

Heading Home Ramsey Review, Scoring, and Ranking Policy & Procedures for the HUD CoC Program

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This policy and procedure document describes the steps taken by Ramsey County Housing Stability Department (HSD) staff, as collaborative applicant for the Heading Home Ramsey Continuum of Care (HHR CoC), to facilitate a Ranking Committee process for the scoring and ranking of projects for the HUD CoC Program competitive application.

This policy is intended to describe the general timeline of the annual HUD CoC Program competition and detail the constitution, work, and process of the Ranking Committee.

1. Ranking Committee Formation

1.a. Committee Eligibility Subject to Conflict-of-Interest Policy

The Ranking Committee is defined by Article IV, Section 3 of the Heading Home Ramsey Charter and is subject to the CoC's Conflict of Interest policy found in Article V.

Membership on a ranking committee is open to all CoC members, subject to the approval of the Steering Committee, in keeping with the CoC's Conflict of Interest Policy in Article V and Ramsey County procurement policies.

No member of the CoC (Governing Board, Steering Committee, Work Group participant or CoC member) shall vote or make recommendations on funding decisions concerning the award of a grant or other financial benefits that:

- Directly benefits them as an individual, or an immediate family member;
- Directly benefits any organization in which they have a direct financial interest;
- Directly benefits any organization with which they are affiliated in an official capacity; or
- Directly benefits any organization from which they derive financial benefit, exclusive of stipends.

To that end, neither Governing Board nor Steering Committee members whose organizations are currently funded by or have applied for funding through the HUD CoC Program, may take part in Ranking Committee activities to review, score, or rank project applications. Persons with lived experience of homelessness who receive services from an organization that may directly benefit from a funding decision may vote or make recommendations on funding decisions.

Members of the CoC will disclose potential conflicts of interest that they may have regarding any matters that come before the Heading Home Ramsey CoC in full session, Governing Board, Steering Committee, or other meetings.

All Ranking Committee members will be provided the Ramsey County Procurement Conflict of Interest Policy and will complete the Ramsey County Procurement Conflict of Interest Certification Form prior to evaluating a procurement or contracting process.

1.b. Committee Scheduling and Responsibilities

The committee shall be convened prior to the expected release of the HUD CoC Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) application to discuss the ranking tool for the upcoming application. Committee members will be recruited by HSD Staff with priority given to active members of the CoC's standing Performance & Ranking Committee and active members of the Governing Board, Steering Committee, and Work Groups. Persons with lived experience of homelessness, people with disabilities, and people who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) will be actively sought by HSD to serve on the ranking committee.

The HUD CoC Program Ranking Committee is responsible for:

- Developing the Ranking and Scoring criteria and tool
- Submitting these documents to the Governing Board for review and approval each year
- Scoring and Ranking project applications as outlined in Section 4.

This application-specific Ranking committee is dissolved following the ranking notification to CoC Program applicants. The standing Performance & Ranking Committee continues to meet throughout the year for system performance review purposes.

2. Ranking Tool Process and Policies

2.a. Pre-Application Process

Prior to the expected release of the HUD CoC Program NOFO application:

1. The standing Performance & Ranking Committee will discuss and inform local application priorities for the upcoming application cycle, such as housing project types (e.g. PSH or RRH) or populations to be served (e.g. Families, Youth, or DV).
2. HSD will publish a pre-application survey and share it across all CoC communications channels. This announcement will include any local application priorities for the coming cycle.

All providers intending to apply for Renewal, Expansion, or New projects will be required to submit responses to this pre-application survey for each project. Projects that do not submit responses by the published deadline will not be scored or ranked and will not be considered in the competitive application. Late submissions may be accepted at the discretion of the CoC Coordinator.

2.b. Development and Approval of Ranking Criteria and Scoring Tool

Renewal and Expansion projects will be reviewed, scored, and ranked along five general performance dimensions – each of which includes multiple component measures. Each measure is in turn based on one or more defined data elements drawn from a specific data source, including individual project applications, annual progress reports (APRs), HMIS, and HUD reports. Performance measures should consider both historical program performance (for Renewal projects) and the extent to which the project's design aligns with local priorities.

In addition to measures differing for New vs. Renewal/Expansion projects, they will also differ for:

- DV projects vs. non-DV Projects
- Projects serving different household types (Single Adults, Families, or Youth)
- Project types (PSH, RRH, or TH)

For each individual measure, the Scoring Tool also defines four ranges of performance – Low, Medium, High, and Maximum – and identifies for each a set number of points awarded to programs whose outcomes fall within that range.

