



## GUILFORD COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE

Working to End Homelessness in Guilford County

### **NC-504 GUILFORD COUNTY NC CONTINUUM OF CARE (COC) AND EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT (ESG) REVIEW, SCORING, AND PRIORITIZATION OF PROJECT APPLICATIONS**

#### **OVERVIEW**

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) [24 CFR § 578.9](#) requires the NC-504 Guilford County Continuum of Care (CoC) to design, operate, and follow a collaborative process for the development of CoC project funding applications and approve the submission of applications in response to the both the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and the Request for Applications (RFA) for Emergency Solution Grants (ESG) published annually by the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and the and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Adult and Aging Services (NC DHHS-DAAS) Emergency Solutions Grant, respectively<sup>1</sup>.

This policy outlines the process by which NEW and RENEWEAL CoC and ESG Project Applications are reviewed, scored, prioritized, and ranked in the NC-504 Guilford County CoC, consistent with the provisions of the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by S. 896, the Homeless Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing \(HEARTH\) Act of 2009, 24 CFR § 578, 24 CFR § 576](#) and [NC-504 CoC Written Standards](#).

The [Governance Charter for the Guilford County Continuum of Care and CoC Board](#) designates the System Performance and Evaluation Committee (SPEC) to be responsible for Guilford CoC planning activities, including establishing CoC system performance metrics and standards; evaluating CoC system performance; establishing metrics and standards for measuring the performance of ESG- and CoC-funded projects; and evaluating performance of those projects.

The SPEC, with input from the Collaborative Applicant, must establish and oversee the CoC's annual process to evaluate and rank the performance of CoC member agencies applying for HUD or other CoC-administered funding. The SPEC is also responsible for developing a tool to evaluate performance of ESG- and CoC- funded projects.

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<sup>1</sup> National Archives. Electronic (e-CFR), Code of Federal Regulations, [24 CFR § 578.19](#); [24 CFR § 576.200](#)

After its review of all project applications, the SPEC will provide its recommended funding and rank/priority to the CoC Board. The Board shall then provide initial approval of funding and rank/priority recommendations made by the SPEC. These recommendations will then be submitted to CoC membership for final approval before being submitted by the Collaborative Applicant by the deadline set forth by HUD through either the CoC NOFO or the ESG RFA.

## **CoC NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)**

The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), published annually by HUD officially opens the Continuum of Care Funding Competition, and articulates eligible activities, timelines, priorities/scoring, final funding amounts available/tiering, potential projects, and CoC and project application requirements.

Based on the NOFO requirements, the CoC is responsible for disseminating and publishing information regarding eligible activities, the local application timeline, funding priorities, amounts available, and project application requirements.

1. **Intent to Apply:** Organizations must submit an Intent to Apply letter and threshold documentation on or before a deadline to be determined by the Collaborative Applicant. Organizations will also need to submit a full a complete project application and all supporting documentation, prior to the local application deadline as published by the Collaborative Applicant. Specific documentation requirements for the letter of intent will be provided with release of the local HUD NOFO RFA.
2. **Timeline and Deadlines:** Each of these elements will have separate deadlines and documentation requirements, which will be detailed on the [NC-504 Guilford County CoC website](#) following the NOFO announcement from HUD. NOTE: The LOCAL application deadline will fall at a deadline set by the local CoC, prior to the HUD NOFO application deadline.
3. **Project Proposals and Eligible Activities:** All Project Applicants must propose projects and activities that are eligible to be funded, as detailed in the CoC NOFO or ESG RFA. Eligible activities for CoC funding are defined by statute and regulation<sup>2</sup> and generally include:
  - i. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH, which must be dedicated to eligible individuals and families according to HUD guidelines);
  - ii. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH, applicants must already be operating an ESG RRH program or operating a RRH program funded by another source but adheres to all ESG RRH standards and practices);

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<sup>2</sup> National Archives. Electronic (e-CFR), Code of Federal Regulations, [24 CFR § 578.37](#)

