October 27, 2015

SNAPS In Focus: CoC Planning

For the past few years, we have been encouraging Continuums of Care (CoCs) to implement the strategies that will help us meet the goals of *Opening Doors* and end homelessness in this country.

We have asked communities to:

- Prioritize more units for individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness;
- Improve data collection and use data to measure system-level performance;
- Lower barriers to housing by adopting Housing First principles;
- Use reallocation to eliminate poor performing projects and create high performing projects to take their place;
- Collaborate with other housing and service providers, including Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and youth providers; and
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their coordinated entry systems.

We know that this has not been easy and that it has come in a time of restricted resources that made it that much more challenging for CoCs.

The FY 2015 CoC Program Competition NOFA and application – both the CoC application and the project application – continue the focus on the strategies that will help us meet the goals in *Opening Doors*. We are asking CoCs to use performance and outcome data to determine how to best use resources available in the community to end homelessness, including CoC and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program funds. In particular, we are encouraging CoCs to use project-level performance and outcome data to rank CoC Program projects and to make decisions about reallocation in the FY 2015 CoC Program Competition. These requests come with additional planning resources for CoCs.

As part of the FY 2015 CoC Program Competition we are providing CoCs with up to 3 of their Final Pro-Rata Need (FPRN), or $1,250,000, whichever is less, for CoC planning costs. Additionally, CoCs do not have to choose planning funds over any new or renewal projects as the planning projects are not ranked. We will conditionally select these projects so long as they meet minimum quality threshold requirements. All of this is because we believe that strong governance, strong data, and strong projects will lead us to our goal of ending homelessness even in a period of restricted resources.

We hope that all CoCs take advantage of the opportunity to apply for a CoC planning project and use it to meet any of the planning needs of the CoC. Please read the requirements for CoC planning projects in the FY 2015 CoC Program Competition NOFA carefully to ensure that all requirements are met and HUD can fund the project. The activities that can be carried out with funds from these projects are incredibly broad and flexible and almost any activity related to carrying out the duties of establishing or operating a CoC or CoC planning are eligible (see 24 CFR 578.39 for more information).

Some examples of what you could use your planning grant to pay for are:

- Evaluating the performance of the homeless system and individual projects, including those funded with CoC and ESG funds, and identifying how a project's performance can be incorporated into the CoC's ranking of projects for the CoC Program Competition.
- Monitoring and improving the quality and the performance of projects, whether funded with CoC Program funds or not.

- Providing training to your CoC member organizations on Housing First and how a low-barrier approach can be implemented in their projects.
- Collaborating with PHAs, youth providers, or other mainstream providers to develop strategies for ending homelessness and identifying resources that are available to help meet that goal.
- Planning for and conducting the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count.

Thank you for all of your hard work,

Norm Suchar
Director
Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs