

# Southern Nevada Homelessness Continuum of Care

## Scoring and Ranking Policies and Procedures

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## Objective

These *Scoring and Ranking Policies and Procedures* govern nonprofit and local government agencies applying for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Continuum of Care (CoC) program funding in the Southern Nevada Homelessness (SNH) CoC. This document directs the local competition's application process, and scoring and ranking procedures, with the primary objective of a consistent and transparent process for project application reviews.

## Glossary

### *HUD CoC Program NOFA*

HUD's CoC program goal is to coordinate and streamline local homelessness response systems and adhere to unified measures of success. The 2009 Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act governs the CoC planning process, including the requirement of a board appointed to represent the local constituency of persons experiencing homelessness, and increased emphasis on system-wide performance measures. These measures assess a region's successful deployment of its resources, federal and otherwise, and in turn drive HUD's continued investment in the SNH CoC's efforts to end homelessness. HUD releases an annual Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to announce the start of each year's national competition for CoC funding.

### *Collaborative Applicant*

The Clark County Department of Social Service (CCSS) acts as Collaborative Applicant for the SNH CoC, applying for funding on behalf of the Clark County Continuum of Care (NV-500).

### *SNH CoC Board*

The HEARTH Act requires a CoC board to conduct community-wide planning for its geographic region, strategic deployment of resources, and scoring and ranking of local Project Applications for listing in the annual Consolidated Application sent to HUD.

The SNH CoC local application process frequently begins prior to HUD's CoC NOFA announcement. The NOFA's particulars may impact review and evaluation processes. The SNH CoC Board reserves final approval for edits and modifications by its working groups to update the community's compliance.

### *SNH CoC Working Groups*

Three SNH CoC Board working groups, and one subgroup collaborate to develop, update, and complete the Consolidated Application, and local application processes.

*Data & Systems Improvement Working Group (DSIWG)* – Determines local priorities and measures collective impact of existing projects annually, through evaluation of system-wide metrics. Informs local competition's *Scoring Tool* development, and *Scoring and Ranking Policies and Procedures* updates according to a given year's evolving priorities. For this year's local priorities, please visit <http://helphopehome.org/funding-opportunities/>.

*Monitoring Working Group (MWG)* – Coordinates project monitoring, desk audits, and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) reviews to evaluate ongoing project compliance and performance, according to established data-based outcome benchmarks. Responsible for annual monitoring reviews, including data furnished to the SRT as a component of the local competition’s scoring and ranking process.

*Evaluation Working Group (EWG)* – Facilitates planning of the CoC Consolidated Application, and the project scoring and ranking process. For further detail, see *The Evaluation Working Group (EWG) and its Scoring and Ranking Team (SRT)*, below.

*Scoring & Ranking Team (SRT)* – EWG subgroup responsible for project application review, scoring, ranking, and recommendation of the priority listing for SNH CoC Board’s final approval.

### **The Evaluation Working Group (EWG) and its Scoring and Ranking Team (SRT)**

The EWG is variously comprised of SNH CoC Board members, jurisdictional partners, and local stakeholder representatives. The EWG meets monthly, and is primarily responsible for facilitating the scoring and ranking of local project applications. The EWG convenes its SRT subgroup to assess local *Project Applications* against the local competition scoring tools, to produce a recommended *Priority Listing*.

The SRT ensures that the SNH CoC maximizes its project applications for all funding available in a given NOFA, and that the CoC recommends the most competitive possible applications. The SRT strives to maximize incoming funding across Tier 1, Tier 2 and Bonus offerings as described in a given NOFA announcement. The SRT considers short- and long-term implications to the SNH CoC’s system of care as a result of addition, removal, or reallocation of any individual project on the priority listing.

#### **Recruiting the SRT**

The EWG employs the following process to recruit knowledgeable, neutral members for the SRT. Recruitment is focused on CoC members, Board members and community partners representing a cross-section of stakeholders that are not themselves applicants or otherwise conflicted for a given year’s HUD CoC funding. The EWG maintains contacts with adjacent agencies in homelessness response to ensure a sufficient number of CoC members are available year-to-year. The CoC member application process is outlined in greater detail by the *CoC Governance Structure* found at: <http://helphopehome.org/southern-nevada-homelessness-continuum-of-care-governance-structure-snh-coc/>.

The EWG recruits a Scoring and Ranking Team each year, up to fifteen persons. A maximum of twelve members will serve as the primary SRT, with a remaining three asked to serve on the Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee may attend, but will not participate actively in the SRT’s initial scoring and ranking process. The Appeals Committee of the SRT will only be activated in the event of an appeal from a project seeking to contest its ranking in priority listing.

