



The HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) Re-Imagining Initiative and Accomplishments

The Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) within the Office Community Planning and Development, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, discusses below its transformational efforts to make the Continuum of Care Program processes faster and easier – to enable both HUD and communities to spend more time focusing on ending homelessness. SNAPS also provides insight on increasing efficiency and time savings for applicants and HUD employees in order to expedite assistance for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Continuum of Care Program

The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is designed to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness and to provide the services needed to help such individuals move into permanent housing, with the goal of long-term stability. The CoC Program does this by promoting community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improving coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness; improving data collection and performance measurement; and allowing each community to tailor its programs to the particular strengths and challenges in assisting homeless individuals and families within that community.

HUD, through the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS), provides funds to non-profit organizations and local governments through the annual CoC Program competition. In FY 2017, HUD awarded approximately \$2.03 billion to over 7,000 projects.

Goal of the CoC Re-Imagining Process

In 2016, SNAPS began the CoC Re-Imagining initiative with the goal of making the CoC Program competition less time-consuming and more efficient for communities, project recipients, and HUD employees. Ultimately, HUD's aims are to distribute funds more quickly and enable both HUD and communities to spend more time focusing on ending homelessness.

To accomplish this goal, the CoC Re-Imagining team reviews and re-examines current processes with a focus on eliminating unnecessary steps, identifying ways to improve coordination, and simplifying procedures to increase efficiency. The most significant accomplishments thus far are described below.

Accomplishments

Shortening the Competition Review Period

- **SNAPS reduced the CoC competition review period by up to 65 days.** In FY15 and before, the CoC competition review period often took 100-150 days. By making changes to the process, including reducing redundant review steps and re-work, SNAPS has been

able to significantly reduce the total time from application submission to completion of reviews:

- In FY16, the first year of the CoC Re-Imagining effort, the competition lasted 92 days.
- In FY17, the competition lasted 85 days.
- **SNAPS eliminated 524 FY17 project reviews.** In FY16, SNAPS staff reviewed all 7,000+ CoC projects. In FY17, almost 7% fewer projects needed to be reviewed due to streamlining efforts such as providing recipients the option to submit renewals without changes.
- **SNAPS staff saved 175-350 hours (7-14 days) reviewing FY17 project applications.** In FY16, SNAPS staff spent approximately 30 minutes to review each renewal project compared to about 15 minutes in FY17. By eliminating the need to review every application, SNAPS was able to speed up the time to make grant awards. Additionally, SNAPS created a Project Quality Assessment Report (PQAR) that speeds the review of applications by organizing application information and review instructions into a streamlined review form. PQARs also increased standardization in the review process and reduced the amount of time needed to train staff.

Grants Inventory Worksheet (GIW)

Before the competition begins each year, HUD confirms the amounts for which applicants may apply using a spreadsheet called the Grants Inventory Worksheet (GIW). In the past, HUD Headquarters would email the spreadsheet to field offices, who, in turn, emailed it to CoCs. In FY 2017, HUD simplified the spreadsheet and began publishing the data, making the information readily available and the process more transparent to all applicants. Other changes to the process reduced the back-and-forth required to make necessary changes to the spreadsheet, reducing errors and misinformation.

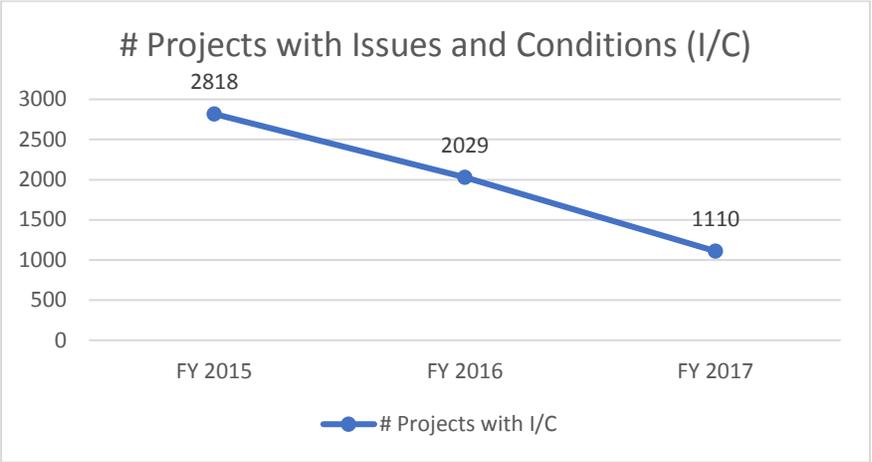
Results from a Fall 2017 survey of field offices about the FY17 GIW process include:

- 61% of field office respondents to the GIW Survey said that the FY17 GIW process required less time than the prior year.
- Specifically, what people liked better in the FY17 process:
 - that information was posted on the HUD Exchange;
 - using a change form made the process more efficient and saved time because field office staff only had to review changes, and no longer had to re-verify data that cannot change, such as the unit configuration totals.

Project Application (FY17)

- Through various changes, SNAPS reduced the number of projects with at least one issue or condition by 60.6 percent, from 2,818 in FY 2015 to 1,110 in FY 2017. This has reduced the amount of time field office staff have to spend following up with recipients.
 - One such change was integrating three required forms (HUD-50070, HUD-2880, and SF-LLL) into the grants management system (*e-snaps*) as part of the

application submission rather than requiring applicants to attach the documents, where they often uploaded incorrect information.



Post-Award

- SNAPS and the HUD Office of the Chief Financial Officer worked together to establish a uniform procedure for field offices to send executed grant agreements to the Ft. Worth Accounting Center using SharePoint. This process improvement eliminates the inconsistencies faced by field offices engaging in time-consuming submissions.