottom of Tier 1. **Within this region at the bottom of Tier 1**, renewal housing projects with less than eighteen months of operating data (as defined by the e-LOCCs project start date) will be placed at the top of the region for a maximum of two competition cycles. HMIS renewal projects will be placed in the middle of the region and Coordinated Entry renewal projects will be ranked at the bottom of the region, immediately above the ‘straddling’ project.
- e. In the event that a project **expands and consolidates**, the Review and Rank Panel will treat the fully consolidated project as a renewal project. The data for all components of the project will be combined for scoring. Note that the panel does retain discretion to consider any exceptional circumstances that result from the consolidation and if applicants wish for the panel to consider such circumstances they should include specific details including the operating dates of legacy project and expansion project, the number of beds/units in legacy project and expansion project, and the specific scored factor(s) for which the project is seeking relief.
- f. If a renewal project meets the threshold factors and **all** the following performance metrics, that project will automatically be ranked in the top of Tier 1. These projects will not be scored and will not be required to complete the supplemental questions for the local competition or participate in an interview. The neutral facilitators of the competition will assess if each renewal project has met these criteria once the APR and eLOCCs data has been finalized.

Factor	Metric
2A/B: Housing Retention/Placement	PSH: 98% or one negative household exit
	RRH: 80% or one negative household exit
3A: Increase or Maintain Income	PSH: 75%
	RRH: 65%
4A: Bed/Unit Utilization	ALL: 95%
4B: Grant Spenddown	ALL: 95%

The use of this policy is reliant on the availability of funding in Tier 1. If the total combined requested funding for renewal projects that meet the threshold factors and all the following performance metrics exceeds the available funding in Tier 1, all renewal projects will be ineligible for auto-ranking at the top of Tier 1 and will be asked to compete in the local competition.

- g. In order to promote system performance by preventing returns to homelessness and promoting housing stability and retention, the PRC has determined that **new housing project that have not demonstrated their ability to better enhance system performance may be prioritized directly below any renewal projects that have met the following performance requirements.** Performance requirements for this purpose are 1) the renewal project meets a unique or prioritized need within the community; 2) the agency has a strong track record of past performance for this project or a similar project (if the project under review has not been scored before); and 3) the agency has developed a plan for achieving better outcomes for this project within the next year. If a plan will be required from a project, the panel will notify the project applicant during the competition period. The panel should also consider if this discretion has been exercised before to prioritize this renewal project over a new project application. If the panel exercises their discretion to prioritize a renewal project over a new project, it must be noted on the ranked list and briefly explained using the performance requirements listed above. The use of this discretion factor cannot be the grounds for an appeal.

- K. The Panel has **discretion** to adjust a scaled score up or down within the boundaries set by the scoring tool based on their understanding of the context of the project's performance through the program's written explanation and any statements made by the program during the review and rank interview **or** clarifying responses over email (if applicable). However, absent a truly extraordinary circumstance, outside the control of the operator, panelists



should not adjust a score by more than 25% of the maximum possible value for that scoring factor (up to the nearest 0.5 increment). If a program's score in a scaled scoring factor is altered, the Project Review Committee must document the reason for the alteration and the evidence relied upon in making the alteration

- L. After creating the ranked list, the Panel may recommend programs for reallocation based on the policy outlined in the sectioned titled "Reallocation of Funds."
- M. After the Review and Rank Meeting, a priority listing with scores will be compiled.
- N. Project applicants will be notified of the scoring results within three business days of the Review and Rank Meeting. Project applicants will receive a full list of project scores and may request a scoring breakdown for their own project.

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## V. ELIGIBILITY FOR APPEALS

Projects shall be allowed to appeal the decisions of the Review and Rank Panel subject to the requirements of this section.

- A. **Timing.** All appeals shall be concluded within 10 days of the Review and Rank Panel Meeting.
- B. **Composition of Appeals Panel.** Appeals will be sent to the CoC Advisory Board but will be heard by a non-conflicted subcommittee of Advisory Board members, together with two non-voting members: the SSF Deputy Director, and one member of the original Review Panel.
- C. **Eligible Projects.** A project may appeal if:
1. The Review and Rank panel recommends the project for full or partial reallocation
  2. The project is placed in Tier 2\*
  3. The project may fall into Tier 2 if another appeal is successful\*
  4. The project is a new project not recommended for funding (if new project funding was available)\*
  5. If the project was submitted by a collaboration of agencies, only one joint appeal may be made.
- D. **Eligible Grounds.** Appeals may be made on the following bases:

### Projects Recommended for Full or Partial Reallocation

1. May appeal its score on any grounds
2. May submit any information the agency feels is relevant

### Projects Recommended or At Risk for Placement in Tier 2

1. May appeal only errors in scoring or in information provided to the Review Panel by parties other than the recipient/subrecipient
2. May not supplement application materials to support appeal

### New Projects Not Recommended for Funding

1. May appeal errors in scoring or in information provided to the Review Panel by parties other than the recipient/subrecipient, if correcting the error could cause the project to be recommended for funding
2. May not supplement application materials to support appeal

NOTE: Appeals based on policy considerations, funding priorities, or other subjective criteria will not be considered and are not eligible.

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## VI. PROCESS FOR APPEALS

\*Not applicable in cases where policy at Section IV. Review and Rank Process, paragraph I.f. is applied to prioritize a renewal project over a new project application.

