

Heartland Continuum of Care Competition Policy and Procedures Special NOFO to Address Unsheltered Homelessness

OVERVIEW

Housing and Urban Development's Special NOFO to Address Unsheltered and Rural Homelessness seeks to support efforts to reduce unsheltered homelessness. Through this Special NOFO, HUD will award funding to communities to implement coordinated approaches -- grounded in Housing First and public health principles -- to reduce the prevalence of unsheltered homelessness, and improve services engagement, health outcomes, and housing stability among highly vulnerable unsheltered individuals and families.

For the Heartland Continuum of Care (HCoC), an independent Rating and Ranking Committee will evaluate project proposals and use a variety of objective and subjective data to create a Recommended Ranked List showing the recommended score and rank of all Sangamon County projects. The Recommended Ranked List may be edited if there is a successful technical appeal. The HCoC Board of Directors then officially adopts the Approved Ranked List and submits it to HUD.

GATHERING DATA FOR RATING AND RANKING

I. SOURCES OF DATA

There are three sources of data for the Rating and Ranking process:

- A. The **eSNAPS Application** is a federal application form that HUD requires all projects to complete in order to apply for HUD funding.
- B. **Supplemental questions** will be used to provide insight about how projects contribute to the comprehensive community plan to reach functional zero for unsheltered homelessness.
- C. **Other Attachments** such as a budget, a job description, or a copy of one of a program's policies, may be requested by the instructions for an application or by the Committee. Any attachments submitted during the Rating and Ranking process become part of a project's application.

DESIGN OF SCORING TOOLS

The Rating and Ranking Committee will be guided in their scoring by the HCoC Special NOFO Scoring Tool approved by the HCoC Board of Directors.

SELECTING THE RATING AND RANKING COMMITTEE

1. RATING AND RANKING COMMITTEE MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS

Rating and Ranking Committee shall be:

- Knowledgeable about homelessness and housing in the community and are broadly representative of the relevant sectors, subpopulations, and geographic areas
- “Neutral,” meaning that they are not employees, staff, or otherwise have a business/financial or specific personal conflict of interest with the applicant organizations;
- Familiar with housing and homeless needs within the CoC; and
- Willing to review projects with the best interest of homeless persons in mind.
- Reflective of different races and ethnicities, particularly those over-represented in our local homelessness population.

Rating and Ranking Committee members agree to:

- Dedicate time for application review and Rating and Ranking Committee meetings
- Sign the HCoC Conflict of Interest Policy Form

2. RATING AND RANKING COMMITTEE SELECTION

The Rating and Ranking Committee consists of 3 to 7 members and is chosen by the HCoC Board. The Rating and Ranking Committee will be announced and sent to the HCoC General Membership and posted on the HCoC website.

3. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

If a person or an organization believes there is a conflict of interest that would exclude a Rating and Ranking Committee Member, it needs to be brought to the attention of the Heartland Continuum of Care board within seven calendar days of the announcement of the Rating and Ranking membership. The concerned person/organization would need to provide specific and substantial information regarding the alleged conflict to allow the HCoC Coordinator to conduct a fair evaluation.

ASSIGNING SCORES TO PROJECT

1. IN GENERAL

The RATING AND RANKING COMMITTEE will use the information it receives to decide on a score for each project for each of the scoring factors listed in the HCoC Special NOFO Scoring Tool. Committee members are encouraged to candidly share their reasoning with each other and to listen carefully to each other's reasoning, but each member is entitled to their own opinion.

2. MISSING, LATE, OR INCOMPLETE APPLICATION

If the HCoC Coordinator receives part or all of an application up to 72 hours late, this fact will be noted in the competition documents so that the Rating and Ranking Committee can assign an appropriate penalty using the Scoring Tool. If an application is more than 72 hours late, the Rating and Ranking Committee may choose to reject that application without scoring.

ASSIGNING RANKS TO PROJECTS & NOTIFICATION OF RANKINGS

After all projects have been scored, the Rating and Ranking Committee will assemble a list of their recommendations for what projects should be funded and how each project should be ranked in order for funding priority. Project applicants will be notified as to whether they were recommended for funding within 72 hours of the Review and Rank Meeting.

HMIS and Coordinated Entry projects are not scored. Instead, they are automatically placed at the bottom of the funding priority list. This reflects the community's commitment to ensuring that it can continue to provide mandatory HMIS and Coordinated Entry services, without which other CoC programs would not be eligible to receive funding. The Rating and Ranking Committee may request an adjustment in the amount of funding recommended due to the number and amount of higher priority projects requesting funding.

TECHNICAL APPEALS

Applicants may appeal the Rating and Ranking Committee decision on technical grounds by following the process set forth below.

1. MEMBERS OF THE APPEAL PANEL

The Appeal Panel shall consist of three members and be selected by the HCoC Coordinator. These members may be selected from non-profits, foundations, consumers, government, and private agencies with experience in grant administration and homelessness projects. Appeal Panel members must not have a conflict of interest with any of the agencies or parties applying for CoC Program funding as defined by the existing Rating and Ranking Committee conflict of interest rules.

2. APPEAL ELIGIBILITY

A project may only appeal only on the following basis of a failure to follow the Rating and Ranking process resulting in a reduced score. NOTE: Appeals based on policy considerations, funding priorities, or other subjective criteria will not be considered and are not eligible for technical appeal.

3. APPEALS PROCESS

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.

- Project Applicants must provide notice to the CoC of an intent to appeal. The due date for this notice will be contained in the official CoC Competition Timeline. 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.
- The CoC Coordinator 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.
- If a resolution is not possible, the Project Applicant will submit a formal appeal pursuant to the official CoC Competition Timeline.
 - i. 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 Rating and Ranking Committee's decision.
 - ii. The Formal Appeal must be sent as an attachment to Coordinator & Board Chair.
- Upon timely receipt of the Formal Appeal, the HCoC Coordinator will convene the Appeal Panel and set a time and date for the Appeal Hearing.
- The Appeal Hearing shall be conducted according to the following procedure:
 - i. The Appeal Hearing will be conducted via Zoom.
 - ii. The Appeal Panel will join the call with the neutral facilitator and a representative of the Rating and Ranking Committee.
 - iii. The neutral facilitator will explain the facts of the appeal and answer any procedural questions.
 - iv. The Appeal Panel may ask the Rating and Ranking Committee 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.
 - v. 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.
 - vi. The Appeal Panel conducts a discussion of the appeal and takes a formal vote.

The Appeal Panel may consider the effect of its decision on other Project Applicants and may include those project applicants in the appeals discussion. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final and will be transmitted to the CoC Board without further debate.

APPROVAL OF THE RANKED LIST AND SUBMISSION TO HUD

- All technical appeals shall be concluded within one week of the Rating and Ranking Committee Meeting.
- Once the technical appeals are complete, the Recommended Priority List will be submitted to the CoC Board for review and approval.
- Once the CoC Board approves the Recommended Priority List, the Rating and Ranking Process is complete.
- The Approved Priority List will be publicly posted on the CoC website in accordance with the timeline and shall be used to fill in the appropriate application forms for the Collaborative Applicant to submit to HUD as part of the national competition.