Prior to 2021, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFO) to submit applications for the Continuum of Care (CoC) Grants. For the 2021 competition cycle, HUD changed the notice to Notice of Funding Opportunity or NOFO. This procedure manual will be used as a guiding document to identify the process and procedures that support the Lead Agency, The Coalition for the Homeless, to operate a fair and transparent grant competition to submit a complete application for projects operating within The Way Home CoC’s area including: Harris, Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties and the cities of Houston, Pasadena and Conroe.

This Procedure Manual can be updated as needed by recommendation of the Lead Agency for the Continuum of Care and approved by The Way Home Steering Committee, which acts as the decision-making body for the Continuum of Care.
Overview of The Way Home CoC NOFO Steps

HUD will announce the NOFO due dates and requirements within the notice, however there are certain procedures that the Lead Agency will follow to ensure that a timely submission for the Continuum of Care operates within those requirements.

Registration:
This is the initial step of the CoC Competition, providing Collaborative Applicants, which is The Coalition for the Homeless as the Lead Agency, with an outline of the functions and requirements of the registration process. It also provides Collaborative Applicants and project applicants with information necessary to continue implementation of the amendments to the McKinney-Vento Act (the Act) made by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act.

The Lead Agency for The Way Home Continuum of Care will be identified by Housing and Urban Development. The Way Home CoC Steering Committee acts as the decision making body for The Way Home Continuum of Care which can be described at length in The Way Home CoC Steering Committee Charter. The Coalition for the Homeless is the identified and approved lead agency and collaborative applicant for The Way Home CoC.

Grant Inventory Worksheet:
Continuum of Care (CoC) Collaborative Applicants need to review their Grant Inventory Worksheet (GIW) report when distributed by HUD and, if needed, submit change requests to HUD using the GIW Change Form.

The GIW report is used annually to record all grants within a CoC’s geographic area that are eligible for renewal funding for an upcoming CoC Program Competition. The GIW calculates 1) an Annual Renewal Amount (ARA) for each project, which is the total renewal amount a project may request under the CoC Program Competition, and 2) the sum of all renewable budget line items (BLI) (e.g., rental assistance, leasing, supportive services). The sum of all ARAs within the CoC is then used to calculate the CoC’s Estimated Annual Renewal Demand (ARD). HUD posts GIW reports to be reviewed by CoC Collaborative Applicants, project applicants, local HUD field offices, and HUD’s Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS), as follows:

- SNAPS will prepopulate each GIW report that will be used for an upcoming CoC Program Competition with all grants that are eligible for renewal funding for that year within a CoC’s geographic area.
- Data from the prior year’s GIW, Line of Credit Control System (LOCCS), and e-snaps are used by SNAPS desk officers to review the accuracy of the prepopulated project information.
- After SNAPS completes its initial review, the following items are posted to the HUD Exchange: the GIW reports; a GIW Change Form (to be used for requesting changes to the GIW); and a Rental Assistance Worksheet.
- CoCs must review the projects on the posted GIW report and verify its accuracy.
- If the CoC agrees with the GIW report, the CoC is done, and the GIW report remains posted on the HUD Exchange.
- If the CoC Collaborative Applicant identifies missing projects or errors, the CoC Collaborative Applicant must complete a GIW Change Form and submit it to the local HUD field office for review. The Form must indicate which projects should be added or removed and which projects...
should be updated (e.g., projects that had BLI changes through a grant agreement amendment). Once the GIW report is finalized, the revised GIW report will replace the initial version on the HUD Exchange.

**CoC Competition Steps:**
These are vital pieces to the Local Competition but are in no particular order.

**Local Competition Deadlines**
24 CFR 578.9 requires CoCs to design, operate, and follow a collaborative process for the development of an application in response to a NOFO issued by HUD. As part of this collaborative process, CoCs should implement internal competition deadlines and notification processes to ensure transparency and fairness at the local level. The implementation of deadlines that meet the standards outlined specifically in the CoC NOFO.

