



## FY 2024 CoC Program CoC Application Process

### CONTRA COSTA COC APPLICATION PROCESS

This document is a tool to support the fair, transparent, and objective administration of the HUD CoC Program Competition process. The following sections outline the Council on Homelessness's policies as related to designing, operating and following a collaborative local process for the development of HUD Continuum of Care Program applications and approval of submission of applications as required by C.F.R. 578.9.

Please note: any late application received less than 24 hours of the due date/time will receive a 5-point score reduction. Any late application received between 24-48 hours of the due date will receive a 7-point score reduction. Late applications received after 48 hours will not be accepted. Incomplete applications cannot be cured for the CoC Review and Rank Panel scoring process but must be corrected prior to HUD submission.

#### **Section 1. APPLICATION OVERVIEW**

The Council on Homelessness (Council) prepares and oversees the applications for funds administered by HUD under the HEARTH Act. The Council on Homelessness is designed to assist individuals—including unaccompanied youth—and families experiencing homelessness and to provide the services needed to help individuals move into transitional and permanent housing, with the goal of long-term stability. The Council's HUD CoC Program funds are granted annually based on a national competition following the release of a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). It is a primary responsibility of the Council to oversee the application for those funds.

#### **Section 2. COLLABORATIVE APPLICANT**

The Council designates Contra Costa County Health, Housing, and Homeless Services Division as the annual HUD CoC Program Collaborative Applicant. The Collaborative Applicant (or its designee) is responsible for leading and supporting all aspects of the annual HUD CoC Program application process, including submission of the Consolidated Application consisting of 1) the CoC Application; 2) the CoC's Priority List of Projects; and 3) all Project Applications.

The Collaborative Applicant may identify and designate a neutral third party to facilitate the CoC Program Competition, including facilitating the development of scoring tools, implementation of technical assistance, support drafting the CoC application, and administration of the project application review and ranking process.



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### Section 3. OVERVIEW OF PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS AND APPLICATION SUBMISSION TIMELINE

Immediately after HUD's Continuum of Care Program Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is released, the Collaborative Applicant (or its designee) will coordinate and carry out all of activities needed to successfully submit an application on behalf of the CoC. The following is an overview of the local competition process and tasks for CoC Program application submission. The process and timeline are subject to change annually, depending on HUD's requirements as outlined in the NOFA.

- Community Debrief of the preceding year's application, funding, and competition process
- COC/ESG Committee meets to discuss scoring criteria for project applications
- Selection of non-conflicted Review & Rank Panelists
- Council convenes to approve scoring tools and Review & Rank Panel
- Mandatory Technical Assistance Workshop held for current and prospective Project Applicants
- Project Applications are submitted through a designated portal
- Review & Rank Panel convenes to evaluate and score project applications and conduct Project Applicant interviews
- Review & Rank Panel ranks projects on a Priority List and recommends projects for inclusion in the CoC Application for funding from HUD
- Priority Listing is publicized and appeals process opens for eligible project applicants
- If necessary, Appeals Committee convenes to make final decision on Priority Listing
- Council convenes to approve Priority Listing
- Collaborative Applicant drafts CoC Application
- Final Priority Listing, CoC Application, and Project Applications are made available for public comment
- Collaborative Applicant submits final Consolidated Application to HUD

### Section 4. SCORING TOOLS

Prior to the NOFA release, the Council will request that the CoC/ESG Committee convene to design and/or revise scoring tools and any corresponding local application materials to assist in the CoC review and ranking of all renewal and new project applications. The CoC/ESG Committee reviews data and analytics from the local HMIS and Coordinated Entry System, year-over-year CoC project and funding information, funding and project opportunities and strategies available in the current HUD NOFA release, and local demographic trends. That data and information is then used to develop and update scoring tools for the purpose of effectively evaluating the current local need for subpopulation focuses and project and bed type, as well as project performance and impact.

The scoring tools will take into consideration both local and HUD priorities, including projects serving populations with severe needs and vulnerabilities, such as persons experiencing chronic homelessness, mental illness, substance use disorders, and survivors of domestic violence.



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The scoring tools may also establish threshold criteria reflective of local and HUD priorities, which all project applications are expected to meet. This criteria may include factors such as coordinated entry and HMIS participation and compliance with Fair Housing and Equal Access rules and requirements.

The scoring tools will be finalized and presented to the Council for review and approval. The Council may initiate additional revisions to the scoring tools and local application materials if warranted based on new information about HUD priorities or process requirements contained in that year's NOFA.

### **Section 5. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Upon HUD release of the NOFA, a third-party facilitator will schedule and announce a time and date for a Technical Assistance Workshop. These details will be distributed to the entire CoC.

