

Buffalo and Erie County Continuum of Care Guidelines 2009



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Introduction

Since 1998, The Homeless Alliance of Western New York has led a community process which coordinates the Erie County, New York application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Continuum of Care Program. Continuum of Care dollars are competitive dollars that communities may only access if their community scores among the best in the country when compared to other communities. HUD establishes a dollar value that represents the maximum amount of money that a community may compete for based upon census and poverty data.

Since 2000, through the leadership of the Homeless Alliance, The Erie County Continuum of Care has been successful in six of eight competitions bringing over \$62 million federal dollars into our community.

This policy guidebook is an effort to codify many of the policies as they have been developed since that time. These policies were developed with the help of a committee of Homeless Alliance members and were then approved by the Homeless Alliance Board of Directors.

Continuum of Care Overview

A Continuum of Care Plan is a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. It includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness.

Key Characteristics in the Design of a Continuum of Care

- Long range
- Comprehensive and collaborative
- Strategic
- Based on an assessment of community needs and priorities

HUD Homeless Definition

HUD states that a person is considered homeless only when he or she resides in one of the following:

- in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings;
- an emergency shelter;
- transitional or supportive housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelter;
- any of the above places but is spending a short time (up to 30 consecutive days) in a hospital or other institution;
- is being evicted within a week from a private dwelling unit and no subsequent residence has been identified and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing; or
- is being discharged within a week from an institution in which the person has been a resident for more than 30 consecutive days and no subsequent residence has been identified and he or she lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing. *Please note that HUD does not fund programs specifically designed for persons being discharged from institutions.*

Common Question: "Can a project serve a person being discharged from a state mental health institution in a state that requires housing to be provided upon the person's release?"

HUD does not consider those persons eligible for assistance since they will be placed in housing arranged by the state. Please note that projects cannot be structured to target individuals being discharged from these institutions.

As a condition for award in the competition, *any governmental entity serving as an applicant must agree to develop and implement, to the maximum extent practicable and where appropriate, policies and protocols for the discharge of persons from publicly funded institutions or systems of care (such as health care facilities, foster care or other youth facilities, or correction programs and institutions) in order to prevent such discharge from immediately resulting in homelessness for such persons. This condition for award,*

required by law, is intended to emphasize that states and units of general local government are primarily responsible for the care of these individuals, and to forestall attempts to use scarce McKinney-Vento Act funds to assist such persons in lieu of state and local resources.

HUD Chronic Homeless Definition

A person who is “chronically homeless” is an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years. In order to be considered chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets) and/or in an emergency homeless shelter.” A disabling condition is defined as “a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions.” A disabling condition limits an individual’s ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living. An episode of homelessness is a separate, distinct, and sustained stay on the streets and/or in an emergency homeless shelter. A chronically homeless person must be unaccompanied and disabled during each episode.

Common Question: “The definition of a person who is chronically homeless indicates that the person must have been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. If the person has had four episodes of homelessness in the last three years but is currently in transitional housing, does he/she meet the definition of chronically homeless?”

No. To be defined as chronically homeless, a person must be living on the street or in emergency shelter at the time of the count or eligibility determination. The definition does not include those currently in transitional housing.

At Risk Populations

By law, only those persons who are homeless may be served by the programs under the NOFA. If your organization wants to serve persons at risk of becoming homeless, persons who are “doubled up,” or persons who are “near homelessness,” it would need to use another source. HUD

administers the Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) program that can fund homelessness prevention activities. A variety of other programs, such as Section 8, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME, serve low-income persons who may be at risk of becoming homeless due to poor housing conditions, overcrowding or other reasons. Contact your local HUD field office for more information on these and other programs.

Other Eligibility Questions

Can a project serve a homeless youth after he/she becomes a ward of the state, or serve runaway youths?

Project funding may not substitute for the assistance a state is required to provide a youth while in foster care. Youth who run away from home are considered homeless if they meet the criteria in Question #1 of this section, are without resources and support, and are not considered wards of the state.

Can a homeless person moving into permanent housing receive services under SHP for an extended period of time?

A person living in McKinney-Vento SHP Permanent Housing may receive supportive services for the entire time he/she is living in the project. Upon leaving the program and moving into housing not subsidized by McKinney -Vento, they are no longer eligible to receive our supportive services. A person living in Transitional Housing, is eligible to receive supportive services for up to six months after leaving and moving into permanent housing not subsidized by McKinney-Vento.

Continuum of Care Programs

The funds available through HUD's Continuum of Care can be used under any of the three programs that assist in creating community systems for combating homelessness.

A person must be homeless in order to receive assistance under these programs.

