

2015 HUD Continuum of Care Program Competition –Quick Facts

Three Overarching Things to know for the 2015 CoC NOFA

1. **This is the most competitive NOFA ever.** HUD is using this NOFA to implement a strong preference for performance and effective practices that Congress originally included in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. Depending on the strength of a community's Continuum of Care and of individual projects, a high-performing community could increase its capacity by as much as 15 percent through the addition of new projects; a low-performing community, on the other hand, could lose as much as 15 percent in low-performing projects that are defunded. While it's unlikely that many communities will reach either of those extremes, this preference means that communities that do the most for homeless people will receive the most funding.
2. **Reallocation is important.** The competition will reward communities that carefully evaluate their existing programs and allocate funding accordingly. Communities that favor allocating funding to program models that are proven to achieve more progress will, as a consequence, be favored in the NOFA competition.
3. **All four *Opening Doors* time frames are important.** The NOFA awards 15 points each for the strength of a community's strategy and approach to ending homelessness for people experiencing chronic homelessness, veterans, youth, and families with children.

So what's different this year?

- **Chronic homelessness isn't the only game in town.** While the federal government originally targeted chronic homelessness first, it has in recent years identified other subpopulations (families, veterans, and youth). This year, HUD is giving all these populations equal weight, i.e. equal points in the competition. The trick here is to balance your efforts across populations according to the need in your community while also leveraging other housing resources
- **PSH programs must be high-performing.** In the past, CoCs that prioritized PSH gained a competitive edge. That's no longer good enough this year. CoCs must prioritize PSH programs that are effective at keeping people housed, connecting people with mainstream benefits and supports, improving incomes when possible, and contributing to the overall CoC goals. This year's NOFA is much more competitive because of this kind of emphasis on performance.
- **PSH programs need to be targeting chronically homeless persons.** Programs that provide PSH beds for chronically homeless persons should have procedures in place that ensure they are indeed placing the most vulnerable and chronically homeless persons in those beds. To make sure this happens, CoCs may need to pool additional funds to incentivize landlords to take in chronically

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homeless clients who may be harder to house. In this competition, HUD will be looking for changes in designated or prioritized beds for chronically homeless persons.

- **There are new opportunities to leverage service dollars.** CoC programs have an opportunity to use Medicaid to fund supportive services in PSH, particularly in states that have expanded Medicaid to all low-income persons. It will be important in your application to demonstrate that you are taking steps to align Medicaid or other healthcare funding to pay for these services. When Medicaid pays for these services it frees up more HUD money to pay for much needed housing for PSH.
- **Reallocation is your best bet to increase PSH.** The NOFA is stressing reallocation this year. While high performing CoCs may be able to increase their funding, the most reliable way for CoCs to increase their PSH capacity will be to reallocate funds from existing programs into PSH. In addition, reallocation to PSH, even if it's from poor performing PSH to high performing PSH will get you more points, making your CoC application more competitive as a whole.
- **Use the Housing First approach.** Housing First is an approach that centers on providing housing as quickly as possible without conditions or pre-requisites and then providing services and support as needed. Housing is not contingent on compliance with services. Guidance indicates that CoCs that have PSH providers that still aren't on board or who have a different understanding of Housing First, it's time to consider reallocating funds to providers who will use a Housing First Approach. HUD is promoting Housing First in the NOFA with additional points.
- **Prioritize the most vulnerable families.** The NOFA awards points for communities that reserve permanent supportive housing resources – the most intensive CoC-funded housing and service intervention – for families who experience chronic homelessness. It also incentivizes CoCs to steer other program interventions like rapid re-housing and transitional housing to high-need families, such as unsheltered families, families at risk of victimization, or families who have experienced previous episodes of homelessness.
- **Reduce barriers to program use.** The NOFA awards points to CoCs that eradicate barriers to homeless service programs like programs that provide transitional housing or rapid re-housing. Such barriers include sobriety, income requirement, background checks or program policies that mandate compliance with services in order to participate in programs.
- **Keep families together.** HUD CoC-funded programs are already required to shelter and house families together (e.g. allowing adolescent boys to remain with their mothers in transitional housing programs). The NOFA provides an incentive for local community programs to do what they are already required to do.