The intent is for each individual measure within the tool to be an objective metric with a defined method of calculation corresponding to one or more data elements from specific reports. This approach reduces variability in assessment between reviewers so that independent reviewers (including projects engaging in self-assessment outside of the NOFO ranking process) using the same, defined data sources can be expected to arrive at similar values and point scores for a project on any given measure.

The local application for CoC providers will include desired scoring measures defined by the community in addition to measures within the application published by HUD. The overall score of a project is the sum of the points it receives in each of the component performance measures across the four general performance dimensions. This score is included in the scoring sheets for each project applicant.

2.c. Eligibility for Ranking

To be eligible for ranking, all applicants and projects (Renewal, Expansion, and New) must meet all HUD eligibility criteria (threshold criteria) as outlined in the NOFO and comply with local CoC competition requirements as described in project application forms. Threshold requirements will be checked first for all project applicants. Projects that do not meet all threshold requirements will not be scored or ranked.

Note: Committee members may request clarifications or additional information on threshold requirements from applicants if information is not clear enough to score the project. However, the committee must apply the same standard to all applications in seeking clarification. Projects that meet the eligibility criteria are scored by CoC Ranking Committee based on the Ranking Criteria and Scoring tool approved by the Governing Board.

2.d. Scoring Tool Development and Approval for Renewal and Expansion Projects

The scoring tool for the NOFO competition will be developed by HSD staff, in consultation with the Ranking Committee, and approved by the Heading Home Ramsey Governing Board prior to the ranking of applications. The scoring tool will be revised to adhere to identified priority populations and project types as approved by the Governing Board. The scoring tool is comprised of the following dimensions:

Service Model

The scoring tool's first dimension captures characteristics of a project's Service Model and consists of component measures including:

- Low Barrier Program Eligibility - whether projects accept or screen out applicants based on certain characteristics (aligns with HUD NOFO Policy Priorities)
- Housing First - the extent to which project adopt a Housing First approach (aligns with HUD NOFO Policy Priorities)

Grant Administrative Performance

Grant Administrative Performance, the second of the scoring tool's dimensions, consists of component measures including:

- Bed Utilization - the extent to which a project's beds inventory is occupied over the course of a given year
- Funding Management: Unspent Funds - the percentage of a project's previous grant which was spent
- Additional Resource Utilization - the extent to which a project's leverages additional housing and health resources for clients
- CoC Participation – the extent to which a project participates in the local CoCs Full Membership meetings
- HMIS Data Quality - the percentage of missing data elements within the project's HMIS client records

System Level Performance

The scoring tool's third dimension, Performance Measures, contains System Performance Measure components that may differ or not apply depending on project category (Renewal, Expansion, and New) and type (e.g. PSH, RRH, TH). The components within Performance Measures that apply to all programs include:

- Returns to Homelessness (12 months) – What percentage of clients returned to homelessness within 12 months of exit to permanent housing (aligns with HUD System Performance Measures 2a and 2b)
- Increase Overall Income - the percent of clients who increased income from all sources, including employment, when compared to total income at project entry (aligns with HUD System Performance Measures 4.1- 4.6)

Other Performance Measure components applying to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), Rapid Rehousing (RRH) or Transitional Housing (TH) have variable criteria based on the type of program, including:

- Average length of time from project entry to housing move-in
- Exits to Permanent Housing
- Earned Income

- Maintain or Increase Earned Income
- Maintain or Increase Non-Employment Income

Criteria Specific to Local Priorities and Populations

The scoring tool's fourth dimension, Criteria Specific to Local Priorities, is flexible and may be altered based on the priority populations or project types determined by the Ranking Committee and Governing Board.

Equity Measures

The scoring tool's fifth dimension, Equity Measures, contains components pertaining to equity for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQIA+ populations as well as those who have lived experience of homelessness, such as:

- Equal Access – Score is based on whether an organization complies with all items listed on the Equal Access Checklist
- Equity – Staff Composition – What percentage of the organization's staff identify as BIPOC and/or as LGBTQ+ and/or have experienced homelessness
- Equity – Board/Leadership Composition - What percentage of the organization's board, directors, and managers staff identify as BIPOC and/or as LGBTQ+ and/or have experienced homelessness
- Implementation – Program has identified necessary programmatic changes to ensure equity and is implementing said changes

2.e. Scoring Tool Development and Approval for New Projects

In addition to scoring and ranking Renewal and Expansion projects, the Ranking Committee will also evaluate, score, and rank eligible New project proposals as part of the CoC Program Competition.