Supportive Housing Program -Housing activities for Supportive Housing Programs includes funds that may be used to acquire, rehabilitate, construct, or lease facilities for transitional housing and for permanent housing for persons

with disabilities, and pay operating costs of the housing. Any other activities that provide supportive services to clients are services activities (for more information on the importance of housing vs. services dollars, see the **Scoring** sections for New and Renewal Project Applications). SHP projects may be funded for three years or two years. Eligible applicants include units of government, nonprofits, tribes, and public housing authorities.

Shelter Plus Care - Funds may be used for rental assistance for homeless persons with chronic disabilities in connection with supportive services funded from outside sources. Rental assistance can be tenant-based, sponsor-based or project-based or for Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units. Eligible applicants are states, units of general local government, and public housing authorities.

Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation for Single Room Occupancy Dwellings for Homeless Individuals - Funds may be used for rental assistance for homeless people who will live in moderately rehabilitated SRO housing. The rental assistance covers operating expenses of the housing plus the debt service for the rehabilitation financing. SRO Moderate Rehabilitation Projects are funded for 10 years. A public housing authority (PHA) is the only eligible applicant; private nonprofits must subcontract with a PHA to administer rental assistance. SRO renewals are not included in this competition.

Emergency shelter, homeless prevention activities, and support for permanent housing for non-disabled persons are not eligible activities under these programs.

Be aware that the Shelter Plus Care Program and the Permanent Housing Component of the Supportive Housing Program may only serve people who are homeless and have a disability. A disability may be physical, mental, developmental, or emotional impairment, and includes impairment due solely to alcohol or drug abuse. Persons living with HIV/AIDS are considered disabled for purposes of these programs.

Federal Eligibility

Supportive Housing Program (SHP)

States, local governments, other governmental entities, Indian tribes, private nonprofits, and community mental health associations that are public nonprofits are eligible to compete for grant funds through HUD's Continuum of Care process.

Shelter Plus Care (S+C)

States, local governments, tribes, and public housing agencies are eligible. Nonprofits are eligible sub recipients. Sub recipients will apply for renewals as an independent agency.

Local Eligibility

In the past, the decision was made at the community level to allow any agency serving the homeless to enter the federal competition through Erie County's continuum as long as dollars were available under the pro-rata need share allocated for Erie County. This process changed in 2006 and in 2009 the Homeless Alliance will continue to target specific need areas and types of programs for inclusion in the application process for the annual HUD competition.

In advance of the annual HUD competition, the Homeless Alliance will issue a local request for proposals (RFP) that clearly identifies current community gaps. *New Projects that do not address these gap areas will not be forwarded to the HUD competition under the Buffalo & Erie County Continuum.*

New for 2009:

On February 4 at 1:30pm, a workshop on innovative approaches to permanent housing will take place at Belmont Shelter Corporation (1195 Main St in Buffalo).

All CoC Applicants are required to attend. Any Applicant Agency that does not send a representative to this workshop will be ineligible to apply in the 2009 CoC competition.

Renewal projects will be assumed to be meeting gap areas, as a loss of funding may jeopardize a program and create gaps in service. The Homeless Alliance

makes every effort to avoid the creation of gaps in service whenever possible. Please note: *in the past, poorly performing renewal programs have not been selected for advancement to the federal competition.*

New for 2009:

Due to HUD's Increasing Emphasis on permanent housing activities through the Continuum of Care, the Homeless Alliance offers the following two notices:

New Supportive Services Only Projects (100% services with no housing) are **ineligible** to apply for the 2009 CoC.

Renewal Supportive Services Only Projects are eligible to apply, however it has become increasingly difficult to fund these projects through the Continuum of Care and it is unlikely that these projects will be funded for their full-requested term. In the past, Renewal Supportive Services Only Projects have not been selected to move forward to the federal competition.

Capital construction or rehab projects that meet identified gap areas will be included in the process along with all other applicants. However, if there are HUD-identified pro-rata need share monies left over after the initial project prioritization process; the Homeless Alliance will consider requests for capital construction or rehab projects that do not address specified community gaps. These projects will not be allowed to apply for renewal dollars.

Organizations seeking capital construction dollars that do not meet identified priority need areas must submit an application at the same time as all other applications, but should understand that their project will only be submitted to HUD should there be dollars available after the initial project prioritization.

Local Prioritization Process

HUD requires communities to make specific recommendations as to how projects should be prioritized locally. A committee of non-interested persons will prioritize projects to be submitted to HUD.