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- **Implement effective to-scale rapid re-housing programs that house families rapidly.** The NOFA includes points for communities that have a rapid re-housing plan that will reduce the overall number of families experiencing homelessness as well as communities that have a plan to re-house families within 30 days of becoming homeless.
- **Make the most effective use of resources to end family homelessness.** The NOFA strongly encourages communities to make the most effective use of the resources they have available to help people experiencing homelessness. There are *strong* incentives in the NOFA for communities to reallocate funding from longer term interventions like transitional housing to more short-term and cost-effective interventions like rapid re-housing. This allows communities to serve more households with the same amount of funding while also decreasing the length of time families are homeless.
- **CoC Planning.** CoC planning grants do not compete against funding for programs. They are awarded outside of the “tiering” process. The work of the Continuum of Care is essential in creating efficiency, i.e. rehousing the largest number of homeless people possible with the money that is available. CoCs need funding for staff and/or consultants to do this work, and the CoC planning grants make that available.

Family Homelessness

The NOFA also rewards communities that have already made progress toward ending family homelessness and can demonstrate outcomes. Communities receive points toward their overall NOFA application score when they can demonstrate:

- Family homelessness has declined in 2015 since the last point-in-time count of homeless households;
- Increased capacity to provide rapid re-housing to families in 2015 compared to 2014.

The NOFA provides clear directions to CoC applicants about what they should do with HUD resources to address family homelessness. CoCs should:

- Adjust the homeless services system for families to ensure that families can easily access rapid re-housing and other housing assistance tailored to their needs.
- Work with their affordable housing community to facilitate access to affordable housing units.
- Ensure that their projects address the safety needs of persons fleeing domestic violence.

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Veteran Homelessness

According to the NOFA, HUD will award up to **15 points** to CoCs that can show real results on this goal.

Did our numbers go down? The best way to show that we are making progress is by reducing the number of veterans experiencing homelessness in our community.

- 7 points will go to CoCs that demonstrate the total number of homeless veterans in the CoC has decreased, as reported in the 2015 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count compared to 2014 (or 2013, if an unsheltered count was not conducted in 2014).
- 3 points will go to CoCs that demonstrate a 75 percent reduction in the total number of homeless veterans as reported in the 2015 PIT Count, compared to 2010 (or 2009, if an unsheltered count was not conducted in 2010).

Does our community quickly connect veterans to permanent housing? In response to the federal goal for ending veteran homelessness, communities have seen a significant and unprecedented surge in permanent housing resources for veterans.

The NOFA asks for a description of the CoC's strategy for identifying and assessing veterans who are eligible for VA services and then referring them to appropriate resources such as Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH) as well as our CoC's process for housing veterans that may not be eligible for VA resources

Do we prioritize CoC resources for veterans? HUD awards 3 points to CoCs that prioritize CoC resources for veterans who are *not* eligible for VA programs or services. According to HUD, to house every veteran in 2015, CoCs may have to prioritize some of their resources for veterans who are not already eligible for VA-funded housing and services such as HUD-VASH and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF).

Do we count every homeless veteran in our community? If we plan on conducting a sheltered AND unsheltered PIT Count in 2016 to assess your community's progress (even though the unsheltered count is not required) and are able to count every homeless veteran in our community we will get 2 points on our application.

Youth Homelessness

HUD will award up to **15 points** to CoCs based on the extent to which it is making progress towards ending homelessness among unaccompanied youth by 2020.

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Are we addressing the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth? HUD awards up to 5 points to CoCs for strategies that address the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth and the existence of a proven strategy that addresses homeless youth trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

Does our community ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth are taken off the streets? HUD will award up to 5 points to CoCs that demonstrate an increase, as recorded in the HMIS data field “residence prior to entry” from October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014, in the number of unaccompanied homeless youth (up to age 24) served who were residing on the streets or in places not meant for human habitation prior to entering a homeless project.

Are we increasing community resources for our youth? Up to 3 points will be awarded to CoCs that demonstrate a proposed plan to increase funding for unaccompanied youth homeless programs in Calendar Year 2016.

Do we ensure that education is a priority for our youth? HUD awards up to 1 point to CoCs that specifically describe how it collaborates with local education authorities and school districts in the geographic area to assist in the identification of individuals and families who become or remain homeless and are informed of the eligibility of services under subtitle B of title VII of the Act (42 U.S.C. 11432, *et seq.*). This includes demonstrating that the CoC has established policies that require homeless providers funded by both the CoC and ESG programs, to ensure all children are enrolled in early childhood programs or in school and connected to appropriate services in the community.

Up to 1 point will be awarded to CoCs that demonstrate the extent in which youth service and education representatives and CoC representatives have participated in each other’s meetings over the past 12 months. Additionally, the CoC will describe how the CoC collaborates with the McKinney-Vento local education liaisons and State education coordinators.