Scoring Tool Description

As detailed in the New Project application released by the CoC, New project proposals must meet the following minimum threshold requirements to be considered for funding:

- Project applicants must be a nonprofit organization, state or local government, public housing agency, or instrumentality of a state or local government, without limitation or exclusion
- The population targeted by the project meets current HUD and CoC requirements
- The service model adopted by the project meets current HUD and CoC requirements
- New project pre-applications are submitted to the CoC Coordinator on or before the deadline
- Projects have both a plan in place, and the capacity to participate fully in HMIS and the CoC's Coordinated Entry System
- Applicant organizations have a mission/purpose statement, bylaws to govern operations, an active governing board that includes at least one member who is homeless or formerly

homeless (or has a formal plan to recruit such a member), clear policies and procedures to address potential conflicts of interest of board members, and possesses adequate levels of, and expertise in, staffing

- Applicants provide complete financial information which suggests the project is likely to be viable
- Applications include the most recent audited financial and year-to-date financial and management letter, and this letter contains no significant adverse disclosures

Project applications meeting these requirements will then be evaluated and scored by the CoC Scoring Committee using the New Project Evaluation and Scoring Tool which considers a project's application on dimensions including the following :

- Alignment with HUD Priorities, including Housing First principles, activities to advance equity, and strategies related to implementation of evidence-based practices and fully utilizing HMIS
- Project Alignment to Filling Gaps in Heading Home Ramsey's Homeless Response System, including alignment to prioritized project component, target population and service model
- Commitment to Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, including project strategies to meet the cultural needs of the people they serve (including culturally specific services and partnerships with culturally specific organizations) and the extent to which organizational policies and training offerings reflect an agenda for promoting anti-racism practices
- Performance Plans, including where the project has articulated plans for successfully achieving performance measures including: increasing exits to permanent destinations, decreasing participant's length of time homeless (rapid connection to housing move-ins), reducing the rate at which people return to homelessness, and increasing income (including earned income, other income, and total income)
- Innovation and Effectiveness, including whether the project employs research-based and/or evidence-based practices and has demonstrated experience in using such practices to inform decision-making and service provision
- Funding Leverage, including the extent to which the project leverages outside funding and the percent of leveraged funding currently in place
- Applicant Experience for Proposed Activities, including whether the project applicant or partners have past experience providing housing services, have past experience providing housing services to the population targeted by the proposed project, and have demonstrated objective outcomes of past success in this service provision
- Project Readiness, including the feasibility that the proposed project will be up and running in the necessary timeline

3. Reallocation Policy

3.a. Reallocation Abilities

HUD expects CoCs to reallocate funds from non-and/or under-performing projects to projects addressing higher priority community needs that align with HUD priorities and goals. Reallocation involves using funds in whole or in part from existing eligible Renewal projects to create one or more New or Expansion projects. 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.

The Ranking Committee will use scoring criteria and selection priorities to determine the extent to which each project is still necessary and addresses 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.

Renewal projects may also voluntarily reallocate part or all of their funding. Under-performing projects are encouraged to reallocate unused funds, and potential applicants are encouraged to apply for new projects through reallocation.

3.b. Reallocation Eligibility and Consideration

Only eligible Renewal projects that have previously been renewed for the same applicant organization through the CoC Program will be considered for reallocation.

When considering reallocation, the Ranking Committee will:

1. Consider unspent funds and the ability to reduce grants without reducing service or housing levels. Any project that is underspent by 20% or more for 2 consecutive operating years will have the unspent amount from the most recent operating year automatically recommended for reallocation.
2. Consider history of reallocation (e.g., if a grant was reduced one year, this will not be apparent in spending the following year).
3. Consider the project's performance:
 - a. Projects that receive 60% or fewer points available in the CoC Program local competition will be considered for reallocation.
 - b. If the project continues to underperform and cannot meet stated objectives and goals, then that project will be recommended for reallocation in the next HUD CoC NOFO process.
4. Consider the project's ability to meet financial management standards.
 - a. The CoC will work with grantees that have had HUD Monitoring findings that call into question the project's ability to meet financial management standards. The CoC will assess the project and set up goals and objectives to bring an underperforming project up to standards and will provide technical assistance to address the findings.
 - b. If the project cannot meet the stated objectives and goals, or cannot address HUD findings, then that project will be recommended for reallocation in the next HUD CoC NOFO process.
5. Consider alternative funding sources available to support projects at risk of not being funded.
6. Consider impact on system performance and the CoC's Consolidated Application score.
7. Consider impact on community needs.

The impact of this policy is that high-scoring projects may be reallocated if these considerations warrant that decision.

