

**Southern Nevada Homelessness Continuum of Care
Scoring and Ranking Policies and Procedures
Revised April 2017**

Objective of this Guide

This guide serves as a tool for nonprofit agencies that wish to apply for HUD funding under the federal Continuum of Care (CoC) and outlines policies and procedures for the application, scoring, and ranking, striving to provide a consistent and transparent process for application reviews.

This guide provides information on how the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition Housing Act (HEARTH) impacts local projects that address homelessness in Clark County. Understanding the importance of creating data-driven projects that align with HUD priorities and a consolidated community plan is an important first step in creating a successful application for funding. The Southern Nevada Homelessness Continuum of Care (SNH CoC) Board's Evaluation Working Group (EWG) and its subgroups follow the process outlined in this guide to evaluate projects submitted through the local Project Application process.

Part I: Background and Overview

The Continuum of Care

In 2009, the HEARTH Act codified into law the CoC planning process, which requires a board consisting of geographically based organizations that represent the interests of and provide services for the homeless. The overall CoC goal is to achieve greater coordination in responding to the needs of the homeless population and to adhere to a unified approach in measuring progress. The CoC engages in data collection to measure performance of homeless services; this is critical in developing priorities, which in turn drives HUD's investments in the local community.

The SNH CoC Board carries out CoC required duties as detailed in the HEARTH Act. These duties include community-wide planning for the geographic area, ensuring the strategic use of resources, reviewing and evaluating CoC applications, and scoring and ranking local Project Applications for inclusion in the Consolidated Application.

Clark County's Department of Social Service serves as the Collaborative Applicant for the CoC and applies for funding on behalf of the local Continuum of Care. The SNH CoC Planning Working Group creates a planning budget for the Collaborative Applicant, which is not ranked as an application.

The Role of the Evaluation Working Group and the Scoring and Ranking Team

The EWG is one of five main working groups of the SNH CoC Board. The EWG consists of CoC Board members, some of whom are also applicants for CoC funding. Meanwhile, one of the roles of the EWG is to facilitate the scoring and ranking of local Project Applications for the CoC Consolidated Application. The EWG does the work of scoring through a subgroup, the Scoring and Ranking Team. Following HUD regulations and requirements from the current Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), the Scoring and Ranking Team makes recommendations for local Project Applications to include in the Consolidated Application.

In order to ensure fairness in the scoring and ranking process, the EWG has adopted the following process to recruit knowledgeable and neutral members for the Scoring and Ranking Team and will focus recruitment on Board members from organizations/agencies that generally are not applicants for CoC funds.

Recruiting the Scoring and Ranking Team

The EWG will focus recruitment for the Scoring and Ranking Team on individuals from organizations and agencies that are members of the CoC, but that generally do not apply for CoC funds. Developing and sustaining a broad pool of potential Scoring and Ranking Team members is an important part of the recruitment process, so the EWG should seek strategies for ensuring a sufficient number of CoC members who are interested in homeless issues, but do not apply for funding. For example, municipalities that have community engagement committee representatives who are a good fit for the Scoring and Ranking Team might ask those individuals to apply to join the CoC through the CoC member application process, which is outlined in the CoC Governance Structure found at: <http://helphome.org/southern-nevada-homelessness-continuum-of-care-governance-structure-snh-coc/>.

From members of the CoC or their alternates, the EWG will recruit a Scoring and Ranking Team of up to 15 individuals. Up to 12 of the members will serve as the main Scoring and Ranking Team, and a remaining 3 members will be asked to serve as an Appeals Committee and will not participate in the initial scoring and ranking process, but will be active only in the event of appeals. (See details about Appeals Committee under section titled *Appeals to Ranking Decisions*.) Using the criteria below, the EWG will recruit individuals who are:

- Knowledgeable about homelessness and housing in the community and who are broadly representative of the relevant sectors, subpopulations, and geographic areas;
- Willing to review applications with the best interest of homeless individuals in mind;
- Not staff or board members of agencies that are applying for funding in the current grant cycle;
- Committed to neutrality— meaning members shall report actual or perceived conflicts of interest and that no member shall vote upon or discuss any matter which shall have a direct financial bearing on the organization(s) the member represents;
- Familiar with current housing and homeless needs within the Southern Nevada Homelessness Continuum of Care;
- Willing to sign a commitment to complete the following activities, which typically take place during the period of June-July: attending a training on application review and the Scoring and Ranking process; reviewing 30-40 applications; attending presentations by applicants (if applicable); participating in scoring and ranking discussions and process.

