North Dakota-500
Statewide Continuum of Care

Ranking and Review Policy

CoC Board Approval: April 2025
CoC Membership Approval: May 2025

Next Review: April 2026

I. Introduction

A. The North Dakota Continuum of Care (ND CoC) requires an annual project review for all U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) projects. This policy applies explicitly to projects seeking funding under the annual HUD CoC competition.

B. These conditions are designed to inform performance evaluation and Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Rating and Ranking Committee deliberations and provide all new and renewal applicants with clarity regarding how ranking and prioritization occur.

II. Roles and Responsibilities, ND CoC Rating and Ranking Committee

On behalf of the ND CoC Board of Directors, the ND CoC Rating and Ranking Committee oversees the rank and review process. As stated in the ND CoC Governance Charter, the committee is responsible for:

A. Updating ND CoC policies for the annual HUD CoC Competition and presenting them to the CoC Board and CoC Membership for approval;

B. Conducting an annual review of all projects applying for the HUD CoC Competition using established criteria;

C. Ranking projects according to criteria, placing them in a recommended funding order by tier, and presenting ranking recommendations to the CoC Board and CoC Membership for approval; and

D. Conducting meetings for policy review and during the local CoC competition as needed.

III. Important Project Application Dates and Deadlines

The ND CoC publishes annual HUD and local CoC competition deadlines. . The dates and deadlines will be published on the ND CoC website and emailed through the ND CoC membership email list. Projects that do not submit their project application packet by the ND CoC deadline will not be eligible to be ranked. In the event of a natural disaster, or other extenuating circumstances, an agency may request a reasonable extension to the ND CoC coordinator, and the Rating and Ranking Committee must approve the request.

IV. Eligibility

To be eligible for inclusion in the ND CoC Rating and Ranking process, all projects must pass all facets of the ND CoC application process, including:

A. HUD Threshold Requirements including, but not necessarily limited to (*please go to the HUD competition page for a complete list of HUD Threshold requirements*):

1. Applicant has a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and has a current SAM registration.

2. The project draws down funds from eLOCCS at least quarterly (this is only applicable to currently federally funded agencies).

3. Project applicants and potential subrecipients must meet the eligibility requirements of the CoC program as described in the Act and the Rule (nonprofit organization, state or local government, instrument of state or local government, public housing agency, or Indian Tribe or Tribally Designated Housing Entity) and

provide evidence of eligibility required in the application (e.g., nonprofit documentation).

4. Project applicants and subrecipients must demonstrate the financial and management capacity and experience to carry out the project as detailed in the application and the capacity to administer federal funds.

5. Project applicants must submit the required certifications outlined in the NOFO.

6. The population to be served must meet program eligibility requirements described in the Act, the Rule, and the NOFO.

7. Project applicants must agree to participate in the local HMIS system. Victim Service Providers (VSP) must use a CoC-approved comparable database.

8. Project applicants agree to meet the criteria set forth by HUD for project quality thresholds for their specified project. The criteria can be found in the NOFO.

B. CoC Eligibility and Threshold Requirements

1. The project agrees to incorporate Housing First principles, including low-barrier access, into agency policies and practices. The agency may be required to submit policies during the local competition.

2. The applicant agrees to comply with Fair Housing, Equal Opportunity, and Equal Access, including ensuring adaptations to marketing, access, interpretation, and reasonable accommodations.

3. The project will incorporate CoC housing stability best practices to assist households in achieving and maintaining independent living adapted to their individual needs and goals.

4. The applicant agrees to invite program participants (persons with lived experience) to participate in their board of directors, regional/local coalitions, consumer advisory boards, and any other opportunity for persons with lived experience to provide input on ND CoC or project improvement.

5. The project has a signed CoC Membership Agreement.

6. The project agrees to participate in local and regional planning, including attending ND CoC and local homeless committee/coalition meetings.

7. The project agrees to fill all beds using the CARES prioritization process, tools, and policies (PH, including PSH and RRH, or Joint projects ONLY).

8. The project agrees to link households to mainstream services.

9. Project agrees to verify recipient eligibility and maintain documentation of eligibility.

10. Project history or assurance (if a new applicant) to maintain current and clean data and promptly respond to quality and compliance issues.

11. History (renewal projects only) or agreement (new projects only) to provide timely documentation and reports.

12. Ability to achieve ND CoC utilization and performance standards or, if not achieved, identify a performance improvement plan approved by the ND CoC.

13. The project agrees to participate in all CoC-required training, including, but not limited to, monthly training sessions, EdApp learning management system training, and HMIS in-person training.

14. Applicant agrees to participate in an annual performance evaluation and follow-up with any technical assistance requirements if the project has been identified as underperforming.

15. The project agrees to follow ND CoC Policies and Written Standards.

C. Project adheres to all local ND CoC competition deadlines.

1. The project submits an Intent to Apply and Threshold Assessment by the deadline.

2. Initial and final Project Application submitted in e-snaps and via PDF by deadline.

D. Provide Annual Performance Reports to the ND CoC with the project application (renewal projects ONLY).

V. Guidance on Required Ranking and Tiers

A. The ND CoC Rating and Ranking Committee will review all projects and rank in either Tier 1 or Tier 2 according to ND CoC ranking criteria including, but not limited to: Housing First, equity, CoC participation, project design, project performance, data quality, and coordinated entry. Tier 1 projects are more likely to be renewed by HUD. Tier 2 projects are conditional and will depend on HUD's CoC competition score, project score, and rank. HUD will award a point value to projects in Tier 2. Projects may straddle Tier 1 and Tier 2, but the portion in Tier 1 must adequately fund the project if funding in Tier 2 is not awarded.