Project Selection and Priority Placement Process

The local RFP is released in December of the year prior to the competition for which proposals are sought. The RFP is written in anticipation of an announcement by HUD of available funds. The RFP is released on the web and

distributed through e-mail. Applications and forms are sent through traditional mailing when requested; however, the Homeless Alliance does not customarily send the applications through traditional mail. Information-sharing agreements are in place with the County of Erie Department of Environment and Planning, City of Buffalo Planning Division, and the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, and several area coalitions including the Western New York Coalition for the Homeless, The Multi-Disciplinary Coordinating Council on Elder Abuse, The Erie County Coalition Against Family Violence, and the Homeless Alliance of Western New York.

New for 2009:

RFP's, applications, and other CoC-related materials will be made available via e-mail and web. None of these materials will be sent via traditional mail unless requested. If you did not receive the RFP via e-mail, please contact Devan DeCicco, Continuum of Care Coordinator, at decicco@wnyhomeless.org to sign up.

The organizations that receive information about funding availability include: governmental agencies; homeless and non-homeless service providers; non-governmental organizations; churches and other religious groups; medical providers; and agencies that target subpopulations such as veterans, mentally ill, domestic violence, AIDS/HIV, and substance abusers.

To ensure the widest possible circulation of information, the Alliance invites groups to share information with any group not included in the original announcements and e-mailings of the Local and Federal RFP and application; local process timeline; community priorities information; and rating criteria on the Alliance website. The Alliance also engages in special outreach efforts to individuals and nonprofit organizations at community meetings and presentations. Finally, advertisements about the funding competition are placed in several community newsletters and bulletins. Any organization has an opportunity to submit a proposal to the Homeless Alliance of Western New York for the Continuum of Care funding competition.

(2) Applicants are required to submit copies of the local and federal HUD application by the respective deadlines. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the competition. The local application includes a cover sheet and a brief summary of organizational experience; project design; performance measurement; description of how the project addresses community needs; budget, match and

leveraging; and project implementation timeline. In addition, applicants must specifically indicate how the proposed project will forward HUD's goals of permanent housing and self-sufficiency as well as participation in the Energy Star program.

Renewal applications are instructed to include a copy of their most recent HUD Annual Progress Report for review by the committee. Committee members review performance on HUD-established criteria including movement of clients into permanent housing, maintaining clients in transitional housing, and access of mainstream resources.

Members of the Continuum of Care Decisions Committee are asked to review each of the projects and to determine their rank for the Continuum of Care Project Priorities Chart. To do so, they draw on input from the BAS-Net (HMIS) Advisory Committee and PRISM 10-Year Plan Steering Committee.

During the review process, Continuum of Care Decisions Committee members are supplied with a great deal of information and committee members are asked to draw on their own expertise and knowledge of the community while filling out a specially developed Continuum of Care Application Evaluation Form. The Continuum of Care Application Evaluation Form was designed to help reviewers determine project priorities in an objective manner. This Evaluation Form is subject to change on an annual basis.

New for 2009:

The Evaluation Form has changed significantly.

The maximum number of points available for Permanent Housing projects is 70 points.

The maximum number of points available for Transitional Housing projects is 67 points.

The Maximum number of points available for Supportive Services Only projects is 50 points.

See the Scoring Rubric below. It is based on the Evaluation Form.

Additionally, respondents are asked to identify specific collaborations with the Homeless Alliance of Western New York and other homeless-related community activities to determine their connection to Continuum of Care activity. A copy of the examination questions and suggested point values are included below.

New Scoring Questions for 2009 Reviewers

Project Design (10)	
Applicant clearly defined the target population, services/housing offered and amount requested	(0 to 10)
Measurement (17 pts for Transitional, 20 pts for Permanent, 0 points for Supportive Services)	
For Transitional Housing Programs (17)	
Will the project successfully move clients from transitional housing to housing	(0 or 2)
Will Clients be staying in your program for at least six months	(0 or 5)
How will your project ensure that program participants have access to mainstream benefits and/or employment income at time of discharge	(0 to 10)
For Permanent Housing Programs (20)	
Will your project stabilize clients in Permanent housing for at least six months	(0 or 10)
How will your project ensure that program participants have access to mainstream benefits and/or employment income at time of discharge	(0 to 10)
Measurement for ALL Projects (20 pts)	
Applicant project focuses on moving homeless persons toward self-sufficiency.	(0 to 5)
Applicant project focuses on moving homeless persons toward permanent housing	(0 to 5)
Applicant has a reasonable plan to measure client success.	(0 to 5)
Applicant has a reasonable plan to measure project success	(0 to 5)
Addressing Community Needs (20)	
Applicant has demonstrated involvement with the Homeless Alliance	(0 to 10)
Applicant has demonstrated involvement with other homeless-related efforts	(0 to 5)
Applicant has demonstrated involvement with homeless-collaborative efforts.	(0 to 5)