Prior to the annual scoring and ranking process, the EWG will provide a training overview to the Scoring and Ranking Team regarding the team's role, scoring tools, and resources for the ranking process. EWG Scoring and Ranking Team members will sign a Conflict of Interest Agreement and a Confidentiality Agreement prior to reviewing, ranking and scoring applications.

Conflicts of Interest

The SNH CoC Board recognizes that members represent interests of organizations that ultimately receive benefits from the CoC program. To ensure that individuals and organizations that best serve the needs of the community will not be denied funds because of their active participation on the SNH CoC Board, and to confirm that members serve the needs of the community and not the interests of any organization or entity, conflicts of interest will be clearly stated.

The following policies and procedures are based on the CoC Board policies and apply for conflicts of interest with the EWG Scoring and Ranking process:

1. All EWG Scoring and Ranking Team members must sign a Conflict of Interest Agreement.
2. No member shall vote upon or participate in the discussion of any matter, which shall have direct financial bearing on the organizations the member represents. Conflict of interest and even the appearance of a conflict of interest must be avoided. Members shall report a conflict of interest and recuse themselves from voting on issues where a conflict of interest is apparent or identified.
3. As it relates to business and action items, any SNH CoC Board member has an actual or perceived conflict of interest when the member's actions result, or appear to result, in personal, organizational, or professional gain. An actual or perceived conflict of interest occurs when:
 - a. The member is a salaried employee of any organization that receives, or is eligible to receive, CoC funds;
 - b. The member serves on the Board of Directors or as a Trustee of any organization that receives, or is eligible to receive, CoC funds; and/or
 - c. The member has a relative or close personal relationship with a person who is employed, or serves on the Board at any organization that receives, or is eligible to receive, CoC funds.
4. SNH CoC Board members who receive goods and services as a client of an organization that receives, or is eligible to receive, CoC funds is not deemed to have a direct conflict of interest unless the member may receive differential treatment as a result of their position on the SNH CoC Board.

Recusal Procedures

Pursuant to policies around conflicts of interest, any EWG member may recuse himself/herself from speaking or voting. Recusal will occur prior to the beginning of the agenda item, and the member will put on the record all reasons that make it inappropriate for him/her to participate on the item. The member should only recuse himself/herself when there is a conflict of interest and/or he or she cannot participate in an impartial manner.

Part II: CoC Local Applications for the Collaborative Grant

Application Requirements and Process

1. The community is mandated to follow HUD regulations as they pertain to the CoC NOFA; therefore, applicants must be aware of and adhere to all current NOFA requirements.

Timelines, revisions, and changes may occur suddenly, and the local CoC will communicate with community stakeholders through e-mail in order to provide clear and concise information regarding issues pertaining to the grant process. ***The CoC is not responsible for late NOFA announcements, short timelines, or additional requests for information from HUD.***

2. Each year, the CoC EWG develops a local HUD CoC Project Application, which is typically released prior to the release of the NOFA. The local CoC Project Application is mandatory for

anyone who wishes to submit a project for the current year's Southern Nevada Consolidated Application.

3. Applicants must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency or governmental entity working to address homelessness in Southern Nevada.
4. Project applicants are required to have an active Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.
5. Project applicants must have an active registration in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR)/System for Award Management (SAM) to apply for funding.
6. Potential applicants are required to attend at least one local application technical assistance training. The CoC will publicize dates for the technical assistance training and will post information at <http://helphopehome.org>.
7. Local Project Applications are submitted online, currently through ZoomGrants. The application requires information related to: project type, scope and description; budget data; connection to consolidated CoC planning; and other pertinent information.
8. Applications for HMIS are submitted and ranked separately from local Project Applications, as the SNH CoC strives to implement system-wide HMIS data collection per HUD requirements and because HMIS participation is required for all projects.
9. Submission of a local Project Application does not guarantee inclusion in the HUD Consolidated Application competition.
10. Opportunities and access to local Project Applications for funding through the CoC can be found at <http://helphopehome.org/funding-opportunities/>. This site will contain more information including funding timelines and application dates.

Application Evaluation Process

The SNH CoC Board must approve any changes to the review and evaluation process or criteria prior to the start of the application cycle.

Local Project Applications submitted are reviewed and evaluated according to the following steps and criteria.