B. New or Expanded Project Ranking Priority Bonus: The ND CoC will award bonus points to projects based on project type to help prioritize new or expanded project applications that fill the gaps and needs within the ND CoC. New or expanded projects will receive bonus points based on the priority of HUD and the ND CoC for the current NOFO.

VI. Scoring and Ranking Process: HMIS Projects

The ND CoC recognizes that a quality HMIS is not only required by HUD but is used as a valuable tool to operate and evaluate our regional homeless response system. However, ranking and scoring HMIS like Supportive Housing Projects is not feasible due to the unique aspects of our statewide system. Therefore, the ND CoC will rely on the ND CoC Data Committee to evaluate our HMIS system administrator's performance annually and provide the ND CoC with a letter of review and recommendation for renewed funding or reallocation. Furthermore, the ND CoC recognizes that a robust HMIS needs sufficient funding and, therefore, will strive to renew or reallocate funding for our system by placing one or more HMIS applications for a minimum of 2.5 percent of the CoC's Annual Renewal Demand (ARD) at the top of Tier 1 if the request comes from the designated state system administrator. Requests for over the ARD or 2.5 percent, whichever is greater, may be placed in Tier 2.

VII. Scoring and Ranking Process: Supportive Housing and Supportive Services Only Projects

A. The following describes the ND CoC process to score and rank supportive housing projects for CoC funding. It should be noted that the ND CoC uses "scoring," "reallocation," and "ranking" as three distinct steps. Scoring informs, but does

dictate, the final ranking decisions. The ND CoC Rating and Ranking Committee may recommend adjustments where ranking and scoring do not correlate. The committee will indicate in comments why the project is ranked in its position versus directly following scoring.

B. Scoring criteria: The ND CoC Rating and Ranking Committee or other designated committee is responsible for reviewing, updating, and distributing ranking criteria to the ND CoC Board and Membership for approval each year. The process utilizes non-biased, objective criteria based on the HUD ranking tool, established ND CoC priorities, and project performance. The ND CoC uses the e-SNAPS project application, project threshold assessment, an ND CoC ranking scorecard, and required attachments. The Rating and Ranking Committee will score each project using the ranking scorecard to rate and rank each project application.

C. Specifically, ranking incorporates the following categories:

1. Housing First
2. Equity
3. Client participation in project design
4. CoC participation
5. Project design
6. Spending history, annual performance report, and monitoring
7. HMIS/data quality
8. Coordinated entry participation
9. Performance/evaluation

D. Scoring & Ranking Process

1. The ND CoC solicits interest for the Rating and Ranking Committee through the annual membership drive. No representatives from applicant agencies (staff, clients, or board members) are accepted.

2. Intent to Apply: The ND CoC solicits Intent to Apply and project threshold assessments to renewal applicants and an open invite for new projects via the ND CoC email list and notice at other regional meetings or public notices.

3. The ND CoC coordinator follows up with agencies interested in applying for new or expanded projects.

4. Within ten days after the NOFO publication, application packets are posted on the ND CoC website.

5. The ranking process, criteria, submitted Intent to Apply, and timelines are presented at the first ND CoC meeting after the NOFO release. Any proposed updates to the policy in response to the NOFO are presented and voted upon at this time.

6. The ND CoC promotes and hosts, at a minimum, two application labs to assist with completing the application in e-snaps.

7. Submission: To be eligible for ranking, project applicants must submit their application packet (project application and required supporting documentation) to the ND CoC by the deadline in PDF format.

8. Review and Ranking

   a. The ND CoC coordinator collects and organizes the application ranking materials and shares them with the Rating and Ranking Committee.

   b. The committee reviews the application packet (project application and required supporting documentation) and scores each application. This includes:

      • Reviewing project eligibility.

      • Identifying specific concerns or noting questions for the applicant.

      • Assigning a preliminary score and rank to each project.

   c. The Rating and Ranking Committee meets to collectively review and align scores and rankings. Each project is assigned a score based on the percent of eligible points and any adjustments (note adjustments may be made for extenuating circumstances like a change in agency leadership, disaster, etc.).

   d. The ND CoC coordinator notifies applicants of the inclusion/exclusion in the ND CoC Collaborative Application that will be submitted to HUD.

   e. Projects are given up to seven days (dependent on HUD's deadlines) to appeal the committee's recommendation to exclude their application from the ND CoC Collaborative Application that will be submitted to HUD.

   f. If received, appeals are reviewed by the Rating and Ranking Committee. Scores may be adjusted if validated (supporting documentation or appropriate clarification is provided). The Rating and Ranking Committee will meet to deliberate score adjustments if needed.

   g. The committee will recommend one to three ranking scenarios to the ND CoC Board based on project score, ND CoC priorities, and eligible funding. When ties exist, the committee shall rank the following preferences:

      • The project with the highest housing stability and the fewest returns to homelessness shall be ranked first.

      • Projects with existing clients shall also be ranked higher if scores are identical or within one point.

9. Vote on Rank

   a. The ND CoC Rating and Ranking Committee presents final applicant scores and the board-approved ranking scenario to the ND CoC Membership. Although rare, members may reject the proposed options and identify another desired option. The membership votes on the proposed rank and tier.

   b. Projects are notified of final rank, tier, and inclusion/exclusion in the collaborative application. Projects not accepted or ranked in Tier 2 are also again notified of their ability to appeal to HUD.

10. Public Posting: The approved priority listing will be placed on the ND CoC website and mailed to the ND CoC email list, which includes project applicants.