- iii. Joint Transitional Housing/Rapid Re-Housing (TH/RRH)
  - iv. Supportive Services Only (SSO, limited to DV Bonus Projects, and only if the HUD NOFO includes such projects in the annual NOFO)
4. CoC and ESG project applications must both meet certain threshold requirements, which shall be based on Federal, State, and local requirements and guidelines. These threshold requirements shall be included in both the local CoC NOFO announcement and the local ESG RFA announcement. Project Applicants that have curable deficiencies and/or omissions in these threshold requirements may be required to provide additional documentation to the SPEC to meet NC-504 CoC and ESG threshold requirements prior to submission of a full project funding application for review, scoring, and ranking by SPEC.
5. Any project applicants determined not to meet threshold requirements by the SPEC will not be permitted to submit a full Project Application for consideration by the NC-504 SPEC.
6. Threshold requirements that the SPEC may require include but are not limited to:
- i. Verification that applicant agency has no delinquent Federal debt;
  - ii. Applicant agency has no unresolved, outstanding Civil Rights matters as detailed in CoC NOFO;
  - iii. Funds requested for this project are not replacing any existing state or local funding;<sup>3</sup>
  - iv. Applicant agency has no financial audit findings or material weaknesses identified in its most recent audit;
  - v. Applicant agency participates in NC-504 Coordinated Entry (CE) or has applied to be included in CE and NC-504 HMIS information sharing agreement;
  - vi. Applicant agency agrees to receive and make all referrals for housing placement through the NC-504 CE;
  - vii. Applicant agency actively participates in NC-504 committees and workgroups;
  - viii. Other documentation of ability to carry out proposed program(s) and comply with Federal, State, and local regulations and requirements.

## **NC-DHHS ESG REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)**

The Request for Applications (RFA) published annually by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services-Division of Adult and Aging Services, officially opens ESG application process, and articulates eligible activities, timelines, priorities/scoring, funding

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<sup>3</sup> National Archives, Electronic (e-CFR), Code of Federal Regulations. [24 CFR 578.87](#).

amounts available/tiering, potential projects, and ESG project application requirements.

Based on the RFA requirements, the CoC is responsible for disseminating and publishing information regarding eligible activities, the local application timeline, funding priorities, amounts available, and project application requirements.

1. **Intent to Apply:** Organizations must submit an Intent to Apply letter and threshold documentation on or before a deadline to be determined by the Collaborative Applicant. Organizations will also need to submit a complete project application and all supporting documentation, prior to the local application deadline as published by the Collaborative Applicant. Specific documentation requirements for the letter of intent will be provided with release of the local ESG RFA.
2. **Timeline and Deadlines:** Each of these elements will have separate deadlines and documentation requirements, which will be detailed on the [NC-504 Guilford County CoC website](#) following the RFA announcement from the NC DHHS. NOTE: The LOCAL application deadline will fall at a deadline set by the local CoC, prior to the NC DHHS application deadline.
3. **Project Proposals and Eligible Activities:** All Project Applicants must propose projects and activities that are eligible to be funded, as detailed in the CoC NOFO or ESG RFA. Eligible activities for ESG funding are defined by statute and regulation,<sup>4</sup> and grouped in to two (2) broad categories, Emergency Response and Housing Stability.

Eligible Emergency Response activities include:

- Street Outreach
- Emergency Shelter

Eligible Housing Stability activities include:

- Rapid Rehousing, which may include Housing Stabilization and Relocation
- Rental Assistance (short and medium term)

ESG-eligible activities also include operating and maintaining a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or an equivalent database.

4. CoC and ESG project applications must meet certain threshold requirements, which shall be based on Federal, State, and local requirements and guidelines. These threshold requirements shall be included in both the local CoC NOFO announcement and the local ESG RFA announcement. Project Applicants that have curable deficiencies and/or omissions in these threshold requirements may be required to

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<sup>4</sup> National Archives. Electronic (e-CFR), Code of Federal Regulations, [24 CFR § 576.100](#)

provide additional documentation to the SPEC to meet NC-504 CoC and ESG threshold requirements prior to submission of a full project funding application for review, scoring, and ranking by SPEC.

## **LOCAL REVIEW PROCESS**

**SPEC Role:** All Project Application Letters of Intent to Apply and Threshold Documentation will be evaluated by SPEC after submission. The SPEC will inform the applicant if they meet threshold eligibility to submit a Project Application for consideration in the NOFO competition; if additional threshold documentation is needed; or if the applicant does not meet threshold eligibility.