4. Scoring and Ranking Procedure

4.a. Ranking Committee Scoring Process

The Ranking Committee members will be assigned project applications and documentation to review for completeness and consistency. The Ranking Committee uses the Scoring Tool as the basis for scoring projects. HSD staff will complete scoring for all objective measures informed directly by HMIS and other data sources. Ranking Committee members will score non-objective application measures. The average of all committee members scores, combined with objective scores, will determine the project's overall score. All scores will be converted to a standard 100-point scale.

4.b. Ranking of Housing Projects (PSH, RRH, TH)

HUD Requires CoCs to rank all projects that are submitted for the HUD CoC Program Competition that meet threshold criteria except for the CoC Planning Grant, which HUD does not require be ranked.

Scoring informs but does not solely dictate the final ranking decisions. The Ranking Committee will initially rank all projects using the scoring tool, based on their overall scores. Projects are ranked in descending order, with the highest scores at the top and the lowest scores at the bottom.

If there is a tie between two projects, a ½ point tiebreaker score will be used. The tiebreaker score will be based on the percentage of referrals each provider received and successfully placed from the CoC's Coordinated Entry priority lists in the last year as a measure of the provider's engagement with the CoC. The project with the lower score on this measure will be placed one rank lower than the other.

If there is a tie between more than two projects, the ½ point engagement tiebreaker will be applied as described above, followed by a tiebreaker based on the percentage of performance points awarded on the ranking tool. The project that received the highest percentage of performance points will be placed highest of the tied projects, followed by the next highest, and following.

4.c. Placement of NOFO Projects in Tiers

HUD requires that Continuums of Care designate projects into either Tier One or Tier Two based on their ranking. Each year, with the publication of the HUD CoC NOFO, HUD establishes the percentage of a Continuum's Annual Renewal Demand (ARD) that must be ranked in Tier One and the percentage that must be ranked in Tier Two.

Following the submission of project applications by the local competition deadline, projects will receive an initial ranking as follows:

1. Ranking of Renewal Housing Projects:

The Ranking Committee will use the scoring tool described in 2c to calculate Renewal project scores, produce a preliminary ranking of all Renewal projects, and preliminarily place them in Tier One.

2. Ranking of Renewal Non-Housing Projects

After housing projects are ranked, renewal projects for HMIS and SSO-Coordinated Entry are always placed in Tier One to ensure a functioning Coordinated Entry System and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HMIS and Coordinated Entry renewal projects' ARD will be ranked in the top 1/3 of all projects.

3. Ranking of Expansion & New Projects

The Ranking Committee will use the scoring tool described in 2c to calculate Expansion project scores, and the New Project scoring tool described in 2d to calculate New project scores, produce a preliminary project ranking of all Expansion & New projects, and preliminarily place them in Tier Two.

4. Ranking of Bonus Projects

If bonus grant funds are available and one or more projects are included in ranking designated for bonus funds, such projects will be preliminarily placed at the bottom of Tier Two.

Renewal projects without a complete APR due to changing providers or extenuating circumstances will not be scored and will be placed in Tier One.

4.d. Adjustments to Project Ranking

After reviewing the full ranking and breakdown by tier, the Ranking Committee may recommend adjustments to the ranking as follows:

- The Ranking Committee may place Expansion or New housing projects with an overall score above 80 in Tier One.
- The Ranking Committee may place projects with an overall score above 80 that would otherwise be designated for bonus funds in Tier One.
- The Ranking Committee may adjust ranking for a project straddling Tier One and Tier Two if that project would not likely be feasible if only the Tier One portion were funded. Projects whose ranking may change may be consulted.

The Ranking Committee will make such adjustments based on the overall strength of project applications within the context of the CoC's local priorities, and such adjustments will be applied uniformly across applicable projects to the extent feasible. Rationale for any adjustments made will be included in the ranking tool, in notification to applicants, and in the final project Priority List posted for CoC review.

The Ranking Committee will recommend the final project Priority List for approval by the Heading Home Ramsey Governing Board prior to submission of the full application to HUD. At this point, projects not ranked or fully funded in the final project Priority List may appeal the decision to the CoC following the procedure outlined in the Appeals Policy.

4.e. Scoring and Ranking Notice

- I. The Ranking Committee (via the CoC Coordinator) will provide all project applicants preliminary notice of project acceptance or rejection; any funding changes due to reallocation; score, rank, Tier One/Tier Two status; and source of funds expected for the project (i.e. reallocated funds, CoC Bonus, or DV Bonus).
- II. Information on the Appeals process will also be provided, and a deadline will be set for appeal submissions.
- III. Renewal projects with a final score below 60 will be required to participate in Technical Assistance provided by HSD in the 6 months following the CoC Program award announcement, in addition to any CoC monitoring.

Approved by the Heading Home Ramsey Governing Board on July 18, 2024.