All potential applicants must participate in the HUD CoC Program Technical Assistance Workshop. At the workshop, the third-party facilitator will present an overview of the HUD CoC NOFA, including details about available funding and any major changes in the application from previous years. Applicants will also be oriented to the process for reviewing and ranking applications, which will cover any supplemental local application materials, the scoring tool, and relevant dates and deadlines. Applicants will also have a chance to ask any questions about both the local and HUD application processes.

Throughout the CoC Program Competition technical assistance will be available to all project applicants. Technical assistance for new and returning project applicants is designed to:

- explain the application process, including use of the application submissions portal,
- explain the current year's funding opportunities, and
- provide training and support for prospective applicants to ensure eligible and competitive applications.

### **Section 6. PROJECT APPLICATIONS & SUBMISSION**

Project applications are submitted online through a designated application portal.

The project applications mirror the new and renewal project scoring tools and solicit information necessary for the Review & Rank Panel to consistently score applicant responses using the objective criteria outlined in the tools. The application may include requests for quantitative and qualitative data. Typically, the applications require information related to: consistency with HUD and local priorities, agency capacity and readiness, project scope and design, and efficient use of funds.

Applicants complete the project applications typically within four to six weeks of the NOFA release (and generally not less than 30 days prior to the NOFA submission deadline). Technical assistance is available to support projects with data entry and reviewing data for accuracy and completeness.

Any late application received less than 24 hours of the due date/time will receive a 5-point score reduction. Any late application received between 24-48 hours of the due date/time will receive a 7-point



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score reduction. Late applications received after 48 hours will not be accepted. Incomplete applications cannot be cured for the CoC Review and Rank Panel scoring process but must be corrected prior to HUD submission.

### Section 7. LOCAL REVIEW & RANK PROCESS

The next stage in the competition requires an evaluation of project applications. The Review and Rank Panel is responsible for conducting this evaluation and ranking process.

#### A. PANEL MEMBERSHIP

The Council designates between three and five of its members to serve as CoC Review and Rank Panelists. CoC Review and Rank Panelists must be:

- Knowledgeable about homelessness and housing in the community and broadly representative of the relevant sectors, subpopulations, and geographic areas;
- “Neutral,” meaning that they are not employees, staff, or otherwise have a business or personal conflict of interest with the applicant organizations;
- Familiar with housing and homeless needs within Contra Costa County; and
- Willing to review projects with the best interest of homeless persons in mind.

To serve on the CoC Review and Rank Panel, members must:

- Sign a statement declaring that they have no conflict of interest and a confidentiality agreement; and
- Be able to dedicate time for application review and CoC Review and Rank Panel meetings as scheduled by the Collaborative Applicant.

Qualified, non-conflicted CoC Review and Rank Panel members are recruited and oriented to the local review and ranking process.

#### B. REVIEW & RANK METHODOLOGY

The CoC Review and Rank Panel members receive all local application and scoring materials and evaluate and score each program’s application.

Panel members are encouraged to individually review and pre-score applications using the scoring tools prior to the Review and Rank Panel meeting collectively. The CoC Review and Rank Panel meets to collectively evaluate each application and interview applicants.

The ranked list is created by the following procedures:



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- Project applications are evaluated based on the scoring tool. Those applications that do not meet certain threshold requirements (as detailed on the scoring tool) will not be included on the ranked list.
- The Review and Rank Panel evaluates the quantitative and qualitative data consistent with the objective criteria in the scoring tool and assigns a score.
- Projects are ranked in the Priority Listing in order of their assigned score.
- HMIS and Coordinated Entry projects are automatically ranked at the bottom of Tier 1. Renewal projects with less than 12 months of data are automatically ranked at the bottom of Tier 1.
- Based on community priorities as defined in the scoring tools, the CoC Review and Rank Panel may determine whether any renewal project should be decreased or reallocated. Any funding captured from an existing project will be made available for reallocation to any project that meets the requirements in the NOFA application.
- Preservation of existing permanent housing:
  - The Contra Costa CoC prioritizes the preservation of existing permanent housing to maintain critical supportive housing inventory and prevent the loss of housing for existing program participants. Considering this, the Council on Homelessness has determined that renewal projects with a strong track record of performance, as demonstrated through their APRs and other data, may be prioritized above new projects.
  - The Review and Rank Panel will look at the following renewal project performance measures for this purpose:
    1. Score of 90% or more in Housing Stability
    2. Score of 80% or more in Utilization Rate
    3. Score of 20% or less in Unspent Grant Funds
  - The Review and Rank Panel may consider ranking scored renewal projects above new projects regardless of overall local application scores upon considering the 3 measures above, any extenuating circumstances, and/or any adverse impact to underserved populations should a project not be funded.

Scoring results are sent to applicants with a reminder of the appeals process at least 15 days before CoC Application deadline. Appeals, if any, are considered in compliance with the Appeals Process detailed in Section 9 below.



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A final ranked project list (i.e., the Priority List) is submitted to the Council for review and approval. Upon approval, the Priority List is published.

