



October 31, 2023

**To: Brenda Barnes, Assistant Manager, Clark County Social Service
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From: Elaine de Coligny, EdeColigny Consulting, LLC

Re: 2023 NOFO Competition: Recommended Next Steps

Our consulting team had the privilege of facilitating the Local Competition for the Southern Nevada Homelessness Continuum of Care (SNHCoC) as part of the 2023 HUD NOFO Process. This memo provides a summary of what we observed and learned through that work and the action steps that we recommend to prepare for future competitions and to strengthen the CoC-funded system of care.

If EdeColigny Consulting were selected to facilitate the 2024 local competition, these recommendations would guide our work, but we believe that they could apply broadly to anyone tasked with ensuring a successful competition. In addition, there are several activities that we believe the Continuum of Care could be doing now and in the upcoming months, outside of the NOFO competition.

Steps for a Smoother Competition: We suggest taking the following actions to ensure that the local competition is transparent, fair, and robust, while minimizing the burden on applicants and the Scoring and Ranking Team.

- **Start preparing earlier for the local competition.** The timing of our contract execution delayed the start of our work until just a few weeks before the NOFO was released. We were able to get up to speed quickly and conduct the competition, but it made for a very compressed and stressful timeline. As described in detail below, some of the preparations for the NOFO competition should take place much earlier and at a more reasonable pace.
- **Take more time to develop the CoC Rating and Ranking Policies in partnership with the CoC Board, in advance of the competition.** The CoC Board should be actively involved in developing and informing how projects applications are prioritized, reviewed, and scored. In

upcoming years, we suggest involving the CoC Board earlier in the process of drafting the policies, not just when it comes time to approve them.

- **Develop a clearer method for evaluating performance.** We relied upon the Monitoring Reports to score performance, but applicants still expressed lack of confidence in and confusion about their monitoring scores. In addition, grant management performance data (such as spend-down and timely APR submission) were lumped into a single score and not discretely accounted for in the Monitoring Reports. Overhauling the monitoring process may be a multi-year endeavor but, in the meantime, the CoC should arrive at an interim strategy for performance measurement in the 2024 competition that aligns clearly with HUD priorities and is easy for applicants to understand.
- **Allow more time for pre-scoring renewal applications.** For all but the newest renewal projects, performance data can be gathered at any point during the year, which can then be used to pre-score applications. This information could be gathered and shared with applicants in advance of the competition to allow them sufficient time to understand it better, make corrections, and to otherwise know what to expect in their local competition scores.
- **Expand upon the new project application to allow for a fuller picture of new projects.** Scoring and Ranking Team members noted that it was not always possible to get a full picture for new project applications, both of the project itself and of the applicant organization. We suggest adding a few questions to ensure that reviewers understand the central aspects of program design and the applicant organization's qualifications and experience.
- **Start working with prospective new applicants early and provide intensive technical assistance.** CCSS did a great job recruiting new applicant organizations into the local competition, particularly with respect to DV providers. However, several new applicant organizations submitted proposals that did not meet the threshold, and the Scoring and Ranking Team reported that many of the other applications were not of high quality. Ideally, part of recruiting new applicants could consist of preparing them for what will be required in the application process, setting them up for more competitive submissions, and sparing them the time and effort if they are not ready or their desired project is not CoC-eligible. Starting early could also increase the likelihood of generating a project that maximizes the CoC's ability to score points for leveraging of mainstream housing and health care resources.
- **Allow more time to develop and review Zoom Grants application format.** Applicants seemed quite happy with the Zoom Grants format, and we believe it worked well. However, there were key fields left out of the application questions, due primarily to the rushed

timeline for setting the application up. We suggest taking more time to develop the application questions, running more tests on the format, and building in a stronger mechanism for ensuring that projects that do not meet threshold are weeded out early.

- **Develop a clearer and more streamlined budget form for new projects.** Many applicants were confused by the budget form, and some of the sections in the form were not essential for the competition.

Steps for a More Competitive Application and Stronger Continuum of Care: We recommend the following actions to build the overall strength of the CoC and the system of care that it supports, and to maximize SNHCoC's competitiveness in the broader NOFO competition. Most of the recommendations below highlight the need for a stronger feedback loop between the NOFO competition and the priorities and activities of the Continuum of Care.

- **Use the NOFO results to drive CoC priorities.** The results of the NOFO – particularly, areas where the CoC lost points – should inform the CoC activities and priorities. There were several areas in the 2023 consolidated application where CoC performance could be higher if prioritized by the CoC. For example, there is no PSH preference for Housing Authority vouchers. This could be set as a goal for 2024, even if it takes multiple years to achieve. This would not only make the CoC more competitive, it would ensure that people experiencing homelessness had more permanent housing opportunities.
- **Improve program performance to improve CoC scores (and overall system).** The CoC lost points on several performance measures. Some of these are hard to address (overall PIT count results) but others tie back directly to the performance of CoC-funded providers. For instance, the CoC could establish the goal of increasing exits to permanent housing and take a set of steps over the course of the year to support providers with achieving that goal, including training, technical assistance, support with identifying new PH resources, etc. This initiative could be supported across the CoC, such that different partners contribute to the effort and understand it as a shared goal.
- **Address low-hanging fruit.** The CoC lost points in areas where they could have earned them. For example, offering an annual SOAR training and regularly updating the CoC-wide anti-discrimination policy could have yielded 5 additional points.
- **Overhaul the project monitoring process to better serve programs and the CoC.** The CoC has a very robust and involved monitoring process, but it does not appear to have led to significant improvement in program performance over the last few years. In fact, there does not seem to be a shared, layman's understanding of the overall monitoring results and where and how performance could be improved at the program- or system levels. We believe that the monitoring system seems to have gotten so involved and technical that it is

no longer meaningful to the broader CoC, whereas it should serve as a central part of the essential feedback loop to the CoC.

- **Take action now to address CoC areas for improvement.** Some of the potential areas for improvement are multi-year endeavors. We recommend building a workplan, with interim goals, action steps, and milestones, both to make the task more manageable and to allow for measurement of progress along the way.

The EdeColigny Consulting team appreciated the opportunity to work with the SNHCoC in managing your local application process for HUD Continuum of Care funds and would welcome the chance to continue serving in that role. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you have regarding this memo or our work for the CoC.