The EWG, through Collaborative Applicant's staff, will recruit individuals for the SRT according to the following:

- Generally familiar with regional homelessness and housing issues;
- Broadly representative of relevant sectors, subpopulations, and geographic areas;
- Equipped to review applications according to the best interests of persons experiencing homelessness locally;
- Not a present staff or board member of any agency applying for funding in the current grant cycle;
- Committed to neutrality – Members shall report any actual or perceived conflicts of interest to the EWG, and no member shall vote upon or discuss any matter related to a project for which the member is perceived to have an actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- Available for the time required – Typically a timespan of approximately one summer month, covering a training on application review; the potential review of approximately 20 project applications; and in-person participation for four to six hours in a final scoring and ranking discussion.

Prior to the annual scoring and ranking process, the EWG's third-party facilitator will train the appointed SRT on its role, the local competition's scoring tools, and additional resources for evaluation.

#### SRT Conflict of Interest Procedure

Considering the finite pool of qualified candidates with sufficient contextual and local knowledge of CoC programming, Scoring and Ranking Team members may be directly or indirectly associated with organizations participating in the SNH CoC funding stream. The SRT's conflict of interest mitigation procedure is as follows:

1. Upon agreement to join scoring and ranking, each SRT member must sign and submit to the Collaborative Applicant, the *Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement*. For detail on conflicts of interest, see the *Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement*.
2. SRT members are expected to report potential conflicts of interest to the Collaborative Applicant prior to pre-scoring.

#### Recusal Procedure

EWG members may recuse from speaking, voting, or participating in scoring and ranking processes involving a real or perceived conflict of interest. Recusal is expected prior to the pertinent agenda item(s), and members will verbalize for the record all reasons for their recusal. Members will only recuse if and when there is a perceived or real conflict of interest.

## Local Application Timeline

These *Scoring and Ranking Policies and Procedures* will be posted publicly at <http://helphopehome.org/funding-opportunities/>. The community is given opportunity for public comment on this document prior to CoC Board submission for final approval.

### Competition Process

- MWG administers annual performance monitoring for existing projects. Resulting monitoring score cards individually summarize project performance metrics.
- DSIWG identifies and informs EWG of community needs and priorities.
- EWG incorporates new community needs and priorities into scoring criteria and *Scoring and Ranking Policies and Procedures*.
- CoC Board approves annual updates to scoring criteria and *Scoring and Ranking Policies & Procedures*.
- SRT assembled from minimally-conflicted SNH CoC member volunteers.
- SRT pre-scores assigned projects according to *CoC Scoring Tools*.
- SRT meets publicly to review and finalize scores; recommends preliminary *Priority Listing*.
- Collaborative Applicant publicly posts preliminary priority listing; appeals process opens.
- SNH CoC Board addresses appeals, if applicable, and votes on *Priority Listing*.

## Local Application Requirements

1. Applicants must abide by current NOFA requirements. Timelines, process revisions, and other changes by HUD may occur suddenly. The Collaborative Applicant will communicate with community stakeholders via e-mail and public posting on the Help Hope Home website to update the community on any competition or timeline developments.
2. The EWG annually updates the SNH CoC's Local Project Application. Its targeted release is prior to that of the given year's HUD CoC NOFA announcement. The Local Project Application is then updated as necessary, according to specific NOFA requirements following the NOFA. The Local Project Application is a mandatory process of the NOFA.
3. Applicants must satisfy the threshold criteria enumerated in the given year's SNH CoC Scoring Tool (available at the [Help Hope Home website](#)), depending on application type.
4. The technical assistance training is mandatory for prospective applicants. A given year's technical assistance training date will be listed at the [Help Hope Home website](#), and announced via listserv, when scheduled.

5. Local Project Applications are submitted through an online application portal, alongside a designated cloud storage utility for application attachments. Please see the given year's *CoC Scoring Tools* for scoring criteria. A successfully submitted Local Project Application does not guarantee a project's inclusion in the HUD Consolidated Application.
6. HMIS and Coordinated Entry may be subject to distinct scoring criteria.

### Presentations

The SRT has discretion to hear oral presentations by project representatives, when necessary. An agency selected for presentation will receive written notification of the SRT's decision. Presentations are open to the public, but no public comment or question is allowed. Outside agencies are encouraged to attend. Applicants are prohibited from including client testimony and/or paper materials during their presentations.

All SRT questions are aggregated and sent to the presenting applicant to prepare ahead of time. If an SRT member has an additional question during the presentation, they must first seek group permission before the question can be raised.

### Scoring and Ranking Process

The EWG annually updates the local application according to the DSIWG's own annual priority updates, with amendments to these *Scoring and Ranking Policies and Procedures*, and project scoring tools. The scoring and ranking process continuously accounts for, and prioritizes according to Housing First principles: the severity of clients' needs and vulnerabilities, chronic homelessness, mental illness, substance use disorders, and domestic violence history.

### Local Application Procedure

Applicants submit narrative responses through an online application portal, and attachments to a designated cloud storage system. The Collaborative Applicant's technical assistance provider, Homebase, will support applicants throughout the submission procedure.

### Scoring Basis

Renewal project scores are primarily based upon objective data collected from a combination of Annual Performance Reports (APRs) and annual compliance and performance monitoring by a third-party contractor overseen by the MWG.