Threshold Criteria

All local Project Applications must meet the following minimum requirements:

1. The project is consistent with the Southern Nevada Regional Plan to End Homelessness, which integrates the "Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness" and the HEARTH Act of 2009. More information on this plan can be found at <http://helphopehome.org/the-plan/>.
2. The applicant has not been debarred or suspended from federal funding opportunities based on the federal System for Award Management (SAM).
3. The project complies with the requirements of the CoC Interim Rule, including, but not limited to:
 - a. The project accepts (or will accept) referrals from the coordinated entry system.

- b. The project participates (or will participate) in the Clark County HMIS.
4. Application and requested materials were received by the deadline.

Applications that do not meet threshold criteria will not be considered for review.

Presentations

The EWG Scoring and Ranking Team will determine if oral presentations are to be heard for the current application process. When oral presentations are required, each agency will receive written notification of the day, time, and location of the presentations. Applicants will be asked not to include clients or handouts in their presentations. The presentations are open to the public, and all agencies are encouraged to attend.

If applicable, EWG Scoring and Ranking Team members will provide each applicant with a list of questions or comments prior to presentations. Audience members are not to interject comments into the Scoring and Ranking Process. If the EWG Scoring and Ranking Team has a question to pose to an agency, they will seek permission from the group before doing so.

Overview of the Scoring and Ranking Process

Each year, the EWG develops the application and will ensure that the criteria for scoring and ranking appears in the grant application instructions. Project Applications are evaluated based on local priorities, and the SNH CoC has the responsibility for planning, determining these local priorities, and measuring collective impact. Under the HEARTH Act, performance measures are used to evaluate the effectiveness of projects and determine their ranking priority. Projects that best align with HUD priorities and local community needs are ranked for inclusion in the Consolidated Application.

The EWG Scoring and Ranking Team members will use the following criteria to direct conversation around the community's collaborative application and local priorities.

1. Guidance provided by HUD, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the National Alliance to End Homelessness;
2. Project's alignment with HUD's policies and procedures as determined by desk audits and onsite monitoring;
3. Project's alignment with HUD's administrative goals as articulated in *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*;
4. Alignment with the *Help Hope Home: Southern Nevada Regional Plan to End Homelessness*.
5. Community gaps analyses performed by the CoC that identify key unmet needs in the housing and services system and that consider the overall functioning of the system and identify strategies to improve effectiveness.

Review and Scoring of Local Applications

The EWG Scoring and Ranking Team ranks projects based on performance data as dictated by HUD requirements. Each year, the EWG updates a *Local CoC Application Reviewer's Guide*, which can be found at www.helphopehome.org/funding-opportunities under the heading Application Resources. The Scoring and Ranking Team adheres to the scoring system that is outlined in the *Reviewer's Guide*.

The *Reviewer's Guide* provides an overview of application questions, points each question can receive in the scoring process, and information that should appear in the answer. The objective of the *Reviewer's*

Guide is to provide a consistent approach to determining the components, quality, and effectiveness of the program within the context of the objectives and priorities of CoC Planning Processes.

Using a scorecard developed by the EWG, the Scoring and Ranking Team members review each local Project Application. The scorecard is used to help determine an overall score for each application, which in turn helps determine which applications move forward. The scorecard also helps identify projects that may be defunded due to substandard performance. A sample scorecard can be viewed at <http://helphome.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Blank-Local-Grant-Application-Scorecard-2016-wEdits.xlsx>.

Ranking Process

After members of EWG Scoring and Ranking Team have reviewed all relevant information from each local Project Application, evaluated the merits of each project, heard presentations (if applicable), and scored applications, the applications are ranked for inclusion in the collaborative application. During the ranking process, the EWG Scoring and Ranking Team will evaluate all projects in accordance with the NOFA guidelines. They will also consider information from the application, from monitoring scores, and from presentations.

Projects will be ranked by priority and will be listed in the collaborative application in order of priority. The following methodology is used for the ranking process.