Readers will note that the point values are different depending on the project type (Transitional Housing, Permanent Housing, Supportive Services Only). The maximum number of points available for Permanent Housing projects is 70 points. The maximum number of points available for Transitional Housing projects is 67 points. The Maximum number of points available for Supportive Services Only projects is 50 points. This is designed to give preference to projects that focus on permanent housing options, thereby reflecting the priorities of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

For each section, reviewers are asked to assign a score that reflected the current status and perceived potential for meeting various homeless needs in the community. As noted above, the application targets specific homeless subpopulations as well as needed housing/services, drawing upon nationally-recognized best practice models. This is consistent with the Alliance’s efforts to focus its efforts on populations most in need and the types of programs most needed in Erie County to address the community’s goals of ending

homelessness. Total scores for each project are determined by adding up points in each section.

In addition to the evaluation form, Continuum of Care Decisions Committee members reserve the right to conduct site visits with new applicants.

(3) During the final vote, all projects are judged together, both new and renewals. The scores for each of the projects are added and an average score is computed for each project. By taking an average score, the group is able to take advantage of all available data and reduce the influence of outlier scores. After computing the average score, a list is generated from highest to lowest average score.

In addition, the Continuum of Care Decisions Committee also calculates a threshold score which is two standard deviations below the mean for each grouping (i.e., Supportive Housing projects, Shelter Plus Care renewal projects). Committee members engage in additional conversation around projects that fall below the threshold score and determine whether or not applications should be forwarded or if special assistance is required.

Renewal projects that fall below the threshold or who are placed on probation due to performance concerns are allowed to apply for only one year of additional funding support as a probationary measure. Applicants are also required to meet with Homeless Alliance staff and members of the Continuum of Care Decisions Committee to discuss concerns and to improve the quality of the application/program before projects submit the next year's application. Renewal projects that fall below the threshold score are subject to additional site visits over the one year period. Following the one year probationary period, these projects on probation will be judged and ranked in the following year's competition along with the other projects.

Likewise, new projects that fall below the threshold score are typically held out of the competition. These projects may request that the Alliance assemble a team to assist in the development of budget, necessary collaborations, and helps organizations better address community concerns for the following year's competition. This process ensures that only projects that meet community needs and are well-designed and organized move into the HUD Competition.

Moreover, the ratio of funding requested for housing activities in the total budget is – and will continue to be – an important factor in the ranking of projects following their scoring. Projects with a low request for housing and a higher request for services will have difficulty in the ranking of their project.

New for 2009:

Given HUD's increasing emphasis on dollars spent on housing vs. dollars spent on services, it is unlikely any New Project Budget that has less than or equal to 50% of their total budget allocated to housing activities will be successful in the competition.

Similarly, any Renewal Project Budget that allocates less than or equal to 50% of the total budget to housing activities will likely not be funded for the full-term requested. Some Supportive Services Only projects (SSO) have not been selected for advancement to the federal competition in the past due to a 0% housing activities allocation in their project budgets.

Following initial ranking and threshold scoring, Committee members are then asked to share their findings from any site visits. Committee members are also given an opportunity to discuss the proposed rankings before making final decisions. Subjective evaluations of projects and their applicants give Committee members a more complete understanding of each program.

There are important exceptions to the ranking process. For example, Congress has directed HUD to use 30% of funds nationwide for permanent housing, including (1) new Shelter Plus Care projects (2) Section 8 Single Room Occupancy (SRO) projects and (3) new and renewal projects designated as permanent housing for homeless persons with disabilities under the Supportive Housing Program. Therefore, non-permanent housing project applicants may be disregarded by HUD in order to fund lower ranked permanent housing projects. This congressionally mandated activity has greatly affected regional funding awards in the past. Therefore, since 2007, *the emphasis of dollars spent on housing vs. dollars spent on services in the project budgets has become increasingly important to the ranking of projects. It is strongly recommended that New Projects seeking funding through the CoC have project designs that allocate more than 65% of the total budget to housing activities.*

Decisions Committee Selection

The Homeless Alliance Executive Director, as local convener of the Continuum of Care process, invites and assembles the members of the Decisions Committee. Members include those sitting on the PRISM Steering Committee unless they specifically recuse themselves because of a conflict of interest or if they deem themselves unable to serve. The Homeless Alliance Chairperson is also invited to serve on the committee. Other members of the Committee are selected by the Continuum of Care convener to ensure proper representation in the process.

There are four inclusionary criteria for Continuum of Care Decisions Committee service.

In order to ensure that all homeless individuals receive the same representation in the process, there is only one representative from each homeless subpopulation invited to serve.