Renewal projects in their first year of funding are unlikely to have complete data. These projects are "held harmless" for a single year, instead receiving full points for all performance-based scoring factors.

New projects scores are the result of applicant narratives only, as performance data does not yet exist for these projects.

### Scoring Teams

Due to a high volume of applications, SRT may divide its review of low-risk renewal project applications across smaller scoring teams. “High-risk” is defined as all projects within Tier 2, and those at the bottom of Tier 1 up to an amount equivalent to Tier 2’s total funding request. “Low-risk” is defined as all projects above the high-risk line.

Scoring teams will review and pre-score divided sets of low-risk renewal applications; all scoring teams will review all high-risk renewal applications and new project applications.

All renewal projects are permitted to submit supplemental narratives to the SRT via the *Project Response Form* to contextualize adverse data outcomes.

### Ranking Process (Priority Listing)

Renewal projects are those with existing HUD CoC contracts, already funded in prior CoC grant years. New projects are those applying for the first time in a given year’s CoC NOFA. Project applications are ordered from highest to lowest ranking in the priority listing, and in accordance with HUD’s two-tier system according to CoC NOFA guidelines. For tier cutoff dollar amounts, please refer to the given year’s HUD CoC NOFA announcement.

All projects are ranked according to score in the Priority Listing, with the exception of renewal projects supporting HUD-mandated systems (i.e. HMIS, SSO-CE), which are automatically ranked atop Tier 1.

### Tie Breaking

If a situation arises where two projects earn the same score, resulting in a rank that places either project at risk of losing its funding (straddling or wholly within Tier 2 of the *Priority Listing*), the following criteria will apply:

1. First Tie-Breaker: The project with the highest monitoring score on the monitoring score card.
2. Second Tie-Breaker: The project with the highest local application score.
3. Third Tie-Breaker: The project with the highest score on the SNH CoC’s performance monitoring tool (V3).

### Reallocation Process

HUD prioritizes CoCs that reallocate funds from underperforming projects, as a means to better fulfill local needs and improve CoC-wide performance, without negatively affecting the Annual Renewal Demand. The SRT may exercise discretion to reallocate funds from underperforming existing renewal projects into the CoC Bonus amount if it deems necessary. In the alternative, a project may voluntarily reallocate its funds in-whole, or in-part to be made available for new project applications. Reallocation is reserved to:

1. Underperforming projects’ funds fully reallocated to CoC Bonus.
2. Projects whose monitoring results indicate a significant history of unspent funds,

resulting in reduction or reallocation to CoC Bonus.

3. Projects voluntarily reallocating funds.

#### Notification of Funding Recommendations

The Collaborative Applicant will notify local applicants of funding recommendations within two business days, following the SRT Ranking Day. The SRT's preliminary Priority Listing will be posted on <http://helphopehome.org/funding-opportunities/>, pending any appeals.

#### Application Debriefing

Application process debriefs are available to applicants upon request, especially while an applicant considers appealing its rank in the preliminary *Priority Listing*. Requests must be submitted in writing to [HelpHopeHome@ClarkCountyNV.gov](mailto:HelpHopeHome@ClarkCountyNV.gov). The debriefing will be held within the two weeks following the competition phase. The SRT, Collaborative Applicant and/or third-party facilitator may participate in the debrief.

#### Ranking Appeals

Appeals are limited to projects reallocated in-part or in-full, those ranked in Tier 2, or those at-risk of falling into Tier 2 as a result of another project's successful appeal (preliminarily ranked in the bottom portion of Tier 1 equal to the total value of Tier 2).

Appellate review is limited to the information submitted prior to the local application due date. New material submissions beyond the appeal itself will not be accepted, nor considered. Appeals must be received by the given year's local competition appeals deadline. A project must notify the CoC of its intent to appeal in writing by sending an email to [HelpHopeHome@ClarkCountyNV.gov](mailto:HelpHopeHome@ClarkCountyNV.gov). All appeals must be received within three business days of the notification of project rankings.

An appeal consists of a written statement asserting grounds for reconsideration, submitted by an individual authorized to represent the agency. An appeal must not exceed two pages typed, in 12-point font.

The EWG will appoint an Appeals Committee of four members. Three voting members will be appointed concurrent to SRT appointments. The fourth non-voting member will be an SRT member intended to provide context on the SRT's scoring decisions. SRT conflict of interest rules, as described above, apply in kind to Appeals Committee members.

The Appeals Committee is restricted in its review to the matters asserted in a project's appeal. An 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.

The Appeals Committee will render determinations within two business days and notify the applicant(s) in writing of outcomes.

## SNH CoC Board Final Approval

Following the scoring and ranking process, and any subsequent appeals process, the SRT will present its funding recommendations to the full SNH CoC Board for a vote on the finalized *Priority Listing*. SRT conflict of interest rules, as described above, apply in kind to SNH CoC Board members, when voting upon the finalized *Priority Listing*.