1. Scorecard results which consist of:
 - a. Local application scores, as outlined in the *Reviewer's Guide*;
 - b. Monitoring scores, including performance measures based on HMIS data.
2. Renewal projects with outcomes (12 months or more of data available)
 - a. Renewal projects will be ranked based on the average score from their applications and monitoring results that are based on data.
 - b. Examples of monitoring data includes recidivism rates, rates of spending and utilization, and compliance with HUD monitoring guidelines.
3. Renewal projects without outcomes (less than 12 months of data available)
 - a. If a provider (applicant) has other CoC funded projects, then the average performance monitoring score for any existing projects that have 12 months of available data should be applied to the renewal project that does not yet have outcomes.
 - b. If a provider (applicant) does not have any existing CoC funded programs with 12 months of data available, then the project will be ranked based on the application score.
4. New projects
 - a. If a provider (applicant) has other CoC funded projects with 12 months of available data, then the average performance monitoring score for existing projects should be applied to the new project.
 - b. If a provider does not have any existing CoC funded programs with 12 months of available data, then the project will be ranked based on the application score.

Monitoring information provides the EWG Scoring and Ranking Team with valuable information it can use while ranking applications/projects. Monitoring practices include onsite monitoring, desk audits, and

HMIS reviews. In determining consistency of monitoring, the EWG Scoring and Ranking Team works with the Monitoring Working Group (MWG) to determine that the following occurred for every CoC funded organization that is applying for the current year's funding:

1. Regular desk monitoring, or
2. Onsite monitoring, according to the MWG's established schedule for the year, or
3. Ten percent or a minimum of three files were reviewed during each onsite monitoring event.

If the EWG Scoring and Ranking Team and the MWG determine that any aspect of the monitoring has not been consistent among the applicants, then that aspect of the monitoring information will be excluded from the ranking process. For example, if all applicants experienced consistent desk monitoring, but not consistent onsite monitoring, only desk monitoring will be used toward scoring. If all applicants experienced consistent desk and site visit monitoring, both will be used.

The next steps include putting the funding recommendations in ranking order in accordance with HUD's two-tier system.

1. HUD's two-tier approach of ranking is designed to indicate the priority of funding for projects. As described above, the projects' monitoring and application scores are a factor in determining which are ranked in Tier 1 or Tier 2.
 - a. Tier 1: HUD will select new and renewal local Project Applications to fund as a percentage of the CoC's Annual Renewal Demand as determined by HUD in the NOFA.
 - b. Tier 2: The CoC Application score and the Project Application scores will determine which projects in Tier 2 will be selected for award, with an amount based on the remaining percentage of funding as determined by HUD in the current year's NOFA.
2. Projects ranked in Tier 1 will include the following:
 - a. HMIS
 - b. Projects that integrate HUD models. For example:
 - i. Safe Haven projects that operate within the scope of HUD's definitions and regulations established for Safe Havens, which is a form of supportive housing that serves hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who come primarily from the streets and have been unable or unwilling to participate in housing or supportive services. Safe Havens are a HUD-designated program for which the agency continues to support existing projects but does not provide funding for new projects. If a Safe Haven project is de-funded locally, funding cannot be renewed. Therefore, the SNH CoC prioritizes Safe Haven projects so that these services will continue to be offered in the community and needed funding will not be lost.
 - ii. Projects that implement a Housing First approach as defined by HUD, which is an approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and

barriers to entry.

3. The EWG Scoring and Ranking Team may deviate from the scores and adjust a project's ranking for the following reasons:
 - a. Projects that have poor outcomes due to serving the most vulnerable, hard-to-serve populations (ex.: chronically disabled, mentally ill, etc.), which places the project at risk of being placed into Tier 2.
 - b. Projects that fill a critical service gap and/or community need that might otherwise be placed in Tier 2.
4. If a situation arises where two projects earn the same score, the following criteria will apply:
 - a. First Tie-Breaker: The project's monitoring score. The mode of monitoring must be the same, as described in the section of this document on monitoring.
 - b. Second Tie-Breaker: The project's local application score.
 - c. Third Tie-Breaker: The project's score on the SNH CoC's performance monitoring tool.

Reallocation Process

HUD expects CoCs to seek continual improvement in quality of projects and the overall performance of the CoC in terms of improving community outcomes and reducing homelessness. HUD mandates that CoCs use cost, performance and outcome data to improve how resources are used to end homelessness, and HUD prioritizes funding for CoCs that have demonstrated the ability to reallocate resources to higher performing projects. Through the reallocation process, HUD allows the CoC to shift funds to better address local needs and priorities and improve overall performance without decreasing the CoC's Annual Renewal Demand.

The Scoring and Ranking Team will use objective, performance-based criteria that are approved as part of the regular scoring process to determine the extent to which projects address HUD policy priorities. During the ranking process, the EWG Scoring and Ranking Team may reallocate funds from existing renewal projects to new projects if reallocating resources will better help end homelessness.