Homeless subpopulations include:

- Homeless families
- Persons dealing with substance abuse
- Persons living with HIV/AIDS
- Persons with mental illness
- Homeless veterans
- Homeless youth
- Homeless elderly persons
- Persons with disabilities
- Homeless individuals

Representatives from all aspects of homeless service provision will be invited onto the Committee.

Homeless service provision includes:

- Prevention
- Outreach
- Emergency Housing
- Transitional Housing
- Permanent Supportive Housing

One representative from each of the municipalities which make-up the HUD pro-rata need share monetary pool will be invited to serve.

These municipalities include:

- County of Erie
- City of Buffalo
- Town of Amherst
- Town of Cheektowaga
- Town of Tonawanda
- Town of Hamburg

- Town of West Seneca - **NEW FOR 2009**

Finally, the Committee shall include community representatives from local interests, including:

- Business community
- Foundation community
- Banking community
- Homeless or formerly homeless

Decisions Committee Members will serve terms that run from the evaluation of new projects in February through the review of renewal projects that following December. As necessary, committee members will remove themselves from the committee should a conflict of interest arise.

This priority selection process develops a true community practice and ensures that particular groups are unable to protect funding or revenue streams. The process has been highly successful in Erie County and has led to a greater understanding of the needs of the local homeless population.

Members of the Continuum of Care Decisions Committee need not be members of the Homeless Alliance. However, attempts will be made to use Homeless Alliance Members whenever possible.

Members of the Continuum of Care Decisions Committee should not be involved with applicant projects at ANY level.

Involvement includes:

- Participation in the planning, development, or solicitation of a project for the HUD Continuum of Care SuperNOFA.
- Providing technical assistance in the preparation of a project application in either a paid or volunteer capacity.
- Active involvement with or work for any agency that has a proposal pending.
- Perceived advocacy for a project can also disqualify an individual from serving on the priorities committee.

The Homeless Alliance will endeavor to avoid even the appearance of impropriety when selecting committee members.

The Committee will use an evaluation sheet to determine a score for each application. Additional points will be awarded to projects which will provide services that were determined to be of highest need by the Homeless Alliance Community Needs Committee. Additional points will also be awarded to applicants that fulfill HUD-identified goals.

The Homeless Alliance Executive Director will facilitate the priority selection process, but will not vote except in the event that a tie score is achieved.

Continuum of Care Decisions Committee members will also review the HUD application, may conduct site visits, and have access to HUD APRs for renewal projects. *Neither Continuum of Care Decisions Committee members nor the Homeless Alliance staff is responsible for reporting any errors or missing information.* However, they will endeavor to identify any areas in need of clarification.

In most years, HUD identifies priority areas for which bonus dollars are available. These bonus dollars are applied to the entire continuum, usually allowing for more projects to be funded. The Decisions Committee must review HUD priorities, local gaps, and submitted applications and is empowered to make decisions on modifying a project or ranking a project outside of its score to qualify for a HUD bonus based on what they perceive to be best for the community.

Local Application

All applicants are required to submit a local application. For 2009, the local application for all projects – both new and renewal – must be submitted to the Homeless Alliance office by 5pm on Friday, February 27. Any application that is not submitted to the Homeless Alliance office by this time will not be considered by the Decisions Committee.

For New Projects: Following the submission of the local application, New Project Applicants may be contacted to schedule a site visit. The site visit occurs after Homeless Alliance staff has reviewed a New Project Application and wishes to consult the New Project Applicant to make suggested changes in the project design, goals, or budget. These changes are not mandatory but are advised to ensure that the agency has a competitive application to submit to the Decisions Committee. Homeless Alliance staff will consult these projects about these suggested changes and that agency will have ten (10) business days following the consultation to provide a revised application. If a revised application is not submitted within ten (10) business days, then these projects will go forward in the competition with their initial local submission.

New for 2009:

There is no pre-application for New Projects. All projects are required to submit a local application. The Homeless Alliance staff will review all New Project applications submitted by Friday, February 27 by 5pm (any new application submitted after that date will be rejected). For those New Project applications that show minor deficiencies or are in need of clarification, the Homeless Alliance will provide an opportunity for revision to the application. Homeless Alliance staff will consult these projects about these suggested changes and that agency will have ten (10) business days following the consultation to provide a revised application. If a revised application is not submitted within ten (10) business days, then these projects will go forward in the competition with their initial local submission.

Renewal Projects will not be reviewed by staff prior to review by the Decisions Committee, as it is assumed that the project design is appropriate and that Renewal applicants are familiar with the expectations of the competition.