- A. **Timeline for Appeals.** Any Project Applicant seeking to appeal must adhere to the included timeline. Failure to meet a deadline in the timeline voids the Project Applicant's appeal.
- B. **Notice of Appeal.** Project Applicants will have 24 hours after the issuance of the Priority Listing to provide notice to the CoC of an intent to appeal. This notice must include:
- i. A statement as to why the project is eligible to appeal.
  - ii. The basis for the appeal
  - iii. A brief statement of the facts upon which the Project Applicant bases its appeal. These facts need not be complete, but must give the CoC a sufficient understanding for the basis of the appeal.
- C. The CoC will contact the appealing Project Applicant in an attempt to clarify the scoring decision and determine if the appeal can be resolved without requiring a formal hearing.
- D. If a resolution is not possible, the Project Applicant will submit a formal appeal pursuant to the official CoC Competition timeline.
- iv. The Formal Appeal must consist of a short, clear, written statement no longer than two pages of the basis for the Project Applicant's appeal of the Review and Rank Panel's decision.
  - v. The Formal Appeal must be sent as an attachment to the Collaborative Applicant.
- E. Upon timely receipt of the Formal Appeal, the Collaborative Applicant will convene the Appeal Panel and set a time and date for the Appeal Hearing.
- F. The Appeal Hearing shall be conducted according to the following procedure:
- vi. The Appeal Hearing will be conducted telephonically.
  - vii. The Appeal Panel (including non-voting members) will join the call with the neutral facilitator.
  - viii. The neutral facilitator will explain the facts of the appeal and answer any procedural questions.
  - ix. The Appeal Panel may ask the Review and Rank Panel member questions about the Review and Rank Process to clarify what occurred during Review and Rank and what information the Panel considered in evaluating the Project Applicant.
  - x. The appealing Project Applicant will then join the phone call. The appealing Project Applicant will be allotted a few minutes to explain their appeal. The Appeal Panel may then ask any questions of the appealing Project Applicant. The appealing Project Applicant then leaves the phone call.

- xi. The Appeal Panel conducts a discussion of the appeal and takes a formal vote.
- G. The Appeal Panel may consider the effect of its decision on other Project Applicants and may include those project applicants in the appeals discussion.
- H. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.
- I. Once the appeals are complete, the Priority Listing will be submitted to the CoC for Review and Approval.
- J. Once the Priority Listing is approved all project determinations are concluded and the Review and Rank Process is complete.
- K. The approved Priority Listing shall be publicly posted on the CoC website in accordance with the timeline stated in the Continuum of Care Program NOFA.

## APPENDIX A: REALLOCATION OF FUNDS

HUD expects CoCs to reallocate funds from non- and/or under-performing projects to higher priority community needs that align with HUD priorities and goals. Reallocation involves using funds in whole or part from existing eligible renewal projects to create one or more new projects. In the recent competitions, HUD allowed CoCs to use the reallocation process to create:

- New permanent supportive housing projects that serve chronically homeless individuals and families, including unaccompanied youth.
- New rapid rehousing projects for homeless individuals and families, including unaccompanied youth, coming directly from the streets or emergency shelter or fleeing domestic violence.
- New projects for dedicated HMIS.
- New Supportive Services Only (SSO) projects for centralized or coordinated entry systems.

HUD expects that CoCs will use performance data to decide how to best use the resources available to end homelessness within the community. CoCs should reallocate funds to new projects whenever reallocation would reduce homelessness. Communities should use CoC approved scoring criteria and selection priorities to determine the extent to which each project is still necessary and address the policy priorities listed in the NOFO. Recent NOFOs have stated that HUD would prioritize those CoCs that have demonstrated a capacity to reallocate funding from lower performing projects to higher performing projects through the local selection process. In previous competitions, HUD assigned four points in the Collaborative Applicant Application to reallocation.

The Sacramento Continuum of Care has identified a need for additional permanent housing, with targeted services for youth, seniors, or individuals with conditions contributing to higher risk of COVID-19 infection (as identified by the CDC).

Reallocated funding shall be prioritized for projects which clearly and concretely address these needs.

### Voluntary Reallocation

In order to encourage projects to voluntarily align themselves with HEARTH Act goals and local priorities regarding housing and service provision, existing projects that voluntarily wish to convert their project to permanent housing or another eligible new project type as defined by HUD in the Continuum of Care Competition Notice of Funding Opportunity will be given the first option in accessing the funds reallocated from their existing project to create a new project (note that the new project funding request cannot exceed the funding available via the existing project). If the agency does not wish to use voluntarily reallocated funds for a new project, the funds will be released back into the common pool for the entire CoC.

Any such project may request reallocation and exercise the option to access funding through written notice to the panel, which should be sent to [mwatts@sacstepsforward.org](mailto:mwatts@sacstepsforward.org). The project must submit a new project application and

if the panel determines the new project application to be of reasonable quality, then the project may be given full points in the new project scoring tool factor 2B, *Ready to Start*, scoring factor.

## APPENDIX B: SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECT FUNDING

In some circumstances there may be an opportunity after the application deadline for programs to submit application materials for additional funding. The Sacramento Continuum of Care will issue a Supplemental Project Application when:

1. After receiving all project applications it appears there is additional funding available; or,
2. After conducting the threshold review of the submitted project applications it appears there is additional funding available; or,
3. After conducting the review and rank, the Panel has recommended a program for reallocation and there are not adequate new project applications for those funds.

In the event that Supplemental Applications are required, the Collaborative Applicant will:

- Email the CoC and other interested parties (all homeless service and housing providers in the CoC area) with specifics regarding how much money is available and which type of programs qualify.
- The Collaborative Applicant will provide technical assistance and guidance, as needed, to ensure applicants understand the funding requirements.
- Any additional applications for these funds will be due as soon as possible after this email is distributed, as determined by the NOFA submission deadline.
- The Review and Rank Panel will reconvene either via telephone, video conference, or in person depending on availability and convenience to evaluate the applications.

For this type of process, the timeline will be extremely short and may make an application burdensome; however, expanding an already submitted application, applying in collaboration, and a community consensus on how to spend the funds are also viable options.