Reallocation may happen for several reasons:

1. Low-performing projects (as determined by the application and monitoring scores) may be defunded and these funds reallocated to new projects.
2. Significant history of under-spending of CoC funds by a provider may result in having funds reduced or completely reallocated to new projects. This is to ensure that the community is maximizing the use of existing funds. The CoC will notify applicants at risk of under-spending in advance of reallocation of funds.
3. Providers may choose not to apply for renewal funding, and these funds will be reallocated to new projects.

Funds from renewal projects that are not funded in whole or in part will be reallocated to new project(s), provided that the new project(s) meets eligibility and quality thresholds established by HUD in the current

NOFA. Any renewal projects that are partially or fully defunded may participate in the local appeals process as outlined in the appeals section of this document.

Notification of Funding Recommendations

The Collaborative Applicant will notify local applicants of funding recommendations in writing within two business days of the closing of the scoring and ranking process. The overall ranking results will be posted on <http://www.helphopehome.org>.

Debriefing sessions will be held with an applicant agency at their request, which must be submitted in writing to helphopehome@clarkcountynv.gov. The debriefing shall be held within two weeks of the request and will be done by members of the Scoring and Ranking Team as assigned by the EWG.

Appeals to Ranking Decisions

All eligible applicants have the opportunity to appeal both their score and their preliminary ranking prior to the SNH CoC Board's final approval of the priority funding list. A project applicant may appeal a decision if the application received less funding than applied for, or if the agency can show, with clear evidence, that the scoring and ranking process was unfair. Both new and renewal projects may participate in the appeals process. Project applicants that did not meet the threshold requirements outlined in the section of this document titled as such are not eligible to appeal.

Applicants must notify the CoC of their intent to appeal in writing by sending an email to helphopehome@clarkcountynv.gov. All appeals must be received within three (3) business days of the notification of project rankings. Every effort will be made for the appeal to be heard in a timely manner, and if needed, a special meeting will be scheduled.

All notices of appeal must be based on the information submitted by the application due date as part of the full Project Application. Omissions to the application cannot be appealed. The notice of appeal must include a written statement specifying the grounds asserted for the appeal and must be submitted by an individual authorized to represent the agency, such as the Executive Director.

The EWG will appoint an Appeals Committee of four members. Three of these individuals will have been designated as Appeals Committee members as part of the recruitment process for the Scoring and Ranking Team. The fourth member will be an Scoring and Ranking Team member who scored and ranked applications during the current application cycle. The three members who were designated as the Appeals Committee initially (and who did not participate in the scoring and ranking process) will be voting members of the Appeals Committee. The individual who participated in the scoring and ranking process will serve on the Appeals Committee in a non-voting capacity. No member of the Appeals Committee may have a conflict of interest with any of the agencies applying for the current round of funding. All members of the Appeals Committee must sign a Conflict of Interest Agreement and a Confidentiality Agreement.

The role of the Appeals Committee is to read and review only those areas of the application that are being appealed and to hold an appeal hearing. Each appeal hearing will include a set amount of time (no more than one hour) for the organization representative(s) to present a case and participate in a discussion with the Appeals Committee. The applicant is required to attend the appeal hearing in order for the appeal to be considered. Failure to appear for the hearing will result in loss of the opportunity to present their case.

After the hearing, the Appeals Committee will render a decision within two (2) business days and notify the applicant in writing if they uphold or overturn the recommendations of the Scoring and Ranking Team. If the applicant does not agree with the appeal decision, the agency may request to have an appeal heard by the full SNH CoC Board. This request must be in writing to helphopehome@clarkcountynv.gov.

The board will hear the appeal and return a decision to the applicant at the meeting during which the EWG Scoring and Ranking Team makes funding recommendations. The decision of the CoC Board is final on all appeals.

Recommendations for Approval by the SNH CoC Board

Following the scoring and ranking process, the EWG Scoring and Ranking Team members present their funding recommendations to the full CoC Board for final decisions. At this meeting, the CoC board will also hear any appeals that have been elevated from applicants and return their decision during the meeting.

The CoC Board members then vote to approve or decline the recommendations. Any CoC board member whose agency is also an applicant for the current round of funding must recuse himself or herself from discussion and voting so as not to pose a conflict of interest. Upon final voting on the recommendations, the CoC board will approve the Collaborative Applicant to move forward with submitting the Consolidated Application to HUD.