Please note: If a New Project application demonstrates major deficiencies including:

- Project designs that do not address Priority Areas as defined in the 2009 RFP
- Lack of explanation about the design and effectiveness of models that are not recognized as best practice models;
- Missing or incomplete answers or answers that are not relevant to the questions provided;

then that New Project application will be rejected without a site visit and without the opportunity to revise.

For Renewal Projects: The Homeless Alliance *does not review* Renewal Project Applications in this manner, as their projects have received funding previously and are assumed to have an appropriate project design, similar budget, and be aware of the expectations of the CoC process. Therefore, Renewal Projects have a deadline of Friday, February 27th by 5pm. Renewal projects should be certain that their application is complete and that their responses are appropriate, as the application they submit will be forwarded to the Decisions Committee. As there are new elements in the 2009 application, it is strongly discouraged for Renewal Projects to “cut and paste” responses from previous local applications into the current application.

Copies of the local application will be available on the Homeless Alliance website (www.wnyhomeless.org) –shortly after the release of the RFP in January. Applicants will be scored on items included in the local application. Items included in the local application include: budget, project description, services, housing, population served, performances measurements, and collaboration.

Federal Application

All applicants are responsible for completing the HUD federal application as outlined in the HUD SuperNOFA (Notice of Funding Application). The Homeless Alliance may offer *limited* technical assistance. The deadline for submission of this document will be finalized after the release of the SuperNOFA by HUD.

New Projects - Scoring

Applicants will be scored on project design and how the project addresses priority need areas; description of how the project addresses community needs

(see application form); budget; project match; leveraging; collaboration; and implementation timeline. Other factors in the rank of New Projects will include community involvement, and possible site visits. The New Projects will be ranked in the same pool with Renewal Projects to ensure that the best applications – regardless of past success – are forwarded to the federal competition.

Since 2006, HUD has put increasing emphasis on the amount of dollars requested for housing vs. the amount of dollars requested for services. Therefore, *it is unlikely that a New Project Application that has a housing dollars request at or below 50% of the total request will be successful in the local competition.* When creating your project design and budget, please make note of the emphasis your project places on housing.

Renewal Projects – Scoring

New for 2009:

While low-scoring transitional housing and permanent housing projects may still be forwarded for a one-year request, the Decisions Committee reserves the right to withhold Renewal Supportive Services Only projects from the federal competition.

Applicants will be scored on project design; description of how the project addresses community needs (see application form); budget; project match; leveraging; collaboration; performance measurements; and implementation timeline.

Renewal applications will be scored and ranked along with other applications (both New and Renewal). While the Homeless Alliance endeavors to avoid the creation of gaps in service whenever possible, the strength of the entire CoC application lies in the strength of each individual project. Therefore, for the sake of the entire Continuum, all projects will be scored together to ensure that the best projects are ranked at the top of the list. Other factors in the rank of renewal projects will include community involvement, housing to services ratio, possible site visits, client satisfaction surveys, and community needs.

As in past years, a scoring threshold will be determined which is two standard deviations from the mean score of all applications. Unlike new applications which fall below this mean score, the Homeless Alliance Decisions Committee may forward low-scoring renewal applications to the HUD Competition so as not to create gaps in service. However, low-scoring projects will be placed on probation and only allowed to apply for a minimum renewal period. **Please note: as stated in the Project Selection and Priority Placement Process section,**

New for 2009:

Renewal Projects and New Projects will be scored and ranked together. This is different from previous years where Renewal Projects were scored and ranked against other Renewals and automatically placed at the top of the rankings.

This is to ensure that the best applications and project designs are forwarded to the federal competition.

Some Renewal Supportive Services Only projects (SSO) have not been selected for advancement to the federal competition in the past due to a 0% housing activities allocation in their project budgets.

A program on probation will need to demonstrate considerable improvement over the course of the year to remain competitive.

A system of monitoring and feedback for all renewal projects will be established by the PRISM Project Steering Committee. This system will enable the local Continuum of Care to provide assistance to under-performing programs or to identify new providers to better meet client needs.

To “rate” renewal projects, The Homeless Alliance currently uses the HUD Annual Performance Report (APR) to understand program performance when compiling its Annual Report.

Going forward, the Homeless Alliance and Continuum of Care Decisions Committee will also use the HUD APR to evaluate the performance of renewal programs as well as client satisfaction surveys. In particular, at least three HUD-identified performance measures and several locally determined measures will be used.

As HMIS continues to grow in scope, additional performance measures will be identified and reviewed by the PRISM Project Steering Committee.