**Local Competition Kickoff Conference**
Once HUD releases the NOFO, the Lead Agency will establish a timeline and communicate as vastly as possible not limited to:

- Posting the communications on the website at [www.homelesshouston.org](http://www.homelesshouston.org)
- Sharing the posted website information on our Funding Information Listserv which is located here: [http://bit.ly/cfthfundingopps](http://bit.ly/cfthfundingopps)

This Kickoff Conference will be held in-person at a location decided upon the release of the NOFO and is deemed mandatory for any applicant, new or renewing, in the CoC Grant Competition. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings and conferences will be held virtually in 2021. The ramifications for missing this conference are as follows:

- A **renewing applicant** will be docked points from their renewal application
- An **agency expecting to submit a new project** in the competition will be disqualified from the current conference. However, that agency will be allowed to apply in future competitions, pending attendance at required meetings.

**Renewal Project Competition Steps**

**Annual Performance Reports**
Renewing projects (second time or more) will be evaluated using data provided from the Annual Performance Reports (APR). Those projects operating within the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) will have their project information directly from the system by the Lead Agency as communicated in the timeline posted.

For any applicants operating in a comparable database, the Comma-Separated Value (CSV) file, will need to be submitted to the Lead Agency by the applying agency in accordance with the timeline posted.

**Technical Assistance**
The Lead Agency will be available during the competition to provide Technical Assistance for applicants interested in submitting an application for a Continuum of Care Grant. **Renewal Project attendance at Technical Assistance is optional.**
Technical Assistance can include, but is not limited to: Project Budget discussion, population expectations, process overview, competition overview, ESnaps information, grant conversations, data questions, etc.

Reduction and Reallocation Letters
To ensure CoC Funds are spent in a timely manner to address homelessness in our communities, the Lead Agency works year-round with grantees of CoC Funds to ensure that awards are fully spent. The local HUD Field Office provides quarterly spend-down reports which is reviewed by the Lead Agency. During the year, should programmatic adjustments not fully answer to the return of funds, agencies can elect to reduce part of their award. Additionally, should the project be changing dramatically or not require funding to continue operation, reallocation can be used as an option during the CoC NOFO Competition. There is no punishment or benefit to agencies for reducing or reallocating their grant.

The only time that funds can be reallocated is during the CoC competition. These funds can then be used towards new projects during that competition cycle. Doing this ensures these funds remain within the CoC, rather than recaptured by HUD annually. Those agencies electing to do this should submit a letter to the Lead Agency in accordance with the posted timeline and include the following:

- Grant Number
- Applicant Name
- Project Name
- Grant Award
- Breakout of Budget Line Items
- Reallocated/Reduced Amount

Renewal Score Reports
The Lead Agency will use the Renewal Scoring Rubric in which to populate a scoring report for each renewal project that is on its second or higher renewal application. The Renewal Scoring Rubric is evaluated annually and approved by the CoC Steering Committee.

New Project Competition Steps

New Project Submissions
In the event that Bonus and/or Reallocation funds are available, agencies may submit New Project Applications. The Lead Agency should be working with agencies year-round to discuss the CoC Grant Opportunity to ensure that applicants are made aware of the CoC NOFO process. Any entity is eligible to apply for new projects, as long as the project adheres to the recommended guidelines for bonus projects provided by HUD in the NOFO.

Because New Projects do not have any data to provide an APR, agencies will be evaluated by way of a New Project Selection Committee. The applications submitted will be given to members of the New Project Selection Committee for review, and then New Project Applicants will present their project and answer questions from the New Project Selection Committee. The Committee will be sent an invite from the Lead Agency to participate in the New Project Selection Committee Process which should include but is not limited to:

- Private Funders
- Domestic Violence Provider
- Public Funders
  - Harris County
  - Fort Bend County
  - Montgomery County
  - City of Houston
  - City of Pasadena
  - City of Conroe

Applications will be scored in accordance with the New Project Scoring Rubric which is created by HUD and the Lead Agency and approved by the CoC Steering Committee. This rubric should be updated regularly and note any specifications listed in the NOFO and focus on local priority recommendations made by the Steering Committee and/or the Lead Agency.

Technical Assistance
The Lead Agency will be available during the competition to provide Technical Assistance for applicants interested in submitting an application for a Continuum of Care Grant. **Technical Assistance is mandatory for any applicant submitting a New Project, including expansions.**

Technical Assistance can include, but is not limited to: Project Budget discussion, population expectations, process overview, competition overview, ESnaps information, grant conversations, data questions, etc.