The Collaborative Applicant collects all final Project Applications and submits them to HUD, along with the CoC Application and Priority List, as part of the CoC's Consolidated Application.

### **Section 7. REALLOCATION OF FUNDS**

HUD allows CoCs to reallocate funds from non- and/or under-performing projects to higher priority community needs that also align with HUD priorities and goals. The CoC Review and Rank Panel facilitates the reallocation discussion and process, in consultation with the CoC, the Council, the Collaborative Applicant, and the CoC Program recipients and subrecipients who may be impacted. The third party facilitator may be asked to support community discussions and technical assistance around the strategic benefits or consequences of reallocation decisions. The Council must approve all final decisions about reallocation.

### **Section 8. USING ALL AVAILABLE FUNDS**

The Collaborative Applicant and third party facilitator will do everything possible to ensure that the community applies for all funds available to the CoC. Thus, if all on-time applications have been submitted and it appears that either: 1) the community is not requesting as much money as is available from HUD, 2) no bonus (or other special project as defined by HUD) projects have been submitted, or 3) there are reallocated funds available, then:

- The Collaborative Applicant and third party facilitator will communicate with the Council, CoC, and other interested parties (all homeless service and housing providers in Contra Costa County) with details about the available funding.
- The Collaborative Applicant and third party facilitator 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 communication is distributed, in compliance with CoC Program submission deadlines.

### **Section 9. APPEALS PROCESS**

All eligible applicants have the opportunity to appeal both their score and preliminary ranking prior to the ranked list being finalized and approved by the Council. The Appeals Committee will only be established if an applicant requests an appeal.

#### **A. THE APPEALS COMMITTEE**

The Appeals Committee will be comprised of four impartial members of the Council: three voting members and one non-voting member. The three voting members will not have participated in the



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original CoC Review and Rank Panel. The non-voting member must have been a member of the original CoC Review and Rank Panel.

No member of the Appeals Committee may have a conflict of interest with any of the agencies applying for CoC Program funding. All members of the Appeals Committee must sign conflict of interest and confidentiality statements. If there are insufficient Council members who qualify for the appeals committee, a member of the CoC may be designated by the Council to participate in the Appeals Committee.

### B. ELIGIBLE APPEALS

An applicant may be eligible to appeal the decision of the CoC Review and Rank Panel if their project application:

- Is rejected from inclusion as part of the CoC Consolidated Application submission, or
- Receives decreased funding (e.g., through reallocation).

To appeal, the applicant must demonstrate that:

- Their score is not reflective of the application information provided, or
- There was bias or unfairness in the process that warrants the appeal.

All appeals must be based on information submitted by the applicant agency by the application due date. No new or late information will be considered. The omission of information (inadvertently or otherwise) from a project application is not grounds for an appeal.

### C. SUBMITTING AN APPEAL

Any and all appeals must be received in writing with supporting documentation within three business days following the notification of ranking to projects.

The notice of appeal must include a written statement specifying in detail the grounds asserted for the appeal. The statement must be signed by an individual authorized to represent the agency (i.e., Executive Director) and submitted to the Collaborative Applicant or the third party facilitator. The notice of appeal is limited to two single-sided, single-spaced pages in 12-point font. The notice of appeal must include a copy of the project application in question and all accompanying materials submitted to the CoC Review and Rank Panel.

### D. THE APPEALS PROCESS

The Appeals Committee will meet with a representative(s) of the agency/collaborative making the notice of appeal to discuss the appeal. A face-to-face meeting is preferred, but if time conflicts require it, the meeting can occur by conference telephone.



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All appeals submitted in compliance with Section 9.B will be read, reviewed and evaluated by the Appeals Committee. The role of the Appeals Committee is to read and review only those areas of the application that are being appealed.

The Appeals Committee will then meet to deliberate. All project applicants will be invited to attend any appeal and each applicant may make a 10-minute statement regarding the appeal.

The Appeals Committee will review the rankings made by the CoC Review and Rank Panel only on the basis of the submitted project application, the two-page appeal, any statements made to the Appeals Committee during the appeals process, and the materials used by the CoC Review and Rank Panel. No new information can be submitted by the applicant or reviewed by the Appeals Committee.

The decision of the Appeals Committee must be supported by a simple majority vote of voting members.

The appealing agency will receive, in writing, the decision of the Appeals Committee within two business days of the Appeals Committee Meeting. The decision of the Appeals Committee will be final.

### **Section 10. FINAL PRIORITIZED LIST OF APPLICATIONS**

The Council must approve the final ranked list of all Project Applicant proposals. Any Council members with a conflict of interest must recuse himself/herself from all related discussions and abstain from the vote approving the priority list. The Collaborative Applicant will then submit this prioritized list to HUD by the CoC Program Competition deadline as part of the Consolidated Application. Conditional award funding is typically based upon the prioritized list of Project Applicants that are submitted; however, HUD determines actual awards and funding amounts.