Moreover, the ratio of funding requested for housing activities in the total budget is – and will continue to be – an important factor in the ranking of projects following their scoring. Projects with a low request for housing and a higher request for services will have difficulty in the ranking of their project. Since 2006, HUD has put increasing emphasis on the amount of dollars requested for housing vs. the amount of dollars requested for services. Therefore, *it is unlikely that projects with a housing dollars request at or below 50% of the total request will be allowed by the Decisions Committee to move forward to the federal competition for more than a one-year request.*

HMIS Requirement

All projects funded under the HUD Continuum of Care will be required to participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) operating within the Continuum area. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to participate in the Alliance's regular data collection efforts. Contact the HMIS Coordinator at the Alliance office (853-1101) for more information.

Performance Measures

Performance measures are a HUD requirement in determining the overall strength of local Continuums, but also helps the Buffalo and Erie County community to better understand the nature of local homelessness. As we continue to move towards full implementation of the Buffalo Area Shelter Network (BAS-Net), our community's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), this information will be both easier to collect and of more use to our community in planning Erie County's overall homeless strategy. **Please note:** BAS-Net data quality is imperative for those agencies seeking renewal CoC funds. Underreporting of benefits access affects the score not only of individual projects but the Continuum as a whole in the federal competition.

APR-Based Performance Measurement

Local Goals Around Performance Measurement:

- Objective Evaluation of Current Program Performance
- Awareness of Continuum Progress on HUD/Locally-Specified Measures
- Limited Burden on Providers
- Easily Calculated Measures
- Use in Continuum of Care Competition
- Review of APR – Technical Assistance

HUD Targets:

- End chronic homelessness
- Help move homeless individuals and families to permanent housing
- Promote appropriate level of self-sufficiency

HUD-Specified Performance Measures (*According to Proposed Homeless GPRA Measures '07*):

- Stabilize clients in permanent housing (at least 72% for six months or more)

- Successfully move clients from transitional housing to permanent housing (at least 62% of homeless persons in transitional housing will move to permanent housing)
- Increase the employment rate of homeless persons (employment rate of persons exiting HUD homeless assistance will be 12% higher than those entering HUD homeless Assistance)
- Increase HMIS participation (93% of all HUD continua will be operating HMIS)

Local-Specified Performance Measures:

- Increase the financial resources of homeless persons (rate of persons with no financial resources at program exit will be 13% less than the rate of persons with no financial resources at program entry).
- Increase use of general mainstream resources among homeless persons (food stamp participation rate of persons exiting the program will be 13% greater than the food stamp participation rate of those entering).

Population-Specific Performance Measures:

- Programs serving specific homeless sub-populations will increase use of at least one appropriate targeted mainstream resource for their population by 5% between program entry and exit.
 - Programs serving veteran populations will increase use of Veterans Benefits or Veterans Health Care by 5%.
 - Programs serving disabled populations (i.e., mental health, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS) will increase use of SSI, SSDI, or Medicaid by 5%.
 - Programs serving homeless families will increase use of TANF or SCHIP by 5%.
- Each program will identify an appropriate targeted mainstream resource for the population they serve. These mainstream resources include:
 - SSI
 - SSDI
 - Social Security
 - General Public Assistance
 - TANF
 - SCHIP
 - Veterans Benefits
 - Veterans Health Care
 - Unemployment Benefits
 - Medicaid
 - Other

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**Erie County Continuum of Care
2008-2009 Timeline**

(For Projects to be funded beginning in January 2010)

Please note that all dates regarding the federal application are subject to change dependant on the HUD SuperNOFA

	Staff Activities	New Projects	Renewal Projects
August			
September			
October			
November			
December	Assembling Policies and Priorities for following year's CoC Competition		
January	Preparing Housing First Conference RFP Released	Putting Together Project Design based on Priority Need Areas in the RFP Completing Local Application	Completing Local Application
February	Answering questions about CoC applications, Presentation at the Homeless Alliance monthly meeting to address FAQ's, Assembling Decisions Committee	February 4: Housing First Workshop for All CoC Applicants (Required) Friday, February 27: Local Application Due!	February 4: Housing First Workshop for All CoC Applicants (Required) Friday, February 27: Local Application Due!
March	Staff Meeting to review New Projects Site Visits with New Projects Assembling Renewal Project Packets for	Reviewer Comments	

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	Decisions Committee Members		
April	Assembling New Project Packets for Decisions Committee Members Decisions Committee Orientation		
May	Decisions Committee meets for scoring and ranking Informing New and Renewal Projects about decisions Logic Model Training	Informing New Projects about decisions Logic Model Training	Informing Renewal Projects about decisions Logic Model Training
June	Follow-up with Agencies on Probation and Non-Forwarded Projects Completing Exhibit 1	Local Deadline for Federal Application (Exhibit 2)	Local Deadline for Federal Application (Exhibit 2)
July	Submission of 2009 CoC Application Follow-up with Agencies on Probation and Non-Forwarded Projects		

Continuum of Care Successful Application Fee

The Board of Directors of the Homeless Alliance has established the following policies in regard to the payment of fees related to successful HUD Continuum of Care applications.