**Proposal Content Evaluation:** All Project Applications will be evaluated on agency experience, project viability, local need, and scope of proposed project. The NC-504 SPEC will also evaluate New Project Applications for alignment with at least one or more of HUD's key priorities, i.e., how the proposed project will specifically improve System Performance Measures across the community to:

**1. Reduce:**

- i. Length of time persons remain homeless;
- ii. Return to homelessness;
- iii. Number of persons who experience homelessness; and
- iv. Number of persons who become homeless for the first time.

**2. Increase:**

- i. Access to employment and income growth for previously homeless persons in CoC program-funded projects; and
- ii. Number of successful housing placements from street outreach and ensure successful retention of permanent housing.

**Proposal Evaluation Tool:** Applications will be reviewed and scored according to an objective project evaluation tool, to be published at the time the local CoC and ESG application processes are announced by the Collaborative Applicant. This evaluation tool will align with the HUD NOFO and ESG RFA Project Application questions, which may vary from year to year. Each component of the evaluation tool is assigned a point value, which may also vary.

**It shall be the policy of the NC-504 that Continuum of Care HMIS Applications, being necessary and required for the operation of the entire CoC and required by federal regulation, that such applications always be placed in Tier 1 of the CoC Project Priority and Ranking.**

## **APPEALS PROCESS**

The NC-504 Continuum of Care System Performance and Evaluation Committee (SPEC) may recommend that some new and/or renewal applicants not be included in the final CoC Consolidated Application to HUD or the Regional Application to the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS). To ensure fairness, these projects will have the opportunity to appeal the NC-504 SPEC's decision.

**Who May Appeal:** New or renewal applicants whose projects were not included in the final slate of CoC Project Priority Listing or ESG Project Applications and approved for submission to NC DHHS may appeal.

### **How to Appeal:**

1. Applicants must submit a letter of appeal signed by an applicant agency's Executive Director with any relevant supporting documentation within a timeframe to be designated by the CoC.
2. Appeal documentation should be submitted to the SPEC Chair by the deadline using this link.
3. Appeals submitted after the published deadline will not be considered.
4. Appeals must present evidence that shows the SPEC made a clear error, did not follow the advertised process, engaged in discriminatory activity, had a conflict of interest, or the grantee experienced extenuating circumstances.
5. Appeal letters must also address deficiencies in the Project Application.
6. All CoC or ESG Project Applications are scored and chosen based on information submitted by the deadline; additional information or explanations to address programmatic deficiencies or missing documentation will not be accepted as part of an appeal.
7. The CoC SPEC will consider each appeal and decide whether to overturn its decision to exclude the project as part of the final application slate.
8. If the CoC SPEC decides to overturn the decision to exclude the project as part of the final application slate after reviewing appeals, the decision and its reasons must be approved by the CoC Board of Directors.
9. Guilford County NC-504 staff will email final decisions on appeals to Project Applicant agencies following a meeting by the CoC Board to consider the SPEC's decision on appeals.

**Appeal Decisions:** The SPEC will carefully review each eligible appeal request. The SPEC may, but is not required to, overturn its original decision for the Project Applicant filing an appeal in the following situations:

1. The SPEC mistakenly used false or significantly incomplete information to make decisions and additional information presented as part of the appeal letter addresses the deficiencies in the application.
2. The SPEC or the CoC did not follow the competition process as advertised or took steps that are not allowed by HUD or NC DHHS policy.
3. If an appeal is filed that shows a member of the SPEC has a conflict of interest that affected the SPEC's decision or a member or members of the SPEC discriminated against the applicant due to the applicant's race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, or familial status, the SPEC must conduct a new full review of the application that does not include the member or members with conflicts of interest or who engaged in discriminatory behavior.

**The SPEC will not consider appeals that present information that applicants simply neglected to include in original applications, except in extenuating circumstances. An example of an exception would be if the deficiencies in the Project Application would not affect long-term viability or performance of the project, such as a delay in application submission caused by an act of god or other major event beyond the control of the applicant.**