1. A fee, to be known hereafter as the “Continuum of Care Successful Application Fee” is to be paid by successful applicants for HUD Continuum of Care funding, as described below, in order to reimburse the

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- Homeless Alliance for the cost of work done to prepare, coordinate and complete the Continuum of Care application process.
2. Every applicant for Continuum of Care funding shall be notified in writing of the requirement to pay this fee, including a general explanation of the work done by Homeless Alliance staff and volunteers that justifies the imposition of this fee, the formula used to calculate the fee, and other payment rules, no later than 30 days prior to the date that such applications are due to the Homeless Alliance.
 3. *Fee Calculation:* this fee owed shall be equal to 0.5% (zero point five percent) of the total award granted by HUD to the grantee. Where a multi-year award is granted, the fee will be calculated and due on the total award.
 4. *Payment Method:* fees are to be paid by check or money order, and are to be made payable to “Homeless Alliance of WNY, Inc.”.
 5. *Payment Schedule:* fees will be due and payable according to the following schedule:
 - a. No later than 90 days from the date that HUD officially announces Continuum of Care awards, the Homeless Alliance will calculate and send an invoice to each grantee which details the amount of the fee owed and date due.
 - b. Payment of this fee shall be due no later than 30 days after the execution of a contract with HUD for the award subject to the fee, or no later than 30 days after receipt of an invoice from the Homeless Alliance, whichever comes later.
 - c. For multi-year awards, the full fee will be invoiced, but the option of paying on an annual basis over the life of the award is available to the grantee upon request.
 6. *Sub-Grantees:* in the event that an agency applies for and receives an award on behalf of one or more sub-grantees, that agency (the “grantee”) is responsible for the fee covering the total amount awarded, and it is the grantee’s responsibility to collect from the sub-grantees, if they so choose. This policy does not apply to governmental entities.
 7. *Credits:*

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- a. In the event that a grantee is required to pay to the Homeless Alliance membership dues for the same year in which a Continuum of Care Successful Application Fee has been paid, the amount of this fee actually paid will be credited toward the agency's dues obligation for that year.
 - b. In the event that a grantee is required to pay to the Homeless Alliance a Continuum of Care Successful Application Fee for the same year in which membership dues has been paid, the amount of dues actually paid will be credited toward the agency's fee obligation for that year.
 - c. In the event that a grantee has made an unrestricted financial contribution to the Homeless Alliance during the same year in which a Continuum of Care Successful Application Fee falls due, this contribution will be credited toward the agency's fee obligation for that year.
8. *Failure to Pay*: the failure of a grantee to pay a Continuum of Care Successful Application Fee will be ranked as a significant factor in the evaluation of any future Continuum of Care applications the grantee submits to the Homeless Alliance.

The Board shall review the formula used to calculate the Continuum of Care Successful Application Fee on an annual basis. Any adjustments to this fee shall be made no later than November 1, and communicated to the Homeless Alliance members no later than December 1, to be effective the following year.

Electronic Submission

HUD requires electronic submission of all federal application materials from Project Applicants. Please see the *Continuum of Care Guidelines 2009* for more information on the electronic submission. *Upon completion of the federal application for those Project Applicants moving forward to the federal competition, Project Applicants will be required to make their final submission of the federal applications at the Homeless Alliance office* This protocol is in place to ensure that all information is submitted correctly and in a timely manner. More details on these procedures will be available upon your selection to move forward to the federal competition.

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Also, agencies that submit a project application should register with E-SNAPS, HUD's electronic submission website. *Please Note:* This site is *not* the same as Grants.gov and agencies should not underestimate the time it will take to register with E-SNAPS. You can register here:
<https://esnaps.hud.gov/grantium/frontOffice.jsf>.

The Homeless Alliance does *not* offer technical assistance with registration on E-SNAPS.

Please note: *Project Applicants that are selected to move forward in the federal competition are advised to have access to a computer and the internet and also have an understanding of basic computer use.* The Homeless Alliance may offer limited technical assistance including training on the HUD Logic Model and will be available to answer questions about the electronic submission form. Homeless Alliance staff will *not* offer any basic computer training or related assistance.

Finally, the Homeless Alliance staff is available to provide more information or to answer specific questions you may have about the local and federal application process. Please contact us at 853-1101 or check our website (www.wnyhomeless.org). Further information regarding the HUD Continuum of Care Funding Competition can also be found at www.hud.gov.

Visit www.wnyhomeless.org for more information.